



**Treating A Sick Animal: Flash and Micro Fictions. Timothy Gager. (Cervena Barva Press PO BOX 44035 W. Somerville, Mass. 02144) \$15. <http://www.cervenabarvapress.com>**

*Review by Doug Holder*

The noted author Steve Almond once stated that Timothy Gager was one of his favorite local writers. I can see why. Gager shares Almond's sense of irony, razor sharp wit, he deftly explores the ying and yang of relationships and this capricious thing we call "Love."

This book titled, "Treating a Sick Animal: Flash and Micro Fictions" published by Somerville's Cervena Barva Press, is a collection of flash fiction; very short pieces, where like poetry every word counts. Gager is an ac-

complished poet and this serves him well in this genre. In his piece "Why couples have pets," a cat provides a mirror to a relationship that has lost its flame:

"Today she's late for work. Late too, with other things. Damn cat can't be found. It's nine o'clock and she has decided to get rid of it. That decision upsets me, but mistakes happen—that time we made love under a blanket at Ocean City, plush towel in her mouth so the beach couldn't hear.

Now she is late and she runs for the cat."

And in his lead story "How to Care for a Sick Animal" Gager uses the conceit of a man treated like a dog (literally) by his girlfriend and a rather clueless veterinarian. Here, the girlfriend wishes the hapless man a fond farewell before he is put to sleep; their relationship relegated to its final resting place...or it was great fun, but hey, it was just one of those things, just one of those fabulous flings:

"After Dr. Jones left, Gracie approaches the table. "So how are you doing boy? I'm sorry that it has to end this way. There's nothing I can do for you. Awwww...don't look at me with those sad eyes. It'll be ok. I just want you to know that I'm not going to go out and get a new dog anytime soon,ok? Oh, Todd you were my best friend and I loved you, but can't you see I need to do this?" Helen entered the room with various snout sized Halothane masks and Gracie gave Todd a hug goodbye."

Don't expect Gager to get sentimental on you--he is too much of a realist for that. But behind the dark Bukowski bombast there is still a glimmer-- that light of the hopeful romantic.

Highly Recommended