

There are more debatable monsters in *Autobiography of Red*; one of the titles recommended by Shetland Library readers. I hadn't read any of Anne Carson's work prior to the PP project and I'm very grateful to have been guided to this one.

It's a story in verse and I encourage you not to be put off by the book's fragmented structure. The heart of the book is a sequence of poems, girded all about with "APPENDICES" and "INTERVIEWS" with dear-departed Homeric poets.

The big story starts on page 21, introducing the main character, Geryon, as a child. In fact, as a small red monster with wings, which he keeps concealed under a big leather jacket. Geryon is molested by his brother, dotes on his mother, develops a remarkable talent for photography, a fascination with volcanoes and a love-obsession with Herakles.

Carson tells us that Stesichoros completely revolutionised the use of adjectives in poetry. And she stretches and strains language to fill Geryon's character with redness. The characters are extraordinary and yet their speech is totally believable.

It's a fantastic manifesto for Difference, with a really compelling set of characters and all the added extras turn out to be a treat rather than a labour. The thing to do is just let the story drive. It works.

I hope you will continue to explore the Shetland Library Poetry collection.

Illustrations from www.ubu.com/ethno/visuals.html

Poet Partner is a three year project involving the Scottish Poetry Library, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Shetland Arts and the Shetland Library.

Jen Hadfield, author of *Almanacs* and *Nigh No Place* came to Shetland for a writing residency in 2005 and stayed. In 2009 she was awarded the TS Eliot Prize.

The library has invested in this special collection but also has a huge amount of other poetry in stock. Please browse our catalogue and ask for any books you don't see on the shelf.

www.shetland-library.gov.uk

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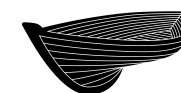
Poet Partner



2007-2008-2009

Leaflet Two

Jen Hadfield,
Shetland Library's Poet Partner,
chose a special collection of poetry for
our stock in 2007. Here she writes
about some more of her choices



Shetland arts



Shetland Library

Wilderness and Wild Beasts

*One barb on the wire catches a tuft of wind.
This is the only thing that happens for miles.*
Three Movements for the Wind, Crozier

*“Now I can see how much I have knocked about in
the world, on tankers, freighters, third world buses,
beat-up cars, by foot and by jumbo jet - midnight
bars and dawn mosques...”*

Introduction to The Gary Snyder Reader

Gary Snyder was a contemporary of Jack Kerouac and I remember it dawning on me as I read *Dharma Bums* for the first time that Kerouac's character Japhy Ryder was "based on" Snyder.

Ray Smith encounters Ryder through the Beat Scene in California. Ryder is a Buddhist scholar, devoting his days to study and translation of Japanese poetry and scripture; Ryder guides Ray through a rigorous and life-changing hike up Matterhorn Mountain, encourages him to take work as a fire lookout in the Cascade Mountains and in return Ray and his Beat pals interrupt Ryder's work for bouts of wine, poetry and tantric love. Great book! I recommend it...mainly because it's great to read *Dharma Bums* and this anthology of Snyder's work side by side, flitting into the real-life diaries of his seasons working as a fire lookout in the Skagit region, on Sourdough Mountain.

Snyder's environmental and buddhist morality and his concerns about the consequences of population expansion and urban domination, drive his poetry, his travel, his lectures and essays.

“I for one will keep working for wildness day by day.”

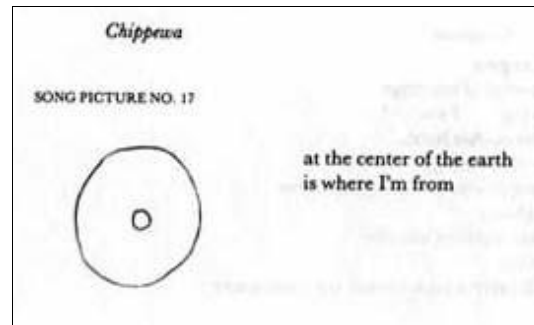
The Etiquette of Freedom

I specially like the pieces from *The Practice of the Wild*. Challenging as they are, Snyder's tone is thankfully neither bossy or dry. His writing is

accessible and descriptive and, as so often seems to be the case with the Canadian and American poets, the themes may be huge, but to read him is to hear him speak.

Snyder urges us not to lose track of our literary heritage - our stories, songs, myths and rituals - and in the same vein it's a pleasure to recommend Jerome Rothenberg, whose anthology *Technicians of the Sacred* throws us amidst the hunting-gardening-fighting-mating-tripping-labouring-partying-doctoring-dreaming-praying-naming-life-and-death stories of the world.

So Jovian and mighty is this book it's really difficult to find a summary for it. It's the whole world between covers...vast, nasty, exquisite, hilarious, proud, hedonistic, delicate...and full of opportunities for readers to add their own voices to the massed choir inside.



Here's some play you can have with the book.

page 205. Mide Songs and Picture Stories:
Illustrate the lines with your own scribbled line-drawings

page 368. The Descriptions of King Lent
Invent a character and describe them in a list poem copying the form of this one; where every line begins the same and the rhythm of repetition drives your writing.

page 97. Nottamun Town.
Does this remind you of anything? Write a contradictory nonsense poem.

The physical, intellectual and spiritual

I made a generalisation about North American writers...that it is important to them that their poetry is as close to their speech as possible. The same is true, I think, of Lorna Crozier's work; and she also fits in nicely to another big generalisation. The North American writers that I've encountered are more than usually aware of the natural world, our own status as mammals and of the relationship between the physical and intellectual. It just appears to me there are more honest BODIES in these poets' work ... and in the case of Whetstone the subject matter is the significance of what we feed ourselves; what we cook; how we handle illness; how we handle loss; how we handle weather—drought, for example, when, as it does in Alberta, it threatens our livelihood.

In Ice-Fog *“It breathes a frosty haze/on my pants and jacket as if I'm growing fur.”*

And, writing about Louis Armstrong in Leaving Home -

“I love to think about that trout sandwich he carried/in his pocket and later ate, the wheels spinning him/into fame”

I really like Lorna Crozier. As Gary Snyder, she seems to value wildness and wilderness. Neither of them seem to think that wildness is the opposite of civilisation.

“We can appreciate the elegance of the forces that shape life and the world, that have shaped every line of our bodies - teeth and nails, nipples and eyebrows.”

Snyder, The Etiquette of Freedom

And likewise, in Brushes Made from Animal Hair
*“The badger clamped the broken branch
between his teeth.*

*The boy gripped the other end,
afraid to let go”*