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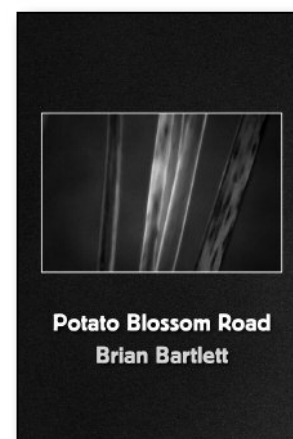
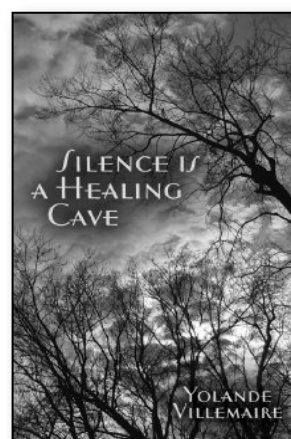
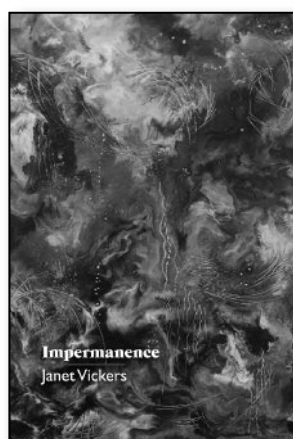
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photo: Yolande Villemaire



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# from Echoes from Pluto

## Mike Doyle

### THE UNKNOWABLE *Tao te Ching, XIV*

What you cannot see  
what cannot be seen  
may be elusive  
but is it there?

What you cannot hear  
what cannot be heard  
may be in thin air  
but is it there?

What you cannot feel  
what cannot be touched  
may be a mere trace,  
so is it *there*?

These cannot come to  
light, nor live in dark,  
nor can they be named.  
So they are where?

Head on, you see no  
front. Pursuing, you see  
nothing. Purely  
immanent, you

will see it all,  
hear everything,  
touch at its core, now  
you become it become you.

### NIGHTFALL *(remembering Akhmatova)*

1  
I don't think much about you, & I don't care  
so much, now, what happens to you. But the wound  
of our meeting has not healed. I walk past your house  
& wonder about the future. Like a sharp  
shift in the wind, I know we'll meet again.  
The leaves show red & begin to curl at the edges.  
Earthmovers have gouged a huge hole in the road.

2  
The invisible line remains. To be in love  
is not enough to break it, even when lips  
cover each other in passion. The heart  
  
can be shattered by love, & there's nothing  
friendship can do, nor the protected years  
when the soul was free & felt no boredom in the flesh.

To try to cross that line, you have to be persuaded.  
Those who touch it may persist in despair.  
It has the feeling of my hand touching your breast.

3  
I almost never dream of you any more,  
or see you everywhere the way I used to.

Tonight, rain blots out the road between us,  
Even the pools are too blurred to shape our shadows.

I'm sharpening secateurs to prune the limbs  
of shrubs that have quit blossoming. I long for  
the ordered, tangible world that cannot look back at me.  
Ah God, give me the icy calm of not loving.

### WAITING ON THE SHORE *(a painting by Anna Hawthorne)*

Is it for him she waits, as the legends convey?  
Not any more.  
Impatient, windblown, peering across the water  
to the further shore,  
she longs for the canoe to come and paddle her  
off to explore  
the far side of Three Mountains Lake.

She paces the shoreline not for his sake  
but for her own.  
'This is the time,' she tells herself:  
'I must act soon.'  
Sun glinted on the smiles at Matheson Lake  
that afternoon.  
If he was there, his presence went unheeded.

The arc and splash of paddles, as she needed,  
cutting the water,  
churning into the future. Now she is done  
with waiting on the shore.  
Once she casts off where will the paddles take her  
are the waters there  
swifter, shallower, deeper? Who would dare say?

### BURTON IN INDIA

*'The dwarfish demon called Interest had, as usual,  
won the fight.'* ~ RB

Finding odious his fellow officers' society,  
Burton, the army man, explorer and linguist,  
experimented with forming a monkey vocabulary.

To study simian language, he set up house  
with forty assorted monkeys, a mimic world  
modelled upon his regiment. He assigned

various roles: solicitor, doctor, aide-de-camp;  
one 'silky pretty little ape' he called his wife,  
putting pearls in her ears, seating her by him

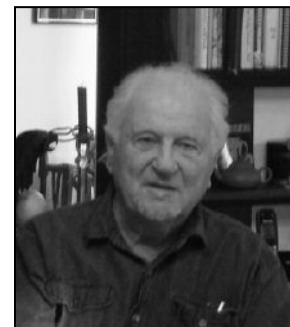
at the long table. Waited on ceremoniously,  
each monkey had its own cup and plate.  
Establishing a mode of conversation,

Burton identified sixty-odd  
definite words, finding the whole affair  
vastly entertaining; but along with priceless

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*Mike Doyle is a poet, critic, biographer and editor. His other work includes William Carlos Williams and the American Poem (1982), Richard Aldington: A Biography (1989), Paper Trombones (2007) and its sequel Softwood Trumpets (2012), a journal of his life as a poet in Canada, and Intimate Absences (1993), a "Selected Poems" from work up to that date. Doyle has lived in Victoria for over forty years and is a Canadian citizen of long standing.*



Persian and Indian manuscripts and a huge  
collection of costumes, he lost his notes in a  
warehouse fire. His simian distractions

failed to endear him to the authorities.  
No monkey business could save him so  
he was posted home, 'unsuitable for campaigning'.

### THE JOURNEY ITSELF *(M.M., 1913-1997, for her centenary)*

1  
In some literal sense, you were still alive  
one Saturday evening back in the '90s when  
a glimpse on the telly showed me Morse and Lewis  
in a parked car at night, and through its window  
behind them the street sign, a metal strip  
enamelled black on white: 'Shakespeare Avenue'.

Half a century earlier, in late spring  
just after the fall of France, not yet twelve  
years old, I walked 'Shakespeare' for the first time,  
with my brother Bill and our Dad: three blocks  
down, turning left onto Spenser Avenue,  
we found our way to your housing estate,  
your tiny kitchen, and you, the 27-year-old  
mother of two small boys, with factory worker  
Paddy, our 'good uncle'. We were wished  
upon you, Bill and I, along with the incendiary  
bombs of that blitz era, the Anderson shelter  
waterlogged in the back garden; later  
the Messerschmitt hurtling down in flames  
consumed in a fireball seven miles further on,  
and one day, high in the sky, the dogfights  
and the boasted kill: **185**.  
(Revised after the war to 75).

# from Impermanence

## Janet Vickers

### Long-Jawed Orb-Weaver

O silent trapeze artist  
weaver of wet meadows

your city has invisible paths  
where we get stuck

where we watch the leaves dance  
hear the blossoms croon

where we learn the brief escape  
of our own rituals glued to these mortal

threads. Soon we will become you—  
great weaver of new directions

but we won't know it  
and neither will you.

### Morning After

You know how you wake to the curtain blowing  
and air imminent with rain dances on your face  
until it's inhaled to the tongue  
you rub around your teeth  
and in those seconds

before you recall the conversation you had last night  
about her parking your car in front of a fire hall  
then phoned an hour after the police  
after you'd thumbed yellow pages  
paced the floor seventy kilometres away  
to say she picked it up from the pound  
paid the fine and was on her way home

come the answers you never asked for  
the translucent voice of a breeze that says  
it's the bad days that measure us  
and she got an A plus but you didn't?

### Alex Colville's Horse

Across a grass covered prairie, a train,  
a steel bullet born in a mine  
hurtles this way on track without vision  
or a station to arrive  
and the driver cannot be seen.

This train, shaped by many hands  
(with dirt under their finger nails) for many hours  
—to put bread on the table, lace curtains on windows,  
and school books in children's arms, this train  
has no thoughts, second or first,  
for them

or the large brown horse galloping towards it,  
with all the might and precision of his own muscle,  
as though velocity, set in motion, can be stopped  
by the single will of a noble beast.

### Mind Is Wind Reflected

I left him curled in bed, pillow between  
his knees— taken somewhere in his sleep  
away from this house and garden with its  
endless demands.

His frownless face and  
steady breath will be there when I return  
from my walk on easy roads.

But the breeze  
changes direction.

One day he or I will  
not return to this. One of us will go first  
to a sleep that does not wake to the familiar.

One of us will forget  
the fold of these arms.

### Ripples

It all begins as a single cell and tells  
the past in its beautiful body  
heart and liver, teeth and eyes  
a map of nerves, a guide for the journey.

First ripple, the soul's navigation  
out to the shore's indecipherable dream,  
breathing and swimming, form invested,  
mind embedded in a mortal crossbeam.

The second embraces mothers, fathers,  
sisters, brothers, love or lack of it,  
bound beyond hurting, tied in belonging  
blessed or cursed—we are sewn in this glove.

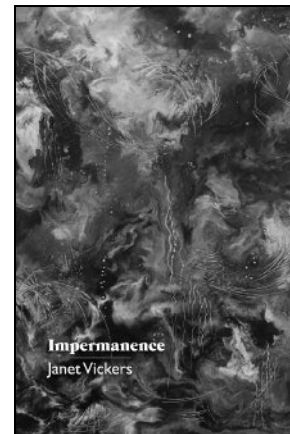
The third ripples out to the road and the forest  
by the river to the sea surrounding that island  
you once named yourself, where call keeps calling  
a haunting echo, farthest and deepest.

The fourth ripples on long after you're gone  
and your heart writes the lyric to a stranger's song  
and your deeds fall like seeds in the dust and dirt  
and love finds a root under memory's skirt.

### Calliope

Beautiful little star, avian angel with eyelash wings  
flirting with the feeder and my eyes. Your tiny clicks  
are music. You mesmerize my day with your visits.  
Your ferocity I can handle, be greedy, you are my  
guest.  
You are the dreams I no longer remember.

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*Janet Vickers's poems have appeared in various Canadian and UK anthologies such as Down in the Valley (Ekstasis, edited by Trevor Carolan, 2004), literary journals such as The Antigonish Review, Grain and Sub-Terrain, and online in nthesis. You Were There is the title of her first chapbook published in 2006. Her second chapbook Arcana was published in 2008. Janet is currently BC/Yukon Rep. for the League of Canadian Poets, and lives on Gabriola Island with her husband Tony.*

### Impermanence

*Thanks to impermanence, everything is possible.*  
Thich Nhat Hanh

The word is impermanent.  
Not permanently will it permeate a thought  
or resonate from the throat. And though  
it never dies, it never lives long enough  
to feed itself.

A word can stick out its tongue  
and draw a new conclusion, eat anything  
but has no digestive track, unless it becomes  
a world

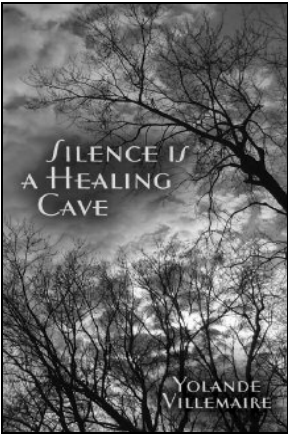
of appetites. Selves eating selves impermanently.  
Self not staying ever anywhere. Gone  
like it was never there at all. And yet  
nothing can't name a thing unless it gives.

To give is to give up what it was  
then.

# from Silence is a Healing Cave

## Yolande Villemaire

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*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. Her novel La vie en prose won an award from the Journal de Montreal in 1980 and her poems, L'armoire received a Radio-Canada award in 2002. She also received a Quebec-Mexico poetry prize in 2008 and the Career Award from Quebec's Council of Arts and Letters in 2009. She has published more than twenty-five books, four of which are available in English translation from Ekstasis Editions: Midnight Tides of Amsterdam, Poets & Centaurs, India, India and Little Red Berries. Yolande Villemaire lives in Montreal and is the director of TOTEMPOÉSIE.*



0.  
  
A haiku a day  
Sends the dove into your heart  
Wind of wings flapping

1.  
  
Narrative fractals  
A sacred geometry  
Dancing in thin air

2.  
  
Sitting on a rock  
Under a gentle rainfall  
The scribe is seeing

3.  
  
A wooden mermaid  
Springs to life as a blonde girl  
In a lush garden

4.  
  
Dim hills in the fog  
Clouds galloping as horses  
Peach sky in background

5.  
  
Walking up the hills  
A bear bell at the belt  
Droplet of being

6.  
  
Sitting listening  
Birds singing brilliant solos  
Sending you my love

7.  
  
Ravens in a field  
Rain, rocks, moss, fragrant forest  
Graced by doe and fawns

8.  
  
Yellow butterfly  
On a bright yellow flower  
Brings up a big smile

9.  
  
Over the river  
Suddenly a great heron  
Majestic omen

10.  
  
Travelled galaxies  
Healing circle in forest  
On Mount Violet

11.  
  
On harvest full moon  
Waking up into new world  
Swaying with the flow

12.  
  
Grasshoppers hopping  
Pale green boreal lichens  
Huge erratic blocks

13.  
  
In meditation  
Her hand writing hieroglyphs  
On subtle tablet

14.  
  
Moon hovering path  
Distant bright stars, Milky Way  
Last night up the hillls

15.  
  
In a dream a stag  
Magical being of heart  
Glowing and so real

16.  
  
On way back to town  
Laurentian shield visible  
Hills like seated beasts

17.  
  
In urban bistro  
Overlooking a wild stream  
In tune with my soul

18.  
  
Sun plays in river  
Boats, ducks, birds in a ballet  
Under the old bridge

19.  
  
Young gothic couple  
Blinking under the bright sun  
Frail bats out of cave

# *from* Potato Blossom Road

## Brian Bartlett

For three seconds  
six pairs of eyes fix  
on one speeding Snow Goose

This rock has a river  
etched in it — that one,  
some continent's map

Flies plague a whale  
carcass. Bright warblers  
pick them from the air

Deep night — my chest hit  
by a Storm Petrel fluttering  
to its chick's burrow

Where a ship sank  
a century ago: sponges  
named Dead Man's Fingers

Near the outhouse, through  
a gap between trees, Jupiter  
in my pupils

A birder with hearing loss  
learns to trust others' ears —  
oh, *that* Flycatcher!

Insomniac chain-smokes  
in pitch darkness,  
murmuring for owls

From the lighthouse crown  
we watch a Harrier soaring  
below us

"Keep breakfast short,"  
says Mr List. "There are birds  
out there to be got"

Claire pishes for warblers:  
*pishhh — pishhh — pishhh —*  
A hidden deer snorts

Morning light  
spills into deer tracks crossing  
Canada Goose tracks

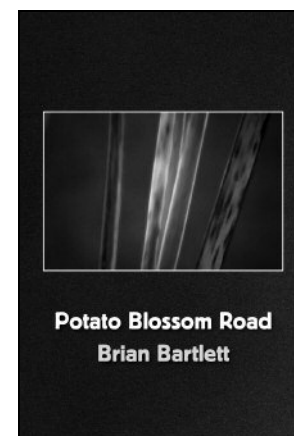
Throat shag, head ruff —  
Little Blue Heron known  
even by silhouette

Bird-banding nets  
dew-hung  
like the spiders' webs

Some birders talk and talk,  
others go into silence:  
edgy truce

"Get a good north wind,"  
says Peter, "and Monarchs  
are all over the island"

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**Brian Bartlett** of Halifax is the author of six full-length collections of poetry, including *The Afterlife of Trees* (McGill-Queens, 2002) and *The Watchmaker's Table* (Goose Lane Editions), winner of the 2009 Acorn-Plantos Award for People's Poetry. His *Wanting the Day: Selected Poems*, published in 2003 by Goose Lane Editions in Canada and Peterloo Poets in England, was honoured with the Atlantic Poetry Prize. He grew up in New Brunswick, lived in Montreal for for fifteen years, and since 1990 has taught creative writing and literature at Saint Mary's University.



Beach Peas stretch around,  
over, into, and through  
a collapsed lobster-trap

Empty cough-medicine bottle  
on shore — the ocean keeps  
hawking up jetsam

No roads around,  
a castaway car-tire dresses  
in Bullhead Thistles

Blue, green, yellow, red:  
between tides, the spectrum  
cut into washed-up ropes

# The Three Legs of (Wo)man

## Linda Rogers

In recent decades, there have been efforts to lift poetry from the gutter-gossip of soapbox and broadside to classical paradigms bitten in the endpapers by reciprocal contrary motions that favour the flavour of real life. The old story goes round, the new Romanticism of urban poetry and slam versus academic formalism, the proponents of which appear to have a desperate grip on the printed word.

Even so, collections through which real blood flows, ones that record the stages of life as experienced by ordinary mortals who speak in colloquial tongues, are still coming off the literary presses.

One of the few publishers that tirelessly promote diversity in page poetry is Wolsak and Wynn, who have recently released poet and balladeer Robert Priest's musi-poems, profiles in courage. *Rosa Rose and Other Poems*, long researched and much loved by their creator, is intended as a catalogue of secular saints. From Rosa Parks, who sat down at a lunch counter in Montgomery, Alabama, and gave birth to the Civil Rights Movement now enjoying a resurgence due to the martyrdom of Trayvon Martin, to Deepa Mehta, courageous filmmaker and advocate for women's rights, and pugilistic versifier and war resister Mohammed Ali, Priest presents a verse list of heroes for contemporary children.



Robert Priest

Yes he was a champ in the ring  
and a champ times two-  
cause Ali was the king  
of *not* fighting too!

Priest's fastidiously researched and accessible poem-stories are an ethical and historical yet playful education for young people, who learn from them that the world can and ought to rhyme. A poet, novelist and songwriter known as much for his passionate convictions and compassionate heart as for his skillful ironies and jarringly apt imagery, Priest has written the book that is the gift of his so-called counter-generation to a world compromised by geopolitical confusion. In it are found tales of heroism that prepare children for a tsunami of cynicism in the social media. It is high time to give

these thirsty beings a dose of inspiration.

We are all one, he shows us, all sharing in the reinvigorating goodness of life,

And O, my son's son's sons,  
No one owns the sun.  
O my daughter's daughter's daughters,  
the water is everyone's.

In the notes that follow the poems, Priest gives back-story to his heroes, giving them context and the book another valuable dimension.

The life-cycle moves from childhood idealism to the disenchantment of middle-age when fairy-tale marriages sometimes drown in stagnation. It is usually women who notice the death of love because they have been conditioned from childhood to maintain the story of happily ever after. *Ignite*, Rona Shaffran's debut book of poems, is the diary of such a union.

Confessional poetry, from the lust pangs of courtly lovers to the gimmesum dub-thrusting of hip-hop, goes in and out of fashion. How much do we need to know about the *me* as opposed to the *we*? How much empirical and spiritual nudity is necessary to feed the voracious



Rona Shaffran

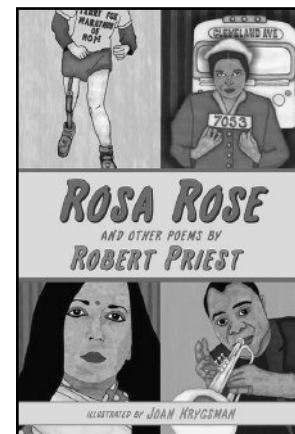
muse? This may be a rhetorical question since self-help outsells poetry to word consumers hungry for self-knowledge, the ones who secretly hunt the spells that will

...let our bodies lose all  
their loneliness

The Shaffran narrative is not unusual and the survival of marriage, a far greater challenge in these times of longevity when men and women have many more opportunities to grow apart, is still important to the health of the family, even in end times the basic unit of

### *Rosa Rose and Other Poems*

Robert Priest  
illus. by Joan Krygsman  
Wolsak and Wynn  
2013



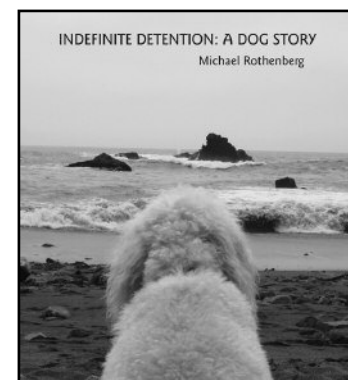
### *Ignite*

Rona Shaffran  
Signature Editions  
2013



### *Indefinite Detention: A Dog Story*

Michael Rothenberg  
Ekstasis Editions  
2013



civilization.

In pared down poems, she reminds us that the greatest loneliness in this age of social and cultural alienation is the loneliness in an empty relationship, where every silence is an acute angle.

Their teeth clash  
through half-clenched  
lips.

If sexuality is the play of tectonic plates, the head bones that come together during infancy to protect the vulnerable places where the soul resides, then the mind can wander and sometimes return to the safe house of pleasure and love. And that, the poet discovers, is the bricks and mortar of a good marriage, a place worth rediscovering, where two people with history can still reference the old pleasure maps,

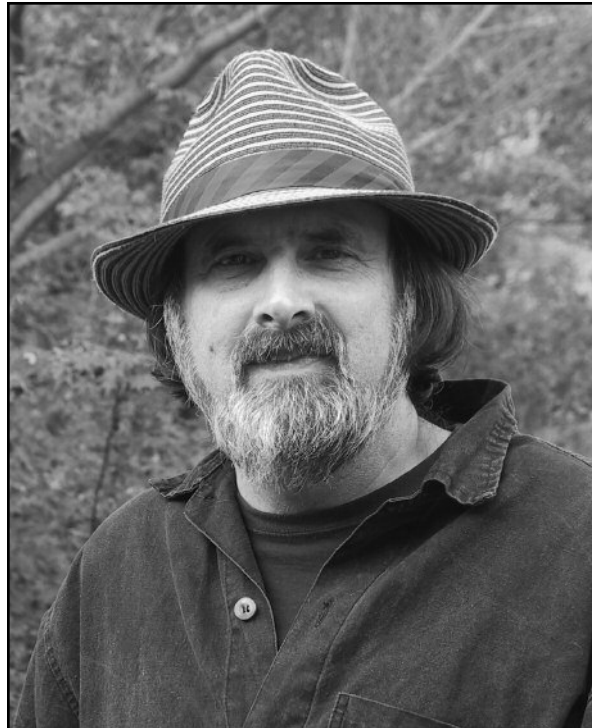


while in feathered queues  
lime-green bushes bend as one  
to an unseen hand

We can argue forever about unseen hands, great designs, Platonic, Buddhist, Aristotelian and Messianic theories about human and divine relationship, but everyone has to agree that poetry, whatever form it takes: spell, prayer, wish list or proverb, is the bridge. It is not coincidental that poet and human rights activist Michael Rothenberg, continuing breath of the San Francisco Beats, has chosen the metaphor as his brand, the Big Bridge that joins 100 Thousand Poets around the world in one big prayer for peace, with the earth and all life.

This review ends with Rothenberg because his new collection of poems, *Indefinite Detention: a Dog Story*, records the transformational moment when all of us, all our relations, enter the One, and the sea reclaims our footsteps. Beyond birth and copulation there are larger relationships for which intimacy is only a rehearsal. Rothenberg draws us a lyric map. Reference to his missing wife sets up the conceit, as their parallel journey erodes and reshapes itself.

Not long ago, a writer mentioned the influence of British novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch, particularly her late novel *The Sea, The Sea*, which surprised her readers with its uncharacteristic randomness. Not long after she wrote it, the brilliant scholar and writer was diagnosed with dementia. Had Murdoch, we might now wonder, rather than "losing it," finally broken through the disciplines of her tandem vocations and found the logic of water flowing in the endless cycle of life? Is dementia a breakthrough to cosmic understanding, the blurring of boundaries that defines hallucinogenic experience?



Michael Rothenberg

A similar freedom is the randomness of second generation Beat Rothenberg, whose howl is the contrapuntal movement of water music, praise and lamentation, waves rhyming on the beaches of his observation and imagination. "I am," he writes, "listening for the radiant pulse." That one line justifies a book of idiosyncratic selection that parallels life.

And there are many such proverbs. Rothenberg's fluid catalogue of ruin and beauty frequently captures the light as it floods the mudflats of post-modernist writing, much of it devoted to form, genies trapped in bottles defined by conservative social norms. The dog,

his doppelganger dreaming in black and white, knows no such constraints. The dog's, god backwards, is the world of ego, see food/ eat it, see a ball/ chase it, even into the dangerous streets of America.

Form is the rage

It's too late for redemption  
Blue jays murder finches like madmen in Iraq

Heat waves flood and submerge the Nation

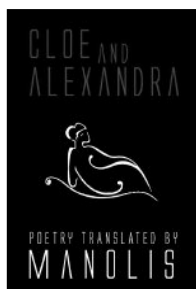
Indefinite detention is the unenlightened life and freedom is it apotheosis. In madness, dementia, death, and transubstantiation we are given opportunities. Even when the flower has been decapitated or ravaged by weather, word travels under the ground

Roots travel  
Madrid to Galicia  
Paris to bougainvillea

Field guide to love and civilization

From nursery rhymes and cautionary tales to grave-side homilies, we are redeemed and released by the blessing of stories and storytellers who connect us to the larger narrative of being. Priest, Saffron and Rothenberg are three writers who are willing to expose themselves to the light. In the generosity of their nakedness, we experience what it means to be human and to struggle toward the divine.

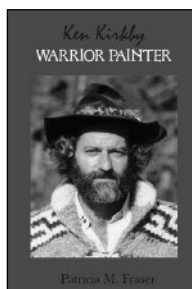
*People's Poet and Poet Laureate Linda Rogers is the author of The Empress Trilogy, the saga of a Jewish-Chinese opium and rum running family in the Golden Triangle.*



**Cloe and Alexandra**

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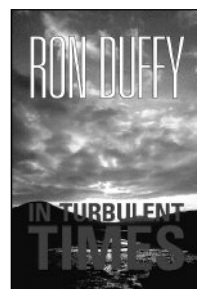
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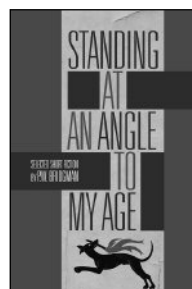
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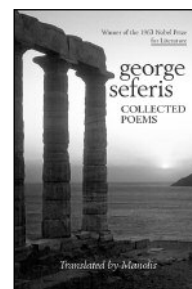
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