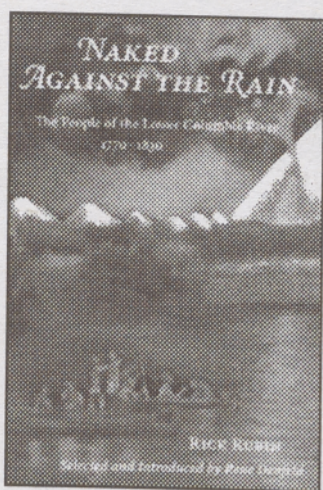


Two books set in the Pacific Northwest from the DIY shelf



Naked Against the Rain, The People of the Lower Columbia River, 1770-1830, by Rick Rubin, Second Edition, Introduction by Rene Denfeld

BY DOUGLAS SPANGLE
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

DIY literature, though easy enough to produce, is difficult to get to the public. Once it is written, someone must publish it. Corporate empire-building has brought us to the pass that about three media conglomerates control not only production, but also distribution of books. Smaller presses only have the resources to publish a few titles annually. If an author lacks the connections to get a publisher, self-publishing is the only recourse.

In 1999, Portland writer Rick Rubin fulfilled a labor of love when he wrote and published *Naked Against the Rain, The People of the Lower Columbia River, 1770-1830*, an intriguing and thoroughly researched history of the Native people who lived here before they were decimated by disease and the settlers' lust for land. He brought a unique perspective to the story, bringing anthropology and folklore to bear, unlike a conventional white-written chronicle. He published it in a small edition under his own imprint. And there it stayed. Rubin died a couple of years ago.

The book fell into the hands of Rene Denfeld, another Portland writer, who had a connection with a medium-size press, Pharos Editions, which specializes in high-quality reprints, and brought out a second, larger edition. Denfeld wrote a new introduction, and so this readable and valuable book has gotten a new life, with much better circulation than before. The point is that if Rubin had not believed enough in his sweetheart project to design and publish it in the first place, it wouldn't exist at all. Now the book has outlived its author. I reviewed the first publication and

recommended it then; I feel the same now, but twice as much.

Per Fagereng faced a similar problem, once his novel, *Jack Moloney's Century*, was written, and this author, with some computer skills, used Amazon.com's CreateSpace to design and produce a book (and list it on Amazon's website in both hard copy and electronic forms.)

Fagereng, a long-time Portland contrarian, labor specialist, radio host and jack-of-all-trades, is a born storyteller who has written a very readable novel. It's a bit rough about the edges, but has narrative force and character depth to burn. If this had been written in the 50s or 60s, it would have been perfect fare for a second-tier paperback house specializing in science fiction. It's an alternate/near-future story, and it bears certain resemblances to Walter M. Miller's under-appreciated classic *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

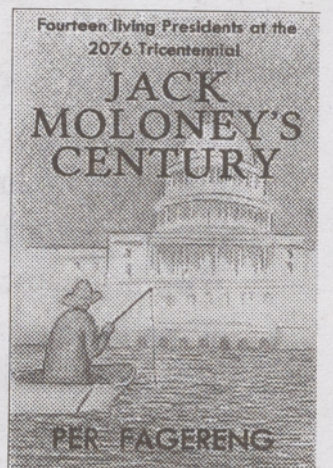
In Fagereng's tale, Jack Moloney, born about 1980, leaves his violence-ridden home of Northern Ireland and signs up to work on a cruise liner, then jumps ship in New York. He meets Barbara, a Long Island girl who is itching to leave her home and family, and they both set out, like a latter-day Lewis and Clark, on what turns out to be a multi-generational continent-spanning trek. They wind up first in rural Michigan, where they start a homestead operation, farming, stilling, playing music, doing whatever comes to hand. By this time, the country has started to come apart at the seams: oil reserves have begun to run out, and technology drops a notch or two. They make do, utilizing alternative forms of energy. They band together with a few other hardy individuals: a recusant priest, a Guatemalan

refugee, among others, for mutual defense. Many of them, including Jack, are undocumented.

Finally, tired of long winters, bandits and corporatists who hunger for land they use for plantations worked by convicts and unemployed digit-pushers, this multi-generational expedition sets off west in a collection of makeshift vehicles.

The disintegration of the United States has seriously set in. The former superhighways are ruins, haunted by former big city-dwellers and escaped inmates. The Midwest is in a state of chaos. A Mormon empire sprawls to the foot of the Rockies. A secessionist area that calls itself Aztlan occupies the former Southwest. Los Angeles is in open revolt against the United States and under siege by a loyalist San Diego. The actual United States is limited to a few areas on the East and West Coasts, and politicians are forced to make a long journey back to Washington D.C., which has largely reverted to swamp. A small collection of corrupt and feckless politicians swap terms in the White House. Jack's band of refugees is hoping to get to Portland, where an old friend of his has settled.

Portland, which in Fagereng's world is esteemed as the best surviving place, comprises a network of Dignity Villages where brokerages and tech firms once rose, their former workforce mostly laboring as farmhands. Jack's son Patrick saws and pries up chunks of the concrete airport runway to use for building. Good beer is still to be had, Powells Books is still in business. KBOO is still on the air. DIY wins in his DIY novel, which for all its rough edges charms the reader.



Jack Moloney's Century, by Per Fagereng

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