

Lucille places her hope in male saviours, an interesting reversal to a motif of Bergen's in earlier works—where, as observed by Ervin Beck in his *JMS* review of *Here the Dark*, good women are portrayed as saviours to lost men. Bergen renders a wonderful allusion to the New Testament in a Thailand boat scene where Lucille is enamoured by Cees, a muscular hero who shelters Libby in his arms, unfazed in an overcrowded boat tossed by the waves of a death-scale storm. With structural ingenuity, Bergen sets up a trinity of male saviours that plays a significant role in Lucille's choices, culminating in the book's tender and ironically redemptive ending.

Bergen provides a wealth of details to savour, like the old women doing tai chi near a noodle stand in the opening, or the breath clouds of Baptiste and his new-found girlfriend seen through the window as Lucille drives by in the winter cold. As in Bergen's other work, dialogue is particularly effective, especially the absence of quotation marks that allows the reader to move in and out of Lucille's mind, to spoken word to action and back to mind again, this lack of parameters almost acting as a foil to her hiding, limiting behaviours. There's a seamlessness too in the time transitions, the way Bergen meshes for example Lucille and Baptiste's past-habitual with key flashbacks that reveal the essence of their relationship. There are laugh-out-loud moments like at the end of Lucille's interview with Shane, when she refuses to lose dignity "sorting her feet out" (78) in front of him, so the lace of her Greek sandal trails after her out the door.

Out of Mind is a tour de force. It's hard to detect a weakness, except perhaps near the end when Lucille conveniently chances on an extra credit card in a time of crisis. But there's always another side; turn this moment over in your mind and the flaw turns out to be exactly the thing a woman like Lucille would pull from her pocket.

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Dora Dueck, *Return Stroke: Essays and Memoir*.
Winnipeg, CMU Press, 2022. Pp. 228. Softcover, \$20.

In the essay "Burial grounds" in *Return Stroke: Essays and Memoirs*, Dora Dueck comments that while "reading the biography of P.K. Page [she] noticed that [Page] ordered half her ashes to her late husband's Ontario burial spot and half to the sea off Victoria" (69). Dueck's reference to Page and to Sandra Djwa's biography, *Journey with No Maps: A Life of P.K. Page* (2012), is no surprise.

Like Page, Dueck found herself looking back and writing about a privileged sojourn as a Canadian in the southern hemisphere, exploring in the process the complexities of memory, memoir, and colonialism. The division of Page's ashes evokes the phenomenon of existing in two places at the same time, a sensation often experienced by those living through migrations and relocations. In making the decision of whether to settle in Paraguay or Canada, Dueck declares that "here, or there, we would miss the other" (218).

Return Stroke includes ten essays, three of which are published here for the first time, and "In the house of my pilgrimage," a 135-page memoir of Dueck's time in Paraguay in the early 1980s. The narrator/subject of "In the house of my pilgrimage," in recalling her life in "the Mission" in the Paraguayan Chaco town of Yalve Sanga, records landscapes, weather, motherhood, childbirth, social interactions, and domestic duties, as well as a determination to carve out time and space for research and writing. The pages of this memoir include retrospective insight into the writer's outsider status, the process of memoir writing, and inequities in the Chaco society. In "Changing places," chapter 7 of the memoir, Dueck wrestles with the troubling memory of a short road trip in which an Indigenous Enlhet family rode in the box of the truck while the Duecks, "the Patron, boss, and his family" (127), rode in the cab. Musing about her personal, familial, and community's nomadism and migrations, Dueck articulates, through her own experience, the drive to settle, the yearning for home, and the complication of home for those who leave it (127–130). Returning to the Enlhet people, she concludes the chapter by emphasizing similarities rather than grappling with differences in her observation that the Indigenous and Mennonite communities "[shared] common ground for a while, touching the shape of one another before our feet shifted on the ground" (131).

The short chapter or section titles of "In the house of my pilgrimage," occurring where they fall rather than on new pages, fail to provide strong visual or organizational divisions of the material. The anonymizing of the Dueck children, explained as "un-naming" half-way through the memoir (154), is understandable to a degree, but awkward. Yet these are minor distractions. The memoir is engaging and provides connections with the essays that precede it, thus reinforcing the volume's focus on life narratives, particularly those of aging and death. The memoir includes Dueck's description of the twenty-page *Lebensgeschichte* (life story) she encouraged her mother-in-law to write and her observation that when her mother-in-law "reached the last months of Papa's life, . . . like a river reaching the sea, the detail widened, the emotion thickened" (199). References to her father-in-law's diaries (153) take the reader back to

the fourth essay in the collection, "Return stroke," originally published in 2016, which introduces the author's search for the life of the father-in-law she never knew. The most personal and wrenching of the essays is the previously unpublished "As he lay dying," an account of the final sixteen days of the life of Helmut Dueck, Dora Dueck's husband, to whom the volume is dedicated. Through this focus on remembering and recording lives, the separate essays take on a sense of a unified collection.

Dueck includes her research sources in her essays, drawing readers into other writers' work and ideas. In "Return stroke," for example, she refers to the work of Hermione Lee, Carolyn G. Heilbrun, and Janet Malcolm as she probes the possibility of writing biography, as well as the ethics of such writing. In "As he lay dying," she brings in the work of Maggie Callanan on listening to "nearing death awareness" (82) and Kathryn Mannix on the process of dying and the breathing patterns involved (86). Dueck draws on these writers as she labours to put the days and events of Helmut's sixteen-day stay in hospice in "order" and "proportion" (85). She yearns for a linear narrative but relinquishes such insistence, concluding the essay by listening to sounds rather than attempting to control experience through words. The heard and unheard ticking of the clock, regular breathing and the absence of breath, stillness and a surprising keening reverberate in the final paragraphs.

While the deliberate pursuit of her father-in-law's life as recounted in "Return stroke" was a success for Dueck, who says she came to know him "as a rounded character, as a person with presence" (47), she concludes the essay by documenting a more profound connection in the form of a "jolt that zigzagged" (48) in a manner similar to the "vivid flash of lightning" in the quotation from *Middlemarch* which serves as the essay's epigraph (33). This flash, instigated by Helmut's comment that his father "used to document the sadness of pigeons," jolts Dueck into relationship with her father-in-law through her realization that they were both compelled to write. She is lit up by the sensation that the two have met not just through her reading of his writings, but through his envisioning of the "future relative or stranger" who would read those pages. Dueck concludes that as "longings and prayers transcend chronology" (48), so too words offered and received can break free from physical time and space.

In this collection of essays and memoir, Dueck honours the written word to which she is devoted, but suggests that words, particularly those that record a human life, point to patterns and relationships that cannot be caught and contained in linear narratives. In

moving and evocative ways, Dora Dueck encourages flashes of timelessness rather than the predictability of conventional plots.

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Sarah Ens, *The World is Mostly Sky*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2020. Pp 112. Softcover, \$17.

Sarah Ens, *Flyway*. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2022. Pp. 120. Softcover, \$18.

The World is Mostly Sky, published by Turnstone in 2020, is the debut poetry collection of Sarah Ens, and is made up of deeply personal reflections of selfhood, as it considers the sky, the realm of halcyon, happiness, and bird. It is, in ways, a prelude to *Flyway*, her second publication with Turnstone in 2022, a long poem that considers the migratory paths of birds and heritage.

The World is Mostly Sky opens with the images of a child losing a deciduous tooth, of a nest and shattered eggs, introducing a vivid recollection of childhood, lost innocence, coming of age, and the attentive observations of speaker and poet. Ens's artful engagement with space, line breaks, enjambments, and short lines in free verse, or the longer lines of prose, offer disclosures of a childhood and community, its silos both literal and metaphorical, and its traditions, set in a "time before condos built up / all around [my] hometown . . . when [I] believed in secrets" (22). The book's second section explores the body as "a house to fail, / to pray in" (37), as the site of the "in-breaking divine" (37), and as the body *within* a body of water, impossible to dive into "without breaching / changed" (43). Ens's closing section proclaims "something has happened to all of us . . . It helps to say it happened, to do this in remembrance. It helps to say: this body, this blood. To say me too, me too" (75).

It is this long poem form that distinguishes this poet's work as her lyric voice soars. "Wuthering: A Comprehensive Field Guide" (written under the influence of *Wuthering Heights*, the poet explains in the notes), unfurls as a meditation of the body, its hush, its youthful awakening, and desires. "You found the body, mid-dive, trying for lake," she writes. "The body lets you think you found it yourself" (52). Embodiment is privileged as the site of perception/reality. Heritage, God, myth, popular culture, art, and death are all made particular through experience as the speaker learns "to sit still with what it is in me and forgive myself for it" (62), as she asks questions,