

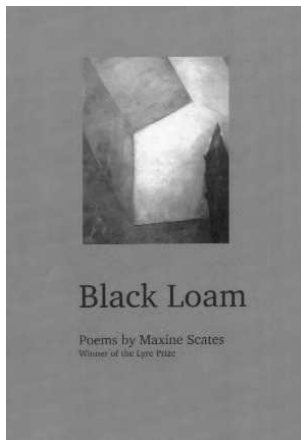
poetry

SOULMAKING

Black Loam by Maxine Scates. Cherry Grove Collections, 2005. Paperback. **Finalist: 2005 Oregon Book Award for Poetry.**

Maxine Scates' poems are personal, poignant recollections of lived family histories and hard-won moments when truth speaks clearly. Scates grounds her poems in the immediacy of the body and what it knows. I love the understated feelings in "Yellow Dog":

"and then in the woods
you closed your eyes,
is she gone? I looked up
the last day of August, leaves drifting
already, your head simply dropped
and we carried you, the ebbing warm weight,
the big paws I touched last."



My favorite poem, one which I've heard Scates read twice, is "The Mothers," a lengthy, layered work about the complexity of mother-daughter relationships — all that was, all that will never be — and the understanding "how if being born is forgetting, living a life is remembering all you've forgotten."

Cleaning "Mother's Closet" involves ambivalent feelings about what is left behind and what is taken away as well as the resonance of objects:

"I've found nothing I want but the purple mache mask
I made in the fourth grade. I like its yellow eyes.
She looks at each magazine I remove, saving
every word about my brother, the coach. He's sixty
and a long dead mouse has eaten the laces
of his baby shoes. I want order. I say
I'm old myself, I've started throwing things away.
I'm lying. I've kept everything she's ever given me."

Some poems in this collection are about wounding, healing and forgiving, coming into the light, as in the last verses of "Forgiveness":

"One spring on that road
I crossed the train tracks,
I saw how the weeds lay down in the heat,
how the wild roses
tangled with the blackberry vines.
I knew I had come to love the stand of oaks
whose shape I could see even late in the evening.

They rise through me some morning when I wake.
Rise through me
like the herons from the fields
With unencumbered grace."

The poet lives in Eugene among us with her husband Bill Cadbury, and frequently reads poems at Tsunami Books and other venues here and in Portland. May she long walk with unencumbered grace.

— Lois Wadsworth

WORLD TRAVELS

Surgeonfish by Ingrid Wendt. Word Tech Editions, 2005. Paperback, \$17.

Ingrid Wendt's new collection of poems includes those inspired by various travels to the American Southwest, the Pacific Northwest, the icy North of Europe, the sunny South of Europe, the Middle East and the banks of many rivers, lakes, gulfs and oceans of the world. Some of my favorites come from the trip with her husband, poet Ralph Salisbury, to Norway. Her themes range from regard for people and places to concern for the planet and questions of peace and war. She is a passionate poet, never more grounded and alive than in her poems of nature.

So here is a verse or two from an ecstatic poem about the Edenic beauty of the land of fjords and the Northern Lights, "Epithalamion From Norway":

"Friends,
how long have we thought of the Garden
as jungle? As warm?
Friends, I have dived in these waters:
cobalt blue of the fjord and a silent chorus of sei
iridescent
around me, patient
angels, watchful. Here
the future begins."

Wendt walks through the lands she visits. She requires the first-person experience of natural beauty. Here, at the Snake River, is her encounter with a "Porcupine at Dusk":

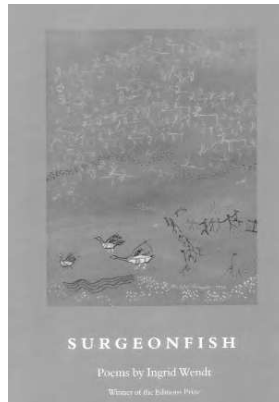
"Out of the bunch grass
out of the cheat grass
a bunch of grass waddles
my way.
Quill-tips bleached by winter four
inches down: crown of glory dark
at the roots: a halo
catching the sun's
final song"

And in romantic Italy, a November day spent walking through a town on Lake Como, where an old woman shopkeeper tells them about St. Martin, "the soldier who split his cape in two, for the beggar." From "St. Martin's Day, Lago di Como":

"blue light etching the air, each leaf on each olive
tree
silver and shining: grass on the hillside full to
bursting with green, gold, and the lake flat up
against
mountains: each atom of empty space tangible,
sharp as the bite into apples."

You can find this lovely book locally. I cannot imagine a lovelier gift for travelers of the world or for those of us who wish to see the world with a poet's eyes.

— Lois Wadsworth



SISTERHOOD

I Saw Us in a Painting by Sandy Jensen. Cover painting, *Magical Healing*, by Cheryl Long. Walking Bird Press, 2005. Paperback, \$7.98.

Teacher, poet and loving sibling, local poet Sandy Jensen, who lives in Eugene with her husband, poet Peter Jensen, collaborated with her sister, artist Cheryl Long, on the structure of this collection of poems. Each element from Long's cover painting — butterfly, dove, bone necklace, pomegranate, sliced mango and quilted star — contains one set of poems.

In "Song for My Father" (from Butterfly) the poet reaches past "mountains of memory" to the final passage:

"Under the murmur of trouble and thunder,
under wildfires' crackle and spark,
under the ground of roots and time,
his song of 'East Side, West Side,'
stills the nearing dark."

Jensen brings elegance to the quiet, moving picture of "Canoeist" (from Dove) at sunset:

"Canoe in timeless lift and glide parts
the lily-rooted reeds. Last sun
pours vermillion on the waters. Listen.
Out of silence the loon calls lovely,
lovely. Dip and swing of paddles. Arrow-
perfect bow slits the silver satin
of the lake."

And love for the sensual art of poetry itself inspires the poet to take us into the kitchen at "Berrytime" (from A Plate of Mango Slices):

"Your poems came in a hot season
when all I had to do was stand and pour
blackberry shade and black juice
into my gold glass jar."

When berrytime comes around
My tongue is alive with liquid heat:
Dappled shade of the harvest to words
Leaves my mouth purpled with longing."

And for her gal pal, Kat Chinn, and the many meals they have shared together, Sandy writes another food poem, "Yellow Curry"

"The world is like this: a bowl of yellow curry,
hot and strange, swimming
with tasty creatures of sea and land.
We eat them up in coconut milk and broth,
Slurping noodles, smearing lips,
Tongues, and tall tales
With tiger turmeric.
Like candlelight the curry gently burns
All the way down to darkness."

An imaginative, Northwest poet of the tangible and intangible pleasures of life, Sandy Jensen offers readers meaningful glimpses from her keen observations of the natural world and her inner thoughts. — Lois Wadsworth

