

# CPR

*Resuscitating the art  
of Canadian poetry*

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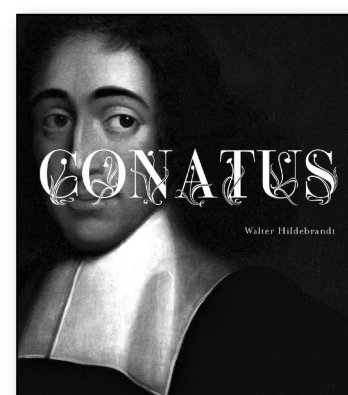
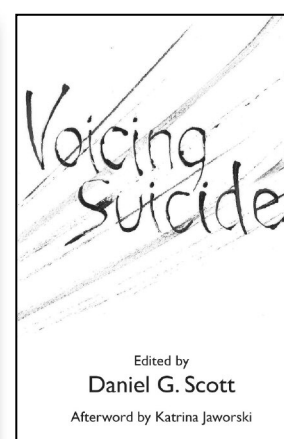
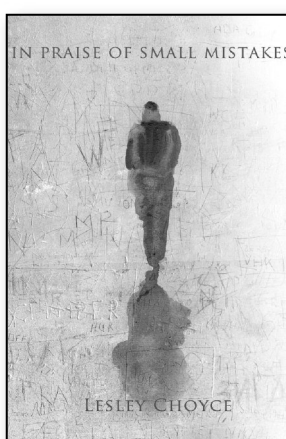
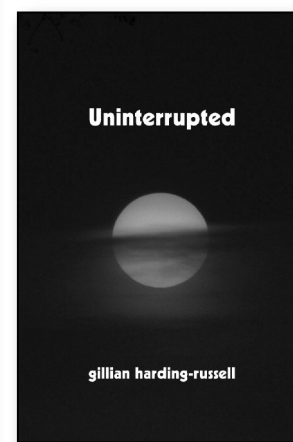
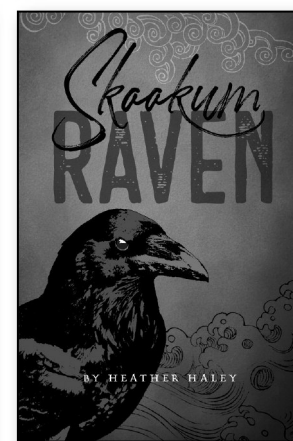
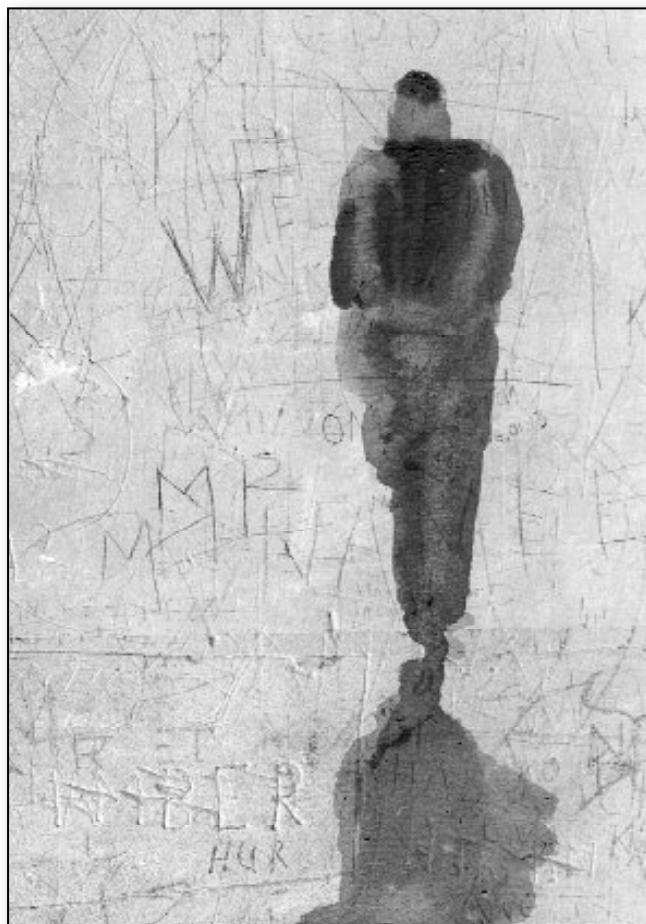
becoming a magnet for suicide poems

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# Heather Haley

## from SKOOKUM RAVEN

### Dawning Consciousness

She wakes grimly febrile,  
desperately nostalgic  
to dawdle in ditches  
of tadpoles,  
to wager glass  
marbles in snow lanes,  
sew mini-skirts  
for her Barbie,  
for mashed potatoes,  
fried baloney,  
the gag reflex.

She shuts her eyes,  
snubs the town's lens  
zooming in on her culpability.  
Incensed at the sun's insolence  
she rises despite collisions and  
the most recent death toll.

She groans, engulfed in tokens  
of admirers, embattled by and  
dreading the delirium of desire,  
one lover resolutely phlegmatic  
as the other effuses and plummets.  
No incidental leaf  
but a loose lunatic rook,  
mate in the old-school canon.

Men ostensibly, on,  
off or side-tracked,  
their interpersonals interpenetrate  
their fictions, demands and tousles  
so delightfully incessant.

No accident this transport back  
to forsaken tracks,  
giant drainpipe.  
I engineer it.  
I, of humble origin,  
melancholic disposition  
provide stimulation and  
orchestrate robberies.

I, in the cliché of a crisp white shirt  
and black hat  
inflict pain, increase pressure,  
draw hostility, reel in crisis  
commonly referred to  
as authentic experience.

I dare to sprawl,  
invite expansion  
as vital to my vitals  
as blood on needlework.

### A Larcenous Groom's Cool-Off Period

He filches tunes: fuck copyright.  
Downloads steamy nude pics,  
provides a market, not Paypal.

He pilfers  
pop for his hottie Charlotte,  
slots 'em in the fridge door,  
stacks 'em in the pantry,  
enough Coke to fuel a militia.

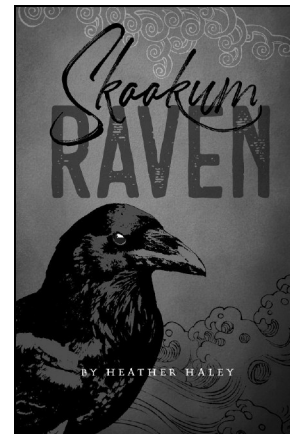
He boosts  
street signs. That'll stop their goddamned  
touch-the-sky routine,  
bestows his buddy Guy  
with a JACKSON ST,  
a little vainglory for the double-wide.

He lifts  
century-old chairs,  
stuffed wildlife  
from a leaning farmhouse.  
Ed the Fence thanks him for the laugh:  
"Now get the fuck outta here."

He pinches  
his sister-in-law Emily  
in the pocketbook.  
Emily, who mourns the loss  
of her younger sibling.  
"I'd like to hearse her away  
for Chrissakes."

But he gives. He gives!  
To the church,  
indirectly, every time he mows  
Our Lady of Sorrows' lawn:  
"Cos they ain't paying me enough  
to do this shit  
and it's fuckin' hot as hell out here."

Ekstasis Editions  
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Poetry  
104 pages  
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Poet, novelist and musician **Heather Haley** pushes boundaries by creatively integrating disciplines, genres and media. Her writing has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, she was Poetry Editor for the *LA Weekly* and publisher of the *Edgewise Cafe*, one of Canada's first electronic literary magazines. She is the author of poetry collections *Sideways* (Anvil Press), *Three Blocks West of Wonderland* (Ekstasis Editions), a debut novel, *The Town Slut's Daughter* (Howe Sound Publishing) and the new collection, *Skookum Raven* (Ekstasis Editions).



### Rookie

Fleeting night,  
Windows eternally flicker  
With reality show glimpses.

Headless psyches,  
A fleck of remembrance.  
My brief childhood.

Dumb, young adulthood.  
Grim hospital stay of a marriage.  
My next of kin reside in the past.

I plod like a donkey.  
55 and I need more  
Time. Miles. Cash.

Born harried, will I die a novice?

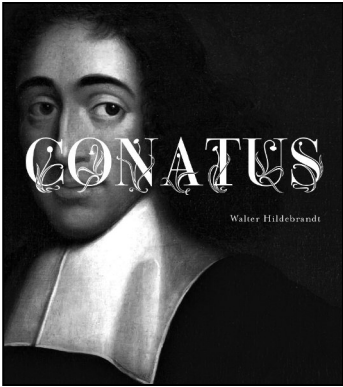
# Walter Hildebrandt

## from CONATUS

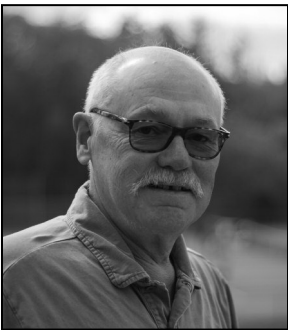
### Judy (excerpt)

in a spider's web  
parallel lines  
converging  
end up  
crossing  
complex  
histories  
become traps  
in Cuba  
youth  
left to fend  
for themselves  
lost  
alienated  
turning  
inside  
against  
an inauthentic  
outside  
world  
wear  
"in your face" clothing  
alternative uniforms  
converse sneakers  
designer clothing  
hide  
what's underneath  
want to be different  
want absolute  
freedom  
no religion  
no ideologies  
just to be left alone  
withdraw  
don't believe  
in anything  
man or God  
drawn to  
Nietsche's Zarathustra  
God is dead  
no morality  
no guidelines  
no limits  
leave  
make escapes  
on balsa rafts

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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 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. A previous volume of poetry, *Where the Land Gets Broken*, received the Stephan G. Stephanson for best poetry book in Alberta in 2005. This is his thirteenth book of poetry.



drugs  
alcohol  
Buddha  
to endure  
the shitty corrupt world  
where to  
most do not choose  
freedom  
live enslaved  
in bondage  
follow blindly  
their own  
discredited  
leaders'  
ideologies  
emos  
asexual  
practise random  
promiscuous  
empty  
sex  
carelessly  
little to hang onto  
turn to tribes  
reject masses  
just a tribe  
of your own choosing

# *gillian harding-russell* *from* UNINTERRUPTED

## Adaptations

No path through the tossing grasses around the slough  
behind the rushing highway, altogether another country  
from winter's snow-feathered landscape you could  
sign with your boots' heavy imprint  
on its ice-packed alien smoothness

after you've walked that way how many times  
before? New hazards beside the power plant, DANGER  
writ in red letters (have you never noticed  
the sign at this angle to the morning  
sun?) Tufted grasses of early spring  
now lush with silky sedge grass that nicks skin  
like a paper cut across your leg, and the scratch of thistles  
man-made potholes filled with mosquitoes, heavy run-off  
turned sulphurous and evil smelling, a black thing

with sharp-whiskered nose whips in front of  
feet, and what else lurks under the squelch of runners?  
In this reservoir the native birds have made their home  
as on any other slough, calling down visitors flying  
overhead  
with news of other parts.

Look! There's a pocket of

pelicans  
with comical laughing jaws, old gentlemen  
with pipes in armchair discussion  
of news abroad!

## I have walked on the edge

of an escarpment where the wind  
rides along the back of an unseen  
animal coming from the other side  
of awareness, grey-pebble sage pressed  
between airy fingers pungent and  
awakening on the parched path

when I turned my head  
met the narrowed eyes of one  
with up-curved snout staring straight  
at me over the tassels of brome  
and wild oats still as glass in sunshine (scat  
knobbed with red berries, odd bits  
of twigs)

but had I so little faith in the invisible  
wind, its intuitions and predispositions  
not having yet acknowledged the animal  
walking from the other direction impervious  
to my point of view? Nor to all the evidence  
lying before my living eyes as we trod  
on the same ground?

## Revising nature

Our puppy brought home in the arms  
of my son, a comfortable armful  
boldly staring over a short bearish snout  
that later lengthened, his black and gold  
colours regal, his paws sturdy even  
at that age, whose size I noticed  
with worry, hind legs dripping elaborate  
sickle dewclaws as I scrubbed the kitchen  
floor on my knees, the pup curious,  
stepping over to sniff the suds, but we  
were proud of his fierce symmetry.

Dutifully, we scolded, 'No!' when he chewed  
through our shoes and tried his needle teeth  
on our hands, our dog bringing home infant  
sparrows fallen from a nest in the lilac  
under the roof in the soft moist dome  
of his growing mouth. Once  
he carried a thumping heart and  
then a slowed one  
that, warmed in our hands  
revived

and flew away, my love for  
this descendant of wolves amazed  
as the lamb rested inside the wolf; but recently  
our pup has learned the power of his great size  
and the thunder of his paws

across the open field, an upside-down sky  
squealing constellations of gopher piping up  
at his approach, several in frenzied unison now  
while the giant dog has launched front paws  
wrestling with a youngling whose small bulk

dangling out of his mouth  
is a wet, toothed, scrawny thing  
of infinite pathetic pain and shaken fury  
and I feel, as famous warriors must  
the need to look and overlook, seeking  
some greater good in the carnage  
and pattern of what must be  
natural.

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## Uninterrupted

gillian harding-russell

Regina poet, editor and reviewer **gillian harding-russell** has published in journals across Canada and her poems have been anthologized in seventeen collections. Her recent poetry collection, *In Another Air* (Radiant 2018), was shortlisted for a City of Regina Saskatchewan Book Award. Her work has been shortlisted or has won the Thomas Morton Award, gritLIT and Exile's Gwendolyn MacEwen chapbook competitions. She received a Ph.D. from the University of Saskatchewan, completing her dissertation on postmodern Canadian poetry. *Uninterrupted* is her fifth poetry collection.



## Widdershins

The earth shimmies on its axis  
and rotates around the sun, and most  
of us are blown clockwise

in the wind of its orbit heading to the right  
from the sharpest-nosed vole in the field  
to the darkest green crab under the ocean

favouring a *dexter* forefoot or dominant  
right claw over a *sinister* and smaller left limb.  
There is instinct for direction, knowing

your right hand from your wrong, and your strong  
from your weak, to keep you secure  
against accident, though some of us prefer

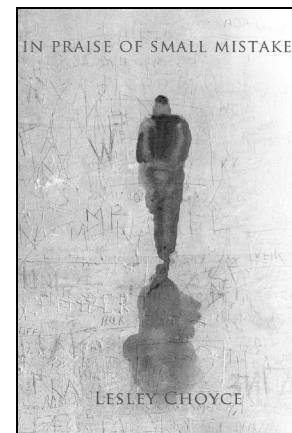
the traction of moving  
against earth's windy passage. I know an ambidexter  
who can hold a blue pointer on a leash with his right

and make a call on a cell to his loved one  
on the left, and all  
while riding a skateboard widdershins...

# Lesley Choyce

## from IN PRAISE OF SMALL MISTAKES

Ekstasis Editions  
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Poetry  
90 pages  
6 x 9  
\$23.95  
Now Available



### In Praise of Small Mistakes

We probably should all be thanking them  
the little mistakes that shape who we are  
the wrong turn  
the time you tripped over your laces  
the bad timing  
the wrong decision  
the ill-chosen words  
or even worse  
the question we never should have asked.

So many poor choices made  
that have shaped who we are –  
especially such an amateur as me  
who has gathered  
all my many small mistakes  
into the auditorium of my heart  
where they politely sit  
through this speech.  
Sure, some will snicker, I know  
and a few might clap  
but it will be like a clumsy family reunion –  
getting them all together like this  
and afterward there will be drinks  
and nervous small talk  
until each of us  
will wander off into the error of our ways.

If all goes according to plan  
next year I will consider  
inviting my big mistakes  
to a similar celebration  
which I pray  
will not be  
the biggest mistake  
of them all.

### Ghost Deer – Early Morning

The eyes of a ghost of a deer  
see us coming down the road  
and bid us on our way west  
well before the sun  
musters courage from the eastern sea  
to begin its silent watch over North America.

Twin quakes in California haunt my thoughts  
my daughter in the Pasadena foothills  
in West Coast darkness far from morning.  
My brother, now 71, driving south to New Jersey  
in an aging Winnebago  
that still remembers the history of my origins.  
A power outage last night  
stole my sleep  
and smuggled it out of the country  
but the long dark drive  
reminds me that death  
is a nation of quietude and peace  
but a commonwealth I am not ready for  
anytime yet.

By 5 a.m. I realize  
I need this poem  
to keep me company  
to keep me safe with my wife  
by my side  
discussing plans  
for New Year's Eve  
on the seventh of July  
just north of nostalgia  
south of adversity  
east of history  
and just slightly west  
of this province I call home.

### A Rainy Afternoon in London

No doubt I am not  
the first to document  
such a thing:  
25 Monmouth Street near  
Seven Dials.  
History seeps up from cobbled streets  
to greet my Canadian shoes.  
Smokers in cold doorways  
(in memory of T.S. Eliot)  
are both nervous and weary at once  
while prim Londoners swarm and pass  
marching to the morning's employment.

Inside the L-shaped apartment  
I chart the itinerary of  
local pubs where famous poets  
drank themselves to death  
while I soak up the centuries  
in this famously diminutive flat  
furnished in a scandal  
of Scandinavian plastic.

A long long way from home  
I wash my socks in the sink  
and suddenly prefer to think about anything  
other than London in the rain.

Lesley Choyce is the author of 100 books of literary fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction and young adult novels. He runs Pottersfield Press and has worked as editor with a wide range of Canadian authors. Choyce has been teaching English and Creative Writing at Dalhousie and other universities for over thirty years. He has won The Dartmouth Book Award, The Atlantic Poetry Prize and The Ann Connor Brimer Award and has been short-listed for the Governor-General's Award. He surfs year round in the North Atlantic. He lives in Lawrencetown Beach, Nova Scotia.



At night in my sleep I see a grackle  
I once raised as a pet  
and have these scattered dreams  
about repairing a washing machine  
a belt and a motor  
dirty in my hands.

And when I wake  
I remember I was once  
a very young man  
with long hair and a heady ambition  
in an uncharted life  
but one with  
(according to the Gypsy)  
a long lifeline  
in the palm of my sweaty hand.

In the morning, hiding  
in this narrow urban nest  
surrounded by Ikea like this  
I find it hard to believe  
there are so many people below  
each as dedicated to their important lives  
as I am.  
But who exactly am I?  
I ask the boy in the art deco mirror.  
You are your father's son  
he says  
and so I am  
and so I will be  
in this city of industrious strangers  
kind enough to share this part of the planet  
while I still walk upright on the earth.

# THE ELEVENTH HOUR

Jason Blake

Carolyn Marie Souaid's latest collection, *The Eleventh Hour*, is her eighth volume of poetry. It is also the finest of the four Souaid collections I have read.

Souaid meditates on ancestry, times gone by, death, and hard times North of the 60<sup>th</sup>, but never succumbs to doom and gloom. She also reflects on the writing life, without falling into solipsism. This is fortunate because reading a writer writing about writing is usually dull. For Souaid, poetry is a job among other jobs and she slyly works this everydayness into "Survivor": "She commutes to work and files her taxes. / Her children are fed. // Between dishes and bed, she types a word." Modesty, a work ethic and a sense of proportion can also fuel verse – "She drinks, in moderation, / far too little to enlarge her spleen." Verse is not born only of booze, melancholy or suicidal thoughts, and the title "Survivor" is a nod to real survivors but also to those who have been bitten by the muse.

*The Eleventh Hour* contains 49 free-verse poems, plus five interspersed centos or collage poems made up of lines from other poets. These "Auguries" help set moods, casting a meaningful shadow over the poems to come. Souaid's poems are personal, but they do not alienate the reader; they are not mere diaries in verse.

The opening of "Sisters" springs us back decades: "Little tagalong brat, you were. / Little, tagalong, thumb-sucking brat." Now, the two sisters are "cantankerous farts who knit scarves / and dine at five after Scrabble and Scotch," still playing together, still bickering after all these years. "Steven Anthony Joseph Souaid (1961–)," aimed at another sibling, starts, "My brother insists I write him into a book" – somewhere between making Steven immortal and giving in to a little brother's wheedling or whining. "But don't expect a miracle" writes the self-deprecating Souaid. "Don't assume my quotidian pen / will make you a symbol, a martyr, a venerated saint."

The comic-yet-melancholic "Questions for HRH," one of my favourites, is aimed at Souaid's son:

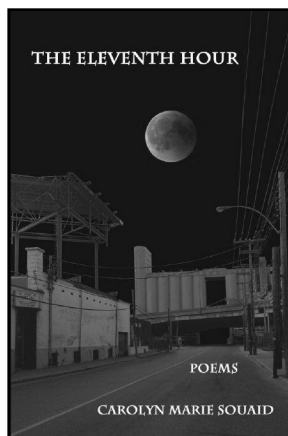
Why does your own mother, caregiver,  
constant reservoir of love and support,  
need to call ahead to book time with you?

The motherly cross-examining continues: "When did you hair recede, / your doctor start prescribing cholesterol pills?" Though this is the voice of a worrying mother, the son might hear this series of questions as badgering. (Note to my own mother: I know I'm balding. You don't have to remind me.) It is also the voice of sadness at times gone by. The final lines read: "is it feasible to call in sick, / play hooky with me?" The management-buzzword "feasible" gives way to the schoolyard word "hooky" as Souaid pleads for Son to take a day off work to hang with Mommy. The poem has travelled miles from the sarcastic *His Royal Highness* of the title.

Souaid's poems travel fantastic distances, moving from time past to time present in the blink of a stanza. Sometimes this is achieved through references. "Shipwreck," for example, is inspired by a sunken 19<sup>th</sup>-century schooner now visible at Higgins Beach in Maine. The *Howard W. Middleton* "could have been the Titanic of its day" but instead it "mutated overnight / into a green dungeon dripping with algae." Four stanzas later, Souaid mentions a "pirate adventure starring Johnny Depp, / star-crossed lovers on an ill-fated course," and that layered reference whisks us away from the beautiful description of the first stanza, while reminding us that we see the past (including Shakespeare's lovers) through Hollywood-coloured eyes and celluloid stories.

Souaid handles and blends voices masterfully. In "Timeline," she sketches her father, just as he once sketched her mother:

In his youth our father sketched: portraits of Mom  
before the cancer infiltrated.  
A good sport, he managed the fort  
until new and improved she returned from the hospice—  
illness downgraded to a green alert,  
a blip on the radar, a problem solved.



*The Eleventh Hour*  
Carolyn Marie Souaid  
Ekstasis Editions  
2020, 73 pages



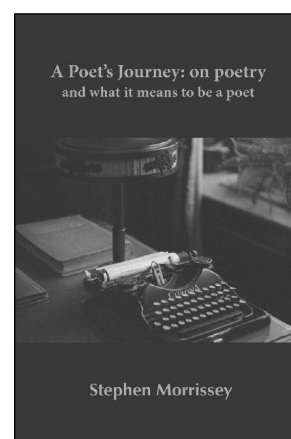
Carolyn Marie Souaid

In one short stanza Souaid delivers the euphemistic hospital-speech of "cancer infiltrated" and the sprightly and chipper internal rhyme *sport/fort*. The dehumanizing "new and improved," and "blip on the radar" evoke the speech of a previous generation, perhaps of a man pushing away pain and death through manly phrases.

"Amplitude" begins with a "a dozen flies swarming / around death" as they orbit a bird corpse. This image would be cliché were it not for the terrible beauty of the "crushed velvet, / blue and iridescent" Souaid spies in the bird's head. In the second stanza, the blue is echoed in the "the mottled bruise" that appears on her father's leg after a fall. The link between the dead bird and the fading father is all the more subtle for the non-repetition of "blue." Souaid suggests the link but doesn't force it, showing confidence in the reader.

*The Eleventh Hour* is deliciously paced and gorgeous. It makes the reader want to slow down and speed up at the same time – to revel in the words and rhythms but also to give in to the narrative thrust of each poem's twists and turns and surprises. There is darkness here, but *The Eleventh Hour* put me in a good mood.

## New from Ekstasis Editions



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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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Daniel G. Scott (editor)  
from VOICING SUICIDE

becoming a magnet for suicide poems

to have spoken asked  
stab the silence allow

the manic tongue of poetry  
the lure allure allura lie of death  
how sweet and sour these voices

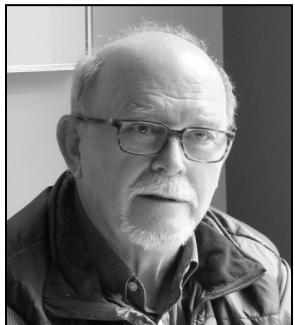
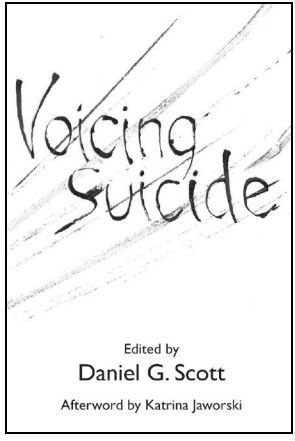
a damnable gift suicide  
an unwrapped surprise  
whose presence stays present  
in the ledger  
never counted out

unholy a hole opens breaks  
whatever whole may have been  
will never close  
weeps

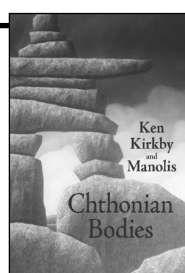
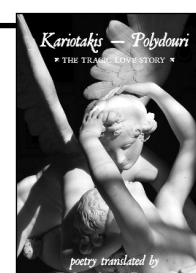
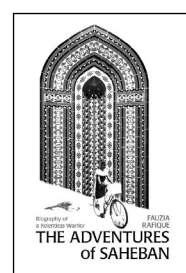
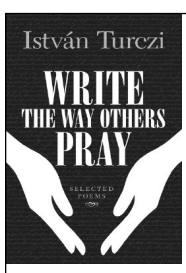
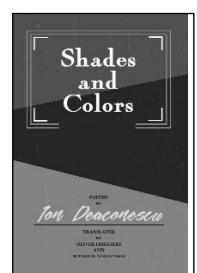
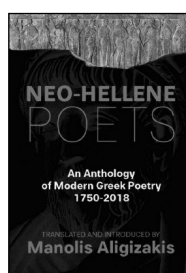
or bleeds  
the not-gift must be named  
and they come poems  
full of bright darkness  
a longing  
to be heard

as  
a longing to die  
lingers

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