

your social occasions.

If you're black, you can finally get paid for the years of service you've been providing for free. ayo even provides tips for retroactive billing.

A Portland-based conceptual and performance artist, ayo frequently incorporates social critique into her work. She invites her audience to step out of their comfort zone and engage in dialogue about why race is still such a wrenching issue in our country. Past exhibits include panhandling for reparations and creation of the rent-a-negro.com website that preceded the book.

In ayo's words: "Due to ... exhausting out-put of education to white people, and taking large amounts of racism and racial ignorance into my system on a daily basis, I called 'who else,' my mom. She and I talked for a long while about the exhaustion and how I wasn't getting payback from the interactions I was having, yet I felt obligated to attend certain events... I wasn't getting networking (or even entertainment) out of these experiences. Mom's response: 'Well, sure, you can't just be everyone's rent-a-negro.'

"This made me relax. I decided I could stick it out with the several white people in my life and continue to assist them on their paths of learning ... but that everyone else would be put on a fee-for-services basis ... for me this was a mindset. But as the concept sat in my mind for a while, it naturally evolved into art ... it's sparked some great discussions, which is the whole point of my work in general: dialogue."

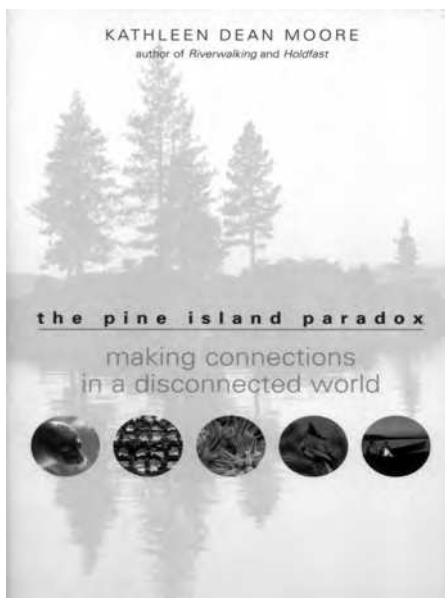
Ayo challenges white people to read the book and not see themselves in at least a small part. She described favorite moments during her book tour that involved white people interacting, cutting her off, declaring, "This (racism) is for us to work on."

I asked ayo what she hoped people would take away with them after reading her book.

"Mostly questions about themselves," she replied. "The sense of where they see themselves in the book and what they want to do about that. It does posit the idea that an individual can make a difference. It's up to us how long this continues ... any market

depends on the consumer, so if people want to keep doing it, it's going to keep happening."

During ayo's book tour, according to a reviewer on Amazon.com, "people interacted, talked, hugged, laughed, cried, squirmed and searched out the issue of race together in the same small book-stores and city streets ... people actually got upset in public about it. That is moving this society forward." — Mary Meredith Drew



takes us deeply into the howl of a wolf, explaining how, in music, the first two mournful notes of a wolf howl are known as an augmented fourth, a sound that for centuries has been used by composers to express bottomless longing. In medieval Europe, she writes, the sound was considered the "diabolus in musica," the devil's chord, "so powerful it could grab a parishioner, drag him to his knees and pull him, scraping on the

paving stones, straight to hell."

And there are the more biology-based factoids, sometimes provided by her husband, Frank, such as how bats' wings work, or why the ears of some owls are uneven, or how tiny tree frogs create their resonant songs.

Moore arranged her book in three sections, each challenging a misconception of the Western worldview: that human beings are separate from (and superior to) nature; that individual well-being can be disconnected from the ecological systems that sustain us; and that there is a distinction between the sacred and the mundane.

The essays I enjoyed the most are those in which she takes us on a journey, whether into the web of family and social connections that enrich her or the minute lives of creatures living just below the surface of the water or a leaf. She makes discoveries, such as the antics of a thieving scrub jay that has brought her much joy.

Occasionally she climbs onto the philosopher's soapbox, and although I agree with much of what she says, the lecture is not why I have come to this book. I have come to be transported and enchanted, both by her writing and what she writes about. At her best Moore does exactly that. — Alice Tallmadge

SCIENCE AND ART

The Pine Island Paradox by Kathleen Dean Moore. Milkweed Editions, 2004. Hardcover. \$20. Paperback, \$14.95. **Winner of the 2005 Oregon Book Award for Creative Nonfiction.**

As demonstrated by her three books of nature essays, OSU philosophy professor Kathleen Dean Moore is more than willing to wade about in the muck and wonder of the earth in order to attach her lofty ideas to roots, waves and even decaying mice, if that's what has turned up. In her third book, she takes us to many of her favorite haunts, including the Alaskan wilderness island where she, her husband and their family have vacationed for years. She introduces us to its nights and silences, animal sounds, thrumming rain and to the reveries they engender.

One of the joys of reading Moore is the science and art she brings to her writing. In one essay she traces a quote from the *Book of Job* through several editions of the Bible to find the true sense of the phrase "songs in the night." In "The Augmented Fourth," she

CHALLENGES

The Gods Drink Whiskey: Stumbling Toward Enlightenment in the Land of the Tattered Buddha by Stephen T. Asma. HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. Hardcover, \$24.95.

When Stephen Asma, professor of Buddhism at Chicago's Columbia College, was invited to teach a graduate seminar on Buddhist philosophy at the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, he decided to write about this surreal experience. In his preface, he asks readers to approach the story "with an interest in challenging your views rather than just mirroring and confirming them."

In Southeast Asia, "The idea of human rights is not really a foundational building block," Asma writes. "This is the creepy underbelly of cultures that are oriented more toward the collective than the individual." In a movement for human rights in the flesh trade, he writes, many women's groups favor "disentangling the amoral sex work of consenting older prostitutes, which they want to decriminalize, from the morally disgusting phenomenon of child exploitation, which they want prosecuted to a greater extent."

Asma is alarmed by what he calls "supernatural Buddhism," a blending of Khmer folk religion with the faith he practices and teaches, which he sees as "largely consistent with contemporary science." When an epidemic in northeastern Cambodia is brought under control, village leaders believe that their sacrifices and ceremonies, not antibiotics administered by the World Health Organization, are responsible. "In this health-related example, supernatural spirituality seems ... dark, witless, and infantile," he writes.

Living in Phnom Penh means reflecting on the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, at whose hands almost a third of the people of Cambodia lost their lives. Asma presents monk Tep Vong's controversial perspective that "the Cambodian people may have deserved Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge

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