

# CROW REVIEWS

Discussion, Essays, And Analysis

= Menu =



« “Seriously Dangerous”, Helen Losse

Elevators: Rena Rosenwasser »

## “Handing The Cask”, by John Swain

Please follow and like us:



*“Handing The Cask”, poetry by John Swain, published by erbacce press, UK. Reviewed for Full Of Crow by Elynn Alexander.*

I keep saying that John Swain is a poet to watch, and I have published as much of his poetry as I could get my hands on including “Burnt Palmistry” and “The Feathered Masks” as well as including two of his poems when I guest edited the September 2011 issue of Graffiti Kolkata Broadside. His work has been nominated for awards and prizes and has appeared in Red Fez, part of our small press family.

The late Nobius Black of Calliope Nerve stated that John Swain “paints the world in words.” Sandy Benitez of Flutter Press said that “he has only begun to enchant us.” And I couldn’t agree more.

John Swain is a humble, reluctant artist who seems to shy away from the trappings of ambition and persona and somehow remains above all of that. It is this tendency that is part of his charm because it is refreshing, his work speaks for itself, and it reaches you without imposing. You want to let it in. In my opinion, some arrogance would be well deserved- but you won’t find it. When I first started reading his work, I couldn’t help but wonder: where the hell has this guy been? But every poet has their time, and here’s hoping that we continue to hear more from him.

His latest collection from UK-based erbacce press, *Handing The Cask*, is an assemblage of poems, many have appeared online but you will still want to get the book because you will likely revisit them, as I do. Swain’s vibe is introspective, thoughtful, romantic, surreal, an exertion of unique descriptions and oddly coupled terms that together bridge the physical world with the ethereal:

*Rain became another queen of the peak,  
she tore at her breast to strengthen the young.*

(Binding of Branches)

*Twilight grants relief to the person I am seldom  
like dogs emerge from burrows to scavenge  
the elusive paths illuminated by absence,  
I held a weathered limb to stable my ranging.*

(The Offered Garments)

*The frozen river kept the skeletons of horses  
in a pyramid diamond  
I knelt in my wound like the drowned rider*

(Over the Broken Room)

Nature, rendered in her primal environment, beautiful and cruel, qualities found in the writings of one of my favorites, Annie Dillard. Swain is less apart from the physical world as he floats peripherally in transcendent verse, as he is rooted in the firmament of the landscape as it truly is, acknowledged and honored:

*I turn the loose earth  
searching the murmurs for presence.*

(Epitaph Seven Years Past)

Nature is not apart, but of this realm, creates the constituents and mesh of her dominion:

*The crows rejoice in their roost at the calm darkening.* (Invocation on the Gravel)

### **Scattering of Migrations**

*At scattering of migrations  
these blue movements flood  
as every bird becomes the sky,*

*as every fish becomes a wave.*

*We rain*

*lit into the unceasing horizon*

*where sunset halves the world*

*in silhouette of man and woman.*

The transient nature of physicality, and shared consciousness of mortality:

*I was glad*

*my reflection vanished*

(Queen Anne's Lace)

### **Inheritance**

*I fear for the unborn*

*and fear for the wild,*

*all that passed between us*

*will drift away.*

*And as glass beads fall*

*from around your neck,*

*this fear is the extent*

*of our natural inheritance.*

*Handing the Cask* is available now from [erbacce](#), [information here](#).

« “Seriously Dangerous”, Helen Losse

Elevators: Rena Rosenwasser »

## What We're Reading



## What We're Reading

Crumbling Utopian Pipedream, Scott Wozniak

Cleveland Wall's "Primer"

"Bulletproof", by Wolfgang Carstens

"Fireball", by Charles Joseph

"This Same Small Town In Each Of Us", by Wanda Morrow Clevenger

“Stay Afloat Inside”, by Cord Moreski

Aad de Gids Reviews “Body Voices” by Kevin Reid

The Non-Herein, Michael McAloran

“Desecrations” by Howie Good

“The Horizontal Poet” by Jan Steckel

Metamorphic Winters: A review of Confessions by Marcus Reichert

On Crow Reviews- Interview By Karen Lillis

“White Vases” by John Swain

“Dinosaur Ditch” by Tim Murray

Watch The Doors As They Close, Karen Lillis

Elevators: Rena Rosenwasser

“Handing The Cask”, by John Swain

“Seriously Dangerous”, Helen Losse

“All Her Father’s Guns”, James Warner

Sunshine In The Valley, by Kyle Muntz

Somewhere Over The Pachyderm Rainbow

SF Poet Steps Up: Jazzbo Wind

Apostle Rising, by Richard Godwin

This Reality Of Man, by Michael Aaron Casares

Twenty Stories, Kristin Fouquet

“Forked Tongue”, by Craig Sernotti

On “Epigonesia”, by Kane Faucher and Tom Bradley

“Watching The Windows Sleep”, Tantra Bensko

Rummaging In The Attic, by Constance Stadler

Noise Difficulty Flower, by J.D. Nelson

## Categories

Absurdist Fiction

Art Reviews

Asemic Writing

Chapbooks

Crow Reviews

Experimental

Fiction

Guest Reviews

[Novels/Novellas](#)

[On Reviews And Analysis](#)

[Poetic Prose](#)

[Poetry](#)

[Uncategorized](#)

[What We're Reading](#)

## Contact

Contact The Editor, Elynn Alexander, at: [poetry@fullofcrow.com](mailto:poetry@fullofcrow.com) [www.elynnalexander.com](http://www.elynnalexander.com)

## Archives By Month

Select Month 

## Contributors

[Elynn Alexander \(Lynn\)](#)

[Elynn Alexander- Facebook Page](#)

[Lynn's Blog- Essential Industry](#)

[Michael J. Solender](#)

[Paul Cormman-Roberts](#)

[Serena M. Wilcox](#)

## Full Of Crow

[Full Of Crow Blog: News, Events, Projects, Small Press](#)

[Full Of Crow Fiction](#)

[Full of Crow Poetry](#)

[Full Of Crow Poetry On Facebook](#)

[Full Of Crow Press On Facebook](#)

[MiCrow Flash](#)

[On The Wing](#)

## Review Sites

[Big Bridge](#)

[Lynn's Blog- Essential Industry](#)

[Marcus Speh](#)

[Red Fez](#)

## Social Media

[Elynn Alexander on Instagram](#)

[Elynn Alexander- Facebook Page](#)

[Elynn Alexander: Twitter](#)

[Fashion For Collapse- You Tube](#)

[Full Of Crow Poetry On Facebook](#)

[Full Of Crow Press On Facebook](#)

[Full Of Crow Press on Instagram](#)

[Full Of Crow Press On Twitter](#)

## Pages

[About Contributors](#)

[About Our “Reviews”](#)

[About Requests](#)

*Crow Reviews is a section of Full Of Crow Online, produced by Full Of Crow Press And Distribution. 2009-2013.*

Crow Reviews | Powered by Mantra & WordPress.