



The Fleur-de-lis (Vol I-III) Discussion

(taken from Editor's notes)

The Fleur-de-lis offers a panoramic investigation of landscapes both spiritual and physical, guiding the reader among the thematic elements of the three volumes. Their collective continuity describe a genre evoking deep imagination for the purpose of facilitating communication between not only the author and reader, but persons, nations and people groups. The art of words, nuance, and poetic device stand out in these free verse pieces, with the poetry as a whole scribing an impressive sensory, sensual universe, a visual documentary in words.

The narrative voice of Volume One bespeaks a deep connection to the institutions and attitudes of the “Old World” even as it shows their interruption by experiences—particularly physical sensations—in the “New World”: the Canada at that time.

The new nation that Canada is today develops by way of a transmuting from the old practices of holding to the Commonwealth as opposed to the new practice of independence from this vainglory. The traversing from one world to the next is evidenced in this journey in literature from the old nation to a new nation, in a literal historical voyage from the “Old World” to the new. The primary emphasis for this collection of verse is provided by these two interpretive frames: the idea of nation—and in particular, of the contemporary “break up” of our old ideas of nation, and the reclaiming of Canadian nationhood by both English, French and First Nations people. In a sense it carries a redefinition of what it means personally to be a citizen of this nation and what responsibilities and burdens that belonging carries with it.

In Volume One, where these themes are nascent, one can sense they will emerge, and that we will engage with them, however volume one carries out other thematic tasks. Written as 222 poems in 22 sections, “The Laurel Wreath” highlights poems such as “Myrrh (The Apostle John Observes)”, and makes use of the different essential oils as title headings. Connection between ideas and images, atmosphere and narrative replay old themes of early poetry by C.S. Lewis and Ruth Pitter. Woman as all-knowing, culture as pervasive to conscience, and the gestation of healer and the healing gift as maternal are all central. The children of the womb as precious seeds of the next generation implies divine power to the unborn.

In Volume Two, “The Lion and the Unicorn” theme has historical and literary significance in both Victorian and Orwellian incarnations. The postmodern connotations of this symbolism as well as the medieval stage for both the short stories and the narrative poetry of “Castle Mount” displays myth building and storytelling in various temperaments. The Lion and the Unicorn depicts the marriage union, and in this instance relays a covenant theme. The preparation of personhood for love and home, the development of moral structure and the resurgence of old animosity as well as the desire for revenge being transmuted into a healing gift of life-saving proportions are dominant: the hint to engage with themes that the reader will later encounter.

In “The Oracle” of Volume Two, there are thematically unified compelling word pictures and thought-provoking exploration of topics, that while they seem disparate—together form a remarkably coherent whole. Both accomplished and beautiful, the art being described and its primary characteristics has a remarkable evocation. In “Oracle of the Wild Mountain” the graduation from mythical worlds to Canadian geography makes one feel the poems are about transition and movement, so the suggestion of change and a deeper stability offered by one’s roots and culture works implicitly to the theme. This section speaks of renaissance to the First Nations of both art and spirituality by a series of altars representing various sacred animals, symbols, and persons of intrinsic value.

In Volume Three, we see the narrative between two figures—alone together, silhouetted against a background, hidden away in shadow. This is simple, lovely, and effective in bridging ostensive divides between different sections and meditations. What is later referred to as “two poets, two prophets—/Justice and Liberty/stand in the street” in “Perestroika” becomes two voices conversing back and forth. In the last sections, depicting the seasons Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter respectively and named by character values, the lovers switch voices between the masculine and the feminine to convey their sentiment and betrothal to each other’s ambitions and dreams.

Ideas that are prominent across the collection, in broad strokes, also provide points for discussion. First is the idea of the deified feminine, and further, of women who are fairly or unfairly persecuted as symbolic representations of a particular idea, creed, or time. Similarly, the notion of the literary heroine—we see the continual presence of Shakespeare’s women in Isaacson’s text, and this offers a linkage to women being woven (another recurrent metaphor) into the fabric of the nation—both the national body and its literary representations as same. Isaacson’s resituating and interrogating of female figures and the purpose they serve, has the implicit tie to ideas of woman as poet.

Second, the interplay between different types of worship—our veneration, frequently unquestioned, for landscape; the more programmatic veneration that takes place during a church worship service; veneration for country, themes which come out powerfully in “House of Gold” where the history of the First Nations is inter-woven with a new faith, a new creed and a new nationalism as opposed to the anti-nationalism which equates to the opposite of worship.

Thirdly, in addition to different types of worship, different types of faith are discussed: personal faith in a person, an ideal or a dream is contrasted with more proscriptive types of faith, particularly organized religion and—even more particularly—Christian orthodoxy. We see in the theme a foreshadowing of the loss of a particular style of faith in the face of a new landscape upon which that faith had to be practiced.

Fourthly, the constellations, in their perpetual slate for interpretation, reinterpretation amid fixity and their influence on the destinies of humans play into the narrative of times when the stars, the sea and the land were both sustenance and barriers to survival.

The inspirations for Isaacson's poetry are derived from literature, images, photographs, and nature. The poems of her childhood and teenage years through the end of university are included in "Oracle of the Stone" as a testament to the early days of her writing; one can see her progression as a poet from this point at which she first knew that to write was paramount destiny. The consequences of that choice showed her true colors as a fine character to discuss both pathos and its ramifications for the human race—when suffering is imparted for spiritual, moral, or metaphysical reasons, we also see the transformation of suffering into artwork, the harnessing of the transcendent.

This work of postmodern literature is reminiscent by virtue of its commentary on human nature and revisits Nazi Germany examining ideas of how the British identity was shaped by the war, as well as the identity of the individual. Further, the idea of World War II and the enemy which the British fought, defined as a way of life bound by invasion and imprisonment, is once more revisited in "Glasnost". The original early manuscript of "A Wind of Morning" was submitted to W.W. Norton and was postmarked on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, thus the later notation that it was dedicated to Prince William in honor of this day.

Isaacson's work, in an artistic sense, will inspire those who love authenticity. The Fleur-de-lis is a document in verse sent to Prince William over five years, beginning in 2005, which invited a yearly correspondence between them. Later, in "Libertine" bearing the titular symbol of Joan of Arc, Isaacson, through a series of soliloquy called "The Fleur-de-lis", asks to be removed from the Commonwealth of Great Britain on behalf of her country Canada.

The Fleur-de-lis is a partaking of spiritual renaissance, defined by the cloistering and chastisement of martyrdom itself. In the text we see the richness and depth of the poet's diametrically established and ordered world. Piecing together the

journey of royalty from humble beginning to glittering coronation, the poet is given to birth and pierced by nature. The language of verse speaks as medium, chronicling human nature in all its pathos and gestation.

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