

Journey beyond 2012

Piero Rivolta

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Finally, a doomsday 2012 novel without meteors, earthquakes, tsunamis, viral epidemics, or zombies. Piero Rivolta is to be congratulated for eschewing the commonplace while taking what is quite literally a high road. Although spurred on by the predictions of Nostradamus, the Mayan calendar wheel, and Chinese astrology, Rivolta writes not about the end of life on earth, but of its evolution to a higher plane.

In *Journey Beyond 2012**, Rivolta's hero, engineering-firm magnate George Hauser, is initially skeptical of the "usual end-of-the-world nonsense" that his greedy business associate Ryan Morris has come to believe. That Ryan sees the coming cataclysm as a personal opportunity to become "unimaginably wealthy" disgusts George and makes him take a good look at his own life. Rivolta brings the reader along on Hauser's expedition of self-discovery.

With three other novels and three collections of poetry to his credit, Rivolta's writing experience shows in the spare prose and steady pacing of *Journey Beyond 2012**, which, at fewer than 170 pages, is more novella than novel. Like a poet on a budget, Rivolta wastes few words in this crisp little work. He is equally frugal with the casting, as there is only one other significant character, Hauser's wife, Valeria, who happens to be Ryan's former girlfriend.

These three characters engage in a mystical ménage à trois, with Valeria playing the pivotal role around which the two men revolve. She, more than Hauser, is Rivolta's voice; Valeria provides the clues to and explanations for the metaphysical changes the world is experiencing. As a spiritual guide, Valeria helps the two male characters and the reader make sense out of what comes to pass after 2012.

Whether or not readers buy into the metaphysical spirituality in the novel's denouement is not important. The book can be read on that level, or it can be a journey for the reader, much like the one Hauser takes "to expand his knowledge of this world, even if it served him no particular purpose." As Hauser begins a course of self-examination just out of curiosity, so, too, can the reader. Rivolta writes that "curiosity is the child of an active intelligence and requires constant nourishment."

There is much nourishment for the mind and soul in *Journey Beyond 2012**, at least for those who have an interest in the spiritual evolution of humankind. Of course, certain readers may sigh and roll their eyes, as Rivolta's main character does, over the presumed nonsense of doom-and-gloom predictions. Even so, there is a solid, entertaining, and thoughtful story to be found in *Journey Beyond 2012**.

MARK G. MCLAUGHLIN (May 10, 2012)

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