



the quint 4.2

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EDITORIAL

Door Wide Open

In 1975, I made my first trip “up” north. My boyfriend and I drove up the Dempster Highway in search of something neither of us, in the naïveté of youth, could define nor understand. I know now it was wilderness I was after. Surrounded by the vastness and beauty of the Ogilvie Mountains, I felt a strange yet pleasant kind of unleashing, perhaps of soul, as though the north was a metaphor for possibility. The door was wide open.

Pierre Berton asked in *The Wild Frontier*, why it is we have such a strong attraction for the frontier. For those that ventured into the Canadian wilderness in the late 1800’s, he suggested it was often ignorance; the hardships were not envisaged by those who longed for the mystery of the wilderness. He said it attracted dreamers, mystics, romantics, adventurers, and zealots. People who “belonged to that breed which cannot endure the humdrum; because they wished to test themselves, body and soul, even at the peril of their lives; and because, within themselves, there were their own frontiers, and these too, must be attacked and conquered.” Berton understood wilderness to be a mirror to the innerworld. Understood as such, the north becomes a place for the exploration of self.

In honoring that endeavor, I chose not to limit the theme of this issue, but rather, left the door wide open. The contributors to this edition of the *quint* – all staff at Northern Lights College - have graciously opened wide the doors to their inner world. Tanya Clary’s fiction and poetry lead us into a world where we must take on the difficult burden of bearing witness to violence. GP Lainsbury’s laugh-out-loud, yet despairing take on late modernity, and the sorry state of the soul in a culture of meaninglessness, left me lonely for the authenticity and self-awareness he suggests we lack. Pamela den Ouden takes us on a lighthearted journey into her passion for letter writing, while Monique Pharand takes us on a delightful drive through the Gatineau in her father’s 1960 Chevy Impala. I can’t shake the



image of an eye popping open whenever I think of Donna Kane's postcard story. Lisa Verbisky suggests that creativity has its place in scientific writing. Helen Knott offers a delightful short story inspired by her father's childhood experience of the search for belonging, and my own story evokes the search for home. We are fortunate to have this edition framed by the fine art of Jennifer Bowes.

I want to thank Sue Matheson for inviting me to guest edit this edition. I'm indebted to the contributors who graciously allowed me to help shape their stories. Creative writers understand that the exploration of self through the revelations of one's inner world, is the path to that authenticity GP Lainsbury suggests we are in need of. Vincent Van Gogh, in a letter to his brother Theo wrote, "Well, what shall I say; our inward thoughts, do they ever show outwardly? There may be a great fire in our soul, but no one ever comes to warm himself at it, and the passers-by see only a little bit of smoke coming through the chimney, and pass on their way."

Welcome to this edition of *the quint*. Where there's smoke, there's fire. Come on in. The door is wide open.

**Dawn Service
Guest Editor**

Heads – Installation

Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

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A Simple Task

A simple task—
mailing a book of poetry to a friend
I wrap carefully
in cheery birthday paper
party hats and streamers
in neon pink and green
a padded envelope
assures arrival in good shape

to save five percent
I print my own shipping label
from the Canada Post web site

sender information . . .
recipient address . . .
payment method . . .
a few more clicks on the keyboard
and the printer hums
As I cut on the dotted line
to separate label from receipt
I read the fine print
in both official languages:

The sender warrants that this item
does not contain dangerous goods
L'expéditeur garantit que cet envoi
ne contient pas de matières dangereuses

quint 8

I put the scissors down

In all good conscience
I cannot mail it

On my next trip south
I hand-deliver the book

Pamela den Ouden

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“... Yet it gives me pleasure to remember how many detours I had to make, along how many walls I had to grope in the darkness of my ignorance until I found the door which lets in the light of truth... In such a manner did I dream of truth.”¹

Artist Statement - Jennifer Bowes

My work attempts to achieve a balance between control and chance. The work is process-oriented, where every stitch, knot and/or mark becomes a record of a moment, pause or thought. My interest is not so much in direct representation, but rather in capturing a sense of human experience and presence, tradition and invention. The act of repeating similar movements is very grounding, allowing for contemplation.

I have been working with repetition for approximately seven years, manipulating the surface and gesture of paper. In covering the individual letters of a book with a stitch, the work started out as an imposition of silence, being very much about escape, isolation, longing and retrieval. There has been a shift of both intent and influence, where I have become much more interested in the transformation that occurs within both the material and object. By imposing a pattern into a fragile material, it inherently becomes stronger. An object can act to both contain and reveal the memory of the process, touch and intent of the creator, where the object and/or image becomes a container for thought.

I am influenced by my physical environment; especially patterns, visual rhythms and textures found in nature. During harvest time, the hay bales are placed in arbitrary patterns over an expanded space. When the sun sets, there is a raking light, creating a sense of suspension. For a moment, it is as though nothing is substantial or relevant; the silence becomes overwhelming and physical. I attempt to create a similar sense of suspension, one between an active moment and an extended period of time. I work from memory, in most cases, rather than observation, attempting to re-create an emotional response to a place, or to a piece of music or poetry. The process becomes much more about

recollection, the accumulation of moments, thoughts and/or silence. The final image becomes simply a vessel, made up of collected fragments that re-constitute a whole. A friend wrote in response, ‘it induces strangely contradictory impulses: to cherish and protect its delicacy and fragility and to probe its enticingly half-revealed messages.’²

featured in this issue: works by Jennifer Bowes

The Dream of Scipio. Book pages and thread. 2001.

In Silence the trees wept. Book pages, thread and ink. 2001

Woven Knots. Detail. Butcher cord, thread and ink. 2002

Suspended. Knitted book pages. 2005-2007.

Suspended. Detail. Knitted book pages. 2005-2007.

Head project. Porcelain (Raku glaze). 2008.

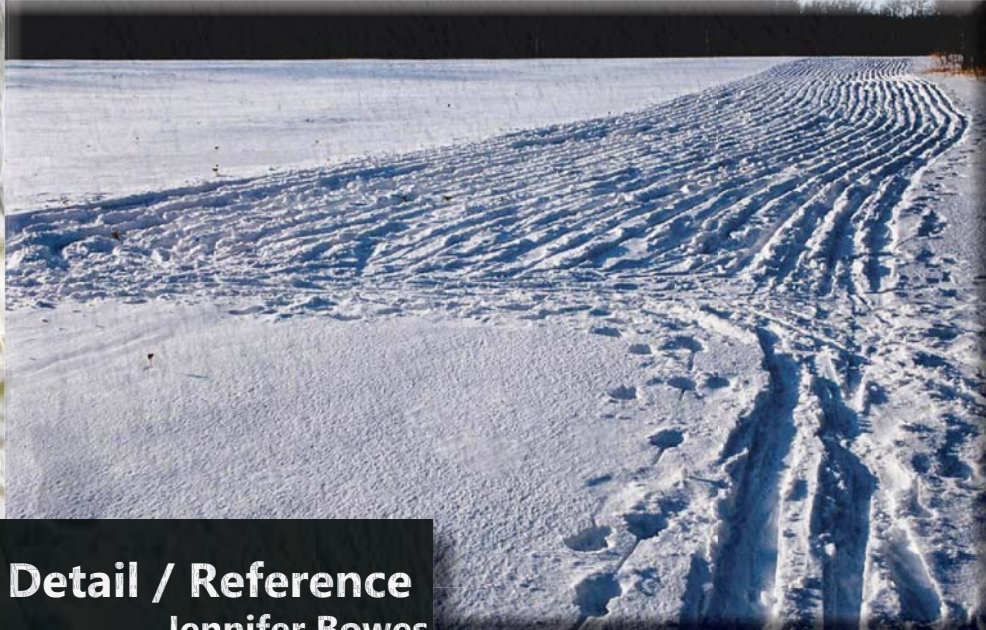
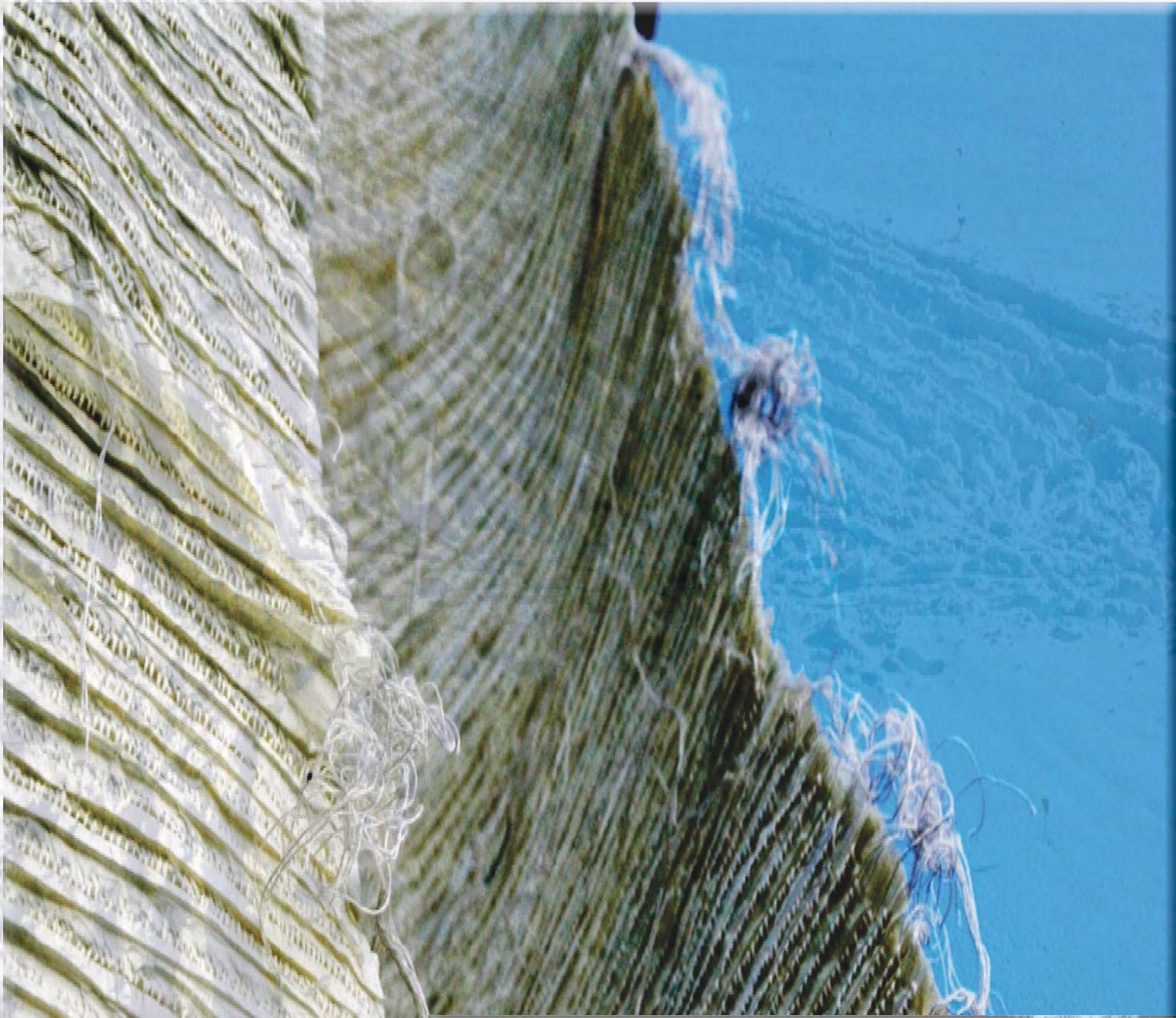
Head project. Detail. Porcelain (Raku glaze). 2008.

Heads – Installation shot at the Banff Centre – The Other Gallery with Dagmara Genda.

In Silence – Installation shot at the Harcourt House Gallery in Edmonton. Tissue paper and thread. 2009.

In Silence – Detail. Tissue paper and thread. 2009.

Reference Work for *In Silence*.



In Silence – Detail / Reference
Jennifer Bowes

Photos: Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

In Silence – Detail

Jennifer Bowes

In Silence – Detail

Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

Creativity in Scientific Writing

by Lisa Verbisky

My experiences as a college instructor along with conversations with friends have clearly established the prevailing belief that the title of “Creativity in Scientific Writing” is an oxymoron. Early in my science career, a writer friend of mine told me that writing a report based on research was not really writing; it was only reporting data. Knowing the effort and care that goes into writing scientific pieces, I bristled at this comment. I responded that not only was it writing, but writing that required vast amounts of skill and creativity. After much consideration given to my friend’s comment, my belief that creativity is vitally important in scientific writing only grew, and that it might even fall within the genre of creative writing.

The scientific research process typically involves proposal writing to secure funding, designing a research project and compiling the resulting reports. In order to pique the interest of a panel of non-experts in your research field the scientific writer must convince the proposal reader of the value of his or her research. This involves building a story that propels the reader from virtually zero knowledge to believing in the value of its contribution to the scientific and larger community; a skill that requires the scientist to develop an ability to clearly express thoughts.

Although creative, perhaps scientific writing is not creative writing in the strictest sense. But if one defines creative writing as self expression, is not the scientific process and subsequent written product the ultimate in self expression? Firstly, a researcher creates the material on which the writing is based through the research; information that did not exist in the past. Secondly, the focus of the experiment comes from a genuine interest in that topic and a genuine belief of what is important to our society; a true reflection of what the researcher believes to be valuable in this world.

Despite my best efforts, I have largely failed to instill the importance of creativity in scientific report and proposal writing. I recall a conversation with a graduate from my science based program. She spent years working in the field from which she graduated, but then decided to create her own business and so began teaching yoga. As part of the promotion for her growing business, she submitted poetic, self-reflective, and elegantly written stories about yoga to a local magazine. One day, I jokingly enquired why she had reserved her creative writing skills for these

publications and did not use it in her scientific report writing as a student. She shrugged her shoulders and replied quizzically that that was science.

Despite my apparent dismal success rate, my efforts will continue to instill the importance of creativity in scientific writing.

15 *quint*

Ocean's holding:

i hold the words of others
stories
horrors
images
of selves neither false nor attainable

*the beauty of one's Face, when pain finally, again
rushes the surface of consciousness
challenges the sky-red sunset beauty that overtakes
awe in its presence, honour to witness both*

in the waters of Mazunte

after moments of ache, revulsion,
remembering over/come

no longer Witness
but Carrier of hurt[s]

not away
only changing owners

i acquire
childhood rapes
murdered cousins, brothers, mothers and dogs
haunting fears of hunger, strangers that were once real, the unwelcomed

let me lie here

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and piss out
for whales and dolphins to swim in
what i hold a bladder full of
what i hear, what cannot lighten

*these are not my
stories. not my words. i carry the weight of/ or others
surrender them to you*

Tanya Clary

17 *quint*

Here and Now

It is not moments that divide days from nights
Nor is it infinite blissful dreams
Or calendar boxes with lines painted through them
These define how far or near I am
To finding me

If I forget what exists
Beneath the fleshy surfaces
Under the measurable appendages
Behind the soft pools of iris
The mirror will not tell me
Who I am

There's a balancing of time
With no foreseeable balance
I tip the scales
In favour of pursuit
After all don't we all
Deserve to chase happiness?

Scattered seconds of living
Gathered like loose change
From beneath the couch cushions
At the end of the month
My cupped hands are not yet full
And I wonder where
I had spent it all

quint 18

I am a six armed goddess
Negligent of her already perfect form
Reaching out for transformation
On horizons edge
Pulling on the stars and shadows
Of nights lived and lost
And trying to hold on to
The light of the present

No one ever told me
You cannot emulate three faces
Exist in three planes of time
While embracing and waging war
With versions of self
And still expect peace

I've been searching
For slivers of enlightenment
In fractured reflections
My eyes need adjusting
Because I cannot see myself

I do not dwell in the future
And I can choose to not be
A projection of my past
No longer will I chase
After a better being
Not allowing

19 *quint*

The space or faith needed
For being

I find myself
Where I had forgotten to look all along
I find myself
Here
I find myself
Now

Helen Knott

Doubts Accumulate

as a single piece of paper
tore in half
again and again until
one is left
holding
the compact layers
of a postage-sized demolition
until and when
you have reduced the paper
to the smallest bits
the fingers can possibly tear
only then do you let go
of what
you know
or thought
you knew and then
and only then
as you make your way back
through and out
of the stamp collection
of ideas and knowledge
can you really know
anything at all
and that is nothing
you know nothing
at all
and this, you realize
is where
you've been led

21 *quint*

you have worked so hard to come
to nothing
the only altar

nothing is the religion
that tears
something
to pieces

Dawn Service

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My Father is Dying Alone Now

and I walk the twenty two steps
to the outhouse
aware of the slippage of time
that takes him round
the path of the garden outside his window
the one they lock, as if
he might dare to crawl
out in the night
and take
back that distant northern star
that leads home

I was never, or feel as though I was never
kind enough to him
as though through kindness, I might
reveal
an aching love caught
as fists in the throat
later in his life I saw
in his eyes the same regret
the awful difficulty of a father's love
for a daughter not fully recognized, held
not knowing how to hold
a child as she grew beyond
a whisker rub or the tightening of skate laces
at a winter rink

he knew laces as only a hockey player could
but after the laces I don't know
where he went, or I

23 *quint*

only that
this year's spring I raked
the dead leaves from his garden
while he circled the path, trying
to keep his legs, his feet in shoes, alive
then stood
in the dirt gathering handfuls
wanting to help, be useful with leaves, at 83
unaware his feet were crushing
the newly emerging shoots

round and round he goes
the garden path
waxing and waning past the last window
of his life
courting and counting steps as though
each were fingerholds
on the edge of a precipice
over which one sees
the awful
end

I give you these words now
that you may place them on your tongue
payment ready
for the ferryman who will
carry you across the river
to the other side

Dawn Service

march/12

In The Silence the trees wept

Jennifer Bowes

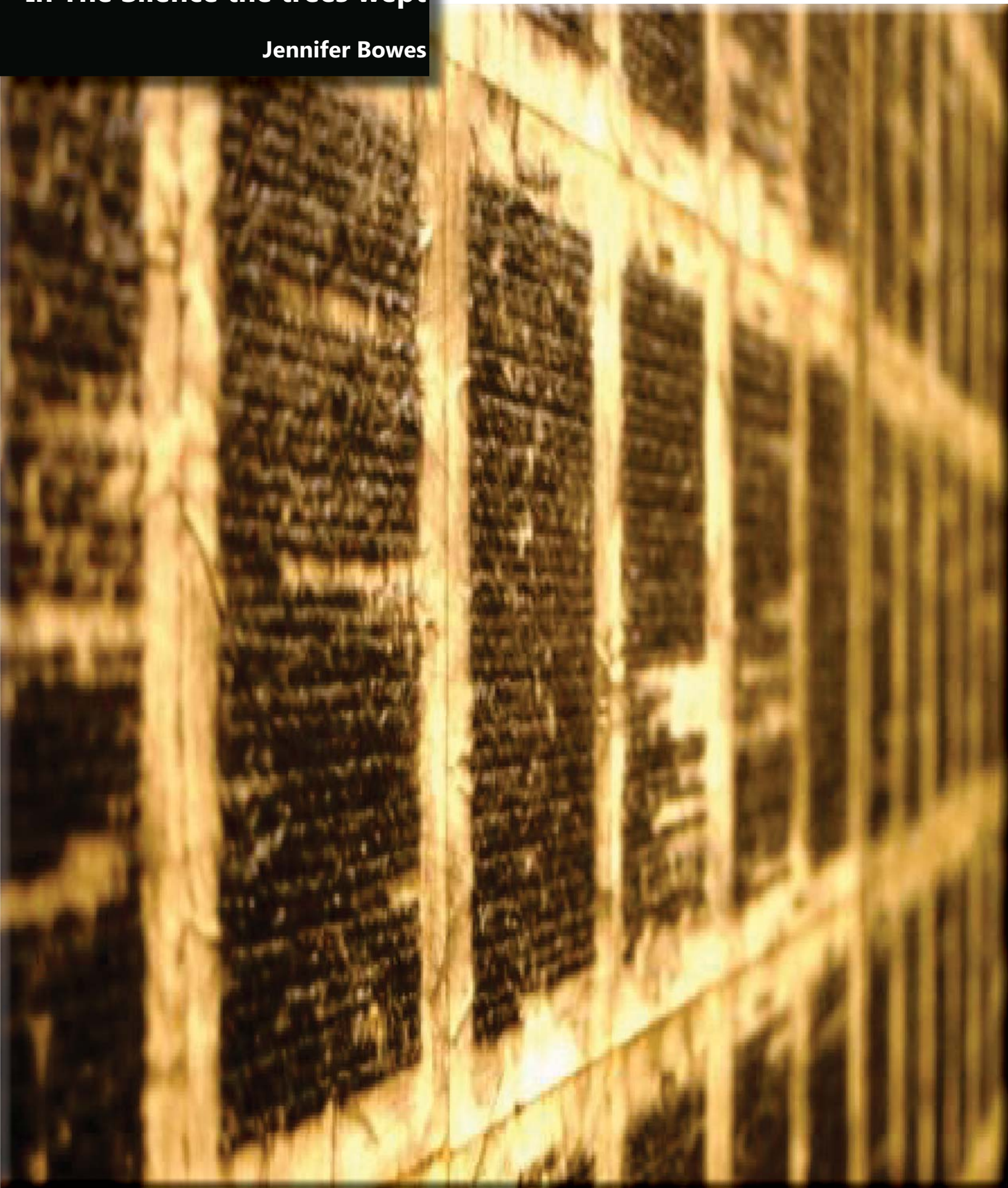


Photo: Jennifer Bowes

The Cabin

by Dawn Service

“The illusion which man has that his will is free is so deeply rooted that I am ready to accept it. I act as though I were a free agent. But when an action is performed it is clear that all the forces of the universe from all eternity conspired to cause it, and nothing I could do, could have prevented it. It was inevitable.”

– W. Somerset Maugham

Morning snow fell as lightly as a man’s breath on the back of my neck, but there was no man. I was alone, wrapped in the cocoon of my sleeping bag beneath a layer of quilts in the back of my Toyota 4-Runner in the back yard of the cabin I’d purchased last autumn. It was late April. I awoke with the first light, sat up to the wonder of pine, spruce, poplar, and willow being dusted with warm Pacific air that had risen over the Coast Mountains and chilled to crystals large enough to cover the end of my tongue. I lay awake listening to the wet joy of winter’s last speech: a snow-fall so tranquil even the birds and trees appeared to abide the perfect stillness. Tucked beneath the warmth of the quilts, I watched the sifting spring sky fall to the earth until I fell back asleep, and when I next awoke, found myself in semi-darkness no longer able to see outside, so thickly had the wet snow clung to the truck windows. I was alone inside the silence of a great cocoon.

I first saw the cabin the previous summer of 1996. On the drive across the Chilcotin plateau from Williams Lake, British Columbia to Bella Coola where I often went to hike, I’d noticed the *For Sale* sign on the side of the road, eight kilometers west of the community of Anahim Lake. A gravel road turned north from the highway and led to a T-intersection, where another sign on a pine tree indicated a left turn. From there, the road curved to the right and made a short descent into a yard thick with weeds, rose bushes, and juvenile pines. From the driveway, appeared the back of the cabin.

It perched on a small hill that sloped toward the lake, was unkempt, forlorn, and had been left to the sun and the rain and winter’s cold embrace. Aged logs grey from exposure rested one on top of the other. A pit toilet with a shed roof sat next to the cabin. Log ends, remnants from construction, were strewn across the ground. I kicked at them, rolled them over, noticed the hollowed galleries where the cream-colored eggs

of carpenter ants hid. A gnarly patch of wild roses snared my pant legs as I made my way to the front of the cabin. Visible from the deck, a narrow opening in the trees revealed a glaze of silver water reflecting the feathered edge of white spruce and lodgepole pine that lined the lake's perimeter. A small trout leapt from the cover of water, somersaulted, then disappeared. To the northeast, the soft undulations of old volcanoes formed the Itcha and Ulgachuz Mountains. In the west rose the Rainbow Range, a refuge for mountain caribou, where I'd once watched a herd we'd surprised plunge into the icy waters of an alpine lake and majestically make their way to the other side.

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The shingled roof of the cabin ended at the front wall, but the roof purloins cantilevered out over the deck like the fingers of an outstretched hand. The log ends in each of four corners extended beyond the protection of the roof. They were all punky with rot from repeated exposure to rain and snow. Three openings had been cut in the front wall and ill-fitted with French doors made of Douglas-fir. The gaps between them were large enough to see through. Broken, jagged bits of glass were all that remained in some of the small panels. The center doors served as an entrance and were secured with a simple garden-variety latch. Neither the door nor windows would keep out a Chilcotin winter.

I peered through the broken glass to ensure no one was inside, flipped open the door latch and stepped in. The plywood floor heaved and sighed like sea swells, and was covered with squirrel dung and clumps of pink insulation torn from a pile of batts that were stacked in the corner. An old, plaid-patterned couch with a burst seat sat in front of a cheap imitation of an oriental carpet. There were no windows on the back or side-walls, no inside walls, no lights, no cupboards, no bathroom, no water lines or water, and only a single electrical plug on the back wall. A kerosene lantern hung from a bent nail in one of the purloins. I opened the small door to the Sears model woodstove, smelled the ash, and leaned down to examine the condition of the firebox. It was warped.

In the back corner, leaned against a warped floorboard in the loft, was an old wooden ladder. I climbed the rickety rungs afraid I might end up face to face with a beady-eyed rat, peered over the edge of the floorboards and had a look into the partial loft. Instead of rats, there was a large pile of 1" X 6" tongue-and-groove pine in very good condition and obviously meant for the loft ceiling. The floorboards had dried and twisted so the tongues no longer fit into the grooves. Sunlight flooded the loft through three skylights in the roof.

In the abandoned chaos of neglect, I imagined hardwood floors, a small bathroom, a kitchen with maple cupboards, lights, stairs to a new loft, my antiques and books against the log walls, and my feet up by the fire in winter or out on the deck in the summer. It was a place where I could look out and not see anything but trees, dream unencumbered, where I could be idle, listen to bird song, where my imagination might swirl and boil like white water in an eddy, and where I could disengage from the culture of patriarchy and its illusory world of power.

My desire for a cabin in the woods reached back into formative experience. In the late 1970's, I'd traveled with a boyfriend up the Alaska highway to the Yukon Territory in an old Willey's jeep whose windshield wipers didn't work. When it rained, we drove as if across the bottom of a great sea, so blurry had the outside world become. When the rained stopped, the dust rolled up through the holes in the floorboard. On the Dempster Highway north of Dawson City, the road spanned creeks that rushed through

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culverts; the cold, clear, water had sculpted out a pool on the outflow side, creating holding areas for fish we caught on hooks baited with cheese. Around us the hummocks of the tussock tundra were already tinged with an August autumn. I looked off into the distance to the unglaciated, limestone ridges of the Ogilvie Mountains and imagined we were the only two people in a circle that extended as far as the eye could see. There was no other movement along that isolated stretch of road, but a moose and calf foraging a few hundred yards from the roadside. The expanse of that wilderness inspired a divine awe.

Before we left Dawson City, I stood on the steps of Robert Service's one-room log cabin, looked in and fell for the quaint simplicity of a cook-stove, a sink, a bed in the corner, a window to gaze out and ponder, a porch with a rocking chair, and a writing table with a typewriter, and so dreamed of a similar place for myself. But was it really *my* dream, or could an ache for something be a vague premonition of divine destiny? A window we are not allowed to see through? A view as vague and blurry as that drive up north? If formative experiences are windows into soul, then the quietude wilderness engendered, and the seductive lure of the simplicity of a cabin in nature, were the two hinges upon which the door of my destiny was hung.

I slipped out of my sleeping bag, got dressed and went out into the morning air: an invigorating aroma of wet snow and piquant pinesap. The snow had sculpted itself on top of fence posts, rooftops and conifer limbs, and would stay there until the sun licked at it and bent it like warm ice cream. In the outhouse, I learned how to bathe with a pail of hot water and a bar of soap. Cobwebs hung from every corner crevice. Snow fell through the slats in the timbers of the roof and wetted the toilet seat.

Later the sky cleared and the woods enlivened with chickadees and the sound of woodpeckers drilling tree boles. Two female Ruffed Grouse dashed across the top of the snow, zigzagged their way toward the drum of a distant male. From my outhouse perch, I saw a small woodpecker spiral up and down an old willow stem, hammer with its sharp beak, and throw off bits of bark. The small red spot on the back of its head and its white back identified it as the Downy Woodpecker, the smallest in the Chilcotin. Snow clumps fell from treetops, down through lower limbs, causing small blizzards of explosions in the descent as one storey fell to the next.

Inside the cabin, I lit a fire in the woodstove, boiled a pot of water on the hot plate plugged into the only electrical outlet, stabbed a piece of bread with a barbeque skewer, sat on a log stump in front of the stove and toasted it in the smoky firebox, while I sipped a strong cup of black tea laced with cream and honey. Firewood crackled as the bread browned. While I waited, I considered the work projects that needed to be done and the tools needed to do them. After breakfast, I set up a makeshift kitchen with a small table, cutting board and washbasin, drafted a floor plan and drew it out on the plywood floor.

From the porch, I threw out chunks of bread and watched the grey jays tear off pieces and fly off into tree limbs to peck at the harvest. I filled a bird feeder with sunflower seeds and hung it next to the hummingbird feeder. It didn't take long for the mountain chickadees – distinguished from the blackcap chickadee by the white stripe of an eyebrow over the eye – to find the seeds. Their activity drew the juncos and the purple finches and the red-winged blackbirds that struggled to fit their large bodies on a small perch not intended for them.

The female purple finch sat on the perch of the bird feeder. How different and distinct she was from the male. He was all rosy and she all

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stripes, yet they recognized one other. Two males stood on the deck, faced each other with their heads pointed straight up. I went to the window and looked up too, expecting to see what it was they were looking at, but there was nothing there. Motionless for some time, they ruffled up the rosy feathers around their necks, vibrated their wings, then flew at each other in a display of aggression.

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A junco sat on my deck and chewed a sunflower seed. He gnawed at it, shuffled it from one side of his beak to the other, as if he couldn't figure out how to crack it or what to do with it. His head shifted from center to left, back to center, right, center, left and so on, as he continued to shuffle the seed from one side of his beak to the other. Then another arrived and the two began an aerial dance. With flank feathers ruffled, and tail feathers splayed to reveal a flash of white, they flew at each other, breasts touching, circling, twittering and chattering, until one renounced and flew away. What ancient raw nerve fires a message that splays a tail feather? What evolutionary path? This was bird vernacular. Spring song and time to mate. Time to pluck a few raw nerves.

A bird with an orange eyebrow, throat, and belly, and distinct black V-shaped band at the throat, rustled leaves on the ground, tossed them into the air and over its back with great vigor then flew into a pine tree. I wanted to shrink myself to the size of a robin and walk along its branches, through a secret garden of green needles and copper cones so I could meet this bird - the varied thrush. The red-breasted nuthatch ran up and down the boles of trees like an acrobat. I was surprised to see a mountain chickadee jump from the pop bottle feeder to the hummingbird feeder, then stretch his legs and neck up to look over the edge to something beyond. It is speculation and curiosity that causes a human to stretch, to look. Does a bird wonder?

By mid-morning the sun came out and melted most of the snow that had fallen, but the ground had not yet thawed and small patches of snow remained in the darkness of north-facing slopes. I walked through the forest west of the cabin, stopped occasionally to consider small patches of ground still held tight with frost and could detect, just barely, an earthy odor about to rise and proclaim itself, but then it disappeared into the cold slap of a snow bank, not yet ready to give into spring. The earth held the odor of spring in the same way a lake holds warm water, in pockets where I wanted to linger.

Pine needles, cones, twigs, and last year's leaves lay on what was left of the snow, their contrasting darkness absorbing and emitting heat, creating private little melt holes as if a kind of collaboration between the dead and dormant living. The leaves of fireweed had clung all winter to a dead stalk, and not until spring had they shed on top of the snow. It was as if the plants and trees who waited for spring, gave the snow gifts of old needles, twigs, and desiccated leaves because of what they would receive in return. *Hurry, hurry, melt the snow* they said. Out of the darkness of winter, comes spring.

The shrill of a red-winged blackbird played out in the top of a spruce tree near shore, while the trill of chickadees rang out from the cover of conifer limbs. In the dry, bare patches of ground beneath conifers, desiccated leaves stirred and danced, their decay not yet complete. Rainwater begins the process of decomposition, leaches soluble minerals and organic compounds from leaves, but much of the water is shed from sloping limbs, and so falls at the drip line creating an acidic desert beneath the tree. Nature's tent.

I saw the white flash of tail feathers and the spotted breast of a bird I hadn't seen before, but it flew away so fast I couldn't identify it. After several sightings and a search through my bird book, I discovered it was a male Northern Flicker. With a salmon-pink moustache stripe that extended from the base of

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his bill to the back of his head, and a black crescent bib, he was so well-dressed he looked as though he belonged at the opera and not in the forest. The stark contrast between the black spots on its breast and the surrounding tan color held my eye. He hammered away at the broken top of a rotten poplar tree, preparing the season's nest. I heard his ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka and saw, with the aid of my binoculars, his black bib vibrate as he sat in the top of a nearby tree calling for a mate.

At the end of the trail on the point that juts out into the lake, Canada geese swam in the open waters near the outlet to the Dean River. Lake ice snapped and cracked, moaned then echoed into the woods behind me. Pressure cracks had risen like small mountain ranges as the tension sought an escape route. A thin layer of water slid across the surface of the ice along the shoreline, carrying with it all manner of twigs, reeds, and small bits of organic matter. Surface water, which only a moment ago was drifting west towards the river, changed course and headed east, enticed by the caress of the breeze that swept over it. Willow buds, the same color as the junco's beak, hung their small heads out over the cold shore.

West from the cabin, the lodgepole pine forest stretched for miles across the immense expanse of South Tweedsmuir Park until it transitioned to subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce. On the northeast horizon, the soft undulations of old volcanoes formed the Itcha and Ulga-chuz Mountains, and to the west lay the Rainbow Mountains. Eastward, the forest stretched across the Chilcotin plateau to the Fraser canyon. In the monotonous repetition of pine trees, I felt a rhythmic simplicity far removed from the pension treadmills and workaday grind of the city.

As I walked back to the cabin, I had this desire to stop and listen, to still the body so I could hear nothing but silence - a strange yearning for there really is no silence in nature. Wind rustles the crowns of trees, bends treetops sending pops and creaks down trunks. Squirrels chatter as they harvest cones. Songbirds sing. Insects drone. What I really sought was peace, a quiet mind free of the weight of human chatter and empty of my own thoughts. I wanted to hear nature's rustlings, stirrings, songs and drums, in time to the pulse of my own blood.

My first weekend at the cabin, I saw the magic of Chilcotin starlight so bright, so expansive, shadows fell from the boles of trees stitching land to lake ice, securing me to the fabric of the landscape. The night before I left to return to my job in Williams Lake, I lay in bed in the back of my truck and reveled in the blessing of the land. I felt safe in the arms of that neglected cabin, felt a sense of power over my fate as if I was in control. I thought I chose it. I didn't think it possible then, it could have chosen me.

The yip of a coyote echoed across the lake. I was home.

In Silence – Detail

Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

Roma

I have been in Rome
when the oranges were on the trees
in the Palatine gardens
thick waxy leaves
stirring sweet citrus haze
I've felt the weight of the fruit
full orbbed in my hand
For a few thousand lira
a farmer filled a sack
hands cupping the fruit
as he dreamed of the wife of his youth

I have been in Rome
when the lavender was in bloom
along the Via Appia
wide rows erupting
the heady scent
tangled with sunshine in my hair
roadside at dusty stalls
essence of lavender in thin bottles
mauve of the palest hue
a madonna in black
wove small baskets
from satin ribbon and willow
For a few thousand lira
she filled one up to the brim
hands scooping the sweet sprigs

Long after I returned home
my backpack smelled
purple and violet and wild

Pamela den Ouden

Soft Like Fry Bread

by Helen Knott

It was 1965 and one of the coldest winters that decade when Kokum came to my house and found my mother elbow deep in suds, scrubbing a diaper clean. Mother stopped mid-scrub and rushed to my little brother, making it just in time to fish a potato peel out of his mouth with her finger. My brother whined. Mother scolded him, swept the potato peels into a corner, stood there a few moments and sighed.

“He’s still drinking. I haven’t seen him in over two months now, and there’s no money left,” my Mother said, referring to my father’s absence. She returned to her chair, stopping to pick up a half peeled potato. My Kokum nodded silently as she watched my brother crawl toward my two sisters who were playing cards nearby.

“Watch them,” my mother said pointing her lips in our direction as she tugged on her coat, buttoning it up over her swollen belly. “I need to get fire wood.”

Kokum told me I was three years old then, howling like a coyote with snot flowing into my mouth. Mother came back inside with a flurry of snow chasing in after her before she could shut the door. She stoked the fire and started on a supper of boiled potatoes.

My Kokum stood up and pointed at me.

“That one,” she said.

“I’m taking that one,” my Kokum declared.

Kokum told me this story twice but never included my mother’s reply. I like to think my mother put up a fight. I like to think she said no repeatedly, getting louder each time, hitting the top of the stained wooden table with her calloused fingered fist. Maybe she asked, “For how long will you take my son?” I imagine her agreeing with my Kokum, believing I was only going for an overnight visit. Yet I can’t help but picture

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my mother silently nodding her head without looking up to meet my Kokum's eyes. Mother probably stayed hunched over peeling potatoes, her shoulders and head heavy with the worry of empty cupboards, the burden of many little bellies to fill, and the weight of an absent husband.

My Kokum loaded me on the toboggan she used to carry potatoes, flour, and on rare occasions, oranges. She pulled me six houses down and took me into my new home. Kokum's house had two small rooms: one belonged to Kokum and the other to my Aunt Liza and her boyfriend. He was always stumbling in while the sky cradled the moon, breathe heavy with the smell of whiskey. At first, I shared Kokum's bed, but when I was five, I started to sleep in the main room with the other boys.

David, Michael, Lawrence, and Charlie were my true brothers in life, all of us taken in by Kokum. We were from families who couldn't, or just plain wouldn't, care for us. Each night, we lined up on the living room floor like sardines in a can. Often we shared the space with a drifter or relative who was passing through. "No" wasn't a word Kokum used when someone needed help.

The Metis people of Chetwynd lived in Moccasin Flats: a string of shack-like houses on the outskirts of town. The doors screeched. The floors had missing planks, yet the homes overflowed with men, women, and children. At night you could hear men hooting and hollering, swollen eyed women crying, and sometimes the sweet sound of a fiddle.

At first, I didn't think it was strange that I lived at Kokum's house. In fact, I believed I lived with her because I was her favourite grandchild. But when I turned eight years old, my feelings changed and I began to wonder why I had to visit my brothers and sisters instead of live with them. There were other kids in Moccasin Flats being raised by their Kokums, but their parents didn't live a few doors down.

I spent a lot of afternoons at mother's house and sometimes the visit would end with a fat lip or a bloody nose, but I always came back the next day ready to apologize for something I'd never started. When I visited, I swept the floor, did the dishes, or hauled in firewood, hoping mother would see I was a good boy and let me come home. She never noticed. My brothers and sisters didn't care if I came around but I refused to give up. I didn't understand why I was different. My family treated me like a pesky mosquito, but all I wanted was to belong.

"Get out of there!" my sister shrieked as she shoved me away from the cupboard.

"I was just looking!" I yelled back, lying with as much outrage as I could muster.

"You're not allowed to eat our food," she said angrily as she crossed her arms.

"I didn't touch nothin," I pouted.

"Oh yeah? What are those crumbs on your lip then?" she said pointing at my

mouth.

I put my head down and said nothing in my defense.

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“I’m telling mom,” she smirked.

I left the house and scooped up a few stones just in case I saw a grouse. I had been working on my aim lately and Kokum would be proud of me for bringing home a grouse on my own. My stomach began to feel heavy with regret. They had cookies in their cupboard and I was really hungry. We never had cookies. When I reached Kokum’s house, she was sitting at the table with pink rollers adorning her head and a hand-rolled cigarette dangling from her lips.

“You going to bingo?” I asked her.

“How’d you know?” she asked, cocking her head to the side as if she didn’t know herself.

“Kokum, that’s the only time you curl your hair!” I teased.

The corners of her lips turned up and she put out her cigarette then motioned for me to come over. Kokum pulled me on to her lap and ran her fingers through my hair.

“Your hair is just about long enough to curl too,” she teased.

“Kooooookum,” I squealed as I ripped away from her embrace.

“I’ll cut it tomorrow, my boy. If I win enough, maybe I’ll even give you money to get a haircut,” she cooed. Kokum’s voice was sweet like raspberry jam and soft like her fry bread.

That night I rolled my blanket out on the floor and brought the second one around me sliding the ends snugly under either side of my body, forming a tight cocoon. I never complained to Kokum, but at night I imagined for her a house with a stove so she could be warm in winter. It would have running water, a bathtub, and a flush toilet. I pictured a house with enough rooms and mattresses for all of us boys. I drifted off dreaming of a mattress of my very own.

In the morning, I cut myself a thick slab of bread and used Kokum’s raspberry jam to coat it. After every little crumb had been eaten from the table top, I headed to my mother’s house. As I approached, I could hear the laughter of my eldest sister. I tried the handle but the door was locked. I knocked. Nothing. I knocked again. Still nothing. I knocked harder. The lock slid out of place and the door opened a sliver. My sister’s obsidian eyes appeared under a gathered brow.

“Let me in,” I said, pushing at the door.

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“Mom says you’re not allowed,” she taunted as she blocked my entrance.

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“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Mom says you’re not allowed here unless she’s here. She said you can’t come in and eat our food. It’s not for you!”

“Yea right!” I yelled as I tried to push past her.

She shoved me with the strength of a cow moose and I tumbled backwards. I got up and ran at the door, pounding it with my balled-up brown fists.

“Let me in! Let me in!” I cried.

My sisters and brothers appeared at the window with curious looks upon their faces and watched me as if I was some raging zoo animal. My cheeks burned and my arms began to feel weak.

“I won’t eat any more food. I promise. Just let me in!” I shouted as I turned the handle repeatedly.

“Please! I swear I won’t do it again. I was just hungry that’s all. I won’t do it again,” I vowed as tears cut tracks down my cheeks.

“I won’t eat nothing, I swear,” sobbing to an unmoved audience.

One by one they shrugged, shook their heads, then disappeared behind the walls that separated the wanted from the unwanted.

Tears blurred my vision. I ran toward Kokum’s and away from what I couldn’t understand. Inside, I fell like a rag doll to the floor, unable to pick myself up. Kokum placed my head in her lap, ran her fingers through my hair, rocked me gently back and forth, all the while humming until I stopped crying.

“Kokum,” I sputtered, “why don’t I belong?”

“My boy,” she sighed. “you look like you did the day I took you home, snot nosed and crying.” She chuckled to herself.

“When I saw you like this many years before, I knew,” she said motioning from her head outwards, “that you belonged with me. You belonged here with us.”

Kokum pulled me up to a sitting position and placed her hands on either side of my face and looked me in the eyes.

“You belong here,” she said as she pointed at her heart.

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“My boy,” Kokum said, “come for a walk with me.”

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I rose silently and followed her out the door and along the wooded path behind our house. We walked up a low slope, both of us silent, listening to the forest around us. Nature seemed to make her young again and she blazed a trail ahead of me and I struggled to keep up. She led me into a clearing where all of Moccasin Flats was visible.

“I want you to look at this,” she said as she waved her arm over the land, “The way our people are living are not our ways, they have gotten lost here. Settling in one place has made them crazy and they lost something of themselves my boy. They have become takers, piling up stuff like the white man does, instead of sharing with each other. This isn’t the way of those who went before us. They never come out to the bush to hear what the Creator has to say.”

Kokum drew in a deep long breath before she spoke again, “Your mother... they took her from me. They put her in that residential school and when she came back to us she was different. I don’t know what happened, but she had nightmares after that. Something bad happened, something made her distant like she is. It’s like her spirit follows two steps behind her and her heart, even further back. It’s not her fault my boy and it’s not yours, she needs to call her spirit back to her.”

Her eyes glazed over and she went silent.

“Most of these people that live here went to that bad place too. They are all walking around wounded and angry. No one talks about these things and they carry whatever happened around with them. That’s why they fight so much and drink. I want it to be different for you. A lot of the families here are on welfare. I have seen that the easiest way to kill a man’s spirit is to pay him to do nothing. I want you to work hard for what you want. There is more for you than this. You are with me because the Creator meant for it to happen my boy. An easy road makes for a weak spirit, your road is hard but you will be able to gain strength and make it through much. My boy, can’t you see? You are mine so that you may see in a new way.”

Kokum closed her eyes and began to pray in Cree. Tears flowed down my face and I felt a heaviness lift from my heart. That night I dreamt I was in my mother’s backyard looking up at the clotheslines that crisscrossed each other. I stood on one foot and began to flap my arms. The sky was so blue just beyond the wires. I knew that if I flapped hard enough, I would be able to rise up like an eagle. Just as I was about to rise off the ground, I woke up.

That morning I felt calm and hopeful. I knew that I was going to be able to make it through anything. I belonged, with or without the acceptance of my mother and siblings. I would make something of my life, go to school, graduate, have a family of my own and work hard. I closed my eyes again and I whispered a prayer to the Creator for the first time in my life. I was right where I was supposed to be.

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Photo: Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes



Suspended – Detail

Jennifer Bowes

Walking to School in Winter

You were half a block
ahead of me
I hurried through the snow
but couldn't match your stride

It was like a dream I used to have
when I was seven
walking home from school
along Upper Lachine Road

My mother
just ahead of me
No matter how I ran
I could never catch up
or how I called
she never turned
I was afraid we would never
be together again

My lungs burning
 running but not wanting
to be seen to be running
afraid I'd never catch up
I scurried foot in front of foot
until I could hear your breath—

Two steps behind you
my foot kicked a take-out cup—

Plastic noise cut the darkness
You turned and said my name:
“You scared me!”

“I scared *you*?”

I was afraid you'd never turn
and we'd walk the same place
separated by three metres
and darkness

Pamela den Ouden



Suspended

Jennifer Bowes

“Darling, I am Hoping that You Have Written to Me”: Life and Love Through Family Letters

by Pamela den Ouden

According to an online encyclopedia, the postal service in this country delivers about 40 million items every business day. Canada Post has more than 15,000 letter carriers and 6,000 rural truck routes providing postal service to a larger area than in any other country, including Russia, where service in Siberia is limited to areas near the railway. In the new subdivision where I live, the red and silver “super-boxes” are a familiar sight, with people stopping on their way home from work to check for the mail. This is my daily ritual. As I approach the corner where the super-box stands, I feel a sense of anticipation, a nervous energy. Bronze key in hand, I hop out of my car, swing open the door of my mail box, bend over and peer inside. Flipping through the wad of flyers, bank statements, real estate brochures, and a copy of *Sky News* magazine—none of which I’m looking for—I find at the bottom of the pile a plain white envelope with a hand-written address. I recognize the writing. It’s what I’ve been waiting for. A letter from my sister. In the car on the side of the road, I read her two-page letter. The first page is covered with a leaf-and-vine design drawn with a green felt pen and a sparkly gel pen. Her handwriting is bold, loopy, very distinctive. I pull a pen from my purse and add the year to her “it’s march the 19th.” In addition to never using capital letters, she never puts the year in the date. I’ve learned the hard way that this is not good for my filing system. Sending or receiving a personal handwritten letter is a day brightener and a mood lightener.

Although I also carry on a voluminous e-mail correspondence with several friends and colleagues, I make no apology for being a real pen-and-paper, stamp-and-envelope letter writer. I come by it honestly. I come from a family of letter writers, and like to think that those who receive letters from me are gladdened when they see my handwriting on the envelope.

Over the years, I have developed a system for filing my letters. Each person with whom I correspond has a file folder with his or her name on it. These are filed in alphabetical order, except for a miscellaneous file, “Friends and Family,” which is at the front. This file contains letters from people who write too infrequently to warrant a file of their own. New letters are filed behind those already in the file, so that at the end of the year, they are all in order. Back in the days of carbon paper, I created a copy of my letters as I wrote them, but now, more often than not, I photocopy the out-going letters.

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When I find myself in a pensive or melancholy mood, I'll pick one of the files and read through it. It's like having that person over to visit, like talking to him or her. Reading through these letters, situations and emotions come back to me. I remember ups and downs and relive all those passions. Sometimes I laugh. Sometimes I cry. It's tiring but pleasant. Of course, phone calls are cheap now, and it's always nice to hear people's voices, but after the call, what's left beside the bill? At least with a letter, you have something. You have a memento, something that you can pull out again and reminisce over, something to remind you of the laughter and the tears, the good times and the bad times, the anger and the angst, the *sturm und drang* of life. I love that expression; it's so evocative of its meaning. With all the letters I have, I can re-experience some of that. Such anguish—sometimes I've agonized over letters—first in the writing, thinking carefully, going back, editing, making it letter-perfect, then in the sending. And some I've never sent. I keep them in that person's file, clearly marked "Never Sent." There aren't too many of those. I guess I wrote them for me. To get something off my mind. But it was too hard to send. Somehow, writing about it made it okay. It's settled, and I never have to think about that situation again.

When my mother was alive, I loved to get letters from her. For as long as I can remember, she always wrote with a kelly green fine-tip felt marker. Her stationery was eclectic. Some had a cartoon of a cat dressed in a fur coat and high heels; the caption read, "I'm only doing this job to keep myself busy between films." From her file, I pull one of these letters. With it comes a black-and-white photo of a handsome man standing on a sidewalk in summer. His arms are by his sides, his jacket open, his shoes polished. In one hand, he holds his fedora; in the other, a pipe. She wrote: "You said you didn't have pics of Daddy when he was younger. Here he is at 37 yrs. in Asbury Park. The brown spots are there as they are on the orig small snap, but I guess I could cut them off the orig. and when they reproduce it, they'll be gone. I didn't think of it at the time. M o m . "

Another has "Yakety Yak!" in two-inch high letters in a balloon, with a cartoon of two women sitting on a park bench talking. The date: Jan. 24, 1996: "How my haiku ever got to be published in the company of these illustrious names in the HAIKU WORLD is beyond me. Thought you might like to see this little anthology. Love, Mom."

The letters, both coming and going, were filled with the stuff of our daily lives:

February 25, 1994

Dear Mom,

Do you believe all this cold weather?! It's been -30 overnight all week. This morning it was -44 in Dawson Creek! And the snow just keeps on coming! Jord has been getting in some skiing but when it is this cold, they close the hill.

Guess what I did last Sunday? I took a watercolor painting workshop! We spent the day doing a pen and ink drawing, and then we painted it. For a first effort, I guess it turned out all right. I think if I practice, I'll improve. You just never know what you can do till you try!

Everyone here is great. We are shovelling our way to spring!"

And one from her to me when she was 75 years old:

Thank you for your lovely letter. Now, I think you should stop writing letters to everyone since you are very busy with WORK. DO NOT WASTE TIME on letters! Your work is too important. Let letters come to you, but do not answer them. O.K.?

Have to go for an eye check-up Monday a.m. Tuesday afternoon I want to start a line dancing class, which is taught by the same teacher who teaches us folk, country and line on Friday mornings, and

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Wednesday morning I have an appointment to be tested at the Adverse Reaction to Drugs Clinic, as I have thought for many years that I was allergic to penicillin, because I THOUGHT I had one (allergic reaction) when Dr. Senechal, the dentist in Pin-court gave it to me to take after he extracted an abscessed tooth for me. When I went to work the next morning, I THOUGHT I had a funny feeling in my head. When I called him and told him, he said to stop taking the penicillin. However, perhaps I would have had one (a funny feeling) anyway.

That's all the excitement that's fit to print for the moment. Take care of yourself, and love to all, especially the bairns.

Love, Mom

I have hundreds of letters that passed between us. Her writing was a mirror of her life: she was funny, self-deprecating, generous, and wanted to tell the bright side of everything that went on in her life.

Some of my most precious memories come from the letters from my father's file. The earliest is written on small, thin, blue air mail paper: a letter written by me while I was at Girl Guide camp. The date: July 1967. There is also one from him from the same year: "Dear Mikey," for that was his nickname for me. My handwriting looks a lot like his. This was deliberate on my part. As a teenager, I consciously styled my writing after his. He learned to write back in the days when handwriting was *Something*. My mother kept these letters, and once, when I was visiting her in Toronto, she gave me a plastic grocery store bag filled with papers. I stuffed it into my suitcase and never even examined its contents until months after I got home. When I looked, there were dozens of letters—letters I had written to them over many years, not only from camp, but also from my life "out west," where I moved when I was 24. These letters are a sweet savour of the past, a past that is harder and harder to sort out the more time that passes.

A small white 4 x 6 inch envelope, stuffed with a half-inch thick bundle of letters, is among my prizes. They were written to my mother from Lyndhurst, Ontario, March 1949. In fountain pen and blue ink, in my father's small, beautiful evenly-slanted hand:

Darling:- I intend to phone you tonight, but I feel so down in the dumps, and so damn lonesome that I decided to start writing letters, and all of them to you.

First, it seems that fate is against me all the way. I came up to see mother, and my cousin Ed said he could scare up about a hundred dollars to help the cause. He has some logs which he is selling tomorrow, and will have the money first of the week.

Then on Sunday we got a phone call from Ottawa saying that Aunt Jessie had died. Mother said for me to go to the funeral because it would give me a chance to see the rest of the family, and I might get the money I needed right away. Uncle Silas and I went into Ottawa the day before the funeral, and that evening, on my way to Aunt Jessie's house, I slipped on the ice, which was 6 inches thick all over the sidewalks, and twisted my ankle. . . . I was in bed all that night and all the next day before I called a doctor.

The doctor came in about 10:00 PM, took one quick look, and ordered me to the hospital for an X-Ray at 8:00 a.m.

The Xray said, "Donald, your ankle is busted," so it is now in a cast from my knee to my toes, and I feel as if I had a wooden leg. And I had to pay \$7.50 for X-Rays, \$8.50 for the cast, plus \$5.00 to the Doctor. . . . I called Ed and he came to pick me up with the car. When we got to his house, I couldn't

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walk to mothers, and the car couldn't make it because of the snow, so in the morning he had to hitch a team of horses to the sleigh to haul me about ¼ mile to mother's, and here I am.

Outside of these few things, everything is fine. I am trying to forget everything except your own sweet self for these few days. If I could have you with me here, I would never want to see New York again.

And I imagine New York would be very thankful.

The letters continue, sometimes three in a day. Everyone starts the same way: Darling: -- . One of my favourite parts is this: "I wish you could have been here these last two nights. The sky has been cloudless, a full moon, and I counted 7,492,646 stars." Maybe this is where I get my love of star-gazing and all things celestial.

These letters provide a glimpse of my father that I never saw when I was growing up. He's been gone for 25 years, but now, through these love letters, I know something of his earlier life and his love for my mother. She kept these letters tied with a pink ribbon in a drawer for almost 50 years. My sister gave them to me after my mother died.

I imagine that after I'm gone, my grandchildren or great-grandchildren will be interested in my letters. I hope I'm not wrong. My daughter has warned me not to leave file folders of loose letters. If they're bound, she says she might be able to deal with them, but loose, they'll be headed for a bonfire. I hope that doesn't happen. If my grandchildren want to know what was going on in my life at any time, all they have to do is read my letters. Better than my photo albums, my letters reveal my heart.

At the end of every year, in the days that follow Christmas, I have an important task to complete before the New Year. Conscious of my daughter's warning, I take the letters that I've sent and received and bind them; people with a large volume of letters get their own binder. Letters from two or three people who were less diligent about writing are bound together. The empty files go back into the filing cabinet in alphabetical order. Once this is done, I'm ready to ring in the New Year with my resolutions, and I always know what Number One will be: "Be a better, more faithful correspondent." Every Sunday night, I sit down with my fountain pen, some cards and stationery, stamps, and my address book. I spin off one or two short notes, or perhaps a longer missive. It's my way of bringing light to someone's day, both now and in the future.

**Suspended
Detail**

Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

The Possibilities of Me

I only want to give myself to the truth
Over and over and over again
Letting it render me helpless
And leave nothing uncovered
Touching and healing every part of me
That was left unfathered, left unmothered

I want to bring myself to its' altar
Without first altering some aspect
And concealing a weakness as if
Imperfections are some unnatural defect

I want only to be REAL to something
And not have to wear another mask
Or assume another role
I want to be able to come broken and lost
And on the verge of losing all control
And be told....

That I am right where I'm supposed to be
And truth would plant kisses
On every wounded part of me

Telling me all the while that "It's okay"
That I don't have to have all my shit straight
It's fine to admit that it's hard and
You're having an off day
Yes you got worries about bills getting paid
And I know you're scared to trust
And that you'll end up getting played
Sometimes you only see the cracks
And can't see the beauty in your own face

quint 46

Some days...

You toss out the rose tinted glasses
And replace them with jade

And truth will tell me...

It's okay

Cause this isn't where you live

You live deep inside of me

And if you will let me

I will trickle into every insecurity

Drown out every worry

Flood every feeling and thought that deems you unworthy

Because all of your blessed life

You've been swallowing beautiful and ugly lies

Letting them carve new neural pathways

That send the signal to give up the fight

You struggle through days and push through the nights

Your belief in your incapability's lets you survive

Existing in the mundane and sleeping with your lies

You keep your possibilities cold and your heart blind

It's all a part of your defense mechanisms that you construct

So that they'll work like clockwork

As soon as the alarm starts too buzz

You tug on illusion

Like yesterday's shirt

Wearing the same hurts

As the year before

Dressed up in another shade

They manifest themselves each and every day

In some old and some deceptively new ways...

47 *quint*

I can't do it
I'm not smart enough
I'm not able too
I'm unlovable
I'm too broken
I'm broken
I was born this way
I'll die this way
It's not a phase
I ain't never going to make it
It's a curse and I can't break it
I'm too scared
I'm too lazy
Too timid, too crazy
Too boring, too young
Too old, too high strung
Too sad, too unorganized
Too busy, too strapped for time

Lies with always work to defeat you
My love
It's truth who will be the one who frees you

Love is the movement
And truth is the force pushing it forth
So open up your gates and realize
That you've never been lacking in anything
Because all that you need
Exists
Right inside of you
It's the lies that you eat
That keeps you from tasting the truth
That anything is possible
As long as you stay true to you

Helen Knott

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Feeling the Blues for that Blue Impala

by Monique Pharand

Through the tall grass of a lawn forever in need of a manicure, my three sisters and I pushed our way into our parent's car. Daughters to Eldege and Lucille Lepine, we anticipated discovery the minute the engine roared.

After elbowing for best position, I found myself either curled up comfortably in a nest of blankets, pillows, and Raggedy Ann dolls, or squeezed tightly in the gap between the front seats, where the grey houndstooth tweed seat cover would soon leave its imprint on my arm. Constraints such as seatbelts weren't necessary to hold down live cargo in those days.

In the small town where I grew up, houses were constructed on narrow lots. Neighbors were just a few steps away from each other. This meant that looking the other way when the neighbors were outside was not easily done. And so it follows that on those days when we, the Lepine girls, skipped to the car in a frenzy of giggles, neighbors usually feigned surprise. Four sisters, two back-seat windows. Bits of frills and ponytails escaped the minute we wound down the windows as the car reversed down the driveway. Onlookers spying our family ritual recognized the scene as one after the other as we pointed the way.

"Va par ici, papa!" we shouted. The lepinés were once again embarking on a grand adventure aboard their blue Chevy Impala.

As children we were far too busy to notice the planning that preceded such excursions. Unless Papa planned a lesson in geography, that is. In such instances, he looked forward to our participation. Often, it was I who volunteered to fetch the map and so I'd run to the Chevy to dig it out from the large glove box. How small I felt, yet important also, to be the only one in the front seat of that car. Sitting squarely on the banquette, right hand reaching out to the glove box, tongue dancing on my upper teeth, I would strain to hear the click. Anticipating the moment where the door would fall open, I held my breath. A hard push on that perfectly round silver button and the map appeared like magic from its hidden compartment.

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My trip back to the house never resembled the composure I affected when laying the map on the kitchen table. The lively exuberance of my nine years guided those few steps. Swinging the map held firmly in one hand, I

49 *quint*

imitated my square-dancing parents and “sashed” my way to the sidewalk where one giant leap took me over the two cement steps. At a much slower pace, and with much decorum, I then entered the house through the front entrance, as if I were a guest. The planning phase soon began.

Papa, a young veteran, unfolded the map with great ceremony. Four pairs of eyes followed his every tug, as he carefully opened the giant document. I listened for the crinkling as he pulled each section flat, sucking at his pipe. Air in, he would unfold the left panel. Puff of smoke out, he would lay it flat. Air in, he would next unfold the right panel. Throaty grunt, he would wipe it flat. On it went until roads, rivers and symbols lay exposed. The geography lesson thus began.

A frugal couple, maman and papa had purchased their almost new 1960 Impala knowing they would be conducting lessons on wheels. They valued the importance of sharing the stories of heroes of long ago. A sailor aboard the H.M.S. Puncher in WW II, papa boasted that the ocean air inhaled from his travels still lingered within him. Winking at maman, he would add that since his ship had anchored in Africa, the Arctic, Europe and Asia, particles of nations far away also traveled through his bloodstream. As I grew up, I wondered if the richness of such travels awoke in him a desire to instill in his daughters curiosity about this large world. His passion for waterways was passed on to us over time. When we were young, he planned most of our trips along lakes and rivers of the Gatineau Valley, where we lived. By the time rust peaked through the metallic blue paint of the Impala we were familiar with the shore line of the St-Lawrence River, La Lievre, and the Ottawa River. From Easter to Thanksgiving, through the budding lilacs of spring to the vibrant colors of autumn leaves, the fine elegance of our Impala displayed a picturesque photo against the pastoral scenery of rural Quebec. Always a smooth ride, the blue fins and chrome strip mocked the shimmer of catfish, pickerel and perch as the car continued its travels on sunny afternoons. I entered high school dreaming of earning my driver’s license, and of finding a job that paid enough for me to buy that old car papa kept in the garage.

In search of hidden retreats, our family regularly left main routes to explore less-traveled roadways. Rolling alongside the very same rivers which had challenged log-drivers, the two-door Impala carried our family through chapters in the history of the log industry of “La belle province.” My sisters and I inched our faces out of the side windows, imagining exciting sagas of loggers courageous enough to force logs along treacherous passages. One time, surprised at the sight of a submerged log piercing through the crest of a wake, we squealed in delight. Could we be witnessing the resurrection of a sunken 100 year old spruce?

“Papa, regarde!” we shouted, eager to get closer!

Papa stopped the car by the roadside. The car doors flew open. Impatient, my sisters and I rushed to the riverside, our parents close behind. The tree had become tangled in branches. I envisioned how the scene might appear at the turn of the century. Log-drivers would be yelling in a panic above the roar of wild water. With a whoosh loud enough to frighten me, the log burst from its hold and carried on down the river. I grabbed maman’s hand and slid behind her as water thrashed up onto the river bank. We returned to the car. As if waiting for its passengers, there was the Impala, doors open, silent on the side of the road, as though it were a family member who understood the importance of its responsibilities.

“Nobody takes such tender, lovin’ care of you as Chevrolet”

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stated the advertisement on the giant roadside poster. And our Impala was up to the challenge. With a 283 cubic inch V8 engine, power steering, and a maximum torque of 373.0 Nm at 2400 rpm, our Chevrolet could take care of its travelers. The interior's classy design attracted those with flair in an era when adults adorned to impress wore suits and heels for a night out. A sleek dashboard, not yet fabricated to cushion contact, elongated by the balance of chrome and controls, inspired the potential buyer to whisper b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l. Indeed, the four-year old Impala emanated confidence.

quint 50

Returning to the comfort of our nests on that back banquette, my sisters and I quickly shifted our attention away from the river. The collection of anything picked up on those unpredictable stops called for closer inspection. One day, we became obsessed with the mica that my sister Danielle, the one intuitively attracted to anything messy, shared with us. I found such pleasure in peeling one fine brown layer after another from the lump held in my hand. How fragile the mica. How tender my approach. How quiet my sisters. Maman had turned her attention to the radio talk-show long enough for her backseat aqua-princesses to transform into geologists. Minutes later, I heard her whisper to papa that she doubted if the Electrolux would be up to the challenge of removing those mineral fragments her daughters were feeding that houndstooth fabric.

Many a calendar page has been turned since those early days of my childhood. Yet, I stand in wonder at the magic of the journeys we took in that blue Chevy Impala.

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Head Project

Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

Cemetery in Winter

Snow covers the flat stone markers
names and dates buried
with those who repose here

Our footsteps mar
the clean sheet
pulled up over the ground sleepers

We chose a tall marker
granite to last
past our own span

The children run ahead
at our spot, the six-year-old worries
“Am I stepping on Opa?”

I look at her freckled face
haloed by blond wisps and blue toque
“No, sweetie, he’s not really here.”

In his ten-year-old wisdom
Noah, the only grandchild who remembers,
accuses: “You *said* he was buried here.”

I try to explain but the words are
swept from my mouth by the wind
off the golf course

Where in a few weeks
parties of four will chase
white balls through green grass



Photo: Shirley Wiebe

In Silence

Installation

Jennifer Bowes

Your Help is Greatly Appreciated

by Tanya Clary

So, some lady came to talk to the girls in my class today about bullying. We were all pretty bummed 'cause we thought we were getting the sex talk when they separated the boys and girls. But after, we found out the boys got to play in the gym for like two hours or something, and we had to sit there and listen to how great we are at hurting each other's feelings without anyone ever knowing we do. Honest, that's what she said, that we are "professionals" at hurting each other's feelings, and doing it all with smiles on our faces. She smiled a phony smile when she said it, like we're supposed to think that was funny or something, but we all sat there horrified she was going to be with us for two freaking hours, telling us all the ways we bully each other. What, like we don't know it already? It would have been better to just let us talk the whole time.

Even before she started her big talk, at the very beginning she thought she was being all clever, watching as we took places on the floor, looking at who was sitting with who. Jamie let Kaylene sit right next to her instead of Caitlyn, which made Caitlyn then go ask for both Dayna and Danielle, the two D's, to sit by her, so she had more girls around her than Jamie did, even though Caitlyn could have asked ten girls to sit with her and she still don't have the power that Jamie has. Then, Bree was all mad because no one at all was fighting over her, and besides that, if anyone, Kaylene stays with Jamie no matter who's fighting with who, and Bree is just way down the list of who's important enough to Jamie, so her pouting went completely unnoticed by anyone she wanted to care, which made her even madder. So, there she was, that lady seeing the whole thing, the looks and the whispers, taking notes even, like she's some sort of genius or something. Like we all don't see what happens when you ask a bunch of grade four girls to pick their own seats? It's always like that, the same drama and the same hurt feelings, always the same stuff going on. It's not like that lady is suddenly going to save us from each other, just because she's taking notes in a fancy notebook and can tell you who's got all the power in our class.

So then, that lady leaned over to me *specifically*, as if I needed to be singled out more than I already was, with my fat hanging out and ugly Walmart clothes! She bent over and said to me: "You can sit anywhere you like you know" like me sitting right in the middle of that mean circle of girls is something I was even interested in

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55 *quint*

doing? I felt like telling her it would be like sending a scruffy little bunny to sit in the centre of a den of hungry lionesses. But I could tell that lady wouldn't get the joke and probably wouldn't frigging laugh anyway.

No thank you, I'll just sit back and see if I can squeeze into the edge of the circle even though there ain't never anyone excited for me to sit by them,

that's obvious. Don't she even know that no one wants to sit where they ain't even wanted? Hey, I know lady, why don't you go and sit right beside someone who loves to hate your guts. How does that feel to you?

So, at the end of all the shuffling of girls, after the lady looked away, all sad that I didn't just march up to Jamie and tell her I'm taking Kaylene's place or something, I just sat on the edge of the mat, next to Cynthia, who, after me, is the most left out girl in class. She's a zero, just like me, only she's too stupid to even know it. Least I know my place in the world, is all I can say.

I took my place, looked down and saw some lint and a long piece of string stuck to the mat's Velcro which I could concentrate on picking out. I was grateful for something to do because that lady wouldn't stop studying us all, and me in particular after she saw I had no one to sit by and didn't take her up on her stupid offer to sit *anywhere*. But with Jamie and the whole thing with Caitlyn being mad at her for not letting her sit beside her, the lady was watching them, and when she was done telling us why we were there, and who she was, like we cared if she's got certificates or not, she went and rearranged all of us anyway. Made me sit by Dayna, who was practically crying because of it, and she made Jamie sit almost by herself, at the edge of the group, where I was sitting before. It made me want to laugh out loud seeing Jamie's face go so red, getting left on the side like that, but trying to look like it was best frigging place to be in the whole world, even though we all knew she was pissed. But I didn't laugh or smile or anything because I had Dayna sulking next to me. I knew she'd report back to her group after the lady left if I made a peep, so I didn't. Like this lady is suddenly going to make us best friends and all. So, I hated her from the beginning and it was the longest two hours of my whole freaking life.

After she rearranged us, she got into all the ways we bully each other, getting us all to agree on how we leave girls out, how we roll our eyes and show how much we hate each other without saying anything at all. She got Kaylene, Erin and Stephanie to demonstrate how they stand together, then she pretended to try and join the group. And, like they do every single day, to every single girl they don't like that day, they went and showed us all how they just keep talking, but moved the circle in tighter and tighter so the lady couldn't join them. Everyone laughed and laughed because the lady told them they were real good at leaving girls out without even looking like they were trying to. Like she's some sort of whiz for making us all watch that, giving them compliments for how good they do it all. I smiled along with them, but with my face red hot. I could feel my face burning when I saw a few of the girls look over at me, like they just suddenly realized that yesterday they did the exact same thing to me. But, that woman, she had me figured out from the very beginning. She knew I was the one they mostly left out. When she looked my way, I just glared at her, hoping she'd get the message that if she thought she was doing me a favour, she wasn't.

Even before she was done for the day, I knew she was only going to make it

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worse. I hate people like that, trying to make them girls see, like they don't know that they are being nasty, or what I call in my head 'bitch-sluts,' which makes me feel better for a little while. I'm just afraid I'll say it out loud one day, so I don't say it very often, even inside me, because they're always just looking for a reason to hate me more. But they know who they are, and how mean they are, and if they can get me to cry, which they don't do very often anymore, they are all the happier for it. This lady standing up there shedding light on the whole thing isn't changing a single thing for me after she leaves. She's only giving them more ideas, is all.

quint 56

And so this lady, only made it worse by telling them stupid girls that we will even stay in a group when we are being bullied, just to be part of something, instead of being alone. When she said that, Danielle, who ain't nobody herself in this class, looks over at me with puppy dog eyes, like she didn't know I knew they was being mean? But I know when the joke's on me. What do they think, that I'm fat and ugly, plus stupid? Not too many girls are that unlucky. I know it all, well enough. But even fifteen minutes of them playing with me, even if it is just to make me 'It' for the whole game of tag is better than a whole hour alone. Don't take no expert, if you ask me.

So there she was, up there, with her fancy clothes and big words like 'relational aggression,' like saying it like fifty times is going to make it something we say everyday: "Oh, look, there's some relational aggression going on. Let's all go and do something about it." Ya, right! Once I got a good look at her, I realized that she don't look like she's ever been bullied in her perfect little life, with hair that looks shinier than a brand new Barbie's, and this weird glow to her skin that you just know must cost money to get. And, the fact that she's not fat, so she's completely oblivious to all the fat jokes and mean teasing around being a fat girl. Matter of fact, she'd just have to walk by and my mom would probably call her the c-word or something. Of course, my mom wouldn't say it out loud or to her face or anything, but under her breath, the way Mom does when she wants us to hear but don't want to be caught if we called her on it. No, that lady standing there, thinking all her knowledge and information is going to save my life, and suddenly all those girls are going to be my friend, no, she's not improving my life any, thank you very frigging much.

The best part of the whole morning was snack time, 'cause we got special treats. The assistant for that autistic kid in grade three came in with four plates full of cut-up fruit which made me like her a bit more than I did last week when she walked by Jamie and me, her gang laughing at my boots. They were my brother's, ugly and old, but my teacher said I couldn't play gym outside without boots in the winter, so I had to use his. That lady didn't do a thing but pretend she saw nothing at all, like so many teachers are all professional at doing. If that lady wants to talk to anyone, why don't she talk to all the adults in this school who know, just like us kids, who bullies who, but don't do nothing about it. I don't fault the other kids in my class for knowing and not doing nothing, 'cause who wants the heat on them for it, but when the adults pretend not to see, that's when I want to explode with hate for them all.

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All the girls crowded to the food table to get the fruits they liked, but I didn't mind waiting, because I'll eat any fruit. I just love fruit. Mom always

57 *quint*

laughs because if we get fruit at home, and it's gone in a day or two, she knows not to blame my brother, because Cody won't touch the stuff. On the table, leftover after they all grabbed the cut up apples and watermelon, what was left was the dark grapes and a few pieces of greenish cantaloupe that weren't ripe yet. Just as I was cleaning up the grapes, putting them little bunches on my plate, that bitch of a woman came up to me and offered me some of her mandarin oranges, in front of everyone! I wanted to yell at her that I didn't need her stupid oranges, but I just shook my head, because out of the corner of my eye, I saw Dayna, who is now best friends with Jamie, comforting her for having to sit by me or something, sitting in the corner giggling at me and the lady, who, being so smart, don't see what's going on under her own nose. She was just making it worse! They knew that I knew that they are just plain mean, nasty girls, who will treat me like I'm HIV or something. They will stay as far away from me as possible, and all this woman could do was offer me her oranges? That was just great. Them there oranges are going to change my frigging life alright.

I took my plate of fruit and sat as far away from the lady as possible. I was so happy they were the grapes with seeds, the sweet and sour ones, because they can take forever to eat. First, I squeezed the jelly insides out of them, then ate the juicy clear middle, making sure to break each and every seed in my teeth. Then, I took the purple skin, and squished it between my fingers. If I'd been at my Auntie's apartment, which is the only place I ever eat grapes like that, I would've put the purple grape-skin around the top of finger first, then eat it from there, sometimes waiting until I have all four of my fingers covered with grape skins before I eat them. The skin is bitter and makes my upper lip sweat, but I like it, because it's my punishment for eating the sweet insides so fast.

I got to spend the whole break eating grapes like that, and for ten minutes I was happy, and eating fruit, and no one was bugging me. But, then we had to go back and listen to the lady talk about what to do if someone is bothering us. She looked around at the middle girls, the girls that aren't on top, but aren't on the bottom of the pile either, like me. She told them they were the ones that could make a difference. I could tell they were listening but it wasn't going in. Most of them don't even frigging know they're middle girls, nodding all sincere like, like it's someone else. After the lady left, our teacher, who wasn't even there for the whole time, and is probably the dumbest teacher alive when it comes to seeing the sort of stuff that lady was talking about, saw mine and Dayna's poster ain't done. Pretty hard to do anything when every time I asked Dayna what she wanted to do, she wouldn't even look at me, but shrugged her shoulders and looked away, over to Jamie and Callie, who were paired, like it is her long lost grandmother and not two girls who she fights with daily. No, we didn't do the poster, and I have to take it home, and color it there with my pencil crayons that I don't have a sharpener for, so will need to use a knife every five minutes to keep the colors good.

For the rest of the day I sat there thinking about how I was going to get home and into Mom's bedroom before Cody gets home, and how, because of that stupid Dayna, I was going to have to take a knife and the garbage can in there too, so I could color the poster properly and not make a mess of Mom's room. It was Thursday, and on Thursdays Damon and Matt come home with my brother and spend the whole time

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playing Playstation3, eating whatever food they buy from the Shell station on the way home. When they are there and when Matt and my brother are near the end of trying to beat each other, and try to 'play' with me, Damon always comes and tries to 'play' with me, even though I figured that one out real quick what sort of game it was, and after the third time when I said I didn't his kind of playing, I sort of realized afterwards that I'd need a plan from now on if I was going to keep him from touching me. That night, I asked my Mom real careful, to make sure I didn't get my mom mad at me: "Do boys try and put things inside of girls' you-know-what?" and she wasn't even a bit surprised by the question. She said "Oh yes! All the time!" and went on to tell me how I'd have to be constantly trying to fight boys off my body, for like, my whole life, and how'd it be normal to be scared all the time. That made me feel better and worse all at the same time about Damon, but at least I knew I'd have to learn to always be on the look out.

quint 58

So now I always have a plan, and a reason to get into Mom's room, which is the only room other than the bathroom that has a lock on it, and I stay there until she gets home. So far, it has been six Thursdays in a row and its working just fine, but it's hard, because she's not home until seven or eight sometimes, and it gets hard to not go to the bathroom or anything that whole time. So I've learned not to take in a juice box, because it's one of the first things I want to chug down after school, I'm always so thirsty for something sweet. But, to get into the room and not to get out for anything is, like, the plan and the only one I got so far since no one asks me to their house for a play date, and my Auntie lives across town and I can't take the bus alone yet. But that Damon is sneaky and sometimes outsmarts me, and he learned to listen for the bedroom door to open. Once, at the beginning when I was implementing my plan, I went to get some cookies to take back into the bedroom, and when I got back, he was there, smiling like he just won the lottery. I yelled at Cody to get his friend out of Mom's room, but he just yelled back that I better not be rude to his friends, or he'll punch me in the face, which is what he says to everything . I almost don't believe him, but, you only have to be punched in the face once by a boy to know that you don't want to be punched again, so I shut up and told Damon to get out, even though I knew he wouldn't go until he was ready to go.

I hate him more than I hate any of those mean girls in my class. They are just nasty and unfeeling, but Damon, he's just plain evil. Those girls hurt my feelings, which I can get over, but Damon hurts me in ways I didn't know was possible. And if you ask me, I'd take their stupid fake smiles when they think they're tricking me into being 'It' for a whole game of tag over Damon sneaking into my Mom's room any day of the week. No, that lady today, she ain't got a clue how things work in my world and how she can do me some favours. Because I can live with those mean little bitch-sluts just fine. It's that Damon on Thursday afternoons I could use some help with.

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Scipio's Dream

Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

A Metaphorical Dictionary

by Dawn Service

Arrogance

you were the hot air
balloon of it
I the pin

Benign

he said
that's how I'm to be
what is it
that makes
him fear a life lived
in emotion, in joy, or even anger
as though I am a terrible
reminder
of what he is afraid
to take hold of

Contempt

you stare at me
like a fish in a bowl
dead fish
empty bowl

61 *quint*

Desire

warm flesh
moving
over tired bones

Envy

I want to be
Al Purdy
but all my life
I've been a girl

Feminist

sounds like nigger used to

Grief

when absence becomes an entity that builds
a nest in your mind and the bird pecks
away at the inside
of your joy

Hope

is a frayed rope
taut
with the weight
of loneliness

quint 62

Intolerance

a rotten carcass of ego
laramide orogeny of arrogance
in the flesh
on this earth
I am
the same as you
what punishment
I wept
the day
I was born

Joy

naked and awake
in the morning
your breath
on the back
of my neck

Knave

I curl my lips round
harbor my tongue
there in you
dry teat
who cannot give

63 *quint*

Love

floor squeaks
a body moves
toilet flushes
water trickles
down
drain pipes
the scent of boiled wieners
wafts
down furnace ducts
plates slam
bang
on the dinner table
mother yells
son whines
feet scurry
cross a kitchen floor
hand smacks
bare flesh
boy bawls

later that night
a throat moans
bed bangs
gently
against a wall

Malignant

dead boob bloody
in the bottom
of a pail
nipple eye closed

Now

the leaves lie down
gold mosaics tucked
between trunks
overlapping
shut eye

Ode to Neruda

I went down to the river
to hold
the concentrated silence
of a stone

Pollen

ethereal, ephemeral gold dust
windward wafting, waving, seeking
by chance to be tossed
upon
a stigma
sticky
with spring sex

Quiet

I am the soft underbelly
of the caterpillar
in the cocoon
in my room
I rest
while the rain beats it tiny
fists on my window

65 *quint*

Regret

dark window
in the belly ache
of life

Shame

is a razor blade cutting
out your tongue

Tenacity

a fist of sun

Uncertainty

self-doubt
is a dandelion I'd like to eradicate
a stink
I'd rather not smell
until I noticed a white-crowned sparrow
ride the flimsy stalk
to the ground
and harvest
its seeds

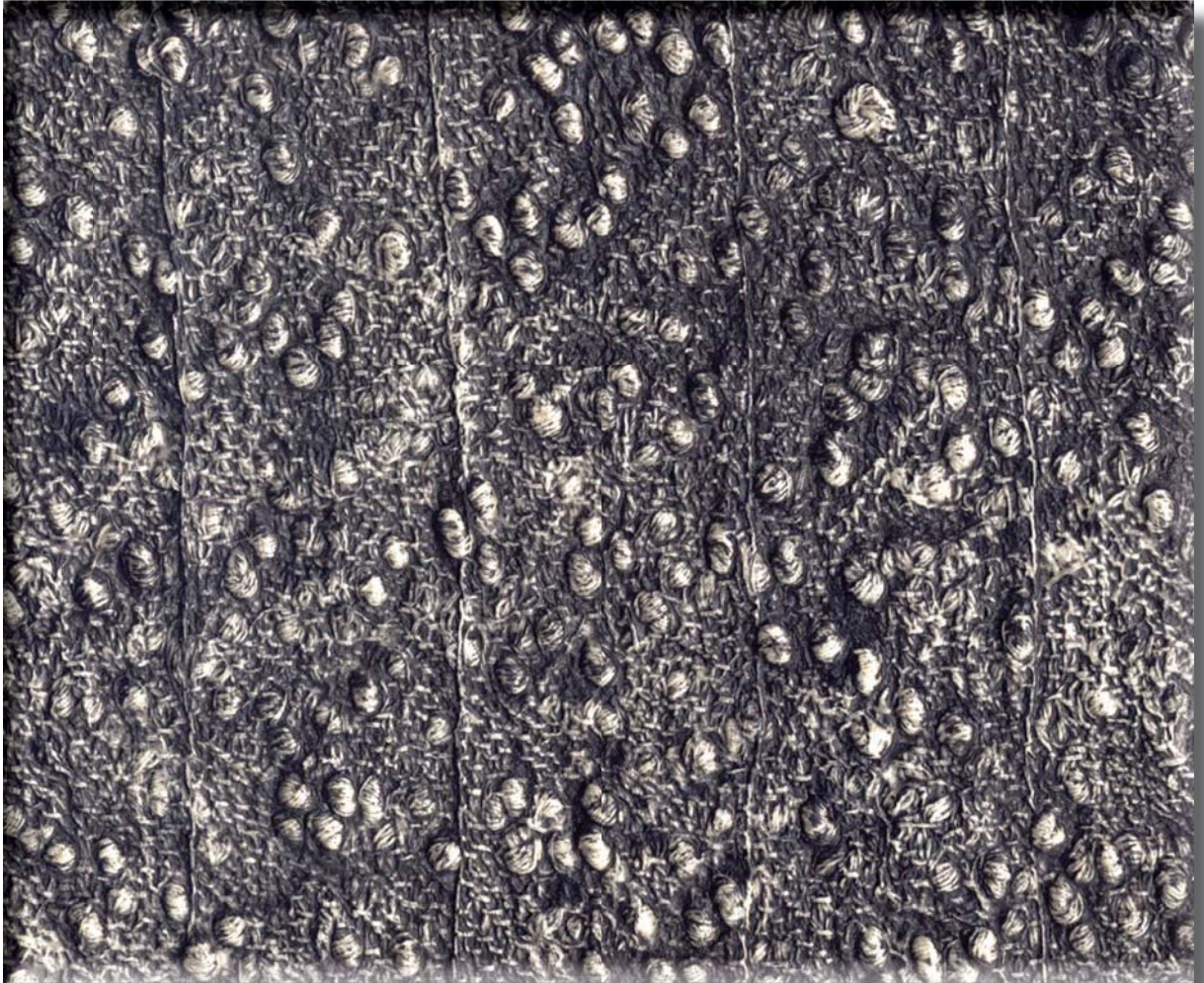
Yoke

back to the wind
in supposition to the lean
the arc
between vertical and forward
momentum
and the promise it holds, still
in midlife is that which
I've been seeking
but never finding

Zen

cutting the lawn
with scissors

Photo: Jennifer Bowes



**Woven Knots
Detail**

Jennifer Bowes

I Feel As Though I Know Where Your Torment Lay

in silence you walk
the cold corridors
of empty winter streets
wrapped and wind worn
scarf knotted
as though a fist
full of possibility

riverbeds and fields of stone cannot
balance the weight
of your silence

possibility is a stone in hand
heavy as autumn is now
with winter
on its back

Dawn Service

I am heartless

Chest cavity exposed
bones b a r e d
like graveyard xylophones.

I lay them out for you
to compose
love n

o
t
e
s.

Blood pumping
into infinity.

Life's lessons turned liquid
dripping out
unrefined philosophy.

I am heartless.

Empty
like cloud covered nights skies .

Nothingness.
Beating like silk backed butterflies.

I spill out
rivers of blue ink
flood alleyways
sweep corner lots
ooze
into vacant space.

I break open
for
metamorphic moments

quint 70

where nothing can stop,
nothing can stop
 our
 closeness.

I am heartless.

Achieved by
self-directed excavation
arteries, aspirations, and offerings
 laid out
for the taking.

Sorry if my exposed innards
make you
blush, squirm, or fidget
I just
I just
don't know how
 to keep my
 heart
 out of it.

Helen Knott

Blue Eye

by Donna Kane

I have sent my Louie at least twenty letters since the stroke. Yesterday my mother said postage was going up and where was I sending those letters anyway, it didn't look like I was getting any back. At eighty, my mother still has a knack for words. "Only when it's dark can you see the stars," she might say. "Make a bouquet from the flowers at hand." "Suck it up, buttercup." Okay, that last one's mine, but it's what she's thinking. My left eye hasn't closed since the stroke. I have to put drops in it. It stares like a person in shock being led through a room, gawking but not grasping a thing. I imagine carrying my eye in the crook of my arm, huge, like a football, and me saying to others, "Excuse me. Whoops. Out of our way. Sorry folks, eye coming through." Louie tried to make love to me after the stroke. I guess there were things we should have dealt with first. You know, I always thought Louie kept his eyes shut during sex. Maybe it was only by some blink between thrusts that his lids whipped apart. Or maybe I'd quit moving, my eye transfixed on the way gravity was making pouches of Louie's skin, his face slack and puckered at the same time. Realizing he'd always looked like that, I'd just never seen it, made our life seem somehow a sham. When his own eyes opened and stayed that way, he must have seen something that enlightened him too. I know we let something important go by, but at the time there wasn't words. He went soft inside me, like a balloon losing air. What was it my mother said yesterday? "Nobody has measured what a heart can hold." Or was it "the heart holds what nobody has measured." Maybe it was "measured, the heart holds nobody."

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In Silence – Companion Piece
Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

Versions of the North Scenario 6:

coyote::moose::deer::dog

II. There Is No God & Humans Are Essentially Evil

amongst all this kung-fewshun

some claritas wld be nice

let's ask ol'Maggot Brain

aka Cowboy Mouth

whassup? still lost midlife in a dark wood

blazing w/hostility & feelings of defeated gigantism?

[all the while the local constabulary continue to have sex
in their marked police cars, on duty & in uniform]

slowly becoming aware of deficiencies in mindfulness

& autobiographical memory

quint 73

its mad dance of self-enhancing productivity
that whole Heideggerian marmalade

how you stand in relation to the many realms
oscillating between suspicion of total futility & desire for total dominion
being particularly sensitive to cultural factors in the structuralization of
perception

dreamers

listen to animals dance & sing

block out the noise of “so many lucky men

restless in the midst of abundance”

always running

interpersonal deficits

occurring accidentally in a dehierarchized sequence of daily events

trauma of the symbolic order aggravates what’s already in their heads

a psychic neuralgia

wholly unknown to normal life

where apparently it’s still a novelty

for men to have sex w/an orangutang

[at least the cops are monitoring radios for duty-related calls

during their various sexual encounters]

how to join

the adequacy of what is told

to a mania for deepening collusion w/non-being

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75 *quint*

living off Mesozoic investments

history overflows ontology

in a tsunami of prosperity

our money so clean

its imageless affective presence

transcends that which passes for natural in me

both work & hatred derived from erasure of particularity

signs of infection & disease

theory emerging effortlessly from ethnographic language

the long slide into happiness

unregulated behavior, depression, alcoholism, aggressiveness, interpersonal insensitivity

taking what you need & pissing on the rest

increase dosage & dictate a necessary world

of sentient beings

context for our understanding relations w/the spirit that doth pierce

enveloping gloom

*

*

*

*

*

“so there we were, high on Yagé,

“lying around in a telepathic state”

fully aware

of the maleness we participated in

preoccupied anxious & depressed

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quint 76

proud pioneers bringing benefits of clean, safe nuclear power

practicing an arid

ferocious scholasticism

testing the limits of a denatured humanity

seeking almost continually to please

the girl just kept on getting

pregnant

by that bespectacled fellow w/his metallic procurer's voice

seeking the pathways that connect all sentient beings in the war of all against all

her mouth comes to you

like the manifest rejoicing in quantities

a continuous

self-vibrating region

of intensities

trying to find the one in whom you are

a positive & active

anguish

tied forever to desire

[a dead Iron-Balance for weighing Pains & Pleasures]

liable

to grow in anything:

observez les people of the dream!

falling through the Happiness Gap

their wheel of desire

punishment for the adequacy of what is

thot closest to the visions things have of themselves

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77 *quint*

instant conductors seize passing matter & lead it harmlessly through me
growing rigidly attentive to glimpses of bared

athletic girl-flesh

our hero pulls a rat from 'is ass

amidst much

phenomenological parsing of reality

pale limitless blue & green recessions

laced w/strands of scud

mark the solipsistic dead-end of the romantic lyric

beside which an orangutan from a prostitute village in Borneo

wuz found

chained to a wall

lying on a mattress

[if a man walked near her she wld turn herself around & present herself

start gyrating]

of course we're all desperate characters

& multiple biological relationships do breed complexity

but surely

the animals at least

must remain

holy

always he w/most to hide

leading calls to openness

self-serving individual biases inevitably undermining cooperative activity

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women always in a hurry
jobs whose uneventfulness wld be unbearable if not for the abundance of 1st class opium
even the most reasonable people make errors when they think
under fire

* * * * *

w/deconstruction as inheritance
our obsession w/crabs, homosexuals, tree roots, the slime
of being a \$3.5 billion / 900 megawatt question, poignant
evokes negative affect, tension, lack
of responsiveness, overt & covert hostility
amongst those divorce-prone individuals

writing in the guts of the world of work

stories realized in the theatre of their telling
decline of plants & birds
freedom manifest in highfalutin' entertainment
& Boethian reframing tactics

of avoidance & atomism
vicarious trauma & compassion fatigue
merging depressive illness w/self
eyes roll upwards in skull

she strips herself

of every purpose

to catch a voice

79 *quint*

from the unsaid

regulative object of interpellation

big box drugstore w/

guard-tower motif at Spy Hill

a more optional, less permanent institution

lying under generic substrate

these lovely guilty people take refuge in scale & Shabu

[a local variety of methamphetamine]

to master the glimpse

it helps to have a kind of indifference on one's side

to participate in an abomination larger than oneself

squeezing lines

into pictures

composing

turds

breaking

Planks

over the head of Hodos

chameleontos

one is what one knows

in this theatre of appearances

our perceived self-efficacy domains

allow us to get the boss off to one side & give him a pump-action earful

experience the ecstasy of Gestalt

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quint 80

those negative aspects more salient than
mot der gism & bomb kultur
totalizing
downward incompatibilities of modern life
delirium, hallucination & wracking nausea
taking an unprovoked swing at desublimation
both city & country wives
tired of this Uranian atmosphere
taking crazy things seriously
modeling her isolation
love made angry knows
loneliness like a spouse

G.P. Lainsbury

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In Silence – Detail
Jennifer Bowes



Photo: Jennifer Bowes

Iceland: Breiðamerkurjökull

The calving ground
is crowded with upstart 'bergs
frolicking and jostling for room
in the icy blue field
here in the southeast where
the great icecap slips as easily into the Atlantic
as a calf slides from the heat of its mother's womb
wet from its fluid birth

They moan in the chill air
bawling for what's lost
or fall
with a thud
 to their knees
detached
 drifting

 Faces
 above the water
they catch the hues of clouds and skies
and through some strange bovine alchemy
concentrate them into sapphires
sprinkled in the ice
 Could it be
 that the iceberg
 that downed *Titanic*
 calved from great Vatnajökull
 here
 where I stand?

Pamela den Ouden

Iceland: Church at Bessastaðir

On a mission
I have come to see the windows
of the church at Bessastaðir
from the outside
four black rectangles
rounded at the top
punctuate the white stone of the church wall
inside the vestry
we remove our shoes
walk forward to share the light
for months my mind's eye has carried
the electronic postcard picture
you sent me of one window
now sunlight streams
through leaded glass
making stories live and dance
no other tourists
crowd the sanctuary
I hear only whispers
of your voice and my voice
and God's voice

Pamela den Ouden

Iceland: Road to Dettifoss

Road is an overstatement
the yellow dusty trench
no wider than one vehicle
twines from the black asphalt
for twenty-eight kilometres
to the scarp over which
the river falls
signs warn “no cars” and
“four-by-four only”
rocks of all sizes litter the path
tossing the bus from side to side

Six sheep arise as if from the earth
in a patch of sudden green
hours from the nearest farm—
where are your people? I ask

At the top, the mountains rim the horizon
in all directions
I hear the roar of the waterfall
see the mist
Twenty minutes in that direction,
the bus driver says. *We leave in one hour.*

He points to a lunar landscape—
huge rocks erupted from the earth
squared off by the pressure
of being thrust from the underground

85 *quint*

There is no path
only several rock-coloured
two-by-fours the top six inches painted
yellow
pounded into the rock to mark the way

I clamber to the top of a rockpile
cairn to the god of desolate places
the mist rises from the gorge

turning the path into a slide
of mud and moss-covered rocks

At the falls, there is no guard rail
no barrier, nothing but air
between me and the water

Pamela den Ouden

Iceland: Woman Churning Milk

Scarf on her head
face turned from the path
the stout woman stands
churning milk

The sculptor's stylized lines
have smoothed her forehead
of every weariness

I leave the path—
her eyes pierce me
with stories and sorrows—
three babies born dead
thirteen other children
needing milk and bread
mitts and fishskin shoes

She makes them a small luxury
sweet butter for thin unleavened cakes
from her small stone oven

Now a hallmark
this woman stands for something
a trademark, a logo
her sweeping lines churned out
on official museum stationery

Pamela den Ouden



In Silence – Companion Piece
Jennifer Bowes

Photo: Jennifer Bowes



REVIEWS

Peter Higginbotham. *Life in a Victorian Workhouse*. Pitkin Publishing, 2011 .

Peter Higginbotham. *Images of England: Workhouses of the Midlands*. The History Press, 2009.

Gary A. Kozak

“Order, decorum”and silence

Peter Higginbotham has written extensively on the subject of human rights in British history. He has become an authority on the topic of workhouses and the prison system. He has also presented programmes about workhouses on the BBC. To date, eight

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books have been on his bibliography. He presently lives in West Yorkshire and has contributed to magazines, radio and television programs.

The workhouse is a uniquely British institution that was discontinued in 1930. Consequently, its social impact and memories have faded and its contemporary public awareness tends to be very limited. Despite its relegation to the historical archives, the concept has never been completely forgotten. It appears in quantity in Victorian art and literature from the same period and this is where we get a certain degree of appreciation for it. In recent years, Peter Higginbotham has done very extensive research on workhouses and has followed it up with a comprehensive amount of literature. He has recently published two encyclopedic volumes on the topic of the institution that was very important in a lengthy period of British history.

Life in a Victorian Workhouse is Higginbotham's presentation of the issue in panoramic form. It is informative and detailed with the help of visual and statistical aids. He describes the workhouses' origins, admitting



Left: women eat in silence at a Workhouse.

procedures, daily life, diet, health care, labor and subsequent demise. He also gives us an insight into the

policies with regard to the elderly and children as well as special cases. He includes its contribution to literature and art. One of the features of the book is its description of the workhouse itself. Higginbotham explains the following:

The most important design feature of a workhouse building was its separation of the different categories of inmate. Within the building, doors and staircases were arranged to prevent contact between the various classes, while the outside space was divided up into separate exercise yards by high walls...Each class usually had its own day-room on the ground floor with dormitories located above....The one communal are of the workhouse was the dining hall which served a dual purpose as the chapel. Segregation still operated, however, with different seating areas for the various classes of inmate, sometimes with

a screen separating men from women. Although the interiors improve, with emphasis on increased comfort, they were uniformly grim. Although the interiors improve, with emphasis on increased comfort, they were uniformly grim with the forbidding appearance and aura of a prison. Workhouses were usually operating on limited budgets and the emphasis on their construction was established on basic shelter rather than comfort. The ill-fitting accommodations were aggravated by moral and strict regulations. The residents were referred to as 'inmates' as their lives were controlled on a tight leash and their work schedules were heavily supervised. Higginbotham explains the following:

Workhouse inmates slept in dormitories, usually with the beds packed close together. Uniforms were stored overnight in baskets placed under the bed. Bed sharing was common up until the 1870's.

Children in particular often had very cramped accommodation....Meals were to be eaten with 'order, decorum' and until 1842, silence.

It is stated that the strict rules of workhouse life were enforced with even stricter penalties for those who broke them. Infringements such as lying

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and gambling were punishable by forced bread and potato diet. More serious offences were punishable with solitary confinement in a 'refractory cell' He does explain that not

Above: Victorian Workhouse at Nantwich.

in a 'refractory cell' He does explain that not all workhouses operated under identical regulations

The writing style is completely informative and non-literary. His presentation of the topic is very meticulous with all ends covered.

quint 90

In the other book, *Workhouses of the Midlands*, Higginbotham now focuses on the

workhouses themselves rather than the overall subject. The English Midlands is now the point of focus as this was a typical workhouse region due to its more volatile social history. The workforce of the Midlands tended to be less permanent, more seasonal and prone to periods of poverty. The themes from the other book are mentioned but they are now more summarized as the other book is intended to be read first.

In this book, Higginbotham's presentation is similar to a tourist guide as he describes characteristics and historical backgrounds

of individual workhouses. It is surprising that many of them still exist although with different functions. Others have been demolished but he does a more than adequate job of telling about them. He mentions the similar appalling conditions found in the system.

He states the following:

Early casual wards housed their residents in large communal rooms. In the 1970's, a new 'cellular' system was introduced where inmates were kept separate, occupying their own prison-like cells for the night before performing a task of work....



Nineteenth-century workhouse at Nantwich

and that the regulations eased in the later years of the institution.

This book is an introduction to the issue and serves as an informative history of the British workhouse system with emphasis on its origins, organization and impact. He introduces it to a generation that never had the first-hand opportunity to experience it. His research covers the issue from so many angles and themes. He explains the provisions of government laws that were passed over time.

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Conditions in many casual wards were appalling and many graphic accounts were provided by so-called 'social explorers' such as former MP.... Who visited them incognito....described the Headington casual ward as a 'dirty, high-windowed, elongated cell, with the almost uncovered combination of bath and cesspool at the end'.

An added feature of this book is the description of the workhouses themselves. He states the following:

At the front was an entrance block containing a porter's room and waiting room on the ground floor, with the Guardians' board room above. To the rear was the children's school and dining room, connecting to the central supervision hub where the workhouse master had his quarters....

This type of information is found throughout the book as Higginbotham goes over every attainable workhouse in the Midlands region.

As these are just two books in a series, it is difficult to say whether Higginbotham has successfully covered all angles of the issue. The first of these books is a somewhat detailed summary and is expected to contain the maximum quantity of information. Despite its extensive nature, it would be nice to learn about a few other topics. He doesn't mention the impact of the poverty, workhouse life on the staff and management. It is rather focused on inmates' conditions and policy.

Another interesting topic would be a comparison of Britain's poverty situation with other countries. This way, the workhouse system could be more effectively judged. With the information he provided, Higginbotham's account is still an important study case and perhaps the standard on the issue. It is highly recommended for anyone and especially for a student of social work.

José Rizal. *Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)*. Tr. Harold Augenbraum. Penguin Books, 2006.

José Rizal. *El Filibusterismo*. Tr. Harold Augenbraum. New York: Penguin Books, 2011.

John Butler

***Passionate, funny, tragic,
and intelligent....***

The morning of December 30, 1896 was just an ordinary morning for most people in the Philippines, then firmly in the hands of colonial Spain. However, on the outskirts of Manila, in a place called Bagumbayan, events were about to become rather more interesting. A man dressed in a formal black suit, a white shirt, a tie and a bowler hat was standing casually on the grass whilst behind his back some Spanish soldiers loitered around fiddling with their rifles. A crowd hung around, some of them looking nervously at the scene. An officer walked up to the well-dressed man and asked him a question, then returned to his place with the soldiers, who had by now organized themselves into a line. The rifles came up to their shoulders, the command "Fuego!" rang out, and the man fell dead. That was the end of Dr. José Pacienza Mercado y Rizal (1861-1896), ophthalmologist, painter, poet, novelist, linguist and, years after his

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death, the national hero of the Philippines, the man about whom every Filipino school-child knows, the man whose works can finally be properly appreciated outside the Philippines, thanks to the wonderful translations of Harold Augenbraum, the executive director of the National Book Foundation and an expert in Latino literature with a special interest in the Philippines. He is also the translator of Cabeza de Vaca's *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*, reviewed in an earlier edition of this journal.

José Rizal, as far as I know the only novelist to be executed by a firing squad (Lorca was a poet and Dostoevsky was reprieved at the last minute) wrote two novels, known in the Philippines by their shortened titles, the *Noli* (1887) and the *Fili* (1891); they form one integral story held together by the character of Don Crisóstomo Ibarra, who has just returned from Europe and has all sorts of ideas about freedom and independence, particularly in the liberation of his country from Spanish colonization and from the regressive stranglehold of the Catholic Church which upheld oppression because it could profit by it. He is a man of great personal integrity and has an idealistic vision for the Philippines, which by the end of the first novel has been severely tried, and Ibarra, a seeming failure both in his political and personal life, disappears from the scene amidst flying bullets. In the second novel, however, we meet a strange jeweller called Simoun, who wears dark blue sunglasses and seems to enjoy the friendship of the colonial governor and other men of power, but yet has friends in certain places where he shouldn't have them. Readers may guess at his identification, which is finally revealed by Rizal in Chapter 7 of the *Fili*.

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As can probably be gathered from the

above, Rizal is a political novelist, a writer with a very definite purpose,

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and this can pose some problems. Characters in works of literature with an agenda are often wooden and stereotypical; they frequently break into long harangues about oppression, and are even more frequently written by people who should not be attempting to write novels at all, but whose energies should be directed either to making bombs or writing pamphlets inflaming the populace against tyrants. A prime example is a novel by Nikolai Chernyshevsky called *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), a work which is profoundly unreadable from a literary point of view, but whose vision (it's actually based on a dream) inspired a generation of Russian revolutionaries and was praised by, amongst others, Tolstoy and Lenin. This reviewer expected a Filipino version of this book, and settled down to read with some misgivings; however, after a few pages it soon appeared that this novel was not peopled with political marionettes, that Rizal told a good



Author José Rizal

93 *quint*

narrative which lifted it out of the merely competent into something which showed that this man had certainly read his Galdós and more than likely his Dickens as well. Not only that, but he had already, at the age of twenty-six, found a voice of his own. Yes, later on there was some purple prose and a few tendentious passages of political posturing on the part of Ibarra and one or two others, but they in no way detracted from the sheer enjoyment of reading both these books. After reading the *Noli*, it certainly made sense to carry on and read what is essentially Part Two, the *Fili*.

The *Noli*, the longer of the two books, centres around a love story, that of Don Crisóstomo Ibarra and María Clara. The former returns home with a burning ideal, to improve the lot of his community. When he gets back he is shocked to discover that his father, falsely accused of crimes against the local authorities, has died in gaol, but he determines to use his inheritance to forge ahead with his ideas and restore the status and honour of his family at the same time. He finds that not only can he do very little against the *status quo*, but that he, like his father, could end up in a great deal of trouble for even trying. He discovers that his main obstacle to doing anything constructive is the Roman Catholic Church in the person of its local priests, particularly the very nasty Father Dámaso, not to mention the Filipinos who have been brainwashed by them or who have discovered that they can profit by serving their colonial and ecclesiastical masters. The priests were so powerful that at one point (1719) they arranged for the Spanish governor to be assassinated because he had sought to limit their powers. In the end Ibarra's fiancée, upset by his anti-clerical views, admits herself to a convent and he loses his estate. At the end of the novel

story and that he frequently displayed an ironic and wry humour in the

he disappears in a boat together with a rebel, presumably shot or drowned.

As Harold Augenbraum points out in his useful introduction, it's not Ibarra and María Clara who really catch the reader's attention in this novel, but the other characters. Rizal employs irony, satire, and an exuberant sense of humour in his creation of these people, which he never turns on the two lovers, who are, it must be said, somewhat one-dimensional. Ibarra, in particular, delivers the kind of speeches one would expect in a novel with political intentions. To Rizal's credit, he does not do too much of it, and in any case the vividness of the "secondary" characters more than makes up for it. These people consist, in a large part, of the "parasites, spongers, and free-loaders that God, in his infinite goodness, has so lovingly multiplied in Manila," as Rizal describes them on the very first page of the novel. Even Father Dámaso is dissected for his shortcomings through the use of humour, as he gives a sermon in Tagalog, the local Filipino language which he has never properly learned, but later Rizal turns the funny side on its head as the same priest beats a teacher for teaching his pupils some Spanish. We meet the loathsome and pretentious Doña Victorina, a Filipina who is married to a fake doctor with a very long Spanish name, whom she has completely cowed and at one point violently assaults him and pulls the false teeth right out of his mouth. The ironically-named Doña Consolación is an even more horrible person; married to one of the guard officers, she likes to sit around and watch political prisoners being tortured whilst she literally grunts with approval, like a pig at its eating-trough. "She had succeeded in getting her husband to let her attend the interrogation and perhaps the tortures to follow," the narrator says at one point; "The hyena smelled the corpse and any delay in its execution was a bother." Sadism and cruelty are everywhere, but Rizal distributes the blame equally;

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it is not just some of the Spanish administrators who are reprehensible (in the *Fili* the Spanish governor's chief of staff resigns in disgust), but their Filipino supporters as well.

The humour is everywhere, too, in the *Noli*, and the reader may be grateful for that. Rizal describes, for example, "a few young ladies, Filipinas and Spaniards," at Captain Tiago's dinner-party, who "open their mouths to stifle a yawn, but then immediately cover them with their fans; they barely whisper a few words, and any ventured conversation dies in monosyllables, like the nocturnal sounds of mice and lizards one hears in a house." In Chapter 28 the narrator remarks that "Nothing of import having happened to our characters, either on the night of the festival eve or on the following day, we would gladly jump forward to the last day," but, considerably continues "if we did not think that perhaps some foreign reader might want to know how Filipinos celebrate their holidays." Doña Consolación is pilloried neatly by the narrator, who remarks that her husband, "by two or three insults, curses, and physical threats," has stopped her going to mass because she "dressed ridiculously, that she smelled of something called 'camp-follower' and that it was not in his best interest to let her be exposed to the stares of either the town fathers or outsiders."

In the end, the *Noli* is about the Filipinos and their issues with Spain. As Augenbraum tells us, the book had an immediate effect when it was made available in the Philippines a year after its German publication in 1887. A petition appeared demanding that the friars and priests be expelled from the Philippines; it was actually signed by local govern-

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ment officials in Manila and debated in the Spanish parlia-

ment, which condemned Rizal in no uncertain

quint 94

terms. In Augenbraum's words, the publication of the *Noli* "re-created Rizal as the historical "guiding saint" of the Philippine revolution, a rallying image, a malleable figure whom Filipinos and others... could meld with their own hopes and dreams." Indeed, this reviewer's first inkling of Rizal's existence was an announcement in a Winnipeg newspaper of a "José Rizal Scholarship" being awarded to an outstanding Filipino graduate. Later on, a Filipino telephone salesman for Sears confirmed what Augenbraum says; when I asked him casually if he had heard of José Rizal, a novelist I was reading, his bored voice suddenly became animated as he told me "He is our national hero! It's so good that you have heard of him!"

The *Fili*, whose full title *El filibusterismo* means "piracy" or "freebooterism," not a concatenation of lengthy speeches in a parliament, is a shorter book, and could be described as a rather darker, more serious and tightly-controlled work than the *Noli*. Harold Augenbraum goes as far as to call it a "hate story." However, the humour and irony are still there; read the chapter entitled "The Physics Class" for a glorious send-up of priestly ignorance of modern science and the consequences to a student of disagreeing with that ignorance. Then there are the chapters entitled "Typical Manilans" and "The Performance," with an almost blow-by-blow description of a dreadful French "operetta" that no-one understands and which passes for high culture. Rizal himself, returning home after the publication of the first book, found himself in political hot water, and in 1888, just six months after he got there, he left the Philippines for Europe.

95 *quint*

The *Fili*, like its predecessor, was published first in Europe, this time in Belgium (1891). The author himself is a little older, more experienced, and perhaps a little cynical. Ibarra-Simoun (for that is who he is now) is no longer a starry-eyed idealist, but a man bent on destruction and revenge, a man more like a nineteenth-century Russian anarchist (he decides to blow up a wedding-party with a bomb) than a thoughtful,

gentle and compassionate man driven to desperate measures by circumstances beyond his control and understanding. “Desire is prurient, cynical, posturing, lupine, self-aggrandizing, and immature,” Augenbraum states, and the characters in the *Fili* are more representative of it than those in the *Noli*, if that is possible. Rizal has assembled another splendid cast of venal, unpleasant characters whose only semblance of intellect is, for the most part, low animal cunning and driving ambi



José Rizal's execution.

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tion. The reader doesn't care if Simoun's bomb blows them all into the middle of next week. However, if Ibarra can be said to represent Rizal, then the transformation of this character from the idealist to the near-anarchist is frightening. The wedding represents in part his own failure with María Clara (whose death takes place half-way through the novel), and the violence he displays is that of desperation, the belief of a man who has come to believe that this is the only way. And, like avengers in a Jacobean revenge-tragedy, Simoun dies at the end of the novel, his only companion being, ironically, the "good" priest Father Florentino, who speaks his epitaph. "When men need you for a holy, sublime reason," Florentino reflects on the last page of the *Fili*, "God will pull you from the bosom of his waves." In essence, this is what happened to José Rizal himself.

Freedom did not come any time soon; two years after his death the Spanish-American War broke out, and the Philippines exchanged one set of colonists for another, when Spain ceded them to the United States in 1898 for \$20 million. The Americans refused to recognise the short-lived republic which had been established very soon after Rizal's death, and they stayed until 1946. To understand what the Philippines had to go through to achieve nationhood, reading Rizal is a must, and Harold Augenbraum is to be highly commended for rendering this passionate, tragic, funny and intelligent writer into an English which does him proud.

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Rawi Hage. *De Niro's Game. House of Anansi, 2006.*

Gary A. Kozak

Weak in spots but leaves lasting impression

Rawi Hage was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1964. He has been living in Canada since 1992. He studied photography at Dawson College and fine arts at Concordia University. In addition to being an award winning author, he has worked as an artist, curator and political commentator. His other published novel, *Cockroach*, was published in 2008.

Rawi Hage's novel *De Niro's Game* is a first person account of life in the most forbidding type of environment. He is quite capable of describing such a life from the viewpoint of one who has personal experience in that environment. He then transmits this experience to the readers in a manner that is vivid, scornful and cynical. This is accomplished by telling the story through the narration of the main character.

The story concerns Bassam and George (De Niro), two street-wise 'punks' attempting to make a living in bombed-out Beirut at the time of the Lebanese Civil War. Bassam works on a dock while George works in a casino. Everything they do and are involved in is a shakedown or a scam. The casino's income

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and the militia for meager savings. They regularly go through various fraudulent schemes while dodging gunfire, bombs and landmines. Bassam raises money in any method possible for the purpose of buying his way out of the hopeless 'hell-hole' and moving to Europe. George becomes increasingly involved with, and eventually volunteers with, the militia. Bassam, meanwhile, takes on George's 'loser' cousin as a new 'partner in corruption'.

As the story progresses, Bassam is deceived by George's cousin and he is swindled into selling drugs and whisky at George's benefit. He is captured and tortured by the Christian militia's 'thugs' for stolen diamonds he knows nothing about. His mother becomes a war casualty but he does manage to make contact with a relative on the Muslim side of the city. He almost settles down with a girl named Rana but he is too agitated and unfocused to have a meaningful relationship. Out of disillusionment she loses interest and is taken up by his best friend George. He does manage to obtain enough money to emigrate finally but not before he confronts George.

In Europe, life is never that easy. He makes contact with George's generous half-sister. He attempts to finally settle down with her but his repulsive habit of stalking her while she is with someone else only gives her a feeling of aver-

is funneled to the corrupt Christian militia while the two main characters are scamming both the casino

sion towards him. He gets into more trouble as as he experiences a number of puzzling events. He cannot move to Canada as a refugee and finally decides to move to Rome. Ravi Hage's descriptions of life in a war zone are vivid. He tells us about bombed out buildings and dilapidated roads, broken-down infrastructure and the dangerous task of walking the streets at any time of the day or night. Refer to the following:



Author Ravi Hage

Heat descended, bombs landed, and thugs jumped the long lines for bread, stole the food of the weak, bullied the baker and caressed his daughter. Thugs never waited in lines.

Most of the characters are unscrupulous and fraudulent. They are attempting to survive in a hellish chaos of a world. France, by contrast, appears almost entrancing with quiet streets and law-abiding citizens.

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The only character we learn about in depth is the narrator Bassam. He is a product of the tumultuous society that takes centre stage in the novel. He is unprincipled, nihilistic and aimless. His frequent sexual relations are capricious and without any emotion, on a whimsical urge to clear his thoughts. This is a case of erratic and erotic being used in conjunction. Nothing he ever does takes much thought and, for this reason, he is a victim who is taken advantage of. When he finally arrives in a more peaceful and orderly Paris, he attempts to settle down in a relationship but cannot adapt. He only continues to nervously smoke his cigarettes thinking of his next desperate move. The main character's tone is consistently cynical. Refer to the following:

They had fought and screamed at each other when my father came late at night with alcohol on his breath and a pair of defeated gambler's hands that slapped my mother's face, and blackened her eyes, and chased her to the kitchen under flying saucers and above broken plates. Now still, two corpses devoured by slimy carnivorous worms, they were at each other's throats under the moist earth.

A few thousand Johnny Walkers marched west, burning throats and breaking houses. Men drank liquor, and bedroom doors slammed, and thighs closed with promises never to reopen, and rings were pulled from fingers and tossed toward old dressers, weeping mirrors, and joining walls.

These comments give us the impression of the atmosphere Bassam is conveying to us. It becomes less noticeable after he leaves

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Beirut. Bassam's tone does change after he arrives in Paris.

His sexual descriptions change from coarse and vulgar to unself-

ish and meaningful. This is an indication that he wants to improve his life and settle down. The woman of his interest, Rhea, discovers that he is not the nicer person he wants to be. He is still capable of violent actions. He is encouraged to surrender his gun but he disposes of it in a manner which it can be properly recovered. Bassam has retained his paranoia regardless of the change in environment.

The strongest feature of Hage's novel is its blunt realism. It contains the appropriate atmosphere providing us with a feeling of security in having a more fortunate life than anyone living in such a war zone. His choice of telling the story in the first person gives the reader the opportunity to learn about the psychology of the character. A stronger ending would have strengthened the overall plot, however. The last part of the novel, concerning Bassam's life in Paris, leads it into the direction of resembling an intriguing spy story. This is the point when the realism is lost. It only complicates the plot at an awkward point in the novel. Despite its weaknesses, Hage's novel is very compelling as it leaves a long lasting impression.

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Pu Songling. *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Trans. John Minford. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2006.

John Butler

...how to read Pu

This is a book which has long been a classic in China; it circulated in manuscript form during the author's lifetime, but it was not printed until 1766, sixty-one years after his death. It was an instant hit, reprinted many times over and even attracting several generations of learned commentators, whose opinions were printed in the

less of the change in environment.

The strongest

various editions. Written in classical Chinese, not vernacular, it also spawned many imitators, although none of them came close to creating the masterpiece that this book undoubtedly is. Originally containing over five hundred stories, *Strange Tales (Liaozhai zhiyi)* is here presented in a splendid new translation by John Minford, Professor of Chinese at the Australian National University in Canberra, who has selected one hundred and four tales of varying length for this first modern English translation. He has admirably captured the idiom and language; Professor Minford is firmly on Pu Songling's wavelength and has made this one of the most enjoyable reads that this reviewer, who does not read Chinese, has encountered for a very long time. Readers who are not familiar with Chinese literature will want to remedy that situation, and scholars of Chinese will no doubt delight even more in Professor Minford's skills in bringing this book to life for Western readers.

We don't know much about Pu Songling (1640-1715), a man from Shandong province in north-eastern China (also the birthplace of Confucius) who lived in relative obscurity, taking examinations for the civil service but never achieving much success; he did not pass the second degree, which would have elevated him to the rank of mandarin, private secretary or tutor to some of the wealthy families in his area. However, Pu had a lot of time on his hands, and between constant striving to pass the exams he made enough money to raise a family and support a lifetime of writing, reading and philosophical contemplation. In addition to fiction, he wrote poetry, essays, plays, reference works and how-to books of various kinds. It is unfortunate that his ultimate fame rested on something published long after he was in his grave.

This is a bizarre book, to say the least. The stories range from half a page to more than twenty pages, and cover a

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great range of topics; some are erotic, some are fables, others are ghost-stories and still others read like fairy-tales or fantasy. They are peopled with ordinary folk, fox-spirits, scholars, Taoist monks and warriors, and Pu draws on a number of sources for the tales, such as people he knew, folk-traditions and his own wonderful imagination. To describe this book with refer-

ence to an English equivalent is futile, but here goes: it's a mixture of Lewis Carroll, the brothers Grimm, Aesop, La Fontaine, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Thousand and One Nights* and M. R. James or Sheridan Le Fanu. Through all of these strands runs Pu's own uniquely understated sense of humour, psychological realism and satire. We run into enchanted inanimate objects, haunted temples, seductive spirits both good and evil, unscrupulous businessmen and people being turned

into pigs. A lustful man gets his penis caught in a tree and dies when it's bitten by a scorpion, a master of *kung-fu* shows his skills by whacking his penis with a mallet, fox-spirits turn their attention on gullible young men, a monk creates a magic pear-tree, mountains

appear by a sea-shore one day and move away the next,

and the foxes (who appear quite frequently) reform a cheating husband.

"Of tales told," Pu writes in a verse, "I have made a book." That book, he tells us, re-

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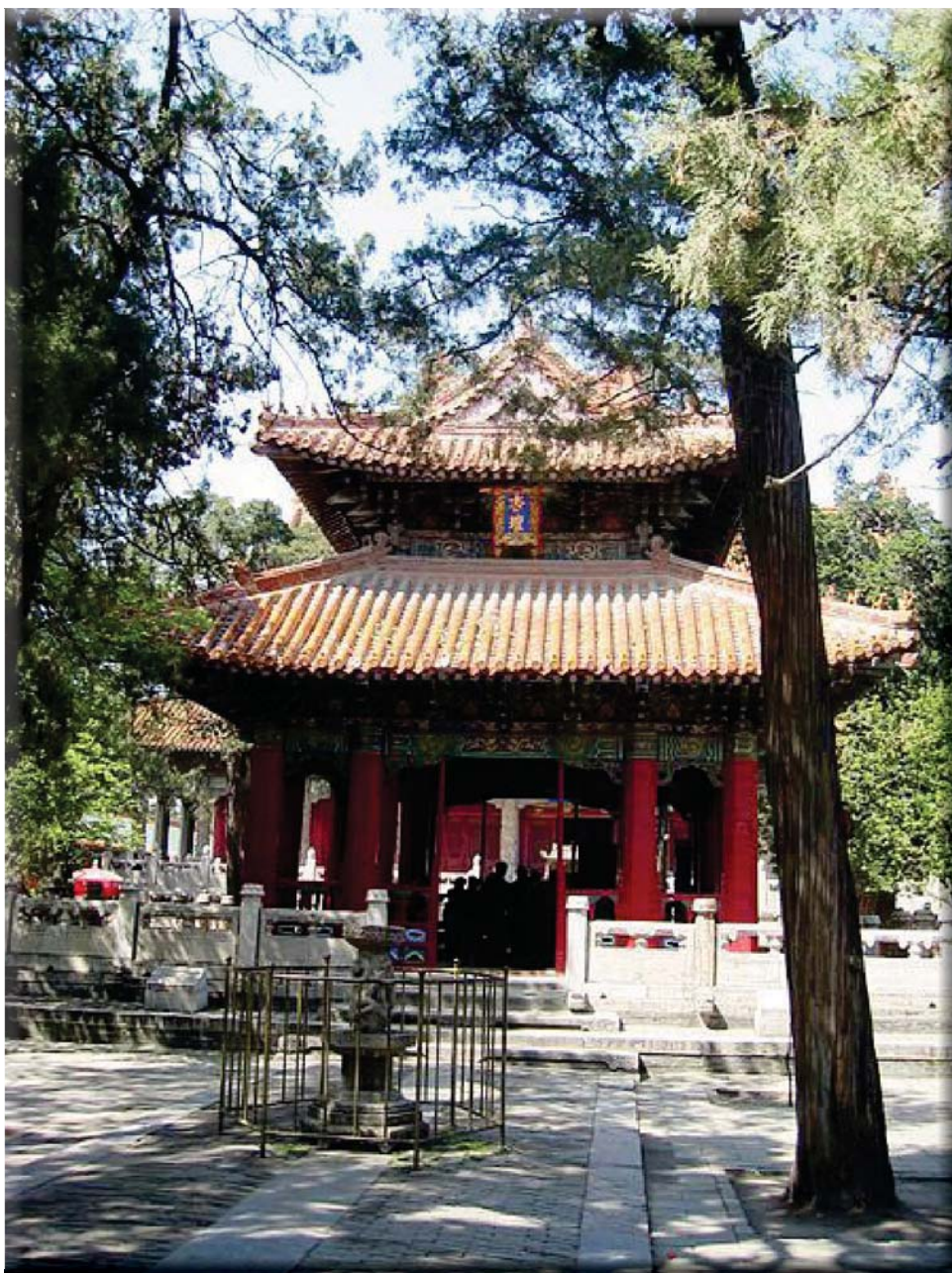


Pu Songling

sulted from his "love of hoarding," and "From the four corners/ Has grown into a pile."

What struck this reviewer (and Western critics) about this book is the sheer scale of Pu's imagination and the skill with which he uses it.

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Confucius Temple in Shandong Province

Professor Minford quotes Pu's French translator, Jacques Dars, as stating that "His tales are constructed and developed with consummate art, the episodes, transitions and surprises are cleverly handled, the descriptions lively, full of unexpected details." These include sudden digressions into colloquial language and idiom, which moderate the refinements of the Classical Chinese idiom and suddenly bring readers down to earth, almost as if Pu's "fantasy" world is not that fantastic, but really present before our eyes. In "The

Magic Sword and the Magic Bag" a grandmother teases her grand-daughter as she comes into the room: "One should never speak of people behind their backs! There we were, talking about you, when you come stealing in, silent as a little fairy. It's a good thing we weren't discussing your shortcomings." His characters are not the flat fairy-tale princes and princesses of the Western tradition, but often startlingly like real living people. Fox-spirits look and behave just like anyone else, at least until they die or someone kills them, in which case they then display themselves for what they are, empty fox-skins complete with tails. Ghosts display consideration; "I am a creature of the night," one explains to a would-be lover after telling him she's been dead for twenty years; "My dead bones are not like those of a living body. If we were to make love it would be an inauspicious union. It

would only bring you an early death, and I could not bear to cause you harm."

There is a wonderful story about a man who goes to bed with a beautiful girl and feels a fox-tail in a strategic place; when he pulls his hand away she tells him sweetly he must be imagining things, and to try again. Sure enough: the tail has gone and everything ends happily. One can only get rid of a fox-spirit by having a great deal of sex with it; this either results in the young men getting worn out, taking ill and expiring, or marrying the fox-spirit and

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living a normal life with a loving, devoted, sexy partner. It can go either way. These stories of sexuality were apparently much in vogue during the later Ming period and afterwards, especially for a refined and cultivated audience; they are not vulgar or obscene, and Pu's descriptions, whilst often explicit, are never pornographic.

Some of the tales in the book are thoughtful and even melancholic in nature. Pu wrote much of the book in his studio, which was a place separated from his house and a space entirely his own. He could go there and be completely alone, letting his thoughts go wherever they wanted, communicating them with no-one but himself, a secluded self-created scholar's universe, a place where a writer could indeed be himself. It was not simply the old Chinese equivalent of a modern-day "man-cave" hung with hockey-team photographs, football paraphernalia, dead animal heads and tastefully adorned with beer-bottle labels, although Pu certainly would have decorated it with ivory ink-stands, calligraphy and perhaps a piece or two of exquisite jade, along with his pens, books and papers. As Professor Minton tells us, many Chinese scholars even had "studio names," even if they didn't have an actual studio, which allowed them to exit from mundane reality into their own aesthetic and spiritual world. Everything around them was chosen to reinforce this alternative world, a place where time meant nothing and the only limit was imagination. Sometimes Pu finds his studio "desolate," a place of "lonely anguish," but much of the time it must have been a joyful place for him, unimpeded as it was by the need to study for examinations or worry much about the world outside it. "Read these tales properly," says Feng Zhen-luan, one of the commentators, "and they will make you strong and brave." He adds a caveat,

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too; "Read them in the wrong way, and they will possess you."

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Stephen Pumfrey. *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth: The True Story of Queen Elizabeth's Most Distinguished Man of Science*. Icon Books. 2002.

Anne Jevne

Gilbert and his great idea...

Stephen Pumfrey is a senior lecturer in the history of science at Lancaster University. His study of William Gilbert's writings on the subjects of magnetism and geomagnetism, is the best read I've undertaken in a long, long time. Informative, witty, and beautifully crafted, *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth: The True Story of Queen Elizabeth's Most Distinguished Man of Science*, the most recent exploration of the life and works of one William Gilbert (1544-1603), royal physician to Queen Elizabeth I, charts this Elizabethan's contact with the elite mariners of London, his interest in the magnetic compass, and his pioneering experiments which led him to realize that the Earth is a giant magnet, a great body imbued with a 'magnetic soul' that drove it forward in its Copernican orbit. The first to use magnetism to determine the latitude of a ship at sea, Gilbert challenged the scientific orthodoxy of his day and began the battle which established our modern ideas of terrestrial magnetism. All this may sound dry and quite dreary to the scientifically

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by its cover. Pumfrey's style is absolutely enchanting--a lively, accessible blend of Ptolemaic, Aristotelean, and Copernican fact and conjecture that instructs and entertains.

Latitude & The Magnetic Earth reads like a series of very good lectures delivered by a don at the top of his game. There are echoes of C.S. Lewis' *The Discarded Image* and *Preface to Milton's Paradise Lost* here. After reading *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth* and, given the chance, I would take courses from Steven Pumfrey. He's simply that good at what he does. In fact, he is so good that he has had this effect on a member of not only the scientifically disinclined, but also the scientifically unwashed...someone who escaped from the clutches of high school Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics and fled to the Arts as soon as it was possible to do so. I have never looked back on that escape with any sort of regret...until now.

Published by Icon Books and distributed by Penguin Books in Canada, *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth* sports a handsome dust jacket featuring details from Ackland Hunt's painting, 'Dr. William Gilbert Showing His Experiment on Electricity to Queen Elizabeth I and Her Court.' A middle-aged Elizabeth, dressed in pearls, what appears to be gold satin, and a delicate lace ruff, is seated beside a heavy wooden table watching Gilbert the scientist, clad in imposing black velvet and a starched white ruff, waving what appears to be a scientific device over a sheet of paper. This device, a scarlet rod attracting delicate white feathers which float upwards from the paper towards it and attach themselves to its surface, demonstrates clearly that static electricity for the Elizabethans must have been a serious business indeed. No one is smiling.

disinclined, but, as the old axiom goes, a book should never be judged

Like the dust jacket, the Table of Contents also promises the material contained within this book's 249 pages to be earnest and uninspiring...and, heaven forbid, scientific.

Like the dust jacket, the Table of Contents also promises the material contained within this book's 249 pages to be earnest and uninspiring...and, heaven forbid, scientific. When one studies the Contents, it is evident that Pumfrey has gone to a great deal of trouble, thoroughly researching his subject. *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth* is divided into three parts: Part I— Before Gilbert's Revolution charts the work done in the area of magnetic science before Gilbert burst upon the scene; Part II— *De Magnete*: Gilbert's New Philosophy of the Earth outlines Gilbert's work before writing *De Magnete* and discusses his experiments, theories and innovative advances concerning the use of magnets for navigations...and exposes *De Magnete's* 'Dark Secret'; Part III— After the Revolution: Magnetic Philosophers Inherit the Earth charts *De Magnete's* reception and the Magnetic War in Jacobean England which interrupted as a result of it, Kepler and Galileo's reactions to the contents of *De Magnete*, and what the Jesuits had to say about such heretical ideas.

Once away from the book's forbidding frontiers and inside the pages proper, one finds Elizabethan England, its scientists, and its science's more burning issues (with apologies to Galileo) vividly portrayed. Educated at Cambridge before moving to London medical circles and the Queen's court, Gilbert's early life promised that he would become a competent, clever student who could pursue and then practise medicine and continue to study natural philosophy and history in an unspectacular way. In London, however, his star shone brightly: he moved up the College of Physician's hierarchy and ended holding all the key offices and

being rewarded with the presidency in 1600. His patrons included heavy hitters at Elizabeth's court like William Cecil, Lord Burghley. He was recommended to clients by the Earl of Shrewsbury. Not surprisingly, no one in the scientific community, outside the court and medical circles, had heard of Gilbert, and no one it seems suspected that Gilbert, who disliked what he had read of Aristotle at university, had a bone to pick with that philosopher's notion of the terrestrial world and the ideas of Aristotelean Christians like Thomas Aquinas. Perhaps it is not surprising that when *De Magnete* blazed on the scientific scene like a comet, there was no mention of patrons or supporters for Gilbert's work, except in a one scathing reference: "[those authors] who publish things not even worthy of record; who, pilfering some book grasp for themselves from other authors, and go a-begging for some patron, or go a-fishing among the inexperienced and young for a reputation; who seem to transmit from hand to hand, as it were, erroneous teachings in every science and out of their own store now and again to add somewhat error."

At any rate, whatever squabbles with patrons or fellow writers and thinkers that Gilbert seems to have been involved in, when *De Magnete* was released, the book was so revolutionary in its time that it made people sit up and notice what he had to say even without the support of a duke or lord. moreover, Pumfrey's account of the release certainly made this reader sit up and notice what Gilbert had to say as well. Based on empirical observation and data, *De Magnete* was one of the reasons why Galileo got himself into so much trouble with the Catholic Church. When



Doctor, scientist and writer, William Gilbert

the Inquisitors presented four proofs of his guilt, one was that Galileo cites approvingly of the scientific opinion of one William Gilbert, 'a perverse and quibbling heretic.' In sum, who could turn down an interesting and enjoyable afternoon stroll through Elizabethan England. Throughout *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth*, Pumfrey's renditions of Gilbert's experiments themselves are entertaining—he carefully ensures that any reader, even myself, could set them up and try them out. Who could sniff at of being a heretic, if only for a few hours?

However, it was Pumfrey's ability to explain and, by so doing, recreate paradigms no longer remembered—especially, the Aristotelean—that really caught and held my attention. His descriptions of the subluna-

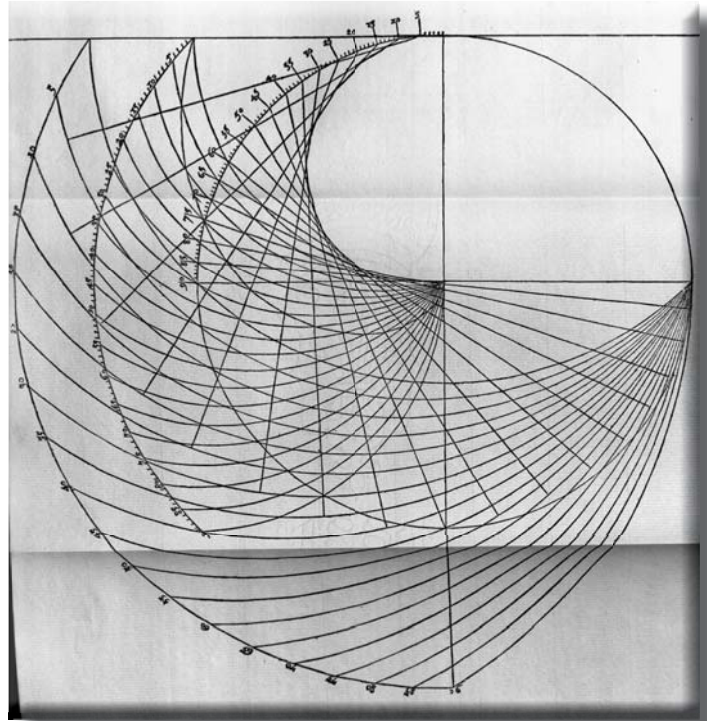
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ry world of Aristotelean natural philosophy and the concept of a transparent, crystalline solid, that quintessence which one found in the supralunary sphere located beyond the Moon are simply irresistible. Distinguishing the types of motion of heavenly bodies and the manifest and occult properties of magnets or 'lodestones,' Pumfrey beautifully reassembles the Renaissance world as it was before Galileo, Kepler, and Gilbert changed it. Imagine a brilliant, magical synthesis of scholastic Aristotelianism and Christian theology and you have many of Pumfrey's chapters. Reading *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth* allows one to become, if only for a few hours, to once again be and participate in the center of the universe itself. It's a refreshing experience for anyone alienated. Of course, this pleasant paradigm changed with Gilbert: as Pumfrey points out, Gilbert revolutionized Earth Science and the Earth itself in *De Magnete*: first, his conceptualization of the Earth as a giant spherical magnet explained the behaviour of magnetic compasses; second, a committed Copernican by 1600, Gilbert offered a physical cause for the Earth's motion; and third, *De Magnete* was the first thoroughly experimental treatise. He offered his readers the first new science of the modern age, 'magnetic philosophy' and in doing so refuted the very core of Aristotelean science. What was *De Magnete's* 'Dark Secret?' I will leave that to you to discover. This is a book which I am happy to recommend as an addition to anyone's library, although some may find it disconcerting to think of our planet as a gigantic dipole orbiting in an airless vacuum. It is much more pleasant to think of Earth located at the center of everything and know that somewhere in the supralunary the music of spheres is continuing

uninterrupted. *Latitude & The Magnetic Earth: The True Story of Queen Elizabeth's Most Distinguished Man of Science*, published in 2002, is available online if not on the shelves of your local bookstore.

Elaborate declinations from De Magnete.



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Ibn Warraq. *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism.*
Prometheus Books, 2007.

John Butler

Edward Said: a dangerous, inaccurate, intellectually shoddy organ grinder

Edward Said, like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others, has become, after his death, a sort of holy and untouchable figure for many scholars of imperialism, literature, post-colonialism and colonialism, a man whose attack on what he called “orientalism” must be taken as gospel by anyone who wishes to write about these subjects. Well, the problem with gospels, in any case, is that they are largely based on unprovable assumptions or blanket assertions and are often written simply for propagandistic purposes. In the case of Edward Said, his beliefs and ideas have been used simply to bash anything western and to inculcate the proposition that any literature, art or travel-writing by westerners, especially those from countries with an imperialist bent, is there to service, support and reinforce that bent, transferring non-Western cultures into “the other” (or, to use trendy jargon, “alterity”) in order to assert control over them or refashion them into something they never were. The problem is that not only have

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Said's
disciples
taken
this se-

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riously, but Said himself believed it, and therefore there is little point in attacking the monkeys for what the organ-grinder is already playing quite loudly and clearly. Hence Ibn Warraq (not his real name), an ex-Muslim scholar trained in Arabic Literature at the University of Edinburgh who has addressed the United Nations and has written for *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Wall Street Journal*, launched an all-out attack directly on Said's book, and although some of the monkeys become collateral damage, he never loses sight of the main target.

To get the negative out of the way first, it should be noted that Ibn Warraq can be over-polemical and sometimes over-emotional in his disgust with the way he sees the West has betrayed itself and its values. He sets up Said as an anti-Western bigot and decries what he calls in a chapter of that name “The Pathological Niceness of Liberals, Antinomies, Paradoxes and Western Values,” which for Ibn Warraq all feeds into Said's theories. Occasionally Ibn Warraq verges on the *ad hominem*, although this is rare; the language is strong, direct, clear and unequivocal, which of course would not suit the obfuscatory and jargon-ridden hordes who follow Said. Ibn Warraq is appalled at how these people have influenced museums, art galleries and university courses so much that they are consigning significant works of art to oblivion in storerooms or decrying great works of literature as “imperialist” or “orientalist,” thus depriving students of a chance to make their own decisions about them. That's why his tone may seem shrill at times to some, even offensive to others. It is also easy to see why Ibn Warraq might have become the darling of rightist American intellectuals such as Daniel



Venetian Orientalist painting. 1511. The Louvre.

Pipes, who has spent his career attacking “radical” Islamism, the British philosopher Roger Scruton, author of *The Meaning of Conservatism* (1980), Paul Berman, the author of *Terror and Liberalism* and a man who supported the Iraq war yet opposed George W. Bush, and Fouad Ajami, the Lebanese-American scholar from Johns Hopkins University who believed the Iraq war to be “noble” yet strongly supports Palestinian liberation. All these people are amongst the names on the back cover endorsing Ibn Warraq’s book. They are all, to some extent, right-wing polemicists, if the phrase “right-wing” means anything much now, but that in itself doesn’t necessarily make them suspect or unworthy of notice, and the book is not, luckily for Ibn Warraq, endorsed by Sarah Palin. “I never meant to say that the Conservatives are generally stupid,” John Stuart Mill once told Parliament; “I meant to say that stupid people are generally Conservative.” And it might be noted that Ibn Warraq does, from time to time, lose sight of Edward Said amongst the trees in the political forest, moving away from the central thesis of his argument into interesting but questionably relevant pathways.

This reviewer had some problems with Warraq’s belief in the inherent superiority of the West, although it needs to be said that his admiration for Western culture and achievements is sincere and in many cases justified. The West *is*

more tolerant of diversity than the East (think Iran, for example, or North Korea), the West *is* more open to differing ideas and religious beliefs than the East, and the West *is* largely politically “free.” In the past that has not always been the case, and even now is not one hundred per cent the case, but in comparison to the Arab world and some Asian regions the West may be seen in a positive light. None of these assets, however, make the West “superior,” just not the same. It is nevertheless true that if one digs deeper enough into the past and takes history contextually, one will find, as Bruce Thornton notes on the back cover of Warraq’s book, “an expansive and tolerant curiosity evident in the true history of Western contacts with the [Muslim] world.” For every Crusader there is a liberal-minded traveller, for every *conquistador* there is a Bartolomé de Las Casas (see below), and now we have the so-called “Arab Spring,” which may (or may not) bring a more Western-style politics to the Middle East, although some of the signs, particularly for women and religious minorities, do not look good. Again, this does not mean that Western values are superior, but that they are not the old values of repression and intolerance. Warraq should, in some instances, have paid more attention to the negative aspects of Western civilisation, decrying, for example, the homogenous world of American pop-culture and bad Hollywood movies, and he, too, is no fan of George W. Bush, although he justifies the Iraq war. In the end, though, Western civilisation has shown itself big enough to want to right past injustices (Warraq would argue that perhaps some of this has gone too far) and to at least begin attempting to make sure they do not happen again. Eastern civilisation has done no such thing, and it remains to be seen whether it ever will.

When Ibn Warraq goes after Edward Said, however, he is right on the

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mark. A careful examination of Said's book shows that in many places the scholarship is less than rigorous ("shoddiness" is the word used by both Pipes and Bruce Thornton, a distinguished classicist and author of *Decline and Fall: Europe's Slow-Motion Suicide*) and that his arguments, based on often-groundless assumptions, do not hold up to scrutiny. Ibn Warraq shows clearly that Said has simply lumped all Western writers and artists who deal with the East into his category of "orientalists," that is people who are serving imperialism or refashioning the East for their own ends. Said, he argues, has never understood that the West, for all its shortcomings, has developed more intellectual and cultural curiosity about the East than ever went the other way, and that the vast majority of those who were studying the East or writing about it were not the least bit interested in taking it over or asserting their own cultural superiority. Warraq believes that Western writers and travelers were inspired mostly by the curiosity to *know*, not to conquer, and that this curiosity was not reciprocated by the closed societies of the East. Of course, there are exceptions on both sides, and Ibn Warraq mentions them; there's even a chapter on "oriental" orientalists!

Warraq's argument against Said and the "Saidists," as he terms them, is mostly contained in the opening chapters of the book. However, just as Darwin's *Descent of Man* provided massive evidence for his earlier work, *The Origin of Species*, the rest of Warraq's book is evidence, too; he shows, from many examples drawn from painting, sculpture, literature and even music (I didn't

know that even this had come under attack by furious Saidists) that the arguments of Said and his disciples move "from pretentiousness to meaninglessness," as

Warraq puts it. Said employs "endless post-modern jargon" (he uses "textual attitude" for "bookish") and "pretentious language that often conceals some banal observation," for which Warraq provides numerous examples and page numbers from the Master's works. Said often makes ele-



Le Bain Turc by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres

mentary scholarly mistakes, too; as an example of "shoddiness" this editor noticed some years ago (and he was not alone) that in *Orientalism* Said confused the Renaissance historian Jakob Burckhardt with the Swiss explorer Jean-Louis Burckhardt, and has the venerable historian rushing around the Orient writing books on it which may be found in no library or bookstore on this planet. After several scholars wrote in about this one, it has still not been corrected in later editions of Said's work.

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his conclusion. “It should be evident,” he writes, “that one cannot reduce the colourful and gifted individuals known as Orientalists and their works to yet another expression of colonialism and imperialism.” In *Orientalism* Said had proclaimed that “every European in what he could say about the Orient was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric” (204), which is not only ridiculous and inaccurate, but is itself a racist insult. Warraq exposes not simply Said’s racism and rabid anti-Westernism, but his intellectual bankruptcy and dishonesty as well. He deals with the actual methodology of Said’s works in Chapter 7, which opens with a polemical sentence: “Edward Said’s *Orientalism* gave those unable to think for themselves a formula,” and proceeds from there to systematically dismantle the credibility of Said’s methodology. Warraq shows how Said cherry-picked his evidence, conveniently saying little or nothing about such topics as white slavery, Islamic racism and anti-Semitism and Asian racism. He rarely mentions the strong anti-imperial strain present from the beginning of the modern period in writers, artists and even many politicians. Humanists were at the forefront of opposition against conquest and expansion; a famous example of this would be Bartolomé de Las Casas’s *Historia de las Indias* (1552), in which he attacks his fellow-countrymen for atrocities committed in Central America. Other early critics of exploitation and imperialism included James I’s old tutor George Buchanan, Michel de Montaigne and John Milton, to name but a few. Said makes no mention of any of them, because their very existence would contradict his thesis. He cannot accept that explorers were mostly just explorers and that traders, missionaries and businessmen were not always uncriti-

Warraq’s overall thesis is quite simple, and is stated in

cal servants of imperialism. In fact, the simplest argument against Edward Said is that he does to the West what he claims the West has done to the East, forcing the politically-correct “liberals” in the West, which group includes his own disciples, to fall over themselves apologising for the crimes and misdemeanours of their long-dead ancestors and conveniently forgetting their very real, non-imperialist contributions to our understanding of non-European cultures. The convolutions writers like Edward Said have gone through in order to prove that nineteenth-century German philologists contributed to imperialist ventures would be amusing if they had not been taken seriously by twentieth-century followers of Said. And don’t get me going on the “Jane Austen supported slavery” argument!

This book is a must-read for anyone who feels uncomfortable after reading Said’s *Orientalism*. For people who are not academics, Warraq provides a readable demolition of a dangerous and inaccurate book that should be on the shelves of every thinking person. If he sometimes degenerates into polemics, so be it; the West is always being subjected to polemics by mullahs, ayatollahs and other like-minded people. Warraq might not like it, but his book actually makes the case for what I’d like to call “radical liberalism;” not a wishy-washy apologetic kind of liberalism, but one that is robust, tolerant and broadly-based, that is, Western.

Hiromi Goto. *Half World*. Viking, Penguin. 2010.

Sue Matheson

Half World: a fantastic read for the animated mind

A coming-of-age book, *Half World* by Hiromi Goto is a story about learning to take responsibility for the choices that are made in one's life. Melanie Tamaki, the novel's heroine, suffers from teenage alienation. An outsider and unpopular at school, she and her aging, ill, single mother are barely surviving on a limited income. Then one day Melanie comes home to find her mother missing...lured to Half World by a nightmarish cannibal called Mr. Glueskin. She journeys to Half World to save her mother...and the universe as well.

There is nothing unusual about this narrative line in children's literature action and adventure books. Fantastic worlds, individuation patterns, epic quests, and self-discovery are all part and parcel of fantasy genre and *Half World* fits comfortably within this frame. What

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does make *Half World* unusual and startling is its persistent

use of terror and the grotesque. This is a novel that starts in a state of emotional frenzy and keeps up this pace until its final chapter. Goto introduces the nightmarish reality of Half World as soon as the book opens: pursued by unseen monsters,



a heavily pregnant woman and her male companion attempt to run across an insubstantial, rail-less, undulating bridge which spans a deep, empty chasm. Unable to outrun the tall, thin, mouldy, reeking creatures which gibber in pursuit, they are caught. Expecting to be tortured and killed by Mr. Glueskin, a very unpleasant creature who uses his tongue like a frog when he is not spitting balls of sticky mucus everywhere, they discover instead that one of them must stay behind as a captive so that the other may leave. The die is cast. The woman, Melanie's mother, leaves the father of her child behind and goes to Earth to have her baby and raise her. As always, there is a condition attached to such a release: the mother must return when summoned by Mr. Glueskin or her partner will die.

Once on Earth, things do not improve for Goto's protagonists and the emotional frenzy con



Anime characters are often confluences of human and animal characteristics.

tinues unabated. The reader finds Melanie Tamaki pelting around the corner of a sidewalk being chased and jeered at by bullies. An overweight, tormented nerd, she does not fit in with the other teenagers. It is no surprise that Melanie, an introvert, likes books and spends as much time as she can in the sanctuary of a bookstore that she has discovered. She returns home to find her mother gone, and her quest for selfhood begins. The obligatory theriomorphs found in such children's stories appear, in this case, the helpful animal spirits take the forms of a White Cat and a Jade Rat. A kindly bookstore owner helps her find her way into that other dimension which has swallowed her mother. There she outwits giants and monstrous beings until the exhausted adult reader begins to beg for reprieve. *Half World* is not a place for those over the age of fifteen. Melanie's experiences when she journeys to *Half World* are vivid and the pace is too punishing for people whose metabolisms have slowed with age.

Counterpointing the jarring, frenetic pace of Melanie's adventures is the story line itself. At first, the story appears to be too predictable for those familiar with and brought up on Aesop, Grimms,

Tolkien, L'Engle, Travers, and Lewis. However, for a younger generation of readers who enjoy the exotic delicacies of Japanese anime and have not been indoctrinated by the authors mentioned above, I suspect that *Half World* is just the ticket. In *Half World*, there are strong echoes of hysterical, conflicted relationships between the protagonists and their helpful, conflated monsters of *Beyblade* and *Pokemon*. As in much Japanese anime, the alienated child-hero does an awful lot of running and fighting. And as in this sort of anime, childhood is presented in terms of an epic struggle, war between the human and the demonic, Good and Evil, set in a nightmarish reality populated by slaving, unnatural monsters threatening the much-desired possibilities of individual growth and human happiness.

Generally, winning such a conflict is extremely important in children's stories. Only by vanquishing one's opponent can one move on to the next stage of one's development and fulfill one's self. In *Half World*, however, how one wins is more important than the victory itself. Melanie has the opportunity to destroy Mr. Glueskin--and her animal guide urges her to do so. But, as Goto points out, such an action is only a band-aid solution for in order for the source of the conflict is not the individual but the cycle in which the individual is caught. When Melanie recognises this truth, she destroys the cycle in which her family has been trapped and rescues not only her mother, father, and herself, but also Mr. Glueskin and his band of monsters.

Like all good children's stories, *Half World* transmits an important if unpleasant truth about modern consumer culture. Like Mr. Glueskin, we exist not only to devour goods and the world around us, but to devour each other as well. It is a wonderful moment when Melanie, Mrs Wei (the bookstore owner), and Baby G (Mr. Glueskin transformed) settle down in the final chapter to reassemble the family unit and begin a new cycle of life. The pace slows beautifully once their lives have changed for the better.

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Of course, the reader is left with a number of questions at the book's end. Will Melanie, Wei, and Baby G's attempt to live happier, fulfilled lives be successful? Goto avoids closure by leaving that question to the therimorphs' conversation at the novel's end. In the closing pages, The Cat remarks that human lives are so pitifully pedestrian, but the Rat wisely reminds him that no can be certain about that: "[s]ometimes endings are beginnings in the makings," she says.

With the ending of *Half World* in mind (and because I am coming to the end of this review), I am happy to recommend *Half World* to anyone interested in children's action literature. Also, I think this book would be understood and appreciated by them. Published by Viking Press, *Half World*, the winner of the 2010 Sunburst (YA Division) Award and Carl Brandon Parallax Award, is well worth the money spent on it. I'll be passing my copy on to my kids. Charles de Lint is certainly correct when he notes that "*Half World* is an absolute treasure of a book, one of those hidden gems that deserves as wide an audience as possible."



Hwee-Hwee Tan. *Mammon Inc.* Penguin Books, 2001.

Gary A. Kozak

Pleasantly sarcastic: Singapore, / Oxford / New York

Hwee-Hwee Tan is a Singaporean novelist who has studied who has lived in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. She graduated from the University of East Anglia in English Literature. She also received a Master's Degree from Oxford. She recently received an MFA in Creative Writing at New York University and won the New York Times Fellowship for Fiction. Her previous publication was *Foreign Bodies* in 1997. She is presently a resident of New York, although she frequently returns to Singapore.

Hwee-Hwee Tan's novel, *Mammon Inc.*, is a first person narrative with some allegorical overtones concerning the themes of culture, career choice, adaptation and the need to find a personal niche. The narrating character, Chiah Deng, is a Singaporean girl who recently graduated from Oxford and is faced with the important decision of her next step in life. She is witty, observant, pleasantly sarcastic, unprejudiced and broad-minded but undecided as to her preference in location. She receives a lucrative career offer from a large hegemonic corporation, known as Mammon Inc., named, rather obviously, after the Biblical personification of greed, and she is given several tasks to complete that will determine her

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party. Then she has to transform her sister into a wealthy Western woman. Finally, she must convert her unambitious English roommate into a Singaporean. All challenges involve adaptation for others but her own adaptation is inhibited by her cultural impartiality. She also has the option of working as a scholar with Oxford. She finally learns (as a result of the tests) that she doesn't fit into either Eastern or Western cultures but she can have Mammon Inc. and its close nit members as her niche. Chiah Deng, the protagonist, is probably Hwee-Hwee Tan describing herself. She is using the character to highlight the perception of cultural differences as she sees them. Chiah Deng's facetious manner of speech appears like it could be the author talking directly to us. This gives us a personal affection for her. Anyone with extensive international background and similar experiences will understand her completely. She makes many references to familiar Chinese cul-

future with the company. She has to infiltrate an exclusive

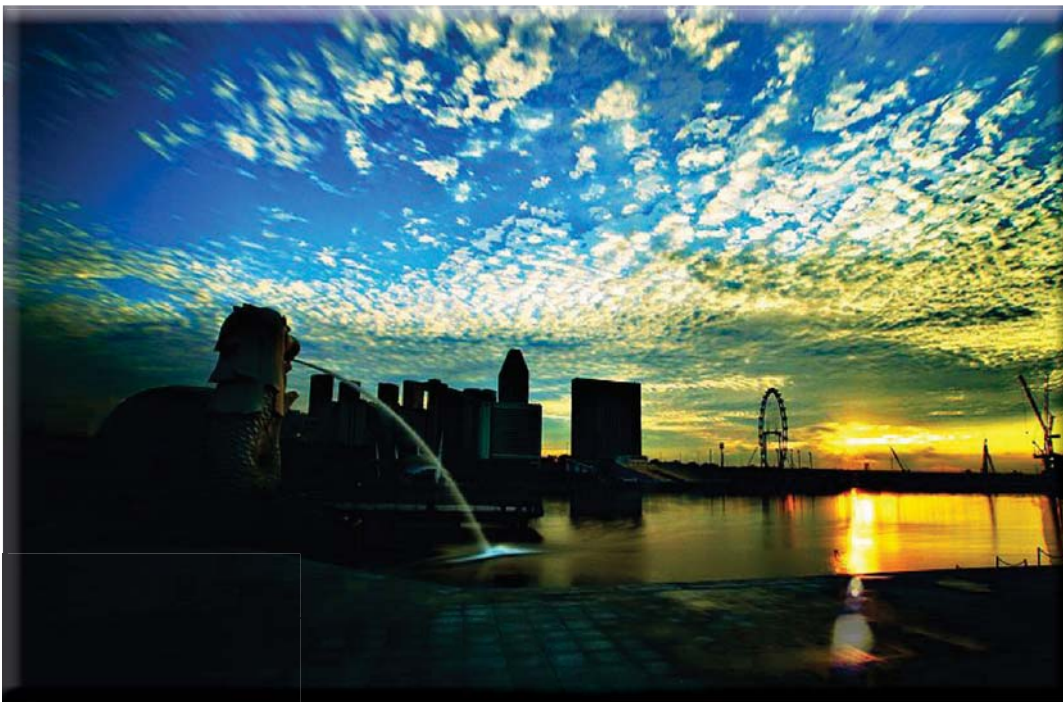
ture and how they are interpreted from different perspectives. She is writing the novel from the point of view of an Asian living in a Western country. There are many characteristics about the West and its history she finds fascinating. This is best shown as she describes Dagobah Hall and its historic elements. She appears fascinated by the traditions confronting her.

At times, her fascination with all things Western appears to lead her to consider going native while disliking her own culture and homeland. While frequently bringing up the topic, she is informative about her culture. She even mentions that she hates being Chinese and questions the logic of sacrificing to older and previous generations. However, there is some criticism of foreigners as they appear when they are in Asia and out of their element and this is demonstrated with the interesting reference to the point of view of Asian noticing Westerners in Asia. The sometimes annoying behavior one notices of Western tourists is captured. She states:

Unlike Thian Hok Seng Temple, which has always been littered with sight seers due to its status as one of the pioneer temples in Singapore, there were no hundred-seater coaches idling outside the entrance, generating a murky fog of exhaust fumes. Neither were there middle-aged men in shorts, exposing their hairy, pasty legs and pointing their Nikon cameras at worshippers as they tried to pray.

These descriptions, and others like it, is conspicuous to not only the Asians themselves but to other foreigners

who have had the opportunity to be a resident



Marina Bay, Singapore

and partly adapted to an Asian country.

Chiah Deng is a somewhat unfortunate character as she can't be totally satisfied in either culture. The fortunate thing about this is that she sees everything from multiple sides and she is constantly self-examining because of it. Her home country is being knocked but she ironically is sometimes promoting her home country. For example:

Chinatown was still one of the few places in Singapore still lined with nineteenth-century shophouses, their dusty ochres, cobalt blues, lime greens and dusty reds providing a rare burst of colour against the orderly rows of grey, skyscraping banks and concrete blocks of white matchbox like housing flats. With its winding alleys and illogical one-way streets, it was a rare oasis of colour and chaos in a city centre dominated by spotless hotels and shiny, identical shopping malls.... Walking around the shophouses always felt like walking into a rainbow into a magical, arcane past, where every shade reflected one of the five elements, and all things maintained the tranquility of a yin-yang in balance.

This demonstrates her fascination with her home country that she appears to have developed in the course of her time spent overseas. This is the interesting experience of an expat and it demonstrates the problem of preference of land and culture. There are three positive concepts of this. First, we learn about the character. Second, we learn about the author who is speaking through the character. Finally,

we have the opportunity

to learn about the country and its unique attributes.

to learn about the country and its unique attributes.

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Hwee-Hwee Tan's writing style has two characteristics. First of all, her dialogues are whimsical and full of double talk. This is most frequently used in Chiah Deng's conversations with her friend Steve. The second characteristic is her imaginative writing and description:

Across the moat, Dagobah Hall stood before me like a castle from another universe. Frozen in fantasy, her fog-wreathed spires breathed promises of myth and mystery. That had always been the lure of Oxford for me, and for everyone who was sick of our modern, factory-strewn, dot



Singapore River

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com i-uni-
verse ...
Dagobah
seemed
like a magi-

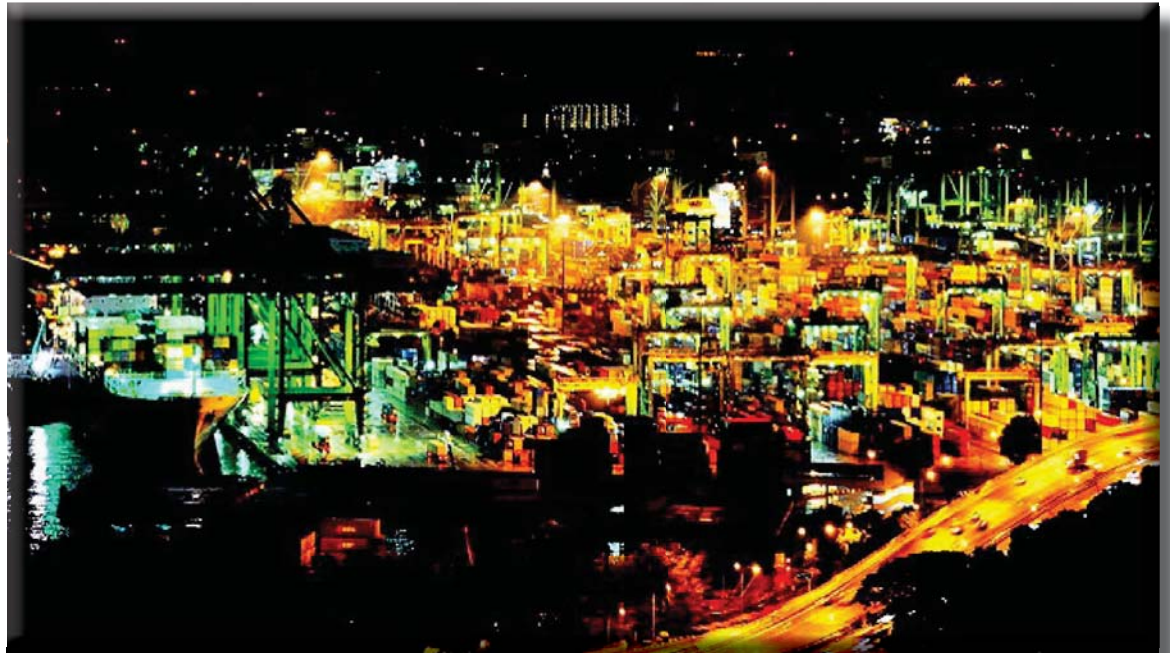
cal time capsule. She was a link when sorcerers brewed potions in cauldrons and knights battled winged snakes. As you walked across the drawbridge into her courtyard, you could easily imagine unicorns flying through those stone portals.

She uses this style of writing throughout the book and most noticeably when describing Mammon Inc's headquarters. It shows a certain romanticism in her thinking as revealed through the character. These two characteristics give the book a captivating style that saves it from the possibility of mediocrity.

There are other features of Tan's novel. She is very conscious of the Singaporean materialism and Chiah Deng's sister is the best example of that. Her description is one of a person's spending of half a year's salary on hi-fi equipment. This is very informative to anyone who believes that all Chinese are frugal. She goes on to tell us about other quirks of Singaporeans such as their fascination with things foreign and supposedly exotic. She states "the harder the name is to pronounce, the more popular..." Her descriptions of things such as temple etiquette are also informa-

tive especially to anyone planning to live there or even visit for

that matter. One problem with the book is the religious theme of Chiah Deng's contemplation of converting to Christianity. It doesn't strengthen the plot or add any more insight to the character. She assigns eccentric names to the Mammon employees, such as Draco Sidious and Sith, and this gives the novel a futuristic William Gibson type of atmosphere. The description of the company's headquarters adds to this same type of eccentricity. It makes the novel entertaining but everything could have worked out the same even without it. In general, Hwee-Hwee Tan's book makes for entertaining reading, and in fact suggested reading for anyone moving to Asia, if it is possible to get through the wit and whimsy. One further, fairly minor criticism might be that Tan or her editors provide no glossary for the liberal sprinkling of Chinese words amongst the "Singlish" (Singaporean English), which are there for authenticity, but often cannot be understood even contextually.



Container Bay in Singapore

Jason Tomes. *King Zog: Self-Made Monarch of Albania*. Sutton Publishing Limited. 2007.

Sue Matheson

Zog: man for all seasons and some reasons

On the cover of my copy of *King Zog Self-Made Monarch of Albania*, Simon Sebag Montefiore of the *Financial Times* announces the Albanian King's biography as being "utterly exotic, gripping, magnificent." Sutton Publishing's paperback edition certainly capitalizes on Montefiore's announcement, presenting the reader with a very attractive picture of King Zog, his cap set at a jaunty angle, the chest of his uniform jacket covered with medals and stars and a medallion featuring a bird of prey hanging around his neck. Eying the camera disinterestedly, Zog is a romantic figure in this photograph--sauve, debonair, aloof. But after reading about his adventures, can he and his story really be described as exotic? Gripping? Magnificent? Unfortunately, I think not. This, however, should not be considered detrimental. Written by Jason Tomes who has lectured in modern history and politics for the universities of Oxford, Warsaw and Boston, *King Zog* is well worth picking up. Tomes' work is a well-written, carefully-

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King Zog I

researched, professionally-packaged history of the most unusual European monarch of the twentieth century, a man entirely without royal connections who created his own kingdom

Alias Ahmed Zogu, alias Ahmed Bey Zogolli, King Zog was born to a ruling class family in 1901, sent first to a Turkish cadet school at Monastir (modern Bitolj) and then to Istanbul to complete his education. A Muslim, Zog proved to be an exceptional individual as a man: rising to power, he became first a Colonel, then the Minister of the Interior, then the Premier of Albania, then the President of Albania and finally that country's king. Reckoned ungovernable until Zog seized the reins of power, Albania, noted for its blood feuds, continued to employ "the sentiments,

morals and farming methods of the Middle Ages” in the twentieth century. Living conditions there were some of the poorest in Europe. Reputed to be a warrior king, Zog gave no public impression of force but the questions which followed him were troubling and never answered: was it true that he once had seven horses shot under him in battle? Was it true that he had arranged the murder of his brother-in-law? Was it true that he drew a gun and fired back at assassins outside the Vienna Opera House? The stuff of legends, Zog proved to be an enigma to all: was he an adventurer or patriot? Was he a hero or a scoundrel? Whatever the reader makes of the man—his ascension to a throne he himself made, his close family relationships, his fairy tale marriage, his exile and death—Zog was judged even by his lukewarm followers to be the Albanian of Albanians. As Ekrem Bey Vlor pointed out, Zog embodied “the archetype, the synthesis of all the merits and failings of the people of the new Albania. He possessed them altogether in the superlative; that is why he had such great success.”

Actually reading Tomes’ story Zog’s life was a great deal like meeting Albania’s version of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby. Like Gatsby, Zog was impossible to know. Founded on rumor and stories, his character changed as the tales about him grew wilder every year. His mercurial rise to power, decadent and flamboyant lifestyle, outrageous habits, and nouveau tastes could have been found in any of the chateaux gracing West Egg. His end, like Gatsby’s, was sordid and tragic. His life, like Gatsby’s, was the stuff that dreams are made on. And yet, unlike Gatsby, Zog proved in the end to be uninteresting. Zog, in spite of



Zog resplendent in his trademark white uniform.

his languid appearance and romantic readiness, worked very hard at being dull.

A man who valued his privacy, Zog spent most of his time inside his palace hidden from the people he ruled. It is not surprising then that Tomes chose to organize his chronological rendering of Zog’s life into categories dictated by his public personas: Part One, Ahmed Bey Zogolli examines Zog’s life from 1895 to 1922; Ahmed Zogu traces Zog’s political career and ascension to the throne; King Zog deals with his reign from 1928 to his exile in 1939; and Ex-King Zog charts his life in exile from 1939 to his death in 1961. Zog’s family, however, were not so shy, and great fun to encounter.

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The escapades of his sisters, known as the Zoglets, kept me turning pages—it didn't matter to me whether the Zoglets were visiting Girl Scouts or dancing on tables. I already knew about Albania's unlucky political history in the twentieth century; the Zoglets, on the other hand, were unpredictable. Zog's adventures on the world stage paled in comparison with the surprises provided by Maxhide, Ruhjie, Senije, Myzehen and Nafije. Counselling her son over breakfasts, Zog's redoubtable mother also proved to be a fascinating character. Likewise, the fairy tale story of Geraldine caught and held my attention: married for fifteen months before the royal couple were exiled, Geraldine Apponyi de Nagy-Apponyi delivered her son and had to be whisked out of Albania on a mattress stuffed in the back of a car.

Living in exile under the suffocating presence of Zog's sisters and mother for so long,

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it is not surprising that she suffered a nervous break

down when her husband finally died. Zog's only son, Prince Leka, six foot eight inches tall, is also a fascinating puzzle: did he go into the business



The Palace of Zog I.

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of selling tractors and cranes in the Middle East

or did he actually use this mundane and everyday business as a clever and profitable front for arms trafficking?

Throughout *King Zog*, Tomes does a wonderful job of presenting unlikely bits of Zog's family history for the reader to savour. If only such tidbits had the effect of bringing Zog himself more clearly into focus. Unfortunately they don't. Zog himself fades into the background of the royal family's lives much as he managed to do while alive. Nevertheless, Zog proves to be a wonderful introduction to the foundation underlying the Albanian character and its history.

Weighing in on Zog's career, Joseph Rothschild concludes that "[o]n balance, to have in two short decades consolidated the new Albanian state against the

pulls of regionalism and tribalism, against the pressure of the frondeur and brigand tradition, against the corrosions of mass poverty and illiteracy, and against the hazard of an international system that allowed predatory neighbours to deny the very legitimacy of an independent Albania was a creditable political achievement."

With this in mind, students of modern European history and political scientists would undoubtedly find this book rewarding reading. If you are looking for a juicy expose of Zog's life or a revealing, romantic biography of a most unusual man however, *King Zog* probably isn't the book for you.



The grave of King Zog near Themis, France.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Jennifer Bowes grew up in Lamont, Alberta. She completed her BFA in 1999, specializing in Painting and Drawing, at the University of Alberta. After spending a year teaching English in Northern Italy, she returned to the UofA to complete her MFA in Drawing. She has been an instructor since 2002, teaching at the University of Alberta and Grande Prairie Regional College. She has recently accepted a teaching position at the Northern Lights College in Dawson Creek, British Columbia as a full time instructor/program coordinator.

John Butler is an associate professor of Humanities at University College of the North. Formerly a professor of British Studies at Chiba University, Tokyo, he specializes in seventeenth-century intellectual history and travel literature, especially that of Asia and Asia Minor. John and his wife Sylvia live in The Pas with their 3 cats.

Tanya Clary lives and works in Northern BC. As a mother, friend, partner, instructor and therapist, she finds time here and there to do a little creative writing. Her short stories and poetry have been published in various journals and anthologies over the years. She hopes to publish something more substantial in the future, when a full-moon party, community campaign or trip afar doesn't distract her.

Anne Jevne, a single mother of two, lives and writes in northern Manitoba.

Donna Kane lives in Rolla, BC. Her poetry, short fiction, essays, and reviews have been published in journals and anthologies across Canada. Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *The Fiddlehead*, *The Malabat Review* and *Geist*. She is the author of two books of poetry, *Somewhere, a Fire*, and *Erratic*. "Blue Eye" was a winner in the 6th Annual Geist Literal Literary Postcard Story Contest.

Helen Knott is a Dane Tsaa and Cree woman who sees herself as a collector of moments. Each moment that is deposited has an opportunity to mingle with another to make something beautiful on paper. Some of her favourite moments are spent cuddling with her son, going for a run, or being present in nature. Helen is currently the Aboriginal Coordinator at Northern Lights College in Fort St. John, and a recent graduate of the Social Service Worker Diploma Program. She plans to obtain a Bachelor of Social Work degree and hopes to use the moments collected in the helping profession to write pieces that shift light for others to see things with a new set of eyes.

Gary A. Kozak has worked overseas extensively in the fields of educational management, childhood development, linguistic counseling, and employment counseling. He has academic education from the University of Manitoba at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the fields of archaeology, history and geography.

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G.P. Lainsbury has been teaching at colleges and universities in northern British Columbia since 1995. He is the author of *The Carver Chronotype: Inside the Life-World of Raymond Carver's Fiction* (Studies in Major Literary Authors, Volume 23. New York and London: Routledge, 2004); his poems, stories and articles have been published widely in journals across North America. Scenario 6 appears here in a slightly different form than the version in *versions of north*, published by Caitlin Press in 2011.

Sue Matheson, an associate professor, teaches literature and film at the University College of the North. Her interest in cultural failure is the base of her research: currently, Sue specializes in popular American thought and culture, Children's Literature, Indigenous Literature and Western film.

Born and raised in Montreal, **Pamela den Ouden** has lived in northern British Columbia for more than 35 years. A former bank teller and newspaper editor, she has published in such periodicals as *The Teaching Professor*, *Reflections on Water*, *The Northern Review*, and *Canadian Mining Journal*. Her poetry appeared in *Unfurled: Collected Poetry from Northern B.C. Women* and *DiVerCities II*. She currently teaches English as a Second Language at Northern Lights College.

Having learned to speak English in her late thirties, **Monique Pharand** discovered that she has the potential to grow in whatever direction she sets for herself. This curiosity opened wide the door to a variety of personal interests as she finds herself happily juggling art, science, and sports while balancing life-long learning. She is an Administrative Assistant at Northern Lights College in Dease Lake, British Columbia. The wide open space is often the only witness to the laughter that escapes as she pulls her quad from the quagmire while clutching the moose hide mitts she sewed backward. She wishes her four grandchildren lived closer to get just as muddy, more often!

Sensing that movement is a metaphor for possibility, **Dawn Service** has led and continues to lead a nomadic lifestyle. She has climbed the Chilkoot Pass; trekked up Mt. Emei Shan in Sichuan province in China; scrambled over the Great Wall of China; hiked through bamboo forests in Taiwan; sailed through the Bahama islands; rafted the Colorado River; hitchhiked across Canada; and once when very young and naive, drove a rusting Willey's jeep up the Alaska highway to the Ogilvie River north of Dawson City where she found herself surrounded by the joy of wilderness. The possibility of the journey keeps her in this world, because she concurs with Margaret Atwood who wrote, *Hell is a washing machine in the suburbs*. She's planning her next journey: a kayak trip down the Green River to explore the canyonlands of southern Utah where Ed Abbey once lived and wrote.

Lisa Verbisky is the Chair of Academic and Career Programs and instructs in an environmental program at Northern Lights College in Fort St. John, British Columbia. She completed undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Alberta and gained extensive experience as a field biologist in small towns around Quebec and Alberta.

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call for papers

The *quint's* fourteenth issue is issuing a call for theoretically informed and historically grounded submissions of scholarly interest—as well as creative writing, original art, interviews, and reviews of books. The deadline for this call is 20th May 2012—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

quint guidelines

All contributions to *the quint* will be forwarded to a member of the editorial board. Manuscripts must not be previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere while being reviewed by *the quint's* editors or outside readers.

Hard copies of manuscripts should be sent to Dr. John Butler or Dr. Sue Matheson at *the quint*, University College of the North, P.O. Box 3000, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada, R9A 1M7. We are happy to receive your artwork in digital format, PDF preferred. Email copies of manuscripts, Word or RTF preferred, should be sent to either jbutler@ucn.ca or smatheson@ucn.ca.

Essays should range between 15 and 25 pages of double-spaced text, including all images and source citations. Longer and shorter submissions also will be considered. Bibliographic citation should be the standard disciplinary format.

the quint thanks Steve Roe (Dean, Academic and Career Programs, Northern Lights College—Fort Saint John), Kathryn McNaughton (Vice-President, Academic, University College of the North), and David Douglas Hart for their support of this project.