

October 24, 2022
Comments to Susan Varga



I've started *Hard Joy*, last night in bed at 9pm. I read the dedication, and then, like a good librarian, turned to the back, to the acknowledgements and the photo credits, so I would have an inkling of what I might be in for.

Then I decided to begin with the Susan and Ann I knew, and read Part IV. I've always envisaged the beachouse as a warmclime equivalent of stately Exeter: happy to find it's not. What most resonates is the struggle to regain life, as writing... The poems, more than the poem+ brain scans, worked best for me: unvarnished intensity.

This morning I read the Prologue and Part I.

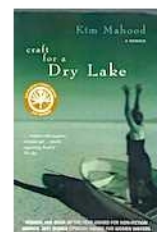
Nothing, not even Primo Levi, has brought home the horror as your concentrated narrative does. I'll leave the crossovers and overlaps of my memories and Part I for a conversation, sometime...

What I can say so far is that the poems work best when the context is minimal, as in the Dutch poems, where they *are* the narrative, more than an afterword. I'm thinking they were written at the time?

Do you know Kim Mahood's books? She is the one author I know who has done in two books what you have done in *Heddy and Me* and *Hard Joy*: her first, *Craft For A Dry Lake* (2000) deals with the parents:

To my father,
whose death made the book necessary...

Position Doubtful (2016) writes a larger life; it is replete with poems and songs, not all hers-- recommended reading.



Here's a response to the epigraph to Part 1 from *The Well-Gardened Mind* (2020), about remembering place more than chronology:

https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2018/06/med_image_press_eng-6.pdf

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2014.

John O'Keefe discovered, in 1971, that certain nerve cells in the brain were activated when a rat assumed a particular place in the environment. Other nerve cells were activated at other places. He proposed that these "place cells" build up an inner map of the environment. Place cells are located in the hippocampus.

Grid cells, together with other cells that recognize the direction of the head of the animal and the border of the room, form networks with the place cells in the hippocampus. Grid cells are located in the entorhinal cortex

In 2005, May-Britt and Edvard I. Moser discovered that other nerve cells in the entorhinal cortex were activated when the rat passed certain locations. Together, these locations formed a hexagonal grid, each "grid cell" reacting in a unique spatial pattern. Collectively, these grid cells form a coordinate system that allows for spatial navigation, an inner GPS.

The positioning system in the human brain appears to have similar components to those in the rat brain.

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