

CPR

*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

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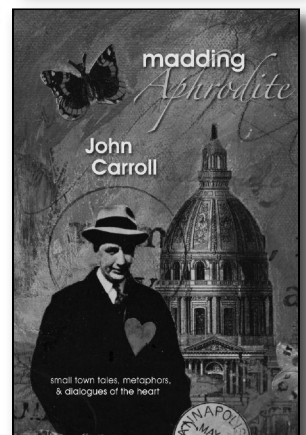
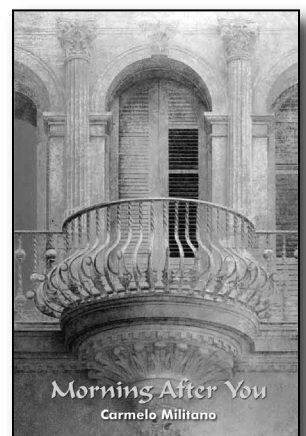
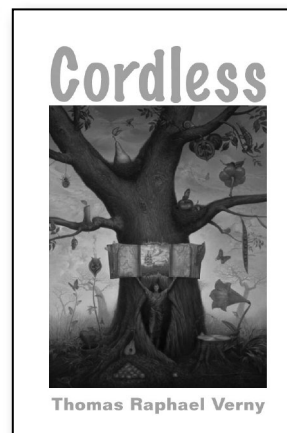
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art: Vladimir Kush



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from Cordless

Thomas Raphael Verny

Ekstasis Editions
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Poetry
110 pages
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Cordless



Thomas Raphael Verny

Fine Print

I was young and naive
when I started this journey
with Adam and Eve.

In the beginning
I traveled with the Hittites,
Ulysses, and Marco Polo,
taking sea voyages to the ends of the earth,
joining caravans through fiery deserts
on ill-tempered camels,
spent nights in tents
sipping sweet mint tea
with Bedouin sheiks.

Then it got worse: sounds of sadness,
sights that pained my eyes
to keep the enemy out,
prisons and insane asylums
to keep the enemy in.

Wearily, I watched men's talents blossom
inventing instruments of torture and torment.
The air crackled with cries of rage
and of lamentation.
I resisted as long as I could,
until I too became polluted.

Now it is in my bones
and I can no longer hear
the laughter of children
or the wind rustling in willow trees.

I feel rotten in my soul's core.
I have become the gray pelican
who swoops down on unsuspecting fish,
the thin-lipped shark who preys on sun-tanned
surfers.

I am your neighborhood knife-and-scissors
sharpener:
I sharpen all day and I slash all night.
At sunrise, in my walled garden,
I am Saint Francis tending
to broken-winged sparrows
and sheep with festering wounds.

But at sundown
I become Vulcan on Mount Olympus
beating ploughshares into swords
that I plunge with pleasure
into the pulsing stiff necks
of my enemies.
Rivers of blood, mountains of bones
to teach those bastards a lesson.

Moses brought me out of Egypt,
yet I am not free.

Buddha showed me the way,
but I am still lost.

Jesus came to save me,
but I forget from what.

I have sought out expert healers:
Tibetan monks, Indian yogis,
African shamans, Viennese analysts,
American rebirthers.

But they were no match
for the demons who roam
the deep catacombs of my heart.

I have been sucked so far down
into the vortex
of demented human DNA,
no gene splicing
will ever make me whole again.

Eons ago, before I signed
on the dotted line . . .
I should have read
the fine print.

The Cosmic Gamble

Oblivion, the great fear engine of religion.
Oblivion, the wellspring of superstition.

Us against them,
kill those heretics,
those pagan idolaters,
our god is great and compassionate
we will go to heaven,
you will go to hell,
mach schnell, mach schnell.

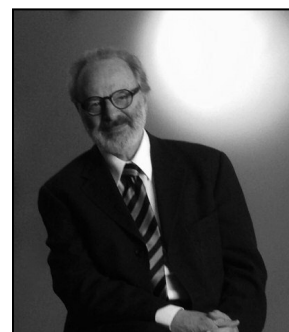
The cosmic gamble:
heads, you are a tormentor,
tails, you are a victim.

Forty-three thousand genes
shuffled at random,
infinite combinations
of good and evil.

Sooner or later
nearly every one
a loser
sucked with a cry
or a whimper
into that great black hole
where the drain pipes
lead into the sewers.

Elohim Gadol,
Allahu Akbar,
In nomine Patris, et Fillii,
et Spiritus Sancti.

Thomas Verny
has published five books including the international best seller The Secret Life of the Unborn Child and 44 scientific papers. He has also edited two books: Pre and Perinatal Psychology: An Introduction and Gifts of Our Fathers, a collection of short stories and poetry. Verny is a psychiatrist and lives in Stratford, Ontario, Canada. This is his first full length collection of poems.



Ask Sibyl

Alexander's wife, Molly,
is indolent, insolent, and insolvent,
forever dieting and working out,
that is, when she is not
just hanging out.

At her health club she habitually
displayed her charms in low cut tights.
One day, when more of her showed
than any one wished to see,
the self-appointed resident wit
dubbed her Molly Moonlit.

About twice a year
in hushed tones,
Alexander confides in me:
Molly's lost a lot of weight.
When she emerges from the shower
she is more gorgeous than ever.
You know, all the guys at the gym
lust after her.

A few days later,
I bump into Molly
at the greengrocer.
Alexander's claim to the contrary,
I look in vain
for the heralded change
her upholstery
appears the same.

from Morning After You

Carmelo Militano

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Winter Rites

January and February a senate winter wind
indifferent and apart
brought snow from almost everywhere on the
continent
to lie still and high on the streets
blank as a single sheet of white paper
shaping the mood of the city already encircled by
winter

Every dull morning the ministrations of waking:
the exit of pee
the making and drinking of coffee
CBC radio pious about being well informed.
Sometimes we argued about whose attitude was
worse
yours or mine
but family need pressed became duty
hours passed into days
into weeks
left no record.

-2-

It was many years before a boy read the poem
"Who has seen the wind?"
I was the boy
and one cold winter afternoon I pulled off my
wet wool gloves
looked at my red hands and found the poem
made sense
the invisible cold wind real on my fingertips.
I did not see it was the beginning
later learned it was a trick
pulled from an imperfect distillery called memo-
ry
recognition, deceit, and transformation
or maybe the better image: the sly Calabrian
peasant.

-3-

My mother's lungs fill with water when her heart
fails
there is no solace.

The quiet scratch of pen on the page is a splinter
of ice in the heart
away from the tears and shouts
and the strange powerful singing voice of my
aunt
women imploring the Holy Mother
to make the New World what it could never be
an old mountain village for the heart.
The rural silent southern Italian men
their hands folded behind their backs
lean against the wall of her hospital room.

-4-

Today he watches swimmers come up for air
I wait for my daughter's lesson to end
the swimmers roll their heads like silent sea-an-
imals to breathe
the day she died the trees, stars, and oceans
remained
She never asked why cancer chose her
like entering a silent unknown hotel room
the bed, couch, ashtray, and lamps
all in their place
and strangely natural
curtains had rushed forward when the door
opened.
The rest was silence.

Spring Rain

Books stand like sentries
refusing to smile or move
rain thin like fine thread
all afternoon.
After an hour
a car drives into a puddle on the front street
and explodes the silence.
Orange tiger lily drips like an hourglass in the
garden
green grass leans perfect as light against grey sky
a bright haiku stillness.

Love Poem

I believe nothing today
but to put all my doubt
into the mouth of your body
give myself away
and keep only enough
to return
without beliefs
beside you.

March Birthday

The day my voice arrived
winter was a dog gnawing on an old bone
under a monotonous grey sky
there was no coming together of social forces
the thermometer did not drop
airports were not silent
a small cult following did not descend
to read my poetry
my ludic secrets went unexposed
my fear of poetry did not end
stars still remained in the night sky
in the shape of pin-wheels and broken kites

Carmelo

Militano is a
Winnipeg poet
and writer. He
was born in the
village of
Cosoleto,
province of
Reggio di
Calabria, Italy
and immigrated
to Canada at an
early age with his parents. He won the 2004 F.G.
Bressani award for poetry for his collection
Ariadne's Thread (Olive Press, 2004). He has since
published The Minotaur's Keys (Olive Press, 2006)
a chapbook, collected poems Feast Days (Olive
Press, 2010) and another chapbook Weather
Reports (Olive Press, 2011) which was short-listed
in 2012 for the Bressani poetry award. His prose
includes the travelogue and family memoir The
Fate of Olives (Olive Press, 2006) and the novel
Sebastiano's Vine (Ekstasis Editions, 2013). He
reluctantly gave up chicken and hog farming for
literature.

day turned to night in the pink and gold March
sky
someone I once knew in a bar whispered "heard
he had become a poet."

The Atlas

Your breasts are small round chapels
where my prayers rise and fall
on a hot celebrated cathedral afternoon
just before the bells on a camel caravan ring
to cross the flat desert of your belly
pause to smell salt
near your original connection to the sea
register a promise
to your solitary prisoner on the embankment
who now waves and stiffens
above your dew filled valley
urge the moon, stars, and sun to return
send light back out into universe
and in a single fitful blast
redraw all the maps born under your skin.

from Terrains

Daniel G. Scott

the dragon of small

it seemed so small
at the time
 you hesitated
 wondering

so tiny it hardly
seems possible
 you knew
 you didn't
 know enough

that a choice
could claw at your life
burn holes in you
with its lingering breath

that it would grow to fill rooms
with stench and scales
trample friends love
won't go away

and you worry it will
take flight and devastate
more than you
than your home
broadcasting a presence
as it calls your name
every time breathing
destruction

no small losses

there are
no small losses
no small deaths
ask that little girl
who lost her cousin
how every day
she must cry must take
time to remember talk
ask about him
where he has gone
she is not yet five

or ask that boy's brother
who says almost nothing
but carries that one glove
with him
everywhere
won't put it down
it doesn't fit
his bigger hand
has it
under his pillow
at night
never says
his brother's name

ask anyone
how loss follows them
clouds over
unexpected moments
interrupts
insinuates into days
into dreams

weaves in a thread
of the missing
who cannot be
forgotten
nor remembered
all the way

clown nose

the red clown nose
slipped into my coat pocket
pristine, playful
later i found it there
the inside turned
greasy black
cradled it in my hands
head tipped sideways
wondering
had i become
a clown of darkness
a cloud growing
from inside

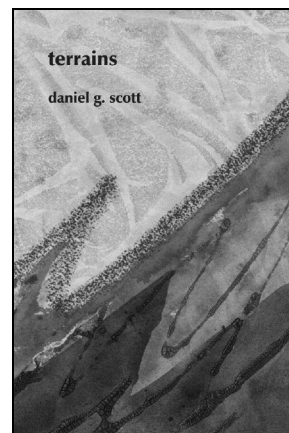
my finger strokes
the concave curve
comes out blackened
smudges the red skin
should i paint it black
recall words from
the clowning instructor
 to clown is to let
 the inside out
i cannot turn away

i should have known

i did not know
absence was heavy
it bears down on me
dark matter
weighted by death's separation
i'm being divided
divided as weight descends
multiplies
presses down

perhaps i should have noticed
how light being is
unbearably buoyant

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74 pages
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Daniel G. Scott
writes in a variety of forms – academic articles, plays, radio and print journalism – but his long standing joy in writing is poetry. His first longer book of poems black onion

(Goldfinch Press) was published in 2012. Many years ago a chapbook: Pyramid and other dreams (Purple Onion Society) was published. He is currently an associate professor, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria and continues to write his way through the vicissitudes of life.



ground slips away
presence soars
becomes ecstasy
how the weight of death
grounds
on earth solid
redolent

pleasure

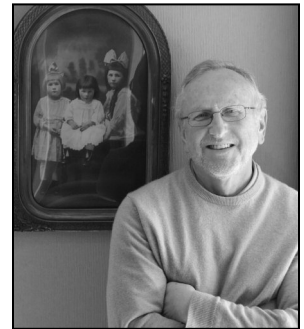
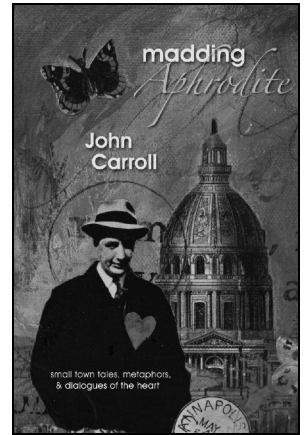
late morning somewhere
a day turns to dust
i'm riding the quiet
rocking rhythm steady
a ghost horse
between my legs
hooves silent as
they kiss the meadow
the carpet, the sky

flanks full
warm my inner thigh
words boil up
catch my breath
to take form, my pen
caresses a naked page
i ride and ride
spill words in a rush
untamed pleasure

from Madding Aphrodite

John Carroll

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349 pages
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\$25.95



John Carroll is a writer and educator. He was born in Buffalo, New York. He immigrated to Canada in 1972. He has received degrees from Wesleyan University, Western Washington University, and The University of British Columbia. He is an Associate Professor of English at the University of the Fraser Valley. This is his third poetry collection.

madding Aphrodite

the goddess was & always is elusive when she ran through the woods her stride was always so full of grace it was unbearable to watch & hopeless to pursue her but pursue her I did sometimes I was so close I touched the boughs that she had just brushed past her perfume was on the wind I was intoxicated I stopped to watch her bathe hid behind the branches of a young alder of course she knew I was there there was no purpose in hiding except for my own pleasure in my dreams she touched me the ecstasy was too great to bear when I woke she was standing over me with her smile enigmatic her body in full nakedness I begged her I prayed to her to let me take her & that one time & several times after I almost did I swear I had her in my arms her infinite eternal youthfulness her body as lush as an undiscovered planet men can only dream about but at the moment of my climax or hers it wasn't clear she was gone & I instantly ached for her again dreamed of her night & day imagined situations I would trap her in devised clever methods of seduction but when it came to the moment the world I'd created dissolved she was laughing running again if I could just reach her touch her breasts put my tongue between her legs I know I could weaken her make her deity crumble melt hear the goddess scream declare her love for me or lust it didn't matter but she could change my world in a second so that I would lose my way so that I would wander from tree to tree laughing talking to them reciting her names my names the names of the planets & stars losing myself in my dark yearning like a monk devoured by his robe twisted about his neck so that the breath no longer comes easy so that god is forgotten & nothing matters but the madness

the True Heart & the Untrue Heart

one day the True Heart & the Untrue Heart met & the True Heart said *don't you wish you were me? I have no worries no shame I move through a sunny world the air I breathe is pure & when I sleep I dream of nothing but angels.* the Untrue Heart replied *don't you wish you were me I'm not in conflict I never feel unfulfilled I'm honest with myself & I move with ease as if my life is one continual dance you lie & distort you tell yourself stories as if they were true you say you're happy when you're not you smile & hope others can't see through you in your private moments under the cover of night you despair* the True Heart hesitated then replied *I don't slink down alleyways kicking stones lost in thoughts about*

my own corruption how often do you recriminate yourself how often do you wake in the morning with the taste of self-loathing on your tongue & innocent love lying by your side never knows your secret until one day it all comes tumbling out like vomit & innocent love is broken crumpled like a crushed flower & all because of you then the Untrue Heart hesitated bowed his head for a moment lost in thought *what you say is true* he said to the True Heart *you understand me & that's some comfort but what about you those days you walk through heavenly light & crisp shadows ignorant of the wind in the monkey puzzle tree blind to the snowdrops & the shivering daffodils enclosed in your world of self-loathing because you know yourself to be a fraud a player playing not himself & when you look at the mountains across the bay there's no strength there's dullness fading to numbness because you know with that skin you're imprisoned by your choice to be true to innocent love & not yourself how the days stretch before you dull repetitive fruitless inconsequential false meanwhile innocent love is by your side dallying in the bright air & all you can do is smile* for a moment the True Heart looked sad then he smiled sadly at the Untrue Heart & said *yes you & I understand each other better than we understand ourselves let's embrace & vow that we'll be true to one another for that's the best that we can hope I understand your ache you understand mine it's small comfort since we know there's no revelation that will lead to happiness for you or me or innocent love who will suffer the most from our great divide but there is some comfort in knowing we're not alone & so they embraced as evening fell as the sky darkened & all thoughts took roost for the night*

the artist's dilemma

it was odd it was oddly quiet how a train could back in like that without a track & it was odd how the very last car where the caboose should be was the funeral car was it meant for me? from a distance it seemed like a cozy little place all soft & plush & dead to sound I felt a little tug in my gut something between fear & fascination but upon reflection I thought it best to have a more careful look inside the car it was much as I'd expected all velvety & deadened to the light outside the air was still stale I would say it was comfortable enough but dully so there was an old man sleeping in a corner I guessed based on his uniform he was the conductor he was snoring loudly his head had fallen back & I had an unobstructed view of his nostril hair I hesitated wondering

if I should wake him up I was still curious to know what was the fare how long was the ride & what country would it take me through suddenly the car jerked & began to creep forward I looked to the conductor but he was still asleep I looked for a cord to pull but there was none I ran to the back of the car threw open the door & stepped out already the train was moving swiftly perhaps too swiftly for me to jump it was leaving the station behind I had to think quickly what was the risk if I did jump I knew I didn't want to be on that train I knew that now with certainty was it worth the risk how fast the track flew by & what did it mean if I stayed I'd always been an artist all my life from the time I began creating in my childish halting way to now that impulse to create was like a great force that had carried me through life what would become of that if I stayed put there was no choice only one clear path I jumped from the car hoping I would land on my feet

REMEMBERING P.K. PAGE

Rachel Wyatt

Coal and Roses is PK Page's second book of glosas. She was fascinated by the form. It allowed her to borrow lines by the some of the poets, past and present, whose work she loved, and to build on them.

I found the first lines of these six glosas particularly meaningful just now.

The Last Time

"I have been an omnivorous reader. . ."

When I moved to Victoria, in 1993, I had no idea that it would be the beginning of 17-year conversation with PK Page whom I had known only slightly before. We used to talk of many things including ships and sealing wax but books were our major topic. Light books, heavy books, fat books and thin books. Over lunch, or tea or drinks or dinner, we discussed literature both ancient and modern, fiction and non-fiction. Whether it was Le Clézio's *The Wandering Star*, or Barack Obama's *Dreams from my Father*, or Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, our discussions added a great deal to my reading pleasure. PK's reading was wide and deep. She studied work on a variety of religious teachings and of philosophy and science. William James, George Steiner, Stephen Hawking, Isaiah Berlin, Idries Shah were all included in her library. The fact that PK was not a Jane Austen fan in no way lessened my regard for her!

On occasion, we revisited our early reading and could finish each other's quotations from *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Tailor of Gloucester*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. Our childhoods, separated by the Atlantic Ocean and several years, had a literary foundation that remained a pleasure to us both.

The Blue Guitar

"I do my best to tell it true"

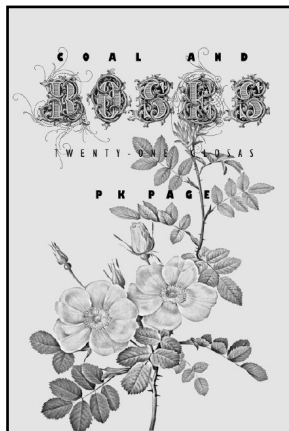
PK always told it true. There was a rigour in her approach to life, to books, and very clearly to her own work. And she expected the same of others. Telling it true is not always the popular route but PK was not deterred. She spoke out in defence of the arts and in protest against any government policy she regarded as wrong. There was no hesitation. Injustice of any kind secured her attention whether the victim was an individual or an entire population.

She was also truly prophetic. 'Unless the eye catch fire,' written in the 70s, speaks clearly of the dangers of global warming, but in those days no one was listening.

soft travellers

"...among the many magics there are words. . ."

Oh there are words! The magical surprise of PK's poetry is in her sudden use of some extraordinary phrase or term that makes the reader's mind leap and dance about with recognition. How did she know? How did she put her finger on that very place? How did she discover that? She placed



Coal and Roses
P.K. Page
Porcupine's Quill, 2009
96 pages, \$16.95

her words with a sure and deft touch to create this image, or illustrate that perception.

Further in this glosa, she wrote of 'words correctly spelled' and this was something that mattered to her. The carelessness of some writing today, the slipshod grammar, were painful to her. How could supposedly educated people not care enough about words to make sure they're properly placed and spelt right! The casual orthography of the text generation appalled her.

And besides the magic of words, there was the magic of magic itself. Just a few years ago, we invited a few friends to a party and hired a local magician to entertain the guests. PK's delight in the mystery of the apparently impossible was a joy to see, even when the conjuror seemed to be about to cut her friend's hand off with a little guillotine. She was always open to wonder and ready to be amazed.



Anna Akmatova

Coal and Roses – A triple glosa

Based on a poem by Anna Akmatova, the first of these three glosas begins, "I read the papers with my morning coffee."

Everything that happened in the world was of interest to PK. This week, we would have talked about the achievement of the scientists working on the Large Hadron Collider. We would have shared their excitement without exactly knowing how those protons could rush around at almost the speed of light and crash into each other or what it meant. We would have despaired perhaps over new acts of violence round the world, and wondered whether Ted Hughes would have been pleased to be relocated in the hallowed ground of Westminster Abbey among his peers. PK had met Hughes and greatly admired both the man and his poetry.

The first of these three glosas speaks of all the dire happenings in the world. The second mentions flowers and stars; the Perseid showers PK loved to see. And then finally with, "A gift of coal and roses," in asking us to imagine something beyond our grasp and yet within ourselves, she allows us to hope.

Paradise

"Paradise is really the same as Britain."

I miss PK's sense of humour above all: Those telephone conversations that left us both laughing even after we'd closed the connection. What did we find so funny? Now when I read a crazy item in the paper or hear of an odd happening, I reach for the phone to discuss it with her and realize she's not there. A sense of humour varies greatly from one person to another and when you find someone who looks at the world in the same oblique way as you do, who sees the irony in so much that goes on, it is a relationship to treasure.

After Chaos

"I had been dealt a blow. . ."

(continued on next page)

"A GRAVE ILLNESS"

Yvonne Blomer

First off, you may wonder what has possessed me to go back in time and select a poem from almost thirty years ago. Is it a sense of the morbid, the topic of the poem being of illness and the poet having recently died? I don't think so, though there is the desire to contemplate how P.K. Page approached death or illness or aging in her work, to try to gain an understanding of how she may have approached it in her final days.

More than personal gloomy curiosity, I have selected "A Grave Illness" because it is a beautifully written poem that contains in it many of Page's ways of rendering the world in poetry. To list a few, she is: honest, personal without being confessional, pays attention to sound, rhythm, rhyme without sounding quaint, unapologetic, curious, an explorer, uncompromising and she delves into the mystical.

Each of the three stanzas in this poem starts with the "someone" shovelling, the sound comes from the world outside, but gradually the two worlds – that of the ill narrator in her house and the outside world - merge: "Someone was shovelling gravel. Was it I?" The colour of the plum blossoms outside gradually moves inside; is equated with the narrator's blood: "trickling from above / through unresistant air/ fell on my eyes and hair/ as crimson as my blood."

This merging of the outside world and the inside world, this transformational experience through colour and sound, recalls the biblical Ezekial – who also had visions of "spokes of static wheels/ spinning and whirring". It recalls Page's own story about global warming, "Unless the Eye Catch Fire" published smack in the middle of *Evening Dance of the Grey Flies*. These notions are mystical in their approach; they are transformative; they capture a moment of transformation.

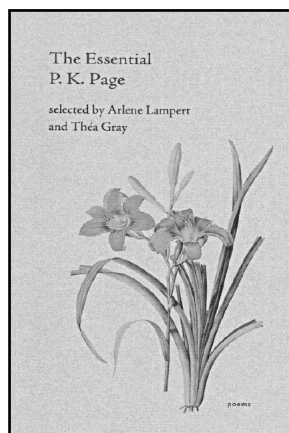
How does Page create this mystical moment?

I think she does it by using rhyme and repetition, also the situation is real, not real in the sense that I know for a fact that this experience is an authentic one to Page, but real in the sense that I can imagine it as an authentic experience to myself. I can put myself there, gravely ill, gravel being shovelled outside my window and the plum blossoms coming into bloom and hear, see and feel this transformation take place.

Page equates the sound of the shovel grating on the gravel with the sound of coughing. Each time that shovel hits rock, the narrator coughs so that, after a time, after it is repeated again, and then again at the end of the second stanza in "The shovel grated in my breaking chest" the sound of outside has moved into the body – shovel and cough are no longer distinguishable.

The third stanza is an almost euphoric embrace of the grating/coughing: "Was it I?/ Burying me in shifts and shards of rock/ up to my gasping throat. My head was out/." These lines are not iambic pentameter as much as each of them has five stresses giving a strong rhythm. They are followed by four rhyming lines: "blossoms trickling from above/ through unresistant air/ fell on my eyes and hair/ as crimson as my blood."

That last line allows for a total opening of the narrator, as if her chest has opened, as the hole in the gravel, as the 'grave' in the title. Our shift from the sound, to the colour of plum blossoms in those final five lines is



The Essential P.K. Page
P.K. Page
The Porcupine's Quill
2008



P.K. Page

a signal that an end is coming as in the sonnet's volta.

This is an expertly created poem. It comes as no surprise that Page can render such parallels, with such detail to colour and beauty imbued in death, or illness. This poem can be said to have come from the early part of her writing career but exemplifies many of her strengths.

Yvonne Blomer's first book a broken mirror, fallen leaf was shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award. She has twice been shortlisted for the CBC Literary Awards and has been published widely in Canada and abroad. In June Yvonne will present a tribute to P.K. Page at the League of Canadian Poets' AGM in Toronto. She is the host and organizer of the Planet Earth Poetry reading series, a series named after P.K. Page's poem "Planet Earth."

REMEMBERING P.K. PAGE (continued from preceding page)

Not long before she died, PK was dealt a final blow. She accepted the diagnosis with her usual grace, and approached it with the curiosity that made her so interested in all aspects of life. She Googled the subject, she got in touch with experts, and finally she found a doctor who would "tell it true". She didn't care to be fobbed off with generalities. Like any writer though, at the same time as she was experiencing the difficulties of her condition, she would stand to one side and watch and consider her reactions.

PK loved life, and she loved the people in her life with a truly unstinting generosity.

We who loved her, her family and her many, many friends, have indeed been 'dealt a blow'. But as I read and re-read this particular poem, I can almost hear her voice offering solace to those of us who miss her every day, and saying, "The healing has begun".

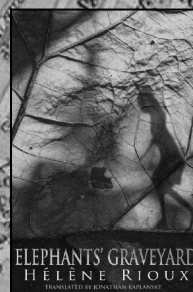
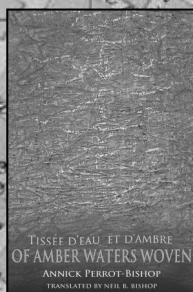
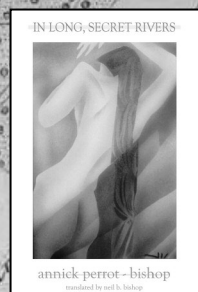
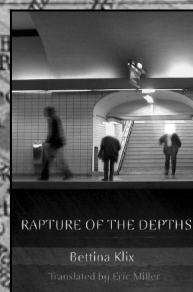
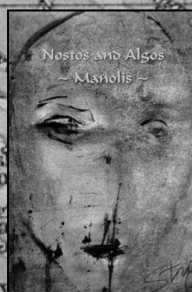
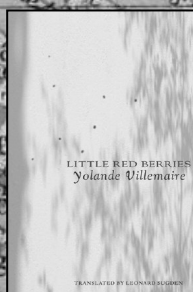
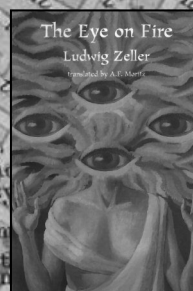
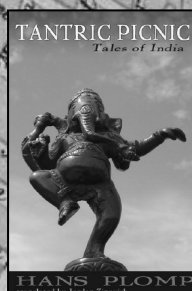
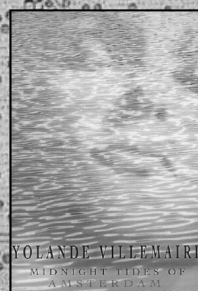
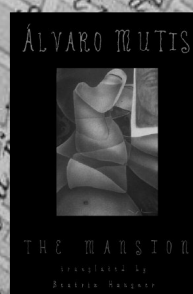
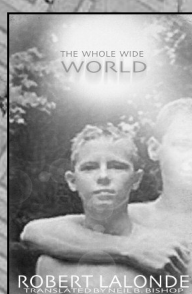
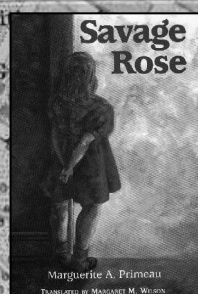
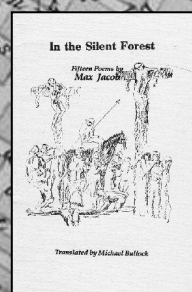
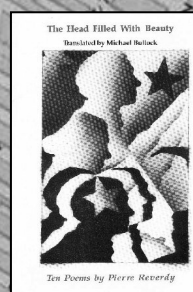
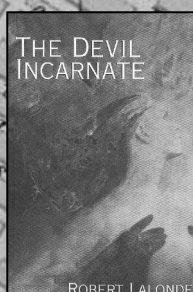
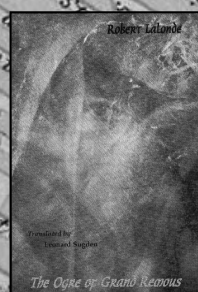
Awarded the Order of Canada in 2002 and the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 2003, Rachel Wyatt has written scores of plays for the BBC and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. She published The Magician's Beautiful Assistant with Hedgerow Press in 2005. She lives in Victoria.



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