

Media Kit Summer 2009

www.threeartspress.com

Three Arts Press presents:

The Letter from Death

by **Lillian Moats**

Illustrations by **David J Moats**

Foreword by **Howard Zinn**

Publication Date: August, 2009

\$17.95 / Trade Paperback

156 pages, 6" x 9"

ISBN: 0-9669576-3-6 / 978-0-9669576-3-1

Three Arts Press

Publicity or Foreign Rights Inquiries: Literary Ventures Fund

Contact: Mary Bisbee-Beek, mbisbee.beek@gmail.com

Distribution: Itasca Books, Minneapolis

www.itascabooks.com, 1-800-901-3480

Further information

Literary Ventures Fund: www.literaryventuresfund.org

Three Arts Press: www.threeartspress.com

info@threeartspress.com

Media Kit Contents

- Press Release
- Biographies
- Early Praise
- Booklist Review
- Q & A
- Sample Illustrations
- Excerpts
- Also by Lillian Moats
- Book Flyer

For Immediate Release

The Letter From Death

by **Lillian Moats**

Illustrations by **David J Moats**

Foreword by **Howard Zinn**

“Moats uses death not as a threat, but as a prism through which to examine the most profound questions that confront the human race today.”

Howard Zinn

Lillian Moats' latest book, *The Letter from Death*, features a foreword by Howard Zinn and 20 evocative full-page illustrations by David Moats. This slim volume casts a bright light on how our unexamined fear of death has been reinforced and manipulated throughout history, resulting in the misdirection of our energies—away from the real and immediate challenges of this world and toward unnecessary war, injustice and self-destruction.

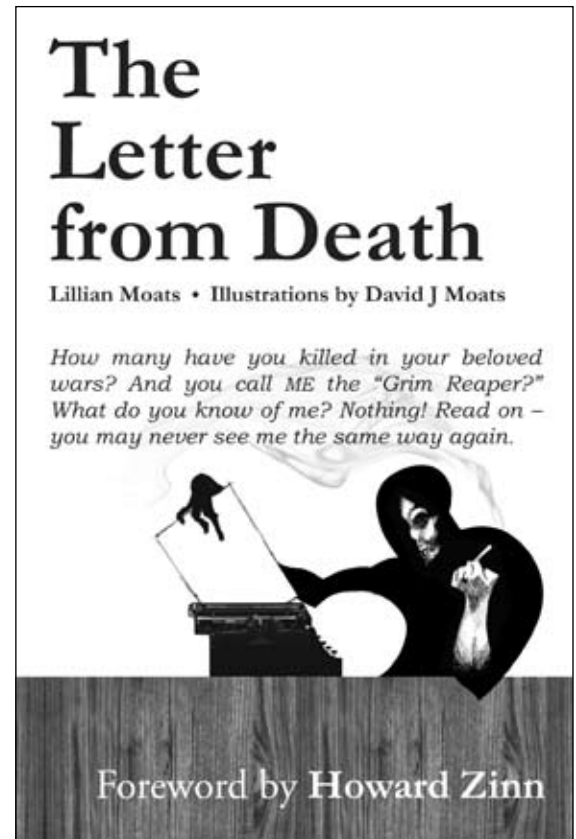
“... In her fourth book, Moats performs an astonishing feat. By imagining Death as a patient and suffering entity fluent in human affairs, she broaches matters of daunting complexity with galvanizing directness. ... this clarion critique offers an arresting perspective on religion, our “growing militarism,” our “inexhaustible genius for denial,” and our paradoxical failure to nurture our best qualities. ... Moats has created a wise, unsettling, and beautiful book.”

Donna Seaman
BOOKLIST

“David Moats' illustrations, sometimes chilling, always provocative, make the imagination glow.”

Michael McConnell
American Friends Service Committee

(continued)



(continued from previous page)

“*The Letter From Death* is an intelligent and delightful exploration of the human comic tragedy. It has the light flavor, wit, and prick of *Praise of Folly* and *Screwtape Letters* but the deep insights and jabs come more from the perspective of Epicurus. This is a book that thoughtful people will want to give to thoughtful friends.”

*Philip Regal, Author of The Anatomy of Judgment
Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota*

From the foreword by Howard Zinn:

“Lillian Moats gives us, in *The Letter from Death*, a brilliant and strikingly original work of the imagination, drawing both on biblical scholarship and contemporary military doctrine, infused with wit and irony, grounded in a profound aversion to war and a celebration of human potential for peace. ...

“What more authoritative voice can we listen to, in rejecting the violence of war, than that of Death itself?”

***The Letter from Death* will challenge even the most open-minded readers to re-examine their beliefs about death, life and “human nature.”**

Publication Date: August, 2009

\$17.95/ Trade paperback

156 pages, 6” x 9”

ISBN: 0-9669576-3-6 / 978-0-9669576-3-1

Three Arts Press

Publicity or Foreign Rights Inquiries:

Literary Ventures Fund

Contact Mary Bisbee-Beek: mbisbee.beek@gmail.com

Distribution: Itasca Books, Minneapolis

www.itascabooks.com

Further Information:

Literary Ventures Fund: www.literaryventuresfund.org

Three Arts Press: www.threeartspress.com

info@threeartspress.com



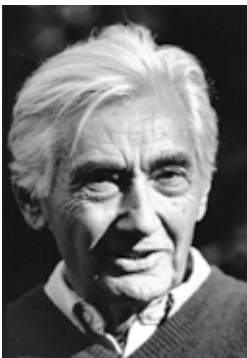
Lillian Moats



Lillian Moats is a writer, artist and filmmaker. The animated art films for children and adults which Moats has produced with JP Somersaulter have won over 40 national and international awards and have been screened by invitation in festivals around the world. Bruno Bettelheim first encouraged the publication of Moats' original fairy tales. Her book, *The Gate of Dreams* (Cranbrook Press:1993, 1996) is a collection of these stories, which Moats illustrated with silhouettes in the tradition of classic fairy tale editions. *The Gate of Dreams* was selected for the South Carolina Children's Book Awards List for 1995. *Legacy of Shadows* (Three Arts Press: 1999) is a fictionalized memoir tracing the lives of a mother, daughter and granddaughter in turn. Moats won critical acclaim for this exploration into the universal impact of unresolved emotion passed from generation to generation. *Speak, Hands* (Three Arts Press: 2006) followed as an experimental work

of creative non-fiction which defied the conventions of memoir by questioning the very nature of memory and the traditional autonomous subject. This complex narrative, told through four inner voices, challenged the distinction between mind and body, subject and object, consciousness and the unconscious. Moats' fourth book *The Letter from Death* (with a foreword by revered historian and social activist Howard Zinn, and 20 evocative full page illustrations by David Moats) is a work of fiction addressing social, philosophical and political concerns. *The Letter from Death* (Three Arts Press: August, 2009) will challenge even the most open-minded readers to re-examine their beliefs about death, life and "human nature."

Howard Zinn



Howard Zinn is a historian, playwright, and social activist. He was a shipyard worker and Air Force bombardier before he went to college under the GI Bill and received his Ph.D. from Columbia University. He has taught at Spelman College and Boston University, and has been a visiting professor at the University of Paris and the University of Bologna. He has received the Thomas Merton Award, the Eugene V. Debs Award, the Upton Sinclair Award, and the Lannan Literary Award. He lives in Auburndale, Massachusetts. (*From Harper Collins*)

David Moats



David Moats lives and works in London as a film critic for The Quietus (www.thequietus.com) and as a free lance illustrator and architectural researcher. He is a graduate of University College London.

Early Praise for:

The Letter From Death

by **Lillian Moats**

Illustrations by **David Moats**

Foreword by **Howard Zinn**

“... In her fourth book, Moats performs an astonishing feat. By imagining Death as a patient and suffering entity fluent in human affairs, she broaches matters of daunting complexity with galvanizing directness. ... this clarion critique offers an arresting perspective on religion, our “growing militarism,” our “inexhaustible genius for denial,” and our paradoxical failure to nurture our best qualities. ... Moats has created a wise, unsettling, and beautiful book.”

Donna Seaman
BOOKLIST

“*The Letter From Death* is an intelligent and delightful exploration of the human comic tragedy. It has the light flavor, wit, and prick of *Praise of Folly* and *Screwtape Letters* but the deep insights and jabs come more from the perspective of Epicurus. This is a book that thoughtful people will want to give to thoughtful friends.”

Philip Regal
Author of The Anatomy of Judgment, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota

“*The Letter from Death* warns of the senseless killing in war and should inspire peace to protect the living.”

Benjamin B. Ferencz
Former Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor

“... Lillian Moats’ courageous tour de force invites us to see our own destructiveness, the world’s human-created horrors, from death’s point of view, as it sets the record straight before falling silent. Neither a terrifying force nor a gateway to justice, death protests against being used as history’s bad guy and humanity’s worst nightmare – warning humans against our addiction to war, agitating us to turn, while we still can, to face our real problems.”

Ronald Aronson
Author of Living without God: New Directions for Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, and the Undecided

(continued)

(continued from previous page)

“*The Letter from Death* is exquisite – acutely imagined, well-crafted, vivid, simultaneously transcendent and focused. Who better than Death to explain the addiction of the death culture? Who better able to document the horror? What a book! It deserves a large, large audience.”

William Ayers

Distinguished Professor of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

“I devoured this book. Lillian Moats brilliantly makes Death the narrator of a tour through hell and war, which are both rooted in fear itself. ... Filled with punch lines that make you laugh and cry ... by the end of the book we see Death as the empathetic curator of humanity’s most precious yearnings for life, while the warmongers among us turn out to be the real Grim Reapers of death. Read *The Letter from Death* and you will look at death—and life in a newly liberated way. David Moats’ illustrations, sometimes chilling, always provocative, make the imagination glow.”

Michael McConnell

American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization for peace and social justice

“Lillian Moats does a remarkable job of bringing Death to life in *The Letter from Death*. ... Oddly enough, I finished this book with a smile and a sense of optimism. I’m confident others will feel the same.

Hemant Mehta

Author of I Sold My Soul on eBay, Chair of the Secular Student Alliance

A Conversation with Lillian Moats, author of *The Letter from Death*

Q: It seems in our culture we rarely look directly at death. Why should a potential reader brave this taboo subject with you?

A: I think we're all equipped to deal quite well with mortality if we're allowed to question the cultural indoctrination surrounding it. It turns out to be a relief for most readers to stop deflecting the subject of death and, instead, to apply their emotions and intellect to grappling with it. *The Letter from Death* is a very philosophical book, but it contains a good deal of satirical humor. It's typical for readers to be a little stunned by how much they end up liking the book.

Q: The Letter from Death has a foreword by historian/ activist Howard Zinn, who is often identified as "liberal," "progressive" or "radical." Should we assume this is a leftist book?

A: I'm very proud to have Howard Zinn's foreword. I admire his critical, insightful writing and reading of history, as well as his commitment to social justice. *The Letter from Death* is radical in that it will challenge even the most open-minded reader's beliefs and assumptions about life, death and "human nature." But it's not an ideological book. In fact, Death says to the reader, "When I consider the superiority of your heartfelt personal intentions over your often barbaric communal actions, I can't fathom why you rarely think for yourselves, why you rarely speak your minds before authority, why you repeatedly line up behind ideologies, religions and paradigms."

Q: There are a number of ways that *The Letter from Death* could be categorized: political philosophy, social psychology, etc. But it's also a work of literary fiction. It isn't an easy book to pigeonhole. Will this be a challenge in marketing it?

A: I think the unusual nature of *The Letter from Death* is going to be more of a plus than a minus—plenty of readers are looking for something different. I think most intelligent readers are tired of books being written and sold according to how they will be shelved by mega-bookstore chains. If the book world were not so driven by categories, I'd avoid them altogether.

Q: I am interested in the tone with which Death addresses us. Initially, the biting sarcasm of Mark Twain or G.B. Shaw came to mind, but that tone modulates. By the end it reminded me of Rilke's mentoring voice in *Letters to a Young Poet*. Did you have any literary precedents in mind when writing *The Letter From Death*?

A: I wasn't thinking of any existing works, though I admire the writing of the three authors you mentioned. The concept for the book came to me naturally; Death seemed the only conceivable character who could be in a position to make these observations. I repeatedly adjusted the tone as my understanding of the character developed and as I interacted with my editors on early drafts. Although I decided not to specify it in the text, I imagined Death to be female. Some day, I might like to rework *The Letter from Death* as a performance piece, but I wouldn't be a candidate for the part. My spoken voice tends to be very soothing—I couldn't possibly pull off the opening lines!

Q: Would you characterize *The Letter from Death* as an anti-war book?

A: There's much more to it than that. The character of Death is probing the myriad ways our fear of mortality negatively affects our relationship to life and to our fellow humans. In my portrayal, Death has taken in the final breath of everyone who has ever lived—in her words: “You can't imagine all that I assimilate in that instant—the sentient remains of a life, the sum of remembrance.” This device gave me the opportunity to let Death speak with authority on aspects of human psychology absorbed over millennia—leading to surprising conclusions about why we kill, whether violence is hard-wired into “human nature,” and how distrust of “the other” comes about.

Q: The provocative illustrations employ a wide range of styles. How do you think they resonate with the book? David J Moats, your son, is the illustrator. Can you describe what the collaboration was like?

A: Dave was already very involved with this book, as one of my editors, when William Ayers suggested the text would lend itself well to illustrations. Dave was immediately interested. I love the fact that the reader can't guess what the next illustration will be like. The collaboration has been fun and rewarding, though a logistical challenge at times because Dave lives in London and I'm in Chicago. We knew it could be a once in a lifetime opportunity to collaborate this extensively on a project—but I hope it's not!

Q: You've written four books: a collection of fairy tales, two memoirs and now this challenging satirical piece. Is there any common thread among them?

A: I think I'd have to say my interest in psychology is what connects them all. Until I was in my late twenties I was very dismissive of the whole subject of psychology—I feel a little chagrined when I think of this now. Then my internal world came crashing down around me. Coming to terms with my psychological history was the only way out for me. A lot of this history, still hidden even from myself, was disguised symbolically in fairy tales I wrote at that time. I didn't realize their personal meaning until reading *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim, who later read my fairy tales and encouraged their publication. *The Gate of Dreams* is a collection of three of them. Several years afterward, I felt drawn to write a fictionalized memoir, *Legacy of Shadows*, when I realized that my own history—one of unresolved emotions being passed from generation to generation—was much more universal than I had thought. *Speak, Hands*, while also based on my own life, is a work of creative non-fiction, a meditation on the intricate relationships between gesture, memory and the unconscious. After writing these two experimental memoirs I found myself in a different place. In these explorations, I'd come to understand how fundamental and similar the psychological needs of all of us are, and I was ready to look outward. At the same time the world around me—around us—dramatically changed. In response to the shock of 9-11, the U.S. made war on two countries. I felt we were lurching forward in an irrational way. *The Letter from Death* was a way of channeling my angst into something constructive. Among other psychological issues, it explores the relationship between war and our fear of death.

Q: Before these four books, you had a successful twenty-year career in filmmaking, winning many awards at national and international festivals. Can you talk about how your short films relate to your writing?

A: With my lifelong creative partner JP Somersaulter, I made animated art films for children and adults, some based on our original stories and some on classic folk and fairy tales. Writing and illustrating the collection of my own fairy tales was the bridge from film to books. Paradoxically, I think the commonality between our films and my writing is simply that no two films or books I've been involved with are alike. We've told each story in the unique way it seemed to want to be told. Content has always driven form. This can be frustrating for anyone who wants to categorize art, but it's so much more interesting to work this way.

Q: *The Letter from Death* is published by Three Arts Press. How was your independent press established?

A: I had grown very used to creative independence as a filmmaker before *The Gate of Dreams*, which I wrote and illustrated, was published by Cranbrook Press. Their press had been established during the Arts and Crafts Movement and, in 1993, was in the process of reinventing itself. I was asked to oversee every aspect of the book's production. While I was learning this new craft, colleagues with whom I'd worked for years contributed their editorial, design and technical advice. The hands-on training that I acquired in producing *The Gate of Dreams* was gratifying in that the hardcover edition sold out, and the book was selected for the South Carolina reading awards list for 1995.

My first memoir, *Legacy of Shadows*, would not have been appropriate for Cranbrook Press, and I was reluctant to turn it over to a commercial publisher. I wanted to be sure there would be no sensationalism surrounding this very personal story, and I felt that most editors would want me to rewrite the book in the form of a conventional novel, which I had no interest in doing. With the supportive involvement of family and creative collaborators, Three Arts Press was established in 1998. My four titles are now in print, and the likely candidate for our next book is a ground-breaking collection of short stories by I.M. Cambalhota.

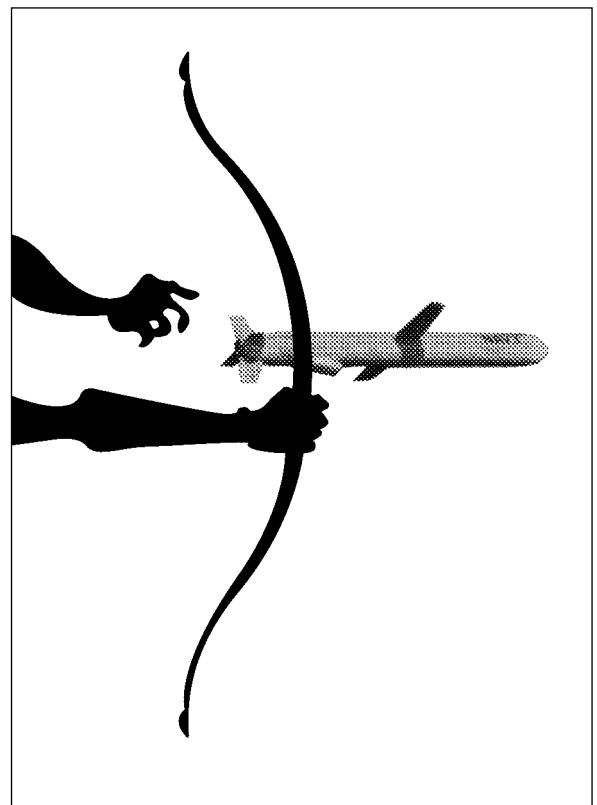
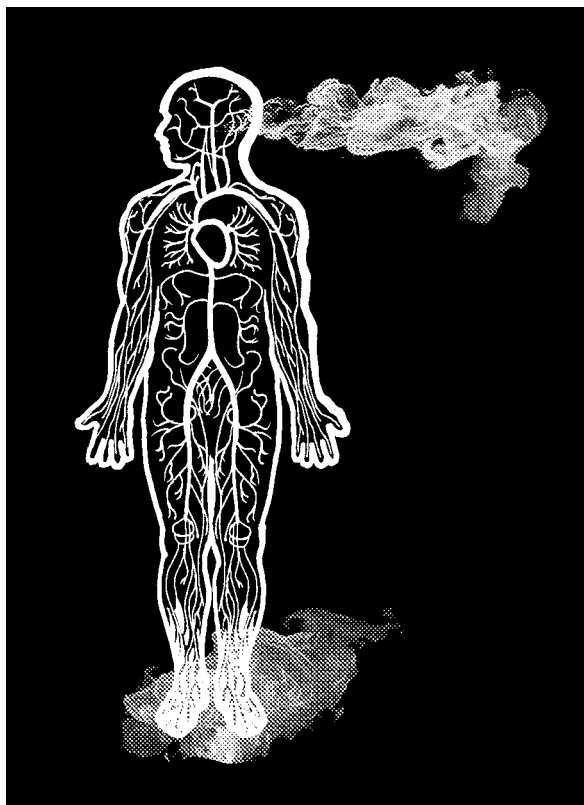
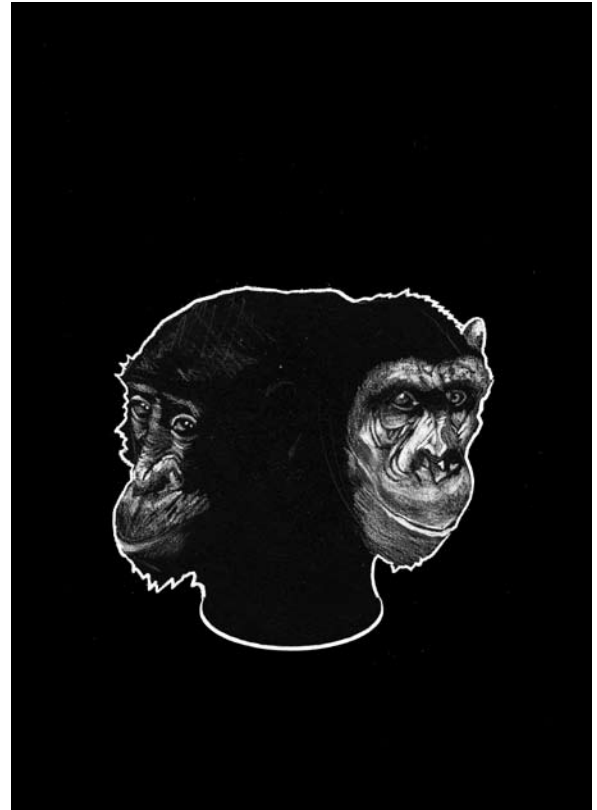
Q: In your experience, what have been the advantages and disadvantages of independent publishing?

A: I can't say independent publishing has been a moneymaking venture, primarily because we've insisted on maintaining such high production standards. Publishers are struggling these days, yet in many ways it's a good time for writers and artists to strike out on their own. Everything that involves the written word is changing because of new technologies in printing and the internet. I think there are ways to make independent publishing economically viable. Digital printing and print-on-demand may be very appropriate depending on the nature of the book, and eBooks are another option worth pursuing. The challenges of independent publishing are in marketing and distribution. But the flexibility of a small press invites experimentation, which can be tremendously satisfying, artistically, regardless of the bottom line.

The Letter from Death

Sample Illustrations

Illustrations © David Moats. Contact Mary Bisbee-Beek (mbisbee.beek@gmail.com) or Three Arts Press (info@threeartspress.com) for electronic images suitable for publication.



Excerpts from the book:

pp. 15, 19

“So much for what I am not. Now I’ll attempt the harder work—to define myself for the first time. Given the endless ways humanity has maligned me, why do I even bother? I’ll get to that later.

In the scheme of things, we all have a part to play. It falls to me to absorb your last breath. I don’t determine which breath it will be. In fact, my role is anything but aggressive. But when your life can no longer sustain itself, I have one moment with you, one moment in which to take in your final exhalation.

You can’t imagine all that I assimilate in that instant—the sentient remains of a life, the sum of remembrance. If there is suffering near the end, I am your release from that suffering. Contrary to entrenched belief, you have nothing to fear from me.

... I have many things to say to you. If you can tolerate the provocation, you’re unlikely to see me the same way again.”

pp. 20-21

“In all of those singular moments I have with you as individuals, how could I be unresponsive to you? Over the ages, I’ve absorbed so much of your sorrow, I’m imbued with it. I am more vast with your sorrows than your joys, since the ends of your lives are so often colored by the consciousness of parting. I meet you most often when you’ve lost your bluff and swagger, when you’re stripped down to vulnerability. In your solitude, I seldom find you hard to comprehend.

Yet, having assimilated human sensitivities, how can I regard your collective insensitivities with anything but disgust? Your societies profess to love “Truth” even as you subvert it. I’m stultified by your concerted capacity for self-deception, and your devotion to the myths with which you rationalize your communal actions and inaction. It is the resulting destructiveness of your species that I find abhorrent.

No matter how you behave, I’ll simply continue the work that falls to me. But I can’t resist asking you questions that torment me. I’ll be blunt: is your species incapable of even the most rudimentary observation?”

p. 55

“Millions have burned in this hell of yours. Last century, the numbers grew exponentially. One might conclude your fear of one another is inexhaustible, but underlying your militarism is your fear of me. Your dictum appears to be ... using any means necessary, force your enemies to face death before they can force you to do the same. It does not appear to matter whether the threat you feel from them is real or imagined. In war after war, you have chosen to send wave after wave of your barely grown children to meet me, rather than face me yourselves.”

Also By Lillian Moats

Legacy of Shadows

Genre: Fictionalized Memoir

ISBN: 0-9669576-0-1

Price: \$18.00

Binding: Hardcover

None of us is unaffected by the dreams and failures of our ancestors. In events played out before we are born, our stories have already begun.

Legacy of Shadows explores the psychological impact of unresolved emotion passed down through generations. Powerful and poetic, the book evolved from the author's exploration into the hidden impact of family history on her own psychology. Set in motion by the death of a small child in 1904, the story moves from Lincolnshire, England, to Toronto, to New York, to Chicago; yet the true setting remains the interior landscape. Revealing the private perceptions of a mother, daughter and granddaughter in turn, Moats offers readers an intimate perspective from which to consider how we become the people we are.

Speak, Hands

Genre: Creative non-fiction/ Memoir

ISBN: 0-9669576-2-8

Price: \$20.00

Binding: Hardcover

This daring literary work defies the conventions of memoir by questioning the very nature of memory and the traditional autonomous subject. Lillian Moats negotiates this complex narrative using four inner voices which challenge the distinctions between mind and body, subject and object, consciousness and the unconscious. *Speak, Hands* breaks through verbal bounds to transport us into the wordless realms of meditation and gesture. Combining prose, poetry, psychology, and philosophy, Moats conveys an extraordinary personal struggle that could not have been told with common literary devices.

The Gate of Dreams

Genre: Fairy Tales

ISBN: 0-9636492-1-3

Price: \$9.95

Binding: Paperback

The Gate of Dreams is a collection of original fairy tales reminiscent of classic fairy tale editions and illustrated profusely in silhouette. The sympathetic characters in "The Woodcarver's Daughter", "Franz the Fool", and "The Girl of the Bells," along with the rural settings of these stories, appeal to children and recall to adults that sense of delight, recognition, suspense and wonder found in the classic tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Moats' stories were first suggested for publication by the revered fairy tale scholar Bruno Bettelheim.

Publicity or Foreign Rights Inquiries: Contact Mary Bisbee-Beek of **Literary Ventures Fund:** mbisbee.beek@gmail.com

Further Information: literaryventures.org **Three Arts Press:** www.threeartspress.com, info@threeartspress.com

“Moats uses death not as a threat, but as a prism through which to examine the most profound questions that confront the human race today.”

Howard Zinn

“Moats has created a wise, unsettling, and beautiful book.”

Donna Seaman, BOOKLIST

The Letter from Death

by **Lillian Moats**

Illustrations by **David Moats**

Foreword by **Howard Zinn**

Lillian Moats' latest book, *The Letter from Death*, features a foreword by Howard Zinn and 20 evocative full-page illustrations by David Moats. This slim volume casts a bright light on how our unexamined fear of death has been reinforced and manipulated throughout history, resulting in the misdirection of our energies—away from the real and immediate challenges of this world and toward unnecessary war, injustice and self-destruction.

Lillian Moats is a writer, artist and filmmaker. *The Letter from Death* is her fourth book. Moats and her filmmaking partner JP Somersaulter have won over 40 national and international awards for their animated art films, which have been screened by invitation in festivals around the world.

Howard Zinn is a historian, social activist, playwright and author of *A People's History of the United States* and *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*.

David J Moats lives and works in London as a film journalist for The Quietus (www.thequietus.com) and as a freelance illustrator and architectural researcher.

Contact

Publicity or Foreign Rights Inquiries:

Literary Ventures Fund

Contact Mary Bisbee-Beek: mbisbee.beek@gmail.com

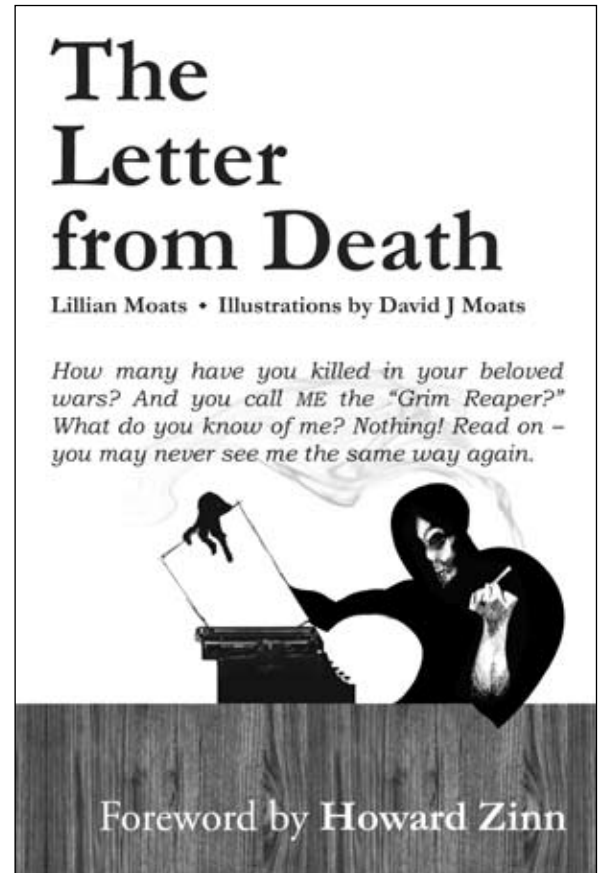
Distribution: Itasca Books, Minneapolis

www.itascabooks.com, 1-800-901-3480

Further Information

Literary Ventures Fund: www.literaryventuresfund.org

Three Arts Press: www.threeartspress.com
info@threeartspress.com



Publication Date: August, 2009

\$17.95/ Trade paperback

156 pages, 6" x 9"

ISBN: 0-9669576-3-6 / 978-0-9669576-3-1

Three Arts Press

Audience

Readers interested in:

- Peace and justice
- Social psychology and philosophy
- Issues of belief/non-belief
- Political fiction

Marketing

Targeted to:

- Major review and industry media
- Bloggers
- Bookstores
- Radio producers/ hosts
- Academic markets