

Aspects of Nature Review by Jo-Anne St. James

. . . I've been reading your stories, one at a time, savouring them like a box of rich chocolates. Some stories, like "Finding Maryan", I've read twice. I'm so impressed with the quality of your writing. Matthew (Corrigan) is right when he says "at times pitch perfect".

The story, "Finding Maryan" moved me deeply. Amazing how, in a short story, you move the reader through such a sweep of history, of life, and time, both the man's and the narrator's. But what also struck me was your bravery, your technical *chutzpah* (sp?). You use your own name. The story seems a kind of hybrid, blending historical events, his biographical facts (with your imagined fleshing out of details), the autobiographical Rhoda, plus possibly something else. I wasn't sure what to make of her remark, "I can no longer separate what I've made up from what really happened" with regards to her final meeting with Maryan, though it really doesn't matter. In any event, it does take some courage, especially for a woman writer, I think, to present autobiographical material, especially this directly. I was also intrigued, in your direct address to the reader, by your insight (one I'd never heard expressed before), of "this intimate quiet catharsis" as the "epiphanic moment of *my* narrative, not the conventional orgiastic male arc". A beautiful finale, too. Brava!

I was also quite taken with the two stories about Shayndeleh, the way you conveyed the vagaries of her memory, and sadly, that image of the cosmetic case, all she had now. I rather smiled at her wish to be with those immediately around her at the nursing home in "Out to Lunch with the Girls". Last year, as I turned 70, I was expected to want a large event, family, other friends, all from farther away. Instead I wanted only four women, neighbours close in many ways. We seemed to need to get together . . .

There were so many other lovely touches – and the “mordant humour” (Corrigan) mentions.

. . . To more wonderful short stories!

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