

never padded; no sentence could be left out without damaging the story. That delicate balance.

The opening paragraphs move us quickly into each story. "Ice," for example, begins:

When the Russians shot a dog up into space, my father celebrated for three days. Later, when he got sober, he took us fishing, me and my brother Amel.

'B.B. I hunt and the other guys, when it's Russian, they think it's something bad,' my dad said....

'But you and me, we like that dog in space, don't we Daddy?' I shouted back. We think it's fine, right Daddy?' Amel and I were drinking root beers. It pleased me to sit with a bottle in my hand and talk of grown-up matters to my dad.

Irene, so proud of her father, wanting to please him, but in her bragging she betrays him instead. We read and are time-warped back to childhood, that time of confusion, wanting to seem grown-up, wanting to please and say all the right things, whatever they are, fumbling and making mistakes. Childhood. Not understanding, and not being understood. That terrible isolation.

When short stories work well they linger on and on in the reader's mind. We expect this of a novel; after all we have paid attention for several hours and hundreds of pages. But a short story that can accomplish this within only a few pages seems to be touched by magic. How is it done? For example, "Maps of the Known World." I'd read this story earlier in an anthology, and it had stayed with me in just that way. It begins:

When I was sixteen, my father brought home a man for me to marry. The man's name was Pete Paska and he sat down at the kitchen table without needing to be asked twice.

The next morning Irene's mother is stirring the porridge and crying.

'When I got married...I thought washing his clothes was all I had to do.' She blew her nose and turned, embarrassed but stubborn, to look at me. 'There's more to it than that, though. A man expects more. Did you know that?'

Irene is still in high school, daydreaming her teen-age dreams, hoping a boy in class might ask her out. The girls make Kleenex flowers to decorate a giant heart for the Valentine Dance, and they talk of the wedding gowns they will wear someday, the fabrics, the necklines, the sleeves, the length of the veils.

The conclusion is appropriately ambiguous. Irene is in a bus station, but accidentally, and we are not told what happens next. Perhaps she will leave town, or become involved with the stranger who offered her a cigarette, perhaps both of these or neither:

I sat on the orange chair. I breathed in and out. I watched the cigarette smoke trail and twist toward the ceiling.

This story worked beautifully and was memorable when read on its own, but here in this book, surrounded by other stories of Irene's life, it is rich with allusion. We can't read of the Valentine heart without remembering the pictures in the bible seller's white

zippered bible, people 'wearing clothes the colours of Kleenex flowers.' We have met Irene's aunt who ran away from home rather than marry the old man her parents picked out; we already care about Irene's mother who married him instead. The wedding-dress discussion sparks recollections too: Irene's confusion about the type of dress her mother wore to get married, imagining it tomato-red, the shade of the bible seller's tie. We readers at first accepted this as true, then, in a later story, realized it might not be. However the text never suggests that Irene, the child, ever changed her mind. This is the delight of reading from the youngster's point of view: as adults we are able to read more into the story than has been said.

The stories, appearing natural and effortless, deceptively simple, in fact are carefully crafted. The author moves back and forth, gliding, and we glide along easily after her, not knowing where we're going, not at first realizing where we've been, just enjoying the trip. We can relax and go wherever she takes us, because we're in good hands. Borsky knows what she is doing, is in control of every change in direction, meanwhile making it look spontaneous. It takes real artistry to achieve this.

Carmen Rodriguez, a Chilean-Canadian, came to Canada in 1973 following the military coup in Chile. *and a body to remember with* contains stories of activism, of torture, of displacement, exile and loss. They are painful to read. Intentionally so.

All the stories are of women, some in Chile, some in Canada; some activist, others less so. As we read our perspective broadens; we are able to see the same subject from their differing points of view.

Rodriguez explores the shifting landscape of language as well as geography. In the forward she describes how she wrote these stories, first in Spanish, then translated them to English, and then back into Spanish again, new associations arising each time. She says she kept reworking back and forth,

until I felt that both tips of my tongue and my two sets of ears were satisfied with the final product.

In many ways, this process mirrors my hyphenated existence....

Working through this collection, I have realized that what I have to tell is not only in the content of the stories themselves, but also in the process of their bilingual, bicultural creation....My heart trespasses borders....And my hand writes in two languages....

I am a Chilean-Canadian writer.

The first story, "black hole," a mix of narrative, phone calls and letters, with shifting points of view, seems less cohesive than the others, but I wouldn't have wanted to miss it. It contains a letter from a Chilean mother, written on return home after visiting her exiled daughter's family in Vancouver. In it she eloquently and simply expresses what has been lost. We suddenly see the exile experience in human terms.

Her loss: she couldn't speak to her own grandchildren; she cooked them foods they no longer liked.

Her daughter's loss:

'I know you, Estrela, you are my child, and I know that something inside you has died.'

The granddaughters' loss:

'...a whole generation being brought up in other countries, with other values, in other languages. My two darling granddaughters don't want to speak Spanish anymore,...and they're growing up without their grandparents, uncles, and aunts.'

Without their culture.

In "the mirror," even though she is not politically active herself and doesn't condone violence, an actress shelters a tortured woman. She does so despite the risk, greeting the doctor as a lover with open arms so neighbours won't suspect, turning Bach up loud during the morning bath in order to speak without being overheard. But,

Your eyes looked at me with a dampness I hated because, what did I have to do with your eyes, your sores, your dry, clenched mouth? What did I have to do with your stifled cries and grotesque contortions?

All the same they draw close, becoming aware of how alike they are in the intensity of their commitments, despite the difference of those commitments: one to armed resistance, the other to the theatre. Late at night they whisper secrets, of childhood, adolescence, first love,

And we spoke of our mothers, of our immense love and deep hatred for them, something we would've never admitted to anybody else, not even to ourselves.

In "i sing, therefore i am" the protagonist is never named. This device is effective: her story feels representative of many others; she could be anyone. It also reflects how the military regime sees her: depersonalized, anonymous, she is no one.

The story opens with a beautiful birthing paragraph:

She pushed with everything: skin, teeth, fingernails. Soaked in ocean water, she felt a tidal wave open her at her roots and fall loose, head down. Her voice called for her mother, but she was answered by the bloodstained cry of her son, dark and perfect roundness. They placed him on her chest and she felt him, soft, warm, hers. Her son. She laughed lightly, while her hands explored the miniature fingers, the sticky brush of black hair. Then she closed her eyes and slept, relieved.

Suddenly the story shifts: the same woman, her leg broken, unable to carry on, unable to tell her comrades where the guns are hidden, preparing to die, then wondering who would finish knitting her son's sweater. She struggles on, is captured, tortured. By the end of the story her leg is missing, she is on board a plane headed for Canada, knowing her son will need the sweater. 'It's very cold there.'

The Rodriguez women are survivors, literally and figuratively. They have lived through much, and they're not going to give up now.

Michelle Berry was only twenty-nine when *How to Get There from Here* was published, so we can look forward to many more of her stories in the future. Good.

Before deciding to read a short story collection I always scan the opening lines to make sure they grab me, and Berry's do. Here are a few:

I'm sitting in front of the TV trying to see the face of Jesus in a tortilla shell when there's a knock on the door.

I ignore it and focus my attention on the tortilla.

She has caught her little finger in the screen door for the second time today and she is howling. I go to the door and release her.

"For God's sake," I say.

"He thinks he is God," she says. "God or Jesus, I can't tell which."

These are openings that don't allow me to put the story down. I have to keep going. But titles matter too, and a few set up expectations that can't possibly be met: "The Most Peculiar Thing," "A Really Good Joke," "Did You Ever Hear Such a Tale in Your Life?" I'm glad I didn't glance first at the table of contents as I might not have bothered to read the book. I'd have missed out. Some of the stories are straightforward; others are quirky, even a bit surreal.

Berry experiments. Never before have I seen a book containing two versions of the same story. Berry risks it. First an abbreviated two-page version, containing the sentence, 'When Joe thought back on it later, it all made sense,' without explaining what he discovered later or how it might have made sense. We wonder what that might have been, but all the same the story works, and doesn't seem incomplete. The following story has a different title, but begins with the same opening line. The pacing is slower and we realize we will probably learn more, and we do. The juxtaposition is strangely satisfying, as though the first story had been only a teaser, a movie preview, a quick synopsis. What a strange thing for an author to do. Amazingly it works. I check the next story to see whether it's a third version, but no. Two is all we get.

In "Directions: How to Get There from Here," the narrator, a non-driver, sits in a bar between her husband and a friend while they discuss how they got to the bar, how to get to the Town Plaza, how to get to Betty's place, whoever she is. Their conversation is exclusionary and incredibly boring:

"I took Avondale north until Highway 6. Then I went west for about half a kilometre until Crescent Street. There's a stop-light there. And a 7-Eleven. I think there may be a gas station on the south side of the street. Anyway, if you go this way, you come up almost at Keyhole Avenue..."

As they yatter back and forth the protagonist watches the parking lot where her friend's parking lights have been left on. Finally they dim and then fade out.