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Trade Paperback

ISBN: 9781988784649

Price: \$23.95

Trim: 5" x 8" / 320 pp

289 Main Street, Suite 1

Picton, ON K0K 2T0

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Distributed to the trade by

Publishers Group Canada/Raincoast

[www.pgcbooks.ca](http://www.pgcbooks.ca)

Publishers Group West (USA)

[www.pgw.com](http://www.pgw.com)



## READING GUIDE: Rob Benvie's *Bleeding Light*

Dear Reader,

Thanks for discussing *Bleeding Light*. Here's a few of the ideas bonking around my brain while writing the novel. Perhaps this will kickstart some thoughts of your own.

*Folklore.* Throughout the book are heaps of references, both explicit and im-, to ghost stories, mythologies, superstitions, allusions to pop culture, you name it. What do the kinds of stories we conjure about the otherworldly reveal about our oh-so-very human desires? Often fables, parables, and the like are/were created with the intention of conveying some higher moral meaning. In an (arguably!) amoral universe, what role does mythmaking play? And how might the process of self-mythologization (think of Dred Hausen, archvillain of *Bleeding Light*) play into this?

*Obliteration.* Self-annihilation is a recurring motif through the novel, with characters voiding themselves through drink, drugs, isolation, etc. For example, Alejandra Ortigosa in the second section indulges in (and almost, in a flashback, accomplishes) fantasies of oblivion. Are these kinds of yearnings perennial human impulses, or is there something particular to our times that generates such desires? Is self-destruction inherently self-indulgent, or can it be heroic?

*Transcendence.* Many of the characters in *Bleeding Light* seek transcendence in varying forms, longing to shed their worldly shackles in hopes of finding something greater beyond. What does transcendence actually mean in a world that seemingly privileges personal gratification above all else? Is a desire for transcendence inherently tragic? Are transcendence and self-obliteration the same thing?

Ultimately, I hope you arrive at (or decide against) your own conclusions about what it all means—just as the novel's characters stagger in their own ways toward that mysterious beckoning light. As was poignantly sung by one Madonna Louise Ciccone, "Life is a mystery, everyone must stand alone." However, whether you do so alone or in the company of likeminded souls, I would recommend remaining seated while reading the book. It's easier on your neck.

Thine,  
Rob

