

alongside each chapter. Many of the literary and poetic pieces collected in this text express experiences living in/with conflict—situations that complicatedly cross social, political, economic, nationalistic, linguistic, and religious lines. This contextual counter-point is an important additional layer of background information for readers who may not be familiar with the contexts, landscapes, and histories being described. Understanding contexts as “socially constructed frame[s] of reference”, the editors state that “a true grasp of context recognizes the interplay between the particular and the universal, and the limitations of viewing human existence through black and white dichotomies.” Whether through the lens of the narrator, the various characters, or the authors/writers themselves, the reader encounters people and events that show the affective side of living; that situations and relations reverberate through the body; and that life ebbs and flows across dis/ease. And, importantly, that daily living with others does not always fit neatly into categories that are used to understand or analyze things.

As each of the ten chapters in the anthology demonstrates, daily life plays out the tension between the particularities of lived experiences and relationships, and the universal ideas and mores professed at a wider level. Family, neighbours, friends, home, and land get caught-up in the whirlpool that can be identity, nation, state, worker, and commodity. To say that contexts are ‘complicated’ does not always do justice to the weight and force of a situation; especially when the particularity of lives are affected by the violence/s of nationalist struggles, colonialism/s and imperialism/s, forced migrations, the natural/ecological

exploitation of resources, and property and ownership rights that are built on mass systemic poverty. The reader experiences how the tune of the tale shifts when ‘modernization’ and ‘progress’ are questions, rather than immutable facts. This anthology demonstrates the power of art and literary mediums to express the personal and intimate in ways that reveal “the paradoxes and ambiguities of life and history.”

As the above quote from Goossen and Hazra’s introduction suggests, part of being able to imagine how others live and think entails being able to compassionately relate-with the everyday realities and experiences that others have. This kind of imagining engages ‘separations’ and ‘distances’ of all different kinds; not only of those marked by the physical parameters of geography or through the passage of time, but as importantly the kinds of separations that happen in the everyday act of living and sharing place with others. In many ways, this imagining begins in self-reflection and by asking questions that can reveal our own hidden assumptions and expectations. By creating a common space through each literary piece, the kind of imaginative work presented in this anthology draws readers into relation with the events, lives, and contexts being described. A relation that ultimately requires readers to extend the movement begun between particularities and universals on the page, to their own lived contexts.

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## AFTER DROWNING

Valerie Mills-Milde  
Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2015

### REVIEWED BY RENATE KRAKAUER

In her debut novel, *After Drowning*, Valerie Mills-Milde, has mined new territory in a Canadian setting we know little about with a cast of characters that will stay with the reader long after finishing the book. We learn about the formerly thriving fishing industry on Lake Erie, now virtually wiped out by zebra mussels, and the impact on the lake and its surrounding villages through the story of one family. Pen and her daughter, Maddie, have returned to Port to stay with her mother and stepfather while Pen sorts out the problems with her marriage. While sunning and playing on the beach with her daughter, she witnesses the drowning of a developmentally challenged young man who is on an outing with a group from his residential treatment centre. This drowning triggers memories, which set Pen on a course of self-examination and ultimately, of release from the constraints and insecurity she has felt all her life.

Pen can trace a marked shift in her life from the day that her adored father drowned on his fishing boat when she was ten. Was it an accident or a suicide? Shortly after that, her older brother, Keaton, also disappeared from her life after a boat he was working on was set on fire. With an alcoholic mother who has taken into her home the man with whom she had been having an affair before her husband’s death, Pen couldn’t wait to escape and escape she did.

Now she is back and has to confront her self-imposed separation from her kind, loving husband Jeff. The death of her father has left a