

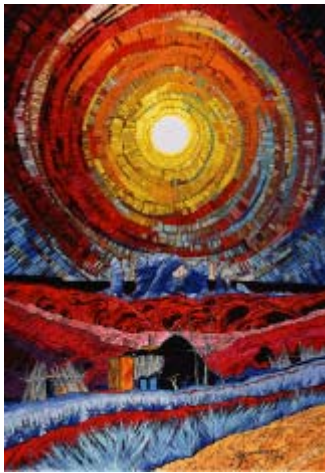
# Book festival Northern Arizona

## ***The Black Veil*, By Rick Moody Reviewed By Michael Marizco**

Take a man in his twenties, threatening to become a writer while fighting to chase away the demons threatening to rape him. Now give that man a choice between his life filled with excess and with impossible goals of being a writer and a life worrying about male pattern baldness. Add Nathaniel Hawthorne's allegory of death. The result is Rick Moody's book, *The Black Veil: A memoir with digressions*.

And like any read that requires some closure for the reader, there's the come-back at the end, that moment of clairvoyance in an artist's life when the trip is complete and he can look over the side into the ship's wake seeing "reflections of lighthouse beacons jitterbugging upon the waves," as Moody writes.

He writes through stream of consciousness when he's not focused on the past. His prose slams through his years working at whatever job he can grasp, including a stint as a tape-recorded tour salesman in San Francisco, messy relationships seen through red-eyed bleariness and culminates in being committed to a hospital after the doubts and voices grow so loud inside him, he suffers paranoid illusions of people trying to rape or kill him while discussing a baseball game.



"I felt like I had to talk about my own life for once,"

Moody said in a phone interview from his Long Island home. He'd already written two novels when he wrote *The Black Veil*. The first received zero acclaims, he noted good-naturedly. But with six books, including short story collections, Moody wrote *The Black Veil* as his first non-fiction book.

Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil*, also comes into Moody's book. In fact, half the book is about Hawthorne's minister and Moody's attempt to de-construct what happened to him. *The Black Veil* is also part genealogy; Moody used the novel - and Hawthorne's - to chase down an elusive Moody ancestor. The veil is always there, in the digressions toward Hawthorne and the memories of Moody's own life and family; it frames the novel, lifting quickly in flashing stream of consciousness and settling black and heavy again in slow, contemplative prose.

He said the novel, which explains about 12 years of his life, came from the creative writer side of him, where he forced himself to get into his own skin for once instead of another person's. "Do writers cause fits of melancholy, or do fits of melancholy cause writers?" Moody asked. "Sometimes I wonder."

## **Northern Arizona Book Festival**

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