

Reviews

Living at the Movies

By Jim Carroll

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Living at the Movies is a strong mysterious potion of refracted lyrical language shattered into elaborate patterns of truth and beauty. You cannot believe the beautiful textures herein - you can believe this upon reading, for instance.

the fancied tilt of stars, sordid doves burning in the hollow brick oven, oceans which generalize tears. it is known to us

in immediate gestures, like candle drippings on a silk floor. what are we going to do with anything?
("The Distances")

The truth is the consistency of the language, and its unnameable ability to create experience, not through language, but language as the experience itself. There are poems in this book - like "The Distances" - that come down to us from a

timeless place.

Jim Carroll knows counterpoint, and his poems, back to back, and even within each other, line by line, are pushing and pulling, making for dramatic tensions. He mixes the serious with the frivolous, the mysterious with the known, making the high and lofty work on levels with Joey Heatherton and Orange Julius - read "Love Rockets" which is pure pop presody. And then earlier, he'll cast a line straight from a French classical era of high dope and despair, a Baudelaire or Mallarme-like line: "The shower of black infants across the infected landscape..." ("August") Then too he likes to use the pastoral with the urban, and he is forever watching, watching, "like watching wind push seaflowers"; "we are here on 53rd and 6th watching steel/turn to ivy". Yeats on Saint Mark's Place? Of course, even that; any damn source that fits - birds and wild flowers and concrete!

and the wind is pushing like pine cones against the angel's dying sperm.

I like to think that is how John Donne

might say it, if he were around today. Jim Carroll may be our first genuine 20th Century metaphysical poet.

MICHAEL STEPHENS

