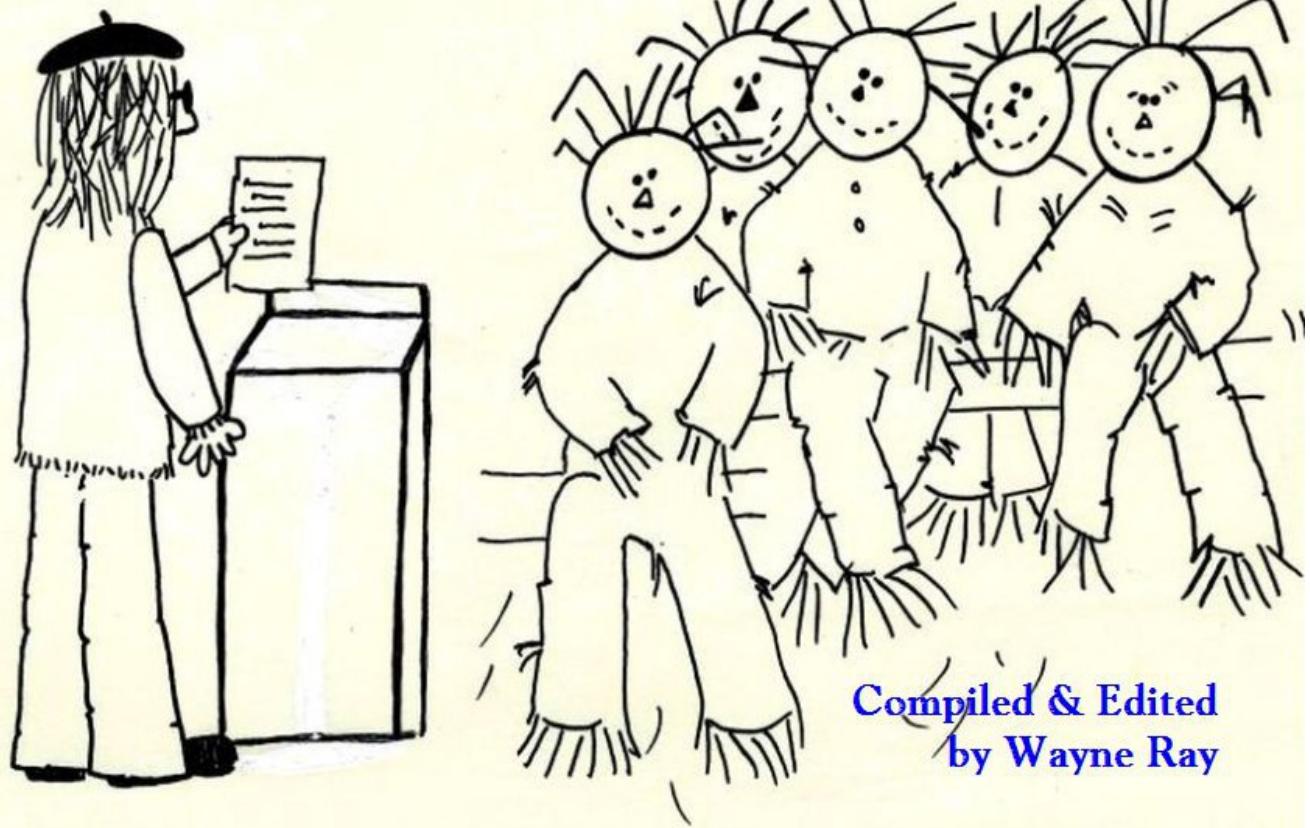


# PARTICIPOET !!

A Brief History of HMS Press,  
Canadian Poetry Association, BookClub Booklits,  
& CPA London: Publications Articles & Reviews



Compiled & Edited  
by Wayne Ray

# Participoet !!

An early history of  
HMS Press & CPA London  
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Dedicated to the memory of our friend Joe Blades, Fredericton New Brunswick. April 24 2020.

## Table of Contents

<b>Canadian Poetry Association: an introduction</b>	6
ID Magazine 1996	
<b>BookClub BookLits 1991-1993</b>	8
<b>Remembrance Day: Three Essays</b>	9
CPA BookClub BookLits sample	
<b>Beyond Bethune: People's Poetry and Milton Acorn</b>	16
by Terry Barker	

### Articles & Book Reviews:

<b>Field: haiku and senryu</b>	18
Review by George Swede	
<b>Caution: Deep Water</b>	19
Review by John B. Lee	
<b>Caution: Deep Water</b>	20
Review by Chris Faiers	
<b>My Coming Of Age</b>	21
Review by Katherine L. Gordon	
<b>My Coming Of Age</b>	21
Review by Elana Wolff	
<b>Ballyhoo</b>	22
Review by Adam C. Holowitz	
<b>Ballyhoo: Culbert's Labour of Love</b>	23
Herman Goodden	
<b>Throw Me A Line</b>	24
Article by Jackie Westlaken	
<b>Whale Songs In The Aurora Borealis</b>	26
Review by Katherine L. Gordon	
<b>Book Project Serves Double Goal</b>	27
Review by James Reaney Jr.	
<b>Invisible Accordion</b>	28
Review by Sherri Telenko	
<b>Cover Makes A Set</b>	29
Review by Sherri Telenko	
<b>Besok Saya Melukis?</b>	29
Review by London Free Press	
<b>BookMarks: Middle Earth</b>	30
Review by Mark Young	
<b>BookMarks: CPA BookClub BookLits</b>	32
Reviews by Mark Young	
<b>Publishing In The Electronic Age</b>	33
Review by Jenny Wilkinson	

<b>Blowing Holes Through The Everyday</b>	34
Review by Deborah Jurdjevic	
<b>Blowing Holes Through The Everyday</b>	35
Review by Mark Young	
<b>BookMarks: Under The Jasmine Moon</b>	37
Review by Mark Young	
<b>Under The Jasmine Moon</b>	38
Review by Patrick Holland	
<b>Weather Report</b>	39
Review by Bob Lincoln	
<b>Acorn: Swept Up In Imagery</b>	40
Review by Maggie Helwig	
<b>Standing Up For Himself</b>	41
Review by Paul Denham	
<b>Whiskey Jack</b>	42
Review by Rob MacLeod	
<b>Without A Crystal Ball</b>	43
Review by Andrew Brooks	
<b>Poems A Strange Source</b>	
<b>The Three Roberts</b>	44
Review by Maggie Helwig	
<b>The Three Roberts</b>	45
Review by Michael Williamson	
<b>Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West</b>	46
Review by Sybil James	
<b>Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West</b>	47
Review by Ellen Pilon	
<b>Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West</b>	48
Review by Cheryl Meszaros	
<b>A Mysterious Poem, The Captain, Photographs</b>	49
Reviews by Bill Brydon	
<b>Auschwitz, Suburban Eyes, Island Women</b>	50
Reviews by N.M. Drutz	
<b>Island Women</b>	52
Review by D.S.P.	
<b>Island Women</b>	52
Review by Stuart Ross	
<b>Two Cops Kissing</b>	53
Review by Martin Singleton	
<b>Pool Hall</b>	54
Review by Mark Bastien	
<b>Final Word On Rejection Letters</b>	55

## **Appendix:**

<b>Articles and Review Titles</b>	58
<b>Book and Chapbook Authors</b>	59
<b>Book Titles: HMS Press &amp; CPA London</b>	60
<b>E-Book Titles [archive.org]</b>	61
<b>CPA CD Reviews</b>	62
<b>CPA [London] BookClub BookLits Title List:</b>	62
<b>Journals, Magazines &amp; Newspapers</b>	62
<b>Book Reviewers</b>	63
<b>HMS Broadsides</b>	63
<b>Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award Winners</b>	64
<b>SBCA Book Reviews</b>	
<b>Only A Dragon KV Skene</b>	65,66

## **Canadian Poetry Association**

*ID Magazine*, January 25 - February 7, 1996

Review by Eppo Martens

Wayne Ray smiles as he takes a small plaster statue down from a book shelf covered with chapbooks, journals and spine bound volumes. The statue is of people sitting around a large table. It's old, chipped in many places, two figures even lack heads. [The Last Supper sic] On the base of the statue is the date "January 16, 1985."

"That's just how it was" says Ray, recalling the night 10 years ago when he slapped \$5 on a table top at the Balmy Arms Hotel, in Toronto and said, "I'm forming the Canadian Poetry Association!" Ten years later, the CPA has grown into a broad based network of poets, with Chapters in Hamilton, London, Toronto, and other cities from coast to coast. Its Mission is simple: "to promote the reading, writing, [publishing] and preservation of poetry in Canada through the individual efforts of its members and autonomous Chapters." Most Chapters hold regular meetings that are open to the general public and often include open sets to encourage amateur poets to share their work. The group also works as a resource for novice poets looking for some constructive feedback. Most Chapters organize writing workshops, and there's usually someone around who will sit down with you and help you refine your writing style.

Ray, who is the CPA's current National Coordinator and runs the Headquarters in London Ontario, says the groups founders were mostly members of the League Of Canadian Poets, a professional organization set up to promote the work and careers of its members. What the poetry scene was missing, according to Ray and his co-founders, was an organization that promoted the poem itself, as an art form to be enjoyed and practiced by all, not just professional poets.

The League of Canadian Poets is open to only published authors, who must meet certain criteria set by the group's membership committee before joining. Once accepted into the League, poets receive either full or associate membership depending on their publishing credentials. The CPA, on the other hand, is open to the general public, and there is only full membership status. The annual fee is \$20 (\$10 for students and seniors) which includes a subscription to POEMATA, the associations newsletter. But you don't need to be published. In fact, you don't need to be a poet.

Poet James Deahl is the 1995 Past President and founding member of the CPA. He is a Full Member of the League. The two poetry groups serve different functions, he says, and for many poets the two groups compliment each other. About a dozen CPA members are Full Members of the League and another dozen are Associate Members.

Poetry in Canada is often marginalized, and it's the Associations goal to bring it to the mainstream. In 1993, they held a book sale in the Galleria Mall in London just before Christmas. Regional poets came to sign books and to promote their craft. "We don't see poetry as something for some small specialized audience that's very private," says Deahl, "it's something that can happen in shopping malls."

But Ray says building up an alternative association has not been easy, The CPA is a broad based network of autonomous chapters, a structure which can hamper as often as it can help the group. The success of any Chapter will depend on the dedication of its members, and the success of the CPA depends on the strength of its local Chapters. While some locals may only get together occasionally, others are more active. They hold regular readings and one is planning to launch an

anthology of poems about Hamilton in June to mark the city's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday.

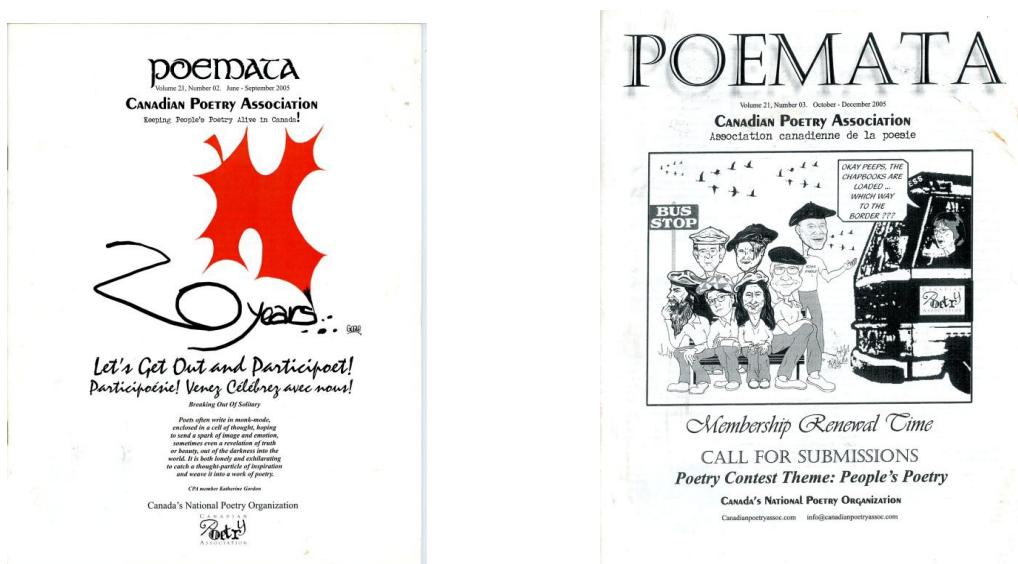
In 1988, the CPA had almost 400 members and local Chapters stretching from Vancouver to the East coast. But in 1989, they hit a low point when Shaunt Basmajian, a founding member and Treasurer, died one year after being stabbed in the heart while working as a cab driver in Toronto. Things fell apart after his death. Letters went unanswered, no one could open the bank account or post office box and the Association lost more than two-thirds of its membership.

But the CPA is back into a period of growth. Despite its earlier drop in membership, the group now has close to 150 members and has just released an anthology of member's poetry to celebrate the groups 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The anthology, entitled *An Invisible Accordion*, was published by [Joe Blades, current President] Broken Jaw Press in Fredericton New Brunswick. It contains the work of 68 members and showcases a variety of styles ranging from three-line Japanese haiku to traditional and free-form experimental poetry.

The name of the anthology was chosen to honor the late maritime poet, Milton Acorn, an active member of the CPA during his lifetime. It's a line taken from one of Acorn's poems, entitled "It's All In The Mother's Head," about a 79 year old woman dancing to imaginary music. As Deahl writes in the anthology's final pages: "it can really be said that the poet makes something out of nothing, like coaxing a Maritime dance tune from an invisible accordion."

The Anthology stands as a testament to the groups successes and marks the beginning of what Deahl and Ray see as renewed growth and revitalization. Future plans include poetry contests, publishing Chapbooks, showcasing members works and simply increasing the association's membership. They also plan to go online with books on disk and a data base of the CPA Library's growing collection [of 1800+ titles currently in the King's College Library at the University of Toronto (ed)].

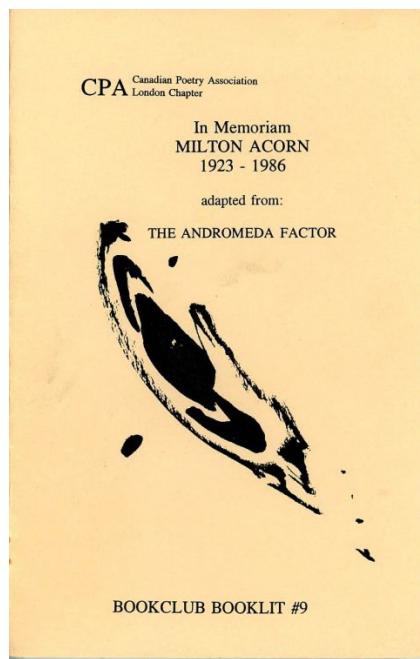
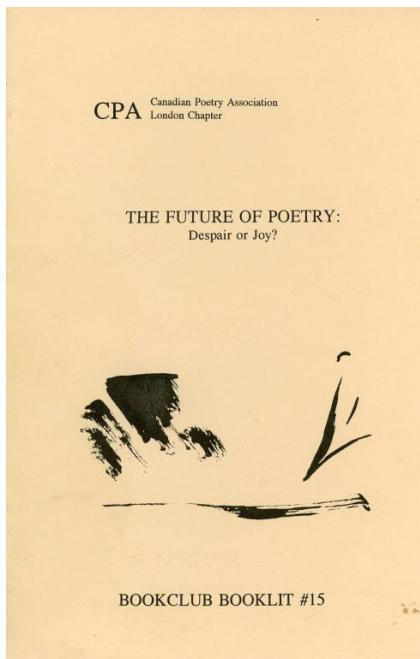
The CPA is a place where professionals meet amateurs and traditions meet innovation. Visit your local Chapter's headquarters or attend a reading, but don't forget to check your ego at the door, because at the CPA it's not the poet who matters but the poem itself.



## BookClub BookLits 1991-1993

The Canadian Poetry Association: London Chapter produced nine Chapbooks in its BookClub BookLit Series. The Chapbooks were written by James Deahl (with Terry Barker, CPA History Committee Chair), Wayne Ray and the sample from this collection *Remembrance Day: Three Essays* by Ted Plantos, Carol Malyon, and Leanne Ray.

1. (WR) *Creative Plagiarism*
2. (WR) *Horticultural Influences in the Founding of HMS Press*
3. (JD) *In Memoriam: Milton Acorn*
4. (WR) *Regional Short Stories: the Literary Highway*
5. (TP, CM, LR) *Remembrance Day: Three Essays*
6. (WR) *Shashin-kaku Haiku*
7. (JD, TB) *The Beauty That Endures:*  
*Archibald Lampman's Foundation For a Critical Canadian Poetics*
8. (JD) *The Future of Poetry: Despair Or Joy*
- 9: (WR) *Twin Peaks*



**Remembrance Day: Three Essays**  
CPA BookClub BookLits 1993  
Ted Plantos, Carol Malyon, Leanne Ray

**Beyond War Sentiment and Propaganda**

by Ted Plantos Originally presented as a seminar entitled *From Flanders Fields to the Place Rotten with Dead: Beyond War and Sentiment and Propaganda*. The League of Canadian Poets' AGM: Victoria College, Toronto, May 25, 1991.

When I first talked to Betsy Struthers about this seminar, I made the claim that all war poetry is anti-war poetry. Betsy was probably right to say this was too general a statement because, obviously, many war poems are written in the spirit of patriotism and in support of a war effort. But are these poems or propaganda jingoism and sentimental patriotic verse? I also make a distinction between anti-war poetry and protest poetry. Protest poetry is written from a political agenda, and thus belongs, with patriotic verse, in the category of propaganda. Anti-war poetry is not necessarily written in protest. There is no stronger protest than the truth revealed through war's reality.

Some might argue that a poet determines his or her own personal truth in a poem. Does this mean that T. S. Eliot, who was an Anglican, wrote Anglican poetry? Or that Ezra Pound, who believed in fascism, wrote fascist poetry? I argue that the poem determines its need to truth, apart from the personal beliefs of the poet.

The soldier poets who recorded the atrocities from World War I to Vietnam were dealing with the truths about mass slaughter. From his poem, Celebration of Spring, American poet John Balahan writes: *In delta swamp to united Vietnam / a marine with a bullfrog for a face / rots in equatorial heat. An eel / slides through the cage on his bared ribs / At night, on the old battlefields, ghosts / like patches of fog, lurk into villages . . .* Contrast Balahan's ghosts of war dead with John McCrae's in the poem In Flanders Fields.

Prevalent among the soldier poets was a disillusionment and change in personal beliefs when confronted with the realities of war. Truth will do that. From his poems, The Invasion of Grenada, W. D. Erhardt writes: *I didn't want a monument / not even one as sober as that / vast black wall of broken lives. / I didn't want a postage stamp. / I didn't want a road beside the Delaware / River with a sign proclaiming: 'Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.' / What I wanted was a simple recognition / of the limits of our power as a nation / to inflict our will on others. / What I wanted was an understanding / that the world is neither black-and-white / not ours. / What I wanted / was an end to monuments.* Some might also argue that the reader determines what is truth in a poem. This is a polite Liberal sentiment, but it suggests that a poem's value is purely subjective.

However, twenty thousand men dying in the mud of the Somme is not subjective. Six [to eleven ed.] million men, women, and children dying in Nazi Germany's gas ovens is not subjective. This is truth, and poetry demands nothing less. War is not solely a matter of personal truth.

Have we arrived at the point in 1991 where the truth about war is as simplistic as choosing what kind and colour of car we drive? Would a poem extolling the virtues of genocide be a matter of personal taste. In schools, generations of students were deprived of reading Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, or Wilfred Owen because such poetry seared the conscience, while thy memorized lines like Take up our quarrel with the foe from McCrae's *In Flanders Fields*. We must ask

ourselves, is it true that World War I was a mere quarrel?

Are verses such as *In Flanders Fields* written from a strictly personal truth, or are they influenced by a political ideology and imperial order quite apart from the poet? The Greek and Roman and British Empires came and fell, and with each died their propaganda about the foes they fought. I decided to pursue my argument by re-reading the World War I poets. I began with John McCrae's poem. Published anonymously in Punch, in 1915, *In Flanders Fields* was the most popular poem of the war. This poem is a rondel, a French form that has two rhymes and usually consists of fourteen lines in three stanzas. The first two lines of the opening stanza serve as a refrain for the second and third stanzas.

One cannot question McCrae's poetic truth in the first two stanzas that offers a clear and poignant denunciation of war. But the final stanza is a call to arms using propaganda buzz word, Victorian moral abstractions and trite phrasing; and it has the effect of something that was tacked on because the structure demanded a third verse. The second stanza, opening with We are the dead, is, without doubt, a powerful shift in tone. And one can argue that this justifies another abrupt shift in the third stanza. But the second stanza is wholly consistent with the first where the author tells us about the crosses, row on row, that mark our place, while the third is a complete departure. Poetically, the one justification for the third stanza is that the man was writing a rondel. (Also, it was written at a time, early on in the war, when nobody, including the soldiers, could conceive of the devastation to come.) And the poem is only superficially consistent with the rondel form, since the third stanza is an abrupt deviation in tone, imagery, and language from the first two where the image of poppies is paralleled with crosses in graves, the singing of larks with the roar of guns, death with sunset's glow, and love with the slaughtered soldiers in Flanders fields. That the third stanza is flawed is evident when one reads the refrain with the third stanza and finds that the sense and rhythm are incomplete; whereas there is no such problem when one reads it with the second stanza.

Contrast *In Flanders Fields* with this passage from Siegfried Sassoon's Counter Attack: '*The place was rotten with dead; green clumsy legs / high-booted, sprawled and groveled along the saps / and trunks, face downward, in the sucking mud, / Wallowed like trodden sand-bags loosely filled / And naked sodden buttocks, matts of hair, / Bulged, clotted heads slept in the plastering slime. / And then the rain began, the jolly old rain!*' This is not the kind of poetry that British and Canadian children would be encouraged to read.

McCrae's poem was enormously popular with the very people whose ignorance about war perpetuated the lie that Sassoon denounced. '*You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye / who cheer when soldier lads march by, / Sneak home and pray you'll never know / the hell where youth and laughter go.*' From *Suicide In The Trenches*. Sassoon's anti-war writings almost landed him a court-martial, but Robert Graves interceded on his behalf and he was judged by a medical board instead. Later, at a sanatorium, Sassoon would meet and influence a young admirer of his poetry, Wilfred Owen.

Sassoon was a poet, and McCrae a writer of minor verse whose one shot at eloquence he compromised for considerations other than poetry. Nothing is compromised in Sassoon's poem, *Base Details*: '*If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath / I'd live with scarlet Major's at the Base / and speed glum heroes up the line of death. / You'd see me with my puffy petulant face, / Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel, / Reading the Roll of Honour, 'Poor Young Chap', / I'd say 'I used to know your father well' / Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap. / and when the war is done and*

*youth stone dead, / I'd toddle safely home and die in bed.'*

In his introduction to the Penguin Book of First World War Poetry, editor John Silken quotes Wilfred Owen from a letter to his mother: "If you believe something is wrong you cannot, out of tolerance, or any other mode, convince yourself that it's right. And am I not a conscientious objector with a very seared conscience?" Silken concludes that "for Owen, killing was wrong." From his poem, *Spring Offensive*, Owen writes: '*So soon, they topped the hill, and raced together / Over an open stretch of herb and heather / Exposed. And instantly the whole sky burned / With fury against them; earth set sudden cups / in thousands for their blood; and the green slope / Chasmed and steepened sheer to infinite space.*'

Robert Brooke provides a more serious challenge to my argument. As Paul Fussell says in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, '*Someone like Rupert Brooke we would expect to be full of literature.*' Brooke is not in the class of Sassoon, Owen, Blunden, or Rosenberg. His poem, *The Soldier*, is a testament to British imperialism and has more to do with patriotism than the actual experience of war. Brooke was killed in action in 1915, only one year into the war. He died before the slaughter at the Somme and the devastation at Passchendale.

More patriotic verse is written in the early stages of a war before the brutal truths and moral conflicts that poetry must confront are known or realized by combatants or civilians. Even Kipling changed his tone later on in the war, after his son was killed in action: '*If any question why we died / Tell them, because our father's lied.*'

Silken states in his introduction that "*The English tendency is to elevate compassion into a religious sentiment and thus remove it from the earth . . .*" Isaac Rosenberg did not have this tendency. His poetry explodes with an art and sensibility totally foreign to 19<sup>th</sup> Century poetics. Although he draws on the traditional English pastoral mode, he does this in contrast with the stark horrors of the battlefield, thereby infusing it with a truly radical element.

Pastoral poetry would never be the same after Rosenberg, and Edmund Blunden, who wrote in his poem, *Third Ypres: They're done, they'll all died in the entanglements / The wire stood up like an unsplashed hedge and throned / With giant spikes, and there they've paid the bill.*

Ted Plantos was a writer of poetry and fiction and the publisher of *The People's Poetry Newsletter* and *Cross Canada Writer's Quarterly*. His latest books were *Dogs Know About Parades* by Black Moss Press and *Passchendale*, as well as *Mosquito Nirvana* by Wolsak and Wynn. Ted passed away in 2001. The Ontario Poetry Society has an ongoing prize for new poets called The Ted Plantos Memorial Award.

## War Poems: A Rebuttal

by Carol Malyon.

Originally appeared in *POEMATA*, the newsletter of the Canadian Poetry Association as a rebuttal to *Beyond War Sentiment and Propaganda*, which appeared in the same issue.

I remember Allie once asked him wasn't it sort of good that he was in the war because he was a writer and it gave him a lot to write about and all? He made Allie go get his baseball mitt and then he asked who was the best war poet, Rupert Brooke or Emily Dickinson. Allie said Emily Dickinson.

Poets think about war and write war poems. We read them and are forced to contemplate war too. They are not an easy and comfortable read. Words can make one believe anything. They have that power. Rhythm helps. All the magical play with language. We are poets and know this.

Some day all war poems are really anti-war, that all poets are anti-war. But surely poets don't collectively agree on anything; they're not all vegetarian or ambidextrous or reclusive. What poets have in common is that they think; they feel; they have something they want to say and write it down. Their ideas intersect at some points, diverge at others. Issues are complex. If they weren't, then poets would not likely be writing about them. Why would they bother? What would they go to the trouble to say?

Readers aren't blank pages waiting to be written on; they bring their life histories with them when they sit down to read, their years full of experience, their philosophies, their biases and beliefs. They identify with certain poems and stories, and read into them what they want to. Readers have things they believe; they need the author to believe them too.

For instance, John McCrae, author of *In Flanders Fields*, one of the best known war poems. School children memorized it. It has been argued that the last stanza was added on, that it doesn't belong, doesn't fit in with the first two.

Paul Fussell discusses the poem in *The Great War and Modern Memory*. He writes, 'But things fall apart two-thirds of the way through,' and describes the third verse as 'recruiting-poster rhetoric' and 'a propaganda argument.' But all three stanzas differ from each other.

The first stanza; gentle, rural, peaceful. Although McCrae's poppies symbolize red spurts of blood, wounds, and scars, still the image was pastoral. The flowers don't simply 'grow' although such an action would fit the rhyme scheme. They blow. We feel a light refreshing breeze. We hear larks sing, just as in England. The crosses are there though, and the guns. The images are ominous as well as rustic. If one must die young and be buried far from home, this is the place that one would choose.

The second verse jolts. '*We are the dead*' hits with a thud. Simple. Declarative. Unexpected, even though the first verse mentioned 'our' place. The reader wants to protest '*No we aren't*.' The Dead, that is. And yet, why bother? We soon will be. A dramatic reminder of how recently these soldiers were alive, 'loved and were loved,' it prods us to remember our own flitting mortality.

The mood of the third stanza differs, is exhortative. It tries to make sense of things, to justify those deaths. Readers may feel no justification is possible, but that doesn't negate McCrae's right to attempt vindication. The torch image is rich with symbolism: light struggling against darkness; the best of a nation's young men competing in Olympic tests of process.

I have no difficulty believing that McCrae told the truth as he perceived it in this poem, and that he needed all three verses in order to do so. Surely it is a disservice to him as a poet to believe otherwise. We read to understand other viewpoints, not simply to confirm our own beliefs.

Otherwise we could just write our own poems and re-read and re-read them.

Toronto writer Carol Malyon was author of two books of poetry, *Emma's Dead & Headstand* (Wolsak and Wynn) and a short story collection, *The Edge of the World*, and a novel, *If I Knew I'd Tell You* (Mercury Press). Carol passed away in 2006.

## **Remembrance Day**

by Leanne Tyla Ray

This essay will discuss the poems *In Flanders Fields* by John McCrae and *Bittersweet* by John Schleihauf. The first poem was written during WWI and the second poem was written about the same war.

*In Flanders Fields* was written during the battle of Ypres, one of the major battles of the First World War. John McCrae grew up in a small town in Ontario in the 1800's. At the age of fourteen he joined the Guelph Highland Cadets and soon rose to the rank of Lieutenant. Later he became a Major. His mother inspired him to write poetry. He studied medicine at the University of Toronto and became a doctor. During the Battle of Ypres, while he was sitting on the back of an ambulance, he observed the battle. He was looking at his friend's grave, a cross, and "the poppies growing in the mud was as though blood had been spilled on the battlefield and been transformed into crimson flowers." He was moved when he looked at this scene of the poppies and the crosses and wrote this famous poem:

### **In Flanders Fields**

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row.  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. short days ago,  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders Fields.

The poem *Bittersweet* was written several years ago by John Schleihauf. He was inspired to write this poem when he read a short story by the same title, written by Lyle Bebensee (author of *Green Applewood* and the audio tape *Titanic: The Last Male Survivor*), while attending a short story workshop at the University of Western Ontario. His favorite uncle had been killed in the war. This tragic incident made him hate war even though he had never fought in it. This event greatly affected him all of his life. He was in his nineties at the time of this interview.

The poem, *Bittersweet*, is about a mother, who is a Canadian Indian. After WWII she is still grieving over the death of her sons in WWI. The themes in both of these poems shows that death and memory of family and friends are universal. Both of these poems are written in rhyme and are represented by red flowers; poppies in Flanders Fields, and the red bittersweet vine berries in the poem *Bittersweet*. The saddest thing is that John Schleihauf now has Alzheimers and does not remember writing this poem. He died in 1994 at 96.

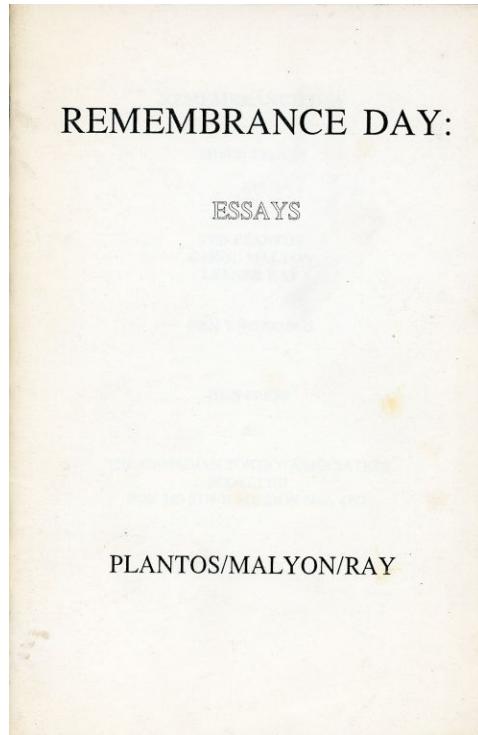
### **Bittersweet**

Mother lays the waxen wreath  
with her bravest courage plies  
o'er the tomb of dead and deaf,  
she hides her mournful cries.  
Death is bitter, life is sweet . . .  
Bittersweet. Bittersweet.

She sees her two brave sons  
torn from her bosom bare  
victims of the senseless guns  
War is bitter, peace is sweet . . .  
Bittersweet. Bittersweet.

Her silver stars brightly shine  
from the polish of everyday,  
her silver hair is heavily lined  
in the cold November rays.  
Age is bitter, youth is sweet . . .  
Bittersweet. Bittersweet.

Each year she lays the berried wreath  
and never questions why,  
she knows in her daily grief  
that they didn't have to die.  
Tears are bitter, smiles are sweet . . .  
Bittersweet. Bittersweet.



Then she wipes the tears away,  
trying to forget the war  
but the gnawing question stays,  
is anything worth dying for?  
Fall is bitter, spring is sweet . . .  
Bittersweet. Bittersweet.

Leanne Ray was a Grade 12 student at Westminster SS in London, Ontario when this essay was published along with the ones by Plantos & Malyon. This is her second publication. She has credits in the London anthology: *Scribbled Secret Notebooks* and *Afterthoughts Magazine*. She is currently living in London, Ontario.

**Beyond Bethune: People's Poetry and Milton Acorn**  
Epilogue by Terry Barker  
*Synaris Press* 2006 p. 132 ISBN 919672469

By the close of 2002, the People's Poetry Movement in Canada, as a movement, was moribund. The People's Poetry Award and People's Poetry Letter (Healey, 1993-2001) had, despite the good intentions of Ted Plantos's friends and associates, ceased functioning shortly after the death of their creator in 2001. The Acorn-Livesay People's Festival, animated in Ontario by the organizing skills of Hamilton poet, James Deahl, faltered and fizzled out with his withdrawal from the organization for unavoidable personal reasons in 2002. Finally, in the Autumn of that year, a series of manifestations appeared in the newsletter of the Canadian Poetry Association (POEMATA), outlining individual People's Poets' summary personal views on the nature of People's Poetry, reflecting upon statements made at the Controversy of Poets organized by James Deahl at Hamilton Ontario, during the preceding summer to discuss the future of People's Poetry.

People's Poetry in Canada is now dead, followed belatedly by the conservative, liberal, and socialist versions of Canadian Nationalism which preceded it into the past of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, as part of the counter-culture movement of the 1960's, it represents an attempt, during the era of the collapse of the Enlightenment ideologies, to restore order in the soul, albeit one that misfired. As such it can be analyzed philosophically, so that its spiritually restorative elements can be identified and developed, and spiritually destructive aspects clarified and eschewed. Thus, the work of poets after Acorn, who like him, have discovered some of the structure of reality beyond Bethune, will not have been in vain.

It is difficult now for the heirs of Acorn to find a relationship for their work, even among the members of the Canadian Poetry Association, an organization that was founded in 1985 by activists in the Toronto Chapter of the League of Canadian Poets, such as Wayne Ray, Shaunt Basmajian, Bev Daurio, James Deahl, Ted Plantos and Chris Faiers and Jeff Seffinga. The purpose of this group was to set up a more democratic and non-authoritarian fellowship of poets than the League, and to extend its already significant activity as the Associates Members of the League of Canadian Poets in the fields of extra-party politics and co-operative self-publishing. Drawing together members of several successor organizations of the Maoist-oriented national Canadian Liberation Movement (1969-1975), such as LINK Poetry Workshop, Unfinished Monument Press, Steel Rail Educational Publishing, and the periodical Anthos, the Canadian Poetry Association (originally called the Association of Canadian Poets), many of whose members considered themselves to be disciples of Milton Acorn or Dorothy Livesay (then both still alive), was consciously promoting People's Poetry for the first year or two of its existence.

*[Addenda: From 1985 to 1989, the CPA gradually grew in terms of membership and influence, eventually reaching a membership of 350 in seven Chapters across the country. It had established six Small Press Poetry Reference Collections in libraries and high schools in Ontario and Labrador through its amassed collection of 5000 Chapbooks, mostly through a purchase of all the back issues of Fiddlehead. The last and largest collection of close to 1000 poetry books is located in the King's College Library at the UofT. After the death of Shaunt Basmajian in 1990 the organization went into a deep decline, with only 100 members by 1990. In 1992, Wayne Ray et al. began the process of rebuilding, registering the CPA as*

*a non-profit organization in Ontario, arranging for a proper constitution to be drawn up, building a website, and as National Coordinator, attempting to attract new members and bring back the old ones. POEMATA became a strong Newsletter and continued into its Twentieth year of publication 2005. . . Terry Barker & Joan Latchford, CPA History Committee]*

Over the years, as the founders drifted away or in several prominent cases, died, this ideological focus faded and little more than a desire of minor poets and small publishers for mutual support and exposure remained, acting as the rather unreliable balm that kept the CPA limping along. By the Annual General Meeting for the organization, held in Hamilton, Ontario, in June 2003, it became obvious that a renewed philosophical basis for the CPA had become necessary, even if only to prevent repeated misunderstandings among the officers and Chapters, and the final disintegration of the group itself [*eventually and quietly in 2019 under the guidance of Ronda Wicks Eller & Donna Allard where the National Headquarters was in Moncton New Brunswick ed.*]

One of the issues raised during the Hamilton AGM (by Tais Lintz, the Burlington, Ontario Chapter Chairwoman) was that the CPA did not seem to particularly promote Canadian poets and poetry, an echo at least, of one of the concerns of the founders with regard to the LCP. The point received some attention, suggesting that the national component of the original Left Populist and nationalist ideology is still alive among CPA members. However, any real discussion of this point was soon eclipsed by the chief issue that has plagued the Association for a decade: the absence of agreed procedures concerning the management of the group's finances, a secondary aspect of which is the lack of clarity with regard to officer's duties and constitutional rules of order. All this pointed to an underlying dearth of ethical and, more broadly, philosophical unity among the members.

This, of course, is quite reflective of the "pluralism" of contemporary Canadian society, riven as it is by disputes among the shipwrecked citizens left clinging to different bits of flotsam and jetsam of Canadian liberal ideology in its break-up.

During the rather heated discussion about the CPA's practical woes at its 2003 AGM, one of the participants, Leda Lubinskyj of Toronto, remarked that as poets, perhaps the members of the Association, like she herself, felt little enthusiasm for dealing with matters of money management. While this created a bit of an uproar, it did point out the obvious basic principle that poets can, and need to, find solutions to their organizational problems in the realm of mythopoeia if they are to truly penetrate to underlying causes. . . . [article continues on Dr. Norman Bethune ed.]

see also *A Controversy Of Poets: People's Poetry In Canada*, Hamilton 2002

Jeff Seffinga POEMATA Vol 21 Number 03 October/December 2005 p.19

## Articles & Book Reviews:

### field: haiku and senryu

by kinshu ori (Ronda Wicks Eller)

Review by George Swede *Verse Afire* TOPS

HMS Press, 2019, 36 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55253-083-2

A self-described “modern formalist poet” Ronda Wicks Eller has published her first collection of Japanese poetry—haiku, senryu and haikai (a sequence of haiku, senryu or both). The chapbook consists of 80 individual haiku and senryu (numbered making each one easy to refer to) as well as six haikai which include another 52 haiku/senryu. Overall, the collection is a delight to read whether one is a fan of the haiku and its relatives or not. Eller is careful to follow the conventions while at the same time contravening them if necessary, for example, she eschews 17 syllables and the 5-7-5 format whenever something else works better.

Most of the poems brim with authenticity. Some are set in nature; others in social and political contexts. To put things into the vernacular of baseball—a Japanese passion—here are some of the poems that hit home runs.

2. 7.

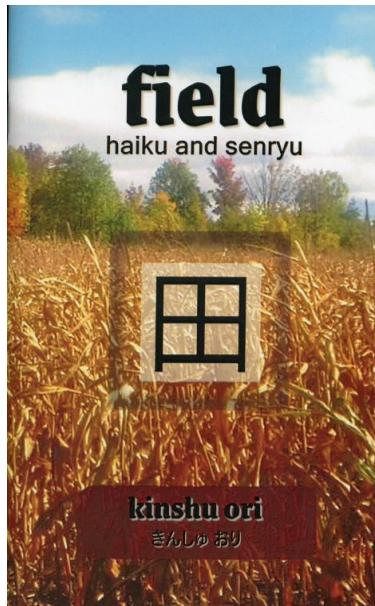
seamless rural view,  
a pale blue-veiled horizon  
calm fertile woman

feathery willows,  
shield spring nests  
the cradle gently rocks

13. 60.

black on blue  
crows mottle the horizon  
a bruised thigh

unquestioned dogmas  
dictate proper behaviour  
my child’s playpen



75.

gutted old barracks  
yesteryear’s construct is now  
a beetle bordello

Eller also has a nice touch with humour—something that is too often missing in haiku and senryu collections.

17. 47.

on stepping stones  
the heron lays lofty claim  
to an island chain

lying naked on the grass  
my butt cheeks glow  
moon to moon

80.

woeful first date  
she hugs goodbye  
to an octopus

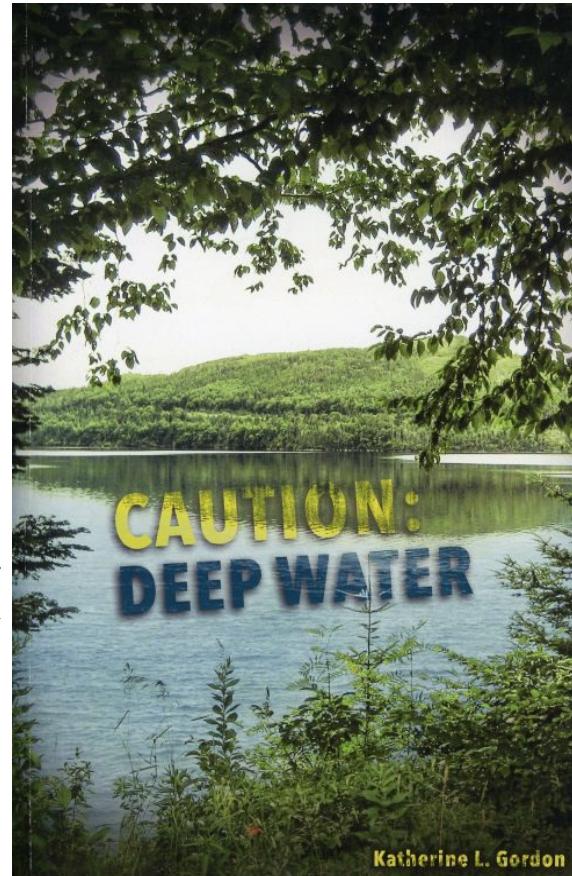
To sum up with the baseball metaphor—among the total of 132 haiku and senryu only a small number strike out. Ronda Wicks Eller has made an impressive debut.

### **Caution: Deep Water**

by Katherine L. Gordon

HMS Press 2018 978-1-55253-096-2

Review by John B Lee *Verse Afire* TOPS



A Cautionary Tale.

In his poem “Keine Lazarovich” an elegy for his mother, Irving Layton writes the line “. . . the inescapable loneliness of growing old.” As a young man Nobel Laureate, Bob Dylan sang, “I was so much older then / I’m younger than that now.” And in her book *Caution: Deep Water*, [Katherine] teases out the connection between the time of life and the place we live. She is suffering the twin sorrows of a husband in the early stages of dementia and the loss she feels when life forces her to abandon her beloved wilderness home for the institutional life of a caregiver not yet ready for the scrapheap. She sacrifices her deep connection with nature to nurse her beloved partner in a new and largely unnatural environment, uprooted from what she once called home. Home is both a place and a state of mind in these finely honed poems where she is seeking equilibrium in the alienated cloister of elder care. The great tragedy of her life arises from the necessity to move in order to accommodate her partner in decline before she herself has entered the same downward path. She uses the word “transplanted” in her forward and the concept of transportation is repeated in her closing poem wherein she writes of herself:

In the deep waters of transplantation  
exiled from all I knew and loved,  
a light of understanding has come  
to guide me back to shore . . .

With the closing lines:

Ask the wolf, the primeval icon who travels between worlds,  
our path is to see more dimensions,  
understand our birthright, the connection in every living thing,  
peace and love will surely follow.

And so we navigate the deep waters, carrying th light where we go, and the light in this case might prove to be the poems of Katherine L. Gordon, who offers up the place we keep in memory, the wildflowers of the mind, the fairies of the imagination, these give consolation when the material world withholds her beauty in the close at hand, sometimes sadly closed-in-rooms of the aged.

### **Caution: Deep Water**

by Katherine L. Gordon

HMS Press 2018 978-1-55253-096-2

Review by Chris Faiers

The free spirit must not be caged for Katherine L. Gordon (on reading her "*Caution: Deep Water*" Dear Katherine, this may be your best book yet your most important story the imprisonment of a shaman spirit in a 'progressive' Canadian retirement home your saddest book, too it's all here - readers will feel your loss of the spirit visitors the ferny spreadings and season changes in your Spirit Valley A too true cautionary tale first word in your title :

**CAUTION!**

Caution: Deep Water

I, too, left my spirit valley  
retreated to a small village lot  
but your wisdom decrees  
when the retirement home beckons

will rise and fly  
deep water is not the realm  
for free spirits

**CAUTION!!!!**

swim - swim far, far out  
into Lake Ontario  
this body will sink  
but the spirit owl shaman  
who invaded me long ago

## **My Coming Of Age**

by I. B. Iskov

HMS Press 2018 ISBN 978-1-55253-095-5

Review by Katherine L. Gordon *Verse Afire* TOPS

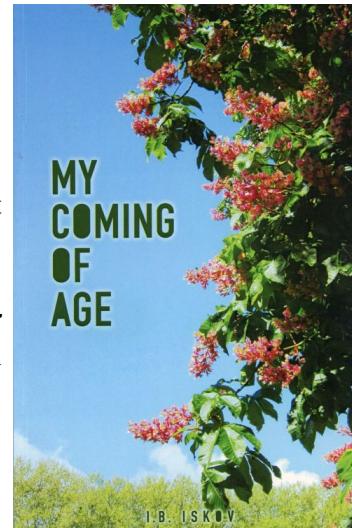
*My Coming Of Age* expresses poet, I. B. Iskov's personal, yet universal, exploration in poetry of that dimension transcending events, revealing the fierce and conflicting, sometimes better than beautiful, confrontations with inescapable truths of existence. From *The Trucker on the 401* to *Bedtime Chimera*, Bunny bravely rips aside the contrived coverings of these events to reveal what we must all accept as we mature into revelation.

## **My Coming Of Age**

by I.B. Iskov

HMS Press, 2018, 48 pp ISBN: 978-1-55253-095-5

Review by Elana Wolff *Verse Afire* TOPS



The forty-four poems in *My Coming of Age* - a book with the inside-cover subtitle The Best of an Ongoing Collection of a Life Expressed in Poetry - represent I. B. (Bunny) Iskov's selection of previously published poems, most of which have received contest citations. The title poem, *My Coming of Age*-a riff on the fan-fiction mold, told as homage to The Beatles-aptly captures the poet's characteristic wry sense of humour and unshielded personableness in the face of life's swerves, curves, and world concerns. "*The Beatles belonged to me / in my coming of age. It was a freer time / even though the Viet Nam war was raging, / even though there was unrest in the Middle East, / even though my parents were constantly fighting, / I had my Beatles record / to keep me safe and happy / when they sang All You Need Is Love ...*" Bunny Iskov displays a discerning eye for the everyday, as captured in titles like *Chronic Cough*, *Wringer Washer Warranty*, and *Ode to My Computer*; genuine interest in the 'everyman' in poems like *Trucker on the 401*, *Lucy and Desi*, and *Pamela for Mayor*; and strong identification with her Jewish self in *What Is a Jew*, *The Jewish Side of the Poem*, and *Be on Guard*. An Iskov poem speaks with personal conviction and plainspoken pluck: "*I am in charge,*" says the narrator in *Bedtime Chimera*; "*My depression is a page in your book,*" she declares in *As One Cradles Pain*; "*I remember the last time / I worked the street in high heels,*" she says tongue-in-cheek in the savvy-shopper piece, cleverly titled *Cheap Love*. There's a strong thread of sadness underlying the humour and juxtaposed easiness in many of these pieces. Humour is often a cover and a face for deep and complicated emotions, and it's clear that I.B. Iskov has the latter. She reveals her own Complicated Suffering and Personal Complexities; remembers and pays tribute to those who have gone to the other side: the beloved people's poet, Ted Plantos, in the surging opening poem *What Plantos Meant to Poets Trapped Within Socio-Economic Boundaries*; her girlfriends "*Marilyn, Rhondi and Lolly*" (lost to cancer) in *Making Macaroni and Cheese*; her mother in *Memory and Loss*; and the dead at large in *When the Dead Do not Depart*. In possibly the most touching and illuminating piece in the chapbook, *Glass House*, the poet writes: "*I open my cabinet doors, / rearrange familiar figurines ... "I care for moments, dust them off,*

*display them / on little easels. / I'm composed.*" This could be the artist's statement. She makes what she will of her life-delicately, deliberately and artfully, piece by piece. Wallace Stevens wrote that "*the poet is the priest of the invisible.*" I submit that Bunny Iskov is the priestess of the visible. My Coming of Age is a collection that will let you know who I. B. Iskov is and what she stands for.

### **Is It Time For Another Ballyhoo?**

By Jeff Culbert

CPA London 2001

Review by Adam Corrigan Holowitz *London Yodeller* 28 May 2015

On my bookshelf among the other books of plays sits a green and black book about an inch thick. Its title, *Ballyhoo 2001*.

Ballyhoo is one of the few, or only, collections of London plays that has been published. As someone who directs mostly local plays and stories it is a volume that I come back to many times. It has also raised the question for me time and again, when will we get our next anthology of London plays published? [Bally Two (?) Ed.]. I think it is certainly about time and we have a fine crop of plays to choose from. So I will muse a bit on what a London play anthology would look like today.

James Reaney Sr. wrote the foreword to the book. "*Jeff, in his introduction*", describes Jamie aptly, "*He's the spiritual leader of all these playwrights - whether they know it or not.*" The selected ten plays were all written or produced in 2001. I wonder if one could find ten plays from the same year. I think it says more about the excitement of 2001 in the theater, than a decline in productivity.

Plays that were included in *Ballyhoo 2001*, provide a wonderful sample of London's theater renaissance. Two plays by Jason McDonald (*Boneyard Man* radio plays), Jonathan Di Souza, Neil Cooke, and two Hannah Feiner plays (*The Geminis & Supine*, *Jeff Culbert's political comedy Running Rude* appears right before another play that focuses on the Thames River. Appropriately the book concludes with Jason Rip's city comedy, *Core*, a beautiful and colorful panorama of London Ontario night life.

The best reason to publish and anthologize our local plays is that it reminds us all that our true theater culture is made up of the plays that have been created from inspirations that our writers observe in our streets and public spaces. They are plays created at desks in our neighborhoods, at tables in our coffee shops. Our culture is the life we breathe in and around us and our art works, our plays, are the exhalations we release back into our city and then into the greater world. With published works we provide a vehicle for our plays to be experienced by the rest of the world. I loved that Jeff described sending *Ballyhoo 2001* out into the greater world as a 'goodwill package to our friends and neighbors.' Fourteen years later, it's about time the world received another such package. [*sadly one of London's playwrights, Catherine Inculet, passed away from a heart attack on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2015. Her theater company King Street Actor's Studio was active in the London Theater scene and she left nine boxes of theater related material to the archives at the University of Western Ontario. A wealth of local plays & theater material.*]

## **Ballyhoo: Culbert's Labour of Love**

By Jeff Culbert

CPA London 2001

Review by Herman Goodden, *London Free Press* 2001

As an actor and director, the founder and artistic director of Ausable Theatre, a playwright and weekly columnist on matters theatrical in *The Londoner*, as well as the editor of the Theatre in London Web site, Jeff Culbert is a cherubically smiling dynamo who never seems to break a sweat while keeping all these projects spinning simultaneously.

It's hard to think of Culbert without picturing one of those jugglers with a fleet of whirling dinner plates atop sticks on the old Ed Sullivan Show. Except Culbert's locks are a curly, Little Orphan Annie-style mop. It can't be as easy as Culbert makes it all look, yet the man exudes such an infectious love for what he's doing that you can't help envying his crushingly frantic work schedule.

With a generosity of spirit that puts me in mind of the late Greg Curnoe's tireless advocacy for all London visual artists, Culbert similarly seeks to spread the glory around by calling as much attention as he can to the unprecedented explosion of original scripts and independent productions underway in London, Ont.

With the assistance of the London Chapter of the Canadian Poetry Association, the London Arts Council and the City of London, Culbert has just edited and published *Ballyhoo 2001*, a bounteous, 200-page compendium of 10 recent scripts by eight London playwrights, all of which saw production in just that year. Many premiered at the London Fringe Theatre Festival (then in its second year), a wonderful spur for small-scale, indigenous productions that couldn't have come along at a more propitious time.

The scripts gathered here include two by the incredibly prolific Jayson McDonald. *The Man Behind the Mask* is episode 65 in his *Boneyard Man* series, which is a good-hearted send-up of live radio serials of the '30s. McDonald's *Subterrain*, my favourite script in *Ballyhoo*, is a witty and thoughtful examination of the dynamics of social coercion when an underground king dies without an heir and different factions struggle for control of the ship of state.

Culbert's own play, *Running Rude* (about environmental activists on a consciousness-raising tear) and Jason Rip's *Core* (a raunchy examination of London street life by night), also stand out, as does J. G. De Souza's *Theseus in the Labyrinth*; a post-modern retelling of the heroic myth in which the dreaded Minotaur might not even exist.

A few quibbles could be launched. In an otherwise handsomely designed book, the print is uncomfortably small and fills the entire pages, not leaving much breathing space in the margins. This is particularly trying in the centre or gutter, necessitating that you splay the book more forcefully than is usually advisable with a paperback in order to make out all the text.

A little more space would also allow headers at the top of each page, identifying which script was printed below, and making it easier for readers to find their way. One more set of editorial eyeballs would have caught some pretty obvious typos, and there is also the odd dropped word or phrase. None of these flaws impede the sense of the stories, but they're something to watch out for if Culbert is going to make *Ballyhoo* an annual or bi-annual summing up. Which I sincerely hope he does because Culbert is quite right. There isn't a livelier art form in London right now and the

boggling richness of our independent theatre scene deserves this kind of permanent commemoration.

Already on sale for \$20 a copy at Attic Books, the Oxford Book Shop and The Last Word (at the Central Library), there will be an official launch party for Ballyhoo on July 17, 7:30 p.m., at Wolf Performance Hall.

Herman Goodden is a London freelance writer. His column appears in Monday's and Thursday's Opinion pages. It no longer appears in Sunday's A&E section.

### **Throw Me A Line**

*Art Scape.*

April 2007, Literature Issue 15 p. 16/18.

Review by Jackie Westlaken, London Ontario

Forget about April being the cruellest month, or that April showers bring May flowers. April is Poetry Month and that's something to celebrate. According to the League of Canadian Poets website, the month-long celebration was established to bring together "schools, publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, and poets across the country to celebrate poetry and its vital place in Canada's culture.

Wayne Ray is a Londoner who does more than just celebrate poetry. He writes it, publishes it, and even gives workshops on how to write it. His website indicates that he is an author, poet, publisher, and photographer, and among Ray's credits you can find that he is a founding member of the Canadian Poetry Association and founder of HMS Press publishing. Locally he has had his hands in pretty much every art organization in the city including being instrumental in establishing the London Arts Council and the London New Arts Festival. Ray operates a book repair company called Ontario Book Repair and the Writer's Resource Center - both located at 757 Dundas in Old East Studios in East London.

The Writers Resource Center offers poetry and prose workshops, literary readings, book publishing, as well as editing and manuscript evaluation. Ray explains that the WRC is about "information dissemination, but we're also branching out to do other things - including poetry readings."

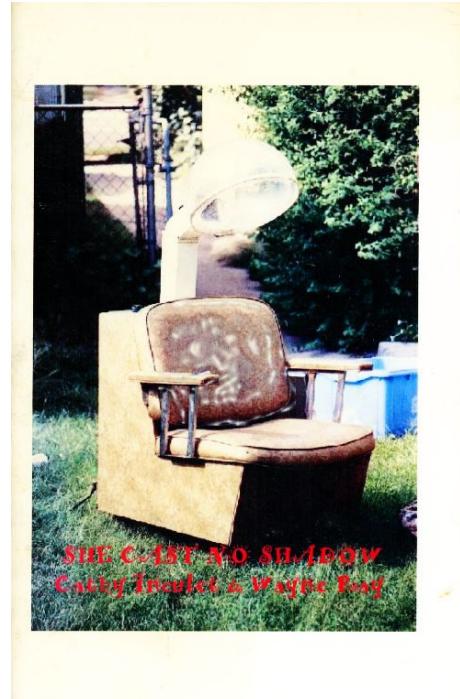
Ray's most recent book, *Going Down Goose Lane Toward Broken Jaw*, was published by Harmonia Press in 2006. His collection of poetry and prose is based on his time [working] in Fredericton, New Brunswick a few years ago. "The book was everything I wrote in poetry and prose while I was there," he says. Ray has also done a fair bit of collaborative work. A few years ago he partnered with Catherine Inculet (*She Cast No Shadow*), a fellow founder of the London Arts Council, very much out of the blue. "We were just sitting there and she said 'throw me a line' - and back and forth we wrote the whole [chapbook of poetry] in about twenty minutes. We went from there and wrote five or six more. Boom. Boom. Pretty soon we had a 28 page book. We weren't even planning on doing anything."

Poetry was not always part of Ray's life, however. Ray started writing poetry back in 1969. He was attending a youth conference and he met a girl his age, who asked him to write her a poem. His response was that he didn't write poetry. He wrote one shortly after and thought it was pretty good. The rest, they say, is history. "Six months ago I got an e-mail from that girl, a woman now,

she'd never been on the Internet and she Googled her own name and came across an interview of mine where I had told the same story - mentioning her name. She sent me an e-mail telling me she was overwhelmed about everything I'd done in my life just because of her telling me to write her a poem back in 1969."

As for Canadian poetry today, Ray finds it "earthy" and "honest." He feels that "what's out there now, some of it is simply amazing. It's passionate poetry and people are telling it like it is. I still get rhymy dimey things, but my response is who cares. Say what you mean." Ray reads a great deal of poetry and he's sent a good deal to review. "What I look for in a poem, well, there has to be one word or phrase that just reaches up and says 'listen to me.' I think people are getting more creative these days."

In addition to his poetry, book repair, publishing, and photography, Ray is busy making contributions to Wikipedia.org (and Wikimedia.org). "They are just little essays and odds and ends I have turned into articles. Nobody gets paid of course, but it's a nice feeling knowing that you are expanding the knowledge of the world. I love it." he adds.



## **Whale Songs In The Aurora Borealis: Selected Poems**

Rhonda Wicks Eller, HMS Press 2005, 44p. ISBN 1552530604

Review by Katherine L. Gordon POEMATA 2005 V21 N3

After a short sabbatical, Ronda Eller, a.k.a. Wicks, has taken up pen and palette once again to step onto poetry's stage to delight us all with Yeatsian whimsy, wonder and ocean deep wisdom. Her pen and ink cover is gripping revelation of the theme of the book: "Everyman" steps into the sea of being, flute raised defiantly over his head, to join the music with cosmic consciousness in the form of a great whale breaching, singing in the eerie, ancient whale-song. The back drop is the aurora borealis, composed of the forces that clash and colour our experience in this ocean of incarnation.

So much artistry unfolds in this book: Ronda's pen and ink sketches, the wind and water music inherent in the verse, the poetic insight into multi-dimensions of time, briefly mirrored manifestations of the spirits we are and might have been, all weaving a magic flute song that spellbinds you throughout the pages.

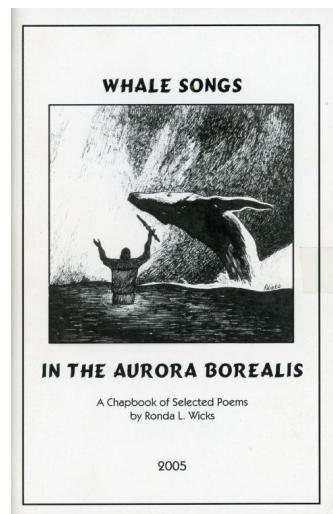
The diamond bright images, "*jewel set in a radiant crown*", "*our diamond resurrection*", "*emerald sky*", are enhanced by a uniquely gripping use of language: "*black garment of premature morning*", "*my bleaching heart*", "*dappled with wax preachers*", "*gold-toothed fleece grinned*", "*impaled by consanguinity*", "*dust-drawn noose*", *wing and wings spiked to a tree.*" Ronda has the honesty to speak of human impalement in time.

There is a wisdom here, sketched on a Celtic harp that the tide of time swells often as we ride the wave from cave to dreamt perfection. This book draws out the attraction of history, the pageant of the ages of man as we carry it all with us, and out of mirrors steps an embodiment of the one sought throughout eras. The trick is to recognize him/her in the Now - "the force connecting here to here." Ronda uses the characters of history in the orchestrated tour, Shakespeare, Jesus, Donne, Yeats and a fantastic old astrologer Greystone. Greystone acts as shaman, taking us from one stage of reagent to the next.

Sounds intrigue in many settings: ethers of silence", "whisper of a heartbeat", "ears filtered for a whispering flay of wing tips", a thorn-bird song in many ways." The title poem, Whale Songs In The Aurora Borealis, is a stunning slide through mythology, a subject as huge as a whale, whose eerie sound calls up the aurora borealis.

In *Panderings and Self-Discussion*, two sides of the poet's psyche converse, the flesh and spirit: "*write these words inside your sleeve / you are in the one that you believe.*" Re-incarnation is a tantalizing thread explaining Ronda's flashes of past and present balance, somewhere a scribe, poet or songster eternally "chained to echoes", "immortals through each season's sleep." Part of this thread is a fascinating twist. Perhaps an interchange of gender complicates the gender complicates the journey: male and female bodies expressing love beyond gender, mismatched incarnations are possibilities to stretch your mind.

Some mystic encounters so enjoyable and sense-piquing in Ronda's work will remind the reader of Hildegarde of Bingham's ecstatic musings: "gender and sorrow scarred my face", "like Jesus I was misplaced", "like Israel, tired and homeless."



This book is a whale of a ride, encompassing dimensions of time and spirit. You will want to pick up your flute and follow the mystery of exploration that will lead you to your own inner music. Our archetypes and daemons are all here to comfort you in a classic Celtic saga through the knot-work of a spirit sea.

### **Book Project Serves Double Goal Literary Heritage Project**

Review by James Reaney *London Free Press* June 10, 1999

The London Community Resource Center, a downtown fixture for 25 years, is celebrating its Silver Anniversary by paying tribute to the International Year of Older Persons,

The Center is compiling a book on the more than 100 agencies that it has embraced at its various locations, including its present address at 388 Dundas, where it moved 21 years ago. The LCRC began life at the downtown London Central Library and was previously known as the London Urban Resource Center. In keeping with 1999's status in honoring older persons, the book will highlight those agencies that have helped seniors.

"We're still looking for people," says project coordinator, Wayne Ray, a London writer and literary activist. "We hope to have the book published by the end of July." Ray says day-care centers and such groups as Pollution Probe are amount the operations that have been part of the center at various times. Organizers hope to collect submissions by the end of June.

In addition to the center's own history, it is involved in two related projects in its literary heritage project. Submissions are just beginning to be gathered for an anthology of writing in all genres by Londoners and former Londoners aged 60 and up. It will be posted on the Internet in an electronic book format, organizers say. Ray is also compiling a CD devoted to the works of Senior Canadian Poets. Eli Mandel, James Reaney Sr. And Gwendolyn MacEwan are among the nine poets in the lineup. The CD will cost about \$15.

Support for the project, with a combined budget of \$20,000 for all three initiatives, includes contributions from the Ontario Ministry of Health, Human Resources Development Canada, Information London, and the Canadian Poetry Association's London Chapter are helping sponsor the CD. Center manager, Sheila Loucks, says about \$13,000 in donations has been received and more fund raising is planned. LCRC may also produce fewer copies of the history and the CD as planned.

The United Nations designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. Its goals are to enhance understanding and mutual support across generations and to increase recognition of senior's contributions to their families and communities.

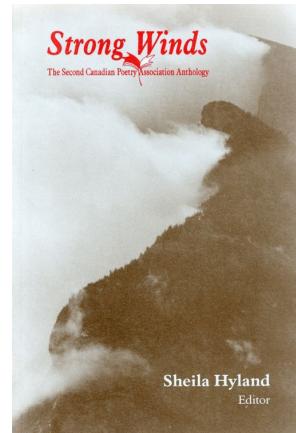
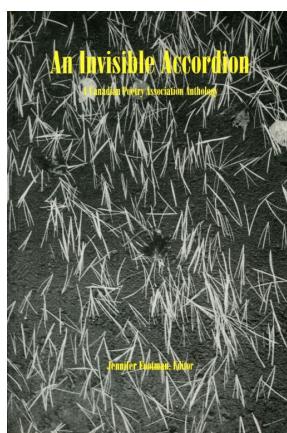
**An Invisible Accordion:**  
**Anthology of the Canadian Poetry Association**  
Broken Jaw Press ISBN 0921411383  
Review by Sherri Telenko *ID Magazine* 1996

The only thing I remember from the one criticism of poetry course that I took in university is the professor spontaneously breaking into a deep operatic baritone version of one of the poems studied. I don't remember which one. In fact, I don't remember any of the poems on the course list. Perhaps the problem lay in the text, whichever it was. A more appropriate choice, had it been around at the time, might have been *An Invisible Accordion*, the Canadian Poetry Association's anthology to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Within this anthology is an extensive sampling of every and any style of poetry imaginable, written at varying levels of skill. Included are several, what I would consider, beginner poems - accessible but simple pieces containing a single image or theme drawn out through a long tower of carefully chosen words. These poems rest near those of more sophisticated styling like that present Association president, Joe Blades' "Dark Age, is rich, intense, almost free flow of seemingly disjointed images which only the perceptions of the poet could draw into association. Local poet and former high-school teacher John B. Lee opens the collection with one of the barn yard inspired poems which have made him popular amongst the public readings crowd. Just for balance there are also some light-hearted, humorous verses along side a few good old fashioned rhyming couplets.

This is not to say that the collection is intended as a text book on contemporary Canadian poetry. The possibility is simply a side-effect of what past president, James Deahl claims to be a mandate of the Association: "We do not exist to promote any one school, literary movement or literary concerns." Instead they appear to celebrate them all. Almost to a fault. For placing more experienced poets in a collection beside the novice does more to reveal weakness than strengths of certain pieces. But this is a fault difficult to avoid considering the Association's egalitarian spirit and this collections' effort to reflect just that.

Choosing a best poem from *An Invisible Accordion*'s diversity cannot be done without revealing significant bias. So here's mine. My favorite is Michael Wurster's "*After The Flooding*", largely because of my affinity for the narrative prose-poem form (the only one in the collection), partially because it may even invite operatic interpretation, complete with memorable vibrato.



## Cover Makes A Set

by Joe Blades

HMS Press: Spare Time Editions (Fredericton)

Reviewed by Tim Bowling Bogg Reviews 1993

Joe Blades is a busy man. As a poet, he is interested in producing concrete, visually experimental and innovative sound poetry. Having worked in a reprographics company, and in this collection it shows with his juxtaposing content and process. He uses found illustrations throughout the book to great effect. These are culled from bus schedules, membership cards and survey maps. What he achieves in free association and a certain grace, is a poem.

## Besok Saya Melukis?

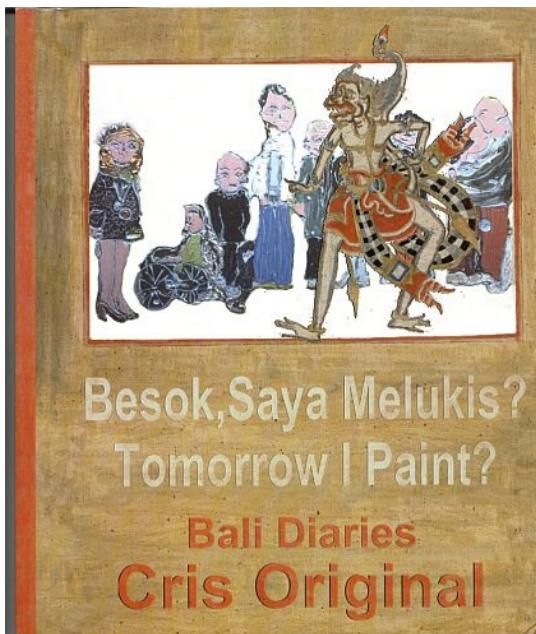
Cris Original HMS Press ISBN 1552530485

Review by *London Free Press* Staff

London artist, Cris Original has published an account of her cross-cultural experience learning the traditional art forms of Bali. When Original first went to the island in 1987 while on vacation, she noticed traditional paintings on the rafters of a temple.

She learned that the works were done by groups of people and was struck by such a different experience from her own experience of art as a personal expression. She returned to Bali six years later to try it for herself for a thesis paper in art education. She also recorded her observations and frustrations in diaries.

Her diaries and paintings have been published as the book *Besok Saya Melukis? Tomorrow I Paint?* (Canadian Poetry Association & London New Arts Festival, \$29.95). The book is available at Mandala Books, Novaks, Words of Wellness, and Wendell Holmes on Adelaide Street.



## BookMarks

**Middle Earth** D.J. Berthiaume

HMS Press 1993 ISBN 1-895700-00-0

Review by Mark Young *Scene Magazine* 1993

This is the story of a princess and a pauper who live in Middle Earth, “where no clocks are bound and the nymphs play in the tide.” No clocks are bound?

*Middle Earth* is such a wonderful, anachronistic treat for an old English Lit Major such as myself: an epic, heroic poem in rhymed verse about medieval things.

I am instantly transported back to Professor Werstein’s Middle English class: “Little wot it any man, how deme love may stonde . . . ” The poetry is also illustrated with beautiful ink drawings of scenes from the story with those lovely, ornate medieval page borders. And as a final Luddite flourish, the cover letter that accompanied the book was typed on a manual typewriter! I love it.

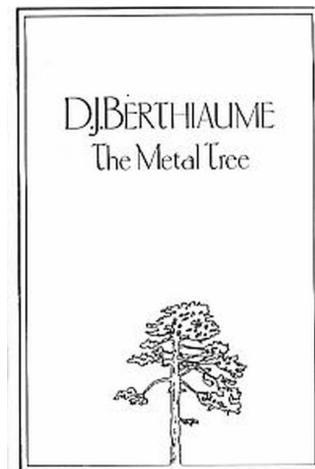
But I digress. *Middle Earth* is the story of a princess and a pauper in love. Right away, their love is discovered and they are forced to flee from her father’s kingdom. They are pursued by the king’s guards and they flee to the castle of a giant, who bravely springs to their defense.

But the guards are too much for them and they are forced to flee to the giant’s boat. During the voyage the giant is snatched by a sea monster, and the princess and the pauper end up washed up on the shore of an old island where the natives grow backwards from old to young. Oh ‘tis full of marvels and wonderment. Unfortunately our journeyman scribe sometimes bends his sentences so thoroughly inside out that is almost a parody on bad rhyme. The book is a good example of why people stopped writing rhyming verse. Here is our crew leaving the giant’s castle:

*The giant had a small boat,  
this they used out the moor,  
far from the castle,  
towards a wet world that roared.*

*There's a storm coming fast,  
everyone down below!  
And with a hustle, they scurried  
for what the sky did not show.*

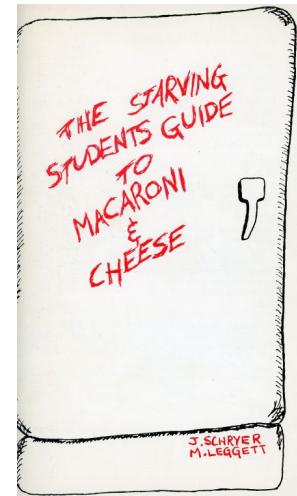
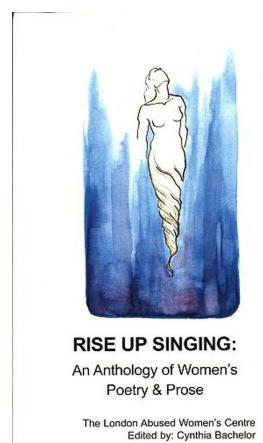
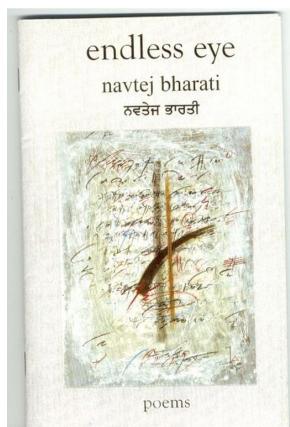
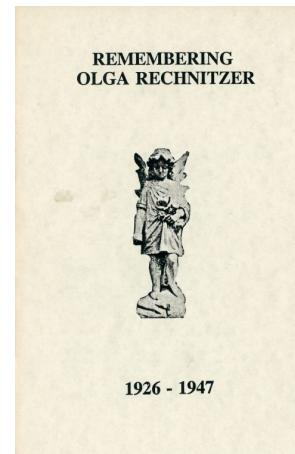
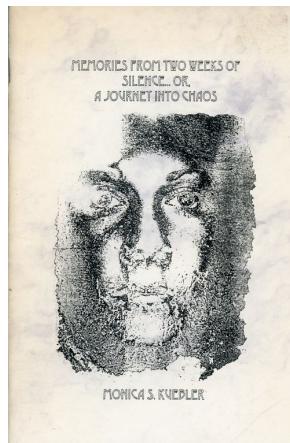
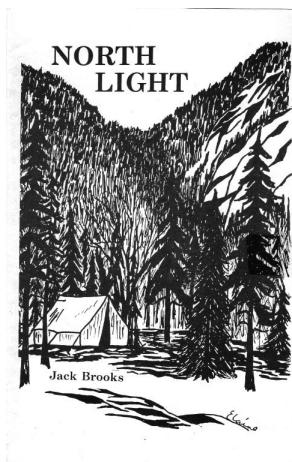
*The waters turned purple  
and the dome coal black.  
As the storm swept closer  
the rain did not lack.*



I know that taking verse out of context is like bringing a brick as an example of the house you have for sale, but I’m sorry, this really is silly.

But I believe the book to be for children (the dedication is to the author’s nieces, nephews, and god children.”) and in that case I can make exceptions for the silliness. So I can appreciate the book as a throwback to a bygone era of literature, when poets wrote about knights that were bold.

If it's a tribute, or something to interest today's young reader in poetry, then I'm totally supportive. The book is fun to read because it is silly . . . but I can't really take it seriously. Even as a children's epic poem, it has more to say about "middle" class than Middle Ages.



## **BookMarks**

### **Canadian Poetry Association BookClub BookLits**

by Wayne Ray and James Deahl #3 #4 #5 & #9

ISBN 0919957404 / 0919957277 / 0919957390 / 0919957315

Review by Mark Young *Scene Magazine* London 1992

I was given a selection of four of fifteen “BookLits” for review, two each by Wayne Ray and James Deahl. The pair by Ray are prescriptive or “how-to” essays and the one’s by Deahl are transcribed lectures.

**BookLit #4,** *Shashin Kaku Haiku*, is Wayne Ray’s attempt to modernize or recreate the form of haiku poetry. The book shows the method and lists the history of the form, including some original Japanese verses and their translations as well as some modern examples of his Shashin Kaku school. Haiku is a good exercise for poets - it forces one to be succinct and clear. It was favored by the Imagists (Ezra Pound, Carl Sanburg, William Carlos Williams etc.) Because of its ability to arouse a distinct emotion or insight from single, sharp images. The book shows that haiku is more versatile than the “autumn” ones we wrote in public school. Three girls / under an umbrella / acid rain.

The other Ray offering is *Creative Plagiarism* (BookLit #3), which preaches the viability of the stolen work. Well, not really. By showing examples of poems and stories “inspired by snippets of other works, graffiti, or old letters, this manifesto of the verbal marketplace gives not only permission but its recommendation to steal from other sources. Although weakest of the four, the book has some interesting works and their origins.

James Deahl addresses the issue which is central to the concern of every modern poet in **BookLit #5,** *The Future of Poetry: Despair or Joy?* - whether our outlook is basically optimistic or pessimistic. Deahl has discovered “a poetry of darkness, loss, pain, and grief” in our time and he seeks in this work to explain the phenomenon. His expiation examines much of the poetry of this century and points to general trends and the social forces which affect them. Canadian poetry turned away from the British influence 40 years ago to follow the Americans down the path of despair in their crumbling empire. Furthermore, Deahl says, “we have become Americans by osmosis.” A sad statement indeed: sad because it could be true. Although it is thinly documented, Despair or Joy has very infringing conclusions. Its rallying cry is that we re-discover Canadianness. Let’s hope it’s not too late.

The last **BookLit #9** is *In Memoriam: Milton Acorn 1923-1986*, an assessment of his life’s work, his contribution to CanLit, and his international context. The biographical section was somewhat clinical, but it is the man’s work and not his life which is central to the work. The book will likely send you, as it did for me, off to the bookcase (or library) to reinvestigate the man’s poetry. These contemporary works of critical theory are timely and relevant. The two able critics address issues of interest to today’s poets, and more works come out all the time.

**Wayne Ray and HMS Press:**  
**Publishing in the Electronic Age**  
Review by Jenny Wilkinson.  
*Scene Magazine* October 16<sup>th</sup> 1997

A curious blend of painstaking book repair skills and Internet savvy, Wayne Ray is an old-fashioned publisher with an electronic edge. His role as Literary Coordinator for the London New Arts Festival has just finished and Ray is about to put on his organizing hat to open a downtown literary resource library. "It will be available for readings, workshops, book launches," says Ray who also works weekends in a second hand bookstore on Springbank Drive. Ray, who came in early one Sunday to repair his bike, looks at ease behind the counter amid stacks of books. He discusses the first time he tried publishing his own poetry. "I began like anybody else - conceited. Full of 'this is my book and anybody will publish it'. I'd pass it around and everyone said "wait t'll you've been published in magazines for ten years, then come back and see us."

Ray's first book of poetry was '*Poetics*' - "A hundred poems I had written in highschool - they were pretty crappy!" he jokes. He then produced a book based on his troubled marriage, *Suburban Eyes*. "It received positive reviews and it just went from there," he explains, and 700 copies were sold.

Poetry is Ray's genre, but he prefers production to writing. He devised a poetry board game and the small run sold out in a week, but only covered the cost of production. A professional horticulturist by trade, he has published [and published by a few other presses] 13 Chapbooks of his own poetry and he feels one of his greatest achievements was establishing the Canadian Poetry Association 12 years ago in Toronto [with 4 friends]. "The London Chapter has been off and on since we moved it here in 1992."

In his quest to get the message out about local publishers, The London CPA and the Writer's Resource Center made their debut this year. HMS Press has published more than 200 books in the past three years; only two dozen in paperback while the rest are electronic. His electronic books, which he began publishing in 1994 [under the Imprint Books On Disk & Atlantic Disk Publishers ed.], are available on computer diskettes through his Internet bookstore and the categories include self-help literature, fiction, romance, poetry, humor, Sci-fi and more. I registered the web pages without really knowing how to run the WWW properly. Aside from the initial glitches, the advantages of electronic publishing are numerous. Publishing in Canada has been difficult for small companies, as Ray explains, "a lot of the larger publishers are supported by the Canada Council, and they wouldn't be able to sell their books if they didn't have the monetary support from the government. As far as Small Press are concerned, bookstores don't want to take them if they don't have a spine."

Ray produces mainly Chapbooks, which find a market in teachers, literary scholars, small bookstores and at readings. Large bookstores have their own distributors, "If people don't know your company, it doesn't matter who your authors are, they're not going to buy your books."

As for the future of HMS Press is concerned, the unassuming gentle giant says he's not accepting any new authors for the electronic books. "I'm naively sitting around waiting for orders and every time I advertise I get ten authors writing in!" Orders come in from the Internet ([hmspress.ca](http://hmspress.ca)), not in the hundreds but enough to keep Ray happy.

## **Blowing Holes Through The Everyday**

Sheila Dalton HMS Press 1993 ISBN 1895700019

Review by Deborah Jurdjevic *Canadian Women's Studies*

Sheila Dalton's first book of poems, *Blowing Holes Through The Everyday*, reads as a dialogue between a pragmatist and a dreamer. The poet inclines towards first the one, then the other, moving steadily toward the penultimate poem "Whales on the Saguenay River, from which the title phrase is taken. This is one of the better poems in the volume and one which melds the two voices.

The strong opening line, the iambic tetrameter, promises epic storytelling, a hero, a plot along the lines of the "*Ancient Mariner*": "the winds were strong, the waves were high." But this is a late twentieth century poem written by a woman with concerns on her mind. She abandons both the promise of rhyme and an established rhythm for free verse more appropriate to the autobiographical and the confessional. She sees the whales as "a distant flash of truth," hears them "puffing air against / the silence / blowing holes through the everyday," and her concern is for the future of the small son she holds in her arms. The poem's moral, that the world is a marvel for those committed to seeing, is defined by the whales who appear without warning and in the final line, remembering the epic form of opening slide "onwards to sea."

"Tests", the poem immediately preceding "Whales" is also confessional in tone, immediate and written for the sake of the "moral" which appears conveniently at the end. Unlike "Whales," however, this is a pragmatic poem. Its governing metaphor is a diagnostic test made to determine the source of a persistent back pain. The physical exam tropes the set of circumstances testing the author's willingness and ability to endure pain and frustration in order to finally write it. Dalton concludes: "*But not to try / means yet another woman / silenced.*" One takes the point, but wishes at the same time for less explanation and for a greater trust in the reader.

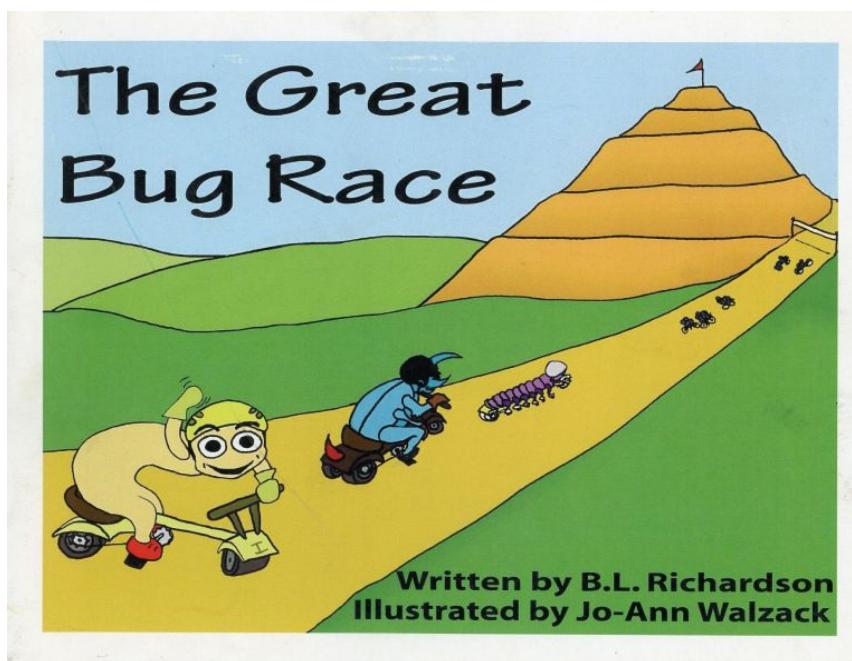
One of the riskier and, to my mind, one of the more successful poems is "*Friends / Conversation*" in which Dalton does trust the metaphor to tell the tale. The subject of the poem is infidelity between husband and wife, between woman friend and woman friend. Nowhere is there anything approaching direct statement. Dalton forgoes rhythm and rhyme for prose; the poetry lies in the power of her images. Her setting is the natural world, a possible Elysium, in the form of a picnic, but what we get, through metaphor entirely, is a sense that the world is shattered.

The poem proceeds in a series of verse paragraphs, each representing a composition, a still-life, and each suggesting through what is depicted a more important absence. The opening paragraph for example, "*next to the wine glasses shoved at angles into the grass, ants scramble into giant wheels, fan out in a plateful of legs,*" is typical of the whole. The wine glasses are askew either because the terrain threatens their upright stability or because the wine has been drunk and the glasses abandoned.

The central image of dismemberment, with probable sexual overtones, points to the flaw in a supposedly functional human community. The poet tells us that there is something wrong in each of the subsequent scenes and in the third paragraph alludes to a friend who is pregnant by another woman's husband. Against this betrayal in the center of the poem, conversation, ceremony, and laughter weave a web of community which seems to hold the participants of this drama. The tension between the conventional and its breach is assessed in the final lines. Conversation and its promise of friendship and belonging float free in time and space; the human actors turn to stone. The poem

makes its own commentary on the soap-opera quality of the drama, and demands attentive reading.

In the preface to *Blowing Holes Through The Everyday*, Dalton, like Leavis at the beginning of this Century and Wordsworth at the beginning of the last, worries that a spiritual dimension is endangered in our commercial world. Her book is her response to that widely shared worry, and reflects her confidence that the particulars of daily life will show us, as they did in the Romantics, if we only look, “the world in a grain of sand.”



## **BookMarks**

### **Blowing Holes Through The Everyday**

Sheila Dalton HMS Press 1993 ISBN 1895700019

Review by Mark Young *Scene* May 1994

A title like *Blowing Holes Through The Everyday* seems like a challenge, doesn't it? It says "this book is going to blow the lid off your perceptions, tear off the veil of the mundane, expose the blinding truth, etc." "This is funny" before telling the joke. You're immediately on the defensive, thinking, "Oh Yeah? I'm not going to be impressed by just any joke. This better be good."

The book is good, but it didn't blow the lid off my perceptions. Perhaps with a different title, I wouldn't have expected so much from it. Sheila Dalton is a talented poet, and also a novelist, librarian, and a future herbalist. I would never have guessed that she is also a writer of children's books. Her poetry is rich and varied in subject matter and influence as any recent works I have read. She is capable of many poetic voices, yet still able to imprint them with her own voice, which makes extraordinary these poems of the ordinary and the "everyday."

She is a political poet, outraged and guilty, in poems like *Eyes*, *Poems From The Late Twentieth Century*, and *To The Boy With The Onyx Elephant*. In these, the poet is in Mexico, unable to laugh off the culture shock, and the contrast between her life and the lives around her. She gives an eight-year old boy five pesos for an Onyx elephant, and then another boy tells her it was only worth two. "*I said, So what? And grinned at you / You smiled back at me. / But then I saw in your eyes / bewilderment was all that held you to me. / The rest of you as remote and glacial as my homeland was just then.*" She concludes, "*I lost my Onyx elephant / I never lost the distance you showed me / between my Mexico and yours.*"

She is a personal poet, revealing private pain, joys, and fears. In *You, My Father*, she struggles between wanting to write a poem that really expresses her anger about her relationship with her father and wanting to be fair and consider his side of the story. This is the kind of depth perception that not many poets have. It is all too easy to write stirring poetry from a position of self-righteous anger; more difficult is to consider the complexities of relationships and the fallibility of memory, even though these produce no easy answers. In *For Adam*, she rejoices the memories of the birth of her son and reflects on giving life and simultaneously receiving it. She is also a Walt Whittman poet, with all her apostrophes to pagan deities and her delight in sexuality. In the poem *The Physical*, she portrays Death as a woman "grinning with a sequined cloak," looking on from the doorway as the doctor completes his examination. But *God Grant Me Madness When I Am Old* is the poem which fairly screams Whittman.

Finally, it is *The Whales On The Saguenay River* which reproaches me for assuming too much because of the book's title: ending the book with a simple, unassuming gesture noted by the poet and her son from a tour boat: "*You could hear them puffing air against / the silence / blowing holes through the everyday.*"

## **BookMarks**

### **Under The Jasmine Moon**

by Geri Rosenzweig

HMS Press 1995 ISBN 1895700183

Review by Mark Young *Scene Magazine*

Under The Jasmine Moon is the latest in a series of books by female poets from HMS Press, all of consistent quality, edited by Wayne Ray. This is a collection of poetry by yet another Irish exile, Geri Rosenzweig. It seems like the Irish all followed Joyce's lead doesn't it? They all seem to have to leave Ireland to truly appreciate and reflect on it.

Rosenzweig writes as if she was born to write poetry. It seems to come as naturally to her as normal speech to the rest of us. She has the ability to transform an ordinary occupation or situation into one which shimmers with portents and promise. What I like about her is that she can be unselfconsciously poetic, letting go with no hesitation, in what is, essentially, an archaic profession (though few will profess to making a living at it)

There is always a certain restlessness in her poems, whether it be a longing for her homeland or a longing for something unnamed, or even a wish for escape. In the poem Nocturne, the voice proclaims "I would like / to step / out of my body / and enter the sea's / long silver roar . . . I could be / weightless and quick / shimmering early breathing / with other bright lives / deep in that blue mansion."

There is an intellectual longing for answers in which in which she examines Einstein, Octavio Paz, the Bible, in hopes of discovering some secret. In *Solar Wind*, though, she achieves her most haunting imagery by reducing her body to genetic patterns and becoming one with the universe. It is a skillful evocation.

She cruises along effortlessly in her free verse and thoroughly modern poetic voice until you stumble on a poem called *Smoke Wisp of Lust* and almost didn't notice it., saying "is it?" It can't be, it is! - a villanelle." And I have not read one that worked so well, (even with a faint hint of wry Irish humor), since Dylan Thomas branded the form his own with "*Do Not Go Gentle . . .* (and I've read plenty). It isn't somber, or overly repetitive, and she breaks the rules just enough to get away with it.

The English Major in me feels limited by this space, wanting to expand into a full exploration of her work. But mostly, I just enjoyed reading it. She writes the basic style and intelligence of beauty, of mystery, and of experience.

**Touching Bottom**

**Under The Jasmine Moon**

by Geri Rosenzweig

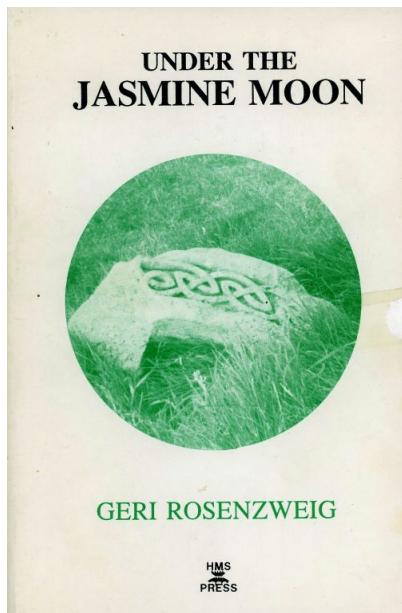
HMS Press 1995 ISBN 1895700183

Review by Patrick Holland *Canadian Literature* No. 145

*Under The Jasmine Moon* is about journeying, but where Eibel [previous review, same article] mainly profiles those who stay, travel and return, Geri Rosenzweig's is the confessional voice of an "I", ferrying between Ireland and America, lyrically connecting one with the other, the present with the past and the future, youth with age. The diction and imagery lush, but what might become a surfeit of sensuousness is held in check in disciplined short-lined strophes. Travel in these linked lyrics, is personal, celebratory and elegiac in turn. Though the writer will not go back to live in Ireland, she knows that her "hunger for its white cities / is a journey from which she'll never return"; her childhood countryside drenches the poems in their images and figures.

Though Eibel is sparing with simile and explicit metaphor, while Rosenzweig is prodigal of them, their work has in common a loving attention to craft, an expertise in taut formal practice, and dictional sureness. In one of the beautiful Jerusalem poems of *Under The Jasmine Moon*, the image of Israelis as a people "wrapped around each other in a small place" gets its strength from foraging nature stanzas imaging the shoreline life of mussels as a nation.

Rosenzweig's poems, anchored in representative personal life are adept at such imaginative leaps and connections, the very stuff of poetry.



## Canadian Book Review Annual

### Weather Report

Brian Burch HMS Press 1987 ISBN 0919957064

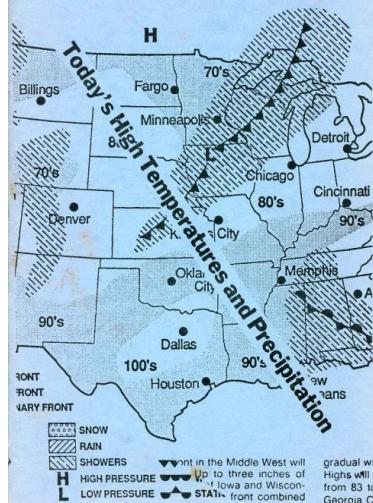
Review by Bob Lincoln *CBRA* 1987

Poems that have weak images, or poems that contain few pictures, smell, touch, or noise are just scribbles on paper. Weak poems conceal more than they reveal and to chase their meanings is almost an exercise without benefit. *Weather Report*, by the Toronto poet Brian Burch, lacks strong images; those that are strong are predictable.

In developing a poem around abstractions such as Death or Peace, the successful poet conveys his message by demonstrating it. If it is a concrete poem, or one that requires an oral presentation to do it justice, these necessities can be suggested by the language or typographical layout. The more particular and specific a poem's images, the better it works.

Phrases like *People need to be freed / from the chains of bourgeois order* are just too clumsy. This may be a true statement to the revolutionary socialist, but as poetry it lacks grit. These are newspaper headlines, captions. The image Trees / echo the road is difficult to make sense or feeling of; 'echo' is a weak verb, and just fills out the line. In the poem Death Stalking there is rhetoric, but the substance of death is dismissed by the ending Death, unfortunately / is ultimately boring. I don't believe that.

## Weather Report



## **Acorn: Swept Up In Imagery**

**Whiskey Jack** by Milton Acorn

HMS Press 1986 48p. ISBN 0919957218

Review by Maggie Helwig *UofT Varsity*

I knew Milton Acorn only at the very end of his life, a few cold months in Toronto before he returned to the Maritimes to die. Just released from the hospital, he wandered aimlessly, in bookstores, delivering harangues, sleeping on a friend's floor or at the League of Canadian Poets; broken down, often incoherent, apparently one more Queen Street rugby. Yet, even then, there was something special about him, some quality you could immediately see, if not define.

Now we have been given Whiskey Jack, a posthumous [actually released before he died ed. It was his last book] collection of 28 late poems, to remind us of what Acorn was, even in disintegration - one of Canada's truly distinctive poets.

Acorn was always fiercely himself, - Acorn never changed - says Al Purdy in his introduction - so Whiskey Jack is, in one sense, predictable. We know we will find rhyming poetry in simple, formal constructions; and anti-intellectual bias; a preference for unsophisticated subject matter (he had a great liking for birds, and they are the main subject of more than half of the poems. These sound like limiting factors, perhaps, but when Acorn is at his best you simply do not notice; everything is swept up in a rush of imagery.

He is not always at his best - some poems in Whiskey Jack, notably the anti-abortion series, are weak and preachy. But often enough the verse catches fire; as in, for instance,

### *The Raven Conceit:*

Like breaking the ripple-barrier of wind  
That flicked as flame about the eave:  
Or his shadow made more noise than he did.  
Or at St. Mike's a wildcat howling  
That particular humanlike intonation . . .  
Somewhere there ought to be a few kind words.

The title poem speaks of the tiny whiskey jack, a 'little red drumb of a bird.' But reading the last lines, I thought immediately of Acorn, lost in Toronto, filthy and luminous: *And you know who he is, not so ambiguous, as the presence of God, a lesser sign.*

### **Acorn's Wake, March 22, 8PM**



ACORN'S WAKE is being held in Toronto in celebration of the life and poetry of the late Milton James Rhode Acorn (1923-1986), at THEATRE PASSE MURAILLE (16 Ryerson Avenue). M.C. Cedric Smith with special guests Susan Hogan and Eric Peterson, featuring poets Bill Bislett • Fred Cogswell • Patrick Lane • Gwendolyn MacEwan • Robert Priest and Al Purdy. Music by THE PERTH COUNTY CONSPIRACY, Terry Jones, Loreena McKennie, Cedric Smith and David Woodhead.

ACORN'S WAKE TICKETS: \$7.00, \$5.00 for unemployed, students and poets. For tickets, send your cheque to Box 7, Stn. D, Scarborough, Ontario M1R 4Y7, or Phone (416) 293-8880 (evenings only)

GROSSMAN'S TAVERN (379 Spadina Ave. at Celi) will be hosting ACORN'S WAKE: TRIBUTE from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm featuring readings by Ontario poets Tammy Barker • Shauri Baumgarten • Don Cullen • Bev Daurio • James Deahl • Michael Dudley • Chris Falas • Marty Flomen • Richard Harrison • Valerie LaPoint • Rob MacLeod • Carol Maylyn • Bruce Meyer • Pam Oxendine • Ted Plantos and Wayne Ray • Music by: REAL IMAGE. FREE ADMISSION

Special thanks to: The Ontario Arts Council • The Canada Council • NFB Press Limited • Theatre Passe Muraille • Grossman's Tavern • League of Canadian Poets • The Canadian Poetry Association • Perth County Conspiracy

## **Standing Up For Himself**

### **The Uncollected Acorn: Poems 1950-1956**

by Milton Acorn, James deahl editor *Denneau* 149 p.

**Whiskey Jack** by Milton Acorn

HMS Press 1986 48p. ISBN 0919957218

Review by Paul Denham *Books In Canada* June/July 1987

The Uncollected Acorn brings together poems from Milton Acorn's whole career, some previously published in magazines but most selected from Acorn's manuscripts in the public archives. Editor, James Deahl has organized them topically in five groups - love poems, elegies, political poems, poems of nature, and religious meditations. He also provides dates, so that we can see how the poems are related to Acorn's poetic development.

A couple of poems in an uncharacteristic 19<sup>th</sup> Century style turn out to be from 1950, the beginning of Acorn's career; this one, for example, sounds like Lampman or Roberts:

The autumn edgens and geese go south.  
From towns and trudgery fields their echelons  
are glimmered, and recall a long-time drought;  
the voice-cracked air of camps in nomad dawns . . .

There are lots of experiments with the sonnet form, an interest that found fuller expression in the *Jackpine Sonnets* (1977). "Never Say It's All For The Best," a poem dated 1958, contains lines later used in "knowing I Live In A Dark Age."

Yet few of these poems are likely to endure with Acorn's best work. Some of the political poems read more like letters to the editor than like real poems, and in the love poems he is often as interested in his own erections as in the subject of his desires. If they haven't appeared in print before this, that may be because Acorn, an exacting craftsman, knew they weren't ready. The Uncollected Acorn is not a brilliant final testament, but rather a window into Acorn's career, and a tribute to the importance of that career for English-Canadian poetry.

It's not at all clear why we have two posthumous collections of Acorn. [One was not posthumous but published just before his death ed.] *Whiskey Jack*, a smaller book, is offered without explanation. Is it composed of poems that didn't make it, for whatever reason, into the Uncollected Acorn? Or was it at press at the time of Acorn's death? [correct ed.] There is no editor; Deahl is listed as the proofreader, and there's an introduction by Al Purdy and an afterward by Gwendolyn MacEwen, but nobody takes responsibility for *Whiskey Jack* or explains what it represents.

Purdy quotes a passage from *The Hummingbird* that, as other reviewers have already noticed, is different than the one on page 14; it turns out that Purdy's version is the one that appeared in Acorn's 1969 collection *I've Tasted My Blood*. Future scholars will have fun sorting out the textual problems. It all makes work for the working man or woman.

Many of the poems in *Whiskey Jack* are about owls, ravens, crows, swallows, and herons. *Mr. Owl* indicates Acorn's interest in birds:

To be what you are with no intention  
Or concept of being otherwise . . .

There are some non-avian poems too, such as the comic *Sonnet X* - another erection poem - in which the poet makes love to a foghorn:

Walking with a heavy-duty thruster  
Rude as a rocket nozzle orbit  
From my fork; I heard a soft contralto  
Hoot appealing like a love-sick dinosaur  
Through fog lingering from the lakeshore.

We're so used to thinking Acorn as a raging lefty that it's surprising how conservative he could be on the issues; there are two anti-abortion poems in *Whiskey Jack*. Acorn's politics, like everything else about him, was his own creation entirely. He followed no party line. And a good thing too.

### **Whiskey Jack**

by Milton Acorn

HMS Press 1986 48p. ISBN 0919957218

Review by Rob MacLeod *Anthos* 1986

In some ways *Whiskey Jack* is very much in the mainstream of Milton Acorn's writing; in other ways it is a radical departure. Acorn often uses animal metaphors and he often writes allegorically, but in the past he has never used an allegory, let alone a bird allegory, as a unifying theme for an entire book. That he does so in *Whiskey Jack* means that he is joining the ranks of those writers of earlier ages who used the characteristics of birds to express the foibles of their human contemporaries.

This is to say that the book attempts a larger vision/ In spite of this, *Whiskey Jack* is not vintage Acorn. In poems such as *Hummingbird* and *To Draw A Robin*, incipient, versifying wit for no apparent reason other than to settle minor scores. On the other hand, *What Right Has A Gull* reminds us of Acorn the visionary who showed the way to so many younger Canadian poets.

Overall, HMS Press is to be heartily thanked for giving us this last installment from the fine writer who is no longer with us; and for showing us some of the promise that a few more years of life might have fulfilled. Recommended.

## **Without A Crystal Ball**

Jim Flanagan

HMS Press 1985 ISBN 0919957161

Review by Andrew Brooks *CBRA* 1985

This slim volume contains ten poems, rhymed and unrhymed. Most of them deal with personal, everyday subjects. Flanagan seems to have real problems with his attempts to write in a rhythmic style. While he shows a good ear for rhythm, his rhymes are jarring. The rhymes themselves are usually exact, but Flanagan frequently resorts to the old device of twisting syntax into archaic forms to get them to the end of the line.

Most of the poems cover aspects of daily life and the insights they offer are often unremarkable enough that the reader has to wonder why they were published in the first place. A Toast To Newlyweds and Christmas Shopping properly belong in letters to people for whom they were written. The Work Ethic on the other hand, is a piece of gratuitous, simplistic, union-bashing that might have some application in Flanagan's own workplace but quickly stretches thin when it ambles into generalities.

To be fair, *To Helene* and *Being* show sophistication of thought and some hard edged insight., although both are cramped by an unnecessary rhythm or rhyme scheme. Maybe what Flanagan needs to do is discard the strict forms of experiment with more free verse which even to this point, allows more of his sensitivity and intelligence to show through. This is the kind of a book a beginning poet might produce after he had decided to be a poet but before his talent has truly begun to evolve.

**Poems A Strange Source**

**Three Roberts: Premiere Performance**

HMS Press 40 p. ISBN 0919957080

Review by Maggie Helwig Toronto Star Dec. 15 1984

Probably the most often-made statements about poets are that they are a unique source of lies. Actually, the two are not mutually exclusive; it is the nature of poetry to select on particular aspect of truth, and to find its integrity, in its responsibility to that viewpoint, partial thought though it may be . . .

Finally [three other reviews preceded], there are the Three Roberts - Priest, Sward and Zend - who have been turning up frequently in Toronto over the past year presenting their "performance poetry," which as the name suggests, is concerned primarily with the responsibility of pleasing the audience. *Premiere Performance* is a transcript of their first joint reading, in Grossman's Tavern last January.

A book of performance poetry is perhaps a contradiction in terms, and this one is not a resounding success. Priest and Sward, trying to adapt the conversations of written poetry for performance, produce what is really a sub poetry, either dribbling off into trivia and humor or producing statements of such profundity as *ugly / is what happens to something / you don't love / enough.*

Robert Zend, however, has the good sense to realize that he is working in a different medium. He is an entertainer, clever, comic, and immediately accessible - and sometimes concealing an unexpected sting. Not only would he have been most enjoyable on stage, he is in fact the most successful when transferred to print. Once again, it is fidelity to the chosen standard that determines whether the poetry stands or falls.

**Three Roberts: Premiere Performance**  
HMS Press 40 p. ISBN 0919957080  
Review by Michael Williamson CBRA 1984

The 21 poems in this collection were performed by the Three Roberts at Grossman's Tavern in Toronto on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1984. I wish that I had been there, because this book is not only thoroughly delightful as poetry to be read out loud, but it also happens to contain first rate poetry from a passive reading standpoint. All three poets are innovators in their own right and all have published previous collections. Mr. Zend, who is both poet and radio producer, knows a lot about performing; Mr Priest, is also a songwriter; and Mr. Sward is also a freelance broadcaster. They have managed to reach a conceptual empathy in this collection despite their obvious stylistic idiosyncrasies. Aside from the obvious sense of play manifested throughout, the main themes of the poems are woven around each other and the effect is quite lyrical:

Love, I love you: Death, I love you;  
and some other things as well,  
I love you . . .  
Extraordinary, one-legged  
Tijuana whore; I love you, loved you  
Robert Sward *Hello Poem*

Poems of perception, identity, and compassion, silly poems such as Zend's *Romance On The Beach* and Sward's *Lagoon Goon*, and quasi-religious Jesus poems fill this collection. What a lot of fun this book is. Highly recommended.

## **Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West**

Mary G. Alexander

HMS Press 1984 80 p. ISBN 0919957145

Review by Sybil James *Women's Art Journal*

As a child, Mary Alexander met Sybil Jacobson (1881-1954) when her family purchased one of her paintings. Years later, Alexander became interested in learning more about this artist whose work had long been part of the family household. Learning more was not easy. Though several galleries and museums in Canada hold Jacobson's work, their catalogs provided little biographical information, and some that was inaccurate.

Eventually, Alexander, with the assistance of Jacobson's daughter, Johanna, gathered enough information about the artist's early life. Born Sybil Atkinson into a comfortable middle-class family in London G.B., she studied art there and in Paris, where she met her husband, Peter Henly, a sculptor and painter estranged from his prominent English family. In 1912 the couple went to Saskatoon to try homesteading. Why they did this is not explored. They were not successful farmers and Peter suddenly became violently insane, was hospitalized, and died soon after. Aside from such sketchy details, the story does not really begin until 1918, when Sybil went to live with Dr. Johan Jacobson, whose first marriage had failed.

From there the story is one of her efforts to paint and care for her family, of struggles and frequent relocations in search of some sort of financial security, and of the difficulties in finding artistic and intellectual stimuli in small prairie towns.

For several years, Sybil managed to leave whatever town the family currently lived in to spend the spring and summers painting in the countryside around Lac Vert. Dr. Jacobson (whom Sybil did not legally marry until 1935) seems to have been atypically accepting her need to paint. ) Johanna postulates that since for so many years her mother was 'technically her father's mistress and not his wife, he may, from a practical point of view have accepted the fact that she had greater control over her own life' - an interesting argument for the status of mistress.)

The lack of information applies also to the whereabouts of many of Jacobson's paintings: often we simply get descriptions of them based on press clippings from exhibits or Johanna's memories. What we do have corroborates Alexander's assessment; a careful, traditional academic manner - and well done, but not innovative. Although she studied with John Singer Sargent and his influence is felt in her portraits - the lighting and the color in the self-portrait on the cover makes us wish that some of the book's 16 reproductions were in color - she is primarily a descendant of the Barbizon School.

Jacobson remained 'on the edge of serious recognition' according to Alexander, who places the artist's struggles for financial security and recognition in the context of the difficulties of other contemporary Canadians. Although the narrative is sketchy and grows a bit disorganized at the end, and the lack of an index makes cross checking difficult. Alexander has given us a sense of this strong, determined woman, rescued from obscurity. The book seems a stepping stone to interest others in Sybil Jacobson's work and lead someone to undertake a full-length study of her place in the history of Canadian art.

## **Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West**

Mary G. Alexander

HMS Press 1984 80 p. ISBN 0919957145

Review by Ellen Pilon *CBRA* 1984

Born in England, Sybil Jacobson (1881-1953) moved to Saskatchewan with her husband in 1912. From around 1918, after the early death of her first husband, Sybil lived with Dr. Jacobson, with whom she had two children and with whom she eventually married in 1935. Her art credentials include studying at the Lambeth School, three years at the Royal Academy Schools, and a few years in Paris. The black and white reproductions of her paintings included in this book suggest she had considerable talent. Yet she is virtually unknown as a Canadian painter. In her penultimate chapter, Alexander tries to place Jacobson in the Canadian art scene and to appraise her art. Although talented, Jacobson remained Barbizon and static at a time when art movements elsewhere were anything but traditional.

Included in the book are an informative author note, acknowledgments, a list of plates, and a selected bibliography. The selected bibliography lists very general works on art, nothing on Jacobson's in particular and nothing suggests where Alexander obtained her material. The acknowledgments offer a few clues: Jacobson's daughter, Johanna Christy, *without whose unstinting cooperation this book could not have been completed*, seems to have been the source for most of the information. The List of Plates provides title, medium (all are oils), size, and the owner for the paintings. There is no list of Jacobson's paintings, although within the text the contents of several exhibition catalogs are recorded. Alexander has not seen all of the paintings and has not been able to locate many of them. No page numbers are given in the list of plates, an inconvenient omission [oops, sorry ed.]

Alexander has gathered some interesting biographical information on Jacobson, but her organization and presentation are deficient. The text is choppy, with tidbits of whimsy tossed in here and there. For example, in a paragraph discussing the B.C. Artists Exhibition of 1937, we learn that Tiggi (her son) returned from overseas, 'invalided home with rheumatic fever.' There is no other reference to Tiggi's travels overseas, why or when he went or in what way he was 'invalided home.' Similarly Dr. Jacobson is mentioned, then forgotten, then mentioned again in such a way that the reader does not know whether he is dead yet, just sick, or living elsewhere. Chronology is confusing throughout, compounding problems posed by the choppiness. Some of the comments are remarkably trite: 'noting that the painting is only 14" by 11.5", one is very much impressed with the painterly qualities of the study.' Although the book offers some useful biographical information on an obscure and forgotten Canadian artist, it is so dull, lifeless, and confusing to interest biography buffs.

## **Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West**

Mary G. Alexander

HMS Press 1984 80 p. ISBN 0919957145

Review by Cheryl Meszaros (article Unk) Summer 1985

The artist's biographer inevitably confronts both the myth that tends to be associated with the artist and the mystique of the creative process. If the biographer's approach is sympathetic and respectful, the artist and the art itself are apt to be set up for popular veneration. Mary G. Alexander's book on the Saskatchewan painter Sybil Jacobson (1881-1953) is an instance of this process.

The book belongs to a genre of biography motivated by the personal experience. The seminal inspiration in this case, was a painting by Jacobson, in the Alexander family collection. The author's enthusiasm was fostered by a youthful visit to the artist's home in Lac Vert Saskatchewan, in 1931. Much of the biographical information, too, was delivered from a personal source, the artist's daughter, Johanna. Hence, a very intimate portrait of the artist is presented to the reader.

There is an impressive compilation of Jacobson's paintings and their provenance; and with Johanna's assistance, Alexander has been able to reconstruct the chronological sequence of Jacobson's life. Seldom, however, does the author synthesize this material into a coherent picture of Sybil Jacobson, the person in relation to the artist. Jacobson's movements to and across Western Canada on the other hand, are admirably documented: from the early years of art training at the Lambeth School of Art and Design in England and the youthful enthusiasts of the Prairie years, to her death in 1953 on the West Coast.

Corresponding changes in her artistic productions are either neglected or dealt with only in passing. In fact, the paintings are relegated to the status of so many inscrutable works dropping down pure, personal and un-interpreted. Pictures, we are given to believe, must flow naturally from one who is 'an idealist and a dreamer.'

The Chapter entitled "*Rural Saskatchewan*" evokes the legendary institution of prairie perseverance and ingenuity. Sybil and her two children, the author relates, '*thought nothing of walking six miles on a fine day to the lumber yard in Naicam and carrying back on their shoulders a small load of lumber for Sybil's studio, chatting happily all the way.*' It is in this manner that the conception of the persistent woman artist echoes through a labyrinth of anecdotal facts. Early Prairie art and artists will continue to suffer their Provincial status if accounts of their achievements are colored with the inessential, and treated in such a topical manner.

The author does place Jacobson's landscape paintings fairly and correctly in the tradition of the Barbizon painters, and includes an informative passage on the technique of plein-air paintings used by the artist. On the other hand, the radical change between Jacobson's early society portraits (e.g. The Black Shawl circa 1902, and the later, more humanistic portraits e.g. The Spinning Wheel, circa 1927) is attributed to her memory of a Vincent van Gogh exhibition. Might there not, perhaps, have been a more direct relationship between the new, crude, and yet penetrating style of Jacobson's Canadian paintings and certainly less elegant life on a homestead in Saskatchewan? Similarly, we hear little of the influence local painters may have had in stimulating this stylistic change. Reflections on such matters would have helped to de-mythicize the art and the artist.

Alexander's research has yielded many valuable facts: but their significance and their relationship to larger issues are neglected. For instance, Sybil Jacobson was one of the ten founding

members of the Women's Art Association of Saskatchewan. It would have been enlightening to discover who the other nine members were; how and why the association was formed; and what relationship it has to the revolutionary act of admitting female students into art classes at the Royal Academy in London (England). Information such as this would go a long way in establishing the sources and evolution of Canadian art and would help to illuminate, rather than mythicize, the painters life.

**A Mysterious Poem**

Allen W. Angel

HMS Press 1984 ISBN 0919957188

**The Captain**

Wayne Ray

HMS Press 1984 ISBN 0919957137

**Photographs**

Wayne Ray

HMS Press 1984 ISBN 091995717X

Review by Bill Brydon *CBRA* 1984

These three trite books of poetry are productions of HMS Press, a shoe-string operation run by Wayne Ray, which publishes and publicizes poetry in Toronto. Each consists of several pages of stiff paper folded over and stapled [saddle stitch chapbook ed.], with primitive layout and amateurish black and white photography. The future of poetry is less crude than the 'punk poetry' that is sometimes sold in Queen Street shops, but is also less engaging.

*A Mysterious Poem*, by Allen Angel, is the sort of thing a high school student might write in defiance of the entire history of recorded literature. The six poems express unremarkable sentiments about drugs, lovers, and rock stars. The spelling mistakes and bad grammar are probably deliberate. The word Mysterious does not appear in the Oxford English Dictionary. [Ed. Mr. Angel was selling pages of his hand-written poetry on the steps of the UofT Medical building to raise money to go home to Ottawa. The publisher (who worked at the UofT Campus), took his poems home, typed them up and printed 100 copies the next morning and gave the chapbooks to the author in the afternoon to raise funds for the bus ticket home. Guerilla publishing]

Wayne Ray's *Photographs* is a collection of 13 haiku poems, one of which I like

greenhouses,  
sea of flat glass,  
flower fish

The other twelve are dispensable. Bad poets always want to write extremely short poems, probably in order to demonstrate complete technical control; however, as the book shows, condensed verse is a test not of technique but of talent.

*The Captain* is a tribute to Ray's father, who served in Korea. The poem represents the reflection of a man who comes upon a trunk of war mementos in the attic and resolves to return with

his sons. The subject is of great personal importance, both for Ray and his father and for millions of men the world over. Unfortunately, the poem is clumsily written and the images and ideas are typical and ineffective. The book is profusely illustrated with photos from WWII & Korea and from Ray's photo album.

**Auschwitz**

by Wayne Ray

Unfinished Monument Press 1983

**Suburban Eyes**

by Wayne Ray

HMS Press 1983 ISBN 091995703X

**Island Women**

by Chris Faiers

HMS Press 1983 ISBN 0919957056

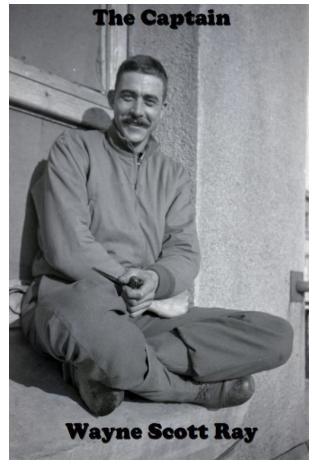
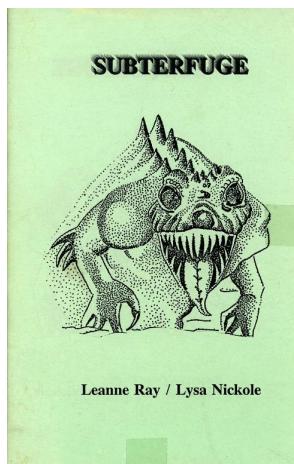
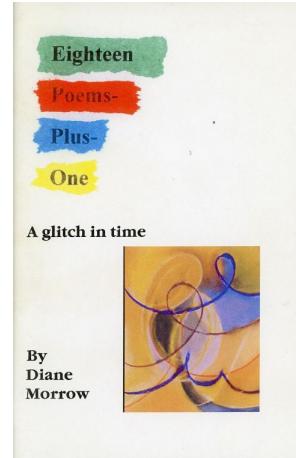
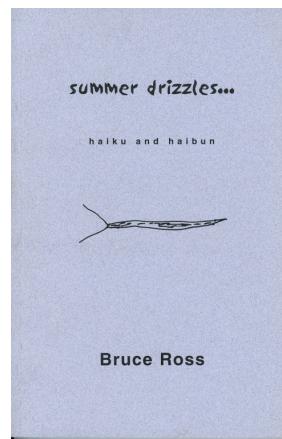
Review by N.M.Drutz *CBRA* 1983

It is hard to believe that Auschwitz and Suburban Eyes were written by the same person. Auschwitz consists of seven poems. The title is a metaphor for the atrocities committed during World War II, not only to the Jewish race but to other peoples as well. The tone is ironic, bitter, and scornful. The most powerful poems are those which describes the horrors of the concentration camps. In *The Ovens* we read *I was there when / they cleaned out the ovens / gut wrenching sweet stench / with every shower of flames and / I saw what intense heat does / to fragile skin and bones / . . .* It is not clear here, who is actually speaking: a German concentration camp official? Ray is bitter, but he does not believe that those involved in the war should inflict their bitterness and hate on the younger generation (*Your Father's Pain*), and feels that the Jews should not forget that they were not the only ones throughout history to be massacred (*Eleven Million Human Beings*). Incidentally, the latter poem is rhymed, demonstrating that Ray can handle Rhyme quite effectively. Auschwitz in a powerful statement, partly because the theme can never fail to evoke some response. [Milton Acorn, while standing at the corner of Spadina & College said: "I read your book, Auschwitz, and I liked it, but . . ." inaudible as a streetcar went by!]

Suburban Eyes, by the same author and already in its second printing, is a disappointing contrast. It is a book of "love, friendship, life and death, fidelity and marriage." These themes are treated in an insipid and maudlin way that fails to arouse interest. *Titles like Young Lovers, College Sweethearts, and Run Into My Arms* abound. Of these 28 poems, only one, *Yonge Street and Roxborough* is even worth mentioning. The book reads too much like a first-year college student to be taken seriously. [*as an aside, later that year the UofT Writer in Residence Dorothy Livesay, told the author that of all the 110 poems submitted for analysis, only 10 % were any good and of those, one stood out as a quality poem: Yonge Street and Roxborough. Figure out why this is and guide your future writing. Ed.*)

Island Women by Chris Faiers is an interesting book. It has supposedly had a lot of praise from such notables as Irving Layton and Alden Nowlan, whose accolades grace the outside back cover. The topic is the West Indies experience, here in Canada and at home. In *Jessie*, Faiers

describes the work experience that most West Indians can expect on coming to Canada. *Jessie, I see you over the sink / washing the new cook's pots / filling and emptying the twin sinks / with all the patience / of the Jamaican tides.* Jessie, Massie and Pat gives us a poetic description of three kitchen workers going to the subway after their daily labours: *After cleanup you slowly emerge / from the change room like so / many red and pink hibiscus blooming / so many spiky aloes / and golden sunsets waving / across a blue sea of cloth / The subway at University and Dundas / has never burned before / in the middle of a snowstorm.* Other poems deal with the flora, fauna, and themes of the West Indies (*Hammerhead, Coral Snake, Palmetto, Mango, Aloe, Soldier Pal, Hurricane* etc) While Faiers may not be “one of the funniest, saddest and most sensitive poets in Canada today,” there is a strength and vibrancy and anger in his writing.



### **Island Women**

by Chris Faiers

HMS Press 1983 ISBN 0919957056

Review by D.S.P. *Rubicon* Summer 1984

Chris Faiers, hero of the chapbook brigade and darling of the Toronto reading series, is at it again, this time with a ‘suite’ of poems about the West Indies and the West Indians. Faiers poetry is as buoyant and sensual as the islands that inspires it; whether writing of tropical fruit or tropical women, or even Jamaican kitchen workers in Toronto, he writes always of experience and delight. No ponderous introspection burdens this beach-pastoral. But this sweetness, like that of the mango, becomes cloying when overdone: . . . *returning / with mangoes, rum, coconuts and / love / which fades so much more slowly / than a tourist's sunburn.*

### **Island Women**

by Chris Faiers

HMS Press 1983 ISBN 0919957056

Review by Stuart Ross *Mondohunkamooga* Feb. 1984

Faiers least overly political collection, these idyllic, lyrical “island poems” are his most successful to date. Certainly not great stuff, but sort of pleasant. Very bizarre design: printed entirely on annoying cover stock, with photos that belong in your dentist’s office.



Two Cops Kissing by Jones  
(following page)

## **Two Cops Kissing**

Jones

HMS Press 1984 ISBN 0919957099

Review by Martin Singleton *CBRA* 1984

This is a chapter of haiku from the iconoclastic author of *Jack and Jill* in Toronto. Jones has also edited *Other Channels: An Anthology of New Canadian Poetry*, by Associate members of the League of Canadian Poets. *Two Cops* opens with a defiant and rather adolescent introduction, in which Jones describes his involvement with the eventual eschewing of, the haiku form. [*“While my experiments with zen philosophy and meditation proved futile, my interest in haiku was enriched by a wide reading of traditional and on temporary Japanese haiku in translation . . . That autumn I found my self in the role of secretary of the Haiku Society of Canada and organizing a massive reading at Harbourfront . . . Rather than encouraging me, this brought about my complete disillusionment with haiku. What I discovered was a mass of hobbyists imitating translations of centuries-old Japanese haiku . . . Everywhere the subject matter was foreign to that of contemporary North American existence . . . The few haikuists who were doing anything original were completely bogged down in lifeless exploitations of form and linguistics. I lashed out at the audience: Do you really want to hear this crap?” Ed.*]

The 32 haiku in this book are mainly strong ones, although a few suffer from banality: *After love/the click of June Bugs/against the glass*. The introduction expresses much dissatisfaction with poets who remain content in using traditional forms and “avoiding the modernism of contemporary Japanese haiku.” Accordingly, few haiku have the traditional 5-7-5 syllable count, although the majority refer either directly or indirectly to seasons.

Rather Jones sets his own poems firmly in the city, where the juxtaposition of plum blossoms and Adidas, pigeons and rally leaflets, crickets and lawnmowers exists. There is in the best of these haiku a wide variety of perception than makes the whole book worthwhile: *Summer afternoon / a broken neon sign argues / with cicada*. There is some danger of Jones falling into a formulaic, Bukowski-like anger (one per continent is quite enough). He should not: he is already too good a writer.

## Pool Hall

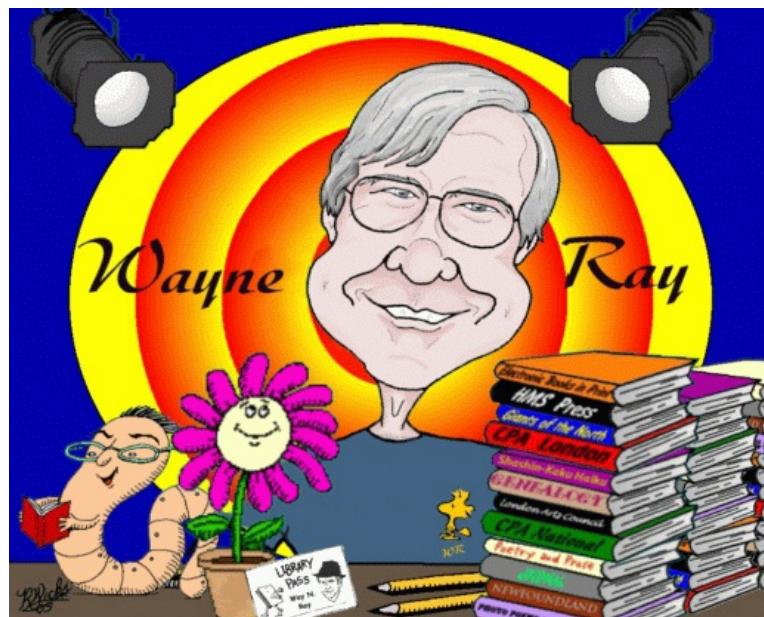
Beth Jankola Photos by Sara Lee James  
HMS Press 1984 ISBN 0919957072  
Review by Mark Bastien *CBRA* 1984

This off beat collection is a series of photographs and graphics about the players and strategy of the game of pool. Beth Jankola and photographer Sara Lee James try to capture the seedy quality of a run-down pool hall: the graffiti on the walls, the long-side burned players, the stillness of concentration. They are only fleetingly successful.

The seven black and white photographs (one of which is repeated) are duskily evocative. Although dimly lit and sometimes reproduced too small to be fully effective, they are illustrations of pool shots, still others are eyes and faces and baseball caps with out owners. One page contains five caps, a pool table, a sign on the wall that says “*Mean Mother Trucker*, musical notes with *Hot Jive in the city*, and the message *Where men are men and women are cooks*.

The back cover of the collection tells the reader “*you’re so lost*” suggests the author didn’t mean to be accessible. It’s more like an excuse for muddled, pretentious musings.

The author’s biography, however, is a fine example of organization and clarity. Her achievements, documented numerically, include the names of 36 publications, organization, and awards. Perhaps Jankola was afraid the reader would not see a poet at work.



CANADIAN  
*Poetry*  
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## Final Word On Rejection Letters

William E.M. Kreizner  
Jacksonville, Florida  
March 29, 1992

HMS Press  
P.O. Box 340 Stn. B  
London, Ontario N6A 4W1

Dear Gentlemen,

I am solicitous to acquaint you with the mental product of my consciousness, my book, *The History and the Theory of Grand Tactics, Book 1, Volume 1*, which I recently authored. It is only natural that I should impart to you what I regard as the beneficially external properties of my book.

I hope that you will not be umbridged by me styling my manuscript a book. I ventured to denote it a book by reason of its more developed physical appearance relative to most other manuscripts. I do not daresay that it may not benefit from an embellished amelioration of its present form under the auspices of your establishment. To whit, I entertain the fullest assurances that you can attain this desirable end.

The principle concepts that I wish to bring to your attention is the penetration frontage equation, specifically the universal trigonometric penetration equation which is set forth in Article 15.4. The universal trigonometric equation enables the commander to ascertain the exact length of the front of the penetration column or the penetration frontage needed to effect a penetration through an opposing inimical line of battle, and its validity will remain constant, notwithstanding the ineluctable vicissitudes naturally inherent in battle. Furthermore, the penetration troop weapons system equations, or P,Tw.R equations, established in Article 15.10 will permit you to determine the number of tanks or troop weapons systems necessary to effect a penetration of a line of battle.

Moreover, I also wish to acquaint you with a concept of no small degree of concernment, that of the equal numerical strength penetration evolution, which is treated in Article 39.1. The recommendatory utility that the equal strength transpiercing attack offers when executed under the mathematical prescription of Article 39.1 is that by applying this principle, the optimum magnitude of force may be partitioned from the pinning wings, and notwithstanding the equality of the numerical strength of the contending forces, yet a permeation of the combat line may nevertheless be accomplished.

Additionally, I trust you will perceive that I have endeavored to construct a comprehensive treatise upon the theory of the penetration evolution. It is my aspiration to effect an analogous undertaking in succeeding treatises upon the grand tactical maneuvers, such as the concentric envelopment, turning maneuvers, flank attacks, and other grand combinations of these evolutions.

The purpose of much moment, which I am desirous to intimate to you is my resolution to write a series of books germaine to grant tactical operation, in which the foremost of combat maneuvers will be analyzed in an intense analytical fashion. The present book available for your inspections is a treatise upon break through operations. The subsequent book will be a treatment of concentric battle operations and will comprise an illumination of the theory of penetration incident

to circular battle confrontations and additionally it will embody an analytical treatment of concentric tactical operations.

Naturally, I repute it to be my disfortune that at this stage I am unable to provide an all embracing theory of grand tactical operations. Regrettably, this ill effect has been occasioned by the want of sufficient financial resources. It is my hope that the present Book 1, Volume 1, will materially succor my present and future researches. On my second book, I will discourse upon the innovative and momentous application of integral calculus to tactical operations. I bid you be advised that I have already developed integral calculus and trigonometric concentric equations which will enable one to dijudicate the quantity troops and weapon system necessary to effect a liberating permeation of a circular order of battle, which is prosecuting a circular encompassing evolution. I have already submitted my researches, the integral calculus and trigonometric concentric equations, to the US Copyright Office and the Writer's Guild to accord me copyright protection and an objective avowal of my innovative findings. Hence therefore, any attempt by any tactical mathematician to preempt my intellectual undertakings in this peculiar academic province will be sufficiently and juridically nullified.

I would do myself little justice in not remarking upon the plates that my book contains. I entertain the hopeful prospect that the tactical diagrams will enlighten the apprehension of the reader of the tactical concepts which I have endeavored to convey in my book.

My book possesses the attribute of being partitioned into articles, which are assigned article numbers. I am of the persuasion that constituting my book with article numbers is a distinguishing particular which imparts to it the quality of organization. The property of organization in military texts is indubitably instrumental in combat operations, inasmuch as the organization of the principles of grand combat operations will facilitate efficiency in tactical undertakings.

Then, too, the intense nature of my index will render it possible to determine the location of the desired concept that the reader may wish to pursue with promptitude. It will then be perceived that my index will be expeditiously conductive to engagements appertaining to transpiercing evolutions.

In addition to these merits, the numerical article preceding the index will allow the army officer to rapidly find the page number which corresponds to the article number. This efficient instrument will be useful, as I frequently advert to article numbers, as General Jomini did.

It is only natural that I impart to you what I regard as the external properties of my book. Observe that my book already possesses the attribute of proportional spacing, in which the top margin has a space length from the top of the page to the body of the page of 1 5/8 inch. I was able to accomplish these fixed dimensioned of the margin with the expedient of a computer. The greater percentage of my book is constituted in this fashion, so as to be consistently regulated by these mathematical rules.

I say that my book in its present form is in a more completed state of a commodity than a regular manuscript. It is in this sense of its more perfected external features that I daresay that you may be more apt to embrace my first book. Moreover, I deem it politic to apprise you that both the British Library and the boolean Library of Oxford in England have received my book in its present form with hardback cover without communicating any disaffection for its present confirmation.

I have in my possession something partially analogous to galley proofs, what I refer to as the original pages of my book which comprise the valuable qualities of my book. I entertain and wish

to see fulfilled the primary wish that you will perceive the amenities of my book, as I have endeavored to descriptively relate. Furthermore, I invite you to take under advisement the economic virtues, that is, the finished product of my book which I fancy my book will proffer you establishment. Should you resolve to embrace the course of action of publishing my book, I will submit to you the original proofs.

Finally, I regard it as useful to alter the tenor of my importations and advert to particulars of a more practical nature. Should you be disinclined to publish my book, Then I importune you to return my manuscript in the self-addressed and postage-paid envelope. The only exception to this entreaty is the condition where I have submitted this manuscript to Europe, in which case I forbear from soliciting a return of it, inasmuch as the postage cost exceeds the cost of the manuscript.

Sincerely yours,

William E.M. Kreizner

HMS Press  
POBox 340 Stn. B  
London Ontario N6A 4W1

Dear Mr. Kreizner,

Firstly, the war is over. Secondly, no one I know talks like you do or carries around a Dictionary & Thesaurus to understand or be interested in your twenty-five dollar words, and Thirdly, I have sent your manuscript to both the Canadian War Museum and the Canadian Humor Museum in Ottawa for preservation, although why I don't know.

Sincerely,

HMS Press

## **Appendix:**

### **Articles & Review Titles:**

Acorn: Swept Up In Imagery	38
A Mysterious Poem, The Captain, Photographs	47
Auschwitz, Suburban Eyes, Island Women	48
Besok Saya Melukis?	30
Beyond Bethune: People's Poetry and Milton Acorn	16
Blowing Holes Through The Everyday	35
BookMarks: CPA BookClub BookLits	32
BookMarks: Middle Earth	30
BookMarks: Under The Jasmine Moon	36
Book Project Serves Double Goal	28
Canadian Poetry Association: an introduction	6
Caution: Deep Water	20,21
Cover Makes A Set	29
Field	18
Invisible Accordion	29
Is It Time For Another Ballyhoo?	24,28
Island Women	49
My Coming Of Age	22
Only A Dragon	65,66
Poems A Strange Source	42
Pool Hall	51
Publishing In The Electronic Age	33
Remembrance Day: Three Essays	9
Standing Up For Himself	39
Sybil Jacobson: Painting In The West	44,45,46
Throw Me A Line	25
Two Cops Kissing	50
Under The Jasmine Moon	37
Weather Report	37
Whale Songs In The Aurora Borealis	27
Whiskey Jack	40
Without A Crystal Ball	41

### **Books & Chapbook Authors:**

Milton Acorn	38,39,40
Mary Alexander	44,45,46
Allen Angel	47
D.J. Berthiaume	30
Brian Birch	37
Terry Barker	16
Joe Blades	29
Jeff Culbert	23,24
Sheila Dalton	34,35,36
James Deahl	32
Ronda Wicks Eller	18,27
Chris Faiers	49
Jim Flanagan	41
Katherine L. Gordon	20,21
I. B. Iskov	22
Beth Jankola	51
Jones	50
Carol Malyon	9
Cris Original	30
Ted Plantos	9
Robert Priest	42,43
Leanne Tyla Ray	9
Wayne Ray	25,32,47,48,49
Geri Rosenzweig	32,36,37
KV Skene	65,66
Robert Sward	42,43
Robert Zend	42,43

## **Book Titles Reviewed: HMS Press, CPA & CPA London**

A Mysterious Poem	47
An Invisible Accordion	29
Auschwitz	48
Ballyhoo: plays from London Ontario	23,24
Besok Saya Melukis	30
Blowing Holes Through The Everyday	34,35,36
Caution: Deep Water	20,21
Creative Plagiarism	59
Cover Makes A set	29
Field: haiku & senryu	18
Island Women	49
Middle Earth	30
In Memoriam: Milton Acorn 1923-1986	32
My Coming of Age	22
Only A Dragon	65,66
Photographs	47
Pool Hall	51
Premiere Performance: The Three Roberts	42,43
Remembrance Day: Three Essays	9,59
Shashin-kaku Haiku	32
Suburban Eyes	48
Sybil Jacobson: Painting in The West	44,45,46
The Captain	47
The Future of Poetry: Despair or Joy?	32,59
Two Cops Kissing	50
Under The Jasmine Moon	37
Weather Report	37
Whale Songs of the Aurora Borealis	27
Whiskey Jack	38,39,40
Without a Crystal Ball	41

**E-Book Titles [<https://archive.org/details/@hmsspress>]  
for Kindle, Kobo etc. & in PDF  
of CPA, CPA London, HMS Press and selected publications:**

21 Pelicans	
An Internet Affair	Police Detectives in Canada
Arma Virumque Cano	Poetics 1969-1984
Auschwitz Revisited	Poetics 1985-1994
Baptist Churches in Clay County Alabama	Regional Short Stories: The Literary Highway
Beatrice Dickerskin	Remembering Olga Rechnitzer
Becoming A Writer	Remembrance Day: an essay
Cherish Our Heritage (Anthology)	Rise Up Singing (Anthology)
Creative Plagiarism	Shashin-kaku Haiku
Creative Writing	She Cast No Shadow
Day Lilies: Pillow Book of Katherion-Empress of Wrenchly	Starbucks Erotica
EOA London Stories (Anthology)	Suburban Eyes
EOA London Poems (Anthology)	Subterfuge
Gaol: Dictionary of Canadian Jail Terminology	Tear The Rust Off My Heart (Anthology)
Going Down Goose Lane Toward Broken Jaw	The Life & Times of BF Gardner
History of Clay County Alabama	The Beauty That Endures
Hoarfrost 1994-2018	The Future of Poetry: Despair Or Joy
If You Like: flash fiction	Tsalagi: Trail of Tears
In Memoriam: Milton Acorn	US Military Bases in Eastern Canada
Jaiku Haiku	
Jaiku II	
Jane Conquest Rang The Bell (1884)	

## **CD Reviews**

Book Project Serves Double Goal	28
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### **CPA [London] BookClub BookLits Title List:**

1. (WR) <i>Creative Plagiarism</i>	32
2. (WR) <i>Horticultural Influences in the Founding of HMS Press</i>	
3. (JD) <i>In Memoriam: Milton Acorn</i>	32
4. (WR) <i>Regional Short Stories: the Literary Highway</i>	
5. (TP, CM, LR) <i>Remembrance Day: Three Essays</i>	9
6. (WR) <i>Shashin-kaku Haiku</i>	32
7. (JD, TB) <i>The Beauty That Endures: Archibald Lampman's Foundation For a Critical Canadian Poetics</i>	
8. (JD) <i>The Future of Poetry: Despair Or Joy</i>	32
9: (WR) <i>Twin Peaks</i>	

### **Journals, Magazines & Newspapers:**

Anthos	40
ArtScape Magazine	25
Bogg Reviews	29
Books In Canada	39
Canadian Book Review Annual	37,41,43,45,47,50
Canadian Literature	37
Canadian Women Studies	34
ID Magazine	6,29,30
London Free Press	28
Mondohunkamooga	49
Monomyth	65
POEMATA	27,66
Rubicon	49
Scene Magazine	30,32,35,36
Synaris Press	16
The London Yodeller	23
Toronto Star	42
University of Toronto Varsity	38
Verse Afire	18,20,21,22
Waferers	65
Women's Art Journal	44

### **Book Reviewers:**

Mark Bastian	51	LFP Staff	30
Tim Bowling	29	Rob MacLeod	40
Andrew Brooks	41	Eppo Martens	6
Bill Brydon	47	Cheryl Mezaros	46
Aeronwy Dafies	65	D.S.P.	49
Paul Denham	39	Ellen Pilon	45
N.M. Drutz	49	James Reaney Jr.	28
D.S.P.	49	Stuart Ross	49
Chris Faiers	21	Martin Singleton	50
Herman Gooden	24	Stella Stocker	
Katherine L. Gordon	22,27	George Swede	18
Maggie Helwig	38,42	Sheri Telenko	29
Patrick Holland	37	Jackie Westlaken	25
Adam Corrigan Holowitz	23	Jenny Wilkinson	33
Sybil James	44	Michael Williamson	43
Deborah Jurdjevic	34	Elana Woolf	22
John B. Lee	20	Mark Young	30,32,35,36,
Bob Lincoln	37		
Joan McGuire	66		

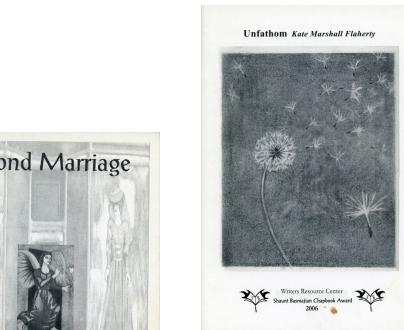
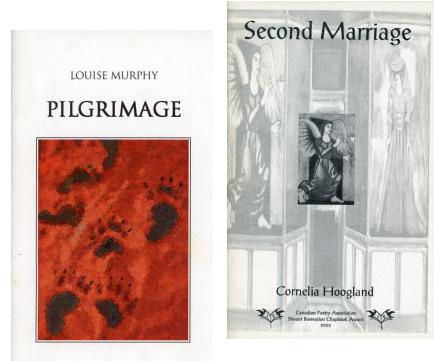
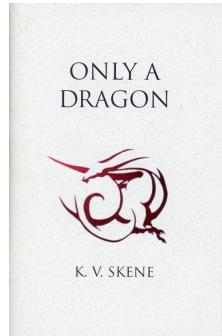
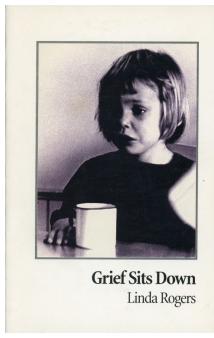
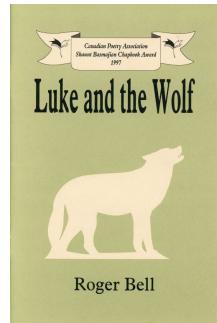
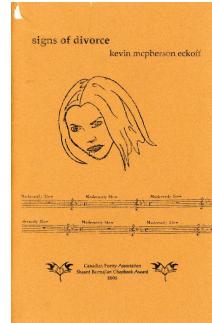
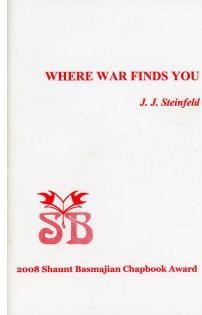
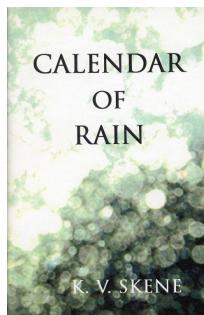
### **HMS Press Broadsides:**

Gwendolyn MacEwen *The Man With Three Violins*  
John B. Lee *Sun Loving Cat*  
Ted Plantos *Newfie Girl*  
Wayne Ray *Prisoner Of War, Last Letter Home*  
Rudy Unger *Over Thirty, Scotch Whisky, Let Me Never Die, Morning Mommy*  
Karen Logan *Oka Kebec, Fortuna Audenta Juvat*  
Rupindar Dhindsa *Mother, Stone*  
Dale Loucareas *O*  
Peter Baltensperger *Thirsting*  
Susan Ioannou *Poem In February*  
Patrick White *Sapient Island*  
Jeff Seffinga *Rabbits*  
Bill Bissett *Bear Run*  
Phera 3 *Poems*  
Peter McPhee *Elmer*  
Beth Jankola/Chris Faiers *Queen Streetcar Runs All night*

## CPA Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award Winners

1997 Roger Bell  
 1998 Alice Major  
 1999 Liz Zetlin  
 2000 Linda Rogers  
 2001 Sue Chenette  
 2002 K.V. Skene  
 2003 Louise Murphy  
 2004 K.V. Skene  
 2005 Kevin McPherson Eckhoff  
     & Cornelia Hoogland  
 2006 Kate Marshall Flaherty  
 2007 Vicky Goodfellow Duke  
 2008 J.J. Steinfield

*Luke and the Wolf*  
*Scenes From The Sugar Bowl Café*  
*The Gourd Poems*  
*Grief Sits Down*  
*The Time Between Us*  
*Only A Dragon*  
*Pilgrimage*  
*Calendar Of Rain*  
*Signs of Divorce*  
*Second Marriage*  
*Unfathom*  
*The Year We Quit Believing*  
*Where War Finds You*



## **Only A Dragon**

K.V. Skene

Canadian Poetry Association Toronto  
Micro-Prose Press Toronto 0-9686018-6-3  
Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award 2002  
Review by Aeronwy Dafies,  
*Monomyth, Supplement 8* [Essex UK]

I was impressed by *Only A Dragon* as soon as I picked it up. The stylized dragon on the cover being a simple but extremely evocative piece of art, that promises quality within.

*Only A Dragon* is a collection of fifteen poems by KV Skene, with whose work I am sure many of The Supplement's readership will be aware. There are also some notes on the poems (very useful for those readers who might have been confused by some of the references in the poems, such as classical ballet steps entitling sections of *Le Lac des Cygnes*) and a short biographical section.

All of the poems are enjoyable, but I especially enjoyed those making up *Ming Shu*, each of which is based around a different animal in the Chinese Calendar, an extremely interesting collection. If you have enjoyed KV Skene's poetry when it appeared in poetry 'zines then I am sure you will want to send off for a copy of this well produced collection.

## **Only A Dragon**

K.V. Skene

Canadian Poetry Association  
Micro-Prose Press Toronto 0-9686018-6-3  
Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award 2002  
Review by Stella Stocker,  
*Waterers 93 April 2003* [UK]

KV Skene ought to be better known in this country. She is published in Canada and appears in contemporary short lists and poetry magazines in the UK. Her collection, *Only A Dragon*, contains consistently good poems. They are brief and pithy, with twists and turns of imagery. Many detail the cruelty and inherent dealing of the natural world. *A Snake in The Grass* has undertones of the Fall *a snake in the grass / splits its summer skin, undercuts / the apple tree, slices the lawn / like a thin knife*. The fox as predator in *Au Autumnful of Fox* is walking on a tightrope between life and death *a hint of snow / in its tail and fox / yelps / to its kind . . . / having killed / and not been killed / overnight*. There are fine, actual images and an assurance within these poems. Varying metaphors for the brittleness and insubstantiality of existence springing on occasions into kaleidoscopic color at others taut and almost oriental in the sparing use of color. Published by the Canadian Poetry Association, Toronto, Canada.

## **Only A Dragon**

K.V. Skene

Canadian Poetry Association

Micro-Prose Press Toronto 0-9686018-6-3

Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award 2002

Review by Joan McGuire

*Poemata Jan. / Feb. 2003*

Only A Dragon is this year's wining Chapbook in the Canadian Poetry Association's annual Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award, a contest honouring the late, great, Toronto poet (and founding member of the CPA) a contest that consistently produces an extraordinarily fine collection of poems. From the opening lines of this collection, the reader is aware of Skene's great poetic talent: *a snake in the grass / splits its summer skin, undercuts / the apple tree, slices the lawn / like a thin knife.* Every piece here is wonderfully crafted, and Skene's imagery is of the sort that makes one stop and re-read in order to take it all in, such as in lines from *Crow: over greenfields (wing/track on flat light) let / obsidian notes crack, and throats (drop/acid croaks / like wing heeled children under a bootsplashing rain.* Only A Dragon includes two series of poems, *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Swan Lake) and *Ming Shu* (the reckoning of fate), the latter being twelve pieces about the Chinese astrological symbols. These pieces are extraordinary, a great mixture of symbols, personifications, and images reminded me, actually of Ted Hughes' crow poems. Once again, this year's Chapbook is designed and published by Joan Latchford, whose artistic vision and attention to detail enhance this fantastic collection of very strong poetry.

# **Curriculum Vitae**

## **Wayne Ray**

Wayne Ray was born in Alabama in 1950 and spent the first fifteen years of his life with his family on Ernest Harmon Air Force Base in Stephenville Newfoundland until moving to Woodstock Ontario in 1965. He became a Canadian Citizen in 1978. He lived in Toronto with his wife and two daughters from 1973-1988 where he worked as Estate Gardener to EP Taylor's Windfield's Estate and the University of Toronto President's Estate, when they moved to London Ontario. Wayne founded HMS Press in 1983, publishing over 100 poets and authors to 2019; the Multicultural Poetry Reading Series at the UofT; created the ongoing Scarborough Arts Council Poetry Contest; co-founder of the **Canadian Poetry Association** in 1985 with Ted Plantos, Chris Faiers, Shaunt Basmajian, Beverly Duario et al., and was its National Coordinator; co-chairman with Jeff Seffinga of the **League of Canadian Poets: Associates** (Toronto 1985/86). He was a co-director of the Beaches Poetry Workshop with Lola Sneyd in 1983. He was the recipient of the **Editor's Prize** for 'Best Poet Published in 1989' from the *Canadian Author & Bookman*. He was instrumental in helping establish (and Literary Committee Chair) the **London Arts Council** in 1994 along with Stephen Joy, Catherine Inculet, et al., and was literary Chair and President of the **London New Arts Festival** in 1995-99. Wayne has Chapbooks of poetry, short stories, essays, and non-fiction published as well as credits in anthologies, periodicals, journals, and newspapers across Canada between 1983 and 2021. He is an avid photographer since 1973 with several gallery shows and contributions to Wikipedia Commons since its inception. [ see <http://photoarchives.ca> ]

### **Publications:**

(books and chapbooks)

<b><i>If You Like: flash fiction</i></b>	2018
HMS Press 141 p.	
<b><i>Jaiku</i></b> (haiku chapbook)	2014
The Ontario Poetry Society Beret Days Press	
<b><i>Going Down Goose Lane Toward Broken Jaw</i></b>	2005
Harmonia Press 101 p.	
<b><i>In A Dream</i></b> (haiku chapbook )	2003
Mercutio Press (Montreal)	
<b><i>She Cast No Shadow</i></b> with Cathy Inculet	2002
Harmonia Press chapbook	
<b><i>Remembering Olga Rechnitzer</i></b>	1996
HMS Press local history chapbook	
<b><i>Giants of the North</i></b>	1992
Third Eye Press 78 p.	
<b><i>Auschwitz</i></b> (chapbook)	1984
Unfinished Monument Press	
<b><i>Suburban Eyes</i></b> (chapbook)	1983
HMS Press	

## **Publications:**

e-books for Kindle etc. available at <http://archive.org>

Collected Haiku moments	2021
Mother Teresa's Orange Clad Lepers (aka Ray Scott)	2020
Dirka Dirka: Acrostic Poems (aka Ray Scott)	2020
In Sao Paolo I Sat Down And Wept (aka Ray Scott)	2020
Creative Writing & 21 Pelicans	2019
Baptist Churches in Alabama	2017
Clay County Alabama History	2017
Ernest Harmon Air Force Base (1987) Wikipedia revision	2017
Botanical Gardens of Canada 1983 & revised	2016
Poetics II: 1969-1984	2016
Poetics III: 1985-1994	2016
Hoarfrost: 1995-2016	2016
Gaol: Dictionary of Canadian Jail Terminology	2015
Editor, design & layout	

## **CPA (Canadian Poetry Association)**

### ***BookClub Booklets Chapbooks***

Updated and republished in 2019

Literary Highway: Regional Short Stories	1997
Horticultural Influences in the founding of HMS Press	1993
Twin Peaks: an essay	1993
Patterns of Inheritance: family genealogy	1993
Creative Plagiarism (updated 2019)	1991
Shashin Kaku: Canadian haiku styles (updated 2019)	1991
Beatrice Dickerskin: found prose	1991

## **Journals & Anthologies**

<b>Bridge Celebration</b>	2019
Brampton Bridge Ministry	
<b>Verse Afire</b>	2010-2021
The Ontario Poetry Society	
<b>Crossing Lines:</b>	2009
<i>Poets who came to Canada in the Vietnam War Era</i>	
Seraphim Editions Toronto	
<b>Trees of Surprise: a Western New York Anthology</b>	2007
Blaze Vox, New York	
<b>Van Gogh's Ear Volume 5</b>	2006
French Connection Press, Paris/Detroit	

<b>Unlocking The Muse:</b> <i>Canadian anthology of verse</i>	2005
TOPS Beret Days Press	
<b>Earth Songs:</b> <i>Canadian anthology of verse</i>	2002
TOPS Beret Days Press	
<b>Waking Ordeals</b> anthology	1997
Agram Press Guelph	
<b>10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Anthology:</b> CPA	1995
<i>Canadian Poetry Association</i> Toronto	
<b>Sacred Climaxes</b>	1990
Cosmic Trend, Guelph	
<b>The Northern Red Oak</b>	1987
Unfinished Monument Press Toronto	
<b>BSPS Journal</b>	1986-1987
CPA Halifax	
<b>Lines Series &amp; Other Channels</b>	1985
League of Canadian Poets Associates	
<b>Whitewall Review</b>	1984
Ryerson University Press	

### **Magazines & Newspapers:**

Poetry, Prose & Horticulture & Photography 1986 - 2018

Anthos (Perth Ont.), Afterthoughts (London Ont.), Author & Bookman (CAA Toronto), Auto Trader (London), Bridge (Brampton), Cross Canada Writers Magazine (Toronto), Deep Woods Magazine (London), Diarist Journal (Pennsylvania USA), ( Downhomer (Newfoundland), Erotic T Magazine (London), Georgian (Newfoundland), Glassdoor.ca, London Life Office, London Free Press, Lousy Pennies, Poets Corner (Toronto Sun), Literary Review of Canada (Toronto), Pflanzen in Deutschland (Plants in Germany), Singles Voice (Toronto), Surface & Symbol (Scarborough), POEMATA (CPA Toronto/London), Well (Halifax), Wikipedia articles 2008-2015.

### **London Arts Council Publications: 1994-2001**

*in association with Dan Ebbs & Stephen Joy*

Public Art in London  
 London Directory of Arts Organizations  
 South Western Ontario Publishers Listing

**Mailing Address:**  
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**London Ontario N6A 4W1**

