

Becoming

Peter J. Morry

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This experimental prose-poetry piece is an ambitious and heartfelt salute to Newfoundland.

Often writers have the desire for their work to take readers to another realm—to create transcendence with their prose. It's no easy task. There has to be something special about the text itself, from its diction to its structure, that can achieve this very difficult goal. Dr. Peter J. Morry has attempted this with *Becoming*, an experimental prose-poetry piece that dares to go to new worlds.

Becoming is a structured combination of genres detailing protagonist Bill's out-of-body journey to another parallel human dimension called Perpetua, and his examinations of how that world compares to Earth; Bill is helped by a guiding, all-powerful Oracle. The book is ambitious and heartfelt.

Immediately, one notes the interesting stylistic choices Morry makes throughout *Becoming* to help infuse the text with meditative ideas. While Bill learns about Perpetua and its struggles with tolerance, greed, pollution, and other human problems, there are several digressions. These use everything from lyrics set to the structures of Hank Williams and Crystal Gayle songs to passages examining Newfoundland's history, particularly the disappearing fishing industry there. These digressions all deal with innocence lost, the sadness of changing lifestyles, and spiritual pain. In every case, the prose shows that the whole universe is in trouble and that there is a need to contemplate a better existence to ensure the survival of both Perpetua and Earth—i.e. “The caring touch, well placed in time, / Restores the Reason and the Rhyme.”

Too often the narrative sinks into cliché, preachiness, and sentiment, exemplified in the culminating last lines of the finale Postscript: “The only weapon that is powerful enough to overcome the weapon of greed is the weapon of love.” The poetry is full of great imagery and exclamatory passages, such as in “The Moratorium”: “The cod are gone! A culture too!” But the constant doggerel rhyming patterns utilized throughout undercut the profundity of the poems overall. The end-of-book list, titled “The Solution,” on how to restore order and a better life to the world—“#5. We must force all politicians to declare every penny of their campaign contribution”—cements the volume as more of a self-help or rally cry book than a poetic creative work.

There is no denying the earnestness of *Becoming*. While it does get bogged down with old-hat literary techniques, it makes a strong attempt to be a very personal experimental novel, using poetry, prose, and historical information all together. The Oracle of *Becoming* wants to show us the problems of the universe and how people can really better their world. That is something valuable for any reader to take away.

JAMES BURT (March 12, 2014)

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