

**Notebooks
From The
Emerald Triangle**



by Bill Bradd

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Notes Of A Renegade Gardener In The Far Hills
by Bill Bradd

Reviewed by [Sharon Doubiago](#)

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“I wanted to become a writer, so I could become a good reader, so I would know great writing when I saw it, to see the armature, the slant of light, to understand how texture casts shadows, to be someone for whom the whole earth of language was quiet round.”

I've said for thirty years that poet Bill Bradd is the true voice of the Mendocino Coast and the Emerald Triangle. The advanced engaged consciousness typical of the populace, the high creativity, the meditative, visionary, stoned outlawry, the profound environmentalism, the poets who have not sold out for career, for that “money tree,” but have honed their art to stay true to themselves and to all of Earth. “[T]he King has his Pinkertons and we have freedom.” This book, not an easy product for one such as Bill Bradd, is about that freedom.

My writer friend in the plane seat beside me reading Bradd for the first time keeps laughing out loud, “this so good, so funny!”

And brilliantly gifted in language, insight, imagination, vision, stories. Heartrending in its lyricism and imagery, metaphors so mindblowing you feel at times you really will explode. Joy is the purpose of the universe, not human happiness. Steeped in incredible nature and its critters, this is a memoir of one who never loses sight of that axiom, who lives that joy. “This book had a lot to do with the moon. Grandmother wanted to be the moon. She said 'reflect of me, boy.' It's about getting old. Seeing my hands in the soil.” The awesome feel for the environment, especially the plants, the seeds, the mice, the ants, the spiders who arrive by truck, the trees, the bears and mountain lions. “What will I do when they pave the planet, covering the secret places that whisper to me, guide me on my journey?” If you've never been out there, this book will take you there.

Yes, behind the great writing there's the sensational, major-to-our-times, outlaw story, but it is the sensations of that story, the armature, the slant of light, the shadows, that this book is about. “If

you have read along this far, it has probably occurred to you that this guy isn't going to tell you much about growing the money tree in the back country. Never said I was going to. The real story is the coming and going.” “ Secret to the Land,” he called it for a long time.

Notebooks from the Emerald Triangle is destined to be a classic of our era, in the way Richard Brautigan's episodic books once were, on our toilet backs and in our outhouses for years. But Bradd is better than Brautigan, a far better poet, a more brilliant and imaginative intellect.

“The prologue of these pieces, which I call the M. Chronicles, the prologue is “four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,” which was a shout out by Blackbeard, the pirate, to his outlaw band, to reassemble, for our fortunes are soon to be made. So this is my shout out to the many fellow travelers..

There are those who would not believe my truths if I told them. Outlaw truths. With their edges of ice.. Wind and rain, me and Fate, together, pushing. I will head for the track, soon, and I will be gone from this world of time. I have not been idle here, nor do I regret. I now know about mercy. I know I can be open and give and take without the thought of losing my soul.”

The magnificent “Outlaw Truths” is, among other things, an elegy for one's beautiful self, its approaching demise. “And I will soon be off. This is no longer the place for me. There are stairs here, stairs that people leave by and re-enter, steps up, and steps down and for me there is no down, no back. Nothing exists in the outlaw world other than now..”

Brilliant all the way to the final story of Jack O'Minory that sums it all up, wow! “In our story we didn't go to the Wizard for advice, we went there so we could become Wizards.” And as Wizards to kiss the grave of Ernest Foresti, 1918-1930.

For years I've offered to come to Bill's cabin, camp out in my van and help him put his stuff on a hard drive, a disc. To save it from the river. He's the only writer to whom I've ever made that offer (having so much myself to do). There's a lot more stuff that needs saving, but Notebooks is a great beginning. The whole earth of language has never been given so well.

“Death is at my door. I want to bury my face in the hands of God. It seems my eyes have become yardsticks, I know how close and how far away things are, I can see back now, the path of civilized progress edged ever so slowly away from my fated path, until, like old cowboys, enjoying the slow ride out to the cattle, me and the Paluouse, arriving to inspect the herd, we ride the barbed-wire fence line, chew our cud of thought, contemplate when the wind will shift, the caterpillars forecast an early spring, the distant cowboy, I see him in my yardstick eyes. It was me back then, I rode into Manhattan, looking for strays, chewing my cud and gathering 'til the mingling herd finally made room at the waterhole. I see that cows think of this stuff, perhaps with my yardstick eyes I've become an angry Puerto Rican, trapped in a cow-body, remembering when I grazed on the western edge headlands. Miles of pastures that roll up from the ocean.”

Yes, make room at the waterhole. Anti-establishment as he is, this guy should get all the prizes.