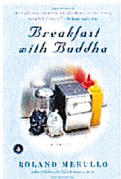




A WELL-READ ONLINE COMMUNITY

Breakfast with Buddha (Merullo)

- Summary
- Author Bio
- Book Reviews
- Discussion Questions
- Full Version
- Print



(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005B1AL70/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_il?ie=UTF8&camp=211189&creative=373489&creativeASIN=B005B1AL70&link_code=as3&tag=litl-20)

Breakfast with Buddha

Roland Merullo, 2007
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
356 pp.
ISBN-13: 9781565126169

Summary

When his sister tricks him into taking her guru on a trip to their childhood home, Otto Ringling, a confirmed skeptic, is not amused. Six days on the road with an enigmatic holy man who answers every question with a riddle is not what he'd planned. But in an effort to westernize his passenger—and amuse himself—he decides to show the monk some "American fun" along the way.

From a chocolate factory in Hershey to a bowling alley in South Bend, from a Cubs game at Wrigley field to his family farm near Bismarck, Otto is given the remarkable opportunity to see his world—and more important, his life—through someone else's eyes. Gradually, skepticism yields to amazement as he realizes that his companion might just be the real thing.

In Roland Merullo's masterful hands, Otto tells his story with all the wonder, bemusement, and wry humor of a man who unwittingly finds what he's missing in the most unexpected place. (*From the publisher.*)

Author Bio

- Born—September 19, 1953
- Raised—Revere, Massachusetts, USA
- Education—B.A., M.A., Brown University
- Awards—Massachusetts Book Award for Nonfiction; Maria Thomas Fiction Prize; Alex Award
- Currently—lives in western Massachusetts

Roland Merullo is an American author who writes novels, essays and memoir. His best-known works are the novels *Lunch with Buddha* (2012), *Breakfast with Buddha* (2007), *In Revere*, *In Those Days* (2002), *A Little Love Story* (2005), *Golfing with God* (2005), *Revere Beach Boulevard* (1998) and the memoir *Revere Beach Elegy* (2002). His books have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, German and Croatian

Early years

Merullo was born in Boston and raised in Revere, Massachusetts. His father, Roland (Orlando) was a civil engineer who worked for state government and was named personnel secretary by Christian Herter, governor of Massachusetts. In his 50s, Orlando attended Suffolk Law School, passed the Bar at 60, and became an attorney. Roland's mother Eileen was a physical therapist who worked at Walter Reed Army Hospital with amputees injured in the Pacific Theatre of World War II. Later, she became a science teacher and taught at the middle school level for 25 years. He has two brothers, Steve and Ken.

Merullo earned his high school degree from Phillips Exeter Academy. After receiving a B.A. and M.A. (in Russian Language and Literature) from Brown University, Merullo spent time in Micronesia during a stint with the Peace Corps. He worked in the former Soviet Union for the United States Information Agency and was employed as a cab driver and carpenter. He taught creative writing at Bennington College and Amherst College, and was a writer in residence at Miami Dade Colleges and North Shore Community College.

In 1979 Merullo married Amanda Stearns, a photographer he met in college. The couple lives in western Massachusetts and has two daughters.

His first published essays appeared in the early 1980s. They include a piece on solitude featured in *The Rosicrucian Digest* and a humorous "My Turn" column for *Newsweek*.

Writing

Leaving Losapas, Merullo's first novel, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1991 and named a B. Dalton Discovery Series Choice. *Publishers Weekly* called his second book, *A Russian Requiem* (1993), "smoothly written and multifaceted, solidly depicting the isolation and poverty of a city far removed from Moscow and insightfully exploring the psyches of individuals caught in the conflicts between their ideals and their careers."

The works *Revere Beach Boulevard*, *In Revere in Those Days*, and *Revere Beach Elegy* are often referred to as the Revere Beach trilogy. Of *In Revere, in Those Days* David Shribman of the *Boston Globe* wrote,

The details are just right, and the result is a portrait of a time and a place and a state of mind that has few equals. This is a story that is true to life because it is about life itself, the tragedies and trials and travails, and even the triumphs, momentary and meaningless as they sometimes seem. This is a Boston story for the ages.

PBS correspondent Ray Suarez said,

I've never met Roland Merullo, or even read anything he's written before now. Yet today I feel as if I've known him my whole life.... At the close of Elegy, the reader is comfortably walking alongside a man who has grown into himself, accepted and embraced his past.

A Little Love Story, published in 2005, centers on a woman with Cystic Fibrosis. According to *Bloomsbury Review* (2005), the novel...

tinkers with traditional formula; the lovers are neither innocent nor naive, nor completely helpless in the face of their impossible barrier to produce a love story for the 21st century.... [The story] circumscribes a dramatic arc that takes in 9/11, media saturation, lecherous men in politics, ethnic family stereotypes, adult-onset dementia, and terminal illness in the relatively young. This is an utterly charming, beautifully told, completely affecting story that is one part love story, one part medical thriller.

Merullo's early works have been termed thoughtful and reflective. "I think I am a person who cares about the emotional life of people...and so I spend a lot of time on the emotional experiences of my characters," he has said.

But *Golfing with God*, *Breakfast with Buddha*, *American Savior* and, most recently, *Lunch with Buddha* exhibit a more overtly spiritual theme—albeit humorous in tone. The seeds of this thematic shift can perhaps be traced to *A Little Love Story*. However, in the fall of 2008, Merullo surprised many with the release of *Fidel's Last Days*, his first thriller. At the time, Merullo said,

I've had editors counsel me to write the same book over and over, and some readers who complained that I haven't kept writing books set in greater Boston. But it would be like trying to keep a migratory bird in your backyard. I just want to go places, to see things, to observe the human predicament in different forms.... Like most novelists, I have a peculiar fascination with the way people behave and the psychological roots of, or reasons for, their behavior.

Merullo has won the Massachusetts Book Award for non fiction and the Maria Thomas Fiction Prize. He has been a *Booklist* Editor's Choice recipient and was among the finalists for a PEN New England / Winship Prize. In 2009, *Breakfast with Buddha* was nominated for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award and *American Savior* was chosen as an Honor Book in Fiction at the Massachusetts Book Awards. *Revere Beach Boulevard* was recently named one of New England's top 100 essential books by the *Boston Globe*. *The Talk-Funny Girl* was a 2012 Alex Award Winner. (From the publisher.)

Book Reviews

Please don't be put off when I describe this pleasant, engaging novel as a sermon. I admit I was put off during the first 50 pages or so, when I realized what I was in for, but I got to liking *Breakfast with Buddha* more and more as I went along and was very sorry when it ended.

Carolyn See - Washington Post

A laugh-out loud novel that's both comical and wise...balancing irreverence with insight.

Louisville Courier-Journal

Insightful, amusing, loving...There are lovely moments of enlightenment that are not accompanied by angels with flaming swords; rather, there is that peaceful blue sphere that is available to all of us.

Seattle Times

Merullo, author of the Revere Beach series and *Golfing with God*, delivers a comic but winningly spiritual road-trip novel. Otto Ringling is a food-book editor and a happily married father of two living in a tony New York suburb. After Otto's North Dakota parents are killed in a car crash, he plans to drive his ebulliently New Age sister, Cecilia, back home to sell the family farm. But when Otto arrives to pick up Cecilia in Paterson, N.J. (where she does tarot readings and past-life regressions), she declares her intention to give her half of the farm to her guru, Volvo Rinpoche, who will set up a retreat there. Cecilia asks Otto to take Rinpoche to North Dakota instead; after a fit of skeptical rage in which he rails internally against his sister's gullibility, he accepts, and the novel is off and running. Merullo takes the reader through the small towns and byways of Midwestern America, which look unexpectedly alluring through Rinpoche's eyes. Well-fed Western secularist Otto is only half-aware that his life might need fixing, and his slow discovery of Rinpoche's nature, and his own, make for a satisfying read. A set piece of Otto's chaotic first meditation session is notably hilarious, and the whole book is breezy and affecting.

Publishers Weekly

With *Breakfast with Buddha*, Roland Merullo takes on one of the oldest and most popular literary genres—the road novel.... Despite the presence of a few mechanical scenes and characters, reviewers appreciated Merullo's engaging writing style and his light and joyous treatment of what could have been very heavy-handed spiritual material.

Bookmarks Magazine

Veteran novelist Merullo continues the spiritual odyssey he began in *Golfing with God* (2005).... [and] using the lightest of touches, slowly turns this low-key comedy into a moving story of spiritual awakening.—*Joanne Wilkinson*

Booklist

Discussion Questions

Use our LitLovers Book Club Resources; they can help with discussions for any book:

- **How to Discuss a Book** (helpful discussion tips)
- **Generic Discussion Questions—Fiction and Nonfiction**
- **Read-Think-Talk** (a guided reading chart)

Also consider these LitLovers discussion pointers to get you started with *Breakfast with Buddha*:

1. The big question, of course, is what does Otto Ringling come to learn—what are the spiritual insights he gains—and when does he begin to learn things? What's the turning point? How is his life changed by this spiritual journey?
2. Talk about the book's humor.
3. Pick out several passages which you found profound...which made you sit up and take notice...and discuss them.
4. Do you see yourself in Otto?

(Questions by LitLovers. Please feel free to use them, online or off, with attribution. Thanks.)



SIGN UP FOR
FREE NEWSLETTER



LIKE US ON
FACEBOOK



FOLLOW US
ON TWITTER



FOLLOW US
ON INSTAGRAM



SHARE YOUR
INTERESTS



FEATURED BOOKS

MAY WE RECOMMEND

WHAT'S NEW

NEWSLETTERS

RANDOM DRAWINGS

LISTS

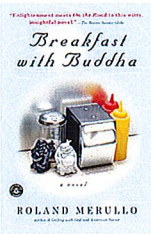
FAVORITES

STORE

SEARCH



BOOK PROFILE



BREAKFAST WITH BUDDHA

By Roland Merullo
Algonquin Books, August 2008
www.AlgonquinBooks.com
www.rolandmerullo.com

SHOP
INDIE
BOOKSTORES

SHOP AT
Powell's Books

Trade Paperback, 336 pages, \$13.95, ISBN: 9781565126169
Subject: Adventure / Humor / Personal Discovery

Print Profile



SUMMARY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PRAISE

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How do the first scenes of Otto with his family set the stage for what happens in the rest of the novel?
2. In what ways does Otto change over the course of the story? What key moments during the trip play a part in his evolution?
3. How would you describe Cecelia? Is she, as Otto says, "as flaky as a good spanakopita crust"? Is there some substance to her?
4. Do you believe Cecelia changes over the course of the story, or do you think it's only Otto's opinion of her that changes? Share specific scenes that support your view.
5. Which events or remarks in the novel convince you that Rinpoche is a legitimate spiritual teacher? Were there situations where you doubted his authenticity?
6. Humor is often employed a way of making us relate to a particular situation. How does the author use humor in this way? Are there particular passages that were especially funny to you? If so, why?
7. The book is partly about "meaning of life" issues, but it also has a lot to say about contemporary American society. What does Otto see and hear that makes him encouraged or discouraged about the state of American life?
8. Discuss the role landscape plays in the story.
9. Jeannie, Anthony, and Natasha are minor characters in the novel, but how do they serve to round out Otto's character? How do they influence your feelings about Cecelia and Rinpoche?
10. Amish country, the Hershey's factory, a bowling alley, a baseball game, taking an architectural tour of Chicago, playing miniature golf, swimming in a Minnesota lake, why do you suppose the author chose these kinds of activities? Discuss the purpose each activity serves in the story. What would the book have been like had these activities not been included?
11. When Otto comes across the metaphor of the piano-playing boy in Rinpoche's book, he says, "If I had been editing the book, I would have written in the manuscript margins, 'Work this,' meaning that the author should take the general idea and sharpen it, make it clearer to the reader" (page 174). Yet Otto can't get the the plight of the piano-playing man out of his mind. Why do suppose that is? What aspect of the metaphor is unsettling to Otto? Do you find it unsettling? If so, why?
12. How would you characterize what Otto experiences after sitting with Rinpoche for two hours in silence (page 237)? Have you ever experienced the pleasure of a quiet mind? Was it similar or dissimilar to Otto's reaction?
13. Do you believe Rinpoche is changed by the end of the trip with Otto? If so, to what degree is Otto responsible for that change?
14. Do you believe the ending of the novel was the best ending for this story? If the story were to continue, where should it go from here?

Title: Roland Merullo

Publication Information

American Novelist (1953 -)

Source: *Contemporary Authors Online*. Detroit: Gale, 2014. From *Literature Resource Center*.

Document Type: Biography



Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2015 Gale, Cengage Learning

Updated:10/24/2014

Table of Contents:

- Awards
- Career
- Further Readings About the Author
- Media Adaptations
- Personal Information
- Sidelights
- Writings by the Author

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Born September 19, 1953, in Boston, MA; son of Roland A. (a lawyer) and Eileen Frances (a teacher) Merullo; married Amanda Stearns (a photographer), October 20, 1979; children: Alexandria, Juliana. **Education:** Brown University, B.A., 1975, M.A., 1976. **Addresses:** Home: MA. Agent: Marly Rusoff & Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 524, Bronxville, NY 10708.

CAREER:

Writer, novelist, educator. Served in the Peace Corps in Micronesia, 1979-80; worked as a carpenter, c. 1983-90; Bennington College, Bennington, VT, teacher of writing and literature, 1993-2000;. Visiting lecturer, Amherst College, Amherst, MA, 2000--. Writer in residence, North Shore Community College and Miami Dade Colleges.

AWARDS:

PEN New England/L.L. Winship Prize finalist, 1998, for *Revere Beach Boulevard*; Maria Thomas Fiction Award, Peace Corps Writers, 2003; Massachusetts Book Award, 2003, for *Revere Beach Elegy: A Memoir of Home and Beyond*; Alex Award, American Library Association, 2012, for *The Talk-Funny Girl*.

WORKS:

WRITINGS:

NOVELS

- *Leaving Losapas*, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 1991.
- *A Russian Requiem*, Little, Brown (Boston, MA), 1993.

- *Revere Beach Boulevard*, Holt (New York, NY), 1998.
- *In Revere, in Those Days*, Shaye Areheart Books (New York, NY), 2002.
- *A Little Love Story*, Shaye Areheart Books (New York, NY), 2005.
- *Golfing with God: A Novel of Heaven and Earth*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), 2005.
- *Breakfast with Buddha*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), 2007.
- *American Savior: A Novel of Divine Politics*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), 2008.
- *Fidel's Last Days*, Shaye Areheart Books (New York, NY), 2008.
- *The Talk-Funny Girl*, Crown (New York, NY), 2011.
- *Lunch with Buddha* (sequel to *Breakfast with Buddha*), AJAR Contemporaries (Georgetown, MA), 2012.
- *Vatican Waltz*, Crown (New York, NY), 2013.

OTHER

- *Passion for Golf: In Pursuit of the Innermost Game*, Lyons Press (New York, NY), 2000.
- *Revere Beach Elegy: A Memoir of Home and Beyond*, Beacon Press (Boston, MA), 2002.
- *The Italian Summer: Golf, Food, and Family at Lake Como*, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY), 2009.
- *Demons of the Blank Page: 15 Obstacles That Keep You from Writing & How to Conquer Them*, PFP Publishing (Georgetown, MA), 2011.

Also author of the serialized novellas *The Boston Tangler*, 1999, and *The Addition*, 2001. Contributor to *Our Fathers: Reflections by Sons*, Beacon Press, 2002, and *Boston: Voices and Visions*, University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. Contributor to periodicals, including *Boston Globe*, *Outside*, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *Forbes*, *Yankee*, *Travel and Leisure*, *Golf*, *Links*, and *Details*. Novels have been translated into German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Korean.

MEDIA ADAPTATIONS:

Leaving Losapas has been optioned for film by director and screenwriter John Turturro.

Sidelights

Roland Merullo has traveled extensively and set his novels in countries he has visited. While writing *Leaving Losapas*, Merullo supported himself by working as a carpenter, and the novel took seven years to complete. It is set in Micronesia, where Merullo served in the Peace Corps, and is the story of Boston-born Leo Markin, whose faith in both his religion and the military are shaken by his experiences as a Marine during the Vietnam conflict. Merullo followed with *A Russian Requiem*, set in 1991 during the collapse of the Soviet Union. The protagonists are American diplomat Anton Czesich, who is coordinating a relief program, and Sergei Propenko, his Russian counterpart, and the story revolves around the politics and lives of these men.

Merullo's *Revere Beach Boulevard* is the story of four days in the lives of an extended Italian American family living in an Italian neighborhood in Revere, Massachusetts. Narrated by a Catholic priest who has known them for years, the novel depicts the various family members: daughter Joanie, a television news reporter; son Peter, a gambler; Vito, the hard-working father; and Lucy, the mother who watches over them all.

When Peter finds himself in impossible debt to a loan shark, his family gathers around to help him, leading to deadly trouble. GraceAnne A. DeCandido wrote in *Booklist* that the book "will create a shiver in the hearts of Italian American readers and gather up those who aren't in a rush of empathy." Francine Fialkoff concluded in the *Library Journal* that *Revere Beach Boulevard* contains "intricate story lines and fluid writing."

Revere Beach Elegy: A Memoir of Home and Beyond is a collection of essays about places that include Merullo's hometown of Revere. He tells of the disappointment of parents who felt that he wasted his fine education at Exeter Academy and Brown University when he took jobs like driving a cab and working in the Peace Corps while beginning his writing career. He writes of his difficulties in documenting the culture of a South Pacific clan and a trip to the Italian town where his wife's grandmother was born, and where they were greeted with great hospitality. *Library Journal* contributor Nancy R. Ives felt that "Merullo writes with warmth and a refreshing openness that will endear him to readers."

Although it is a work of fiction, there are parallels in the life of Merullo and the protagonist in the novel *In Revere, in Those*

Days. Anthony "Tonio" Benedetto, who at eleven lost his parents, is raised by his grandparents in Revere, loving people who gently guide Tonio through their example. He leaves behind his family, which includes his boxer uncle Peter and cousin Rosalie, to enter Exeter on scholarship. The story is a meditation on class and also race, as Tonio's black roommate is likewise from a family much less privileged than most of the boys at Exeter. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor described *In Revere, in Those Days* as "emotionally complex, politically intelligent, beautifully written: Among the best from a novelist in the classic American tradition."

Jake Entwistle, the protagonist of *A Little Love Story*, is a carpenter and artist whose girlfriend, Giselle, died aboard Flight 92 on September 11, 2001. Jake meets Janet Rossi, the assistant to the Massachusetts governor with whom she has been having an affair, and a victim of cystic fibrosis who may die before she receives a lung transplant. Jake takes on the task of finding a donor and a doctor as his love for Janet grows. *Booklist* reviewer Carol Haggas felt that this novel is more than its title implies. "This is not a little love story. It is, quite utterly, grand."

Merullo employs religious motifs again in his novel *Breakfast with Buddha*. The story recounts the adventures of New York City editor Otto Ringling and his sister Cecelia as they plan their return to the family homestead in North Dakota following their parents' death in a car crash. Cecelia, it turns out, has given her share of the farm to Volya Rinpoche, her Zen guru, and she wants Rinpoche to accompany her and Otto on the drive back to the Midwest. Annoyed at first, Otto decides to make the best of it, planning a trip that will expose Rinpoche to the best of American popular culture. Along the way, the grieving Otto is slowly drawn to Rinpoche's serene wisdom, learning that the point of life's journey is spiritual growth. Marjorie Kehe, writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, found this road trip "surprisingly endearing," pointing out that, though the book could rightly be called "'spirituality light,' ... it's still a thoughtful message."

"Merullo writes with grace and intelligence and knows that even in a novel of ideas it's not the religion that matters, it's the relationship," observed John Dufresne in the *Boston Globe*. Describing Otto's journey as "meditative and ultimately joyous," the critic added that "it's quite a treat ... to eavesdrop on these two inquisitive and witty [characters] and hear what they talk about when they talk about life."

In his 2008 novel, *Fidel's Last Days*, Merullo tells the story of a shadowy group out to assassinate Fidel Castro, the communist leader of Cuba. Called the White Orchid, the group enlists Carolina Perez, a former Central Intelligence Agency operative, to smuggle a special poison into Cuba. Once there, she is to hand it over to Carlos Guitierrez, Castro's personal physician and minister of health, who will administer the poison to Castro.

"Merullo not only constructs a highly suspenseful, believable thriller; he also captures the mood of a country," wrote Bill Ott in *Booklist*. A *Publishers Weekly* contributor remarked: "The suspense is as thick as an authentic cafe cubano."

In his 2011 novel, *The Talk-Funny Girl*, Merullo presents Marjorie Richards, married and the mother of children, recalling her earlier life in an desperately impoverished and dysfunctional family in New England. She is the daughter of self-righteous, brutal parents who belong to a cult and use their twisted beliefs to beat and control their daughter. The novel's title refers to the fact that the family has become so far removed from society that their use of language has evolved into an inbred dialect. This dialect "also forms a crucial piece of her identity, the way she thinks about herself in relation to the world," wrote a *Boston Bibliophile* Web site contributor. Carolyn See, writing for the *Washington Post Online*, remarked: "Marjorie and her family members are freaks, half savage, not entirely human."

It turns out that Marjorie's parents belong to a cult of twisted individuals who believe it is their God-approved right to torture their children. When Marjorie becomes old enough, her parents, who have been relying on government subsidies to survive, send Marjorie out to work so they can live off of her income. Marjorie finds a job as a mason's apprentice working on the construction of a cathedral. She forms a friendship with her boss, Sands, and slowly begins to see a possible life beyond the horrendous confines of her parent's home. Meanwhile, it becomes apparent that a sadistic murderer is on the loose, killing young women.

Noting Merullo's "inventive use of language in creating the Richards' strange dialect," *Booklist* contributor Joanne Wilkinson also wrote that Merullo "delivers a triumphant story." A *Publishers Weekly* contributor commented: "The kidnap-and-murder plot Merullo adds keeps the pages turning."

Vatican Waltz follows Cynthia Piantedosi as she grieves her grandmother's death. Her only solace is the church; she is a devout Catholic, just like her grandmother. Cynthia is so devout that she eventually becomes the first female priest in the Catholic faith, and she travels to the Vatican to deepen her practice. When she arrives, Cynthia is confronted by scandal and intrigue, and she questions her decision to devote her life to Catholicism. The story is "a fresh, moving portrait of religion as it could and should be," a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor announced. "The cliffhanging finale offers hope that we will see more of Cynthia's odyssey in

future books." J.L. Morin, writing in *Library Journal*, was equally laudatory, commenting: "This spiritual journey, full of transcendent descriptions and plot twists, brings many moments of wisdom and humor to savor." Conceding that the author's "prior novels about faith have sold well," a *Publishers Weekly* columnist commented: "Here's praying for a similar outcome for this fresh take."

While several reviewers praised the thoughtful tone of *Vatican Waltz*, a contributor to the online *Bay State Reader's Advisory* warned: "I'm not sure how accurately the author has created the interior voice of a young woman. There were many passages in *Vatican Waltz* ... that I could clearly hear in my imagination the middle-aged, male narrator of *Breakfast with Buddha*--Otto Ringling--saying in the exact same words. (I suppose one could argue that spirituality has no gender, so it would make sense that Cynthia and Otto share patterns of thought, although starting from very different places, and that it's not just the same author's voice coming through in both narratives." *Boston Globe* correspondent Matthew Gilbert noted: "It can't be easy to write compellingly about a bland, introverted lead character. ... But, in his new novel ... Merullo manages to create a surprisingly absorbing portrayal of such a woman." Gilbert went on to conclude: "Ultimately, what kind of novel about the church is *Vatican Waltz*--realistic, fantastical, hopeful, angry, evasive? Merullo gives Cynthia's story an unexpected and thought-provoking turn that answers that question in no uncertain terms." Another positive assessment was proffered by Patricia Taylor Edmisten on the *Peace Corps Worldwide* Web site: "Merullo is keenly familiar with the fissures in the Church that have caused believers to split off like bits of a continent that break off in response to the shifting of tectonic plates."

Merullo, who wrote a previous book about the game of golf, includes God as a golfer in *Golfing with God: A Novel of Heaven and Earth*. God seeks help from a deceased pro who plays on heaven's 8,187 courses with players who include Moses and Buddha. Ott noted in *Booklist* that Merullo not only gets the game right, he also "writes with wit and subtlety rather than trying to pound inspiration into our heads with a titanium driver."

Merullo's travel memoir, *The Italian Summer: Golf, Food, and Family at Lake Como*, was published in 2009 and recounts Merullo's decision to take his wife and daughters to Lake Como in Italy for a summer. Merullo focuses on his idyllic summer with family. Although he describes eating good Italian food and playing golf, Merullo ultimately fails to fully embrace a slower pace of life. Ott, writing again in *Booklist*, noted that Merullo's "low-key charm and wit" is comparable whether he is describing golf courses or "as he rhapsodizes over prosciutto and Pinot Grigio." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor called the book "a colorful, affectionate tour of Italian landscape and food."

FURTHER READINGS:

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

BOOKS

- Merullo, Roland, *Revere Beach Elegy: A Memoir of Home and Beyond*, Beacon Press (Boston, MA), 2002.
- Merullo, Roland, *The Italian Summer: Golf, Food, and Family at Lake Como*, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY), 2009.

PERIODICALS

- *Booklist*, September 1, 1993, Thomas Gaughan, review of *A Russian Requiem*, p. 35; September 1, 1998, GraceAnne A. DeCandido, review of *Revere Beach Boulevard*, p. 66; November 15, 2001, Gilbert Taylor, review of *Revere Beach Elegy*, p. 540; August, 2002, GraceAnne A. DeCandido, review of *In Revere, in Those Days*, p. 1924; July, 2005, Carol Haggas, review of *A Little Love Story*, p. 1900; September 1, 2005, Bill Ott, review of *Golfing with God: A Novel of Heaven and Earth*, p. 56; September 1, 2007, Joanne Wilkinson, review of *Breakfast with Buddha*, p. 50; December 15, 2008, Bill Ott, review of *Fidel's Last Days*, p. 26; February 15, 2009, Bill Ott, review of *The Italian Summer: Golf, Food, and Family at Lake Como*, p. 17; June 1, 2011, Joanne Wilkinson, review of *The Talk-Funny Girl*, p. 38; November 15, 2013, Stephanie Turza, review of *Vatican Waltz*, p. 22.
- *Books*, April 15, 2007, review of *Golfing with God*, p. 11.
- *Boston*, September, 1993, Sarah Wright, review of *A Russian Requiem*, p. 35.
- *Boston Globe*, December 9, 2007, John Dufresne, review of *Breakfast with Buddha*; December 4, 2013, Matthew Gilbert, review of *Vatican Waltz*.
- *Christian Science Monitor*, January 2, 2008, Marjorie Kehe, "In *Breakfast with Buddha*, an Average Joe Meets a Siberian Monk," p. 15.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, November 1, 2001, review of *Revere Beach Elegy*, p. 1537; July 1, 2002, review of *In Revere, in Those Days*, p. 910; June 1, 2005, review of *A Little Love Story*, p. 606; August 1, 2005, review of *Golfing with God*, p. 809; July 15, 2007, review of *Breakfast with Buddha*; February 1, 2009, review of *The Italian Summer*; November 15, 2013,