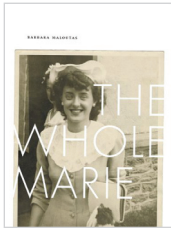


sestina; he often rhymes. Yet these occasional formalities are embedded within a thoroughly contemporary attention to “making it new.”

The pleasure of reading *Things On Which I've Stumbled* is derived largely from the frankness of the poet's struggle for meaning, made visible in almost every line of his poems. Readers searching for wholly modern poetry dealing with spiritual issues, grounded in history, and presented with great craft will find it in Cole's new book. *James DenBoer*



The Whole Marie

Barbara Maloutas

Ahsahta Press

Softcover \$17.50 (112pp)

978-1-934103-04-3

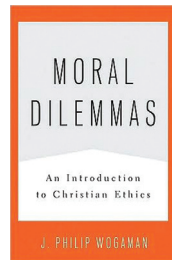
“While I am in the studio making these corrections, my husband is out on the / lawn fixing the sprinkler heads that one of the dogs bit off during *its* long days in / the yard between the house and our studio. If I don't use *its*, someone may think / that my husband has taken to biting off sprinkler heads. He's not there yet.” In the preceding lines, Barbara Maloutas exemplifies the best qualities of her collection, *The Whole Marie*: playful, beautifully crafted, and intensely aware of both the sight of words on paper and their audible sound. Indeed, the reader can almost be convinced of a smirk inherent in Maloutas' more narrative pieces, perhaps even more so in the disjointed and oddly lineated works that comprise the other half of this collection.

Maloutas creates a highly evocative sensory world, where repetition changes the meaning of the most basic statements, makes them new again and odd, left ringing in the reader's ear. “love painting and eye yes eye / simple mention of eyelids and eyebrows lovely space / wait the confounding I in sound envisions / you'll go blind,” from the poem “Tuesday October 22,” is a delight to read aloud, where Maloutas' deft use of the repetitive brings about *entendre*, and invites the reader to join in the sheer joy of language play.

At times the creative lineation and spacing of Maloutas' works becomes nearly confusing, forcing readers to slow their pace and be patient with the words in front of them. She seems most at ease and effective in her more prosaic works, fusing the everyday with language play, occasionally deviating from her lighter tones to invoke what feels nearly like a kind of judgment, as in her poem “When I Read”: “I can't have a row of / women screaming that I am wrong or that I haven't done this or that. If he goes / ahead with his plan, I will have to slink out in the dead of night with a hatchet / to cut them down.” With vignettes ranging from the household to the holy monasteries of the orthodox, Maloutas brings to each piece an accuracy conjoined with obfuscation, as though, sooner or later, a

secret will suddenly appear, a watermark to the reader, tantalizing them with the opportunity to explore again what had nearly become familiar. Ultimately, Maloutas' deconstruction becomes a kind of reconstruction, where definitions share what had been, until her poems' arrivals, empty beds, a place where “eventually she / tried to remember what down meant, and sit and beg and heel. After many years / she became a very famous hermit and human seekers came wanting to be her / followers. They did what she did, for she said nothing.” (January) *J. Noel Trapp*

RELIGION



Moral Dilemmas: An Introduction to Christian Ethics

J. Philip Wogaman

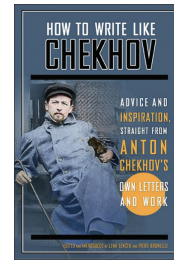
Westminster John Knox

Softcover \$19.95 (176pp)

978-0-664-23316-7

What is the ultimate basis of the moral life? Does the moral life presuppose a deep spiritual reality? Is it religious in character? Or is it enough to think of ethics in purely philosophical or even just sociological terms? In this much shorter and more accessible follow-up to his acclaimed book, *A Christian Method of Moral Judgment*, Wogaman, former pastor to President Clinton and ethics professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, attempts to answer these and other questions in this useful guidebook for Christian ethics. Wogaman argues that individuals establish their ethical values on the basis of certain moral presumptions. Individuals can then act on such presumptions to establish guidelines for their ethical behavior. For Wogaman, the moral presumptions of Christian ethics are “grace, the value of each human life, the unity of humankind, equality, the goodness of creation.” Once he has established these moral presumptions, he explores the ways that they provide insights into moral decision-making about issues such as abortion, homosexuality, divorce, global warming, and economic globalization, among others. Wogaman offers an appendix in which he offers helpful advice in avoiding pitfalls in moral arguments. He reminds individuals engaged in moral discussions, for example, that “a single case is not sufficient basis for broad generalization” and that “not all opposing values or ideas are necessarily inconsistent with each other.” Although many will disagree with Wogaman that rules can govern ethical behavior, they will nevertheless find his little guidebook a helpful discussion of the nature of Christian ethics. (March) *Henry L. Carrigan, Jr.*

REFERENCE



How To Write Like Chekhov: Advice and Inspiration Straight From His Own Letters and Work

Anton Chekhov

Piero Brunello, editor

Lena Lencek, translator

Da Capo

Softcover \$14.95 (256pp)

978-1-56924-259-9

Chekhov never wrote a “how to” book on writing, but Brunello and Lencek's compilation does much to meet the need. The advisory excerpts that the editors have mined from his work and letters and assembled here present a powerfully incisive and empathetic mind. Chekhov combined the analytical physician with the disciplined artist, two personae that produced a tough-minded writer—far different from the traditional image of a bed-ridden invalid felled by tuberculosis at forty-four; the suffering “voice of twilight Russia,” to borrow a phrase from Nina Tumanova, one of his earlier his biographers.

Chekhov's acute awareness marks many of the comments cited in part one, “Theory”—one of which explains his lifelong commitment to and rewards from practicing medicine: “...my medical work has had a serious impact on my writing; it has significantly broadened the scope of my observation....” Yet he stated modestly that he had “no worldview” but confined himself to “describing how my protagonists love, marry, breed, die, and talk.” He was a master of the “show, don't tell” school: “avoid describing the emotional states of your protagonists; one should try to make these apparent from their actions.” (His handling of Kostya's suicide in *The Seagull* reflects this belief at work.) Chekhov described medicine as his “lawful wife” and literature as “his mistress.” Not atypically, the latter was more demanding than the former, and Chekhov became advisor and critic for a myriad of friends to whom he provided endless help.

One short-take is particularly valuable: “One must never lie. Art has this great specification: it simply does not tolerate falsehood. One can lie in love, politics, and medicine; one can mislead the public or even God; but there is absolutely no lying in art.” Add to this: “It is easier to write about Socrates than about a young lady or a cook,” and “Cut mercilessly”—advice that could lighten the burden placed on us by the *I Must Write* generation.

Part two, “Demonstration,” is drawn entirely from sections of *Sakhalin Island* (published in 1895) and Chekhov's letters about his heroic five-year project—crossing Russia to report on the notorious island prison camp in the wind-blasted Sea of Okhotsk. The excerpts forcefully present the master's penetrating analysis of every aspect of life, death, emotion, and human behavior in