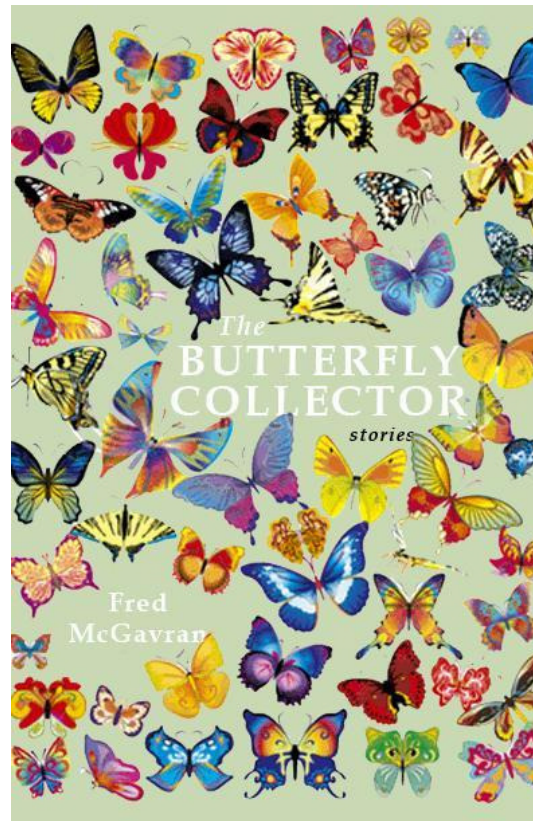


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The Write Place At the Write Time Book Review- Hot off the Presses



The Butterfly Collector Cover Image

The Write Place At the Write Time Book Review presents: *The Butterfly Collector* by Fred McGavran

Author bio: Fred McGavran graduated from Kenyon College and served as an officer in the Navy. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he practices law with the Cincinnati, Ohio firm of Frost Brown Todd LLC. He won the 2007 Writers Digest Short Story Contest in the horror category, the 2004 John Reid/Tom Howard Contest, the 2003 Raymond Carver Award from Humboldt State University, and has placed in a number of other literary and screenwriting contests. His stories have appeared in Pearl Magazine, Rosebud, Gray's Sporting Journal, Dreams & Visions, Storyglossia, Third Order, and other literary magazines and e-zines. His wife Liz is a decorator. Their older daughter Sarah is working on a Ph.D in art history at Washington University in St. Louis and their younger daughter Marian is a realtor in San Diego.

For further information on this book, please click on the cover image~

REVIEW~

In this powerful short-story collection debut, Fred McGavran displays a capacity for imagery and emotional prowess that belies his newly blossoming fiction-writer career. His is a fine contemporary voice to join modern

literature. Be they beautiful or visceral, his visual symbols shock and enchant by turns as themes of mid-life transformation, marriage, justice and aging are brought to the forefront for a no-holes-barred analysis.

There are surreal elements which often graphically expound on the featured themes taking the fiction to extremes that approach the experimental genre. Often throughout the book, the stories begin trending in one direction and suddenly veer off of the paved road toward the unexpected to leave a lasting impression. This is a particularly prevalent strength in the raw tales of the "The Historian", "The Deer", and "Memories of a Family Vacation". It seems a well-woven talent of the author to expose commonly held truths and perceptions by filtering them through a drastically different light. Readers don't soon forget the surprising under-layers of these stories, nor their well-portrayed, satirical disillusionment.

The only instances where switching gears surpassed this strength, turning it into a slightly confused situation of a lost story thread were the latter halves of "The Resurrection of Nelson Campbell", "A Gracious Voice", and "Breaking Cover". Each story conceptually fascinating but rather uncertain, it seemed, of what they wanted to convey most.

That said, an intriguing facet throughout the book is not only the switch of paths, but also the switch of how the same themes are handled in different ways. Tenderly handling the theme of aging, the softly ethereal tale of "The Butterfly Collector" profoundly takes the reader down the slippery slope from reality to the dark hall of Alzheimer's disease. "Lillian" follows a similar bent with the voice of the narrator being unassuming, yet starkly honest enough to encourage our deepest feelings for the elderly who suffer from dementia and Alzheimer's. "The Forgiveness of Edwin Watkins" dispels societal stereotypes and makes a powerful point which is often overlooked. Elements of this style which place humanity back into the human condition are found also in the gentleness of "The Beautician".

Two stories which, in their extreme but deftly crafted resolutions, elicit a bit of dark humor are "Two Cures for Phantom Limb" and "A Friend of Bill Gillen".

Taken through different periods in time, different stages of life and circumstances, the author industriously takes on a great deal of varied content; the result is a diverse world between the book covers seen through discerning eyes that holds the reader's attention from beginning to end. One can imagine great literary discussion and debates over the vast array of preserved butterflies McGavran presents, each with words on their wings.

FEATURED EXCERPT~

Memories of a Family Vacation

I didn't want to go to the lake again; it was Lillian's idea; her family has a place beside the bay. For them it held wonderful memories: how their grandfather won it in a poker game; the drives up from Chicago in the forties and fifties; freighters passing through the sinking sun on the horizon. For me it brought flashbacks to our honeymoon, a hellish week when the septic tank overflowed daily, and we only had Lillian's cooking to tide us through. Worst were her father's monologues about the Second World War, where he acted out his hatred for the human race as second in command of a destroyer.

Night after night, inflamed by bourbon and darkness, he gathered the family around him on the huge porch overlooking the bay. As children yawned and adults reached for another drink, he told how they caught the submarine on the surface near the Carolina coast in early 1942. They holed the conning tower with first shot, and as they turned for another firing run, their searchlight caught the terrified Germans pouring out the hatches and diving into the sea.

In the second before the Captain could order them to slow to pick up the survivors, Lillian's father shouted, "Away depth charges!" "The Captain was a sucker for a sob story," the old man snickered. "Should have seen those Nazi bastards' faces when they saw what I'd done."

Screaming, the Germans tried to swim out of the way in the seconds before the depth charges exploded. Then the sea erupted around them like boils, killing them all from concussion. The destroyer slowed, and they hauled the bodies aboard with boat hooks.

"Looked like they were sleeping," he always said softly at the end to create a sense of complicity with his listeners.

After being stripped of their uniforms and any body parts that might interest weapons designers, they were buried in an under utilized government cemetery on Nags Head. I had to listen to that story for two weeks every summer for thirty-five years. When he finally died, I looked forward to the silence as much as to Lillian's inheritance. I was disappointed in both...



Pulleys and Locomotion Cover Image

**The Write Place at the Write Time Book Review presents:
Pulleys and Locomotion: A Book of Poems by Rachel Galvin**

Author Bio: Rachel Galvin is a graduate student in Comparative Literature at Princeton University, where she studies twentieth century poetry. She has been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and Hedgebrook. An essay on Octavio Paz appears in the current issue of *World Literature Today*, and her poems and translations appear in journals such as *Gulf Coast*, *Spinning Jenny*, *Paintbrush*, *Del Sol Review*, and *Nimrod*. She recently completed a translation of Raymond Queneau's *Courir les rues* and is now translating Cesar Vallejo's *Poemas Humanos*. Her first book of poems, *Of Pulleys & Locomotion*, is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press.

For further information on this book please click on the cover image~

REVIEW~

In likeness to the Salvador Dali painting, *The Persistence of Memory* which seemingly reflects upon Einstein's theory of time being relative rather than fixed, (Salvador Dalí, *La Conquête de l'Irrationnel* (Paris: Éditions surréalistes, 1935), p. 25.) poet Rachel Galvin eloquently experiments with ideas of perception through her poems which evoke surrealist images.

In the way that Kafka meant for a certain ambiguity to be imposed upon the reader, a certain challenge of interpretation, Galvin's works entreat the same level of imagination. "And now, dear readers, it is your turn to retell these tales in your own words," she writes. Vague passages before each set of poems extend themselves like hands, beckoning the reader in. It is difficult to maintain steadiness of foot, but nothing ventured, nothing gained so one enters... the guide, satisfied that the reader has come this far, lets go of their hand and vanishes with a smile. Or so it feels in this realm of surreal, folk and industrial poetry.

"Tzimtzum", "How to Build Your Own Zoetrope" and "When All Speech Has

Ceased Within", are each examples on the theme of perception whether through transformation or a personal filter for one's self and others. "Looking for Hibiscus", "Twice-Salted Seas" and the two "After the Eclipse..." poems are searching out roots through personal history. The reader stays outside or lingers in doorways, glimpsing the poet's world, but uncertain of whether they're meant to be allowed inside.

The village atmospheres, industrial sites and modern city settings seem to serve as a backdrop theme of movement through time- gathering what we can of the past, making the most of it in the present to know where to go in the future.

The ingenuity and rhythm give the artfully unique feeling of travel by train in a distant country. It is both intriguing and yet at times unaccessible; it's being a passenger seeing the unusual, wanting to learn more, but passing it by without being able to get out, look around and explore further. The often technical, rare and somewhat verbose language intensifies this feeling of distance or removal. In style, narration and imagery however, the volume shines through in sophistication with all of the exciting grandeur reminiscent of the invention and innovation present in the early twentieth century. Befitting of its title, it has sure momentum.

FEATURED EXCERPT~

Village of Pulleys & Locomotion

I trail my suitcase along the platform,
the weight of the air
at the small of my back.

A man used to arrive from afar,
give each child a whistle, and parade them
through the village, whistling.

What is this fury of forms, boarding
trains, handing out whistles to children?
Dear rubber valve, dear spigot—if

this world is the only world,
Anaximander will go on shaking his sieve,
persistently sifting with an ear to the ignition—

striker of matches, your scent of cloves, your fire
rides the circumference and gyrates at the center.
There is the vermiform signature: you may eat

of this tree. Now the glorious propinquity, now
the rupture. A village elder goes on debating
with his god. Who can tell if he receives a reply?

In the old stories, if you whistled,
the light would come to you
out of curiosity.

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