

*On the Legacy of Maxine Hong Kingston: The Mulhouse Book* comes with a DVD comprising scenes from the official opening and roundtables, the highlight of which is the reading from *The Fifth Book of Peace* by Maxine Hong Kingston, her husband Earll Kingston and Buff Parry. Readers might be familiar with Buff Parry as a character in *The Fifth Book of Peace* (Louis D. Buffy Perry), but to the great surprise of Kingston as well as the conference organizers, Parry appeared at the Mulhouse conference giving corporeal form to the fact-fiction complex. Unfortunately, the quality of the DVD is not very good, but it brings the words on the page alive in a manner befitting Kingston's concern for the translation of the oral into writing.

This book is the seventh volume in the Lit Verlag series *Contributions to Asian American Literature*, which is dedicated to emphasizing "the exploding plurality of approaches possible in Asian American studies today" as the series editors Rocío G. Davis and Sämi Ludwig put it in their mission statement. The present publication bears out this aim very well and we can only hope to see more of its kind in the future.

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**Sandra Lee Kleppe. *The Poetry of Raymond Carver. Against the Current* Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014. xi, 186 pages. ISBN 978-1-4724-1167-9.**

Sandra Lee Kleppe's study of selected poems by Raymond Carver (1938-1988) argues that important trends can be identified in Carver's poetry production. These include his preoccupation with observation, an overlapping of his poetry and short story careers, the images of water and fish as recurring structural devices, his use of the elegy genre, and the intersection of his poems with medical humanities.

Better known for his short stories, Raymond Carver has attracted more critical attention for his prose than his poetry. Kleppe's study addresses this imbalance. Divided into three parts, *The Poetry of Raymond Carver* explores selected poems within their historical and contemporary contexts. Kleppe adopts the term "autopoetics" to describe the relationship between Carver's poetry and its rich environment of past and present influences. Autopoetics focuses on the larger field of human culture rather than on divisions between such fields as literature and science. "Against the Current" in the title refers to the multiple levels on which Carver's poems operate.

The poem “The Current” forms a kind of mantra for the study, as it includes tropes of observation, e.g. “sight” and “blindness”, creation (images of fish impregnate the brain and the poet and “give birth to the poem”), and opposition to the pressures of the current that the poet is impelled to resist if he is to continue writing. Part of this resistance is Carver’s attempt to go against the current and become acknowledged both as a poet and a short story writer. Autopoetics, argues Kleppe, reveals the full extent of the poet’s paradoxical position in embracing realism, which assumes that language can authentically reproduce aspects of life in an age of skepticism about the connections between language and the world.

A common theme in Carver’s poetry is the movement backwards and forwards between different worlds. While his poems tell stories, his stories are as sparing as his poems. The two genres renew each other as Carver switched from the one to the other, leaving, as Kleppe notes, “traces of each on the other”. It is this mutual generic influence that is examined in the first chapter of Part I. The second chapter of Part I explores how three poems eventually grew into three short stories, “Why Don’t You Dance,” “Black-bird Pie,” and “Mother.”

Part II examines selected poems in their own right, as self-referential creations. Particularly interesting is Chapter 4, “Water and Fish,” which explores how water and fishing (important parts of Carver’s life), create self-referential structures that run like a current throughout Carver’s poems and are reminiscent of paintings by his good friend, Alfredo Arreguin, whose “Ray’s Ghost Fish” adorns the front cover of Kleppe’s study. Water appears as rivers, lakes, streams, rain and salt water. Part III focuses on Carver’s use of the elegy, reflecting on the competition between poets to create a Western canon of elegy as well as on how the death or loss of a fellow poet becomes another poet’s gain.

Each part is introduced by a preface that connects the two chapters in each part. The preface provides an overview of the larger issues with which Carver is engaging and identifies some of the features of the dynamic “edge-of-chaos” environment in which the poems were produced. The first chapter of each part also describes the historical antecedents of the literary traditions that Carver channels: the age-old figure of the voyeur in literature (Part I); classical love poem conventions (Part II), and the elegy (Part III). Kleppe links Carver’s use of the elegy genre with his terminal illness (he had cancer). In the conclusion, she suggests that Carver’s work can be seen as a bridge between the fields of literature and medicine.

Part II is particularly important for those who wish to understand the source of Carver's energy and inspiration. It reminds the reader that on his deathbed, Carver was compiling his final book, *A New Path to the Waterfall* (this was published posthumously in 1989). The long search for the path to the waterfall is a metaphor of Carver's quest to discover and re-discover the source of his creative energy.

*The Poetry of Raymond Carver. Against the Current* is a scholarly work, innovative in its autopoetical approach to Carver's poetry, methodically annotated and containing a detailed biography and index. Kleppe has the rare talent of being able to express complex thoughts in accessible language. While the study does not set out to provide interpretations of individual poems, its analyses of such poems as "The Current," "The Brass Ring," "Woman Bathing," "For Semra, With Martial Vigor," and "Quiet Nights" are as illuminating as they are subtle. Sandra Lee Kleppe enables readers to understand and appreciate Carver's gratitude for his life as he expressed this in his final poem, "Late Fragment." Here he asks to be "beloved on this earth." Kleppe's study enables the reader not only to understand Carver's poems, but also to love them.

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