

ing an unfeeling father. Familiarly strange, rising up like thoughts, the episodes range from home to abroad, from interior landscapes to the Sistine Chapel. Only occasionally overly sentimental, they are always sincere and appropriately earnest.

Rosenberg's skill rests in a courage to face her darkest thoughts and resist easy answers:

Rain is falling, and running down the windows like tears. I resent such easy pathetic fallacies, but I find they are practically instinctive. And those wavy wet lines, uncertain as unraveled yarn or bleeding ink, look to me like mirror images of the ones on my own face.

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*Amor Eterno: Eleven Lessons in Love.*  
Patricia Preciado Martin.  
University of Arizona Press, 2000.  
110 pages. \$24.95 (hardback).

*Reviewed by Lindsay Martell*

Patricia Preciado Martin's collection of short stories is a light, earnest invitation. With a relaxed hand, Martin leads the reader through a careful exploration of desperate love, suffering, and penetrating disillusionment. Created as lyrical vignettes, *Amor Eterno* is a compact balance of voices that sing the praises of both contemporary and traditional notions of love, *familia* and the cascades of an evolving Mexican American heritage.

We are served 11 stories of love. Some are written as letters, which are then cautiously flushed out to reveal a more streamlined story. Martin's grasp of infusing poetry and prose is particularly engaging; neither seems halting or forced. The stories that work best as those filled with rich, easy humor. Martin's sheer grasp of storytelling in the traditional sense is decidedly strong, if not somewhat moody:

What was the sorrow of his aged uncle and antepasados was the delight of the young boys and a source of high adventure and discovery: the surrounding high walls and enclosures, bullet-pocketed and eroding. The crumbling chapel with the fallen hand-hewn beams that still smelled of smoke when it rained. The empty alter niches now harboring lists of colored birds. The creaky, termite-ridden stairs to the empty bell-tower, which had been plucked of its cast-iron bell and gaped like a toothless mouth. The weed-strewn family cemetery where the tumbled tombstones with exotic names scattered like so many spilled dominoes and where ancestors silently claimed their final meager heritage.

The constant revolution of sound and character works deftly in some places, especially in Martin's pictorial descriptions of Doña Eloisa; a devoted mother whose

pilgrimages to la Mision de San Xavier in the hopes that her son returns from the Korean War unscathed, remain fluid and earnest. The depiction of such characters as Lola in "Forbidden Love," while colorful, may leave readers somewhat restless:

Our prima Lola! A California Home-Girl! A teenager! Knowledgeable. Daring. Streetwise. The keeper of the keys to the kingdom of romance: boys and cars, flirting and dating, drive-in movies, lovers' lanes, making-out and French kissing, and the sensual sandy beaches of the California beaches we could only fantasize about.

Martin has successfully molded color and language in *Amor Eterno*. Readers can embrace the steadfast structure of her writing style and all its subtle intricacies. The stories are palatable diversions; each one acting a steady bridge to the next, allowing us to breathe in 11 nurturing lessons of love.

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*The Body Artist.*  
Don DeLillo.  
Simon & Schuster, 2001.  
124 pages. \$22.00 (hardback).

*Reviewed by Kevin McGowin*

The ironic thing about people's negative or lukewarm criticism of DeLillo's *The Body Artist* is that for almost 30 years the author has satirized the very culture that now takes umbrage at being more or less left out of it. The blatant ironies are more subtle here; yet work on a small canvas is no less riveting. DeLillo is simply not writing what people are used to from him: the lists in *White Noise* or the allusions to and indictments of popular American culture in his other works.

Now over 60, DeLillo has the insight to see that the Culture has caught up now, in Real Time, with his parodic treatment of middle-class suburban America. This feeling is present also in *Underworld*, set at mid-20th century, but it's far too easy to see a short novel as a reaction against the tendency toward the *Bleak House*-length tomes of five years ago. It is another voice entirely, a Voice that DeLillo has flirted with in all his novels, but never allowed to become dominant.

*The Body Artist* is every bit as surreal as "vintage" DeLillo and, if you wish, as apocalyptic. Yet it is rather pointless to compare the work with *White Noise* or *Mao II* or even *Underworld*. It is the story of the most profound apocalypse: the internal, personal one. DeLillo shares a certain vector of vision with Carver, Cheever, and even Kafka in this sense, yet the work is still distinctly his own.

*The Body Artist* has been criticized for DeLillo's "sen-

timentality.” Let’s make an important distinction – the characters feel deeply, edging toward insanity in their own isolation. DeLillo, however, pulls off an astounding flight of horrible, lyrical beauty in this book, a down-right HAUNTING fluidity of descriptive prose that is so masterful it makes *White Noise* look like the abrasive sarcasm of an insufferable child.

Don DeLillo is, quite honestly, a much better writer than I ever really thought he was. He was clever and witty, sometimes profound – but rarely empathetic. And with *The Body Artist*, he enters another aspect of humanity, a place where what we fear the most doesn’t come from without but from within: not the fear of death, but the reality of it. He goes for not the brain but the soul. And he arrives. No, I doubt you’ll be entertained – you’ll be emotionally pummeled by this book’s implications.

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*Rain Mirror.*

Michael McClure.

New Directions, 1999.

112 pages. \$13.95 (paperback).

*Reviewed by J.W. Bonner*

Michael McClure’s latest collection divides into two long sequences: a collection of 50+ haiku and a selection of offshoots of earlier poems, graftings that have been transplanted into new poetic terrains. These poems dive rather than walk across the page, vertical plumbings as opposed to standard horizontal renderings. Apropos of this Beat poet, most lines are only a beat, a syllable. Although a little does go a long way in many of these poems, too much doesn’t go far enough, finally.

Given the space limitations, let me point to the collection’s strengths. The opening sequence of haiku share the Japanese origins in a focus on “seasons and special subjects,” but an owl might be incongruously – but aptly, given McClure’s home near San Francisco – paired with garbage cans. Petals, flowers, insects, and animals figure in these poems and vie for space with cars, bandaids, helicopters, and phones. The haiku are presented as vertical strips, and they are stripped to syllables and letters. The tone of the poems is often informal (“HEY, IT’S ALL CON / SCIOUSNESS”). Nonetheless, at their best, fine images abound. For example, look at how McClure depicts the rim of light seeping into closed eyes: of “NOTH / ING / NESS / of intelligence; / silver / sunlight / through / closed / eyelids.” Capillary brightness gleams in a center of blackness, darkness – just as with mental drift or the incipient stages of sleep the mind actively continues along certain pathways, even when they are not directed. Nice comparisons include pine bough tips with monkey fin-

gers or a sunlit butterfly with a light show at the Filmore – both psychedelic.

The poems in the second section depict a kind of “Reason / whose details are confusion.” Written in the aftermath of personal trials (“after meltdown”), these poems, too, extend down the page. At their best, the images are plain and domestic: “Scarlet lipstick all over / the frail cobalt cup / fine / as the mind / of a moth.” But then the jarring smashing of the poetic prettiness at the poem’s conclusion: “A handful of excrement smeared / on a wall.”

McClure thinks of images as big as God’s “HUGE FACE,” but the best of these “SMALL” poems have “a soul / like an opal.” McClure wisely quotes Whitehead’s statement, which applies equally to the writing of (good) poems: “We think in generalities but we live / in detail.” The best of these poems are replete with the details of daily living.

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*Of Moment.*

Jonathan Greene.

Gnomon Press, 1998.

61 pages. \$10.50 (paperback).

*Reviewed by Robert West*

Jonathan Greene’s *Of Moment* contains 51 new poems – with an average length of less than six lines. In its commitment to the miniature, it recalls Fred Chappell’s *C*; however, whereas Chappell grounds his book in the Latin epigram, *Of Moment* is rooted in East Asian models, as its two translations from haiku suggest. Time and again Greene succeeds in producing something not merely brief, but exquisite. Take this untitled poem:

I leave mowing at dusk  
with swallows criss-  
crossing the air

like a ship  
blessed by dolphin escort  
I dock the tractor in the shed.

The actual image and the accompanying simile are remarkable enough, but notice the way the poems right-hand margin zigzags, mirroring the swallows’ diving. And notice too the other reversals: the rhythmic as well as visual doubling back of “with swallows criss- / crossing,” the switch from the trochaic fifth line to the iambic sixth as the tractor (and poem) withdraws and parks. Greene does more than describe the scene – he virtually enacts it.

These poems can seem deceptively simple; on rereading them, you usually discover you missed something