

ANGEL RUCKUS**AUTHOR:** B. K. Filson**PUBLISHED BY:** Nine Pines Publishing, 1994, 64 pages

B. K. Filson's *Angel Ruckus* is a delight to read, both for its brevity and simplicity, and will appeal to the majority of readers. At a time when the reading of poetry is relegated to the background in favor of the novel and various media offerings such as newspapers and magazines, these poems, which are divided into three sections of equal length, are refreshing as well as inspiring. A cursory glance at the table of contents may give a wrong impression: the poems' titles may appear mundane, but, in fact, they offer a depth of insight into one's modern experience. The angel motif serves as a backdrop to the whole, elevating the poems to the height they deserve. One can easily imagine the angels suggested by the book's title as hovering and chatting above the author's head as he sets down on paper all the impressions he has gathered to date: the books he's read, the travels through Canada he's made, the emotional relationships he's shaped, and the conclusions he's reached. Through his poems, the reader comes to a knowledge of life and its purpose rarely found elsewhere, except perhaps in the holy writings of religious founders.

The author is, if anything, a very literate poet who is very much aware of his tradition. One can find here and there the seeds planted by the likes of Marvell, Blake, Yeats, and Eliot, as well as Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and the American Beat Generation. Add to these his own literary heritage to be found in the writings of Nelligan, Layton, Cohen, and Atwood, just to mention a few. Shaped within the bounds of his national identity, the poems are able to transcend these bounds and soar into the realm of eternal truths. What at first appears to be mundane becomes meaningful. Thanks to many "happy" phrases, the poems become memorable. Consider, for example:

"This poem was not made for television. / It's in black and white" ("Not Made for TV" 38). Or: "I follow my feet in a house of time. / This is how I sculpt my soul, / dream nakedly my trueness. / My spinning keeps getting frozen / like an explosion taken place" ("In my house of time" 24). Or again: "Winter's wet prelude of melting snow / tumbles in off cue / surprising autumn trees' auburn fandangling" ("Mid-October, Saskatoon" 16).

Interestingly enough, late autumn/early winter seem to be the poet's favorite times of the year. There are many allusions to snow, "peregrinations" and the like; even Côte des Neiges in Montréal is given a reference. As the poet writes, "Autumn, I surmise, is the most suitable / statement of being" ("Fall in Upper Canada" 29). And he has come to terms with his true self: "I have tried too long to say the right thing / when the honest thing would have done as well" ("Fall in Upper Canada" 29).

The poet ends his collection with a few poems alluding to Bahá'í subjects, with calm references, for example, to pilgrimage, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the Master), images of the nightingale, and the Riḍván Gardens.

These poems, then, are in a way the poet's songs of innocence and experience. One also suspects that they might best be digested in the stillness of a winter's night, away from the exigencies of daily life and its cares. No doubt that he will leave his mark on the reader's mind and heart, as Roger White once did and continues to do. And if one listens carefully enough, one can hear those angels above making a ruckus of things while the craftsperson below is busy forging his art. In short, *Angel Ruckus* by B. K. Filson deserves with justification to be on everyone's bookshelf and within arm's reach.

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