

CPR

*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

CANADIAN POETRY REVIEW ISSN 1923-3019 JAN 2017 VOL 7 ISSUE 1 \$3.95

Contents

Jacques Rancourt

from *Forty-Seven Stations for a Ravaged Town* page 2

- I. From North Dakota to Nantes
- II. A Town Called Lac Mégantic

D.C. Reid

from *The Spirit of the Thing and the Thing Itself* page 3

1. The happy little elegy
2. A little S & M

Walter Hildbrandt

from *Now Time/Jetzt Zeit/Nunc Stans* page 4
Berlin 2013 (excerpt)

Randy Kohan

from *Rain of Naughts* page 5
Summer morning in Canada
Old country curse
Pushkin and Shakespeare, Mandelstam and I
A lesson I learned from the century passed
Instant haunting

Blaine Greenwood

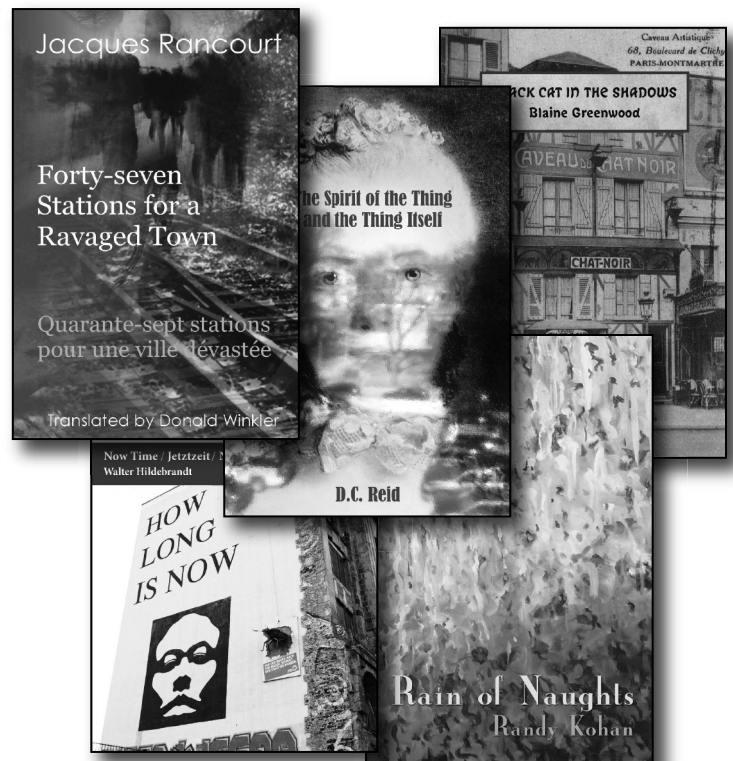
from *Black Cat in the Shadows* page 6
Black Ribbons
She Does Require Much of You
Self Portrait: 1886

Review

Orphic Poititics by Tim Lilburn page 7
Reviewed by Martin VanWoudenberg



photo: D.C. Reid



Published by CPR: The Canadian Poetry Review Ltd.
Publisher/Editor: Richard Olafson
Managing Editor: Carol Ann Sokoloff
Circulation manager: Bernard Gastel

Legal deposit at the National Library of Canada, 2014.
CPR welcomes manuscripts and letters, but we take no responsibility for their safe return. If you would like your work back, enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Do not send original artwork. All texts will be edited for clarity and length, and authorship checked; please include all contact information.

The CPR is published six times a year. Back issues are available at \$4.00. A one-year subscription is \$20.00. Please send a cheque payable to the PRRB.

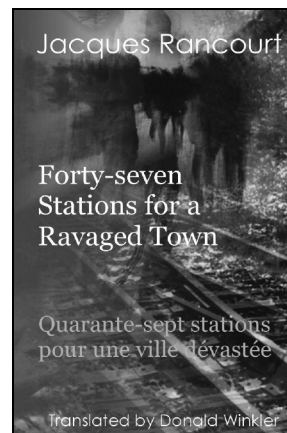
CPR mailing address for all inquiries:
Box 8474 Main Postal Outlet, Victoria, B.C.
Canada V8W 3S1
phone & fax: (250) 385-3378

Copyright 2017 the Canadian Poetry Review for the contributors

from 47 Stations for a Ravaged Town

Jacques Rancourt
translated by Donald Winkler

Ekstasis Editions
ISBN 978-1-77171-139-5
Poetry
52 pages
6 x 9
\$23.95



I

From North Dakota to Nantes

There is, east of Montreal, Farnham, and
Sherbrooke,
a little village called Nantes
there is, 12 kilometres on and 120 metres down
a little town called Lac-Mégantic
and a 1.2% incline between the two
there is the number 10 and the number 12
that seem to play a strange role in this story

There is in North Dakota
3000 kilometres to the west
the Bakken oil field
where shale gas is extracted
where rock is fracked to extract shale gas
with a significant input from water and sand and
chemical additives
water and sand and dubious substances

The night is black
there's a 10,000 tonne train
a train 1.4 kilometres long
come from Bakken and heading towards Nantes
there's a railway company called MMA
the Montreal Maine & Atlantic Railway
bearing shale gas towards Nantes

The train is heavy and long
as it rolls it makes a muffled noise
it has to pass through Lac-Mégantic
on the way to Maine and then New Brunswick
where the refineries and the Irving company wait
the night is black the train is heavy
72 oil cars and dubious additives
It's already travelled over 10 hours this 5th of July
from Farnham to Nantes
200 kilometres on inferior rails
with the lead locomotive on its last legs
locomotive number 5017 for the record and its 72
tank cars
it has to stop at Nantes for a shift change
it's a heavy evening this night of the 5th to 6th in
July 2013

Now it's 11 pm in Nantes
on the main track as always
the main track not the siding track
as is authorized by MMA protocol
as Transport Canada does not proscribe
the shift change is scheduled for 7 o'clock
the night holds its breath

II

A town called Lac-Mégantic

There is 12 kilometres from there
a small town called Lac-Mégantic
an Abenaki name it's said was given to its lake
and that means "place where there are trout in
the lake"
or "in the camp of the salmon trout"
depending on whom you talk to
and seen from the sky the lake is shaped like a
fish

A small town of 6000 souls
split in half by the railway line
around which it grew
in the days of the marshalling yards
locomotive warehouses, storage for coal and salt
before passenger trains abandoned the town
and the station became a tourist bureau

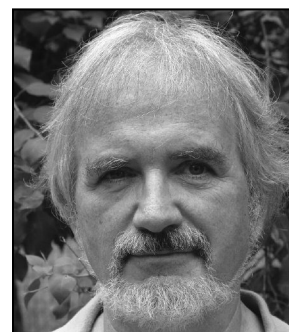
There is this town hot in summer
a town of snow in winter
on the edge of the Appalachians
crossed from north to south by Laval and
Frontenac streets
that join hands here and there along the rail line
following the curve of the rail line
as if to reel in all the feelings in the environs

There are farther back from Frontenac Street
next to the rail line
Québec-Central Street and its funeral homes
then leading down to it with their trees and
wooden porches
with their names giving voice to ancient and
recent history
Dollard Champlain Papineau Laurier and Bonin
streets
repositories of urban calm

Seen from space at night
it all represents in Quebec's southeast
but a tiny luminous point
you can make out neither the lake nor the river
nor on the lake side the rail line behind Cartier
Street
only a minuscule sign of life may be detected
and life is carefree this night in Lac-Mégantic

Jacques Rancourt was born in Quebec and has lived in Paris since 1971. He has published twenty collections of poetry and artist's books, essays and anthologies devoted to

Quebec poetry, French, African, Haitian and West Indian, as well as English and Spanish poetry translations. For the last thirty years he has hosted the French-English Poetry Festival and the magazine La Traductière. With Éditions du Noroît he published Quarante-sept stations pour une ville dévastée (2014) and Paysages et personnages (2012). This is his first publication in English.

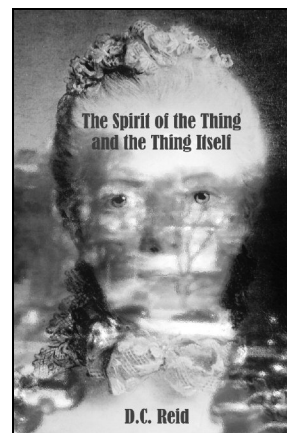


It's endless summer this Friday night
this night of July 5th to 6th
they are singing and dancing at the Musi-Café
30 feet from the rail line
they are celebrating 2 birthdays
it's a night to linger in place
as does the river where the water turns to the sea

from The Spirit of the Thing and the Thing Itself

D.C. Reid

Ekstasis Editions
ISBN 978-1-77171-123-4
Poetry
92 pages
6 x 9
\$23.95



The Spirit of the Thing and the Thing Itself is **D.C. Reid's** 12th book (his oeuvre includes: poetry, novels and non-fiction). Reid's Love and Other Things That Hurt and The Hunger were shortlisted in their separate years for the Dorothy Livesay Award, BC's highest prize for a book of poetry. Among many other awards, Reid has taken silver twice in the Bliss Carman Award. His work has been translated into Hindi, Spanish and Chinese. He is a past President of the League of Canadian Poets.

1. The happy little elegy

*And it's hard being dead,
and full of retrieval, before one gradually feels
a little eternity. Though the living
all make the error of drawing too sharp a
distinction.*

~ Duino Elegies - Rainer Maria Rilke

And it's hard being dead.

A worm will spew a little dirt on the garden bed.
The robin in its endless search is a strobe light
finding
the oxygen of your lost attention, your tongue at a
twisted
lip. Desire is a molten thing, it moves within my
thighs.
An ocean is a horse that knows only where it goes
and when it turns in winter aspen conjures
a beauty. You can't say what kind only less
sentient, sentimental, less squandering.
Instead, I or you have a toe testing the linoleum

*and full of retrieval, before one gradually feels
like the heron, head aside on its beach asleep.*
In its vertical world, we are a granite monument
to waiting. The gecko's on its white-washed wall
with sucker toes, the sound of rubber boots.
Hey there in my pants, where the fate of
mankind resides and subsides from time to
time when you are away; that long
interminable rope resists being apparent to
the looking eye, the hungry iris, or

*a little eternity. Though the living
the modernity of the galaxy believing
with intensity the black matter we cannot see,
the dust. Without eyes there is nothing
other than now as the frowsy heads of
hyacinths break blue from the snatching hand.*
Starry, starry night, without a sound for
striding within your brain, upsetting
the ear's knack for keeping our feet on the
ground, the sapient, sentient Earth, the sphagnum,

all make the error of drawing too sharp a distinction.
The endless cantor of winter muscle, the stamping
horse feet on their way to spring, under Northern
lights at 3 am, the tingling ionosphere responding
to the squeak of 30 below. The hard hard snow,
the sand, the hourglass. Say you misstep, head down
and sleepy with scent of women. You land
a gibbet in the reins. The horse you never
liked much, walks you over, each hoof making
an accordion of your ribs, a broken boat, a place to go.

2. A little S & M

*Let the Archangel now, the dangerous one, from
behind the stars,
take a single step down and toward us: our own heart,
beating on high would beat us down. What are you?
Early successes, Creation's favourite ones,*
~Duino Elegies - Rainer Maria Rilke

*Let the Archangel now, the dangerous one, from behind
the stars*

stutter his concupiscence and stumble on his scars:
the verb to skewer, a little food and the rush to saliva.
Voice like a beak: long, thin, with the intelligence of
sharps.

The dumb post cormorant, black and pathetic, yellow
eyeing sea that goes this way and then goes that way.
So the food – the endless slime fish – passing to and fro
does not catch the eye of the black accountant.
But the shit hawk strikes and the black bird wakens
to its own stupidity. Well, yellow eye

take a single step down and toward us: our own heart.
You slippery bladed beak, you blackest angel on the dirt
just heaving flanks, black wet wings, maybe a little
S & M, leather bits trailing wetly, blackly apart.
How can we wonder whether an angel flies purely?
The one who knows death is death.
A van Gogh iris goes back to earth softened by the
red stuff from the ear he gave to depression.
Cezanne found intelligence left such an impression
he could only trust what first came to the eye.

Beating on high would beat us down. What are you?
Beating the blade, folding it back and beating you
again. A sword? Cherry blossom deaths of samurai?
Some riparian melodrama of heron? Screw
its old man complaint, neck it folds in half, spearing a
bullhead, sculpin that skips from rock to rock
under the unjaundiced Cezanne surface of things.
Saltwater rings a person dry, scatters your
intentional looking – Leonardo's dinner group
analyzed in long lines that vanish no matter his

early successes, Creation's favourite ones.
Painting a portrait of ourselves without a mirror, one's
own face the immaculate perception. May
we portray the only image we can sans our own
infecting eye. You understand don't you?
The Archangel ain't coming *after* you, he's
coming *for* you, bill separating you from your
delicious skin. You plop on an algorithmic table.
God's favourite vocation holds the Earth, and
the ocean, oh, and the black cloth, runcible bird.

Notes:

Shit hawk – a slang term for seagulls.
Cezanne – postimpressionism versus impressionism.
Katia Grubisic – 'riparian melodrama', used with permission.

from Now Time/ Jetzt Zeit/Nunc Stans Walter Hildbrandt

Berlin 2013 (excerpt)

where

The Wall

came down

nothing lines up

Holocaust Memorial

even cement

now cracking

Jewish Museum

zig zags

across a void

nothing lines up

displacement

Stalin's Grass

carefully

covered up

fractured
museums on the island

float

sewage runs

above ground

large concrete slabs

need to be held

together

steel bands

screwed

into the concrete

memorial

remembering/documenting

concentration

camps

Ekstasis Editions

ISBN 978-1-77171-141-8

Poetry

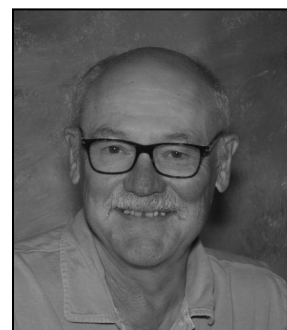
188 pages

7 x 8

\$34.95



Historian and poet Walter Hildebrandt was born in Brooks, Alberta and now lives in Edmonton. He was the Director of University of Calgary Press and Athabasca University Press. He has worked as a historian for Parks Canada and as a consultant to the Treaty 7 Tribal Council, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Banff Bow Valley Task Force. He was awarded the Gustavus Meyers Award 1997, for outstanding work on human rights in North America, for his book *The Spirit and Intent of Treaty 7*. His long poem *Sightings* was nominated for the McNally-Robinson Book of the Year in Manitoba in 1992. Another volume of poetry, *Where the Land Gets Broken*, received the Stephan G. Stephanson for best poetry book in Alberta in 2005.



Ulbricht/Honecker

brutally

kept a people

apart

inscribed by ideology

subverted

with intelligence

communism

fascism

fungible

escapes

poster shows

escapes

soldier jumping

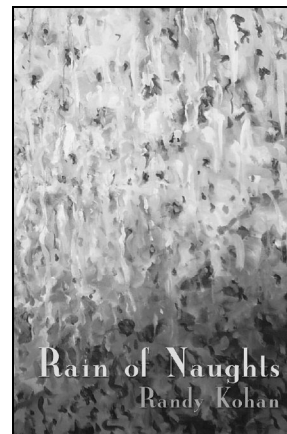
barbed wire

"Freedom Must Not End Here"

from Rain of Naughts

Randy Kohan

Ekstasis Editions
ISBN 978-1-77171-135-7
Poetry
72 pages
6 x 9
\$23.95



Summer morning in Canada

In you, twentieth century,
most of my life resides.

Beneath these darkened curtain clouds
I smell you in this summer morning
see you in the broken twigs
scattered on the street
wrapped in shrouds of rain,

see you in a crow's black sheen
cawing, restless, on a line
reflected on a rippling puddle
left from last night's storm.

I place my forehead there
upon your watery breast
close my eyes
open wide
and listen

for the bullet's crack to come...

Old-country curse

Ah such weakness, this old-country curse,
like a poor peasant timid,
when something inside is troubled
by any rise of wind

when, like a black cloak snapped
over an only window,
I take to shaking and dread.

And then to call on you
my private vespers!
to stay the darkness near.
To call on you!
your all-night vigil
of holy supplication –
with icons, candles burning
at grim Galician moons –
to pour your solemn chorus down,
reclaim this immigrant soul...

Ah such weakness, this old-country curse,
when snow is falling hard,
to sing full-blooded of fear and sorrow
and find my courage there.

Pushkin and Shakespeare, Mandelstam and I

I too have communed in the statue
presence of Pushkin's shade;
there was no one there to stop me
and the feeling that I should...

As the earth slowly turns
its sides to the sun
the soul must turn
its cracks to light

if it yearns to be caught
in the rounding wake
of some great constancy,

to live within hearing
of the dulcimer tone
that shudders the depths
of the earth like a bell
ringing a mending, doleful, sweet

to feel the brush
of Gabriel's wing, Shakespeare's joy
rolling past your shoulder...

Wait, my dear boy, wait.
While you set the feasting table
the table is being set,
and as much as you want it, standing in line,
you never really wished to be
a member of People's Will, served
out of turn...

My whole world spins
on an axis of faith,
arms open wide;
fear and hope, the gnashing of teeth,
Osip in his time, I in mine.

A lesson I learned from the century passed

Though with my versing friends we play
the senses, six,
the future, that rose, I propose,

that flower blossoming
just beyond the fence,
is untouchable

and the wire surrounding her,
barbed, severe, is brother
to her deadly stem.

Randy Kohan
studied History at the Universities of Regina and Alberta. His poetry has appeared in Writing the City: Poets Laureate of Edmonton, 2005-2013 and the Canadian Russian News. He lives in Edmonton with his wife and their two sons. Ekstasis Editions published Hammers and Bells in 2013. Rain of Naughts is his second collection of poetry.

Instant hauntings

The flutter of a vista, memory,
glance across a room,
potent with a chilling brush,
one that might cause
harm...

O you snowflake flutters
beating at my breast!
Stirring up a storm
leaving me no rest!
Stripping me of leaves
naked to the test!

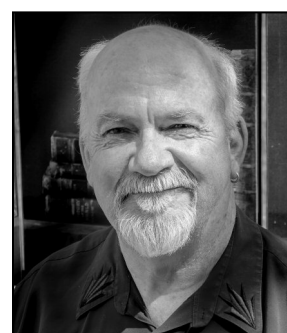
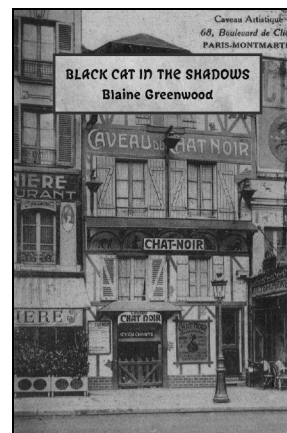
So be it then, December!
Take me by the hand!
Blow your blasting reign!

With bracing cold and fearless stars
you've always been
the silent friend
who takes my hand in yours.

from Black Cat in the Shadows

Blaine Greenwood

Ekstasis Editions
ISBN 978-1-77171-137-1
Poetry
84 pages
6 x 9
\$23.95



Blaine Greenwood, born in Viking Alberta 1951, is an educator by profession – with a career spanning from classroom teacher to museum educator and event planner. It is from this foundation that Blaine's poetry has come to reflect his interest in psychology, history and spirituality. He is currently one of the artistic directors of Lotos Land spoken word / poetry venue at Fort Macleod Alberta's South Country Fair and DJ for CKXU's *Not Your Mother's Poetry*.

Black Ribbons

No one had prescribed the lines on which I should work. I have worked to amuse myself, and if it has amused the public as well, so much the better for me! Of course I have one aim, the grotesque. If I am not grotesque I am nothing.

— Aubrey Beardsley

With mocking laughter, she looks over shoulder
as you read their good words,
their bon mots ...
your Muse unties black ribbons
on your portfolio.

Things grotesque squirm out,
pushing ink from blot on the page ...
ink running
into beautiful, into dainty, into fanciful or
bizarre —
with flourish here, loop there and then a scratchy
line,
calligraphy of the grotesque unfolds ...

Those with elongated neck and twisting head,
the swimming peacock worm,
cat man with crawling giant flea,
the one eyed spider,
the pimpled pears and boles of breast,
harpy with razor feathered wings,
griffins with hawk beaks
standing here and there,

your trees have blinking eyes
and yet again ...
the tiny ones that pop up everywhere —
those little moon men, those unborn ones,
escaping ears, escaping thighs
like your little monster
escaped Mabel all too soon
after red haired sister led you to her bed.

Like embryos crawling from the pouch,
your grotesques slink
from corner, crevice and crease —
to seek the light of day, to squirm,
to wither or to die,
Here my little magpie,
the little demons have come to watch you
meet your Gotterdammerung with
tubercles
crawling through your lungs
and yet the angels and the knight with winged mail
protect you there
you the boy
never to become a man.

She Does Require Much of You

*When you pinch human nature in one place, it
budges out in another, just like a woman's figure.*

— George Moore

Once a smooth horned lady did ask John the
ragged prophet
to receive her body as her gift to him
Fool, he refused such pleasure and she did
require of him,
his head, his blood, his life and limb
and now Salome she dances for you
and you will offer peacocks as did the King
but she still will ask for head of Prophet as her pay
Yea, she will require even yours, dear A B,
yes even yours —
your blood coughed into handkerchief.

She will reach forth her hand to touch his blood,
as lilies spring forth from the stain —
find yours instead, sneezed upon the page
where she now stands.

And now, despite your sacrifice while drawing
the old king
you turned too Japanese for that fey boy
that Alfred Douglas refused you fifty guineas
to sketch the daughter of the Queen
you, the boy of vulgar scribbles, were told:
"Remove the offending bits"

You did
and then
you would decorate the pictures
with detail truly obscene.

Here you set sensuous Salome
on settle,
trapped in clothes not of her time.
You become eunuch
as sketched balls and cock are expunged
and swept away

and yet here you stand ...
with Herodias striding forth to claim
the dripping prize
as you hide the phallic candlesticks.

You, Aubrey, like Baptist John, would be set upon
the stage —
and then by critics, taken down.
Once you stood, like naked Perseus
with Medusa's head in your hand,
now to be attacked,
castrated before them all —
and yet they recognize your drawing
far outstripped the text
of that popular Wilde man.

Self Portrait

*I prefer painting people's eyes to cathedrals for
there is something in the eyes that is not in the
cathedral, however solemn and imposing the latter
may be — a human soul, be it that of a poor
beggar or of a street walker, is more interesting to
me.*

— Vincent Van Gogh

1886

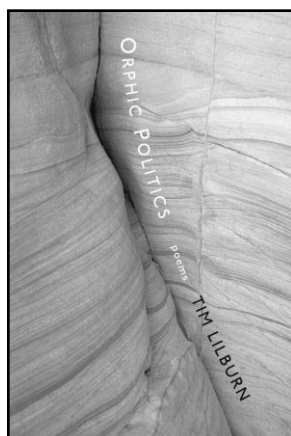
Dark felt hat above your rusty hair,
mauve knot at throat,
green yellow skin — your eyes still clear —
and then your father dies —
as well, Margot, well almost dead—
she lies there dying at your feet.

And then that priest,
that truly hell spawned man,
would turn the people all away from you
—
from you, the mad Dutchman, yes.

The madness did begin — all your models gone
and then the stare, the haunted look,
the collar up,
tie so tight around the throat
like hangman's noose —
that you became
a stranger to yourself

ORPHIC POLITICS

Martin VanWoudenberg



Orphic Politics
Tim Lilburn
McClelland & Stewart
2008

Tim Lilburn's book of poetry, *Orphic Politics*, is a near-impossible book to review. In order to analyze properly and appreciate an author's work, it needs to be understood; this is essential. If one does not find and grasp the meaning, both deliberate and implied, then one is scarcely qualified to submit a judgment on the matter. Unfortunately, Lilburn's collection of poems appears to be formed precisely to create this issue. It is, at essence, a torrent of sounds, sights, impressions and references that have little or no apparent association or central theme. Digging into the work with reference books in hand, lends some centrality to his writing, but it is superficial at best. Perhaps, that is the intention. That does not mean it is a good read, however.

In one sense, I can relate to the premise of the work. Lilburn formulated most of the poems during a time of serious

illness. He consumed countless hours in the hospital, undergoing testing, and being one more ill-fitting cog in the medical machinery. It is little wonder that he emerged feeling dehumanized, detached and doubting. As he says, "...I got quite ill, was hospitalized, and had a number of surgeries. I also developed an auto-immune condition that made walking difficult. I had never been sick like this before, never lived in the country of the ill..." Here, the Orphic connection appears obvious. Lilburn descended into an underworld of sorts, rising again, but not unaltered. The realm of pain Lilburn speaks of is referenced in the following way: "I dug a slot into the gravel of no address." It is a place he inhabited for a time, but it was both foreign and occasionally terrifying. A scalpel hangs over him like something out of Poe's nightmares. "A knife waits, girlish, down the hill, flipping over, over small / fish flash at the bottom of that boat, convinced, the knife, crossing / and uncrossing its legs."

Regrettably this is as comprehensible as Lilburn ever gets, and the only position the Orphic connection works. The majority of the work pitches in references to Orpheus, Oedipus, Dante, Parmenides, *Summa Theologica*, Christianity, Proclus, Aristotle, wrestling, wet socks, reed boats, sexuality, and the mountains... all with imprudent abandon. Furthermore, as in the list above, they all surface in a single poem, and within a few lines. If there are meaning and relevance here, it is maddeningly elusive. If Orpheus was notable for his musical cadence that could soothe men, beasts, and the gods themselves, then Lilburn is notable for his discordant style and literary cacophony in this anthology.

Lest you sense I have omitted something because I do not appreciate the experience he went through, realize that just the opposite is the case. Of all readers, I am in a position to appreciate this work. Not to become needlessly biographical, but I have expended months in the hospital myself. I have undergone more than ten major surgeries, one of them to save my life, and one to literally bring me back from the dead. I have had to learn to walk again. I have experienced brutal morphine withdrawals. I have suffered for ten years with crippling chronic pain and hourly doses of painkillers. I have emerged from a drug-induced fog, speaking but making no sense – my mother and father gazing down at me with puzzled and concerned expressions.

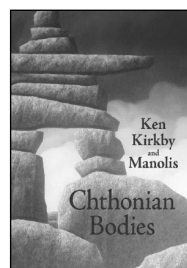
Reading *Orphic Politics* is a bit like trying to claw out of such an underworld, be it medically or metaphorically. That may make it somewhat revealing as an experience, but it does not make it good reading. The constant bombardment of images and impressions denies the reader the opportunity to follow a unifying theme within even a single poem, let alone the collection. If the author is trying to challenge or change his readers, he



Tim Lilburn

has failed. If he is trying to frustrate them, he has succeeded. Perhaps we can only understand what it feels like to have a broken leg, by having one ourselves... but try convincing your friends they should line up for it. Handing them *Orphic Politics*, and telling them to read it, feels a bit like asking them to hold out their leg...while you stand ready with the hammer.

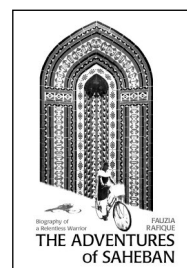
Martin VanWoudenberg is a longtime contributor to PRRB. He writes from Aldergrove, British Columbia.



Cthonian Bodies

art & poetry by
Ken Kirkby
& Manolis

paperback
8.5 x 10.0 in 102 pp
978-1-926763-42-2
\$48.00



The Adventures of Saheban

a novel by
Fauzia Rafique

paperback
6 x 6 in 212 pp
978-1-926763-44-6
\$20.00



Kariotakis - Polydouri: the tragic love story

poetry translated by
Manolis Aligizakis

paperback
6 x 9 in 122 pp
978-1-926763-45-3
\$20.00

libros libertad

Libros Libertad Publishing Ltd

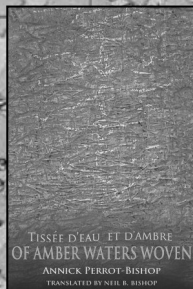
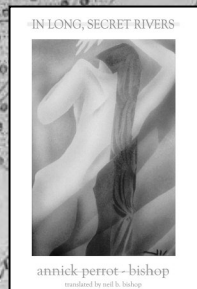
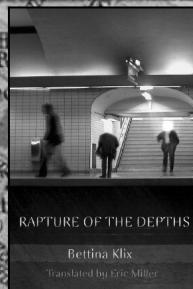
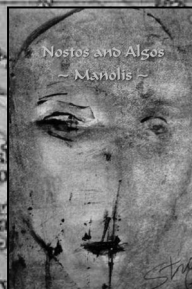
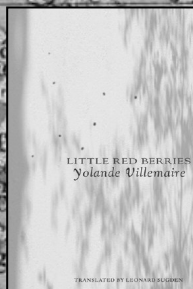
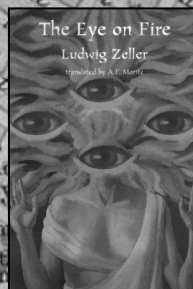
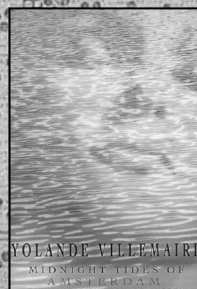
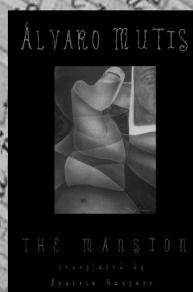
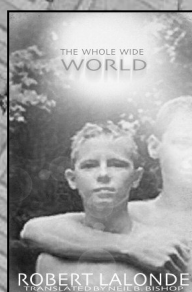
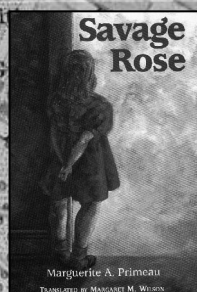
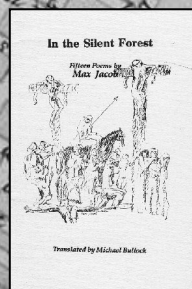
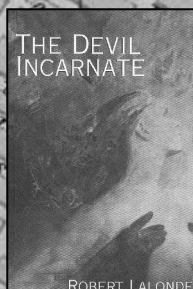
• 2244 154A Street • Surrey, BC • V4A 5S9 • Canada
• info@libroslibertad.com • www.libroslibertad.com



Ekstasis Editions

*Celebrating more than 30 years
of quality literary publishing*

literary translation is a passport to the imagination



*ekstasis editions will take you
across the borders of the imagiNation*

Ekstasis Editions
ekstasis@islandnet.com
www.ekstasiseditions.com