

Presa 14, spring 2011 Tributes to Hugh Fox



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Hugh Fox never stops writing. Right now he has four novels out: “Depths and Dragons” (Skylight Press in the U.K), “The Lord Said Unto Satan” (Post Mortem Press), (On Line) – ‘In the Beginning” (Muse it Up Press in Canada) and “Reunion” by Luminous Press. In addition, he’s released a Journal of Archeological musings called “Immortal Jaguar” (Skylight Press.)

As stated in the introduction to this tribute issue to Fox, Hugh has been the longtime editor of Ghost Dance and exerted his influence as a founder of COSMEP and The Pushcart Prize. He has written books about Charles Bukowski and Lyn Lifshin and his reviews in the Small Press Review outnumber those of any other reviewer.

For this issue of Presa, Hugh was asked to select favorite poems, including Fox’s 180 line collaboration with Eric Greinke “Beyond Our Control.” It’s currently under nomination for a Rhysling Award. The issue also includes poems and memoirs about and to Hugh from grateful friends and fellow writers: Kostelanetz, Greinke, Lifshin, Luschei, Lockie, Smith and O’Hearn. Also included in the issue are poems by 30 other poets various subjects.

Word play, striking juxtaposition, musings on the nature of the universe and consciousness, the emblematic presence of mysterious gods – all pervade Fox’s verse. A time and space traveler, he leaps from situation to situation, from cultural purview to personal episode like an acrobat. In Section 11 of “Apotheosis of Olde Towne” he writes:

“playspace
eye to eye under glass grass,
wayspace,
chess,
chat
color upflung - - pipe in birds!” p. 5

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Broken up into four jagged stanzas, Hugh begins and ends with Unity: "green, the curved eye and the curved mind."

In a self portrait poem, "Who am I?" from Once, Fox asserts:

"Who am I?
musico loco/crazy musician
vagabond wind,
fuchsia feathers,
...
Buddha snapping up
from dreams...
the snake twisting of
dragon king Melech-Moloch
God." p 6

Having been raised staunchly Irish Catholic and then realizing his Jewish lineage, Hugh uncovers and seemingly vaunts many spiritual icons in his poems to form a rich cosmos in which many spirits are at play.

He is equally comfortable in the urbane setting of the Allerton Hotel in Chicago where he would encounter "Le petite Gourmet where there was this blonde piano player who'd always play "Clair de Lune" when I'd come in after the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on Saturday nights...." This was years before and now Fox, rummaging around for old ghosts, finds at the Drake "a beautiful naked-armed harpist (statistically impossible!) playing "Clair de Lune" in the lounge." Such snapshot moments of coincidence or synchronicity also activate Fox's poetry.

He pays tributes to relics collected on journeys in his Amsterdam ranch house in "Flea Markets."

"I buy a bunch of Mochica masks
of Hercules, me the only one in the world who
knows that's what they are, my whole house a
flea market museum..." p 8

Comparing it to the garage sale flea markets inhabited by "Koreans and Japanese, Indonesians, Hindus from India" where one finds "a wood carved statue of dancing Siva, a marble carving of Ganesha, the elephant God, my whole sanity/identity revolving around the walls of my rooms that are more me than me these days."

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In a whoosh of hedonistic pleasure, Fox, in "Everything" from *Approaching/Acercando*, runs down the everything of that moment.

"...NOW, NOW, NOW, slender reed legs
that arrive at almost full-time
rapturous friction, take Crack, dance
in the street, the voices in the internal Caverns
always whispering higher heels, shorter skirts..."

All, it seems the enigmatic feminine presence in humanity "without thinking about death or its equivalents or alternatives." p. 10

In the brilliant collaboration with Greinke, Fox ebbs and flows in each stanza with a longing for "now defunct deities" and "greasy abandoned keyboards and feeble mountain peaks." p 11. He writes:

"Trying to slide back into pre-everything
but slipping instead into black holes of
memory, Polish sausaging and
potato-pancaking through memorial
masquerades that mimic lost moments..." p 12

And in the final stanza:

"The spirits of our ancestors waft around us
haunt our whys and why-nots, wherefores and where-nexts,
remind us that soul music is in us all." p. 15

There is an interlude of poems by Ellaraine Locke, John Mervin, Guy R. Beining and one I'm particularly fond of by Mike Spikes which ends:

"when you are away from me
I am
too." p. 24

Juxtaposed nicely are two by David Bloomberg and Dean Phelps: "My Dream of Being Pregnant Was" and "The Child Inside," respectively.

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Then the small press luminaries weigh in on the unique and magnetic character of Hugh Fox, part mystical unicorn, part work horse.

"No one else reviewed as much small-press produce as Benny. If only because he acknowledged books and writers ignored everywhere else. Some small press should produce a CD-ROM reprinting those reviews not only to respect him but our movement." - Richard Kostelanetz

Eric Greinke pens one for Hugh:

"With blue eyes
Why extinguish
Your distinguished self
In the muddy mire?
I turned my back
On poetry, but
Poetry wouldn't turn
Its back on me,
Nor on you, Hugh." p. 37

The notoriously prolific Lyn Lifshin, in a tribute titled "Amazing" gives gracious thanks to Fox for years of friendship and support as a poet:

"It is hard to believe that the book he wrote about me, "Lyn Lifshin, A Critical Study" was published in 1985. I've always been amazed at the imaginative, perceptive plunges he keeps taking into my work. If I ever feel down about my writing or discouraged, his words always make me feel better. He is one of the sweetest, warmest people I know." p. 38

Ellaraine Lockie pens a five page travelogue about a week with Hugh, who she dubs Foxy, well worth reading and Jared Smith puts one in called, "Do We Not" with the refrain "We get older, do we not?" in three stanzas replete with many beautiful nature images – a serenade to vintage aging and the eyes' inscrutable ability to see on through it all." Viva Hugh Fox!

Lo Galluccio is the author of "Hot Rain," "Sarasota VII," and "Terrible Baubles."