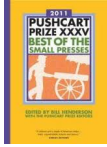


Pushcart Prize XXXV, Best of the Small Presses



Enjoy discovering new authors? Or finding new work by favorite ones? Or just checking out what kind of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction shorts the vibrant American small press movement is publishing? This anthology, edited by Bill Henderson, manages to seek out the best new work in American literature year after year.

It opens with a short story by Anthony Doerr titled "The River Nemunas." It's about a 15-year-old with no parents and a poodle named *Mishap*. Because he has no relatives in the U.S., the boy is sent to live in his grandfather's homeland of Lithuania. For the first time, the teenager sees a place that in the past meant no more to him than a pink spot on the world map. It's a lovely story about an orphan finding a new home after a tragedy. Another interesting story is the funny "Frost Mountain Picnic Massacre" by Seth Fried; it depicts a Revolutionary War Massacre reenactment that turns out badly.

In "Munro Country," a nonfiction memoir, Minnesota-born author Cheryl Strayed describes meeting her literary hero and weeping. "Munro Country" is the name critics have used to describe Huron County, the southwestern part of Ontario where many folks are poor and lead a hardscrabble life. This part of Canada has been immortalized by Alice Munro. Meeting the famous Munro taught this young author how she needed to claim a specific place and make it her own through writing.

The Pushcart never stints on poetry, and the XXXV is no exception. There's new work by Linda Gregerson, Michael Collier, Stephen Dunn, Jean Valentine, and Patty Seyburn whose poem begins, "When I was little, I thought the moon was Europe."

If your attention span is compromised during this hectic holiday season, pick up a copy of Pushcart XXXV. Similar books that concentrate on one genre only are the Best American Poetry, 2011 (edited by David Lehman) and Best American Short Stories, 2011 (edited by Geraldine Brooks).

Posted by Dory L. on December 12, 2011

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