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MICHAEL ONDAATJE
**THE COLLECTED
WORKS OF
BILLY THE KID**

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MICHAEL ONDAATJE

Michael Ondaatje is the author of seven novels; a memoir, *Running in the Family*; a non-fiction book on film, *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*; and several books of poetry, including *The Cinnamon Peeler* and *Handwriting*. *The English Patient* received the Booker Prize in 1992 and the Golden Man Booker in 2018, and was made into a film directed by Anthony Minghella. *Anil's Ghost* was awarded the Irish Times International Fiction Prize, the Giller Prize and the Prix Médicis. Born in Sri Lanka, Michael Ondaatje lives in Toronto.

ALSO BY MICHAEL ONDAATJE

PROSE

Coming Through the Slaughter

Running in the Family

In the Skin of a Lion

The English Patient

Anil's Ghost

Divisadero

The Cat's Table

Warlight

POETRY

Rat Jelly

There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do

Secular Love

The Cinnamon Peeler

Handwriting

A Year of Last Things

NON-FICTION

The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film

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WITH AN AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHOR

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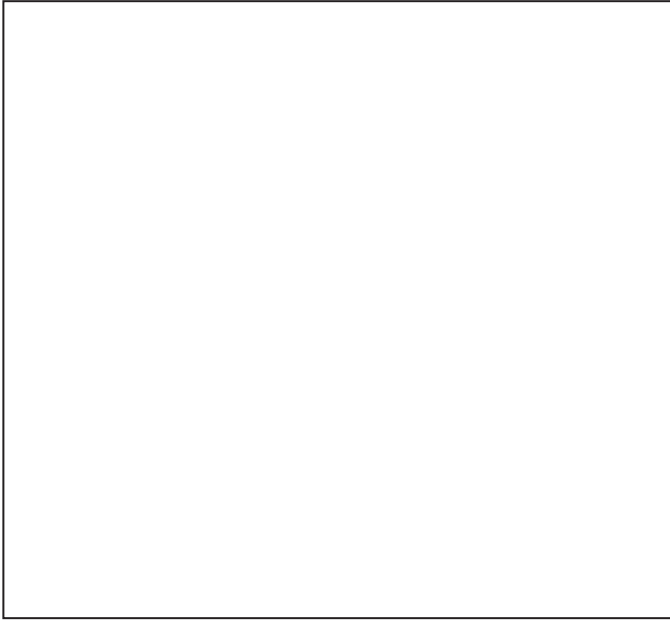
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I send you a picture of Billy made with the Perry shutter as quick as it can be worked—Pyro and soda developer. I am making daily experiments now and find I am able to take passing horses at a lively trot square across the line of fire—bits of snow in the air—spokes well defined—some blur on top of wheel but sharp in the main—men walking are no trick—I will send you proofs sometime. I shall show you what can be done from the saddle without ground glass or tripod—please notice when you get the specimens that they were made with the lens wide open and many of the best exposed when my horse was in motion

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These are the killed.

(By me)—

Morton, Baker, early friends of mine.

Joe Bernstein. 3 Indians.

A blacksmith when I was twelve, with a knife.

5 Indians in self defence (behind a very safe rock).

One man who bit me during a robbery.

Brady, Hindman, Beckwith, Joe Clark,

Deputy Jim Carlyle, Deputy Sheriff J. W. Bell.

And Bob Ollinger. A rabid cat,

birds during practice,

These are the killed.

(By them)—

Charlie, Tom O'Folliard

Angela D's split arm,

and Pat Garrett

sliced off my head.

Blood a necklace on me all my life.

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Christmas at Fort Sumner, 1880. There were five of us together then. Wilson, Dave Rudabaugh, Charlie Bowdre, Tom O'Folliard, and me. In November we celebrated my 21st birthday, mixing red dirt and alcohol—a public breathing throughout the night. The next day we were told that Pat Garrett had been made sheriff and had accepted it. We were bad for progress in New Mexico and cattle politicians like Chisum wanted the bad name out. They made Garrett sheriff and he sent me a letter saying move out or I will get you Billy. The government sent a Mr. Azariah F. Wild to help him out. Between November and December I killed Jim Carlyle over some mixup, he being a friend.

Tom O'Folliard decided to go east then, said he would meet up with us in Sumner for Christmas. Goodbye goodbye. A few days before Christmas we were told that Garrett was in Sumner waiting for us all. Christmas night. Garrett, Mason, Wild, with four or five others. Tom O'Folliard rides into town, leaning his rifle between the horse's ears. He would shoot from the waist now which, with a rifle, was pretty good, and he was always accurate.

Garrett had been waiting for us, playing poker with the others, guns on the floor beside them. Told that Tom was riding in alone, he went straight to the window and shot O'Folliard's horse dead. Tom collapsed with the horse still holding the gun and blew out Garrett's window. Garrett already halfway downstairs. Mr. Wild shot at Tom from the other side of the street, rather unnecessarily shooting the horse again. If Tom had used stirrups and didnt swing his legs so much he would probably have been locked under

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the animal. O'Folliard moved soon. When Garrett had got to ground level, only the horse was there in the open street, good and dead. He couldn't shout to ask Wild where O'Folliard was or he would've got busted. Wild started to yell to tell Garrett though and Tom killed him at once. Garrett fired at O'Folliard's flash and took his shoulder off. Tom O'Folliard screaming out onto the quiet Fort Sumner street, Christmas night, walking over to Garrett, no shoulder left, his jaws tilting up and down like mad bladders going. Too mad to even aim at Garrett. Son of a bitch son of a bitch, as Garrett took clear aim and blew him out.

Garrett picked him up, the head broken in two, took him back upstairs into the hotel room. Mason stretched out a blanket neat in the corner. Garrett placed Tom O'Folliard down, broke open Tom's rifle, took the remaining shells and placed them by him. They had to wait till morning now. They continued their poker game till six a.m. Then remembered they hadn't done anything about Wild. So the four of them went out, brought Wild into the room. At eight in the morning Garrett buried Tom O'Folliard. He had known him quite well. Then he went to the train station, put Azariah F. Wild on ice and sent him back to Washington.

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In Boot Hill there are over 400 graves. It takes the space of 7 acres. There is an elaborate gate but the path keeps to no main route for it tangles like branches of a tree among the gravestones.

300 of the dead in Boot Hill died violently
200 by guns, over 50 by knives
some were pushed under trains—a popular
and overlooked form of murder in the west.
Some from brain haemorrhages resulting from bar fights
at least 10 killed in barbed wire.

In Boot Hill there are only 2 graves that belong to women
and they are the only known suicides in that graveyard

*

The others, I know, did not see the wounds appearing in the sky, in the air. Sometimes a normal forehead in front of me leaked brain gases. Once a nose clogged right before me, a lock of skin formed over the nostrils, and the shocked face had to start breathing through mouth, but then the moustache bound itself in the lower teeth and he began to gasp loud the hah! hah! going strong—churned onto the floor, collapsed out, seeming in the end to be breathing out of his eye—tiny needle jets of air reaching into the throat. I told no one. If Angela D. had been with me then, not even her; not Sallie, John, Charlie, or Pat. In the end the only thing that never changed, never became deformed, were animals.

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