Confessions of a Tea Leaf Reader
by Tanya Lester

Reviewed by Ron Romanowski

Novelist, free-lance writer and professional tea leaf reader Tanya Lester’s Confessions of a Tea Leaf Reader is a genial guide to an interesting subject. It is also a journey into the world of an integrated New Age Spirituality including the use of healing crystals, Reiki and yoga (now clearly mainstream) as aids to a seer’s intuition; all part of a significant societal movement toward a more intuitive culture. Lester wrote and taught creative writing in her hometown of Winnipeg before moving to Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, where she now resides and practises her art. There she also teaches seminars at island colleges and universities in tasseomancy (one of the terms for tea leaf reading). She creates an amiable and open tone right from the start of the book: “I am passionate about providing people with insights into their lives” (1).

Divided into thirteen chapters, Confessions’ step-by-step expository style eases the reader into Lester’s reassuring storyteller’s voice, seeming to answer questions she’s been asked in her career many times. And there is a whole chapter devoted to the question everybody must eventually pose, “When the Future Concerns Death.” There are many examples of readings she has done and how they have helped her clients. And the book also contains some information about the rich and famous, like Lester’s experiences with Goldie Hawn, Canadian author and broadcaster Bill Richardson, and others.

By continuous example in Confessions (especially in the chapter “In the Beginning”) Lester makes the case for a higher standing for intuition in society and the many age-old systems that have developed and supported this gift over the years. She encourages readers to trust to intuition as a larger influence in their lives. After all, intuition, as we know today, is a particular form of reason and not in opposition to it, as such. Lester handles opposition to her art head-on: “some religious groups are definitely opposed to tea leaf reading and other forms of divination” (11). In her personal journey
she finds out that she is related to tea leaf readers through her family line and has a connection to the Middle East and its long tradition of such divinations.

She touches on the history of tea leaf reading, and has found that it really does not matter what kind of tea is used, it is the skill of the reader and her intuition that counts. We learn anecdotally that her readings have helped many people gain insight into their lives and problems. The readings, at times, are a form of therapy because they focus the client’s attention on what may be troubling them and what they might do about that. Perhaps the musings of psychologists on humanity’s problems are just another form of intuition grown through practical case study not completely unlike Lester’s many years of a more ancient practice.

This book is recommended for those who want to know more about what goes in those curiosity-raising sessions at tables in the neighbourhood teahouse, or for those who have enjoyed a reading and want to augment their experience with an amicable and learned guide. As Lester concludes, “The work I do is so enjoyable . . . Every time I sit down to do a reading, I never know what might happen . . . Life is magical. Live in the light. Enjoy good energy.” (145)

Ron Romanowski is a Winnipeg poet and writer. His latest poetry collection is _Insurrection_ (Augustine Hand Press, 2009).