

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

**A CHILD TURNS BACK TO WAVE,
POETRY OF LOST PLACES**
by Peter Neil Carroll,
The Institute for the Study of American
Popular Culture,
Hollywood, CA 90028,
www.americanpopularculture.com,
79 pp., 2012, \$15.

Review by Barbara Bialick

This book, *A CHILD TURNS BACK TO WAVE, POETRY OF LOST PLACES*, which inspired a Hollywood publisher of Americana, is a visual image-filled volume which pivots on the theme of degradation and the fading away of any sign of certain Native Americans and others. This visceral knowledge came from traveling extensively in Western America where he observed how people, buildings, roads, vegetation and rocks crumbled or disappeared under other layers through time, both naturally as well as from the holocaust against Native Americans in the Old West's history. The ensuing metaphors leave the poet with a deep feeling of loss as he continually came upon remnants of almost magical appeal.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen in a list poem called "Names":

*"Names bleed through dusty brick./HEN & BEN/THE SHOE MEN/
MARTINGS DEPARTMENT STORE/Here for you yesterday/here for you
today/
And gone last week. Names/that ran the river towns/...Windows in deserted
shops post/names of jobless girls who stuck around,/got pregnant, chilled on
pills, fell in/and out of love, and too young died..."*

In "Waiting for the Moon" he writes, "...Time then to enter shaman country —/gypsum dunes white as snowfall, wilderness of yucca and violet roses/bedded on crests slippery as the sea./The full moon's expected, first/night after the longest day. How/the ancients marked this celestial/ coincidence is lost. I'm on my own..."

As Crazy Horse of the Lakota said, "The Great Spirit gave us this country/as a home. You had yours."

The author of this collection, Peter Neil Carroll, has written about place in America as both a historian and a poet. This is his second poetry collection. He is also the author of *RIVERBORNE: A MISSISSIPPI REQUIEM*. He has published in many journals such as *Pacific Review*, *New Mexico Poetry Review* and *Monterey Poetry Review*. He has taught creative writing at the University of San Francisco and history at Stanford University.

He hosted "Booktalk" on Pacifica Radio and edited the *San Francisco Review of Books*. Born in New York City, he lives in Belmont, California.

