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The Write Place At the Write Time Book Review- Hot off the Presses

**The Write Place At the Write Time Book Review presents:
Private Worlds: A Revised Atlas by Scott E. Green**

Author bio: Scott E. Green has been active as a poet in the science fiction/fantasy/horror genres. His work has been in both newsstand and small press markets for over 35 years. Aside from doing numerous readings at science fiction/fantasy/horror conventions he has done readings at more mundane locations including the Library of Congress and the Boston Public Library.

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REVIEW~

Poet Scott E. Green brings us to new frontiers in his latest book, *Private Worlds: A Revised Atlas*, which is an expanded edition of his original poetry collection first published in 1985. The concept behind this collection of poems and haikus is that they are each a reflection on the artistic atmospheres of bodies of work from the science fiction, fantasy and horror genres. This new edition features poems which sum up the imaginations or "private worlds" of

actors, authors, filmmakers, artists and other professionals working in the afore-mentioned genres.

It is important to take note of this when confronting the poems as a reader; there are situations where, if you are not familiar with the subject matter that the poem refers to, you feel at a loss to understand its symbolism. The feeling is akin to stumbling upon a private joke, but being left out on its circumstances and significance which might have, once explained, held a pertinent meaning. The remedy to counter this, however, is that many of the works can stand on their own by the perceptive prose of the poet which often resonates with or without a frame of reference.

Green's deep symbolism and his variations between optimism and cynicism are intriguing as they flow throughout the book. Perspectives are ever-changing and fresh as they often are in the real world, in the human condition itself. In the best instances, he has the ability to enrapture in few words. It is a charm worthy of the genres it pays homage to.

Well-known names grace titles such as Stoker, Price, Machen, Disney and Le Guin. Here where frame of reference is clear, there is an added bonus to the prose due to the basis upon which we relate. In the case of fantasy writer, Ursula Le Guin, an excerpt from the piece entitled "Le Guin's World" reads:

"...each path full of danger where treasure is sought,
each path full of treasure where danger is sought."

In a simple, unfettered manner, her fantasy/philosophy signature style is summed up leaving us with an understanding of her enchantment. An example of a piece which deeply resonates with or without knowing frame of reference is entitled, "WILHELM'S WORLD". It compares a woman to a phoenix- a light giving creature not preoccupied, as much of the world is with its own oblivious self-destruction, but rather the miraculous act of creativity and new birth. Another such engaging piece refers to a land of pain which has many roads which bring the traveler toward it and very few roads that can be taken to avoid it.

Amidst the labyrinth of prose, though the reader might have to work for it at times, the treasures found within are worth the journey. There remain some grammatical errors and typos which mar some of the selections a bit, gaining

more notice as the works are short in length, but with a touch more care and cultivation, it speaks to a wide audience through its core concept which transcends the genres it represents.

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REVIEW~

In his debut novel, *The Gravedigger*, author Ilan Herman ambitiously tackles the significance of the barriers between life and death while attempting to discern the meaning of all that comes in between the first breath and the last. It seems a mighty task for a debuting novelist to shed light upon one of the most timeless, disputed themes of the ages, yet Herman does so with solemnity and care, much like the way in which his protagonist, Adam, digs the graves in the cemetery.

A seemingly resolute figure, Herman's Adam has been working in the cemetery for fifteen years since the death of his beloved Naomi. Constantly being surrounded by the coming and going of life, a contrast highlighted by the growth in his gardens and the finality of the plots he prepares, he seems respectively desensitized to the concept of mortality. He and Noah, the elder British man who manages the cemetery, often speak of philosophy as they watch the souls who come to grieve over the passing of time. Captivating descriptions transport the reader while teasing out their own views on the subject. Herman does this deftly with subtle skill:

"Set in orderly fashion, the graves tried hopelessly to lend comfort and logic to what, over three millennia, the wisest scientists, philosophers, and theologians, diligently writing countless reports, passionately penning numerous essays, feverishly delivering God's sermons, had failed to do, leaving the passage from life to death as incomprehensible as it had appeared to the Neanderthal standing on a wind-swept hill, gazing at the stars and shaking a fist in protest."

Though both Adam and Noah, as alike as they are dissimilar, do not believe in the concept of life after death, a deep guttural groan from the eighteenth century tomb on the grounds threatens the foundations of Adam's beliefs. This one incident catapults dramatic change as Adam's entire way of living is challenged. Speaking with a ghost who has wandered the earth for thousands of years, Adam slips deeper and deeper into the dark realms of the unknown, charged with recording the ghost's story in exchange for the promise of being united with Naomi, the woman he loved, whose untimely passing left a great gap in his life.

The family living on the grounds, Paul, his wife Rebecca and their adorably vivacious five-year old, Rachel, are an intricate part of the familial atmosphere shared by Noah and Adam. Once Adam has knowledge of the ghost's existence, he discovers that Rachel too has been contacted by him. Hiding their secret unwinds the strong ties of friendship and suddenly Adam finds himself at the center of suspicions while the cemetery spirals through its final days as the last two plots wait to be filled.

Suddenly feeling alone and abandoned, Adam finds himself vulnerable to an infatuation with the mysterious Eva, a widow all in black who comes to her late husband's grave. Eva is not all that she seems yet Adam's infatuation gives

way to a kind of erotic obsession. Quite contrary to the gentle, earthy Naomi, Eva is aloof and highly secretive, though she surprisingly wears revealing clothing around Adam to further fuel his yearnings with no intention of fulfilling them. Here it seems strange that a woman who does not intend to seduce him flaunts her overtly described curves as a reward to his hungry eyes, but the auburn-haired temptress might answer us here by saying, "I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way," in true Jessica Rabbit style. Odd as her character might seem, much to her and the author's credit, we're still rooting for her by the end even if we cannot completely justify the reason.

The grave plots filled, the confessions of the temperamental ghost transcribed, Adam arrives at what is both a beginning and an ending. He continues to work as an artist of sorts in the earth, no longer digging spaces in preparation of death but rather for new growth; yet still it is for the purpose of living in a way that someone else cannot. Those behind the veil of the other side continue to appear and advise.

Overall, the well-portrayed setting, three-dimensional cast of memorable characters and often artful descriptions keep the reader's attention, thinking "What's next?!" There are moments in the book where expectations are defied which results sometimes in a refreshing take, other times as seemingly mismatched items that are difficult for the reader to believe. That said, if the reader takes a suspension of disbelief and challenges themselves to a truly unique tale, they are in for a pleasurable ride. Overlooking a few very minor technical aspects of grammar and the term 'tempered' which is worn thin, ready for the grave by the end, the theme of a well-lived life is paramount and the story lingers in the imagination where the reader can see themselves smoking on the front porch of Adam's cabin while the train thunders by at 3am, dredging up deep memories.

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REVIEW~

CJ Golden, author of Tao of the Defiant Woman, tenderly makes her perspectives on Taoism teachings available to young girls in her latest book, Tao Girls Rule! Refreshing, uplifting and light, it addresses the difficult rights of passage of the eleven to fourteen age group with anecdotes of average girls, celebrities, and featured inspirational quotes.

The issues tackled are varied which is beneficial to the young readers who will seek out situations which they can relate to. What is striking about the book is that it nurtures with the wisdom of a woman, but it does not condescend. It is quite balanced in finding an age appropriate voice for its young, modern audience, while not abandoning the learned tones of experience- in essence, the 'having been there, done that, survived that' astuteness. It is loving without the clinical coolness of the many young adult self-help books and it reinforces the themes of a growing girl looking within for answers in a world where she can control her actions and not the actions of others. There is a good deal of levity without trivialization and interactive challenges at the end of the book keep the principles in constant 'flow', much in keeping with the Taoist way. Children and parents can refer to the site,

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