PRRB

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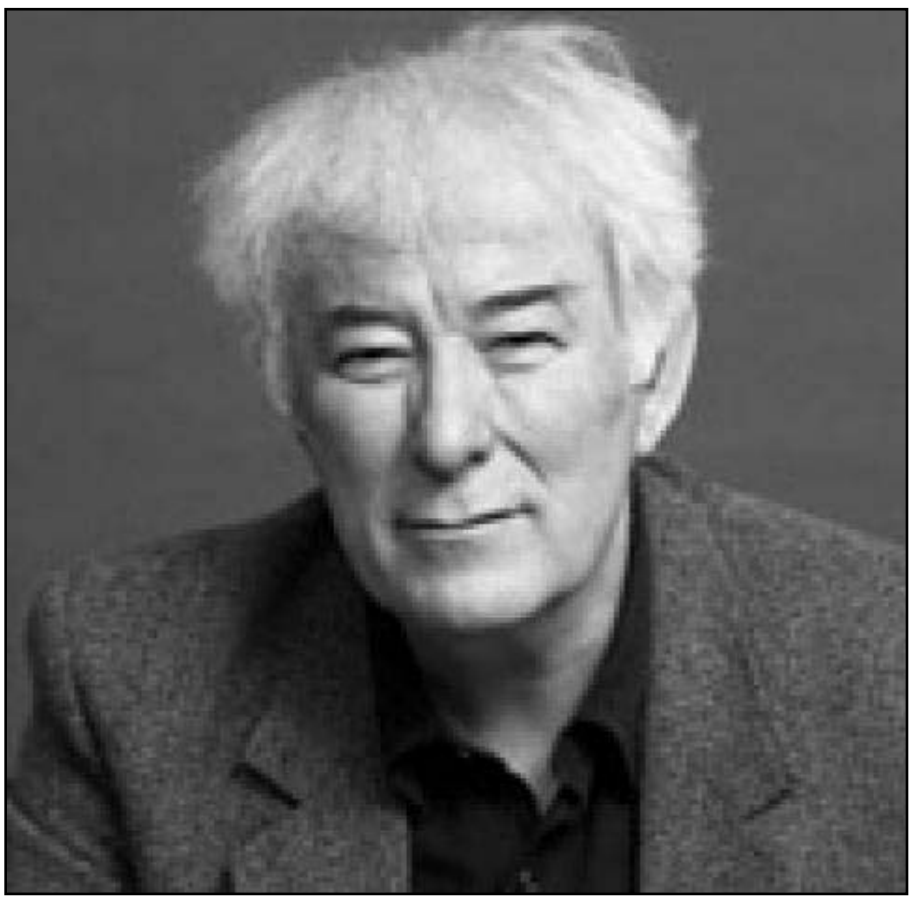

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JOHN WILSON FOSTER ON SEAMUS HEANEY

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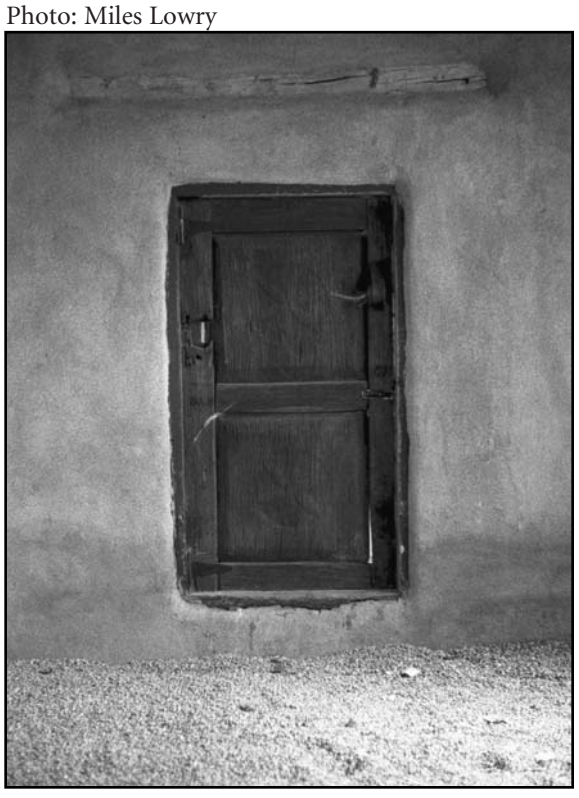

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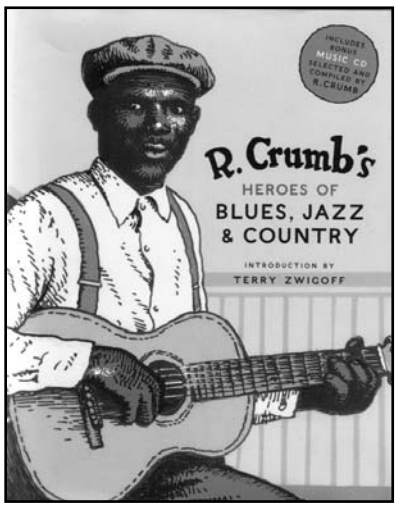
R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country

Rick Van Krugel



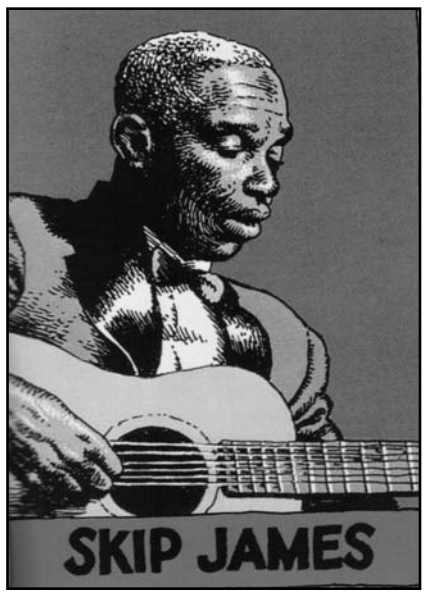
R. Crumb's Heroes of Blues, Jazz & Country
238 pages, Illus. by Robert Crumb, text by Stephen Calt, David Jasen and Richard Nevins
Introduction by Terry Zwigoff
Abrams, New York, 2006
(book and CD, Can.$25.95)

My first two feelings upon reading/viewing/hearing this lovely little hard cover book and CD package were feelings of gratitude and affection: It came to the right person to review it, and an unusual gem like this is a true and pure labour of love and respect. Opening with Terry Zwigoff's introductory words (Zwigoff is a long-time friend of R. Crumb and director of several fine films incl. the acclaimed 1994 documentary "Crumb"), we are treated to a beautifully produced and nice-to-hold feast of what I call Robert Crumb's "serious" side.

A few words about the artist are in order before discussing his collection of Heroes. Crumb is best known for cute contributions to pop culture such as Mr. Natural and the "Keep on truckin'" shirts, bumper stickers and mud flaps (for which I don't think he was ever compensated) and for his often shocking but more often truly hilarious "head comix" going back to the sixties.

True story: My wife, a former university fine arts major, accompanied me to a local showing of Zwigoff's film when it was released; halfway through the film, watching him draw, she gasped "My God, I had no idea – he can draw like Raphael!"

This is a serious artist. I have heard him dubbed misogynistic, kinky, misanthropic, anti-Semitic, racist etc. by people who make the mistake of refusing to see past the surface of his work. Unfortunately, such things as racism, bullying, anti-Semitism, homophobia, murder and mayhem in general really do exist in our society; as it turns out, Robert Crumb, willing or unwilling, bears witness to it all. His virtue is in having the courage to pull no punches; his pen brilliantly screams at us with a unique and sometimes brutal voice of reason.



R. Crumb is something of a social outsider who never really was part of any particular popular "scene"; most often culturally identified as a hippie artist, he was never actually a hippie. Because of his time on the outside looking in (watching the documentary, I am under the impression this is often his own choosing) he has given us the outsider's gift (common to all great satirists and comics), a compulsively-drawn and startlingly detailed vision of what people do to and with themselves, one another, and their world. In Crumb's flawed universe (OK, in mine too) there are few things so clean and innocent as the soul and spirit of a nearly forgotten person playing and singing his or her heart out, captured for eternity in the three minutes of fame permitted upon the long spiral groove of an ancient and venerable "78". For the reader who isn't familiar with his own whimsically anachronistic and inspired musical efforts, I heartily recommend investigating Robert Crumb, musician; a new and different treat is in store for you.

These are predominantly people the majority of you have likely never heard of,

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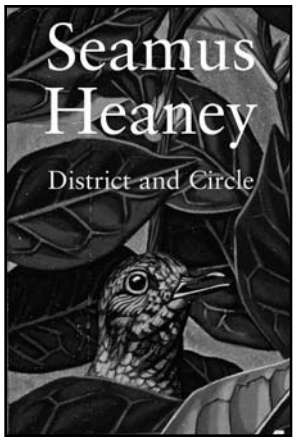
The Dominion of the Physical

John Wilson Foster

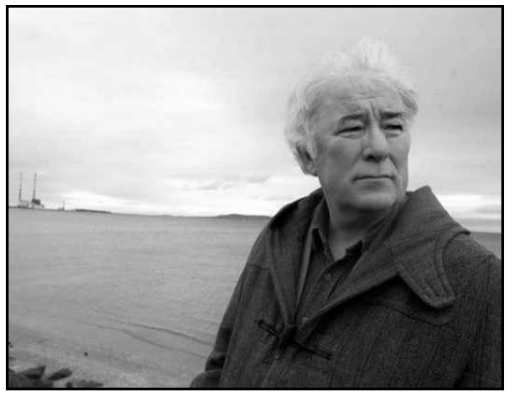


District and Circle
Seamus Heaney,
Faber and Faber, 2006,

Time was when Seamus Heaney was a young poet known only in the precincts of Queen's University, Belfast. "There's a fella writin' good stuff here," a fellow graduate told me on my return to Belfast on holiday from the University of Oregon in 1966, and quoted the controversial lines from "Digging":

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Nowadays Heaney is as palpable as the tools and objects that weight his latest verse as ungainsayably as they did the verse in *Death of a Naturalist* (1966). The opening avoirdupois of *District and Circle* (2006) - "In an age of bare hands/ and cast iron,/ the clamp-on meat-mincers,/ the double-flywheeled water-pump" - once again risks self-parody, as though the poet had never read Wendy Cope's sport with him in *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (1986). Yet, once again, the reader senses only a comforting assurance of the quiddity of the world, his poetry functioning as a kind of fodder (a Heaney word) for the soul as well as the senses.



For a while, say in the 1970s and 1980s, Heaney's ubiquity and representativeness (which is reputation with heft), resembled those of Margaret Atwood, born like him in 1939 and, like him, destined (it could seem) to embody a whole reinvigorated culture (Catholic Ireland, post-British Canada), and virtually single-handedly to conjure into being a field of study (Irish Studies, CanLit) required to interpret and place the writing. Now, like Atwood and Yeats before him, Heaney has risen above his country into that placeless republic that global reputations inhabit. And yet, since *Seeing Things* (1991), Heaney's memories cast into verse and lovingly celebrating custom, do so with an advancing nostalgia, as though expressing in tone his own advancing age (he is 67 and lately ill). "Found Prose" in his latest volume reads like excerpts of a familiar boyhood memoir, *Cider with Rosie*, say, minus Rosie of course.

Verse obituary is nostalgia chastened by death and tempered by elegiac obliga-

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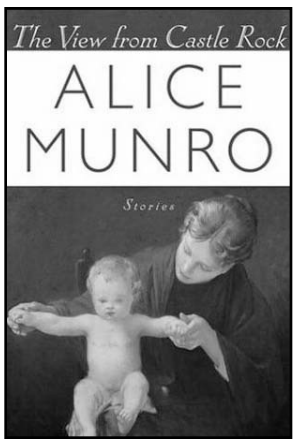
The View From Castle Rock

Linda Rogers



The View From Castle Rock
Alice Munro,
McLelland and Stewart,
2006, 349 pages

I have heard that ropes belonging to the Royal Navy have one red strand, the colour symbolizing the blood bond in disparate ranks and callings, the bond of family and community, that runs like the vein from the "wedding finger" to the heart. *The View From Castle Rock*, reputedly the last in a brilliant canon of work, is the red strand in the opus of Alice Munro.

In this book, Munro releases the volatile epiphanies that introduce writer to character, reader to writer and mother to daughter in stories that are more creative non-fiction than memoir. There may be transformations in the journey from pen to paper, but the ink speaks truth.

I have always admired the writing of Alice Munro, her clarity, the moments as clear as windows washed until they laugh, her humanity and her intelligence, especially in life affirming stories like "The Dance of the Happy Shades." But not her restraint. When critics refer to "Alice Munro country," where tact often overrules freedom, I hesitated. Some readers prefer to ride bareback, way beyond the Rural Ontario Gothic. However, like Margaret Atwood's revelatory *Cat's Eye* and Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, *The View From Castle Rock* is as bare as flesh can bear in its journey to the light.

In these stories, the writer removes the uneasy dress of a painful childhood moment and reveals herself to be as vulnerable and ephemeral as life itself.

Munro has transcended her birthplace and given birth to a new freedom. "The town unlike the house, stays very much the same-nobody is renovating or changing it, nevertheless it has changed for me. I have written about it and used it up…. all their secret plentiful messages for me have drained away." She has emptied herself of history.

Whatever impulse or need took Munro's ancestors away from a small village in Scotland to the unknown world of Canada has returned her to the moment of courage in which they first embarked. It takes courage to emigrate. It takes courage to write books, and it takes courage to stop.

What I didn't know about Alice Munro, with whom I have shared rooms and elevators through the years and who I have only barely met although I do know her first husband and her daughters, is that we share a common history. We are "from" the same small village in Scotland.

Selkirk, near the River Tweed, where sheep graze and the economy has been

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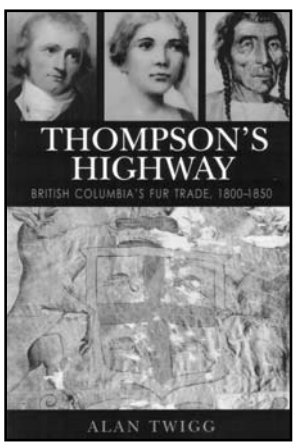
Thompson's Highway

Linda Rogers



Thompsons Highway: British Columbia's fur trade,
Alan Twigg, Ronsdale Press, paper, 253 pages.

Pressed to define Alan Twigg, the publisher of BC Bookworld, author of a baker's dozen of non-fiction books, and instigator of numerous literary projects, I would have to call him BC's cartographer laureate. Passionately, almost obsessively, Twigg has been drawing the map of our conglomerate culture while others pave over our short social history. It is to him we owe the diagrams that bring us from then to now, where our future depends upon our understanding of the past.

Thompson's Highway, which follows the route of settlement through the establishment of trade routes and trading posts by men and women of imagination and courage, is less about the fur trade than the collective personality of the questors who saw an opportunity for a better life in the west coast of North America when times were hard at home. By and large, these intrepid entrepreneurs were Scots or the children of Scots fathers and First Nations mothers, blending a pragmatic ethic that led to the largely peaceful settlement of the land west of the Rocky Mountains.

The Scots, Twigg points out in his early chapters, had much in common with First Nations, who had already negotiated trade routes all over the Pacific Northwest. Clannish people, they had a mutual understanding of the value of extended family and the importance of commerce in sustaining viable communities. Although there were notable exceptions to the pattern of non-violence, the Scots and First Nations spoke a common language. A good example of this unusual brotherhood is in the story of Chief Maquinna and his wily temporary prisoner, the blacksmith John Jewitt, who forged captor/captive bond.

It is interesting that during economic and political times in various parts of Europe, immigrants were attracted to landscapes similar to the ones they left behind. British Columbia was indeed New Caledonia, suited in many ways to the Scottish temperament. Where American settlement was marked by violence, particularly against First Nations, that of Canada was more like the silent invasion of Walmart in our contemporary suburbs. One day First Nations woke up and saw that all the teepees of Scotland had moved into the Rainforest; the next they noticed the fish stocks were disappearing. And so it goes. We are lucky to have writers like Alan Twigg reminding us to value our trespasses.

In his books about Cuba, the gentle island that George Bush has redefined as a spoke in his axis of evil, and British Columbia's literary history, Twigg has developed an omniscient narrative persona. He gives us the facts and anecdotal evidence. When he is not transparent he is a humanist. The more pragmatic pattern of settlement in Canada anticipated our fragile world reputation as peacemakers. Our fragility, of course, will be challenged by the world bullies who would have us betray our historical personality. Twigg does not articulate this modern dilemma, but it is the shadow that hovers over the pages of this book.

Organized as a useful reference book, Twigg provides an overview in the few short essays that comprise the first thirty pages of *Thompson's Highway*. Then he proceeds to the biographies of the twenty-two men and one woman he has chosen to represent the explorers, traders, artists and botanists who give a human face to the maps. In his appendix, he lists fifty forts in chronological order. These trading posts stretching from the Canadian North to California to Hawaii are a tribute to the unlimited imagination of optimistic adventurers. The fifteen page bibliography should keep any scholar engaged in a lifetime of reading and research.

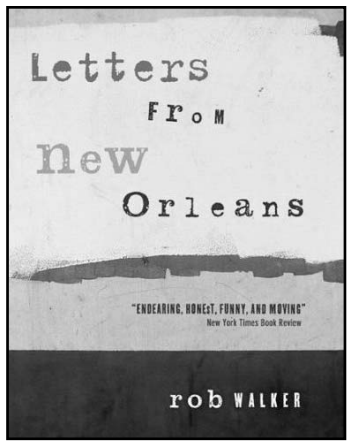
Twigg is careful and genial in his assertions. This book makes this reader want to engage him in further discussion about those who went before us, the foresight and lack of it that brought us to this critical point in history. We are left with the question, "What would these intelligent and brave individuals be doing now?"

Linda Rogers has in common with Alan Twigg the fortunate experience of having the legendary Harry Locke as a high school English teacher.

Healing New Orleans

Joseph Blake

Letters From New Orleans, Rob Walker (Garrett Country Press, 220 pages paperback, $12.95 U.S.)
New Orleans, Mon Amour, Andrei Codrescu (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 273 pages, $14 U.S.)
Triksta, Nik Cohn (Alfred A. Knopf, 211 pages hardbound, $32.95 Canadian)



If you know what it means to miss New Orleans, three recently published books by veteran journalists who fell under the city's spell offer healing news from the neighborhoods while shedding light on the post-Katrina cultural loss. Their love for New Orleans and what they discovered there, the city's seductive charms and soulful essence, is given three, distinct, passionate voices and views, three songs from the beloved Big Easy.

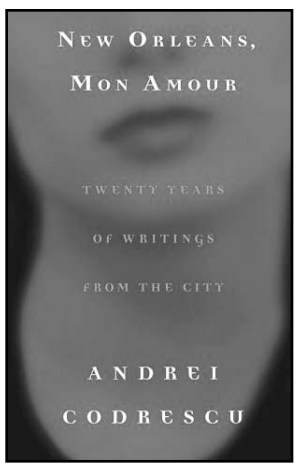
Rob Walker's *Letters From New Orleans* grew out of the New York Times columnist's three-year sojourn and the e-mail dispatches he sent to friends about his life in New Orleans. The musings began to morph into this book when Walker began to e-mail his writing to strangers too.

The journalist's pre-Katrina visions of Mardi Gras Indians, jazz funerals, and burning Christmas Eve effigies on the river levees have had gasoline poured on their poetic flames by the flood last August. It's a haunting, little volume, a celebration of a great city's past.

It doesn't take Walker's hip, understated prose long to insinuate itself inside your ear like a casual kiss. He hooked me with the book's opening *To New Orleans* essay with it's "Random bullets are a problem in New Orleans, especially on New Year's Eve. Apparently it's something of a tradition among certain locals to step outside and pop off a few rounds."

Walker fails to mention the "tradition's" central role in the development of American music. Louis Armstrong, arguably the most important jazz innovator in the music's first century, started playing horn in a New Orleans waif's home after being arrested for firing off a round at a celebratory New Year's Eve sky.

So, Walker's not a know-it-all jazz smarty-pants, and I like his breezy, journal-like approach and his white-hot, stranger in a strange land impressions of the exotic city. Later in the first essay, he captures the spirit of the Big Easy's food culture by describing a local bake shop's poundcake advertisement, a New Orleans institution that brags "It ain't called poundcake for nothing, 'cos there's a **pound** of butter in there, and further advertises that it might be good to Try It Fried!"



"There you go." Walker explains, as if unlocking the key to the city's pleasure seeking, artery clogging cuisine. "Fried Poundcake."

I loved Walker's self-effacing description of a New Orleans jazz funeral too.

"We never got much beyond a buoyant, rhythmic walk ourselves, but there was wild street dancing all round us, ebbing and flowing, hitting truly euphoric peaks. This was mid-July, brilliant sun and sweaty streets. The parade essentially became a mobile party, and stayed that way – a life-celebrating response to death that is the essence of a jazz funeral."

Was there ever a city more prepared for tragedy? Was death ever more welcome at the party?

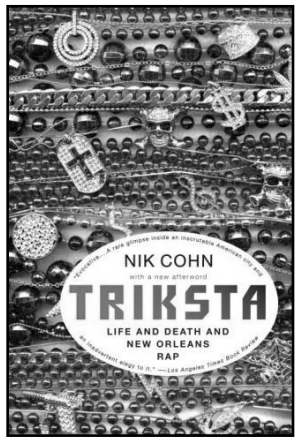
In *Masked* Walker concludes, "The general culture here seems proud and determined to resist change. Mardi Gras is merely the most conspicuous example both of an obsession with tradition and the city marketing itself as, above all else, a unique party environment. The relentless focus on tourism has amounted to New Orleans betting its future on its skill in presenting its past."

Andrei Codresucu's *New Orleans, Mon Amour* is subtitled *Twenty Years of Writing from the City*, and the Romanian-born poet's collected essays have a deeper, even more mysterious resonance than Walker's insightful, unpretentious musings. Probably best know for his smoke-cured radio messages on National Public Radio, Codrescu gets to New Orleans' essence: night, moon, river, water, woman. He's a wonderful writer.

"When writers come here they walk about smelling everything because New Orleans is, above all, a town where the heady scent of jasmine or sweet olive mingles with the cloying stink of sugar refineries and the musky smell of the Mississippi. It's an intoxicating brew of rotting and generating, a feeling of death and life simultaneously occurring and inextricably linked. It's a feeling only the rich music seeping all night out of the cracks of homes and rickety clubs can give you, a feeling that the mysteries of night could go on forever, and that there is little difference between life and death except poetry and song."

I'm sure Codrescu wrote that essay before Katrina. Now it is a sadder song, sadder than his essay *Death Was The Theme This Year* about an earlier, ultra-elegiac Mardi Gras year. In the Mark Twain-inspired *Roll On Big River!* he writes, "History is composed exclusively of the stories of our humbling. We watched the flood waters secretly hoping to drown."

Later in the essay Codrescu concludes, "As I flew over the shimmering water back to my city, which like Venice, Italy, is doomed and thus feels keenly its transitory beauty, I said a silent thank-you to the old writer. He'd been preparing me since childhood for life on the Mississippi."



Codrescu's life in New Orleans has provided him with deep insight into the city's "life-form, a dreamy, lazy, sentimental, musical one, prey to hallucinations (not visions), tolerant, indolent, and gifted at storytelling."

Later in his essay *My City My Wilderness* Codrescu adds, "We, and our ways are marked for elimination; there is no room in an efficient future for what we embody. Like the moon, we ought to be blown up, for interfering with the weather. This is a city of night, fog, and mud, the three elements against which all the might of America is mobilized."

Another haunting, pre-Katrina rant reads, "Being a New Orlean is getting to be tough. A polite people, the natives have always suffered the intrusion of tourism with honeyed, southern resentment. However, the combination of Big Gambling, Big Crime, Big Stars, and Big Entertainment, in short, Big Money, may prove too much. We aren't yet ready to desert our dreamy burg, but if the Disneyfying continues, we may have to retreat, leaving an empty shell. Or we can fight, after we finish this Mint Julep here."

One of my favourite chapters describes the "wealth of verbiage that flows like the Mississippi through the barrooms, saloons, music joints, cafes, and holes-in-the-wall." In another, Codrescu celebrates the "magical weave of African ritural and Christian superstition superimposing its geography on that of "real" New Orleans…the vibrational reality that lies like gossamer over its physical features and permeates even the most casual visitor with a strange sense of something invisible."

In another favourite passage he writes, "Everybody in New Orleans loves the food, the music, our sense of time (slow time) that's peculiar to us and to us only. There is a velvety sensuality here at the mouth of the Mississippi that you won't find anywhere else."

In a post-Katrina essay the author describes New Orleans as "Catholic, pagan, poor and bohemian." That just about captures the city's essence.

In Nik Cohn's *Triksta,* the veteran, British music journalist is almost swallowed whole by what the writer calls New Orleans' "sweet sickness." Subtitled *Life and Death and New Orleans Rap*, Cohn's book documents the aging, white hipster's journey through the city's murderous, black underclass and the world of Soulja Slim, Seventh Ward Snoop, Saddi Khali, Che, Choppa, DJ Chicken, and the rest of the city's strangely omnipresent yet invisible rap nation.

During my visits to the city I'd often hear Bounce and other forms of New Orleans rap booming from passing cars. The ghetto culture that spawned this earthy, outlaw music was washed away in the flood, and that gives Cohn's book added power and mystery too.

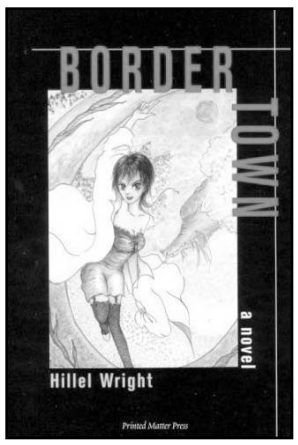
His tales of gun death slaughter and mean streets aren't fabricated. They pulse

(*continued on Page 26)*

J-Pop Animae's Sexy New Heroine?

Martin Van Woudenberg

Hillel Wright's latest novel, *Border Town*, is in almost equal parts a record of graphical satire and a twisted plot involving a Japanese manga artist's run in with the Imperial royal family. The narrative centers on Fumie Akahoshi who after marrying someone identified only as Old Man, lives with him and their son in Japan. While there, she leaves her career as a provider of massage and sexual release at a government-sponsored parlour and turns to anime and parody instead. She and Old Man both meet with considerable commercial and popular success, and Wright weaves in stories of their fictional creations along with real ones that anyone even casually into graphic novels, anime, or satire is sure to recognize. Fumie comes up with her own version of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, shares the pages of *Heavy Metal* magazine with big name artists, references Gary Larson's *Far Side*, works off of *Sailor Moon*, and so on. Her most famous creation however is Chibi Hanako-chan, a female with psychic powers who stumbles on a cover-up by the Imperial family. But depicting the perpetuation of war crimes, as seen in the sexual slavery of Chinese women by the Japanese army in World War II, proves a risky business. In short order her fiction brings down a yakuza hit upon her head, and Fumie is forced to flee for her life - a disgraced sumo turned hit-man in pursuit. The yakuza never fail to make good on a contract and Fumie's run may be very short indeed.



Border Town.
Hillel Wright. Printed Matter Press: Tokyo, 2006

Much of what makes *Border Town* effective as a novel is how Wright weaves in captivating back story and sexual encounters – all which lead to an extraordinarily twisted and improbable family tree. Virtually every character that intersects Fumie's life in any significant way is also in some way related. It takes a bit of mental re-organizing if one is to accept that a young woman can be the stepdaughter and granddaughter of the same man, but the narrative deftly slots it all in. At times the setup of the core plot appears to take a back seat to the author's genealogical maneuvering, but Wright pulls it off with such humour and panache that it is almost impossible not to be drawn along by it all. At 170 pages this is not a particularly long book, so there is therefore little chance of Wright overstaying his hospitality or taxing the reader's patience and tolerance. If anything, he ends up understaying it.

Because we follow much of Fumie's career over the course of the book, her coup de grace towards the Imperial family only brings down a death sentence on her within the last few chapters. The author demonstrates he is more than equal to the task of providing the resonance of a thriller as he is towards dry humour and satire. As Fumie runs for her life, desperately searching for the one man who can save her, the novel becomes as much a page turner as any reader could hope for. The novelist's tease, however, is not fully mastered. A stunning, unconventional resolution comes abruptly and this may be disappointing.

Boasting a great cast of characters, an interesting inventory of the world of graphic cultural satire, and a collection of brilliant illustrations by Taeko Onitsuka, *Border Town* is a novel infused with wit and politically-timely commentary. With such a deft lead-in, and the investment put into solidifying the distinctive characters, the narrative itself could easily have carried itself for another hundred pages. Still, for a writer that is always the lesser sin than staying twice as long as you are welcome. Thankfully, there is always room for a sequel… minus one very dead character.

Martin VanWoudenberg is an author and educator with three books to his credit. He has written several reviews for **PRRB**, *and currently resides in Langley, British Columbia with his wife and four children.*

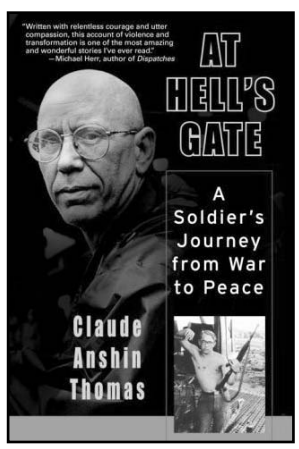
At Hell's Gate

James Eke

There are many similarities between the life of a monk and that of a soldier — discipline, service above self, a spartan lifestyle — but a pair of words separate the two. War and peace.

At Hell's Gate, by soldier turned Soto Zen Buddhist monk, Claude Anshin Thomas is a moving and at times painful account of what it takes to be both monk and soldier. Thomas's thought provoking memoir of his time at a U.S. soldier in the Vietnam war and later skirmishes in the battlefields of his soul after returning home lead us step by step to the calm serenity that he found and has now devoted his life to spreading through Zen Buddhism and his work as a peace activist.

Joining the Army at 17 and serving in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967 as a helicopter crew chief, Thomas was shot down five times and received the Purple Heart for wounds he sustained. This intense period of his life didn't last a long time but still managed to weave itself into his life to a degree that for the following two decades of his life Thomas was left grappling with the ghosts of things he'd seen, people he'd killed and his attempts to reintegrate into a regular life that most of us take for granted.



At Hell's Gate: a soldier's journey from war to peace
Shambhala, 2006

Through the book, Thomas makes it only too clear that the war he fought after leaving the skies and jungles of Vietnam was in many ways far more difficult than the nightmare he left behind in 1967. Post traumatic stress, suicidal tendencies and the downward spiral of addiction plagued Thomas for 20 years until he attended a seminar on meditation for Vietnam vets. It was there that he first had a full taste of Buddhism — a moment that would change him as much or perhaps more than his first steps as a soldier decades earlier.

Of interesting note is that despite long ago dehumanizing the Vietnamese people to help him deal with the deaths he himself had been responsible for, it was the Vietnamese monk and Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh who would open Thomas' heart and mind to the larger world that Buddhism would bring to him.

Eventually Thomas was ordained as a Soto Zen monk himself, deciding to devote his life to finding peaceful solutions to conflict and life as a mendicant — a homeless monk living through the generosity of others — to follow the footsteps of the Buddha.

Today Thomas spends his time talking to others about his experiences both in war and in his lasting inner peace, making pilgrimages to the world's war torn places such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, and the Middle East.

At Hell's Gate is a spiritual road story that carries the reader from a childhood of promise and desire to do what is right, through honour, horror, sacrifice and despair and on to self-discovery and redemption. *At Hell's Gate* is not only one soldier's tale of finding peace and a final healing but a memoir that hints of a better way — that points no fingers and places no blame except at our own ignorance.

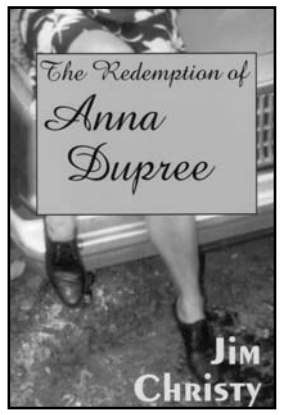
Thomas makes it all too clear that while we may believe at times that war must be fought, peace too is something worth fighting for, striving for and perhaps someday a state that we as a species will finally find ourselves evolving to.

James Eke is the author of the novel **Falling Backwards**. *He is a member of the Armed forces and currently stationed in New Brunswick, awaiting orders.*

The Redemption of Anna Dupree

Linda Rogers

The Redemption of Anna Dupree, Jim Christy, Ekstasis Editions, 2005, 211 pages, paper



Years ago, I saw a wheelchair coming down the only road on Savary Island. It was my friend, the painter Frankie Keefer, "eldernapped" from a chronic care hospital and returned to her beloved island home by a compassionate caregiver.

Eldernapping is a recognized phenomenon. Like toddlers confined to their playpens, or prisoners in cells, most care home residents resent their loss of freedom. After all, freedom is the ultimate goal and the meaning of death, which is supposed to release us from worry, pain and responsibility. Moviemaker Deepha Mehta has made elderly escape films. Novelist Margaret Lawrence gave Hagar her last dignity.

A newer genre is that which recognizes the sexual freedom of seniors, Paul Theroux's *The Stranger at the Palazzo D'Oro* being one notable example. There are some who opine that a little release would be far more effective in maintaining mental health in elderly patients than the drugs that are used to sedate them. Why not use *Le petit mort* as the curtain opener for the big one?

Film noir voyeur Jim Christie explores this theme in his recent novel, *The Redemption of Anna Dupree.* Former film actress and siren Anna Dupree lives in Valley View retirement home where Colin Childs, fresh from university, lands his first job. Troubled by a manipulative relationship with a fellow worker and attracted by the confabulations of Dupree, he agrees to run away with her when he is offered a vacation home in Mexico where he can recuperate from a peptic ulcer.

"You must never go down/ to the end of the town/ without first consulting me." A.A, Milne's James Morrison Dupree says to his legendary mother. Women like to undo their apron strings and travel too.

Christy may or may not have been aware of the new theories about bacterial ulcers when he wrote this book. He does not initially build a case for stress in this shy young man, but eventually it become apparent that he is indeed a worrier. Colin says yes when he should say no. When he says yes to Anna, they begin the comic picaresque that turns dangerous.

There are two categories of male writers of comedy that fascinate me. One is gay writers like Bill Richardson who would have us believe that life is indeed a cabaret for boys of his ilk, and the other is the machos like Christie who bluff their way through "feeling" situations with a laugh and a tough posture. They give off the one- liners as antidotes to every pain from rejection to aging, even though we all know that none of these things are in the least funny.

Laughter is good for us. It may be redemption. Anna tells a bewildered gas jockey to "keep his pecker up." That is a great line from an old lady, Bonnie to Colin's inexact Clyde; yet we all know the incongruous pair are headed for trouble.

"Colin, sitting down, felt a little guilty because, the situation having been reversed, his having to get Anna's attention that way, the waiter staring at her all bewildered, he would have immediately concluded Anna was exhibiting signs of approaching senility."

In his children's book, *Love You Forever*, children's writer Robert Munch reverses rolls. The story begins with the child in the mother's lap, but evolves with the mother becoming the child as her adult son rocks her to sleep during a bedtime story.

Somewhere in *The Redemption of Anna Dupree*, this process is aborted and Anna is given a second chance. The narcissistic actress, who has been a bad mother, is confronted with an opportunity to redeem herself as she and Colin race to the light.

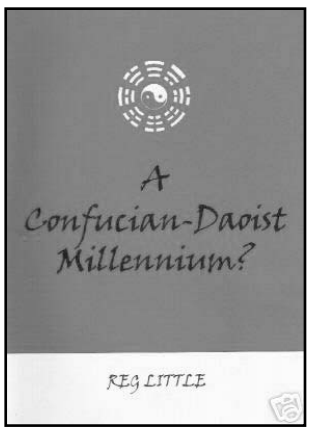
In his gritty novel about imprisonment of the spirit, Christy makes a good case for the entitlement of the elderly to dignity and to the love we all seek. Anna seizes her moment and she does indeed find redemption in a friendship that transcends the conventional wisdom. As she and the book grow in their humanity, Anna, moving through Colin, becomes her own mother, a luxury she never had in her previous incarnation.

Linda Rogers, author of **The Empress Letters**, *is enjoying her old age.*

Mulling Over Real Regime Change for the Global Age

Rosita Dellios

A Confucian-Daoist Millennium? is provocative. The title is based on the judgement that the 200 years of Anglo-American global dominance may be coming to an end. It uses this central idea to explore the forces that may restore East Asian communities to a central and leading global position over the long-term. Recent research suggests these Confucian-Daoist communities held such a role in trade and technology for several millennia until the early 19th Century.



A Confucian-Daoist Millennium?
Reg Little. Connor Court Pub.

From this perspective the book initially questions fundamental Western certainties deriving from Jerusalem, Athens and Rome before it advances evaluations of ten central Confucian-Daoist organising mythologies. It details ways in which these offer major challenges to contemporary Western understanding of the emerging global community.

The book illustrates that East Asian spirituality is largely free of the faith, dogma and prophets that have come to be associated with the Abrahamaic religions and that East Asian thought is suspicious of the West's reliance on abstract concepts and rational structures. Rather, attention is directed to a disciplined intuition focused on the natural world. This has traditionally been protective of human health, ecological balance and environmental sustainability, even in the midst of perhaps the world's most innovative civilization.

It will be interesting to see if the polluted and ecologically mismanaged areas of industrializing East Asia will be able to rediscover their traditions – with the assistance of technology - when it comes to the inevitable big clean-up. Following Western development models carries a heavy environmental price. China is a huge laboratory for finding out how to develop without sacrificing social harmony and the environment. Other developing countries will be watching Beijing's efforts at fostering what the leadership terms a 'harmonious society' while continuing rapid modernization. Much like a *yin-yang* balance, Beijing believes this can be done.

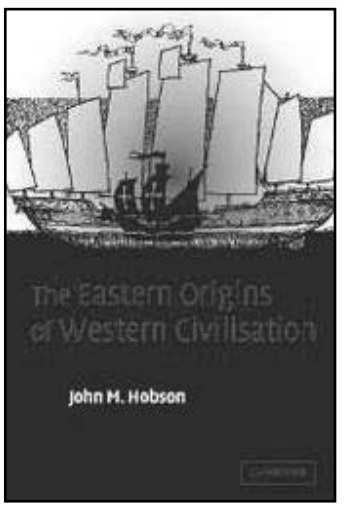
Just as Chinese philosophy seeks to bring together divergent forces, *A Confucian-Daoist Millennium?* juxtaposes seemingly unrelated issues to highlight some surprising patterns. These illustrate, for instance, contrasting and competing Eastern and Western approaches to science, medicine, food and health. Moreover, the book uses these perspectives to comment on the role of that remarkable institutional innovation - the limited liability corporation - in both building and diminishing Anglo-American power and influence.

Some of the book's contentions invite dispute, but readers will find themselves troubled by the evidence and references offered in their support. Whatever final evaluation is reached about particular topics it is unlikely that a serious reader will be untouched by the boldness, sweep and relevance of the treatment.

A Confucian-Daoist Millennium? is a challenging read, if for no other reason than that it presents an understanding of the world that disputes many comforting Western certainties. It ranges freely and selectively across four thousand years of Eastern and Western history, mythology and achievement in order to re-evaluate the contemporary relevance of a variety of perceived facts. Much may be unfamiliar to readers. While the book often prefers to offer thought provoking evidence rather than to draw clear conclusions, certain implications are hard to avoid.

Evidence is gathered from diverse perspectives to support the central contention that the East Asian region has qualities of civilization that give it serious competitive advantages in the contemporary global community. These qualities include apparently superior forms of administration, education, consciousness, change management, holistic science and practice in the maintenance of physical and spiritual health. Attention is drawn in passing to the many areas where Chinese scientific and technological innovation was hundreds, if not thousands, of years in advance of the West.

While much of this will surprise many readers, the book anticipates such a response. It points out at an early stage that John Hobson, in *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization,* has remarked that Anglo-American global influence benefited from a type of intellectual apartheid in extending and consolidating its power over the past two hundred years. This followed a period when Europe had borrowed extensively from the East, particularly China, in ways that were critical to the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions and the European Enlightenment.



It is not denied that this was necessary to advance with conviction the virtues first of Christianity, then of the Enlightenment, then of one favoured ideology or another and finally today of the Anglo-American universal values enshrined in the United Nations Charter. These all played important roles in constructing today's global order. At an early stage, however, attention is drawn to the Viking heritage of many Anglo-Americans, leaving the lingering question whether perhaps today's universal values are little more than a political convenience for the victors of the Second World War.

What are the implications for Australia and for Australian readers? If the book's logic is to be followed, most Australians today have been affected by intellectual apartheid and will therefore be surprised by many of the book's contentions, mainly because they have been educated to disparage such ideas. Readers will wish to make up their own minds on such matters. There is little question, however, that all Australians who seek to develop commercial interests anywhere in the East Asian region cannot afford to be too confident in any assumed cultural or political superiority vis-à-vis their host societies.

The purpose of the book's critique of a contemporary Anglo-American order is constructive. It seeks out an assessment of the contest in the global marketplace between what is advanced as a declining Anglo-American order on the one hand and an ascendant Confucian-Daoist region on the other. The decline-ascent demarcation may not be believed but it is also not implausible.

A major purpose of the book appears to be a wake-up call. It is to send a warning to Anglo-American political leaders, government officials and contemporary commentators that most are flying blind in a world where the fundamentals are changing rapidly.

Will readers agree with the central themes of the book? It will be instructive to follow the fate of this book and to identify the reasons that motivate both its champions and its detractors. If *A Confucian-Daoist Millennium?* provokes debate and new ways of thinking then it has already achieved a great deal.

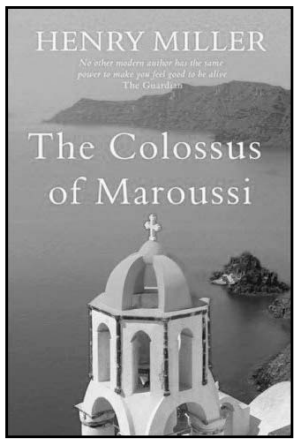
Rosita Dellios is Associate Professor of International Relations at Bond University in Australia.

On *The Collossus of Maroussi*

A meditation on the end of war

Andy Hoffman

In 1939, with fascism hanging as a rancid cloud over Paris, Henry Miller left that city where he had completed his first novels, *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn.* Exhausted from a decade of concentrated effort, he boarded a ship for Greece to meet his friend, the writer Lawrence Durrell. For Miller, forty-seven years old and needing a break from writing, Greece was to be a vacation, his intention to revitalize himself in preparation for the long journey to Tibet where he hoped to find a monastery to begin a "spiritual life". While he never made it to Tibet, Miller's time in Greece came to inspire his impressionistic travelogue *The Colossus of Maroussi,* a book Miller himself believed his best, and along with such classics as Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain,* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, may be considered one of the more remarkable mid-century chronicles of spiritual journey.

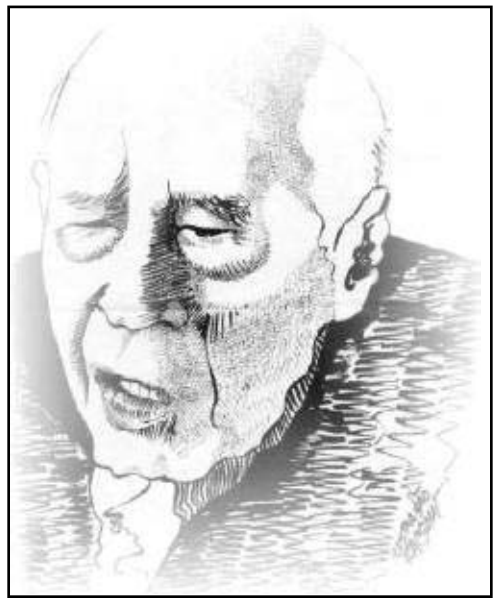


The Colossus of Maroussi,
Henry Miller
New Directions, 1941

By the summer of 1939 war had not yet been declared, but most of Europe could sense the tide of violence ready to sweep the continent. Greece was clearly feeling the tremors, and those wealthy enough escaped to America. For the majority who stayed behind, patriotism was the song of the day, and even Durrell spoke of joining the resistance to fight the Italian fascists in Albania. Miller wasn't convinced. He could understand a man killing in the throes of passion, blood burning with jealousy or vengeance, but couldn't begin to fathom the indiscriminate cold blooded killing required of war. For Miller, war was a deep failure of the human enterprise, the mechanization of our condition, and an act that invariably exposed a festering tumor at the heart of a dying world. As a sensualist, as one who prized raw experience and energetic person-to-person exchange, Miller saw the problem of war as one of abstraction. Only from a distance can we exult in the feverish rhetoric supporting such violence. Those who actually fight, who lose limbs and eyes, whose flesh is singed to the bone, who breathe toxic clouds of gas, whose bayonets spill the guts of strangers, do not glorify war. Miller could see this well enough in the ghostly stares of World War I veterans aimlessly wandering the streets of Paris, fighting stray dogs for scraps of meat tossed in the gutters, the warrior once glamorized now unsaddled, disarranged, forgotten. [1]

The obvious question at the time, what about the Nazis? What to do in the face of such insidiousness? No easy answers. Even Lewis Mumford, a prominent anti-militarist, advocated war as a means to stop Hitler, rallying Americans to "resist the fascist barbarian's dynamic will-to-destruction." [2] Miller wasn't persuaded: "Nothing can bring about a new or better world but our own desire for it," he said. "Let every man search his own heart." [3] And for Miller, the best way to go about the search was to enter a mythical landscape in the spirit of celebration, open to the infinite possibilities of any given moment, to what he would come to understand as a "starry light" rising from the center of the earth, a light that, once embodied, connects humanity to the cosmos.

As is the case with so many spiritual journeys, epiphany is at the heart of Miller's experience in Greece. It is said that spiritual epiphany—the manifestation of the divine—occurs most readily for those prepared to receive it. If this is true, Miller's preparation came by way of years of hunger (an extended fast, to be sure), a cleansing best portrayed in *Tropic of Cancer,* the fictional account of Miller's early days in Paris. In this autobiographical novel, the narrator, after days of hunger and at the point of absolute hopelessness, is pushed to the limits of his existence, finding himself "naked as a savage," born anew to the sensual earth, vulnerable and open to all its evolutionary processes. In this moment of abysmal emptiness, he defies the idea of an all-powerful deity pulling strings from behind the scenes, and in doing so, drops any pretense of commonplace morality, seeking instead to survive by any means possible. Profanation? Crime? Cannibalism? Nothing is simple. And rather than God being dead, as Nietzsche argued, Miller offered the more troubling view that God is "insufficient," [4] that God alone cannot sustain us. We need the earth as we need the sky; we are nourished by dripping springs just as we are inspired by the exhaustion of stars. Even Dante, who ends his journey in Heaven, knows to travel to the earth's molten center to enlarge his moral sympathies, the same center where Miller discovers "the sun in the form of a man crucified." [5] Ah, sweet middle earth burning, suffering is what we make of it, right? And is it too bold to suggest that the flow of earthly lava illuminates as bright as any galactic cluster?



Henry Miller

So it is that Miller, hungry and naked and open to earth, detaches from any idealistic notion of an orthodox God, and in doing so, accepts the world as it is, for what it is. In fact, Miller is always less concerned with the *God* of orthodoxy than with the orthodox *man*, the fellow who privileges such a God without question, who obeys the law however unjust a law might be, who refutes change for fear of losing what he doesn't own to begin with, bowing forever at the altar of capitalism, communism or the church. Miller understands that the orthodox man is a victim of his own fear, dominated by the will of others, a man who resigns his conscience to so many priests and kings, and finally, to the confines of the most rigid sectarianism. The orthodox man conforms every day of his life, in every decision, and in doing so, becomes a featureless cog in a machine lubricated by piety, authoritarianism, and war.

The opposite of orthodoxy is flow, and it is the flow of "rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences" that the Henry Miller of *Tropic of Cancer* seeks to participate in fully. The river, "like a great artery running through the human body," is the metaphor that carries Miller to the story's end. For Miller, the river is body, the river is movement, the river is time and history, the river is cleansing and, ultimately, the river meets the ocean where it dissolves and dies. If God is to be any part of the river, God must flow too, and as God is life God must also be death. Death, in fact, is the only real boundary of consequence. Whereas the orthodox God perpetuates repression and restraint at the promise of immortality, God reconstituted as the river becomes life on earth itself, a flow out of which rises light and dark, earth and sky, despair and hope, humility and defiance. That is, God is the force and friction of tensions, so many dangerous boulders in a stream that wake us to our certain dissolution, a recognition that, when taken to heart and carried on the shoulder, teaches us to live more abundantly and to relish each moment as if it were our last. And as Miller steps onto Greek soil, unencumbered by possessions, regret, or malice, he is nothing if not filled with the bounty of a man seeking abundance in the grace of a moment. And such is the nature of the epiphanies that mark his trail as he makes his way from one end of Greece to the other and back again.

[1] From the early 40s on, much of Miller's writing addresses in one way or another the mechanization of humanity and war. See *Remember to Remember* (1947) and the three volumes that make up *The Rosy Crucifixion* for several direct references.

[2] Lewis Mumford, *Men Must Act*, Harcourt Brace, l939. p 172. In *The Myth of the Machine*: *Technics and Human Development* (1966) Mumford warns of the dehumanizing effect of technology, arguing, "Capitalism, mining, militarism, and mechanization—along with megalomania—went hand in hand." Mumford continued his argument against mechanization in the second volume, *The Pentagon of Power,* a book popularized in the early 70s as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and one that landed in my mother's bookshelf and happily passed along to me.

[3] *The Colossus of Maroussi*, New Directions, 1941, p. 83.

[4] *Tropic of Cancer*, Grove Press, 1961. pp. 98-99.

[5] *Colossus,* p. 57.

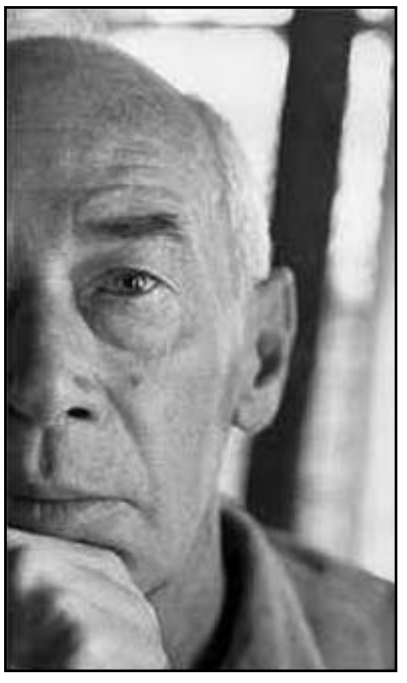
The occurrence of epiphany in the traditional story, whether revealed in a film, novel, memoir, opera, or in the earnest dirge of a friend, is usually located near the peak of the narrative in close proximity to the story's climax. Such an arc is often created by a series of increasingly dramatic events rising to a singular moment of understanding or perfection, or for the spiritualist, a moment where eternity intersects with time. The biblical story of Christ follows such a line. Of course, this structure mimics a common definition of history as the struggle of opposing forces powerful enough to influence events, a struggle which leads humankind—one baptism, one confession, one battle, one war at a time—through progressive stages toward a particular goal, usually apocalypse or utopia, Augustine or Marx, take your pick. If Nietzsche's 19th century challenge to such a view of history wasn't convincing enough, humanity was given World War I, and with millions dead and no one knowing exactly why, even the most zealous defender of human progress had to give pause.[6] As that conflict plodded on, such avant-garde movements as Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism slipped in through the cracks. Miller was heavily affected by such waves, just as he was by Joyce, Proust, Rimbaud, Celiné, and Zen Buddhism. Oswald Spengler, who in *Decline of the West* (1918) redefined history as a steady process of decay, made an important impact.[7] And perhaps most influential were Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau, all of whom challenged the orthodox thinking of their time, allowing that spiritual liberation came not by following strict puritanical codes but by means of immediate—and often spontaneous—contact with the flesh and swamp of mongrel earth.

Rather than a journey leading to a single climatic revelation, Henry Miller's in *The Colossus of Maroussi* is structured by a series of epiphanies that leave him on the steps of revolution, moving as a "citizen of the world… dedicated to the recovery of the divinity of man." The epiphanies manifest as a flow of lyrical ramblings, rising from Miller's experiences in such mythic spots as Athens, Eleusis, Poros, Epidaurus, Hydra, Mycenae, Knossus, and Phaestos. Each stop along the way has an accompanying revelation, all flooded with light. In Athens, the birthing place of democracy and Miller's launching and landing point, light appears in the form of Katsimbalis, the "colossus" of the story. Katsimbalis, so much like Kazantzakis's Zorba, is a great talker, eater, and drinker, a man who doesn't believe in moderation of any kind, embodying a world of sensual delight. Katsimbalis serves as one who affects life without imposing his authority upon it, an emancipated being who transforms the picking of a roadside flower into a "great event" simply by infusing the gesture with "all that he thought and felt about flowers, which is like saying—a universe." For Miller, to pick a flower is to pick a flower; the universe passes through all without regard for definitions. And just as life is movement, Miller also understands there is no teleology to the drift, nowhere we need to get to, no goal. "Voyages are accomplished inwardly," he says, "and the most hazardous ones, needless to say, are made without moving from the spot."[8]

From Athens Miller makes his way to Eleusis, seat of the cult of Demeter, the Great Mother Goddess and Mother of the Corn. "This is not a Christian highway," he says, entering the city. "There is no suffering, no martyrdom, no flagellation of the flesh connected with this processional artery." In Eleusis Miller is penetrated by the light of mystery, a light that "makes one naked, exposed, isolated in a metaphysical bliss which makes everything clear without being known." He is cleansed by light flowing through his naked body, stripping him of the "barnacles which have accumulated from centuries of lying in stagnant waters," or what he calls "Christian humbug."[9] It is in this brightened state he realizes "there is no salvation in becoming adapted to a world which is crazy," which is to say, the world preparing for war.

Juxtaposed with the naked and crazy of Eleusis is the light of the "hushed still world" of Epidaurus, the kind of world "man will inherit when he ceases to indulge in murder and thievery." In this quietness Miller discovers a deep peace, and in peace, surrender. To surrender is to let go of clinging of any kind, and especially "clinging to God," because "God long ago abandoned us in order that we might realize the joy of attaining godhood through our own efforts." Those who cling to God cling to war. It is only when we let go of our clinging, of our will to possess and be possessed, we enter into a "new life" defined only by ceaseless flow where self-consciousness dissipates, where the borders of Buddha and Christ, heaven and hell, earth and sky disappear. By surrendering we become indifferent, enter a "continuity of existence,"[10] a primordial soup that links us to everything that breathes and, ultimately, to everything that doesn't.

Following Epidaurus, Miller meets up with Katsimbalis in Mycenae where the two men make their way to Agamemnon's tomb. From the trail Miller sights a shepherd and his flock on the mountainside. The shepherd is as old and enduring as the hills, and for Miller, the manifestation of the earth song that has risen through humanity from the beginning. It is at Mycenae, upon crossing the bridge above Clytemnestra's grave, that Miller, so inspired, falls into a gap of time, a break where he experiences the world as "pure spirit." Miller understands such a spot to be a kind of *axis mundi*, a point at which the entire world fans out in all directions. It is in this dazzling lapse of borders, in this high tide of eternity, that Miller gains insight on the murder, war and human sacrifice ushered into the world by Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, and leader of the Greeks at the siege of Troy. Before Agamemnon, Miller historicizes, "there were gods who roamed everywhere, men like us in form and substance, but free, electrically free." However, upon the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia to Diana, the Trojan War, and the murder of Agamemnon by his wife, Clytemnestra, the gods deserted the world, taking with them the secret to freedom and eternity. Miller concludes that the secret of the gods can be ours, but only "w*hen we cease to murder*" [italics his].[11]



Just as he discovered in Eleusis and Epidaurus, Miller comes to understand at Mycenae that no amount of searching will bring us closer to God, that indeed paradise resides within, and that war—whether it be the external condition of institutionalized violence, or the self-loathing created by orthodox morality—will forever keep us from experiencing the most fertile ground, that is, the earth below our feet so nourished by the bones of our ancestors, mythic or otherwise.

After similar epiphanies in places like Knossus and Phaestos, Miller returns to Athens where he visits an Armenian soothsayer who lives in the most destitute part of the city, noting that in the "midst of the most terrible poverty and suffering there nevertheless emanated a glow which was holy."[12] Only in sorrow and suffering, Miller comes to believe, "does man draw close to his fellow man; only then, it seems, does his life become beautiful." And so the soothsayer, beautiful as beautiful can be, reads Miller's life, wakes him to the fact that he has created many enemies from his writing, and caused much harm and suffering to others because of it. Miller also learns that he has all the signs of divinity about him, and that his feet are chained to the earth. The soothsayer sees Miller living a charmed life and tells him that if he never gives up he will be saved. Also, no matter how desperate Miller's needs become, he will always have friends. The soothsayer tells Miller to have no misgivings about the future. In the dark days to come, forget about money, for money will do nothing to protect against the iniquities of the world.[13]

[6] Nietzsche's *eternal recurrence* was not the first idea to challenge apocalyptic and utopian readings of history, only the most influential. See R.A. Herrera's Reasons for Our Rhymes (2001) and Eric Voegelin's excellent *Anamnesis* (1978) for cogent summaries on the philosophy of history. For the record, philosophy of history is not commonly associated with narrative structure however evident the parallels appear to me.

[7] Miller, Henry. *The Books of My Life*, New Directions, 1969, pp. 124-25.

[8] *Colossus* pp. 238-41.

[9] Ibid, p. 45. While Miller had great respect for Christ, he saw little good in orthodox Christianity. "By emphasizing the soulful qualities of man Christianity succeeded only in disembodying man," he wrote later in *Colossus*. For Miller, the key to happiness is the incarnation of spirit into flesh, which is radically opposed to the orthodox notion of separation of body and spirit. No doubt, there is a long tradition of Christians who see Christ as manifesting in the human heart, and who, in turn, stand for non-violence and peace. Bless the Christians who walk with an open heart. May we gather at the river.

[10] The term "continuity of existence" comes from Georges Bataille's *Erotism* (1957). While I don't know that Miller and Bataille ever met, or were even aware of the other's work, they shared similar thinking in regard to the body being primary to mystical experience.

[11] *Colossus*, pp. 91-5.

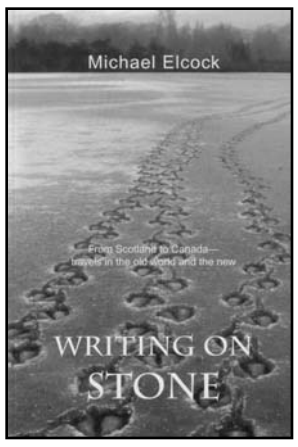
[12] It's interesting to note that Miller's circle back to Athens and to a place that is "holy"echoes Thoreau's return from his journey in his essay "Walking," where he ends famously, "So we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he had done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bankside in autumn."

[13] *Colossus*, pp. 200-7.

(*continued on Page 19)*

Writing on Stone

Linda Rogers



Writing on Stone, from Scotland to Canada - travels in the old world and the new, Michael Elcock, Oolichan Books, paper, 295 pages

Michael Elcock's record of his life's journey from Scotland to Canada is his second mémoire. The first *A Perfectly Beautiful Place*, describing his travels in Europe, might have been called, *A Perfectly Beautiful Book,* because Elcock has the gift of listening and leaving out ego, avoiding the lethally boring mind-hold traps in what can be a very self-absorbed literary form.

This engaging man writes engaging books. His sympathetic observations of sometimes horrible realities make balanced storytelling. Elcock's voice, even when ironic, is gentle. He shoes us how civilized men and women survive experiences like dislocation, war, and the dehumanization of incarceration. Put in perspective, his every anecdote is a step in the progression toward understanding who we are and how we relate to one another. The stories he inscribes on stepping stones from past to present are songlines that lead us in and out of the wilderness of civilization.

Elcock left Scotland in the early seventies for the same reason as the generations before him. There simply was not enough work for bright and energetic young people in their small island home. Scotland loses her children because she raises them well. The greatest Scottish export has been wisdom, as her well-schooled young people leave to make their lives elsewhere.

The West Coast of Canada was a natural choice for the memoirist. British Columbia's social and political geography resembled home. In return for opportunity, Elcock has given back. In politics, education and art, he has been a contributor. This book is part of that contribution.

When our ancestors settled in Canada, there was precious little time and opportunity to record the daily travails of adapting to life in the wilderness. Apart from exceptional diarists and letter writers like Susannah Moodie, there is a dearth of evidence of their struggle. Somehow everything changes and nothing changes. The lonely and homesick twenty-one year old Elcock is in many respects no different from the men who came before him. As he moves, dazed and confused, through the opening chapters of his life in Canada, we experience the lives of other young people who left their familial comfort and identity behind to reinvent themselves in the new world. In the woods and out on the water in brutal cold, we are there, as thirsty as the author for the ameliorating warmth of a glass of whiskey.

We are privileged to experience his uncertainties and fears vicariously in the selected records (from the Italian *ricordi* or memory) of hard times softened by distance. Most of all, Elcock describes the evolution of a pluralistic society, where old grudges are forgiven in the face of new challenges.

"No matter what they'd done in the past they were all Canadians now - as much as I was. I'd worked at the pulp mill with a Japanese student who lived in the same village as I did. I had no idea what his parents had done in the war. One of my friends had a German father. In this country it didn't seem to matter."

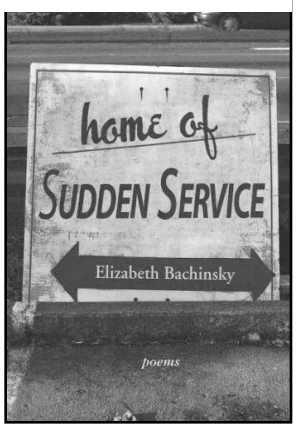
As Elock's quest takes him to the Sweet Grass Hills that border Montana and Alberta, he studies the diaries of a newly discovered relative, James Finlayson, one of the first members of the first Royal Canadian Mounted Police force. In his record of determination and hardship, James begins the story that ends with his relative standing by Alberta's Milk River, half a world away from the Scottish River Tweed, musing like St. Exupery's fox that, "What is essential is invisible to the naked eye." The Whitecomers have not been kind to the new world. Could we not have absorbed the wisdom of the First People who lived and worked with this landscape rather than against it.

"It's clear to me as I stand on these weathered sandstone cliffs, that the greatest questions we have are not only about survival and sustenance: that they cannot just be wrapped up neat and tidy, and finished with. They're not just about roots either, because we all inhabit this planet together."

Linda Rogers is the granddaughter of James Ormonde Hall, who left Selkirk , Scotland in the first depression of the Twentieth Century, contracted tuberculosis fighting for the Seaforth Highlanders in WW1, and sang in the trenches during the famous Christmas armistice.

Home of Sudden Service

Martin Van Woudenberg



Home of Sudden Service.
Elizabeth Bachinsky, Nightwood
paper, 78 pages

Elizabeth Bachinsky's new collection of poetry, *Home of Sudden Service*, is a lot like a tub of butter with a significant air bubble in the center – there is a decent amount of rich substance here, but the core feels essentially hollow. Bachinsky has a deliberate 'in your face' style of writing that 'good girls' are not known for, and she will likely get mileage out of her unabashed and frequent use of words like "cock," "fuck," and "pussy." Out of the roughly fifty poems or poem sections in the collection, just under half toss in these words with reckless, and often pointless, abandon. While poets such as Charles Bukowski and Allen Ginsberg never shied away from such language, one has to wonder how much of this style of poetry has held up under time and still remains visible. Certainly, Ginsberg was not being shocking merely for its own sake, but in this poet's case the effect comes off as a gangsta rapper trying hard to be hip. In reality, shocking language just is not all that shocking anymore, and the dissonance such writing once produced in the reader now comes across as button pushing.

The overarching theme of the book itself is mostly small-town, low income, waitresses, MacJobs, and cheap drunks territory. It is fringe town Canada, both on the prairies and down the West Coast, but really could be just about anywhere. Here young girls give head to pimple-faced boys in the back seats of old cars, and flash their breasts at truckers while driving down the highway. Here also, they live, fight, reflect, grow, fail, and die – and it is when Bachinsky looks at existence above the belt buckle that her work begins to come alive with far more than just 20-something sexual angst. Poems such as "Pack," "Night Voices," "Wild Grass," and the entire subsection entitled "Drive," reveal some of this new poet's promise. "Drive," a reflection on the road trip of two sisters across Canada and towards a long-term separation is filled with keen observation and meditation. Her technical prowess also begins to shine through here, and the words provide the right mixture of imagery, rhythm, and power to stay with you after the book is set aside.

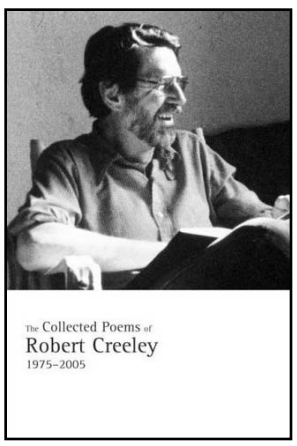
This plucky young poet is attracting attention from the literary community and there is evidence in the collection that it's warranted. However much of *Home of Sudden Service* leaves this reviewer wondering if somehow the book's genius is too well hidden, or whether this publication is primarily the result of being in the right place at the right time, with the right sort of people. Still, it feels like the efforts of a poet trying to carve out a terrain for herself, and Bachinsky should be applauded for the effort. However, her subsequent work will inevitably be measured by how far she evolves beyond the fixation on youthful fleshiness and small town semi-listless dissatisfaction. As it stands, *Home of Sudden Service* largely provides the unpleasant sensation that there is an air pocket where its heart should be. There is value here, but only so long as you skim around the edges.

Martin VanWoudenberg is an author and educator with three books to his credit. He has written several reviews for PRRB*, and currently resides in Langley, British Columbia with his wife and four children.*

Creeley Collected

Mike Doyle

Although accurate, this book's title is slightly misleading. It covers only the last half of Creeley's life as a poet. An earlier volume, *The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley 1945 -1975* (California, 1982) covers the first half. My hope is that, in time, California will issue the work as a two-volume set.

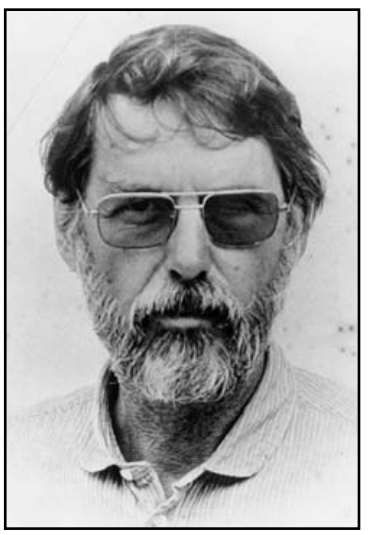


The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley 1975 -2005
Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006

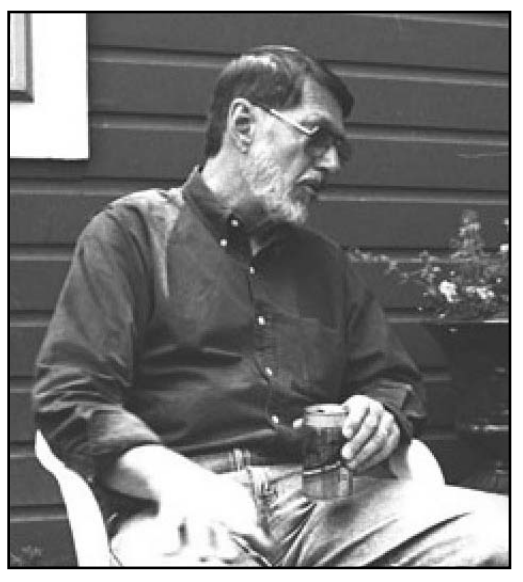
Easy enough to see the influence of William Carlos Williams in Creeley's first important collection, *For Love* (1962). That aside, his original project seems to have been the finding of a voice, or more precisely a personal rhythm, a signature, as it happens one guided through a self-defining diffidence, - "we live as we can, each day another". Early on, Creeley's voice was turned in on itself. "One is/ too lonely", says the voice in "The Riddle," "one wants/ to stop there, at the edge of//conception".

In his mid-twenties he wrote: "a man and his objects must both be present in [the poem]", and: "things have to come in before they can go out" (CE, 464) In the same source, he states "the wish to transmit, free of imprecise 'feeling.'" Except in playful word game pieces, his work from start to finish is permeated with feeling, and a strong desire not to falsify it. Hence his characteristic voice, tentative, groping, antic at times, suddenly vehement. He prefers enactment over description. Hence, in many poems the voice is there, in the midst of things, but the scene is not. In 1960, he declared: "I care what the poem says, only as a poem - I am no longer interested in the exterior attitude to which the poem may well point, as a signboard" (CE, 477). He sees "the poem" as his way of being in the world, something engaged in for its own sake. When true to himself, and thus his art, this engagement is, inescapably, with feeling. Further, he follows Louis Zukofsky (more so in the later phases of this volume than earlier) in seeing the range of poetry as "lower limit speech, upper limit music". Of course, in speech you are speaking to someone and, by inference, speaking about something, but for Creeley, as for Zukofsky before him, this referential function is often secondary. Thus some early commentators found his work's mise en scene skimpy

Back in the '60s, a critic (I forget his name) declared, "There are two things to be said about Creeley'poems: they are short; they are not short enough." Zukofsky, who [2] more and more would become Creeley's touchstone, or reference point, had long ago instructed: "Don't write, telegraph!" When we turn from the Creeley collections *For Love* (1962) and *Words* (1967) and lunge forward, so to speak, to the volume under consideration, I find myself simultaneously back in familiar territory and adrift in a strange land. The first section, "Hello: A Journal, February 29 - May 3, 1976", opens with a sequence "Wellington, New Zealand". Here I must briefly digress. Wellington is precisely the landfall I had made twenty-five years earlier, almost to the day, the place where I began my true life as a poet, just as tentatively as Creeley seems to have done, but in a greater muddle. "Wellington, New Zealand" (the poem) offers itself as minimalist drama. The speaker looks around, notes the scene; comes back next day. Looks around. "Where's the world/one wants" (no question mark.) A few lines on: "Trees want/ to be still?/ Winds/ won't let them?" So this is Wellington? A clue: Wellington's ubiquitous epithet is "windy Wellington", whether the trees want it or not. This sequence goes through 85 pages, nine countries. For the first fifty pages I know the places and know (or know of) some of the people. There is a good deal of terse description, mostly generic. At one point the poet Bill Manhire's wife emerges at the airport in Wellington and thus we learn that Creeley has Glaswegian forebears. At another point, Dunedin (city) becomes a (musical) refrain. Long ago, a critic (perhaps the one I quoted above) characterized Creeley's as "a poetry without any of the axiological signs which serve to hold it in the mind." At this point, nearly fifty years after first finding his work, I still cherish much of it, but notwithstanding the fact that Wellington, and New Zealand in general, are areas of painful love for me, I found little in this sequence. There are moments to which a poet like Frank O'Hara, say, might have given a vivid urgency, but Creeley's terse notations choke him off. For me, at least, the prose addendum on p91 offers more. Flash forward, though, to late in this book, "The Dogs of Auckland" (CP 502-509) you find some remarkable features: an uncharacteristic use of the long line, a sense of a country lived in, a people lived among, a celebration of friends, in contrast to remembering the beginning, when "I set to each morning …/ to learn "New Zealand…as if it were a book…"



In 1967-68 I was at Yale working on a study of Williams's poetry, which from time to time took me to SUNY Buffalo, where Creeley was teaching. I relished his poems, got to know him a bit, at one time stayed with him and (as Americans say, his "then wife") [3]Bobbie for a long weekend. I enjoyed not only the poems, but his distinctive syntax and voice in prose and speech. Last time I saw him, in the early "70s, we were at a conference on Imagism at East Lansing, went to one or two things together, including a wind-up party at the home of poet and scholar Jerry Mazzaro. Also present: James Wright, Louis Simpson. I had a conversation with Wright, each appreciating the fine New Zealand poet, James K. Baxter, a friend and associate of mine, recently dead. Bob, typically, was broody, taken up with Louis Simpson, who he thought had snubbed him. It was not long after this that he made his first connection with New Zealand, where as far as I can gather he lived for most of the years covered by this volume. Ironically, this was when I lost touch with him (for "ideological" reasons not relevant here.).



The early critical take on Creeley, when it was negative, said his work was without images, or that the images were pulverized, without rhyme [except parodistic], without constants in its rhythmic behaviour, but it may be retorted that, like Whitman, and Williams (or, for that matter, Pound) Creeley was into creating his own aesthetic. A respected critic, M. L. Rosenthal, in *The New Poets* (1967), felt that this search of Creeley's for a new rhythm and a new persona too often made for a "blocking presence." Rosenthal is not ungenerous to Creeley's talent, rating some of his work, "lovely or touching or at least alive with wit." More to the point, he observes: "Its essential rhythm is of self-ironic reverie, momentarily self-forgetting and then catching itself up short." This points forward to much in the later work where the poem's speaker is in the midst of a little drama with himself, an unspecified character who tends to exude self-deprecation, loneliness, bemusement, tentativeness. For all his inwardness, there is much gesturing outward, to the world at large, though the point-

(*continued on Page 25)*

100 Aspects of the Moon

Apis Teicher

100 Aspects of the Moon, by Leza Lowitz calls forth a certain intoxicating magic, freely peppered with kabbalistic undertones and delicately crafted impressions of Japanese culture.

100 Aspects of the Moon.
Leza Lowitz.
Printed Matter. Tokyo.

Lowitz's choice to name her book after *Ukiyo-e* artist Yoshitoshi Tsukioka's own rendition of life under the light of the moon is anything but haphazard. Her work, like Yoshitoshi's *ukiyo-e,* reflects a series of vignettes of life as they might be seen in the more mercurial light of the moon. Although Lowitz is certainly not the first artist to feel compelled to pay homage to the dark beauty and sheer raw power of the moon, her work is masterfully exquisite. Interwoven with equal grace are glimpses of old shattered worlds in pogroms, of wars waged, enemies made and victims sacrificed. Lowitz moves with equal ease between the cultural memory of Judaism and that of Japan. Poems such as her "Eight Springs/ Hachi no Yu" conjured forth in modern day Hakone, "Percy's Love" that aches of longing and betrayal on the meeting of two races and cultures—or the more modern "the Spirit of America" which is another poignant juxtaposition of man's abuse recalls the Japanese tale of the bird woman, trapped when a man stole her mantle and forced her to be bound to him, echo loudly in the book.

While throughout the poems there are the echoes of nostalgia, this is weighed against a serious re-examination of events and tragedy. While Lowitz doesn't see fit to apportion blame – we are equally sympathetic to her Jewish immigrant mother as to the boy scout that sets their home on fire in "The Fire"- she gives voice to the universal victims of pain and hatred. Likewise, in her "Sacrifice Stone", crafted at the Himeyuri Peace Museum in Okinawa – the site where many school age girls were sacrificed in a zeal of nationalism- we identify both with the girl in the throes of agony and with the anonymous tormentor/savior. Still, *100 Aspects of the Moon* is not necessarily about remembering or judging, but more about the awareness of being, the joyous delight of existing.

> *Sometimes you lie in bed, terrified of your life./ Sometimes you laugh at the privilege of waking. ("Waiting")*

One aspect of Lowitz's work that stands out as a clear theme throughout the poems is the sheer power of the femininity. In her foreword she associates this with the title of her book and with much of the introspective exploration found within her words; of particular impact is the elegant weaving of disparate threads – the joining of generations, cultures, to find that which remains the unalterable core and strength. Here, women can find a commonality, become stronger in that glimpse of sisterhood. The light of the moon too, is more forgiving – under it the scrutiny is gentler and more genuine.

> *One breast to give life, the other taken away…/its almost beautiful, that dark balance,/and the naked way she reveals herself to us-. ("Amazons")*

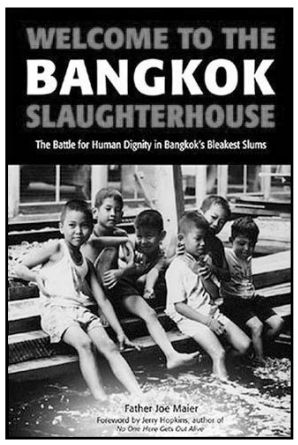
There is also the formidable septuagenarian in "Child of the Moon", living her life as she sees fit – defiant of tradition while immersed in it, or her "Lilith", a fitting

(*continued on Page 23)*

Surviving in Bangkok

Patrick Carolan

The people of Bangkok's notorious Klong Toey slum exist in an isolated world held in infamy by the city's more respectable inhabitants. Established by squatters half a century ago, its people live on the margins of the city's port and animal slaughtering area and wage a constant battle for the survival of their semi-legal community. In *Slaughterhouse: True Stories from Bangkok's Klong Toey Slum*, Fr. Joe Maier, a Catholic priest who has lived with Bangkok's most destitute for the last 35 years, provides a heartrending glimpse into the brutal reality that is life in the developing world's slums. Through the tales of its embattled residents Maier reveals a harsh world centred on one premise: survival.



Slaughterhouse: True Stories from Bangkok's Klong Toey Slum.
Fr. Joe Maier.
Human Development Foundation.

The subjects of Maier's book are those he calls the everyday heroes—the men, women and children who soldier through the worst abuses of urban poverty. But mostly they are the children. He presents us with Ploey, a brilliant twelve-year-old girl who at the age of six was pulled from school and recruited by her unscrupulous drug-dealing parents to walk amphetamine pills through Klong Toey's festering alleys. Her talent made her a legend until her relatives were caught and put behind bars. She now finds some measure of safety within the walls of Maier's Mercy Centre. This is a happy story when contrasted with that of Dtey, Tammy and a throng of other children who laugh and fight as hard as they can, but are ultimately tragic as they were born with AIDS and will not live past the age of 12. There are also tales of triumph, such as "Aftermath," which recounts the rebuilding of a section of the ghetto following a massive fire. Against the protests and threats of the government and police, this massive feat is accomplished in one remarkable night though the spirit of cooperation and unity fostered by a tight knit community in a time of crisis.

The writing of *Slaughter House* is direct and punchy. Its colloquial newspaper style helps capture the wild, unyielding, and ultimately human nature of Maier's world. Perhaps its most distinguishing feature is the lack of a happy storybook ending. One reads on in hopes that one of the characters encountered will make it, that they will find justice for the rape and violence or escape the slum. But these vindications are few and far between. In recounting Ploey's story in "Horse Walker," which ends with her back in school and cared for, Maier ominously notes that we have no idea what will happen when her mother is released from prison. But this creates the desired effect: it reminds us that these people are still in the slum and there is nothing to romanticize. While there is hope, a little kindness and an awful lot of humanity, the children are still hungry, and more often than not their parents are "not nice." Grandpa is an incestuous pedophile and mother pimps her daughter for gambling money. These are the harsh realities of Klong Toey. Regardless, Maier, whose work has made him a legend in Bangkok says, "we go on—we survive."

In the end, *Slaughterhouse* raises an interesting issue. In a profoundly Buddhist society like Thailand, why does it take a foreign priest to alleviate the sorrow, especially in a time when religion has become so unpopular? And why does the government fight against the acquisition of slum dwellers' rights despite giving de facto status by providing compensation to those whose homes were destroyed by the fire of "Aftermath"? Through examining the world's most vulnerable, these inconsistencies in *The Slaughter House* help reveal the basic humanity and inhumanity hidden in all of us, exposing the prejudice and hypocrisy the comfortable can still harbour

Patrick Carolan studies psychology at UBC.

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Author Profiles

CARLA FUNK Having grown up in a world of logging trucks, Mennonites, storytellers and rural realism, Carla Funk turned to poetry as a place to set down the images of her upbringing. Her first poetry collection, *Blessing the Bones into Light* came out with Coteau Books in 1999. Her third collection, *The Sewing Room,* was published in December 2006 by Turnstone Press. In June 2006, Carla was appointed Victoria s inaugural Poet Laureate. She teaches in UVic s Department of Writing.

TIFFANY STONE Tiffany s first collection of humorous verse, *Floyd the Flamingo and his flock of friends* (Tradewind Books, 2004), received critical acclaim from, among others, Helen Norrie of the Winnipeg Free Press who declared Stone has a delightful sense of the ridiculous . Her new book of poetry, *Baad Animals*, is full of rhymes about sheep that steal and other naughty creatures. Visit her online at www.tiffanystone.ca.

TREVOR CAROLAN Trevor Carolan was born in Yorkshire. He studied with Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, served as literary coordinator for the XV Olympic Winter Games, and has published works of fiction, memoir, poetry, translation, and anthologies. A contributor to *Shambhala Sun, The Bloomsbury Review, Choice, Nguoi Viet*, and *Kyoto Journal,* he travels widely in Asia and is research associate with the David See-Chai Lam Center for International Communications at Simon Fraser University. Currently, he teaches English at University College of the Fraser Valley near Vancouver. He is also affiliated with the Department of International Relations at Bond University, Queensland, Australia.

CLAIRE PAULETTE TURCOTTE Claire is a writer, artist and dreamworker. She founded the Corinne Centre in Peterborough where she organized children s programs and apprenticeships and taught courses in dreamwork and creativity. More recently, she has opened The Centre for Dream Research and Imaginal Studies to the community www.cdris.org. Claire launched her book *The Woman Who Could See in All Directions* with an art exhibition at the VAC and is presently seeking a publisher for the companion reader/workbook, *The Story Crouching Beneath*.

CONNIE FREY, PH.D. Connie Frey is a creativity coach and creator of the FAME Cards, 40 interactive creativity prompts. She created the FAME Cards to help artists bring together their analytical, sensory and imaginative capacities. Her coaching clients have called her a creativity midwife, and flow facilitator . Visit www.CreativityCoaching.ca, www.FameCards.ca.

JANET ROGERS A Mohawk writer from the Six Nations territory in southern Ontario, Janet Rogers began her creative career as a visual artist, and then began writing in 1996. Her literary passions are her native heritage, feminism, human love, sexuality and spirit. During a residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts, she began recording her poetry and has been collaborating with musicians as a step towards one day singing her words.

YVONNE BLOMER Born in Bindura, Zimbabwe, Yvonne Blomer has lived in the UK and Japan. In her first poetry collection, *a broken mirror, fallen leaf*, she explores the experience of being a foreigner in Japan. Yvonne s poetry has been published in several anthologies. She has won

	STUDIO 3	STUDIO 4/5	LOBBY	Tradeshow
10:00 am - 10:30	"The Short Story" Panel Discussion	Children's Storytelling: Tiffany Stone		Festival Opening: Carla Funk
10:30 - 11:00	Poetry Reading: Alejandro Mujica-Olea		Book Signing: Christine Smart	Open Stage
11:00 - 11:30	Author Talk: Chris Bullock & Kay Stewart	Poetry Reading: Carla Funk & Guests	Book Signing: Tiffany Stone	Open Stage
11:30 - 12:00 pm	"Drawing the Words Out" Author Workshop: Claire Turcotte	"Web 2.0 – The Online Community" Writers and Filmmakers Workshop: MediaNet	Book Signing: Debra Thomlanson	Open Stage
12:00 - 12:30			Bookmaking Demo: CBBAG	Open Stage
12:30 - 1:00	"The Pacific Context – Books in our Pacific Community" Panel Discussion	Self-publishing Workshop: Trafford Publishing		Crime Writer's of Canada Reading Lou Allin CJ Papoutsis Kay Stewart Chris Bullock JC Szasz Deni Dietz Gordon Aalborg Ron Chudley
1:00 - 1:30				
1:30 - 2:00	Author Talk: Janet Rogers	"Writing Mythic History" Author Talk: Rex Weyler (to 2:30)	Book Signing: RG Ellehammer	

	STUDIO 3	STUDIO 4/5	LOBBY	Tradeshow
2:00 pm - 2:30	Author Talk: Robert J Wiersema	(cont) Author Talk: Rex Weyler	Book Signing: Patrick Taylor	Open Stage Norman K. Archer
2:30 - 3:00	Poetry Reading: Yvonne Blomer	"Using FAME Cards to Get You Writing" Connie Frey	Book Making Demo: Ground Zero Printmakers Studio	Open Stage
3:00 - 3:30	"Talk, Reading Writer's Workshop for Youth " Author Workshop: Lyn Hancock	"Late Bloomer: On Writing Later in Life" Author Workshop: Naomi Wakan		Author Reading: Hazel Magnussen
3:30 - 4:00			Book Signing: Pam Galloway and Linda Rogers Ekstasis Editions	The Heritage Group of Book Publishers Anny Scoones Linda Eversole Kathleen Converse Mary Gazetas Kathryn Bridge Lynne Van Luven Monique Kieran
4:00 - 4:30	Author Talk: Anna Jean Mallinson	Self-publishing Workshop: Printorium Bookworks	Book Signing: Lyn Hancock	
4:30 - 5:00	Author Talk: Trevor Carolan & Marie Vautier		Book Signing: Crime Writers of Canada	Book Signing: E.J. "Samadhi" Whitehouse
5:00 - 6:00 pm	Group Reading Event	Writer's Workshop: Victoria School of Writing	Book Signing: Anthony Dalton	

literary awards and has been heard on BBC Radio. Visit www.ekstasiseditions.com

REX WEYLER Journalist, writer and ecologist Rex Weyler was a cofounder of Greenpeace International. His book, *Greenpeace: The Inside Story* (Raincoast Books and Rodale Press) is the definitive history of the organization. The book was listed by Publishers Weekly among the Best Books of 2004. Weyler has published several books, including *To Save a Whale* (1979) and *The Story of Harmony* (1996). His book *Blood of the Land*, a history of the American Indian Movement, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1982.

MARIE VAUTIER, PH.D. Marie Vautier is Director of UVic s combined major program in English and French (Canadian literature). Her book *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction* was nominated for the 1998 Gabrielle Roy Prize for best international work, Canadian literary criticism/theory. Vautier explores the reworkings of myth in historiographic novels from English-speaking Canada and Qu bec published between 1975 and 1985.

ROBERT J. WIERSEMA Robert Wiersema s debut novel *Before I Wake* (Random House Canada, 2006) to critical acclaim. Currently the president of the British Columbia Booksellers Association, Wiersema is a book seller and reviewer who contributes regularly to the Vancouver Sun, The Globe and Mail and other newspapers. He lives in Victoria with his family. Visit www.robertjwiersema.com.

ALEJANDRO MUJICA-OLEA Born in Chile, Alejandro began writing at age 14. He was imprisoned from 1973 to 1975 under the dictator Pinochet, where he was tortured before being traded to Canada for wheat and technology. His prison diary was published at last in 2003, thirty years after the military bloodbath. Alejandro is a founder of the World Poetry Caf , World Poetry Radio Show and the World Poetry Reading Series at the Vancouver Public Library. He has published six books of poetry.

NAOMI BETH WAKAN Naomi Wakan did not find her own writing voice until well into her 60 s. Her tips and advice are rooted in personal experience and colourful insights into her identity as an older writer. We Late Bloomers have a certain urgency when it comes to communication, I think, and perhaps a certain obligation to fully show ourselves before it is too late writes Naomi in her new book. Visit www.naomiwakan.com

CHRIS BULLOCK AND KAYE STEWART Chris Bullock and Kay Stewart are co-authors of the mystery novel *A Deadly Little List* (NeWest Press, 2006), which is set on Salt Spring Island and in Victoria. In addition to the local settings, the book has many other intriguing elements such as a production of Gilbert and Sullivan s Mikado, conflict over land development on Salt Spring, and links with the internment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. The main characters are a female RCMP constable and an ex-Brit drama critic...hmmmm sounds juicy! The book has been well reviewed in the *Globe and Mail*, among other places.

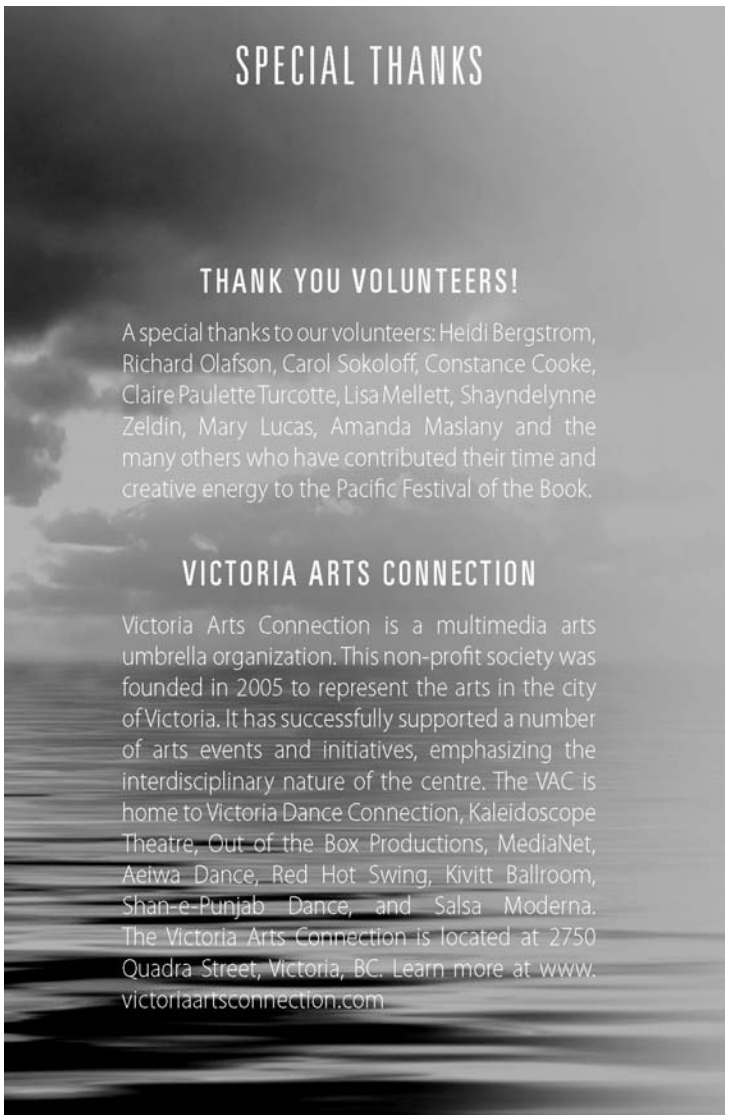
LYN HANCOCK Lyn has lived with raccoons, bears, apes, and people, but Tabasco the Raccoon has always had a special place in her heart. Lyn is an entertaining and passionate speaker on the topic that she most enjoys: touching the wild, and letting the wild touch you. Born in Australia, she has travelled extensively in and written about Canada s wild

places. Her presentations and books bring people and nature together and change lives.

RACHEL WYATT Rachel Wyatt was born in Bradford, England in 1929; she immigrated to Canada with her family in 1957. From 1986 she taught in the Writing Programme at the Banff Centre for the Arts and was Director of the Programme from 1992 to 2001. For eight years she led a series of writing workshops at Arctic College, Iqaluit, Baffin Island. A prolific writer of radio drama, she also writes for live theatre, with plays staged across Canada, in the United States and in Britain. Wyatt has published six novels and two previous volumes of stories. Rachel Wyatt is a member of the Order of Canada and recipient of the Queen s Jubilee Medal.

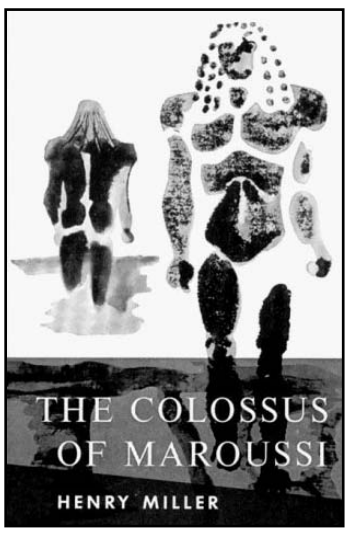
ELIZA HEMINGWAY Eliza has worked with CBC Radio and acted in films and theatre. She has designed stage sets and costumes, written for newspapers and magazines and taught creative writing at Malaspina University College. Her short stories have appeared in several literary magazines in England and Canada and she has won several awards for her paintings and writing, the most recent being as a winning finalist in the USA Best Book Awards with her book of short stories, *Nude on a Fence*. Eliza received an Honorary Citizen of Victoria award for her work. Eliza currently lives in Chemainus on Vancouver Island. Web link: www.elizahemingway.com

ANNA JEAN MALLINSON *Terra Infirma - A Life Unbalanced* tells the story of a summer that became a season of change through a toxic response to gentamicin and the author s struggle to reclaim a life in a body disabled by this modern elixir. Jean Mallinson is the author of a book of short stories, *I Will Bring You Berries*, a book of poems, *Between Cup and Lip* , and, with four other writers, a book of poems, *Quintet: Themes & Variations.* She is also the author of essays and articles, most recently in Vocabula Review. She lives in West Vancouver, B.C., Canada.



While Miller is chastised, he also finds liberation in the soothsayer's reading, in the understanding that art can never be greater than life itself, and that his devotion to his writing, which up to then had always been about the future and what tomorrow will bring, is the "highest and last phase of egotism." Miller doesn't regret the course of his life, doesn't regret his devotion to his practice, but accepts it fully as his own. In accepting writing for all it is (and isn't) he can let it go, never has to write again, and in letting go, in surrendering, he opens to the art anew. As we now know, Miller continued writing well into his eighties. What changed wasn't the act of writing itself but his perception of it.[14] Art, for Miller, became a spiritual practice, an initiation that, finally, had nothing to do with personal identity and ego, but everything to do with the ability to open the pores of his being, a process that permitted him to give and receive freely. Near the end of *Colossus*, Miller writes:

It is not until I look about me and realize that the vast majority of my fellow men are desperately trying to hold on to what they possess or to increase their possessions that I begin to understand that the wisdom of giving is not so simple as it seems. Giving and receiving are at bottom one thing, dependent upon whether one lives open or closed. Living openly one becomes a medium, a transmitter; living thus, as a river, one experiences life to the full, flows along with the current of life, and dies in order to live again as an ocean.[15]



To open. To live as a river. To flow. To die. To live again. And in this eternal process, in living openly, the cosmos passes through us just as we pass through the cosmos. To be sure, Miller's ontological rendering is not unlike Emerson's, where in "Nature" he writes, "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."[16] When considering Emerson's transparent eye-ball or Miller's ontology of flow, it's helpful to remember that both men understand direct experience as primary to personal awakening. While philosophy might work as a trail to the river, the trail is given up and disappears at the water's edge, at the very spot where Buddha sits, where borders fade in the rhythms of heartbeat and breath. Most of us test the river without jumping in, never relinquishing a foothold to the land, to our various creeds and prejudices. There's no shame in this; the river is frightening and threatens our safety. At least we imagine it so. Miller, however, believes we're tricking ourselves when trying to anchor to the land, agreeing with another of Emerson's famous maxims, "There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees. Our globe seen by God is a transparent law, not a mass of facts."[17]

An ancient practice, this opening to the world. Throughout Miller's work he often mentions the "true revolutionaries" and "inspirers and activators" of such practice, including Jesus, Lao-Tse, Buddha, St. Francis of Assisi, and Krishnamurti. As previously noted, Emerson is of such a body, and exhorts us, as do all such pilgrims, to walk into the dark forest, hone in on the underside of loamy earth, and in the process of intense focus, release our mean egos, if only temporarily, if only in a cloud. Miller listens to Emerson and moves on. If anything, Miller is a walker, pausing from time to time to bend, kiss, caress. Though place is important to Miller, he never stops walking, never stops passing through, never stops making love. Miller pays attention to the lips he kisses and the lips kissing back. It is in contact that we become most naked, that the here and now is unveiled and released. Ah, to release a moment from the confines of time, to break the dams, unclog the veins, open the pores, break the doors from the jambs. Lips touch, breath shared. What light, Whitman, what light, Emerson, what light, Thoreau. Jesus, the light of the world. Buddha, Mohammed, Krishnamurti, shine on.

Henry Miller's path through Greece is that of a spiritual anarchist. While understanding that all things are connected in a web of life, that we depend upon one another for survival, he also knew that we must, in the end, walk alone. Teachers are helpful, yes, but if not abandoned will only throttle the instincts needed to negotiate the borders of existence. In the years just preceding the war (and many that followed), Krishnamurti, another great influence to Miller, was not shy in asserting that we should seek no guides, counselors, leaders, or fall into systems of belief. For Krishnamurti, the only revolution is the revolution of the self. Lead your own life, he professed. Discover your own strength. No one can save you, so save yourself.[18]

Henry Miller first learned of Krishnamurti from friends in Paris in the early 30s. By this time Krishnamurti had left his leadership position of *The Order of the Star of the East*, an organization founded in 1911 by Theosophists. He left the Order precisely because 1) he was seen as its leader, and 2) it was an organization at all. "When you look for an authority to lead you to spirituality," he said in his renowned parting speech, "you are bound automatically to build an organization around that authority. By the very creation of that organization, which, you think, will help this authority to lead you to spirituality, you are held in a cage."[19] Already deeply suspicious of groupthink, Miller found such teaching against institutionalization especially inspiring. Miller mentions Krishnamurti but once in "*Colossus*" and only in passing. He does, however, write an essay devoted to Krishnamurti in *The Books in My Life* (1969)[20] In the essay Miller finds most compelling Krishnamurti's ability to think freely, without "opinion and prejudice." According to Miller, what distinguishes Krishnamurti from other great world teachers is his nakedness, that he is dressed "only in the frailty of the flesh [and] relies entirely upon the spirit, which is one with the flesh." Spirit one with the flesh. For Miller, not only is there is no other path to the river, there is no other river.

One need not look very deeply into Krishnamurti before discovering at the heart of his teaching is the idea of letting go of individual prejudice. What Miller sees as flow Krishnamurti calls the "creative release of the individual," which necessarily leads to "abundant energy rightly directed so that… life will have expansive and profound significance." Krishnamurti sees such a release as "integrated revolution… starting not

[14] From *Henry Miller on Writing*, 1944: "Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery. The adventure is a metaphysical one: it is a way of approaching life indirectly, of acquiring a total rather than a partial view of the universe. The writer lives between the upper and lower worlds; he takes the path in order to eventually become that path himself."

[15] *Colossus*, p. 206.

[16] *Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, Oxford, 1990, p. 6.

[17] Ibid. p. 166. Quotation is from the essay "Circles," a piece that heavily influenced the American Pragmatism of William James, et al. As always, Emerson calls for constant transformation by way of self-reflection. "The life of man is a self-evolving circle," he writes, "which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without ends."

[18] See *Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti*, Harper/Collins, 1996.

[19] Ibid, p. 4.

[20] Essay was probably written in the 1950s.

(*continued on Page 29)*

Gleanings From a Bangkok Bookshop

Trevor Carolan

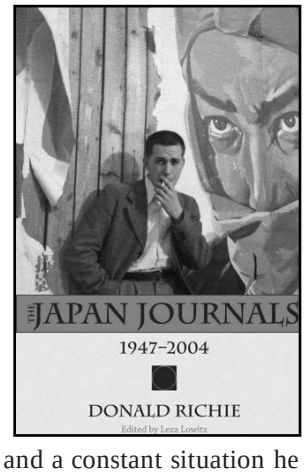
Bangkok's new Suvarnabhumi airport is gigantic but the tourist police are friendly now. More news: it's the age of the 'Flashpacker', of backpacking *farang* who prefer more comfort, and on arrival I'm the only foreigner from my flight who doesn't disappear in an expensive cab for the city. The local airporter runs 34 baht, about a dollar and it's a hoot. With a young Ulsterman just in from Cambodia, we make our way to the tourist ghetto of Khao San Road in Banglamphu district. At dusk the street becomes an enormous, crowded flea market attracting a global tapestry of travellers.

These days, Khao San Road rooms run $12-16 a night. In the whore-chasing hot-spots of Sukhumvit downtown the tariff doubles before you bump into serious rates at the hi-rise chain hotels. Khao San's a bit of a dosser, but you'll see worse. A three-wheeler *tuk-tuk* gets you to the Muay Thai matches at Rajdamnoen Stadium for a couple of dollars, and if full-tilt kickboxing's not your thing, or you're wisely saving the glorious temples here for an early morning start, you can cruise the bookshops. If you're an Asianist as I've been for 20 years, Shaman Books right on Khao San has one of the strongest Asian collections either side of the Pacific. Amazing stuff. One wonders how they find these books here, or rather how they can afford to bring them in. Books are not cheap in the developing world. Must-have volumes materialize easily.

Soi Rambuttri nearby is quieter. You can begin writing your own novel here at the covered patio of the Tuptim, or just read in the shade. A bowl of fresh fruit and a decent pot of coffee runs you 60 baht and the view across the lane is ideal: an Asian jumble of tropical shrubbery, worn Chinese shophouses, everything slowly settling into the chaos of the day. A breeze off the Chao Praya wafts incense from a noodle stall out front. Two novice Buddhist nuns emerge from of an alley with their bowls, clothed in white linen, heads shaved, begging alms. If you're planning, let's say, to ride an elephant through the temple ruins at Ayutthaya tomorrow, a word to the wise is sufficient: *O merciful Buddha*…My *dana* offering of coins draws a nervous titter from the pair.

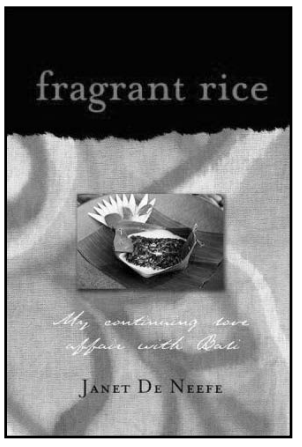
I love Bangkok, its provocative earthiness. I love the barrow-men who wander its streets selling *Pa Kim Ka-Tow*—the milky sago with cocoanut and cane sugar that's everyone's favourite dessert. I love the song they play over and over, a heartbreaking Thai blues from Sulapon, the national folk-singer. You can read and read your new books here and nobody bothers you.

The Japan Journals. **Donald Richie. Stone Bridge Press. 496 pp.**



In 1947, two years into the U.S. Occupation of Japan, Donald Richie could write as a young ex-serviceman of, "The politeness of people who are not starving but who clearly do not have enough to eat." Working for the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes*, Richie was sharp enough to note this observation in his journal, an off again-on again enterprise he has kept up as a resident of Japan for more than 50 years. While Richie introduced Japanese cinema to the West, his journals offer us a privileged glimpse into a host of the memorable Japanese characters he has known or worked with in Tokyo—the novelists Kawabata and Mishima, Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki, film directors Akira Kurosawa, OzuYasujiro, composer Toru Takemitsu, and scores of others. Richie has also been the West's go-to guy in Tokyo for decades and a constant situation he records is his experience introducing visiting foreign artists to Japan. This provides us with a fascinating accounts about Stravinsky, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, Alberto Moravia, Truman Capote, Susan Sontag, Francis Ford Coppolla, Marguerite Yourcenar, John Ashbery, Cecil Beaton, James Merrill, Karel van Wolferen, et al. Hot gossip? You bet: Richie hasn't been afraid to write things down. Interestingly, while a fluent speaker, Richie has remained a permanent outsider within Japanese culture that determines so much by blood. Even so, he has been intensely intimate with it: though married for four-years to American writer Mary Evans and involved in sundry hetero affairs, a litany of homosexual Japanese lovers, some in relationships lasting decades, many others fleeting bonks in Tokyo's urban dynaflow, attest to this. Gradually, one realizes how many other prominent American translators of Japanese literature, including Meredith Weatherby, Ed Seidensticker, Burton Watson, and Donald Keene, have been queer: it's a provocative meditation. As the journals progress, Richie's accounts of Tokyo's seamy underbelly of every persuasion thicken and make for curiously engrossing (and occasionally gross) reading. Inevitably, with the pass of days, the journal entries become a record of deaths, funerals, memorials. Faithfully recorded, win, lose or draw with the individuals, Richie serves them equitably. It's a book that is hard to put down for long, and one senses that like Gide and Proust, Richie has known for a long while exactly what he has been doing—penning a record of his own "creeping conservativism", as well as transcribing the changes he witnesses taking place within Japan's affluent society. As consumerism saturates the national psyche it has produced, Richie records, vulgar youth, growing "disregard for the feelings of others", and wacko Aum terrorists alike. An Ohio gentleman shaped by the Far East, to his credit Richie never becomes judgmental about his adopted homeland—a graciousness summed up by his description of a traditional neighbourhood *sakura*-viewing party: "I hold up my lemonade and wonder why I ever thought I was tired of cherry blossoms."

Fragrant Rice. **Janet De Neefe. Harper Perennial. Sydney. 306 pp.**



A title from Bali by way of Australia. In 1974 De Neefe arrived in Bali with her family and experienced an early psychic connection with the *genii loci* of the place. Returning ten years later, she met her life partner in a local Ubud man and has lived there contentedly since then. And what a life. With her husband Ketut she has raised four children and the book is largely an account of her domestic experiences within Balinese culture. What makes this book sing is the extraordinary cultural background De Neefe is able to bring to her stories of everyday life within this lush, tropic society. Weddings, funerals, births, cremations, the establishment of a new home, temple ceremonies, healing occasions, and civic calendar festivities—all are made entertaining by the degree of knowledge and insight the author brings. The author and her family are proprietors of several prominent Ubud restaurants and De Neefe runs a well-known Balinese cooking school from their large family guest-house, so it is little wonder that recipes and accounts of the dishes and local island ingredients used to prepare them flourish throughout her book. It's a wonderfully personable look at Bali, much in the way that Canadian Colin McPhee's *A House In Bali* continues to resonate from this unique island. De Neefe's heart-scalding story of the aftermath of the terrorist bombing of October 2002 is particularly moving.

Vegetable Roots Discourse. **Hong Zicheng. Trans. Robert Aitken and Daniel Kwok. S & H. 2006. 224 pp.**

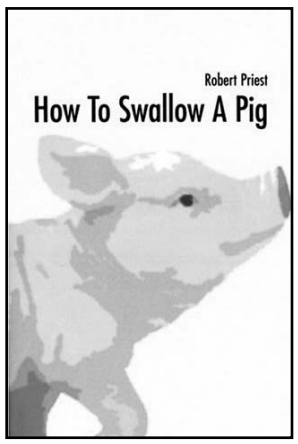
Vancouver scholar Jan Walls told me about this book years ago but decent translations of this Ming classic are scarce, making this edition an exciting discovery. A public official, Hong Zichen retired from worldly turmoil at about the same time Shakespeare had 'em roaring for more at The Globe in London. Ming China was in upheaval. Hong's intention therefore was produce a work of utility, a moral-spiritual teaching

(*continued on Page 24)*

How to Swallow a Pig

Jamie Reid

"*Because of the shape of its face, a pig is actually one of the easiest animals to swallow whole.*" So begins Robert Priest's 2005 collection of mostly prose poems, mostly written to be read or performed in public. A starred footnote at the end of the poem continues: "*It is also one of the easiest animals to shove up the anus. This is not recommended for reasons of hygiene.*"



How to Swallow a Pig, Robert Priest, ECW Press, Toronto, 2004

Here we enter the territory of the Menippean, the hallucinogenic, the fanciful, the horrific, mostly delivered in slapstick style, a territory somewhere between Franz Kafka and the Marx Brothers, or the Three Stooges, who do actually appear in one of the sections of the book in a series of bloody fantasies.

Priest's work at its best straddles the gap between popular art, comic book art, performance antics and the written word. It is created primarily to be entertaining, to feed the desire for laughter and fun, but it also feeds the mind, engagingly engaging issues of contemporary culture and politics. It's often funny, but its purpose is usually satirical and therefore, serious. One of the most entertaining poems, for example, is a more than mildly sadistic fantasy in which a "male feminist" carries his "little mother" on a chain around his neck: "Yet even as he spoke, even as he decried aloud the centuries of cruelty and injustice to women, he would raise his hands to his chest as though in religious gesture and pinch his little mother. He did this so that her tiny screaming might add fuel to his rhetoric."

Robert Priest is an expert at detournement: using the methods and style of advertising and the cultural spectacle to resist the mentalities they embody and deliver a more serious critical message. What we have here is Sex and Romance gone freaky, mutant, the obsessions engendered by popular culture, its sitcoms, its animated cartoons and its consumer magazines with their articles about love, sex, culinary delights, blown up larger than life size, exaggerated and lampooned.

It's a wonder in a way why Robert Priest is not better known nationally than he is. He has been a fixture on the Toronto poetry scene for at least three decades, a troubador with a guitar, more a performance poet than a literary one. He is certainly one of the most imaginatively inventive poets in the country, although his inventions are as often Charles Addams comic book style horrors as they are delightful literate fantasies. Although Priest often writes for children, his little prose poem fables for adults are not cut from this smooth cloth. More often these poems are aimed at disturbing and arousing the reader's consciousness rather than providing easy comfort and assuagement. They are meant to wake the reader up to the recognition that there are more frightening and delightful things in the world than the mass media will ever deliver.

The language of inspired living requires exaggeration, the transformation of the real into the super-real, and Priest is good at this. The obvious exaggerations of Robert Priest's prose poems are understood and accepted by the reader as necessary exaggerations, because there may be no other way to represent the beautifully exalted moments of life and loving, or, conversely the horrors of an entire world writhing from wars, environmental shocks, childhood sexual abuse and other human convulsions.

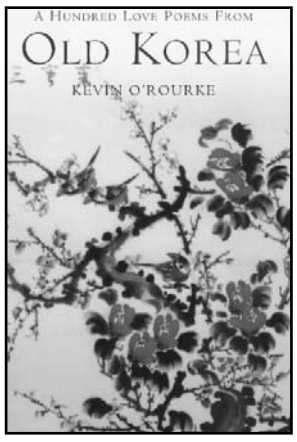
The world that these poems invoke is one where the miraculous, the fantastic and the extraordinary is the norm rather than the exception. Some of the miracles are lyrical and beautiful, some of them nightmarish and menacing, but there is above all, an absolute excess of the miraculous and the extraordinary, so much so, that it is sometimes difficult to see through the lens that they create, back to the world of ordinary life. The reader sometimes has an irritable sense of surfeit, but without full satisfaction. The human characters are more like comic book superheroes than real living people, and the grotesques more like comic strip villains than the bad people of real life, they are caricatures and cartoons, consistent with the fact that many of these poems carry satiric and socially critical purpose.

However, unlike much performance and pop-poetry, Priest's work breaks out of the mold of the poem of advocacy for this or that "popular" issue as framed by the electronic mass media and the magazines. Often, Priest's work seems to refer back to these, more as satire of contemporary mores and concerns than as a way to flog a particular set of ideological issues. Hence popular feminism, anti-racism, peace activism, environmentalism, etc., are all satirized and lampooned, not because Priest is not sympathetic to these popular issues, but because there is a need to break out of the frames and boxes provided by the mass media in order to see these issues more clearly from a wider and more open perspective. Though he cunningly and entertainingly makes use of the techniques of mass pop art, his work at its best transcends them, and enters a world of a wider imagination, and a deeper socially critical commentary.

For the last four or five years poet Jamie Reid has been indulging his taste for Dadaism and literary anarchism by publishing a well-respected magazine of local and international avant garde writing called **DaDaBaBy**.

A Hundred Love Poems from Old Korea

Trevor Carolan



A Hundred Love Poems From Old Korea.
Trans. Kevin O'Rourke.
Global Oriental.

This is the loveliest collection of poetry from the Korean this reviewer has seen in many a long day. O'Rourke sources his anthology from diverse streams, including early Korean vernacular forms, poems written in Chinese, *sijo*, and lyric song forms. That the book itself is beautiful to the hand and eye is a bonus. In his introduction, the translator notes the contemporaneity of much of the work, and of its relationship to Zen, observing, "Poetry that does not talk to contemporary man has long passed its sell-by date."

A resident of Korea for more than 40 years, and the first foreigner to receive a doctorate in Korean literature within the Land of the Morning Calm, O'Rourke expresses his knowledge throughout in the form of introductions and commentaries on the poems that Western readers will find of tremendous help. As his introduction points out, self-cultivation was the model, or theme for much of traditional Korean poetry, and reached its apogee during the Shilla period, roughly contiguous with Tang dynasty China (7-9th cent. A.D.). That the Shilla was also the historic high-water mark of Korean Buddhism, and of freer conditions for women, is a thematic memory that surfaces intermittently through the book.

Yet for a collection of love poems, it must be noted that passion as the West understands it does not figure of any great consequence in much of what follows here. Love and marriage were, and frequently continue to be, separate solitudes in Korean life—partly the legacy of imported Confucianism which has had a longer Korean run than Buddhism, or "the Western Learning" with its Christian underpinnings. Instead, the austere, refined connoisseurship associated with Confucian values is likely to make many of the older poems here seem uneventful to foreign eyes. Nor is there an abundance of stripped-down, Tang-style poetics—the sugar-free aesthetics brought into English by a lineage of translators from Pound onward. What little that does percolate through, however, is worthy. In a sijo, or sung poem, by Yi Chongbo, a professional administrator of the early 1700s, the portmanteau image of the duck quilt—long a symbol of marital felicity reinforces the poet's melancholy, clearly in echo of the old Chinese masters:

> *I lay my head on the pillow*
> *to summon my love in dreams.*
> *The lamp on the wall is growing dim; it's cold*
> *beneath the duck-embroidered quilt;*
> *the honk of*
> *a lone goose in the night keeps me from sleep.*

Yet humour finds its way in as well. From Kim Sujang of the late-1600s, on marital discord: "*…Husbands and wives / in marital disharmony, of magnet and needle compound / a broth and drink it twice a day.*" The meaning is clear enough.

A ramble through this collection offers plenty of insight into folk traditions from old Korea, and therein lies its charm. In the way that a first encounter with China's source text Book of Odes does more to shatter stereotypical Western images of East Asian sexual puritanism, the poets here offer images of "the flower and willow world"—of the casual promiscuity elders warn the young against. Dissenters in love make appearances too: the cheeky country girls who sway their hips before tongue-tied patricians ("Look at that girl"); or in a rare, offbeat example of early Queer Lit—the administrator of "I'll never forget the boy", so candid a portrait that generations of scholars have denied it could ever have been written by a *yangban* aristocrat.

Because there is love, can grief be far away? From Hong Ikhan, a hero of the resistance to the Manchu Invasion, comes an infrequent expression of real despair:

> *The day we parted, I cannot say*
> *whether blood tears were shed,*
> *but in the waters of the Amnok there was not*
> *trace of blue,*
> *and the old*
> *white-haired boatman said he'd never seen the like before.*

And if not always love, there's no shortage of melodrama as in the anonymous lyric on arranged, loveless marriages: "*Six crock bowls the bride smashed / in a fit of temper on her wedding night. / 'Are you going to replace them?' Mother-in-law asked. / The bride replied: "Your son has smashed beyond repair / the vessel I brought from home. / One weighed / against the other, the balance would seem quite fair.*"

Among the unexpected, a cluster of bawdy poems depicting taboo-breaking hanky-panky among Buddhist monks and nuns surely rates as most novel. Here's a taste for starry-eyed Western Buddhists:

> *Rip your black robe asunder; fashion a pair of breeches.*
> *Take off your rosary; use it for a donkey's crupper.*
> *These ten years of studying Buddha's Pure land, invoking*
> *The Goddess of Mercy and Amitabha's saving hand,*
> *Let them go where they will.*
> *Night on a nun's breast*
> *Is no time for reciting sutras.*

Not your average spiritual awakening!

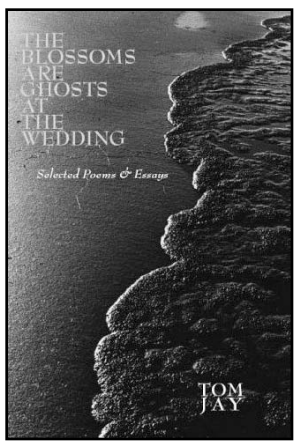
Korean poetry remains something of an acquired taste. End-lines are too often rhetorical, postured, or flat. Shakespeare and Dylan Thomas ploughed other fields. Yet love, at least, has a way of cutting through dogmatic red-tape, so for the voices alone of women in and out of love—commonly *kisaeng*, or professional singsong escorts—that O'Rourke has gathered here, this volume is an essential addition to any good Asian collection. *Utile dulci.*

Trevor Carolan is the international editor of PRRB.

In the Northwest Tradition

John Carroll

Having lived eighteen years in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, I've learned something about its history. I've explored its fields and mountains. I've written about its birds, its forests, its wildflowers. What I observe in this landscape has no language; however, my human inclination is to name. I know, for example, that the narrow vertical shape in the roadside ditch is a Great Blue Heron. And by knowing its name, somehow my relationship with it and with my home in general deepens. I sometimes wonder which comes first: the ability to fully imagine what's outside the self or the language to provide a map to those imaginings.

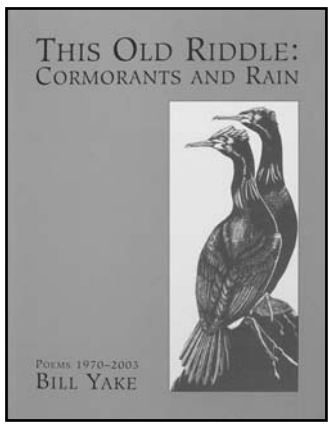


The Blossoms Are Ghosts at the Wedding.
Tom Jay.
Pleasure Boat Studio / Empty Bowl Press

Writers attuned to the ecology of the Pacific Northwest work in a tradition of a shared vocabulary. This vocabulary charts more than a physical place; like rain absorbed into the soil, it becomes intimate with the essence of the land. Several writers working in what I might call the Northwest tradition demonstrate how language can build these profound connections.

In his new collection, Pacific Northwest poet Tom Jay argues that language is its own ecology and "we are its weather." When I name the red-tailed hawk perched on the road sign, or hear the ingots of the varied thrush's call, I am, according to Jay, at the margin between two worlds—my own microcosm and the macrocosm of life. In that liminal place, language is "the record of myriad meetings between humans and the cosmos, two 'natures' woven into wisdom, a fertile border, an echo-system."

That's why language is so vital to Jay; it's his tool for demonstrating the inextricable weave of these two natures. Jay is a poet, sculptor, ecologist, salmon-reclaimer, and, I would argue, mythopoetic archeologist of the Pacific Northwest. Although his lexicon is often arcane, there is something particularly familiar in his writing. It evokes images of a land I live in. Because he is an acute observer of the flora and fauna that is all around me, he can lead me into a richer imagining of this world.



This Old Riddle: Cormorants and Rain.
Bill Yake.
Radiolarian Press.

Jay's collection nicely balances essays and poems. Some of his prose writings are strictly philosophical musings, such as "Words Bear Nature's Wisdom" in which he speaks of language as "a spoken border that bends the light of the world into our shade." Some are paeans to the iconic presences in the landscape—"On Mountaintops We Are Starkly Soulful," for example. In this piece he proposes that Mount Rainier "symbolizes the mountain's elemental role in the Northwest drama," (a role I tend to assign to Kul-Shan, Mount Baker).

His style moves comfortably from unassuming narrative, as in "Finding Moving Water"—which begins with the amusing account of how he learned to water witch—to technical musings on well-locked salmon and comparisons between hydromancy and poetry.

Jay's keen belief in language's resonating power is everywhere evident. One of his favourite tactics is to trace a word back to its Indo-European origin and then catalogue its connotations in modern speech. For example, the Indo-European *moinis*—"gift or exchange"—leads him to a long list of cognates including *community* and *communicate*—words that have at their heart, Jay argues, "the sense of mutual obligation and promise." From there, we must conclude that if we are to rescue our world, it can only be done in the generous spirit of fulfilling a promise to each other.

If Jay's prose can be favourably compared to the shamanic tales of invisible worlds that crowd around us, his poetry is the pure burst of song of the Celtic *file*, as in "Throne Poem" ("time is a hive/of incredible bees"); or "Snow" ("a thousand moths in a black stone bell."); or "Names" ("Names are winds;/small breaths/that open doors and close them").

Poet and environmental scientist Bill Yake is another writer who draws on a Northwest tradition. In his collection *This Old Riddle: Cormorants and Rain,* Yake, through his naming, illuminates complexity, and thus, mystery.

He lists with authority: "the scabland owl;/abetting silent claim/to the souls of mice"; "the circus hawk arcs/ …she is listening for voles"; "mist, haze, spores, and moist pollen flecks bloom/and eddy in these groves." Though the images might be familiar, they reveal the unfamiliar beneath the quotidian veneer. The rainforest looms, populous and rife with the living and the dead: "Mycelial/surges enthread spongy logs." Yake's sense of the past in the present reminds us that we tread on nature's property, only passing through.

Quite a few years ago, T.S. Eliot argued in a different context the necessity of understanding tradition. He argued that it required an historical sense "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence… a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal." It can be argued that ecologically sensitive writing about the Pacific Northwest—like the work of Tom Jay and Bill Yake—resonates with tradition, one that speaks of how we connect through naming and make our home something more than simply a place on a map.

John Carroll writes from Abbotsford, B.C. His "The Word, The Way The Look: Another Side of Charles Bukowski" appeared in PRRB, *Autumn 2005.*

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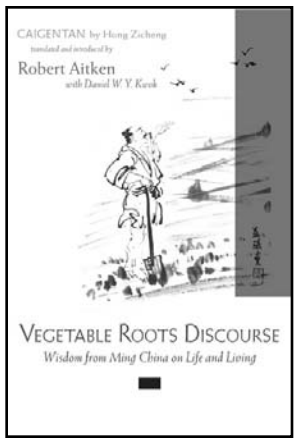
100 ASPECTS (*continued from Page 13*)

homage to that first dreamer and fighter that kindled that light in us. It harkens to the amazons of legend, born anew – the women in the tales Lowitz calls forth for us continue forging strength and purpose from loss.

100 Aspects of the Moon, is a bold, passionate work- full of compassion and conscious, deliberate wonder, and a call to those darker contemplations in our souls that they may waken.

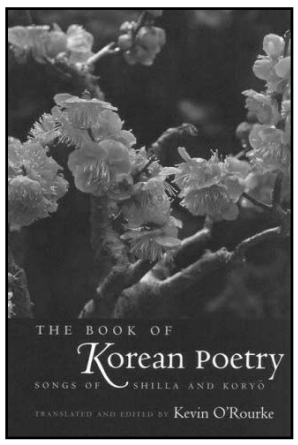
Apis Teicher is a freelance writer and illustrator. She speaks several languages, has lived in five countries, including a three year stint working in Japan and is also deathly afraid of mimes and mold.

BANGKOK BOOKSHOP (*continued from Page 20*)



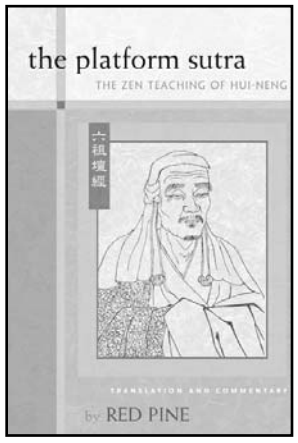
compass for a shaken age and his compositional approach is borrowed from the classic Confucian technique of compiling epigrammatic utterances. Those familiar with *The Analects*, the *Tao Te Ching*, or Bai Juyi's *Record of the Thatched Hut on Mount Lu* will recognize the approach: "…The master looks to matters that are beyond matters, and muses on the body that is beyond the body. It is better to be lonely at times than to face ten thousand ages of forlornness." Architecturally, the 134 epistles join like poetry and are hewn from the *San Jiao Gui Yi*, or 'Three-In-One' tradition melting Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist wisdom into a whole. That the venerable Zen Master Robert Aitken has translated it is the highest bonus one could ask. One has only to read "The true Buddha is in the home/The true Dao is in everyday functions…", and it becomes clear why this little book has been essential to Chinese civilization for more than 400 years.

The Book of Korean Poetry: Songs of Shilla and Koryo. **Trans. Kevin O'Rourke. Univ. of Iowa. 2006, 104 pp.**



Any collection of Korean poetry in translation by Kevin O'Rourke is a keeper. This latest compilation is no different. Beginning at the recorded history of poetry in Korea, O'Rourke samples the lineage like a connoisseur: the oldest extant five poems; selected greatest hits from Korean using Chinese originals; a weirdly off-beat baker's dozen or so *hyangga*—poems recorded through an early attempt to phoneticize Koran using Chinese characters; and the inescapable choice of *shijo* song-poems. Pick of the crop though is a fine roster of Koryo Kayo, a stylish folk vernacular something like the 'hey nonny-nonny' Elizabethan lyrics which still sound fresh to a lover's ears. Themes here are rooted in renaissance-era Country and Western: love, ceremonial lyrics, infidelity. The Koreans have been an agricultural people and some of the 'play party' selections like "Calendar Song" and "Song of Pyongyang" have an Appalachian or Irish feel to their refrains. They're a canny people too, and there's no ignoring the sensibility of a line like Yi Kyubo's (1168-1241) "If you live on a government stipend/ You're like a monkey in a cage: you eat what you get…" *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

The Platform Sutra: The Zen Teaching of Hui Neng. **Trans. Red Pine. S & H. 2006, 346 pp.**



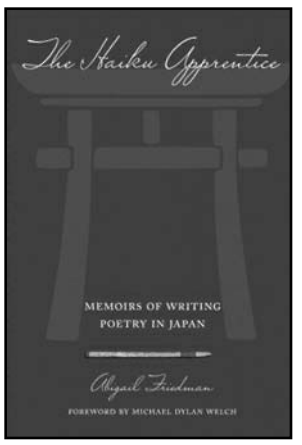
One of Zen's most beloved personalities, Hui-neng became Chinese Buddhism's Sixth Patriarch only after a struggle like something out of a Charles Dickens hard-luck novel personifying the 'small town boy makes good' tale. That's why his teaching is so endearing: there's no phoniness here. For the unfamiliar, this is the straight goods on Zen's teaching of 'spontaneous' or sudden enlightenment that has captivated Western Buddhists since the 1950s when word of this discipline began radiating in the west. Here's a typical mind-bomb: "*…By Zen, we mean to see our nature without being confused. And what do we mean by 'Zen meditation'? Externally to be free of form is 'Zen.' And internally not to be confused is 'meditation.*' The source of 'the Four Vows' by which one may commit to Buddhism, this marks the third of the three key texts (along with *The Heart* and *Diamond* Sutras) that Master Red Pine has rendered into English for us. As always, his text and commentary are seamless, with the English representing an contemporary update on the previous available edition by Wong Mou-lam. Hui-neng's *Platform Sutra* epitomizes Zen's idiosyncratic style and nowhere is it more compelling than in his words of farewell to the monk Chih-tao: "*…This is what nirvana is like…if you don't try to follow my words / maybe you'll understand just a little.*" It's tasty as an apple and simple as Carr's table-water crackers.

Trevor Carolan is the international editor of PRRB.

The Haiku Apprentice

Apis Teicher

The Haiku Apprentice : Memoirs of Writing Poetry in Japan, by Abigail Friedman might at first be added to the rather hefty piles of books on how to write poetry or, more concretely, conquer the elusive Japanese poetic style of *haiku.* That assumption, however, does Friedman's book a grave disservice, as the book itself is a fascinating commentary on the assumptions we make on a daily basis – not just about haiku but about life itself.



The Haiku Apprentice: Memoirs of Writing Poetry in Japan. Abigail Friedman. Stone Bridge. 2006.

Friedman's book opens with the author at the pinnacle of comfort and self-satisfied assurance. A chance meeting on what should've been another rote function she attends changes her outlook, challenges her preconceptions, and opens up worlds of possibilities—not only in the people she meets, the haiku group that befriends and teaches her—but perhaps more importantly in the way that she is woven into the fabric of this rich tapestry.

Most poignant are perhaps the opening vignettes of her train of thought, and how they are slowly unraveled throughout the book. At one of the functions her work obliges her to attend, she turns the mundane into the almost magical – hardly imagining at the time the impact of that initial meeting, or her thoughts on the matter:

> *As a professional woman in Japan, I had learned to get my meishi, or business cards, across early, not just because women are often underestimated in Japan, but because of an important corollary: rank trumps gender.*

That initial exchange of business cards turns the tables on her, as the man across her simply hands her one that lists his haiku group among his other interests. He follows up by inviting her to join and promptly leads her entry into a world completely different from the one that Friedman had inhabited to date. Her thoughts are wonderfully candid - from the heroic deeds she would perform if an earthquake happened to hit at that exact moment, to her embarrassment when one of her haiku was not chosen to be read by her peers later in the book.

The Haiku Apprentice is an unexpected treat. Friedman's candor about her journey of discovery is peppered with humor and snippets of a vivid imagination. Set against the background of her work as an American career diplomat, it's an unusually relevant take on the interconnectivity of all facets of our lives. It brings together effortlessly the elegance and sparse grace of haiku in what becomes an intriguing coming together of cultures and generations.

> *Perhaps all these people had discovered something I was just now learning: that survival in an increasingly complex world requires each of us to tend to our souls, our individuality, more than ever.*

Ultimately, the challenge for Friedman isn't so much to understand and use the restrictive rules and conventions of haiku poetry – but rather to find her freedom within them. She must slowly cease over-analyzing and intellectually dissecting that which simply *is* and enjoy the art of creation. She manages to convey this journey in beautifully lyrical strokes, while at the same time retaining the simple language and the generally simplistic feel of a "how-to" book; a fine line to straddle, but Friedman does it with undeniable panache.

Her journey is a delight to share simply because it's not hard to see our own reflections caught up in the need for immediate gratification, grand gestures, or for our often overlooking the nuances of life: this book comes as a reminder to stop thinking about life, and simply live it.

Apis Teicher is a freelance writer and illustrator. She is staff writer and B.C. correspondent for the newspaper AFTERWORD and a regular reviewer for COMIXPEDIA

CREELEY(*continued from Page 12*)

ing, so to speak, is cryptic. Take, in passing from "Waiting for a Bus *En Frente de la Iglesia*" (one way or t'other, ironic title): "Here's the church,/ here's the tower, the wall,/ chopped off. Open// the door - no/ people. This is/ age, long time gone,// like town gate sits/ at intersection/ across - just facade leading nowhere".(CP, 110). The italics are Creeley's, for unspoken irony. In twelve terse three-line stanzas there's one external reference, undetailed: "you can read/ all about it!" Otherwise an isolated figure (approached by an old dog) is doing what the title says, until the bus: "now starts up,/ and we're on,/ and we're gone". There is a lack of "direct sensuous apprehension", instead there's feeling, in which case the absence of an [4]exclamation point after "gone" conveys its own feeling. The speaker here, and in numerous poems, places himself in a "waiting" or "isolated" scene, observing others or aware of their absence or non-existence, yet everywhere the reader may come upon warm feeling towards absent or remembered friends. Creeley's seems to have been a life experienced predominantly through temperament rather than intellect, that temperament being largely solipsistic.

Throughout this collection, cleaving tight to his own voice Creeley also beckons to many poets of the tradition, in "Versions - After Hardy", for example, summing up in his own voice and measure the great Hardy retrospective love poems of 1912-1913, these encapsulations in effect endorsing Hardy's stoical pessimism. In another poem, the speaker says, "Now I am one, inexorably/ in this body, in this time" (CP 194). This "one" relates not to holism, but to its virtual opposite, Blake's "single vision", or containment, as in a prison. These few examples, in a brief discussion, could be extended and elaborated manifold.

The short poems in the "Memory Gardens" section remind one of Creeley's prolific associate, the late Cid Corman. Both poets tend to write within cooing distance of generalization, but more often than not Creeley's poems relate to something doing "on the ground", though the incident, usually ironic, may be in his own psyche: "I'll win the way/ I always do/ by being gone/ when they come.// When they look, they'll see/ nothing of me/ and where I am/ they'll not know.// This, I thought, is my way/ and right or wrong/ it's me. Being dead, then,/ I'll have won completely". Where Creeley typically is fragmented and struggling, Corman, writing on the same scale is holistic, often bland.

An occasional problem with Creeley (as with Corman) – his portentousness, can drop close to Hallmark, as in "Heaven" (CP,133). For a poet as glancing, as cryptic,1200 pages is a heap of collected poems. Perhaps some culling would be in order, with (in the Creeley spirit!) the definite article omitted from the title.

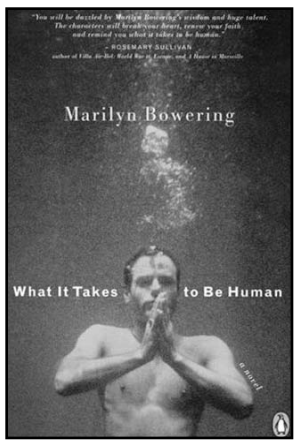
Creeley's is undoubtedly a voice of distinction. In that sense, he is his own man. That voice is reticent, involuted, terse, self-aware, essentially monosyllabic, with a pervasive dry wit, a rueful deadpan humour (v. CP 142, "Thanks"). It lives in a world not without companions, but essentially lonely, not without range but foreshortened and inward turning: "What would it be/ like walking off/ by oneself down// that path in the/ classic woods the light/ lift of breeze softness// of this early evening and/ you want some time/ to yourself to think// of it all again/ and again an/ empty ending?" (CP 350)

The general level of work throughout is high. Until the last third of the text, few [5]poems extend to the 100-plus lines of "Helsinki Window", or "The Dogs of Auckland", so Creeley is not your typical poet of anthology pieces. He should be assessed by his whole range, the whole galley of his work: "Seemingly never until one's dead/ is there possible measure - // but of what then or for what/ other than the same plagues// attended the living with misunderstanding/ and wanted a compromise as pledge// one could care for any of them/ heaven knows, if that's where one goes" (CP 241). For Love (title of his first significant book) – early and late, that is what he sought, at times in blessed quotidian moments finding it. Late in this collection, see several "valentines" and avowals along the way, in a country where the waters spiral down the opposite way, he may have found something close to what he sought.

Mike Doyle is a poet, critic, biographer, and editor. He is a professor of English at the University of Victoria, B.C. His many books include **Trout Spawning at Lardeau River** *and* **William Carlos Williams and the American Poem.**

What It Takes to Be Human

Linda Rogers



What It Takes to Be Human
Marilyn Bowering,
Penguin Books, 2006
292 pp, $

There is a mark on boxes and paper bags indicating how much weight they can bear. 'The bursting test" checks the strength of the container. The results are the same for all bags and boxes of uniform shape, weight and quality of paper. There are no such stamps for human beings, because we are apparently different. Conventional wisdom tells us that "we are given loads we can bear." Another shibboleth teaches that "children are resilient." What a load. This novel is evidence to the contrary.

In her new and astonishingly ambitious book, poet and novelist Marilyn Bowering brings the weight of her own experience to a story so painful it could be written in her protagonist's blood. All of her scholarship, poetic intuition, experience and humanity intersect in the place where Alexander (Sandy) Grey, the narrator of *What it Takes to be Human* finds himself trapped by the failure of unconditional love.

For the duration of this narrative, written by Sandy whilst he languishes at his father's pleasure in a home for the criminally insane, the thwarted young airman is in limbo. While all the institutions designed to protect his human rights conspire to violate the "criminally insane" involuntary patient, he survives by dodging drugs and unethical surgery and using the power of imagination and the empirical evidence of caring to find enlightenment.

Sandy's story reverberates the faith of those who survived the death camps in Europe. Those who believed fiercely had a better chance of living. Like them, he creates his own perfect world, the Innesfree of his hero William Butler Yeats.

Sandy has been accused of the attempted murder of his hypocrite father, a lay fundamentalist preacher. When his irrational punishment for what he alleges was self-defense gets the better of him, he attempts to re-enact his violent circumcision, a kitchen table operation initiated by his parents as punishment for discovering his romantic and sexual nature in an innocent childhood relationship.

Because of the abuse he suffered as a child and the compulsive and self-destructive behaviors that mark his incarceration, the possibility exists that Sandy is a pathological liar, the first defense of sociopaths raised with cruelty. His story, which includes the fantastic intervention of Georgina, a fallen angel intercessor with red lipstick, leaves us as confused as he is about the nature of reality.

Sandy's proximity to the living hell of lobotomy and shock treatments is echoed in the madness on the other side of the garden wall. The hospital is another failed paradise, a garden of Allah controlled by men who are no more evolved in their understanding of humanity than he is.

Because he has been programmed by his dogmatic upbringing, Sandy doggedly believes that the truth shall set him free. That is the positive legacy of the criminally mendacious parent who attacked him with a crowbar when he declared his intention to join the air force and defend his country and defend Europe against Hitler's tyranny. Like Lucifer, who fell from heaven and may, according the belief of at least one sect, have brought God's grace with him, Sandy is touchingly Christian in his belief system. This is territory Bowering, herself raised in a Pentecostal faith, understands well.

Like the Savior who has so far failed to save him from the most primal violation, Sandy is determined to serve. Serving keeps him rational. Until they are savagely murdered at the instigation of a sadistic guard, he serves the rabbits that are sacrificed for god and country. He serves his friends inside and his surrogate mother/lover Georgina, who has lost her only child in the war.

"I understand that life hasn't been kind to George and, at the moment, she's in retreat. I am patient with her, but I reply, always, when she resorts to these platitudes, that we must resist what is and exchange it for something better. How else would humanity have progressed from the caves?"

He serves the memory of the legendary Alan Macaulay a young Scot who was hung in the asylum yard for an accidental shooting thirty years earlier. Macaulay, who speaks to him from beyond, may or may not be the historic figure he imagines. Everyone is innocent until proven guilty. Sandy believes in the fundamental premises of justice. It will take a miracle to save him. That miracle is his faith in the essential goodness of mankind in spite of all the evidence to the contrary.

It is not easy to maintain such beliefs in a world where justice is perceived as an eye for an eye and men who started out as innocent children are denied the sanctity of death by infidels with cell phones. It is not easy for Sandy who, betrayed by his own parents, has always lived in the theatre of war.

Marilyn Bowering is a an enigmatic writer whose truths are revealed in layers of meaning. She is the garden fairy collecting the folklore of men and women with the courage to break through the walls of convention. Her pen is filled with luminous dew. As she mixes truth, half truth and myth in her informed potions, we realise that she is giving us a recipe for redemption.

Every considered line in this novel is poetry that pushes our understanding of ethics. Nothing is what it appears to be and everything is connected to the great organism that emerges from the ocean we came from and carries us through the pain and exhilaration of rebirth. Whether the matrix is a huge sea mammal or an enemy submarine, Sandy intuits its cosmic wholeness. His struggle is to find and define integrity, to swim underwater and emerge blessed with clarity. Navigating the language of poetry carried by domesticated birds, he knows that in the end, when peace drops from the veils of morning, the truth will set him free. That truth is love.

Gris Gris, Linda Rogers' collaborative performance with dancer Lynda Raino, artist Carol Rae and singer Bisia Belina, will appear at the Belfry theatre in Victoria, May 30-June 2

NEW ORLEANS (*continued from Page 5*)

with skin-peeling, raw-nerve passion and commitment. Cohn aka Triksta may be a rap producer wanna-be, but he's paid some heavy dues, and he got out alive with some hair-raising tales and a litany of disastrous adventures.

"What I crave," Cohn writes in his *Remix* concluding chapter, "is the moment when Che and Da Rangaz bring a new track to wherever I'm staying and we go outside and listen on the car speakers. When the bass kicks in, the bodywork starts to vibrate and half a dozen heads bob as one, and the rappers take turns to spit verses, each line a verbal snapshot of this city that has me by the balls and will until I die. In that moment, nothing else exists. All we've got is skin and our soul."

Do you think New Orleans is coming back? Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?

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

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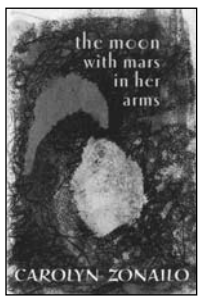
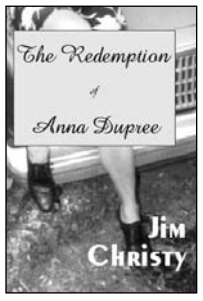
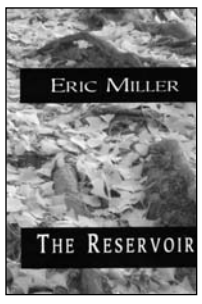
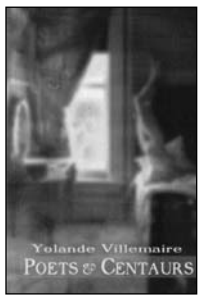








Coming soon…

Celebrating 25 years in publishing

Ekstasis is an ocean where many voices meet!

R. CRUMB (*continued from Page 3*)

but they are real. They are among Robert Crumb's dear friends, simply but ably portrayed with the devout respect and sensitivity only a true friend could bring to a portrait. As a musician, I feel very deeply that these are musicians and singers who live on agelessly in their old recordings and in images such as these. The miniature portraits were originally created as small retro-style trading cards. Trading cards existed mainly in the form of packages of cards plus bubble gum when I was a kid in the 1950's, but which also existed as a collectible premium packed in several kinds of products in the earlier twentieth century (tobacco, soap, cereal etc.).

On the face of each card is a print of an originally drawn or painted portrait of a band or individual performer, and on the reverse is a brief biographical write-up. The three sets of cards represented in this book were initially designed for the Yazoo company, to be included with re-issued vinyl LP collections of old 78 r.p.m. recordings, starting around 1980. As soon as I heard that the record company put the cards on the market in boxed sets as a way to make a little extra income (Yazoo ranks high in the labour of love dept.), I hurried to buy the two sets that were available in a local comic shop.

Even if you already know about, maybe even own sets of those original cards, this book is a must-have, not just for the hand-picked-by-R. Crumb 21 track CD of the wizards portrayed therein, but for the production value brought to his artwork, which is not only about four times the size (closer to that of the original drawings), but is much more vibrantly and faithfully reproduced than on the cards. I'm not knocking the cards, which are a delight, but the print upon their authentically pulpy card stock cannot rival the big beautiful way Crumb's work shines back at us (112 times if I counted correctly) on quality book paper.

More than hundred works of art, vibrantly produced between hard covers, and a great CD to remind us these are real people. I can think of few $25 investments this enjoyable. But I will caution you to beware of the dark side; before buying it in a store, look in the back and make sure the CD is still there unless the book is being sold wrapped…the CD is attached with a temporary adhesive that makes it very easy to steal, and I'm told some CD's are going missing…as Crumb loves showing us, its an imperfect world!

Rick Van Krugel lives in Victoria, B.C. He has played music with Mississippi Fred McDowell, John Hammond and Dan Hicks. John Hammond described him, in conversation with the publisher, as the "best damn mandolin player in the world."

CASTLE ROCK (*continued from Page 4*)

based on the manufacture and export of woolen cloth, has traditionally been a community of risk-takers. The list of border raiders, or *reivers*, who took back what the English had taken from them and their families, could have comprised the Selkirk phone book if there had been such things in those days. The men and women of Selkirk, highly literate because of the educational legacy of John Knox, valued justice and the language of poetry. Robbie Burns is from the district. Sir Walter Scott was the magistrate. Our righteously angry Purdy, Hall, Laidlaw, Crozier and Musgrave ancestors liberated English sheep and cattle and then hid in the hills they knew so well, comforted by their "plaids" and amused by singing and storytelling during the cold winter nights. This tradition is in our blood.

Alice Munro was born a Laidlaw. "Law" is a Scottish hill. Munro's point of view is that of the poor but proud outsider, aware of her worth. She takes it all in. There is an interesting story in the folklore of Selkirk. Every day Magistrate Scott drove his cart up the hill near Abbey. At the top, he would stop and survey the surrounding countryside. On the day he was buried, his horse stopped automatically so that the great man could take it in for the last time.

This is the perspective of *The View From Castle Rock*. Through these stories, we come to understand how a writer is made, or how she makes herself with hard work and even harder decisions, each one working toward a larger freedom.

Always, the carefully crafted stories of this lucid writer have focused on the minutiae of a woman's life, the details that make her fiction sing. She has observed her world through the Laidlaw eyes with their typical Scottish folds and recorded its ironies for posterity. But this book is different. Now the curtains are open. Now we get to see the world within.

I read this book over New Year's, a time when Scots clean their houses. Alice Munro has opened the door for the first visitor on Hogmanay and we are invited to witness the anomaly in her grandmother's eyes, something that might have had her burned for witchcraft in the times when women of vision were persecuted.

"My grandmother's eyes were a hazel colour, but in one of them she had a large spot, taking up at least a third of the iris, and the colour of this spot was blue. So that people said her eyes were of two different colors, though this was not quite the truth. We called the blue spot her window….The blue was clear, without a speck of any other colour in it, a blue made brighter by the brownish yellow at its edges, as the summer sky is by the puffs of clouds."

We too are liberated when we look into her grandmother's omniscient eye. The view is beautiful. It is inclusive and forgiving. What a beautiful time to close the book.

Linda Rogers new novel, **The Empress Letters,** *begins in the garden created by her great-grandmother.*

COLLOSSUS (*continued from Page 19*)
from the outside but from within." The revolution he speaks of doesn't take place by departmental thinking, specialization, or categorizing. That is, it makes no sense to exclude, to mold, to defend. The key, for Krishnamurti, is to integrate. To integrate is to become fully alive. The practice of integration begins with the ability to listen directly. What keeps us from doing so, however, is that everything we hear is filtered through judgments and beliefs. How can we really listen, Krishnamurti asks, if we're already convinced of conclusions, if our opinions are already solidified, if definitions are already clear? If we are conditioned as capitalists, catholics, or carpenters, if we are so persuaded by education, religion, or art, how can we approach the world with a fresh mind? We can't. Krishnamurti and Miller both caution against becoming repositories of fear, understanding that all conflict arises from this fear, all war begins in the conditioning of our minds. All war, all battle, all conflict. This being the case, the only way to end war is to free ourselves from the conditioning, to drop the borders, to flow. Not easy, for sure, this river. It will never be simple to cough blood into a handkerchief, to lose a child, to die. Still, to recognize that even our perception of death and disease is a form of conditioning gives us hope of becoming free of the same.[21]

Like Miller, Krishnamurti did not embrace the patriotism preceding WWII. Living in the United States at the time, he insisted that, as malevolent as Germany's militaristic designs might be, American foreign policy was amply imperialistic and not to be excluded as part of the problem. Beyond the political implications, Krishnamurti believed that nationalism and war were merely symptoms manifesting from the crisis that resided at the heart of individuals, that the conflict was directly related to our narrow-mindedness, to our inability to free ourselves from entrenched thinking. "You are the world," he said to his followers in 1939. Heal yourself and you heal the world. It should be no surprise that Krishnamurti was harshly criticized for his views, accused of failing to engage the terror of war directly. In 1940—the same year Miller was forced to leave Greece because of the war—after coming under the scrutiny of the FBI and being suspected of partaking in a plan to assassinate Roosevelt, Krishnamurti went into a self-imposed exile from public speaking and didn't return until the mid-40s.[22]

It can be fairly argued that both Miller and Krishnamurti were mistaken in their opposition to the war, a mistake that, in turn, weakens their more general claims against the controlling orthodoxy. It's true, most today believe that if the U.S. had not entered the conflict, German atrocities would have continued, that the war would've dragged on for years. In fact, it is hard to argue *against* such justification. But there is a fundamental flaw in this reasoning, and it is this: to this day, the so-called "war" has not ended. Hitler was stopped, yes, but *directly from that conflict* grew the split of Europe and the Cold War, which gave rise to the Korean struggle, the overthrow of Cuba, the bloodstained fields of Vietnam and Cambodia, hundreds upon hundreds of thousands killed or disappeared in South and Central American, the genocide in East Timor and the Philippines, and any number of savage conflicts in Africa and Eastern Europe. Likewise, it is commonly stated that the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union. Tell that to the Serbs and Croatians. Tell that to the Columbians, the Koreans, the Nepalese. Tell that to those who helped drive the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in the 1980s and are now fighting the Americans in those very same mountains. Tell that to the capitalists who have profited mightily and continue to profit from the mass proliferation of weapons so very "necessary to defend freedom and democracy everywhere."[23]

End of war? Is there any chance that political maneuvering will ever put an end to institutionalized violence? Is there any chance the orthodox thinking that so passionately defends war as a just means of resolution will ever lead to peace?

Henry Miller said no. And in saying no, he did what he knew to do. Focusing on the self, he recognized his own limitations, his own borders of prejudice and fear, and by breathing through his conditioning and opening to the eternal current, he watched those borders shift and spread and dissipate, if only in the moment, one epiphany leading to another and yet one more. The process that started in Paris and took form in Greece stayed with Miller the rest of his life. After completing *Colossus* in New York in 1941 he made his way to California and settled on a Big Sur cliff not far from where great rivers widen and disappear. While Miller grew to love the coastal ridges, Greece never left him, in fact became a place he returned to in his imagination again and again, a spot of time that nourished his spirit like no other, one that contributed mightily to the abiding creativity he experienced till the end of his life, an experience he called God. And in God, at the edge of the sea where the sky does not end, he held his hands up in benediction, offered blessings to all beings of the earth, to the critters and the trees, to men and women everywhere. "We are all one substance," he said, "one problem, one solution."[24]

The light dawns upon us still, even now in the midst of war.

[21] Total Freedom, "Can We Create a New Culture?" pp. 178-87. .

[22] Vernon, Roland. *Star in the East*, Sentient, 2000., pp. 208-9.

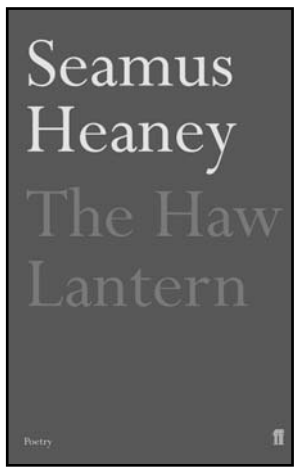
[23] This phrase, of course, is the rallying-cry of the most militaritistic among us today, the neo-conservatives. The neo-cons, influenced by Leo Strauss's platonic philosophy and political science of the 50s, and led by Norman Podhoretz, writer and editor of *Commentary* magazine from 1960-95, gained their current political might by steadfastly churning out reactionary propaganda in support of what is best described as "American Exceptionalism," where imperialist tendencies are apparently viewed as a good thing. (Why not if the imperial power is exceptional?) The voice of the neo-cons is best represented today in *The Weekly Standard*, a magazine funded by Rupert Murdock of Fox News fame. See Andrew Bacevich's *The New American Militarism*, Oxford, 2005, for a detailed examination.

[24] See the lovely ending of Miller's *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*, New Directions, 1957.

Andy Hoffman is the director and managing editor of Elik Press. A graduate of Penn State University and of the Poetics program at Naropa University, he now lives in Salt Lake City and teaches at the University of Utah.

HEANEY (*continued from Page 3*)
tion, and Heaney is still a master elegist (he learned much from Lowell) who can, as the genre traditionally requires, draw from mourned lives lessons about life, in his case about the joy of being in one's element and the perils of being out of it, about the dignifying, signifying value of work, expertise, custom. This has been there all along and we know it again in such a poem as "To Mick Joyce in Heaven". Indeed, given that Heaney has been reluctant to relinquish his memories of a now vanished rural Ireland, it would not be in error to describe many of his poems as pastoral elegy.

Since craftsmanship has been a frequent theme and everpresent formal concern, Heaney has been distinguished in part by his self-conscious but uninhibited wearing of the poet's mantle. He learned this, surely, from his master Yeats, and from the largely anonymous Irish bardic tradition. Here in *District and Circle* are the formal sonnets obligatory to the British and Irish poets proving their mettle. Here are the comforting pentameters by which the poet marries form to voice, speech threatening to raise itself to song. And here are the poems dedicated to fellow adepts that are intimate enough to be virtual apostrophes to dead comrades (Seferis, Rilke, Hughes, Milosz, Cavafy, Auden, with Yeats inspiring the dedication): the pantheon in which Heaney modestly but firmly places himself.



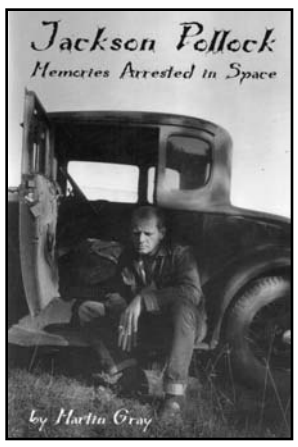
Heaney required Poetry as armour during the decades of Ulster's violence when his allegiance was tested. His choice was between physical-force Catholic nationalism and law-abiding (constitutional) Catholic nationalism. His passport was always green but he refused to let his poetry be recruited by the tribal warriors. He was clearly uncomfortable when under the influence of more committed comrades he appeared to speak out as a disaffacted Catholic, in the second part of *North* (1975) and in *An Open Letter* (1983). In 1996, in *The Spirit Level*, he'd had enough. "When for fuck's sake, are you going to write/Something for us?" a fellow Catholic taxed him. And he recalls replying: "If I do write something,/What ever it is, I'll be writing for myself". He might have said: I'll be writing it for Poetry, so fervent a believer is he in the sovereignty of the art.

District and Circle steps familiar acreage. There is, though, a retrenchment of spirit, light, and marvel which from *The Haw Lantern* (1987) began to challenge the dominion of the physical in his poetry. Here, when he sees things, he is remembering them more than imagining them, if I might borrow the pun of *Seeing Things*. The balance has shifted, and balance has from his poetry of the 1980s been a thematic and formal ideal. Heaney has been a constant revisiter of his past, accounting for all those revenants in his poems that disturb him and then reassure him, and his journeys to the underworld to visit dead friends and admired fellow poets. (The title poem of the

(*continued on Page 30*)

Memories Arrested in Space

Jim Sullivan



Jackson Pollock: Memories Arrested in Space
Martin Gray
Santa Monica Press
214 pp, $14.95 US

Martin Gray follows up his fine verse biographies of modern painter Amedeo Modigliani (Modigliani) and jazz innovator Charlie Parker (Blues for Bird) with a third and equally well-made verse biography of a major modern artist, abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock. An opening chapter surveys some of Pollack's greatest works from his most productive period – a few years in the 1940s. After establishing why Pollock matters, the rest of the book offers a pretty much chronological study of his life.

Man, what a messed up life. A childhood of drifting round the west, gender confusion, mother wanting to raise her fifth boy as a girl, father insisting on a tough code of masculinity, Asperger's syndrome (a mild form of autism) complicated human relations; alcohol a problem from his teen years; intense intra-family rivalries; and always a self-destructive violence. Then some bright points: becoming, in art school, Thomas Hart Benton's young favourite, not for talent (which he lacked), but for the intesity of his drive; first friends, then some of the great modernists, then major arts patron Peggy Guggenheim recognizing that here is something new; marriage to fellow painter Lee Krasner (finally a more-or-less stable relationship); his major berakthrough, pouring paint; moving out of Manhattan into the country; giving up drinking. After two sober years, during which he produced his greatest work, click, he started drinking again and lost all he had ever gained.

Gray tells the whole wild, tragic story in loose trimeters – the hexameter of the ancient Greek and Latin epics cut in half. He used the same form for the Modigliani and Parker books – a tight formal restraint to contrast with the wild unrestraint of these lives. Gray is clearly fascinated by self-desructive modern artistic geniuses. The form he has chosen allows him to tell their stories with a minimum of commentary, presenting fact after fact about these lives. While the expansiveness of, say, a pentameter might tempt a writer to discursiveness and psychological probing, the short-but-not-too-short lines keep the narrative tightly focussed, letting the images and facts build on one another line after line. For example, on Pollock's 1948 painting Summertime:

> but Jackson Pollock grounds
> his floating painting through
> flecks and blebs of buff
> (or ochre if you like)
> alond the painting's base
> which grounds the swirls and rounds
> and gives them gravity –
> a kind of pedestal

With minimal interpretation, each line builds the impression. Gray quotes a description of Pollock's style that might suggest a nearly exact reverse of his own:

> Tom Benton once observed
> the rhythms Jackson formed
> were open and suggest
> a great expansiveness
> which is continuous
> defying "rules of art."
> These also correspond
> to those mechanics of
> how we have sight to see
> no closed peripheries
> but one continuing
> unending focus-shift

Over the course of the whole book. the tension builds between Gray's restrained style and Pollock's tormented, passionate life till Gray finally releases himself, finally lets himself write with an emotionally intense, powerful drive about his hero's final murderous, suicidal car wreck. That's the drama of this book, waiting for that moment when style and substance finally meet

Jim Sullivan is an American poet and critic.

HEANEY (*continued from Page 29*)
new volume accrues the familiar allegory.)

So the net changes have been shiftings, not departures. Certainly the start of discovering Heaney or any unique writer who swims into one's ken, has for the veteran reader gone. Unlike, say, Auden, Dylan or Muldoon, Heaney does not do something different each time out. But then, the customary is where he lives. And our respect for Heaney, our gratitude to him for when his poetry helped us through dark times, return to re-invest his work with compound interest that he has richly earned, in this way increasing his very considerable principal. Raise it again man, we still believe what we hear.

John Wilson Foster lives in Vancouver and last fall was visiting fellow at the National University of Ireland/Galway. He is the author of **The Achievement of Seamus Heaney** *(1995).*

On Target with High-Maintenance

John Tyndall

High-Maintenance
Ekstasis Editions, 2003
$15.95
ISBN 1-894800-42-7

High-Maintenance is Stephen Bett's third full-length collection of poetry, after *Lucy Kent and other poems* (Longspoon Press, 1983) and *Cruise Control* (Ekstasis Editions, 1996); he has also published two chapbooks: *High Design Refit* (Greenboathouse Books, 2002), which includes a few of the poems from *High-Maintenance*; and *Trader Poets* (Frog Hollow Press, 2003), a set of descriptions of Canadian poets as hockey players.

Anyone who has read his two chapbooks knows that Stephen Bett is an on-target satirist. One editor, however, misread Bett's work and ended up in the poem entitled "Eleven Out-Takes for a Magazine Editor", which quotes the man in an epigraph: "Your poems are a hoot... I suspect you have as much fondness for your targets as you do contempt...." The poem ends with the lines: "Real hoot y'self / Hoot, hoot // Road-kill". Unlike a comedian like Don Rickles, who slashes and burns various people and then undercuts his schtick by saying he really loves them, Stephen Bett in *High-Maintenance* is a serious satirist. He is outraged by the inanities of modern culture and doesn't apologize for his skewering of them. What he may (or may not) love is the unending fodder upon which to set his sights; for every target hit, many more pop up just asking for it.

Some of Bett's peeves arise from his work as a member of the English Department at a college in B.C. As a member of a bureaucracy, Bett has to endure memoranda and directives from on high, such as those outlined in the collection's title poem. "All system-wide resources (human and pro-rata) are instructed in the following approved usage–" After bulleted sections on developmental disability, cerebral palsy, and mental illness, Bett adds "'Person resident in trailer park milieu,' in place of low rent, t-p trash, loser, &c." Students also feel the heat of the poet/teacher's wrath in such poems as "21st C. E-/Voice Mail Excuses for Missing Class": "I have to miss your [1:30] class to pay some bills. Like my Master Card bill? And the bank closes at like 5:30?"

A number of poems are imbedded with found items, such as bumper stickers ("ORGASM DONOR" and "SAVE THE PLANET kill yourself"), overheard television dialogue ("Take Off Your Lips Of Hannah?/Lips Of Your Hannah Take Off?"), and in the poem "Found Poem for the New Hampshire Dead *for Ginny*", even the famous state motto ("LIVE FREE OR DIE"). These poems culminate for me in "Snowboarding with Whistler Pornstar", which derides the branding of society: "The Pornstar brand seems to have the head run on / market share, with its timely jump to post- / season casuals [...] Peaked & lettered headgear reading / *Pussy Magnet*".

Stephen Bett's caustic wit is in top form in this collection. His titles like "News from Frontal Lobe" (parts I, II, and III), "High-Maintenance on the Airhead Runway", "Quick Exit on the Pharmacy Road", "Pharmacy Road II (on & off ramps)", and many others take aim at modern craziness on both sides of the 49th parallel. Snake-oil politicians in the U.S. stand next to pop stars on MuchMusic who stand next to Miss America contestants who stand next to a psychopathic B.C. college student taking advantage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All of them get their just desserts in *High-Maintenance.*

John Tyndall is a poet who lives in London, Ontario with his wife and son. His latest collection of poems is entitled **Free Rein** *(published in 2001 by Black Moss Press).*

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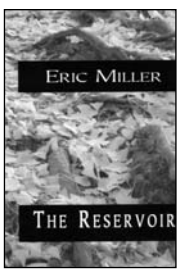

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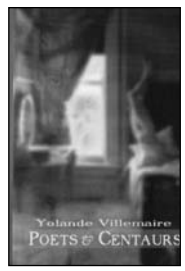
POETS & CENTAURS

Yolande Villemaire
translated by
Leonard Sugden



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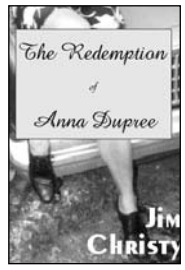
Yolande Villemaire has published more than twenty works of poetry and fiction. Poets and Centaurs *is her second novel published by Ekstasis Editions. Yolande Villemaire lives in Montreal.*

THE REDEMPTION OF ANNA DUPREE

Jim Christy



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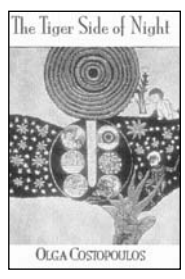
THE TIGER SIDE OF NIGHT

Olga Costopoulos



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Olga Costopouos writes, cooks and gardens at her home in Edmonton, where she teaches Creative Writing at the University of Alberta.