

CPR

*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

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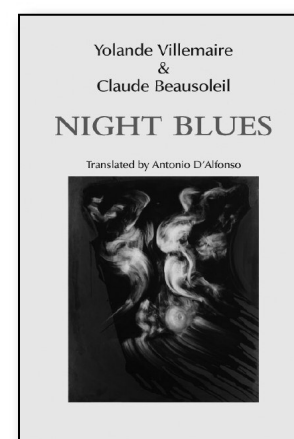
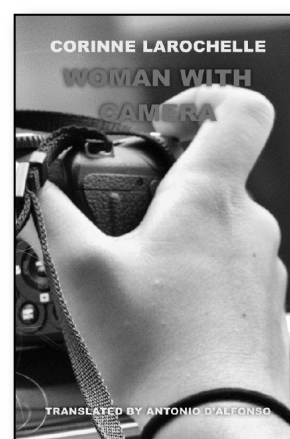
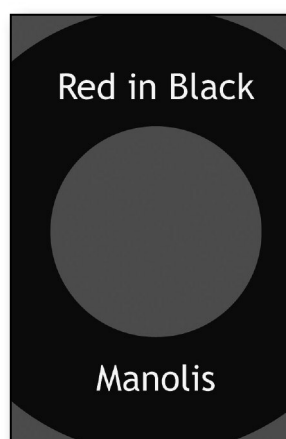
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photo: Antonio D'Alfonso



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from Red in Black

Manolis

HARVEST

Your voice sounded enchanting
on the phone
that warm day in August
and I dreamed of grapevines
and ripen grapes
full of sugar and drunkenness

and in the cool shade
under the plane trees
along the babbling brook
I imagined

your body that I liked to touch
and from your nipples
that I longed to taste
their sweetness and drunkenness to suckle

THE ACT OF DEATH

The act of death unique
singular
errorless, personal
schism in the rock
irreversible incision in time
underscoring valiantness
when you leave the dead flesh
and you enter the whitewashed hallway
on your way to the Elysium

proud, manly act
of courage
that dares Hades and
invites Him to dinner

valiant answer of life
when you walk away from all others
emotional apex
when the soul cries out

open the gates

and as if in delirium it runs
to the unknown yet familiar path
only the courageous follow

where it'll meet
its constant companion
the steps of the sun to rediscover

errorless act of death
witness to the courage of the few-begotten
the act of death unique
single-handed, errorless
idiomorphic, individual
when you leave the husk of flesh
to enter your diaphanous self

COFFEE

Boiling hot aromatic coffee
upward whirling fragrance
tiny table
our legs were touching under it
entangling slowly
when your eyes
dived deep in mine
imperceptible movement of your lips
meant your anticipation
for my prodding
of your mind to lustful thoughts
erotic undulation amid
waves of a sea
angered and passionate

and leaving the cup of coffee
you put your hand over mine
sign that ready you were
for the transcending rhythm of Eros

SUNDOWN

Last reflection of the sunrays
on the leaves of the oleander
and onto the moist rock that stands
guard opposite the sea's slow movement

life declares its benevolence
transcending earth with its songs
before the night conquers
the cracks of hours
and the door shuts till morning

stay up, I'll tell you

taste the bloom of your emotions
eternal moments
that only last a short while

BEYOND THE FLESH

Reaction of your body
with its fear of failure
keeping it on guard

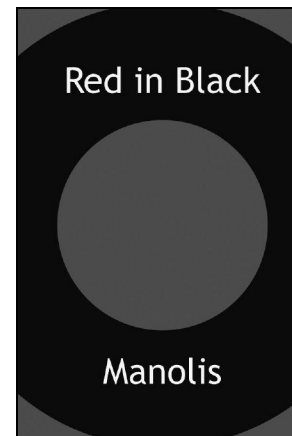
when it becomes one with mine

momentary movement
unrestrained rebellion

one breath
mutual sensation
multi-felt apex
transcends the flesh

totality

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Manolis (Emmanuel Aligizakis) is a Greek-Canadian poet and author. He's the most prolific writer-poet of the Greek diaspora. He was recently appointed an honorary instructor and fellow of the International Arts Academy, and awarded a Master's for the Arts in Literature. His articles, poems and short stories in both Greek and English have appeared in various magazines and newspapers in Canada, the United States and around the world. His poetry has been translated into Spanish, Romanian, Swedish, German, Hungarian, Arabic, Turkish, Serbian and Russian. He now lives in White Rock, where he spends his time writing, gardening, traveling, and heading Libros Libertad, an unorthodox and independent publishing company which he founded in 2006 with the mission of publishing literary books. His translation *George Seferis: Collected Poems* was shortlisted for the Greek National Literary Awards, the highest literary recognition of Greece.



VALUES

The moto was to teach them
values of fast food
flashy commercials on tv screens
beer and baseball

America's past time

moto was to make them believe
in their values
of each pistol carrying citizen

gleaming when one can shoot
the pizza delivery man for being late
and the blind beggar
walking peacefully in the park

moto was to teach them values
screen filled with flashy commercials
of naked women,

they needed to civilize
the brutes who lived
in that faraway land

from Woman with Camera

Corinne Larochelle

translated by Antonio D'Alfonso

from Butterfly Hunting

Predator of secrets
I detect the fragile world
bursting at its seams.

Baptism day
in Washington Square Park
for my brand new Pentax.

A young Puerto Rican stares at me,
feet on enemy line.

The gap between us tapers
while a star sparkles
on our foreheads.

I become a double iris
firm on solid ground
at the corner of Fifty-Seventh Street
and Fifth Avenue.

I am snatched rapidly
and pulled outside of myself
by the lives of strangers.

I fill the frame
with his young body,
and gulp down a couple
of soluble tablets.

Getting closer
to the boy with a beret,
I will munch on the line
of his open mouth.

I will fasten his eyes
to the strap of surprise.

The camera is cruel:
a monster in a box
that grabs hold of you.

Tirelessly following
the glitter of motion
the weird press releases
pinned outside train stations
on car-free streets.

As long as the universe is abuzz
I can choose the proper angle
and catch stars
shooting out of people's eyes.

Thrown out of paradise at a young age, she begins to shoot photographs. She jots down the addresses of funeral homes, and classifies the settlings by age and sex. An area in Eden where fruits are scattered over tablecloths and the keys she will rattle striding into her labyrinth. Depending on which day it is, and with more or less inventiveness. Depending on the organ as well, her beating heart. She possesses a legitimate ambition: soliciting the body.

One a.m. She is marching out of the subway, her eyes swollen by anomaly. Those who rummage through the grotesque find the dark flashes of light sculpted on the gypsum. People glean the leftovers of dignity from the mouths of sewers. They are testing the quality of new elegance by polishing it against sidewalks. She stands out with her arrows, the moon's crescent engraved on her forehead. A beast's face noticed, she begins to talk to it, then slips into its costume.

Streets, alleys, lightning.

On the building's rooftop
childhood looks down,
impossible to see through thick clouds.

Zooming down on details
I point my instrument
on passers-by fleeing away.

Campers in Central Park.

At daybreak
I slide into his daily habits:
empty bottles to amass.

A baby carriage loaded with glass
rolls down Third Avenue.

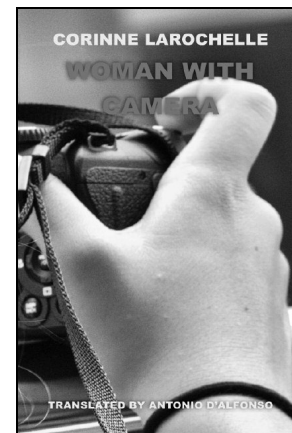
The refined man explains etymology to me
scraping up fragments of a broken mirror.

His mind wanders off to Sophia Loren
as he bites into a maraschino cherry.

He and I share common ancestors,
the bridge of our nose,
the horizon welcomed,
a protruding vein.

Life is beautiful.
Thank you, Mr. Mack.

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*Born in Three-Rivers, Quebec, **Corinne Larochelle** has published six books of poetry and a first novel, Le parfum de Janis (2015). She works and lives in Montreal.*



*The translator, **Antonio D'Alfonso**, is a writer and filmmaker who has lived in Toronto and Montreal.*

She spots everything: solitude, strangeness, a woman and her oversized hat, a man and his loneliness, grief on bone's end. Ever since she was young, she recognized her own talent for nabbing the rarest of butterflies. The human mosaic, a beat on which she could hum. Traveling toward lasting equilibrium, the most exquisite tattoo on her heart.

If space won't catch my attention,
I can't help.

Each sidewalk brings its distraction,
some, asleep,
others, eyes lost
in alcohol.

Vagrants all,
we are to some degree
racing without eyelids
straight to the corner drugstore.

Hope: a communion
at sunset,
a kiss luminous
on the drive-in movie screen.

I flounder back
setting fire to crucifixes with my camera.

from Night Blues

Yolande Villemaire & Claude Beausoleil

translated by Antonio D'Alfonso

from Violet Night
by Yolande Villemaire

Wait, but wait
the Guide of the Lost Ones whispers to me
let
let the violet night
seep down into you

Breathe
breathe in the fragrance of fragile flowers
blossoming into softness

The Angel of Intelligence
unfurls its fractal arborescence
over us
and, poet, you listen to him
you listen to him
you feel the magnitude of his subtle presence

Hear the wind of this violet night
its timbre
the precision of its signature vibration

Listen, poet, listen to
this steady undertow, it is the flood of Time
if you pay attention
there is deep within
a rustling
like silk being ripped

If you cross and you do cross over
oh yes, poet, you cross over
and step into the irreversibility of space

There are four walls here
one, two, three, four
it is small, very small indeed
yet it is alive
it breathes
it feeds you
it cradles you

from Jack & Billie in the Blues of Night
by Claude Beausoleil

Jack,

what you say to Billie
on this American night

is your special way
of jazzing up energy

Black Billie, you listen
you listen to his complaints

in French you listen
you know the origins

of this black continent
you, Billie, the singer

the embodiment of suffering
in your flesh of voice

you sing it he writes it
you sing, you write it for her

on the road on the road
in the blues of silence

your black voice, Billie, your voice your despair
all your power too

Jack is listening to you tonight
on the road on the road for life

Billie Blues in the night
listening to your words

lost and inconsolable
with ecstasy and anger

you repeat you repeat Billie murmuring
when night opens when Jack recalls

the journey of his lifetime
without language in the night *on the road on the road*

you listen to Billie her blues
of cadences and wanderings

Strange fruit in the night

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Yolande Villemaire
&
Claude Beausoleil
NIGHT BLUES

Translated by Antonio D'Alfonso



Yolande Villemaire is one of Quebec's most prolific writers, proficient in both poetry and prose. She has given poetry readings and performances around the world. She has published more than twenty-five books, five of which are available in English translation from Ekstasis Editions: *Midnight Tides of Amsterdam*, *Poets & Centaurs*, *India, India*, *Little Red Berries* and *The Cygnus Constellation*. She has also published a book of poems written in English: *Silence Is a Healing Cave*. Yolande Villemaire lives in Montreal and is the director of TOTEMPOÉSIE.



Poet, novelist, literary critic born in Montreal in 1948, **Claude Beausoleil** published more than sixty books. Director of *Lèvres urbaines*, a poetry review he founded in 1983, President of Honor of the *Maison de la Poésie de Montréal*, member of the *Oscar Wilde Society*, Claude Beausoleil has been decorated by l'Ordre des francophones d'Amérique. Since 1997, he has been a member of the prestigious Académie Mallarmé in Paris. He was the first poet laureate of Montreal, his hometown.



injury blues, Billie, in your voice origins
her pain and helplessness

helpless
lit with innocence

with Jack sharing this night of America
in this nowhere bar

haunted by slivers of voice
expressing desire

***Practical Anxiety* by Heidi Greco**

Review by Andrew Parkin

Heidi Greco is known already from her previous books of poetry, notably those about Amelia Earhart, *A: The Amelia Poems* (Lipstick Press, 2009) and *Flightpaths* (Caitlin, 2017). I enjoyed her live reading from these books in New Westminster last year. Her latest book of poems, *Practical Anxiety*, is in six parts or sections; this suggests that Greco has read Auden's *Age of Anxiety* (1947) that was organized into six "eclogues." In fact, she quotes from Auden's book as a sort of preface to her own: "The gods are wringing their great worn hands/ For their watchman is away, their world engine/ Creaking and cracking."

Auden's title is as striking as those lines recalling the enormous worry of the bare survival of civilization: survival after two world wars and the invention and use of the atomic bomb, linked to the new menace of the communist dictator Stalin's possession of atomic secrets given to the Soviets by the ideologically motivated scientist spies. The constant anxiety during the "Cold War" has now faded, even with the old KGB man, Mr. Putin, in charge of Russia, territorially the largest country on earth; yet anxiety remains about the possible use of atomic weapons by the leaders of half-developed countries with ambitions to seem very important, or, Heaven forbid, the terrorist groups, if they can get their blood-stained hands on the bomb. These are realistic geopolitical anxieties.

Although Greco has followed Auden's six-part structure and borrowed his catchword, "Anxiety," the very real geopolitical concerns still with us are not treated in any detail in her poems. Very recently, our current Prime Minister, M. Trudeau fils, was shown on the TV news referring to "anxiety from global turbulence." Greco's anxiety is by contrast low-key. But many of these poems are bright with vivid imagery and finely cut lines. So what are her "practical anxieties"?

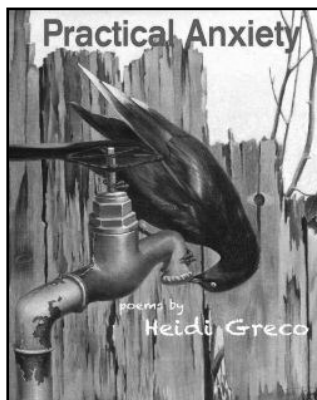
In the first section, "A String of Worry Beads," the opening poem "Oh Dear Angel" presents us with the children's book characters Dick and Jane, but while all seems normal, their dog is agitated and their guardian angel disquietingly "holds in her fingers a thick cigar, the tip of it hottest orange" (p. 3). We are left to surmise on the dangers of our world for a new generation. In her "Land of the Sugar Plum Fairies" she evokes the fears of a child at bedtime, trying to sleep, but tormented by the idea of her heart as a beating walnut which must be placed within a snowman. Such strange fears are a part of many a childhood, as are injections into the arm by a doctor, "Doc Robin" in her book. A more sinister, unnamed fear, arrives in "Geneses" where her meeting with her cigar smoking uncle ends with "... and I believed."

Real anxiety, though, is conveyed in the plight of the hidden boy in "Don't Tell" who cannot escape his hiding place when all the other kids go home. The thoughtless cruelty of children is conveyed vividly also in "Chasing the Light of Fireflies."

A prose poem, "Cheese Leg," has vivid images and deals with the child's fear and dislike of butchers and their shops. As someone who had to learn retail butchering from the age of twelve until I was hauled away into the armed forces at age eighteen, I see this piece as stereotyping the butcher's shop. The voice is that of a post-war pampered generation who could buy as much meat as was needed and drive away with mom in, luxury of luxuries, the family car. Greco doesn't tell us whether she ate the meat her mother bought from "loud laughing" butchers in the shop whose smell she couldn't cope with! Has Greco's growing girl any sympathy for workers who have to face unpleasant jobs every working day? The final poem in this section on childhood, "Chinook," depicts a girl facing "the red mistake," her first period.

The second section, "The Mathematics of Anxiety," deals with mundane and adolescent worries, such as weight problems. In "The Uncertainty of Machines" she frets at sinister dangers (plumbing nightmares) that I think of as funny, the "change of faucets being reversed,/ installed by left-handed plumbers in a hurry" (p. 19). I am glad I am left-handed myself. It's a bit of an advantage when playing tennis, badminton, or squash against the right-handed.

In "Big Plans" she thinks of a next life in which she will be a plumber. She doesn't mention whether she'll be right- or left-handed but the poem finds at its end a disturbing image, "those taps drip-dripping/ deep inside your skull" (p. 95). Where Greco is fearful of her motor mower in "Hazardous," I think she's lucky to have one and a lawn to mow! Many B.C. youngsters today will never be able to afford to buy a house on its



Practical Anxiety
Heidi Greco
Inanna Publications
2018
\$18.95

own lot.

Meanwhile she is "...overanxious over trying/ to quit smoking..." (p. 21). I could go on listing and pooh-poohing these anxieties of a bourgeois Canadian in a vast country thousands of miles away from the horrors of Africa, the Arab world, and that major terrorist target, Paris (France, not Texas). I could notice her off-hand reference to the fathers of children "...the year we all got pregnant/ with somebody's baby" (p. 93). Instead I now want to look at the quality of the poems as poetry.

In "Regenerative," her art as a poet makes us feel the experience of planting bulbs, "each oniony shape," but there is a moment of uncertainty in the language of the poem. In the second quatrain there is the "conviction that green tips will again suffice." Suffice? Surely she means "surface," the word she uses in the last quatrain where "they will surface towards earliest warmth?" (p. 92). It could be a mere typo, but if she really means "suffice" we wait to find out how green tips will "suffice" for what?

This uncertainty causes a bit of reader anxiety. And this reader's anxiety is aroused by linear verse that lacks music. When verse lacks word music, my reaction is to call it unpoetic verse. In "The Importance of the Bird," Greco has a list of exquisite things the bird is, but I think her last lines protest too much: "The bird is more than all that matters,/ bird knows sky" (p. 75).

No, it is not more than all that matters. This is a sentimental over-statement. If I saw a bird swooping on a baby in the open air, for example, I would not think the winged predator more than all that matters. I would frighten the bird away to protect the baby. But many of the poems are elegantly poised, as is "Full Moon, April," where the moon is so bright she can hear it. This Rimbaud-like confusion of the senses works very well.

Her sequence in ten sections, "River of Salmon, River of Dreams" has an attractive fluidity, using a simple vocabulary in which the fish word "milt" appears like a prophecy. Sometimes, as in "Lakeside, Summer Afternoon" she is an accomplished imagist, when she ends the poem with rain hitting the lake to make "tiny wet stalagmites,/ pointing toward sky" (p. 85). In "Even the Starship Enterprise is Being Grounded," Greco raises the major anxiety of our time, "I worry they'll remember us/ for ruining the planet..." (p. 78).

There are many very good poems in this volume, some of them prose poems, like "Heaven is Some Place and no Place we Know" (p. 35). But in "Wordsong" she has a poem in brief verse couplets and produces herself "a thing so true/ as morning light" (p. 91).

For me, her best poem, so finely attuned to human experience, is "Prep talks" where we encounter the aged and dying mother without sentimentality but in verse that delivers true feeling and experience: mother

tells me she's been having long discussions with my dad
my son remarks he hopes
they get along a little better
with shining eyes she tells us
she's ready to go, hears the rustle,
wings about to unfurl (p. 88)

This I would vote for as the best in the collection.

In "My children still bring prizes for my birthday," Greco tells us that her children bring her flowers picked from local spots as presents, for "They know that I have everything I could ever need/ so now they bring me flowers" (p. 79). She remembers them as small children bringing dandelions. I don't worry very much about the anxieties of Heidi Greco now that I know her grown up children don't seem worried about a mom who has everything she could ever need.

As a book, *Practical Anxiety* has a wonderful cover of a bird in a parched place where even the tap is dry. The poems are followed by sparse notes, but though she mentions 1432 (near the date of Joan of Arc's martyrdom), the notes never refer to the date or unlock its significance. Tant pis. Dommage. Among the back cover publicity quotes, I find Anne Simpson and Catherine Owen say just what is needed. I look forward to seeing what Heidi Greco will publish next.

Andrew Parkin recently read with Jessica Li from his bilingual *Star With a Thousand Moons* (Victoria: Ekstasis) in the University of Regina and a few weeks later at York University, Ontario. Meanwhile he is completing a trilogy of novels about counter-terrorism.

Food Truck Elements of Shadowed Lights by d.n. simmers

Review by H. W. Bryce

Painting word pictures deftly, succinctly, shadows of light, light of shades, meanings and lives and snow and frost and cold, d.n. simmers introduces us to a dour yet hopeful world of cold and compassion. Although full of angst-filled memories, there is both light passion and shades of compassion lurking in these stark light and dark short-hand shadow poems that are compelling.

To this reader, the shadows of simmer's words dropped on the page in gasps, like sucked in rage at the inconsistencies of fate and man, conjure up images of frost-ridden down and outers dossing down on and/or in cardboard for room and no board to shiver the night away only to waken from some sort of half sleep to find that the thermometer hates them and their flesh is as stiff as their bones.

And yet...and yet, the poet speaks of the importance of writing – essential as reading – and poetry is a universal image. "In Mid-Air": "Writing is important breathing // Out of the corners of the blank whiteness / of words coming in and going out."

In "Walking a Long Time Ago" simmers, speaks of young memories; old, clothed from sight, shadows coming painful into light, snapped on by a word, expressed, yet still a knot in the throat of an echo...

And then came summer. And the sea and the surf and the boards and the six-packs of muscle and grit – and the one on the surf board that went through the pier, and failed to reappear: "That was it. His riding days done. / We had to say goodbye."

From "Stored", and with "Remembrance Day" a touching elegy to his brother, remembering their swims together: " You're with me brother, / With each stroke. / And I miss you."

Of course, then there are the food trucks poems. Read them. You may just hunger for more. And a splodge of sunshine arrives in a reminder of how damned lucky we are to be living where we do.

In "Bearing Away All the Songs", simmers gives us a gift, here, in contrast to elsewhere: "And the air is full of hope and filled with / birds that are all mating. Have a life And future."

This book is a lament for a life lost in the shadows and to a life found, all in the same body, all in the same mind. simmers' style is stark, simple, even cryptic, yet accessible, readable. It is warm, it is true, and it's from the heart. Somehow, with the snow and the ice and the haunting memories, I found Food Truck Elements of Shadowed Lights a very worthwhile read. Recommended.

H. W. Bryce is a former journalist, editor, book editor, teacher, courier, and robbery and kidnap victim while travelling the Middle East and North Africa. His poetry appears in anthologies in Canada, the US, and India. He is the author of a family book *Ann, A Tribute*, and of *Chasing a Butterfly: A journey in poems of love and loss to acceptance*.

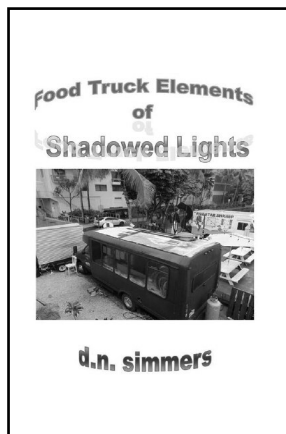
Every Shameless Ray by Leslie Timmins

Review by Candice James

Leslie Timmins rides a polished slalom ski across a shiny lake of sparkling words that bounce and dance to the rhythm she created and the visuals she paints on the waves she displaces as she shifts through shadows and slices through light, exposing the raw bone of every shameless ray. Timmins is a master of strong and vibrant opening lines that place the reader's mind in a comfy lazy-boy recliner to envision the cinematic unfolding of her poem(s).

In the poem "Amata" the opening three lines immediately set the stage with a depth of deep sparkle and evocative mind prodding: "When the pack horses carrying you to your gold rush / grow gaunt, buck off their burden, desert you, / even your enemy is lost"

The poem "The Stoning" bypasses all exteriors and speaks directly to the synapses



Food Truck Elements of Shadowed Lights
d.n. simmers
Silver Bow Publishing
76 pages

with the picturesque opening lines: "If you enter here / a scarlet sky will ache behind you"

"The Prevailing Wind" is an amazing poem and it opens with a strong first stanza that fervently demands we read on: "An eagle liquid as a manta ray swims / the visible shallows of wind. / the tallest trees shake, branches bounce / and we breathe it in and our ribs unlace,/ our flesh, so easily, wing."

So many lines coil around my heartstrings and wrap my spirit in warmth as evidenced in these line from the poem "How the Heart Grows Strong Again": "I know when I'm lost / I should take any road the land offers / from the end of love to whatever comes after"

In the second stanza and the final line of the poem "In the Morning When They Fling the Shutters Wide", the poem stands tall, taller, tallest: "Canvases lean like corpses against the wall / their bruised fruit stain rags below. / Their silver leaves. Pleasing. Mere vapours now." And the last line of the poem shouts itself out loudly: "the sun calls out with every shameless ray"

This ekphrastic poem "Seated Woman, Back Turned", written to the Matisse painting of the same name, is fully included here:

"The cement stoop in the front of the little house / my family lived in awhile / where I sat on summer evenings, 14 years old, / bony knees, chest, face warm,, still being / warmed after the heat of a summer day // all on my own, no one calling or screaming // rooftops and poplars slipped into silhouette, / the rim of the sun caught at the edges of things / as their insides filled with night / and a horizon / I hadn't really seen before - / just, sort of, abiding - // Matisse made one sky thus: / left-swinging and horizontal, / deliquescent over the silk / and flex of a bay / and the play / of sailboats. // this one window so wide to the outside."

Many of the poems, ekphrastically married to a myriad of Matisse paintings, open the windows and throw back the curtains to expose the multi-dimensional landscape of Timmins' exquisite mindset. This book is well worth reading.

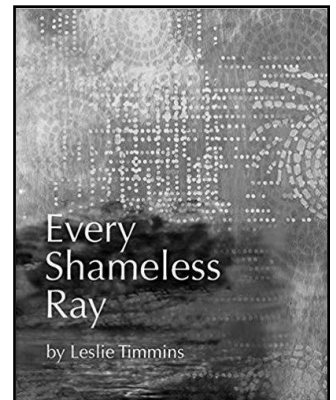
Candice James is a poet, musician, visual artist, singer songwriter. She was Poet Laureate of New Westminster, BC for two 3 year terms 2010-2016. and awarded the title of Poet Laureate Emerita in November 2016 by the City. She is the author of thirteen poetry books, the most recent *The Water Poems* (Ekstasis Editions 2017).

Rainforest in Russet by Cynthia Sharp

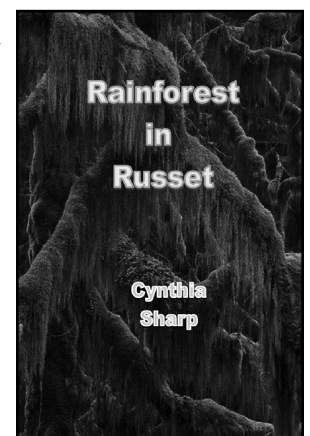
Review by Stephen Karr

Cynthia Sharp has written a truly amazing, bold, brave, and achingly honest book of poetry. Bravo! I was really captivated by the topics she weaved into her writing. I was moved by her references to love found, lost, and found again in various forms, interspersed with natural themes. I love the rhythm and flow of her writing. In combination with her eloquence, passion, and insight, I sense the thought and determination put into each line. I particularly like the brilliant Tribute to Orange, which captures vignettes from periods of her life, all connected with a reference to the colour orange. As a bibliophile, I also like Sleeping with Books, as the imagery in this one speaks very well to my passion. Into the Heart speaks very powerfully to me about moving from adversity and "brokenness" to moving beyond and being "made whole in love, in humanity, in service." I have chosen three poems, but every one in this collection moved me in some powerful way. I highly recommend this book for lovers of brave and honest nature poetry.

Stephen Karr is a library technician and poet who writes about social and environmental issues, nature, and personal observations on his life and locating himself in the world. He is a member of The Federation of British Columbia Writers and Royal City Literary Arts Society.



Every Shameless Ray
Leslie Timmins
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Rainforest in Russet
Cynthia Sharp
Silver Bow Publishing
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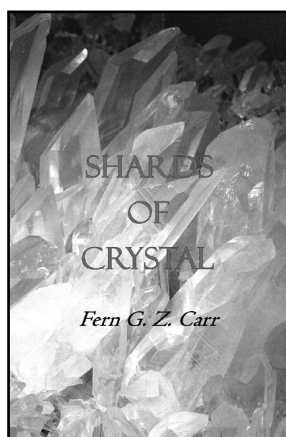
Shards of Crystal by Fern G. Z. Carr

Review by Carmelo Militano

Although this is Carr's first poetry collection we can say with certainty Carr is not a newbie poet. She has published frequently and widely in journals across North America and if I am not mistaken in 47 of the 50 states in the US. Her goal is to be published in all fifty. Her work also has an international presence, appearing in Israel, Latin America, and even a journal in Finland. And finally, one of her poems was chosen by NASA and launched into deep space!

Shards of Crystal collects together what I gather is both Carr's present and past poetic work and puts it all under one roof so to speak. The poems gathered here are powerful dark meditations on illness, the betrayal of the body, and suicide. The opening poem, for example 'Dancing Through the Flames' describes in grizzly detail the mental anguish and slow painful suicide of an injured older man. The poem does not flinch and nor does it try and find comforting clichés. It is a steely-eyed and uncompromising at telling us the mental and physical horror, and suffering of the man. The short powerful poems 'Anorexia' and 'Dementia' are similar examples of Carr's unflinching eye, her refusal to look away from pain and what appears to be meaningless suffering. It is the horrible details that often make the poems powerful and almost unbearable to witness.

The poem 'Hysterectomy' written in a playful experimental form that ironically underlines and describes the ugly and cruel surgical procedure. The natural world or nature is equally savage and dark. The poem 'Duckling' appears at first to be a sweet evocation of the natural world but the poem changes direction swiftly and we watch in horror with Carr as the mother of several innocent downy soft duckling's murders by drowning one her children, "forcing its fuzzy head/underwater/again and again." Another poem 'Marlin' is part of a series of poems here that show us that Mother Nature is far from being sweetness and light, a world of blissful wonder. It is Carr's repeated rejection of the easy and the cliché or to defy the poetic convention of a beau-



Shards of Crystal
Fern G. Z. Carr
Silver Bow Publishing
98 pages
2018

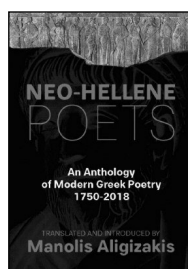
tiful and peaceful Nature that makes her work original. Take as another example the poem 'Anaconda' where we participate in the slow agonizing death of a truly horrific creature trapped in mud and see it slowly die under the unbearable jungle sun. The poem literally makes your own skin squirm with discomfort. The reverse, however, is also true. Carr writes more than one poem for the animals who have brought love and comfort into her life and she misses their presence.

Of the last three sections of the collection, one is devoted to poems about family: her father and brother's axe accident, the love of a mother, the death of a child by leukemia.

The other section, reveals meditative poems on the nature of death and how death can appear sudden and unexpected when you are doing a simple mundane task such as delivering mail and suddenly you plunge to your death off the road and into a lake. Her poem about the state of a corpse unflinching in its repose also suggests Carr has a sense of humour about death. These last two sections continue and extend Carr's uncompromising vision. It is a vision that aims to be clear and steady in its attitude towards the many uncomfortable and unbearable truths about the body, nature and death, the reality of cruelty, and yet Carr's poems in the final section of this fine collection also find joy in the mystery of the self and express wonder (Neruda on the Beach at Capri, Cool Jazz, I Am) and pleasure (Morning Rapture) waking rested to a world of quiet and solitary contentment.

This is a vast and various collection of poetry. It aims to be steady, uncompromising, and rejects easy truths. It seeks and brings to us instead what Ezra Pound once declared as the definition of poetry: Poetry is news that stays news. You will find the news about life here.

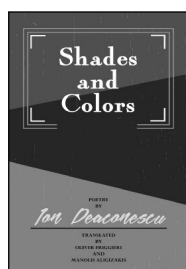
Carmelo Militano is a Winnipeg poet and writer. His books include *Ariadne's Thread* (winner of the 2004 F. G. Bressani award for poetry) as well as a collected poems, *Feast Days* (2010) and the travelogue and family memoir *The Fate of Olives* (2006) and the novel *Sebastiano's Vine*. His latest work is *Lost Aria* (Ekstasis Editions, 2018), a short story collection.



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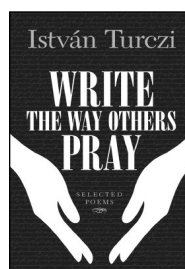
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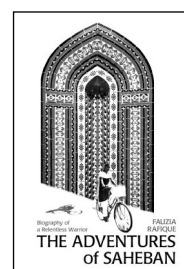
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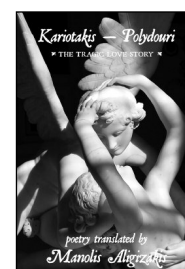
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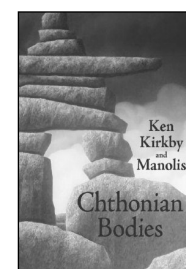
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