

## And a Body to Remember With

By Carmen Rodriguez. Arsenal Pulp Press, 172 pp, \$15.95, softcover.

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To Estela de Ramirez, Canada was a black hole, "a big country at the other end of the world, with mountains and lakes and snow", just like a picture she'd once seen in *National Geographic*. Thirteen years later, she's living in Vancouver and her memories of her beloved Chile have faded, like an old photograph, hazy, distorted. When she tries to remember, she sees only fleeting images that move out of focus, becoming a big dark blotch, a blackness, which grows bigger and bigger until it envelops her. In "Black Hole", and other stories in this collection, Carmen Rodriguez writes about Chilean Canadians torn between two worlds, at opposite ends of the Pacific.

Rodriguez, who was active in the Chilean left, and her family narrowly escaped with their lives after the 1973 military coup. In Vancouver, she continued to speak out against human-rights violations in Chile, resulting in the confiscation of her passport. She was not to visit her homeland again until 1987, when the Pope's visit prompted the Chilean government to end its blacklist.

In prose rooted firmly in the body, these stories live and breathe with raw, sensuous energy. Spanish is sprinkled throughout like a musical score, lyrical, melodic, and dreamy. Rodriguez originally wrote the stories in Spanish and translated them herself into English, revising each version until "both tips of my tongue and my two sets of ears were satisfied". Simmering with rage, longing, and courage, *And a Body to Remember With* leaves one feeling that even amidst despair, there is hope. ■

*Carmen Rodriguez reads at the Vancouver International Writers (& Readers) Festival October 22 at 1 p.m. at the Arts Club Revue Theatre, October 23 at 4:30 p.m. at Performance Works, and October 24 at 10 a.m. at the Arts Club Revue Theatre and at 8:30 p.m. at Performance Works.*



Carmen Rodriguez, who escaped from Chile after the 1973 military coup there, writes about Chilean Canadians in *And a Body to Remember With*.