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Hope lights up dark visions in Mellon writer's anthology

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Despite a dull undercurrent of existential pain that breaks through the surface at times in a brilliant shower of agony, Kobus Moolman's newest book of poetry is inescapably life-affirming.

Left Over

By Kobus Moolman

Dye Hard Press, 2013

Moolman, a well-published poet, editor, teacher and playwright, launched his newest anthology of poems and musings at the Eastern Star Education Centre in Grahamstown last week.

Taking a break from teaching creative writing at UKZN, he arrived in Grahamstown in April and will be staying until the middle of July, lending a talented hand with the Rhodes MA Creative Writing course.

While I haven't yet had the pleasure of reading any of his previous poetry books, his newest is called *Left Over* (published by Dye Hard Press) and it had me spellbound.

Filled with contradictions, his poems contrast observations of the everyday with macabre flights of fancy and always, always a glimmer of hope.

Hope might be a strong word - at first glance, the anthology seems irrevocably bleak.

Moolman edited a collection of works by South African writers with disabilities in 2010 called *Tilling the Hard Soil*, and his relationship with his own crooked frame comes clearly to the fore in this collection as well.

His body is both a stubborn, alien thing and at the same time, inescapably his own. A picture of life emerges as a constant negotiation between body and will.

But this struggle is what makes the book so wonderfully hopeful.

An obstinate sliver of optimism shines through his melancholic reflections and lights up this book, raw existential pain turning and folding its arms around the reader in the form of lost childhood memories

Prosaic observations throughout the book are everything but mundane: they slow time down to a crawl and hold a magnifying glass to the minute details that make up a full human life.

The effect is spell-binding.

The abundance of natural imagery and descriptions plants the poet and his recalcitrant body firmly within a rich, detailed South African landscape.

Previous titles by Moolman include *Time Like Stone*, *Anatomy* (an illustrated chapbook), *Feet of the Sky*, *Separating the Seas* and *Light and After*.

He has been awarded the Ingrid Jonker prize for poetry, the Pansa award and the Dalro poetry prize.

Moolman is currently a Writer in Residence for the Mellon Foundation. He will be reading from Left Over on Monday 1 July at the St. Peter's Building on Somerset Street at 1pm.

You can buy the book there for R100 - but if you can't make it, contact him on kobusman@telkomsa.net to get your own copy.

<http://www.grocotts.co.za/content/poetry-review-hope-lights-dark-visions-mellon-writers-anothology-13-06-2013>

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