

It is odd how a statement can take hold of you and as tenacious as a terrier you find you can't shake it loose. My bouts with such words are not commonly long term, usually on a matter of a few days. Recently I was dabbling in a book on the subject of hospitality. (Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* Eerdmans 1999) I am fascinated by both the depth of this gift and the scope of its influence. Normally we think of hospitality as serving up a rather quaint and pleasant social pastime. And I suppose that is one way to look at it. But I came across some startlingly different accounts. Words like – profound, rich and life-giving, subversive and countercultural – are not what you would expect when speaking about this human practice. The sentence that caught my attention – the one I couldn't shake – made a surprising claim: "Hospitality is resistance."

How might that be possible? On the surface of things the very opposite seems to be true, hospitality is welcoming and inclusive. The meaning of this important practice is found in the way it engages the power of recognition. In a culture where isolation,

marginalization and dehumanization prevail – the recognition that resides in hospitality bridges the gaps between us, brings affirmation and dispels anonymity. It is in this way that hospitality is resistance.



In an ideal world such resistance would be unnecessary, but we do not live in an ideal world. Our culture and our faith communities are filled with examples of failed

Greenhouse Blues



Greenhouse Blues by Peter Reitsma

recognition. Race, gender, age and religion are social realities that we allow to become barriers that divide us. Hospitality at its best resists the prevailing influences of our fast paced society and "makes room" for the stranger. It resists the shriveling impact on the human spirit that seems common fare in our technological society. So what I mean by resistance is the pushing against the darkness, the despair, the uncertainty, the superficiality, the isolation, the arrogance, the exploitation and whatever else may serve to diminish the rich gift of our humanity and the natural world as our habitat. The resistance is not necessarily a conscious effort but it resides in the very nature of the gesture of hospitality.

Simone Weil wrote "Obedience to the force of gravity. The greatest sin." There is a gravity which may be expressed in social,

As an artist I imagine hope in the face of disaster. I would like to picture the land speak of the healing creator by pointing at economic injustice. The metallic skeletal remains (*As the deer pants for streams of water*, Ps.41:2) is frozen in a position of need and supplication on a melting ice floe. Humanity is altering the landscape. It is now well known that the survival of the caribou in the north is threatened by encroaching oil development and related global warming. Is it possible to give the land a voice? What would we hear and see? I believe, as Victor Burgin put it, "Looking is not indifferent. There can never be any question of 'just looking.'" I see my role as artist to challenge indifference by pointing at the complex truth of a situation through whatever means available, culturally specific metaphors, allusions, references or anything from the sheer weight of collective consciousness.

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continued on page 4

Imago Hosts Canadian Premier of *The Walk*

Going for a walk, ... what could be simpler, what could be more commonplace, what could be more dangerous...

Moses walked into the desert a murderer; walking until he came to the end of himself and the beginning of a new life...

Elijah walking into the wilderness hoping to die, but he's driven onwards until he finds himself inside a cave; he hears a voice...

Augustine . walking in a garden in Milan hearing a child's voice saying "Pick up and read." His whole life, all his successful, troubled, confused life changed by a walk in a garden.

Walks that change lives. Walks that change the world.

Walking: an innocent yet dangerous pastime, a high risk occupation.

So begins *The Walk* – a 27 minute dramatization from the life of William Wilberforce and his history changing meeting with John Newton in the year 1785. The film marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament – the law was passed on March 25, 1807.

Written and directed by Murray Watts and produced by Norman Stone, two seasoned British filmmakers, the work has some Canadian connection. Jeanine Noyes (voice) and Matt Baetz (bass guitar) two



Canadian musicians are included in the film when we hear at the end a moving rendition of *Amazing Grace* sung by Jeanine. Monique Sliedrecht a Canadian visual artist now living in Scotland and working with Murray Watts at Freswick returned to Canada in late February to visit family. Monique had in hand the newly released DVD and asked if Imago might arrange a showing of the film with about a 10 day window we were able to arrange a showing on Thursday March 8th – attended by 120 or so interested viewers. Jeanine and Matt performed accompanied by Fergus Marsh and Ottawa MP John McKay spoke to the gathering about the links between faith and politics. Monique was able to tell us something about the making of the film and plans for its distribution.

It is a different sort of film from the full length feature *Amazing Grace* released this month in Canada. But it is an engaging story about poignant moment in the life of Wm Wilberforce. Through the film we catch a glimpse into what he was thinking and feeling at the time and what moved him to take up the cause of abolition. But it is about more than a moment in history – as it raised again the question of what we will do to address the abiding presence of slavery in our contemporary world. The film is not just a reminder of things past but a call to respond to the present. It is an excellent piece for a large or small gathering and serves to provoke our thinking about matters of vital importance.

We hope soon to have information about the availability of *The Walk* in Canada. imago@rogers.com

Recent additions to the Imago Project list:

Heavenly Night – Kelita, Mississauga

Alpha Fugue – David D. Fowler, Langley BC

Fool's Tongue – Luke Ertman, Edmonton

East to Eden – Jim Collins, Ottawa

News & Events



Conquest of Paradise: Paintings by Wojciech Macherzynski

This artist does not paint individuals – specific persons with their own unique qualities. Instead he paints icons of humanity, figures which transcend private individuality and offer us a vision of much larger scope. They are works inspired by acute sensitivity to the human condition coupled with a strong and sustaining faith. March 10 to 31, 2007, Redeemer University College Art Gallery, 777 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster, Ontario. Monday to Friday 10 am to 6 pm, Saturday 10 am to 4 pm.

Tina Newlove

The work of visual artist Tina Newlove will show at The Williams Mill Gallery in Glen Williams Ontario April 11 to April 29, 2007. Opening Reception: Saturday April 14, 2 to 5 pm. www.tinanewlove.com

Constructed Paintings by Lynne McIlvrde Evans

Easter weekend 2007. April 6 to 9 from 2 to 5 pm daily or call to arrange an appointment. 415 Scugog Line 8, Port Perry, Ontario www.mcilvrde-evans.com



The House As Fortress

The Gallery at Gordon College's Barrington Center for the Arts, Wenham, Mass., presents its new show, an exhibition of twenty prints by Canadian printmaker Dan Steeves that subtly explores the contradictions inherent in the notion of the house as a fortress. *The House as Fortress: The Dichotomy of Symbolic Structure* runs from March 3 to April 13, 2007, and examines how the insulation of home not only protects from outside elements, but may also confine and isolate those inside. The artist's concern for both the structure and the human history of a place – the relationship, the memories, the meaning – is powerful and engaging. Images by Dan Steeves are available in *The Light that Lives in Darkness*, Gaspereau Press, 2006. It is a book which offers a combination of the visual and the



verbal on the subject of place and hope and the difference they make in this life.

www.dansteeves.com

Hilariter in concert: "Welcome the World"

Saturday April 21, 2007, 7:30 pm at Donway Covenant United Church, 230 The Donway West, Toronto. Church phone: 416-444-8444. Hilariter is a chamber choir under the leadership of Andrew Donaldson as Artistic Director. Andrew has a passion for the use of global music and engages a diversity of styles for the performance of sacred music. You may order their music and hear some samples at www.hilariter.ca

Writing Canada: Telling Stories With Soul.

Write! Canada June 14 to 16, 2007, Guelph Ontario. Award-Winning Author Rudy Wiebe is Keynote Speaker at Write! Canada 2007. Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, the ability to tell a compelling story is crucial to your success as a writer. You will be inspired at Write! Canada as one of Canada's most acclaimed writers, Rudy Wiebe, draws on his personal experience and his Christian faith to explore the conference theme. For more information www.thewordguild.com

So The Moon Would Not Be Swallowed

is the brand new poetry chapbook from Brampton poet D.S. Martin, released March 2007 by Rubicon Press of Edmonton. It is a poetic journey with the poet's missionary grandparents to the China they served in between 1923 and 1951. China was in turmoil throughout these years. The constant civil war and power struggles among warlords were only disturbed by the Japanese invasion preceding WWII, and the eventual takeover by the Communists. Every one of the poems in this small collection has appeared in a significant publication either in Canada or the US, such as *Canadian Literature*, *The Cresset*, *The Fiddlehead* or *First Things*. Besides being a poet, D.S. Martin writes about poetry for publications including *Faith Today*, *Books & Culture*, and *Image*, and is the Music Critic for *Christian Week*. *So The Moon Would Not Be Swallowed* is available at his readings throughout the GTA, or directly from his website: www.dsmartin.ca. For information about his upcoming readings in and around the Toronto area see: sothemoonwouldnotbeswallowed.blogspot.com.

Falling: A Wake – A World Premier
Lost and Found Theatre located in Kitchener/Waterloo Ontario recently featured a new play by Gary Kirkham, playwright, actor, improv performer and teacher. The play is a comedy about love, death and moving furniture – loosely based on the Lockerbie air disaster. www.lostandfoundtheatre.ca

The Created Life – A Day Celebrating Creation, Community and Creativity

A Rocha and Vancouver Arts Network will host this event to be held Saturday August 18, 2007, at the A Rocha Field Study Centre in Surrey BC. This is an opportunity for celebration of creation and the creative arts rooted in contemplative Christian spirituality. www.arocha.org 604-542-9022



Ali Matthews – Window Of Light Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON CMC Distribution 2006. Cdn \$17.99

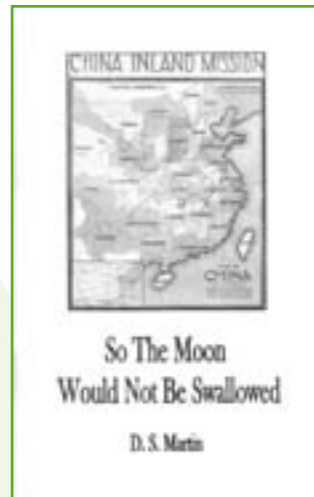
For those unfamiliar with Stratford singer Ali Matthews, *Window Of Light*, will be a pleasant surprise. This well-produced CD tastefully brings together her strong, melodic voice, rich harmonies, the crisp guitar playing of her right-hand man Rick Francis, plus occasional piano, cello, mandolin, and violin – usually

in a band setting. Soft rock dominates on *Window Of Light*, and yet you'll hear jazz, classical, country and folk elements. "Hearts without Scars" sounds like your stereo has skipped over to a Sarah Harmer CD.

She is clearly a gospel singer, and yet writes many songs that will appeal to fans who haven't yet embraced her faith. It isn't until the eighth of seventeen cuts that a song ("You Knew My Name") is obviously about her relationship with God. Gradually, lines such as "Light of the world shine upon us / Light of the world show the way" ("Hear the Rumble") work their way into a listener's consciousness.

She seems to have won over some significant people to her corner – Jim Vallance of Bryan Adams fame, Canadian Celtic music legend Loreena McKennitt, Billboard Magazine's Larry LeBlanc, and Christian Rock pioneer Larry Norman. Her ability to reach both those inside the kingdom, and those watching curiously over the fence, should help her reach the wide audience she deserves.

Review by D.S. Martin,
adapted from *Christian Week*.





Michelangelo's *The Deposition*

also called the *Florentine Pieta* is a strong and compelling work. Unusual in that it depicts four figures rather than the normal two. The detail shown here has one unfinished female figure, the face of Christ and the compassionate visage of Nicodemus. The artist is able to find in the hard reality of the marble a softness of mood and tenderness of spirit that draws in the viewer. The figures are blended together united in the moment of loss and the pain that attends it. The towering figure is that of Nicodemus full of compassion as he takes a last opportunity to give to one he grew to love. The face of Nicodemus is thought to be that of the artist and the sculpture though never completed was intended for the tomb of Michelangelo.

*The imagination whose watchword is "taking pains"
must struggle for survival in a society
whose watchword is "labour-saving"*

Nigel Forde

Resistance...

continued from page 1

moral or spiritual terms, that pushes or pulls us so that at times we feel helpless against its power and resistance seems impossible. Hospitality is one sort of resistance art I think may be another. Irish poet Seamus Heaney, who cites Weil in his essay on *The Redress of Poetry* speaks of how poetry can "place a counter-reality in the scales – a reality that may be only imagined but which nevertheless has weight because it is imagined within the gravitational pull of the actual ..." He uses the metaphor of the balance scales – where one side needs the balancing influence of the other. What Heaney suggests here is that poetry (and surely any other art form) can be engaged to lift the weight of our real life situations and so resist their downward pull. That downward pull is often a paralyzing influence while the resisting presence of art may bring us liberation. But what is crucial is that the art is born out of the forceful swirl of the actual. For Heaney it is not to be a

detached and idealized world that art creates but one which is tempered and shaped by the dynamics of real life. "The redressing effect of poetry comes from its being a glimpsed alternative, a revelation of potential that is denied or constantly threatened by circumstances." (S. Heaney *The Redress of Poetry* p.4)

It is but a short step from speaking of art as redress and resistance to speaking of art as prophetic. I don't wish to champion the idea that the artist must be seen as prophet, but I find the prophetic thread hard to avoid. The artist who creates out of the swirl of the actual is bound to slip into imaginings that have a prophetic ring. It seems to me that artists who walk in the light of Christian faith should find such imaginings unavoidable. It will not do to acquiesce with the prevailing winds of the culture. At the heart of the gospel story is the intent to provide us with an alternative vision that serves both to challenge and to enable us to see beyond the common fare of the surrounding society. If one takes this story seriously it will surely find its way into one's art.

I don't wish to suggest that it is always within the nature of art to be characterized by resistance – though it might be. The point to be made is that art like hospitality is capable of being a countervailing force against so much that bends humanity under its weight. Artists are not simply passive onlookers but agents who have the ability to provoke reflection and generate change. Artists do more than merely reflect the world they live in they invite us to see that world in a different way. It is here that the prophetic imagination may be at work resisting the gravity of prevailing trends opening a window to alternatives which are possible even if not always probable.

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