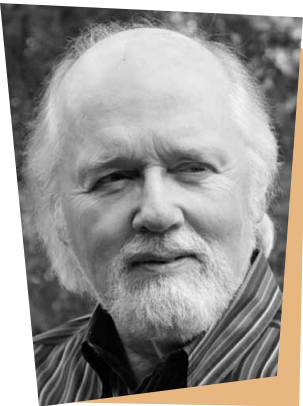


Reading has a long history but is a practice which seems to be diminishing. I am not referring to the kind of reading we do when looking at emails or the never-ending advertisements on screen and sign. I am thinking of a more sustained kind of reading which takes time and effort yet bears fruit for life's journey. Joan Didion has famously said; "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear." It seems to me that we could say that we read for these same reasons. Whether it is fiction or non-fiction it will invite us into a process of discovery. As some have observed reading is a way of self-identification. And the way it works – paradoxically – is that when we read we are called to identify with others.

Nigel Forde in his fascinating book *The Lantern and the Looking Glass* (1997) writes about a distinction made by C. S. Lewis. There are books that we read to while away the time and never return to them and there are books that become "part of their readers' vision of the world". Neither Lewis or Forde want to instruct us to avoid "bad books". Rather they recognize that such books have their place. "The difference between good



and bad books can almost be summed up by saying that bad books merely bring out what is already inside us; they pander to us, they indulge us. Good books add something to what we are; they extend

us, they change us, they surprise us with more than just a clever plot." (p.77)

These are the works we might read again and again. A recent book by accomplished

continued on page 4



An Indian Summer Afternoon

J. Douglas Thompson born under the misty atmospherics of Canada's west coast and raised under Alberta's high SkyScapes finds himself continually influenced by those early images burned indelibly into his soul and mind.

Adventuring into sixty-five countries, he has dipped into the Amazon, Costa Rica's Monteverde rainforest, Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, the high ranges of the Andes, Alps, Pyrenees, Norway's fiords and has sat at the feet of the Himalayans.

Philosophically his paintings are representative of life's storms, yet portrayed with the touch of hope of light breaking through heavy skies. His images often include trees twisted by the winds of life and yet persevering by putting roots deep into a firm foundation.

His paintings have been displayed at the National Museum of Ecuador. He presently has work in several Canadian galleries, has had solo and group shows including TIAF in Toronto and Art Expo in New York. His work is found in corporate and private collections.

Doug paints in acrylic.

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Email: jdouglasthompson@sympatico.ca

Website: www.jdthompson.net

Blog: bigskypainter.blogspot.com

*It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.*

William Carlos Williams, poet



Cotton Patch Gospel

It's a rollicking, foot-stomping, hand-clapping, off-the-front-porch bluegrass musical retelling of the life of Jesus set in rural Georgia. Written by Tom Key and Russell Treyz, with music and lyrics by Harry Chapin, it is based on the book *The Cotton Patch Version of Matthew and John* by Clarence Jordan. This production, directed by Tom Carson, with set and costume design by Kat Misztal-McCubbing, is presented by The Arts Engine and features Arthur Wachnik, Kris Van Soelen, Darren Eedens and Jeanine Noyes, music director. For photos, video, dates and information visit www.theartsengine.ca

Imago at the Art Gallery of Ontario

The Art Gallery of Ontario holds an extensive collection of the prints of the late nineteenth century French artist Charles Marie Dulac (1865-1898). Dulac became a devout Catholic and a lay brother in the Franciscan order. Imago was able to arrange to host a talk in the Prints and Drawings gallery. The talk was given on April 24th by Brother Ignatius Feaver to an invited audience of about twenty five. Nine original prints were on display for the talk and some others to view before and after. Comments on the nine prints were linked with words from *The Canticle of Creatures* by St. Francis of Assisi.

Imago at Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD)

In her final year of a program in art criticism and curatorial studies Meghan Hers took on a thesis project which was a little out of the ordinary. She decided to do research on Christian visual artists in Canada. She wanted to explore whether Christian visual artists tended to form a separate culture apart from those artists functioning in secular settings. Meghan was in touch with Imago and our meetings opened a wide ranging conversation about Christian artists and their practices. In addition to some one on one conversations Imago hosted an evening with about 15 practicing visual artists for a kind of group interview.

What became clear was that Christian visual artists are not ghettoized among themselves but show their work in galleries along with others in their guild. It was also discovered that the phrase "Christian art" was consistently resisted by these Christian artists. The research undertaken by Meghan became a valuable process of discovery for her and the thesis will serve as an informative resource for her professors at OCAD.

As a spin off from these conversations Imago hosted a panel discussion at OCAD at the end of March. This was done under the catchy title "What Would Jesus Paint?: Religion and Contemporary Art". The panel included Heidi Brannan (sculptor), Chris Cuthill (visual artist and Chair of Art, Redeemer College, Ancaster), Maria Gabankova, (visual artist and instructor in figure drawing OCAD) and Jennifer Rudder (Professor of Curatorial Practice and Art Criticism). The conversation was lively and about 40 attended the discussion.

All of this suggests new opportunities are emerging that open the way for dialogue across our differences. The barriers between art and religion so evident in the 20th century (see James Elkins book; *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*) seem to be crumbling. Artistic expression is a deeply human endeavour and is able to capture our interest regardless of the religious sensibilities we carry. For some art enriches their religious experience and for others art replaces religion.

Kim's Convenience at Soulpepper Theatre, Toronto

Some may recall we noted a new play by Ins Choi in the summer 2011 issue of the newsletter. That play was *Kim's Convenience* and was on at the time at the Toronto Fringe where it won Best in the Festival. Since then a lot has happened. This work has generated a great deal of interest from theatre companies in Toronto and beyond. It was picked up by Soulpepper Theater where Ins spent two years as a member of their academy program. It was the work scheduled to open the Soulpepper 2012 season in January and ran for about 38 performances – selling out very quickly. The exceptional popularity of this show led to scheduling it for an additional four week run from May 16th to June 16th 2012. From all appearances it would seem this play will not soon disappear. Where it will go next remains to be seen but we delight in its success thus far. I expect many of you will have seen Ins Choi's recent performances of *Subway Stations of the Cross* – which were done in many settings during the Lenten Season. See www.kimsconvenience.tumblr.com



Milton Acorn: *In A Springtime Instant: Selected Poems*

James Deahl (editor) Mosaic Press 2012

Milton Acorn (1923-1986) was the most dynamic, controversial and prophetic Canadian Anglican political poet in the latter half of the 20th century. Acorn was a poet who spoke to the people of Canada and did so in an accessible and not to be forgotten manner. The fact that Acorn was awarded, by significant Canadian poets, the Peoples Poet Award in 1970 and the GG Award in 1975 speaks its own convincing language. Who was this poet who offended the trendy left by taking a definite stand on the Pro-Life issue yet offended the political right by opposing capitalism, militarism and American imperialism? Who was this unique Canadian nationalist who flirted with the ideological left but when day was a done was a conscious Red Tory?

Who was this High Church Anglican that was convinced that the purpose and end of the grandeur of the liturgy was justice and peace in the streets and for the working class people? Who was this herald and pioneer in the 1950s of the ecological movement?

The time has finally

come for a return and retrieval of the poetry of Milton Acorn. The publication of this work has appeared on the literary and publishing scene at just the right time, and the editorial work and Introduction by James Deahl (who lived with Acorn for a few years and published some of his poetry), makes this updated approach to Acorn a real keeper.

Deahl has, in his editorial role, guided the poetic ship of the book across the full waters of Acorn's life and writing. Poems are judiciously chosen from Acorn's earliest book of poetry,

In Love and Anger (1956) to Acorn's mid-stride classic *I've Tasted My Blood: Poems 1956 to 1968* (1969), the later books of poetry that were published in his lifetime and the books of poetry that were published after his death. The collection is arranged chronologically and separates wheat from chaff, gold from dross in Acorn's poetic journey. Deahl has dug deeply into Acorn's poetic output, and has brought back the finest of Acorn from his diligent spade work.

This work shows Acorn the poetic and probing genius at his challenging best. The Northern Oak of Acorn stands tall and stately, high above the lesser trees of much Canadian poetry and the meticulous work of James Deahl, Terry Barker and Howard Aster (Mosaic Press) amply illustrates why this is the irrefutable case. We await, with much anticipation, the publication in 2013, from Mosaic Press, the book of critical essays on Acorn.

Review by Ron Dart, who teaches in the department of Philosophy and Politics, University of the Fraser Valley and has a particular interest in the intersection of art and politics.

The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction

Alan Jacobs, Oxford University Press, 2011

This engaging work seeks to address some of the concerns that people have about reading. Jacobs suggests that many today find it

difficult to read in a sustained way feeling the draw to check their email, facebook or twitter account. The author himself has had this experience. A certain anxiety prevails and undercuts the focus needed for our

reading. Unfortunately what accompanies this anxiety is the belief that one has lost the ability to read. Jacobs, though he understand that way of thinking, is quick to point out that confidence about reading once lost can be restored.

He challenges a common viewpoint that shows up in a work by the celebrated author Mortimer Adler, *How to Read a Book*. The approach found there is one that Jacobs would like to avoid. He calls it the "eat your vegetables" approach where you are to read because it is good for you, healthy and nurturing. It is an approach that is readily attended by guilt – and guilt easily becomes an obstacle to picking up a book. When we think of how we come to read in the early years of our lives we read not because it was good for us or our duty, but because it was fun. This emphasis is captured in the title where it is "the pleasures..." not "the virtues..." of reading.

At the heart of this work is the author's resistance to a long standing view launched in the mid-nineteenth century by Matthew Arnold. Arnold was keenly aware of the waning influence of Christianity on society a subject he wrote about in his famous poem *Dover Beach*. It was Arnold's view that the moral strength of the culture was in jeopardy and needed to find a new centre and source. It was literature, good literature that would come to fill the gap left by a diminished Christian presence and influence. It was literature that would generate the civic virtues and moral direction needed. Jacobs' view is that such a role is too much for literature to bear. This is a book that will inform, delight and instruct. It might serve to free any who may have got stuck with the sea of distractions we face.

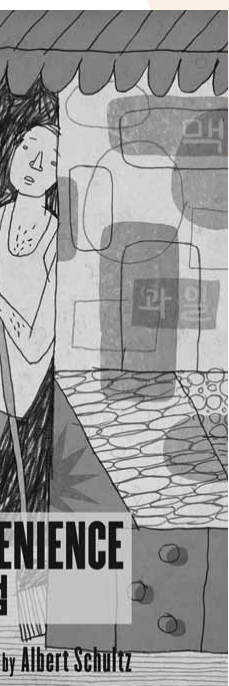
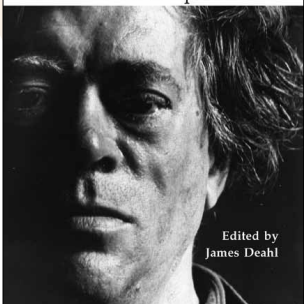
Toronto Journal of Theology vol. 28/1

The Spring 2012 issue of the *Toronto Journal of Theology* is an issue focused on art and theology. Imago's Executive Director was a guest editor for this volume published

in full colour. Now in its 28th year this is the first time an entire issues has been devoted to the arts.



Milton Acorn
in a
Springtime Instant
selected poems





An Imago soiree was held early in May at the home of Scott Cameron and Mary Fote. Imago artist Liala Biali on piano and vocals and George Koller on double bass. It was an exceptional evening where some 50 guests got to enjoy good food, good conversation and the fine music of two talented artists.

Reading has a long history

continued from page 1

author Susan Hill titled: *Howards End is on the Landing* provides a glimpse into her life with books. It tells the story of what happened when she decided to revisit the conversations and bookshelves of the past that had informed a lifetime of reading and writing. The outcome was a year of reading and re-reading from her personal library.

In our fast-paced culture many would argue that “long form reading” is no longer worth the effort: too much time, too much attention. In discussions of this subject we find reference to hyper attention and deep attention. The former is that capacity to switch quickly from one thing to another, a kind of mobility whose stops are momentary, while the latter involves the practice of sustained focus on a single source. The jury is still out on what degree of compatibility there is between these two styles. A person may have some of both but it seems that if you are proficient at one you will not do so well with the other.

In his recent book *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*, Wheaton College English professor Alan Jacobs provides some assurance that reading of the sort that requires “deep attention” is still alive

and well. His most basic advice to aspiring readers is “read what you delight in”. Our choice to read certainly requires attention and it “creates simultaneously silence and receptiveness to a voice; the reader acts imaginatively, constructing meaning from the experience of finding words on a page, but also ideally, strives to assume a posture of charity toward what he or she reads.” (p.149) Read not as a consumer but with critical judgment and the reward will follow.

In an earlier work *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* Alan Jacobs makes essential links between reading and love. In this work he argues that “literature carefully read is an irreplaceable tool in the development of discernment or practical wisdom.” Here the link is made between art and the moral life. Reading need not be thought of as a solemn exercise but rather as play. In the Postlude to this work Jacobs sites J. Huizinga book *Homo Ludens* where he notes three things that distinguish true play: i) play is a voluntary activity, ii) it is stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own, and iii) it is characterized by ‘secludedness... limitedness, it has a beginning and an end. Jacobs makes his point nicely with a quote from Dickens’ *Hard Times* – where the lisping circus owner Sleary discerns that self interest is not the only

Events

Thursday, June 7, 2012
at 7:30 p.m.

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse 6 Trinity Street
(one block east of Parliment south of King)

Featuring:

Singer/songwriter, Jacob Moon

Author, Hugh Cook

Visual artist, Doug Thompson

Jazz pianist, Tom Reynolds

Singer/songwriter, Peter Tigchelaar

Reception to follow. No charge but there will be an opportunity to donate to Imago.

Save the date....

Imago is 40 this year and will celebrate at the Glenn Gould Studio on

Friday, November 2, 2012.

way, that love is not chaotic but has its own structure and that there are some things that are not easily subject to calculation.

“It theemth to prethent two thingth to a perthon, don’t it Thquire? said Mr. Sleary, musing as he looked down into the depths of his brandy and water: one, that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-intereth after all, but thomething very different; t’other that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, which thomehow or another ith at leathth ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith.”

As summer approaches many are searching for what they will read in those leisurely days ahead. The art of reading like other arts is characterized by play and promise and at its best is attended by love and a receptivity that can be the context for bringing new insight as we discover what we are thinking, what we are looking at, what we see and what it all means.

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