

again. Not to say it's that good a book, either. It's not.

And *The Dying Animal* is even worse, what with the usual themes of young men in their early 20s who are writers, usually in Manhattan, who have father complexes and are out to score some pseudo-intellectual nookie, and are having a hard time because they're REALLY Philip Roth, and he's boring. And more pretentious than Norman Mailer. An example from the current book:

The seat next to the most beautiful girl in the world – and it's empty. So you take it. But now isn't then, and it'll never be calm. It'll never be peaceful. I was worried about her walking around in that blouse. Peel off her jacket, and there is the blouse. Peel off the blouse, and there is perfection. A young man will find her and take her away. And from me, who fired up her senses, who gave her her stature, who was the catalyst to her emancipation and prepared her for him.

Does that make you want to go out and buy and actually READ this thing? "Peel off the blouse, and there is perfection. A young man will find her and take her away."

Well, I would do the honors, pal, did she look like the cover, which is by Modigliani, who is All the Rage in New York these days, and yesterday too, I think, when the publisher wanted to suggest that in the pages of this novel elderly professors will find their way to muted and furtive gratification, one way or another.

But she doesn't. Because Philip Roth couldn't draw a rounded female character to save his ass. All you get is the work of a rich, boring pompadour, for whom contrived artifice passes for emotion – and trite, impotent emotion at that.

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In Company: Robert Creeley's Collaborations.
Amy Cappellazzo & Elizabeth Licata, editors.
University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
108 pages. \$24.95 (paperback).

Reviewed by Jeffery Beam

Robert Creeley, a poet with an innate capacity to seamlessly integrate intelligence in metaphor has throughout his notable career practiced collaboration with visual artists of equal stature. Those fortunate enough to see this recent traveling exhibition experienced firsthand the "locus (Creeley) inhabits and investigates, a way for him to explore the shifting relationship between 'I' and 'he,' the subjective and the objective." This comment from John Yau's essay resonates throughout the other essays in the catalog as well as in the beautifully reproduced images from the show.

The catalog, and the show it represents, documents the stunning and exhilarating power of visual, literary,

and publishing arts to create layers of experience and dialogs between modes of communication. Artists such as Georg Baselitz, Francesco Clemente, Jim Dine, Robert Indiana, R.B. Kitaj, Marisol, Susan Rothenberg, and Elsa Dorfman have joined Creeley in these experiments with form and image. The catalog includes statements from the artists that elucidate Creeley's sensitivity, thoughtfulness, and genius as a poet and collaborator, and appreciator and "reader" of visual language.

The reproductions and documentary photos (including superb early photographs of Creeley by frequent *Oyster Boy* contributor, the poet, publisher, photographer, and essayist Jonathan Williams) offer stimulating looks at the show's lovely, engaging, technically adventurous, and oftentimes tender works. As integral as the conversations are between Creeley's words and the visual works, each stands alone as challenging and compelling works of art: "If I had thought / one moment / to reorganize life / as a particular pattern, / to outwit distance, depth, / felt dark was myself / and looked out to me, I / presumed. It grew by itself." (from *Life & Death*, a collaboration with Francesco Clemente)

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The Love-Artist.

Jane Alison.

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001.
242 pages. \$23.00 (hardback).

Reviewed by Larry Johnson

If, like me, you've always wanted to write a novel about Ovid in exile and were not quite satisfied with David Malouf's wonderfully written but rather bleak version in *An Imaginary Life*, then *The Love-Artist* may be for you. True, it's not about Ovid's exile but the events leading up to it, but those are things we've always wanted to know as well, and Jane Alison's first novel portrays a set of unlikely but delicious circumstances that one at times wishes were true. Better that Ovid should be exiled for these events (which do turn out to involve "a poem and an error") than for Augustus' mere hypocritical displeasure with *The Art of Love*.

The novel opens with Ovid's arrest and departure toward exile and the remainder is flashback until the epilogue. Having finished his great work *Metamorphoses*, Rome's most famous and fashionable poet decides to get out of the City for awhile and let the poem's effect settle on critics and emperor alike. He chooses to holiday in a rather unlikely but exciting place: the east coast of the Black Sea, not far from the fabulous land of Colchis, home of the witch Medea. Even the backward natives here have heard of his fame, especially a beautiful young herbalist and spellcaster, Xenia. The two meet amid luscious natural beauty and Xenia, whose one wish