

CPR

*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

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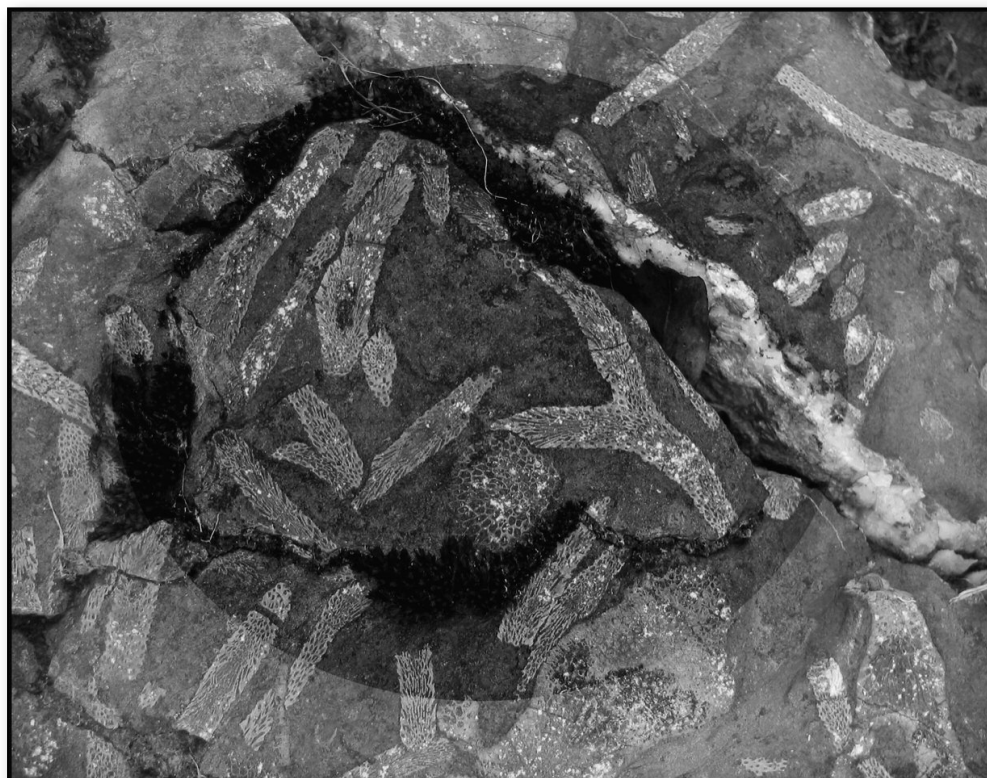
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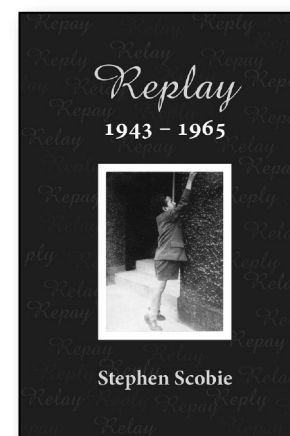
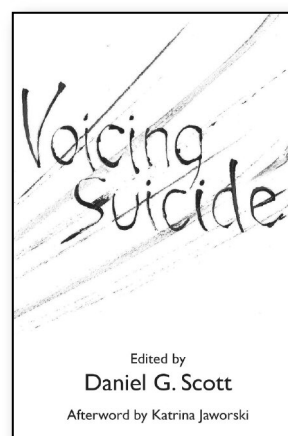
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Daniel G. Scott (editor) from VOICING SUICIDE

Rhonda Ganz

While the world carries on

the names of suicides
float in sea foam, drift
til the foam breaks

on the shore, where Lena
who cannot sleep
walks her island

her task to gather
and speak the names
her work unending

the names float in
on the beach, where Lena
who knows your grief

gathers in her palms
the names and
the sadness her island

with Prometheus moths
who have no mouth
and do not eat

her island with moths
but no bed for Lena
who does not sleep

the names they drift
in spheres of light
break when she speaks

spill radiant, bright—
and her pale shore gleams
and Lena begs pardon for

stumbling on Urdu,
Icelandic, Aymara
Inuktitut

sounding out Farsi
and Kazakh
Cantonese, Dhundari

the names as strong
as every house's word
for death

and when Lena says
a suicide's name
someone who loved them

stopped at a red light
or texting a friend
or closing a door

resetting passwords

or catching a bus
hanging out clothes

someone who loved them
in a small dark room
says the name

of their suicide too
and a moth with no mouth
steadies its wings

as Lena bends
to the next wave as it rolls
as this day's names roll in

Halfway across the Golden Gate Bridge, I pause and look down

Those who survive
say they changed their minds
as soon as their feet left the side of the bridge

and most don't try again.

But the ones the ocean never
gives back, who plummet graceless

in surrender, there must be one

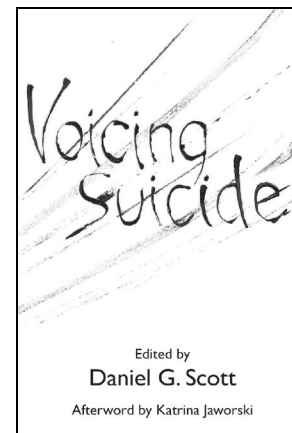
thinking it's come
to this, the grip of the Pacific
open mouth
capitulation
thinking yes
thinking yes

I could have saved myself
seven acid days.

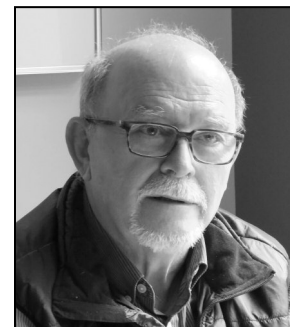
I should have done this
last week.

Rhonda Ganz's first book of poetry, *Frequent, small loads of laundry* (published by Mother Tongue) was shortlisted for the 2018 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize and the Victoria Butler Book Prize. Her poems have appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *Rattle*, *Room*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, on city buses as part of Poetry in Transit and in the anthologies *Rocksalt*, *Poems from Planet Earth*, *Poet to Poet* and *Force Field: 77 Women Poets of BC*. She has been a featured reader at numerous events and festivals, and is an avid open mic reader at Victoria's Planet Earth Poetry reading series.

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202 pages
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Daniel G Scott is the current (5th) Artistic Director of the Planet Earth Poetry Reading Series. He has written in a variety of forms but poetry is his long-standing love. He has previously published *gnarled love, terrains* and *Random Excess* (with Ekstasis Editions), and *black onion* and two chapbooks: *street signs* and *Interrupted* (with Goldfinch Press). He won a one-act playwriting competition in New Brunswick in 1984. He is an Associate Professor Emeritus, University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care, father and grandfather.



John Barton

Pop Music Stigmata

First I tried gulping fifty vitamins
Capsules pellet-shaped, by gravity primed

To pop down my throat, hugging to the rhymed
Prospect of happy death I foresaw twinned

With existential, half-thought-out practice
One-a-days repurposed to telescope

Into a placebo toxin I hope
Vaccinates doubt with courage, quick-acting

Not time-released as I lie down for real—
Absorption too slow to stop me thinking

Dosed and prone on this unmade dorm-room bed
Mouthing scratchy lyrics my hi-fi nails

Through me, needle skipping as I lip-synch
“Alive but that’s the last thing on my mind.”

John Barton's eleven books of poetry and nine chapbooks include *For the Boy with the Eyes of the Virgin: Selected Poems* (Nightwood, 2012), and *Polari* (Goose Lane, 2014). Two chapbooks, *Windsock* (sonnets) and *Visible But Not Seen* (essay), are respectively forthcoming from Frog Hollow and Anstruthers in 2018. Palimpsest will publish his first book of prose, *We Are Not Avatars: Essays, Memoirs, Manifestos*, in 2019. He lives in Victoria.

Daniel G. Scott (editor) from VOICING SUICIDE

Jamie Dopp

The Fifth Dimension

An old school friend has killed himself.
The news causes a momentary disruption,
a kind of psychic stutter, before things
go on as before. I hadn't seen him
in years. We used to party at his house.
His parents were away a lot. There was
the usual drinking and experimenting
with sex and weed. Nothing special.
No doubt there was a lot of inane laughter,
and long talks about nothing much, interspersed
with quiet moments when all of us tried not
to think about the future. Maybe he felt
the same dread I felt. How the path
from the moment we were in to what
I vaguely imagined as "a happy life"
existed in another dimension. Or that
there were instructions for it right under
our noses, but in a foreign language.

The obit mentions a wife and children,
a job working for the city, one of those
steady but boring jobs involving paperwork.
Which makes me think that even in the best
of circumstances, there is never enough
of anything. I don't mean money. Why do we
crave that sense of another world existing
alongside our own? Come to think of it,
my friend had a gift for languages. He won
prizes. Best in French, German, Latin.
And once I complained to him about how
lame our high school French classes were.
Why do we have to write out verb
conjugations, I wanted to know.

Who cares about grammar? Wasn't the point
of a foreign language to learn to speak
enough to get by? He replied that
he preferred the workbook exercises.
Each one, he explained, is a word puzzle.
You just figure out the answer
and write it in the empty space.

Jamie Dopp teaches Canadian literature at the
University of Victoria. His poetry, fiction, and criticism
have appeared in many journals. His most recent book
is *Writing the Body in Motion: Essays on Canadian Sports
Literature*, co-edited with Angie Abdou.

Victoria McLeod
(1996–2004)

Ode to the Haunted (and to Death)

A parasite rooted in my brain,
My mind will never be the same,
He's there in my mind,
He stares through my eyes,
I beg him, go away,
But forever there, he'll stay.
He stirs my thoughts and my scream
Echoes like a silvery dream.

I sit in the dark,
And wait for the spark
That will ignite the mania,
Fire-blazing hysteria
That makes me jump out of bed,
And shout—he's dead! He's dead!

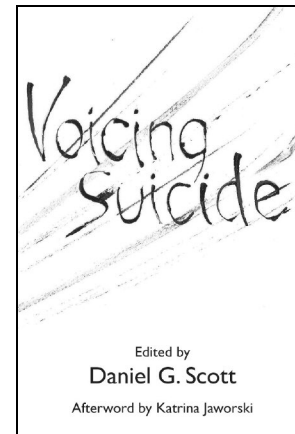
And in that time,
The universe is mine,
I dance and I sing,
So much love I can bring!
The world—my pearl-adorned oyster,
My mind—a heavenly cloister,
The celestial stars shine for me,
Divine, deific, infinite destiny.
And a soothing siesta I sleep.

Then he's back.
Like glass, I don't fall,
I crash,
My flame burnt to ash,
A black, starless sky,
And tears, I cry,
And life is a shadowy chasm—
A riddle I cannot fathom.

He chisels into my mind's eye:
His black hooded cloak and scythe,
And constructs his eternal abode,
Where he will never let me alone,
And I beg him to go,
But in my heart I know,
At times, he will deceive,
But will never truly leave.

As he sieves away my lucidity,
I plummet into dark obscurity,
The depths that equate a threat,
The numbness I want to forget,
I scream: "Bring me back!"
I can't let myself crack.

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But I'm losing control,
No-one can console.
I am worthless,
I am thoughtless,
And have fallen apart,
And I'm ready to depart.

Victoria McLeod died in April, 2014, aged 17. She is the
daughter of Linda Collins, who writes about her in *Loss
Adjustment* (Ethos Books, Singapore; 2019). Victoria left
behind extensive diaries and these are the subject of
chapters in Dr Jesse Bering's *Suicidal: Why We Kill
Ourselves* (University of Chicago Press, 2018)
and *Beautiful Failures* (Penguin Books Australia, 2016)
by Lucy Clark.

Dvora Levin

Haiku Blues Medley

eerie glow of neon
suicide—that alien
open wound

summer drought
green leaves bone dry
drop before their time

leaky condo, black mold
escaping his dark mesh curtain—
one leap

shooting off the planet
aiming for a peace station
in outer space

suicide story
prologue, plot, epilogue
last page always blank

Dvora Levin, once a Director for Social Change Projects
in Victoria and Israel, she now devotes herself to poetry.
She has published 6 collections of her own work: *To Bite
The Blue Apple*, *Sharav*, *Ragged Light* (Ekstasis Editions)
and a unique hand-bound book, *Zeroing In On Nothing*
and her newest collections: *Windblown & Waving* (True
Mint Blueprints) and *Shared Motion: Science &
Spirituality* (Ekstasis Editions).

Stephen Scobie

from REPLAY 1943-1965

Marching as to War

(1)

So let me now
imagine my father, as

a young man born
in 1903

too young for one war
too old for the next

and what did his
religion tell him,
in the hymn's words

Christian
Christian soldiers
"marching as to war"?

or his wife's
dearest
brother's death

out there on a foreign country's
foreign language
gravesite?

Did you pray, father, and
if you will forgive me
for asking it

for asking it this way

what fucking
good did it do you?

(2)

No I can't say that

not to my father, who probably
(certainly)

never once in his life said "fuck"
far less

any doubt about
the efficacy of prayer

I remember his prayers
delivered from the pulpit
Sunday mornings

He was speaking to God as if God
was the man next to him in the queue
at the bus stop or the grocer's

and my father (unlike me) could always
speak to the man
next to him in the queue

because talking to him was not
fundamentally different
from talking to God

(3)

But to be
eleven years old in
1914

reading the *Boys' Own Annual*
raised on Empire

longing, surely, longing to fight

while believing in a religion based on love?

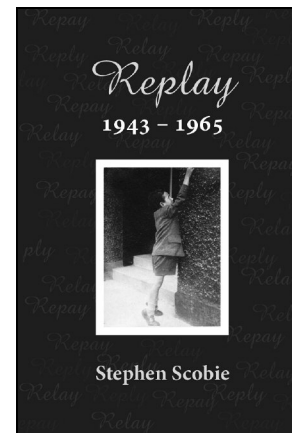
and years, years later
sharing with me (our great
father and son
conspiracy) Rudyard Kipling
Stalky & Co

a boys' school story, so utterly unlike
anything he or I had ever known
a *military* boys' school story
training
the soldiers of Empire

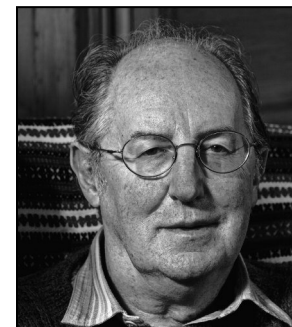
"You never told me to go, sir," said Beetle, with the air of
Casabianca, and King consigned him to the outer
darkness.

lines we could
recite to each other by heart
my father and I
rehearsing the war
that neither of us
would ever fight

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Stephen Scobie is a Canadian poet, critic, and scholar. Born in Carnoustie, Scotland, Scobie relocated to Canada in 1965. He earned a PhD from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver after which he taught at the University of Alberta and at the University of Victoria.



Scobie is a founding editor of Longspoon Press, an elected member of the Royal Society of Canada, and the recipient of the 1980 Governor General's Award for *McAlmon's Chinese Opera* (1980) and the 1986 Prix Gabrielle Roy for Canadian Criticism.

(4)

So he married a woman
whose brother was
an intelligence officer

(oxymoron) and died
in 1917
from an accidental
side-blast of a shell

standing in the trenches, and possibly
reading a book

while my father was still
a schoolboy, reading Kipling

I mean, he was
my uncle, I can read his name

on the wall of death memorial
in Saint Andrews University
College Chapel

whose image still hangs
over my shoulder
as I write this today, I mean

he was my uncle, my
mother's brother, only one

generation divides me

Continued on page 7

THE ARTIST AND INEFFABLE DESIRE

Lucia Guidorizzi

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Amedeo Modigliani, an artist who left an indelible mark on 20th-century art for his ability to express sensual beauty with strength and intensity and ancient essence.

Carmelo Militano is a Canadian poet of Italian origin who I was lucky enough to meet in Cesena in 2018 at the Festival of the Sisters Arts and is the author of several books of poetry and prose. He is also someone who has never forgotten his roots and love for his Italian homeland and now has written an extraordinary poetic biography on the short intense life of Modigliani, a book that attempts to capture the great creative genius of Modigliani. Militano's *Catching Desire* (Ekstasis Editions, 2020) is a new and original image of the flawed great artist.

Carmelo Militano is a poet and as such he has been able to enter emphatically into the deepest dimensions of Modigliani's life, expressing his preoccupations and longings, sensations, and emotions. This book could be defined as a kind of psycho-biography that equally focuses on the cultural and social milieu Modi came from as well as his artistic environment, and some hidden aspects of his family genealogy: the artist, for example, belonged to a rich multilingual Jewish family that suffered a financial crack; his parents (in particular Modigliani's mother Eugenia) were cosmopolitan atheists and lovers of culture. Or we learn that in the early 20th century Modigliani moved to Venice to study at the Academy, but soon abandoned his studies, allowing himself to be absorbed into the city's decadent sensual underbelly and the unparalleled light of Venice reflected on its the water.

Militano is a poet who writes about Modigliani lyrically and is able to investigate his creative essence and seeks to understand its most intimate sources. Carmelo Militano is not limited to a simple biographical reconstruction, but also investigates the stars that influence his birth theme. Modigliani was born under the sign of the Virgin, dominated by Mercury, for the Greeks, Hermes, the psychopomp. In the Kabbala, the sign is connected with the sephiroth Hod, which presides over the sphere of mental faculties and which promotes imagination, intelligence and artistic abilities.

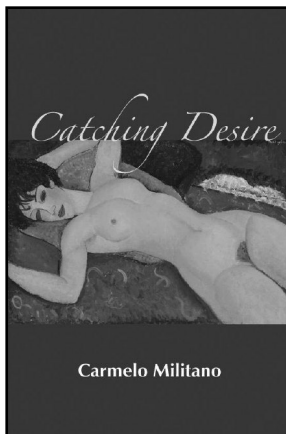
It turns out that Amedeo Modigliani was not only a painter and strong believer in astrology but also loved the word- philosophy- and in particular poetry: he used to proclaim drunk in the cafes and saloons of Paris the verses of Villon, Baudelaire and Lautremont.

In order to understand Modigliani in depth, Carmelo Militano sets out to retrace or find traces of Modigliani by visiting Modi's hometown Livorno. Militano offers us intense and vivid images of Livorno, and sometimes lonely images similar to the American artist Hopper of getting lost in the maze of streets, but still finding epiphanic moments.

In addition to the deep and sensual bond Modi establishes with each city in which he lives(Livorno Capri, Rome, Venice, and Paris), there is also his tormented and often ambivalent relationship with the feminine: his loves were never trivial or banal, but often permeated by a tragic and sometimes fatal violent tempers, such as the one with the poet Beatrice Hastings or gentle and kind with the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova, or his fatal relationship with the young artist Jeanne Hébuterne who committed suicide two days after his death almost nine months pregnant.

In the artistic field as in love, Modigliani appears to be a two-faced being, much like the ancient Roman god Janus: on the one hand he seeks success and recognition, on the other he is dominated by self-destructive tendencies.

Yet, this book also manages to go beyond the romantic clichés associated with artistic genius such as wild unruly behavior and the stereotype of the *maudit*, (damned) artist because it not only manages to grasp the dark side of artistic creation, but Militano also finds the brighter, and let us say, more positive side of the artist. Modigliani's kindness and refined mind, his creative sensibility and work ethic, his total disinterest in the economic aspect of his work, all make him adamant and allow him to reject the contradictions in his life and the expectations of society. Modigliani was thus able to express in his works a maximum sensuality, rejecting the anxiety and anxieties of a Europe slowly entered into the upheavals(WW1) at the beginning of the 20th century.



Catching Desire
Carmelo Militano
Ekstasis Editions, 2020
\$23,95



Carmelo Militano

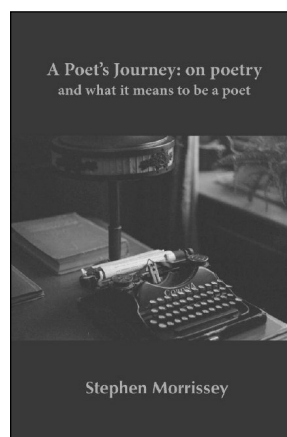
The writing of Carmelo Militano is compelling and alternates between prose and poetry. This variety of extraordinary interpenetration of styles and narrative allows him to effectively register the development of the pictorial and existential poetics of Modigliani. These pages are also pervaded by subtle ironic considerations such as the quote by the English writer Martin Amis in *The Information*: "Poets don't drive. Never trust a poet at the wheel. If he can drive, distrust the poetry." "Poets don't drive. Never trust a poet behind the wheel. If he can drive, be wary of his poetry."

I do not know if Carmelo Militano can drive, but he certainly was able to conduct this book poetically and masterfully, offering a vivid and multifaceted image of Amedeo Modigliani's life and artistic expression.

Lucia Guidorizzi is the author of ten books of Italian poetry and is a professor at a Liceo Classico, City of Venice, Italy.

This review was originally published September 28, 2020 in Italian online at carte-sensibili.wordpress.com.

New from Ekstasis Editions



ISBN 978-1-77171-356-6
Non-fiction
126 Pages
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A Poet's Journey: On poetry and what it means to be a poet

Stephen Morrissey

Writing from a poet's perspective, Morrissey discusses the influence of older poets who act as mentors; the poet friends of one's youth; poets whose books influence one's own work; and the varied experiences of life that are important to the development of the poet's writing. The art of poetry includes ideas about poetry; poetry as the voice of the human soul; visionary poetry; the purpose of experimental poetry; confessional poetry; and finding an authentic voice in poetry. The essays in this book are the culmination of a lifetime of thinking about what it means to be a poet and the art of poetry.

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A SLIGHT SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

gillian harding-russell

Joanne Morency's *Miettes de Moi*, awarded the 2010 prize for a first book by the Foundation L.A. Finances, is at once idiosyncratic and lyrical, concrete and metaphysical. In Jill Varley's translation, *A Thousand Pieces*, the bilingual reader may appreciate the poems in two different languages since the French and the English versions face each other on adjacent pages. In general, Varley's translation is faithful to the original though she tends to give a more idiomatic than literal translation and, perhaps, in all but poetry this plan is the best one. As a metaphoric art, poetry transcends to meaning from the literal, and so with a more idiomatic version a way of seeing or understanding the world may be dulled in the translation. That said, I found Varley's translation almost seamless and careful to adapt the French line to the musicality of the English line.

As the most obvious example of the discrepancy between French and English versions, however, one need to go no farther than the title: whereas the original title *Miettes de Moi* (or "pieces of myself"), implies a fragmentation of experience through the divergent senses, the translated title, *A Thousand Pieces*, suggests a bringing together of the broken parts into a fragmented whole. The essence and experience of the poems reflect a whimsical introspection as the speaker examines physical parts of herself in her interactions with the world as a way to understand her spiritual self, and so the author's chosen title is the most direct. Nevertheless, the translated title, *A Thousand Pieces*, coming a decade later, gives rise to the idea that those parts come together in a visionary whole. And so, the two versions, in French and English, may be said to work as counterpart perspectives.

If I were to single out another poet for comparison, Gwendolyn MacEwen's poetry with its symbolic spirituality and underlying gnostic mysticism springs to mind. As in MacEwen's poems, there is a wonder at the world's mysteries and a playfulness to the writing, and in both poet's and translator's work there is an uncovering of paradox with childlike point and a poignant lyricism. Whereas MacEwen's speaker awaits inspiration in the projected image of the "red bird you wait for," the speaker in "Fragments" is more preoccupied with the physicality of the immediate world as a mean for inadvertent transcendence when she remarks, "Look at that, a right hand!"

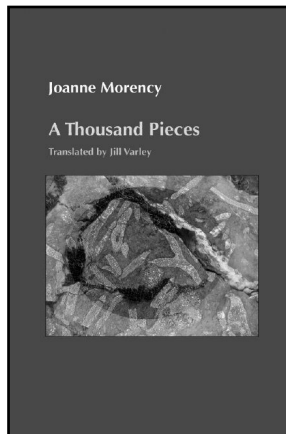
It is a rare day when my whole body is with me. Most of the time,
my pieces are widely scattered. A hand that writes, absent knees, an
invisible back. (13)

In going about her day, the speaker describes herself as losing parts of herself, and so, while extending the metaphor to consciousness, her body "slip[s] out" by night to be brought back into her skin by morning. Again, it is interesting to compare the original French "remet alor debout sur mes batons" with the more colloquial English translation, "get back on my pins" where the translation, even if idiomatic, carries slightly differing associations of agitation (as in wearing formal, heeled shoes or 'on pins and needles').

Poets are often introverts, and Morency's speaker is most certainly inward-looking in her looking out at the world. In "The Noise of the World," there is a sense of being overwhelmed by the multitudinous nature of the world where even "the ants" in their miniscule universe are "running everywhere, stirring all day long" (17). With so much surrounding stimulation and being unable to view herself, the speaker projects a certain mysticism as inherent in the act of partaking in the world while the subjectivity of perception prevents one from seeing oneself:

I forget my point of view in the sky. I do not know how to be
entirely here, without losing myself along the way. (17)

As the lines "it gets hot beneath the cat's coat," and "I long to stretch out under/ my own shadow" suggest, the house cat – as simultaneously a physical cat in her household and transcending to a symbol, later given the suggestive name "Vestibule" – becomes a part of the speaker, something like her sensual, animal self (17). In association with hallways and entrances, therefore, the cat may be seen to open areas of



A Thousand Pieces
Joanne Morency
translated by Jill Varley
Ekstasis Editions
2019, \$23.00

physical awareness inside herself. Similarly, a dog "follows her from one room to the next" and "knocks/ his flank against her thigh" (97) in a later occurring poem, and these two household figures blend in the speaker's psyche, one aloof but occasionally demanding attention, and the other "forget[ing] he is big for an hour or two" as he "stretches at [her] feet and shrinks" (97).

The poem "Oasis" that dramatizes the speaker's moment of discovery through an extending metaphor of a desert is particularly evocative of MacEwen, who was also drawn to deserts and landscapes. Here the speaker suggests that insight may be accompanied by serendipity when the speaker notices "a detail" about her own face that she doesn't recognize, as if she "had crossed a desert to [her]self in the /midst of a sandstorm" (87):

Each object is complete, larger than its shadow, and amazed to
never be alone in the mirror. (87)

While Morency uses short, cumulative sentences and fragments, Varley here improvises a longer line punctuated with commas. Whereas the original verses suggest mounting realisation, Varley's long meditative lines seem more confident at the process of discovery (as if the speaker had known it all along).

Most curious, but also akin to MacEwen world, is the presence of a male muse in Morency's poems. Whereas MacEwen's muse in "Finally Left in the Landscape" writes himself inside a landscape in a kind of dance where the speaker in figuratively immersing herself through awareness joins him, Morency's muse is also ephemeral but appears in a more flesh-and-blood- seeming guise: "The man standing close to me is not there. Not yet." And yet in the next stanza we witness him follow her. He "pets the cat, and even me, sometimes" (93). That he has "wings, a heart and hands" suggests a bizarre and marvellous combining of the angelic and the spiritual with the human.

As in MacEwen's "Letter to a Future Generation," the speaker in *A Thousand Pieces* is troubled by evil in the world. Whereas MacEwen writes her "letter" to warn us almost biblically, and thus to enable us to avert tragedy, Morency finds herself immersed in a world that cannot necessarily be changed. Just as the speaker doesn't know "how to pluck the corpses from her soup" in "The Noise of the World," so a feeling of being overwhelmed by personal and public tragedy reaches a climax in "Spring Cleaning." In long lithe lines (also in the translation) and using homely images, Morency articulates a pain not easy to alleviate that may be too familiar to many of us.

My neighbour across the way has tossed his heart in a bin.
The girl next door sealed her stepfather's hands in a green garbage
bag. My mother, her straitjacket of anger. My old father, everything
he didn't get enough time to do. (63)

In the final movement of the poem, Morency dramatizes the tying down of that garbage bag, a kind of Pandora's box in reversal. The staggered, broken lines from the original French are replicated in the English version: "This is how//we will heal//in the earthquakes" (63). That the bin has a lid that is "airtight" doesn't prove terribly reassuring. Anaerobic containers can explode!

In a world where we find ourselves inundated with personal, civic, national and world tragedy, Morency's *Miettes de Moi* and the slightly more optimistic and longer lens suggested by the translation, *A Thousand Pieces*, offer a clear-eyed view of the world but not without a glimmer of stability as the speaker looks to her physical being with a kind of equanimity like prayer.

gillian harding-russell is a poet, editor, and reviewer. Her most recent poetry collection *In Another Air* (Radiant 2018) was shortlisted for a City of Regina, Saskatchewan Book Award. A new collection *Uninterrupted* was released by Ekstasis Editions in 2020.



Joanne Morency

Continued from page 4

from my father’s useless
useless, useless

fucking useless prayer

(5)

God rest them in peace
Those who believed
Those who didn’t

Those whose bodies
fed the earth

Those whose souls
never saw beyond

the edge of the blast
on the trench’s sky

Leaving Carnoustie

I can’t remember
leaving home

leaving Carnoustie

I was four years old

Children have no votes in
domestic democracy

You go where they tell you to go

I must have felt like a
fragment, fallen

no longer defined by
familiar edges

corners, angles, my
grandmother’s urgent bell
at the top of the stairs

I must have been
not so much the debris
spread by the wind

I must have been the wind

Geography Lesson

When the teacher asked the class
which city was
the capital of Scotland

I of course put up my hand
in favour of Glasgow – that
seemed obvious, incontrovertible

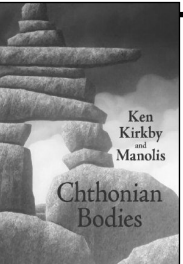
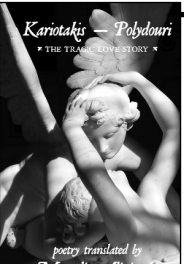
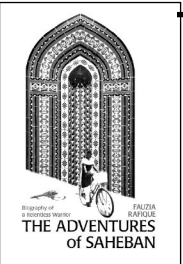
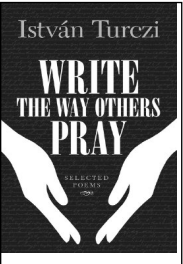
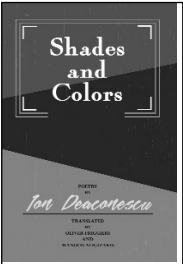
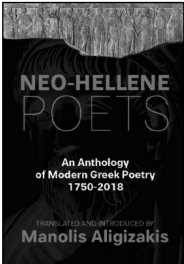
so I was stunned, bemused, astonished
when the answer turned out to be....

that other city, farther east, whose name
I still cannot quite
bring myself to acknowledge

You know it, it begins with E
effete, ephemeral, elusive, only

in later years
enlightened, esteemed, eternal,

“precipitous”



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