Love & Courage: Historic Fiction

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Abstract

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The main section of ***Love & Courage*** is a collection of seventeen short fiction stories inspired by gravestone inscriptions found in Scotland, England, Wales during independent research study abroad travels in 2013, and in Seattle, Washington during the winter of 2014. The stories are illustrated with collages created using photographs of historic sites. The second section describes sources of material inspiration, research, and invention. The last section is a general statement about poetics.

Seventeen Illustrated Micro-Stories



Two Sisters
1785
Whitby, Yorkshire, England

Ann Richardson

In their youth, Ann Richardson and her one surviving little sister, Rebecca, were happy and optimistic, the attractive daughters of a prosperous merchant. They both adored ambitious young men. Ann's favorite was a sailor, William Wedgewood, who aspired to be a Captain in the Royal Navy. He blessed her with two joyful weeks of engagement that were meant to be the mere beginning of happiness, but their time was disrupted by his sudden orders to rush back to Greenwich, where he was assigned to a frigate bound for India. The day he left, William sent Ann a loving letter full of promise. His heart would ache daily, missing her. He would return as soon as he could. But the war was just beginning. It seemed to go on forever.

Ann waited. She read every bit of news she could find. She sewed piles of gowns and cloaks and stockings and kerchiefs and corsets and lace-embellished underclothes for her trousseau. She waited, and vowed never to lose hope, and waited some more. She refused John, and Thomas, Edward, and Robert, who each wept in disappointment and went forth to marry someone else. It was the Seven Years War. It was the ruin of Ann's life. She was twenty-five when William's dying selfish widow of a mother finally let her see the letter she always denied existed. The letter written long ago by the Vice-Admiral, who regretfully informed her William had been struck by malaria upon reaching Bengal, and died of fever.

Ann was stunned. Stunned to silence, stunned to numbness. She never wept for William. She couldn't. She stumbled home and emptied those trunks filled with bright wedding clothes, tore everything apart, and burnt the shreds, sleeve by hem by collar, in the kitchen fire.

A year later Rebecca lost her dearest love, a charming farmer she chose, in part, because he would never be lost at sea. He completely despised fish and ships. She thought he was safe. Yes, he stayed on land, where he was thrown from his horse and broke his skull on a plow. By then the elder Richardsons were both losing their health. They were in need of much help.

Ann and Rebecca stayed home to care for their parents, until their mother and father were dead. The two sisters, old maids, kept each other company until Rebecca passed. Then Ann sadly wrote her epitaph and gladly spent much of her savings to have it engraved upon their stone.

What heavenly thoughts while dying Rebecca
express'd
Undoubtedly caused by need of eternal rest
With closing eyes and fading voice she said
How pleasant to be lain asleep among the dead.
Tho dead she lives safe on the happy shore
Where she suffers pain and sin no more.



Mary Jefferson
1787
Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, England

Margaret Storm

For maidens from the country, a trip to London in 1786 was a hunt for rich men, objects of fashion, and landmarks of history. The two eldest Storm sisters were sent south from Robin Hood's Bay to welcome spring in the Capitol, to bask in the sparkling social sphere enjoyed by their mother's sister, Aunt Hannah, who had married so well she and her husband, George Middleton, lived beautifully in a house on Grosvenor Square. Hannah's only live child was a son dedicated to Greek and Latin, a scholar at Cambridge. She cherished her nieces, perhaps more than anyone else ever did. Their mother had married a fisherman, and felt burdened by having ten children to support: only three were sons. The youngest child was always most favored. Mr. and Mrs. Storm adored the cuteness of babies and toddlers, especially if the child was already dead. Mary and Margaret were very much alive. They were grown women now, not babies, not toddlers, nor even girls. They felt more and more resented every year. They had already spent three springs in London. They were now determined to leave home forever, to be wed before the cool days of autumn set in. They wanted marriages to handsome men with vast libraries, like Uncle George's. They wanted lives enriched with kisses and passions and literature and art and travel to Lisbon and Venice. Long engagements spent sewing underclothes day after day after day would hardly please them, though they would suffer so, if they must, if such were the cost of gaining independence from their tedious parents who treated them more and more like maids, as time went on. Old maids, who were not worth their cost. They felt like Cinderellas, desperate for Princely rescue. Margaret was already nineteen. Mary, tragically, twenty-one. They were carried from home on their father's boat, delivered to London with a load of codfish, in early March. It was an awful journey, fraught with vomit and stenches. They arrived at Southwark at night and had to wait until dawn for the coachmen to carry them and their father and trunks across London Bridge and Winchester to Aunt Hannah's house on the Square, where they staggered upstairs, following the men who carried their luggage. The young ladies bid everyone adieu, then locked their door to privately laugh and dance in a boisterous circle before falling onto their grand guest beds, still dressed, and spent the rest of the day sleeping. Darkness had already fallen when Hannah knocked on the door to wake them, to greet them and gossip, to tell them to throw off their stinking dresses and prepare for an evening of elegance. Don your best gowns now, dear girls. A flock of fine gentlemen will arrive momentarily! Oh, who could ask for more? Aunt Hannah filled the house with musicians and guests. They dined on roast lambs and lemons and larks, drank three kinds of wine, and licked lumps of chocolate. Mary and

Margaret were re-introduced to numerous young men they had previously met. They were freshly introduced to more. Margaret was dazzled by all of them and flourished in the ball, waltzing with one gentleman after another.

But Mary missed the library more. She slipped away to look for an astronomical book. She was standing high on the ladder, holding a candle in one hand and John Shuttleworth's treatise in the other, when Mr. Jefferson found her, and helped her climb down. He looked as old as her father, but was witty and charming, and very impressed that she had already read Adam Walker's analysis. She assumed he was married, and confessed to loving the aurora borealis and yearning to look through a telescope that would show her the rings of Saturn. The two of them spent the rest of the evening browsing the bookshelves, discussing magnetism and tidal waters and navigation by stars and the array of wonders hidden in that vast continent of wild woods across the Atlantic. At midnight he kissed her hand and whispered you are lovely and bright, and I hope to see you again, tomorrow morning. He departed. She was too breathless and astonished to move. When, at last, she calmed herself enough to make her way upstairs, she told Margaret — I have fallen. Fallen in love!

The courtship was swift, transforming. The widower, Mr. Jefferson, only meant to spend three weeks in London, but he stayed for six. The wedding, on the fifteenth of April, was attended by Margaret, Aunt Hannah and Uncle George, and their American neighbors, the guests who brought Mr. Jefferson to the ball that night: John and Abigail Adams. The newlyweds spent a week in London before departing for Paris.

Margaret never forgot how she felt, congratulating Mary for finding her Prince, as the two sisters tearfully said good-bye on a dock on the Strand. Mary stood on the boat's deck as it sailed down the Thames, waving to Margaret who ran along the bank, determined to keep seeing her sister as long as she could. Their feelings were mixed: six kinds of joy swirled in a sea of grief. They knew marriage was a woman's happiness, unless it caused her death, her ruin. When Margaret left London in June she was not engaged, but felt charmed by the son of a merchant who wrote weekly letters stuffed with flattery and poetry. Most of her days were spent sewing underclothes and doing housework for Mother. Mary wrote frequent letters, too, describing her Paradise, until mid-winter, when an unexpected brig sailed into Robin Hood's Bay under a French flag, bringing the news that fate had struck.

After a small accident in a rugged garden in Versailles, beloved Mary was stricken by tetanus. She suffered horrible distress and died. Her mourning husband brought her home in a coffin. He stayed beside the box in the church all night. In the morning Margaret took him water and bread. He said thanks for the water, but please keep the bread. I cannot eat, I have no hunger. I am infinitely smitten, almost fatally crushed. I loved Mary so much. If not for me, she would never have walked in that garden, would never have been gashed by that nail, never have been poisoned by rust. She would have used

her telescope to study the stars on this night, and sweetly greeted the light with a yawn. I promised to bring her home. I would call life over now, and end it today, if not for my country and children.

Margaret awkwardly stood holding the bread, unsure what to do. She had cried half the night. She walked back to the house and cried some more. When the funeral finished the American sailed away. He never returned.



Battle at Flamborough Head
1793
Canterbury Cathedral, City of Canterbury, England

Captain Sir Richard Pearson

It was an honor to speak at Captain Thomas Piercy's funeral, to describe his virtues, the steadfast loyalty, generosity, courage, and remarkable skill the Captain possessed; to say yes, if not for brave actions Piercy took, Pearson's ship would have been sunk and a convoy of forty ships would've been blasted by pirates. But Sir Richard Pearson could not describe that battle in detail, as Captain Piercy's wife requested. He could not speak of the endless pain he and Thomas both felt, caused by losing so many good men to cannon blasts and bullets and flames, aggravated by the horror of hearing the wounded abandoned on the Pirate's ship screaming as it sank. Sir Richard never spoke of his agonies, of seeing his own crew suffer, of being held so long on wretched ships in Holland, inadequately clothed and watered and fed, crammed together in cold holds as winter set in, with no means for the surgeon to revive the wounded and hopeless who were daily joining the dead. How many men died? How many more were dying? Fourteen years later, Captain Pearson still spent his nightmares counting the living and listing the lost, endlessly writing letter after letter to Admirals and Kings and newspapers, doing everything he could to hurry the exchange of prisoners, to save their lives and free them. In real life that trade of men was granted, at last, by King George and Benjamin Franklin, the American in Paris. Did Pearson's lists and letters hasten that? He would never know. But returning to England was only a change of prisons for him and Piercy. The Admiralty put them through court martials for surrendering to the enemy, to the Scottish buccaneer John Paul, a criminal who beat two crewmen on British ships to death when he was a younger fool, before he fled to the west, before he became a privateer for American rebels, before that Congress gave him a squadron. The traitorous John Paul went marauding to Ireland and Scotland, sinking ship after ship on the harbors and coastlines he knew too well, till he met Pearson and Piercy off Flamborough Head and the battle ensued. The court martial decided to honor Richard Pearson and Thomas Piercy for deeds in the battle, not to punish them. They were the Royal Navy. They sacrificed men and ships to keep a civilian convoy safe. That was their mission. The convoy reached Scarborough Harbor, unscathed, because the Navy's men fulfilled their duties. Pearson was knighted for sinking the pirate's frigate and surrendering to save the rest of his crew from a watery end. But his pains never eased. He was Scottish, which made him hate John Paul even more, for betraying the people they should both have loved and protected.

While in London, Captain Pearson made a hobby of lingering at booksellers, reading every word he could find about the traitor. While standing in a printer's shop

on Paternoster Row late one day in November 1787, he glanced out the window and trembled at the sight of the traitor standing in a shadow, looking left and right, impatient, anxious, as if waiting for someone, waiting for some thing. The scoundrel wore a black cape and white wig. As the sun sank and shadows lengthened Jones pulled the cape's hood overhead and turned to slosh in the rain, past the Cathedral. He went slinking through Blackfriars, the maze of narrow streets going down toward the river. He acted like a man whose mission must be accomplished in secret: a spy, a saboteur. Captain Pearson followed, his hand on his dagger, acting as the counter-spy, hoping to be unseen, unnoticed. Where could the traitor be going? Who was he looking for? What was he doing in London? How dare he be there? Pearson meant to discover the secret, then stab the man, for revenge, but he lost the villain in those dark alleys. He secretly enlisted help, kept searching for days, but never saw the pirate again.

What did Captain Pearson learn from his readings? The buccaneer, John Paul, added the Welsh surname, Jones, to disguise himself, in fear of arrest for those first murders. He was a liar seeking fame and gold. He was transformed to a hero, using the art of myth. The famous quote. I have just begun to fight! Ha. The Buccaneer never said that, never said anything like that. The pirate's career ended when Pearson sank his frigate. Benjamin Franklin never let the liar command another ship. His endless demands to be paid a fortune for the boats and cargos he stole before that last battle reaped nothing. He never found a wife, was arrested for rape in Russia, finally died alone and poor, in Paris, in 1792. That sorry end inspired great joy in Greenwich.

Captain Pearson waited till the funeral ended and the cathedral emptied, then placed a rose on Piercy's grave, saluted his memory, and went strolling round the cloisters, humming shanties, recalling the hours he and Piercy spent singing, drinking, dancing jigs with the rest of the Navy, in celebration of the pirate's demise. Was that the best day, the greatest joy, of both their lives? Perhaps it was. Perhaps.


See this go Down

Tetanic Therapies
1838
Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury, England

Robert Chisholm, M.D.

How wonderful it felt to fulfill the dreams of youth and join the ranks of demigods — as a physician! Robert Chisholm worked day and night while training in Edinburgh. He memorized the details of anatomy and physiology, the nature of poisons and disease, the benefits of potions, pills, leeches, electricity and — most important! — the philosophy of modern science! He graduated in 1808, blessed with the power to cure maladies, transform near-tragedies to joyful days, and make life bearable for the chronically afflicted. He carried his diploma away to begin his career, determined never to simply trot along the path of tradition. No. He was a modern man — a scientist! — compelled to carry medicine into the future. He would never simply give all patients the usual treatment. He was very well equipped with good tools, good health, and the mind of a scientist. He loved experimenting, innovating, using new cures, and publishing results. Yes, he was very appreciated: brilliantly spending his days squashing fevers, placing leeches, making blisters, cutting veins, inoculating tots, and prescribing precisely the right amounts of arsenic, mercury, opium, turpentine, quinine, and all the other pills and potions sold by chemists to relieve his patients' pain and improve their health. How many lives did he save? Oh, so very many. Who could count them all? God, perhaps. Dr. Chisholm lost track. Distractions, like marriage, never made him falter. No. A siren broke his heart in Dorset, in his youth. Angelic singing, glossy silk, rosy scents, and, oh my — the glimpse of feminine ankles hidden under skirts — turned him to a fool, a dog, a speechless idiot. But adorable damsels attract many men: men with wisdom and kindness, men with swords and guns. Did Robert Chisholm duel for her love? No. No. He said farewell! And dedicated himself to the people, to the art of science, to the Hospital of Canterbury and Kent, where he served with Dr. Carter. Residing beside the Hospital, always eager to thwart the threat of death, Dr. Chisholm often ran to drain poisons from the blood and bowels, diagnose disorders, and halt the demise of endangered souls, whether crisis called in day or night.

The wonders of medicine helped him vanquish and manage most common troubles and many unusual ones. Tetanic paralysis was all too common, a mystery, a consequence of cuts by rusty metal or other injuries. It was usually tragic. The medical journals were full of case reports, suggestions, theoretical discussions of pathology, descriptions of schemes for innovative treatment.

The intemperate forty-year old William Bryne lived in a wretched state, devoted to gin and self-neglect. He stumbled to the hospital, was treated for dropsy, cured, advised to stay sober, and sent home. After a week spent in his filthy hovel, his neighbors hauled the drunkard back to the hospital. He was paralyzed. His mouth would not

open, his head was drawn back, his back was arched, a cut on his foot was half-healed, his limbs were hard as wood and completely immobile. Dr. Chisholm applied a hundred leeches to suck the excess blood from Mr. Bryne's spine. He prescribed frequent doses of opium and mercury, plus daily enemas designed to rid him of intestinal worms. The patient died on the fourth day.

The shoeless milkmaid, Anne Parks, age eighteen, was admitted to the hospital for treatment of a bloody foot injury: three toes crushed by a stomping cow. On the seventh day she was stricken by tremors, pain in the jaws and chest, an achy back, and widespread muscular slowness. The next morning her jaws were locked. She was going stiff. Dr. Chisholm and Dr. Carter discussed this emergency. Dr. Carter removed a pint of blood from her arm. Chisholm prescribed opium, six daily enemas of castor oil and turpentine, frequent rubbings with mercury and drenchings in alternating hot and cold waters. The next morning, tetanic paralysis had fully taken hold. Eighty leeches were applied to her spine. Opium and mercury were given hourly. When the bloated leeches were removed, the enema and bath schedules were renewed. The next morning, she was dead.

Then a dubious report announced that great success in curing paralytic disorders could be achieved by injecting a boiling slurry of tobacco soup into the bowels. Dr. Carter declared himself eager to see how well such innovative enemas worked. Dr. Chisholm said no, never try that — boiling water would kill anyone. Carter grumbled. Chisholm went about his work. Three months later he returned to the hospital after making his outpatient rounds, and found Dr. Carter in the corner of his office, bashing himself on the head with a heavy copy of Gray's Anatomy. Chisholm wrestled the book away, but couldn't get Carter to speak. He kept trying to coax an explanation out, till their assistant, Mr. Spratt, came to the door, made a gesture for him to follow, showed him the child's body, and described the fiasco. This severely tetanic little boy's parents carried their stiff suffocating toddler in, frantically begged Dr. Carter to quickly treat him with the new cure they recently heard about: boiling tobacco. Which he did: with this terrible, fatal, result. Spratt was ready to clean up the mess, but a doctor should to walk down to the waiting room and give those parents the news.

The ensuing conversation was one of Dr. Chisholm's worst hours.

On Christmas Day stomach pains struck thirty-year old Frederick Moss. The next day he was stiff as a board, struggling to breathe. Dr. Chisholm took blood from his arm. Mr. Moss fainted, but soon awoke and drank his prescribed water with laudanum. More waves of tetanic spasms and pain struck him. He started repetitive whispering. At first his speech seemed like babble, then Dr. Chisholm realized the patient was begging for rum. Not a good sign, he thought, not a good sign at. How could a physician indulge such an untherapeutic request? But the dying man kept mumbling rum, rum, rum. In what circumstance should a doctor refuse his patient's last wish?

Chisholm told Spratt to go get him a pint. Moss drank that, and asked for more. And more. And more. On the third day he sat up and smiled. On the fifth day, he stood up and walked home.

Dr. Chisholm watched the man go. He felt very puzzled. Why did Moss survive tetanus? Was that rum truly his cure? Or was it just luck?

In August 1838, Dr. Chisholm's horse lost a shoe. The blacksmith took too long to replace it. The doctor decided to carry his bag of instruments and medicines through the rain, across the countryside on a footpath. He knew a shortcut to the cottage of two patients. The path went down by the river, then wound between pastures, then crossed hedge after hedge via wooden stiles. The steps were all drenched, slick from the rain. They were slippery, slippery, ladders. He crossed the first two, carefully, lost his balance on the third. He tried to catch himself, lost hold of the bag, slashed his arm on the tip of a nail, and tumbled onto the grass, bleeding. He crawled to the bag, wrapped a bandage round the bloody arm, sat by the hedge, and closed his eyes. Yes, this injury hurt, but not enough to ruin his day. The trouble was that kind of cut could be the precursor to tetanic paralysis. What if he knew he was going to die in a week? What would he do? Dr. Chisholm sat beside the hedge till the rain stopped and the clouds showed him a patch of blue. Then he stood up, found his hat, found his bag, and kept on walking toward that cottage, to see those patients. They needed help.



Holgate's Fairy Land
1856
Seattle, Washington

Abby Holgate Hanford

Once upon a time there was a vast flat land, plain and dusty, that a kingly man named Abraham Holgate rode across, on a horse. His adventurous queenly wife, Elizabeth, and royally bold children followed along in a wagon train, bringing their load of chickens and clothes and tools and seeds for planting, in boxes on wheels, pulled by oxen. The Holgates stopped in the midst of the dust, at a place called Van Buren County, in Iowa, and created a new kingdom there: a sod hut on a corn farm beside a sod church. Abraham plowed the ground and worked daily, dawn till dusk, planting fields and tending the growth of corn, potatoes, and wheat. On Sundays he preached. He taught his elder sons, two princely young men named John and Lemuel, to use plows and shovels and Bibles and guns. Queenly Elizabeth worked daily, too. She grew roses and turnips and cabbage in a garden. She milked cows and collected chicken eggs. She made butter and bread and pancakes and roasted meat for dinner. During dark seasons she created candles from the fat of butchered cattle to help light the hut in the night. She taught her princess daughters, Abby and Olivia, to sew. They made dresses and trousers and shirts and coats. They readied the family for winter by knitting new socks and mittens and scarves and hats made from wool. Abby was the eldest princess. She read everything she could find. She was a storyteller. She did not love the flat world of Iowa. She remembered Ohio and hated the sod, the dust. She was bored by tedious work, starved for music and art. Life on the farm was lonesome. She longed for a place rich with colors and hills and valleys and tall buildings. She yearned to attend festive gatherings populated by boisterous exotic people. But she could not leave by herself. So she invented fairy tales. She told her sister and brothers epics of exploration. She kept them wide awake at night with long winding passages about discoveries of lost gems and magical wonders in mavelous lands that lay beyond the dusty horizon, in the west. Her imagination said everything they ever dreamed of waited to be found, hidden along a far coast, between a wide blue ocean and tall forested snowy mountains, where talking bears and wolves and tribes of happy Indians danced and sang and practiced secret magics, hoping to meet young royal Holgates and share their wild kingdoms. Her brother John especially loved her stories. He imagined they were almost true. He grew up determined to go west. He was devoted to his dreams of leaving the land of dust to find a paradise of green trees and rivers where he would never need to plant another row of wheat or corn, because he could easily catch fish that were as long as a man is tall, and feast on salmon, daily.

Abraham was the king of the Holgates and he loved Iowa. He said he would never leave and if his family loved him, they would all stay where they were. They would not

go west; they would grow corn and wheat and live on the dust, like good farmers must. He was their leader, the wise one. He warned everyone his eldest son, John, was a rebel, a mad man urging everyone to accompany him to an imaginary land, to travel through wilderness and danger to an uncivilized place. Don't go there, said Abraham. If you want to be happy, always call Iowa your home. The west is not blessed. Abraham's wife Elizabeth, and his children: Abby, Olivia, Lemuel, and baby Milton, all agreed to stay where they were, though they hated the dust.

Time passed. Abby and Olivia married young men who grew up on neighboring farms.

John ran away. He said I'm done with misery, and went west. He followed the path of Lewis and Clark. He crossed the Rocky Mountains. He crossed the sagebrush desert. He followed the Columbia River down to the Oregon coast.

Abraham was struck dead by Iowan cold and lost in the snow of a blizzard.

John sent letters home telling everyone yes, he found a paradise. Yes, they should join him, and create a new kingdom. Yes, Oregon Territory was blessed, the world's most beautiful land, where blizzards never blew, where tall trees for building cabins and churches stood in great abundance, where no one lived in sod, dust did not exist, delicious fish filled rivers with food, songbirds filled the air with music, and everyone felt rich with happiness.

After five years of urging people to leave the land of misery, he convinced everyone to join him. Lemuel, Abby, Olivia, and Elizabeth organized a crowd of Iowans. They filled wagons with seeds and chickens and tools and clothes again, walked west to Oregon, then made their way north from the Columbia to Puget Sound.

John had followed the example of Lewis and Clark. He made friends with the Indians, went exploring by canoe, found a cluster of beautiful lakes near the sea, and built the first pioneer cabin on the shore of the Duwamish River. He called himself the young king of this new land. He was elated to greet his family: his princely brothers, his queenly widowed mother and princess sisters: Olivia, now a widow like her mother, and the storyteller, Abby, with her husband and children.

Nearly everyone in Van Buren County who knew the Holgates had left Iowa behind and come west in the wagon train, hoping to thrive in this kingdom of forest and fish. Things went very well. Things went very badly. Too many arrogant settlers came. They treated other people with cruelty and violence. They killed too many trees and fish. They killed each other. They killed innocent people. The Duwamish refused a treaty directing them to leave. They said no, this is our land. These waters belong to us. These are our trees, our fish. Not yours. You brought wicked people. You must go.

But no one agreed to leave. No one missed Iowa. They refused to return to the dust. John Holgate said we will all stay. We will build new cabins, very close together. We will form a town, a tight community, close by the shore. The Navy will guard us. His people moved to the

base of Seattle's First Hill. The angry Duwamish gathered high on the hillside. They fired guns at the cabins. The Indian who meant to kill John Holgate missed and shot his little brother, Milton, who fell dead. More shots were fired. Another white man died. Then the Navy blasted cannons from a ship. Explosive shells hit the hill, cutting the Duwamish with shrapnel, killing twenty men and wounding eighty more, who were carried away by their terrified brothers.

Elizabeth Holgate wept all night, hugging and kissing and praying over the body of her precious youngest child, her beloved innocent baby, until his corpse felt as cold and stiff and inhuman as wood. John Holgate knew he should have died that night. He helped dig a hole to bury Milton in, then launched his canoe and paddled away to escape the angry Iowans who blamed him for their new hardships, and to flee the angry Duwamish who hated him more than anyone. He still aspired to be the Prince of an imagery kingdom, but knew he couldn't go any further west, so he fled south to California, where he developed the new passion that ultimately led to his death: searching rivers for gold, not fish.



Thornycroft Hall
1861
Conwy, Wales

Mary Hughes

John Mytton Thornycroft and his young wife, Charlotte, filled Thornycroft Hall with their annual three-day retreat for ladies. The women arrived from near and far on Tuesday. The Thornycroft coachmen brought them in groups from the train, and stowed their luggage in guest chambers. Everyone dined in the garden, drinking wine by the bottle. The weather was warm as a dream. Mornings were steamy. Middays: like ovens. Indoor evenings felt stuffy and airless, so they all lingered outside. The ladies explored the hot hillsides, threw off their stockings and shoes, lifted the hems of their skirts to wade 'round the pond. Sitting barefoot to gossip among starlit flowers and grass was refreshing, almost cool. How did those rich Thornycrofts ever meet humble Henry Hughes, the ferryman from Conwy? Mary could never explain that to Charlotte. She wasn't sure what tale John told his wife so she mumbled about the rising half moon and carried her cake and champagne up the hill, where a young grandmother could indulge in solitude, gazing at the brilliant night sky, counting shooting stars, and cherishing secrets.

It was not Henry Hughes who first met John Mytton. It was Mary O'Brien, who was never the Welsh wench Charlotte imagined. She was the eldest daughter of an Irish cartographer who taught at Oxford. She was seventeen, sketching Roman gods at the Ashmolean, when that student, John Mytton, came along. He stopped to watch as the shape on her paper became ever more sensuous and detailed, until the museum closed. She returned the next day, and the next, and the next. And so did he. Precious moments grew between them, around them, within them and turned into hours, weeks, months. Mary felt steeped in a stormy cloud of love: exquisite tempestuous love. John secretly posed, in the nude, for her, as Bacchus. She was kissed, seduced, adored, and, despite her prayers, at nineteen — pregnant. They went round, announcing their engagement. John Mytton's preacher father said Miss O'Brien held the wrong faith and must burn it now, or John would vanish, for his father would never allow a Papist slut to drag his son to Hell. He would rather John died of fever as a missionary, and would happily send him China. Mary's father said if she threw her faith aside, she would be dead to her family. The Irish kin would never see her again, never hand her a bit of news, or clothes, or bread. She would die in sorrow and burn in Hell.

The young couple retreated, bewildered, and met in secret. John threw his Bible in the fire, shouting at God — those wicked old fools! They don't know love! They don't deserve the truth! He and Mary agreed to use deception to keep their families. They vowed to stay in love, whatever happened. They pledged to bury their sectarian chains

with their fathers, and be wed forever together as soon as they were free. The next day she was hauled to Ireland by a father who never guessed his daughter was pregnant. He took her to Waterford and left her with a sympathetic aunt, to spend the next few years forgetting her lover and remembering her faith. Aunt Gwendolyn kept Mary's secret child, raised him as her own. Everyone knew him as Mary's favorite cousin: little Dante. When she was twenty-two she left him behind and returned to Oxford, still in love with John.

The next year was filled with crises and subterfuge. John was informed he would inherit Thornycroft Hall if he changed his name, so he did. Mary's passions clashed with her dread of sex, her fear of giving birth to bastards. She swore never to abandon another baby. John also mourned the loss of Dante, the son he never met. He introduced Mary to a friend, Henry Hughes, and urged her to marry him. The two men looked so much alike, no one would ever be sure which child was whose. And so the courses of their three lives were entangled, like a knotty triangle of interwoven cords. Mary bore eight more children. Of the five who survived infancy, three later died. At the funeral of the twins who were taken by smallpox, John secretly wept like the grieving father he was, quietly sobbing as he held Mary close, standing hidden behind a hedge. She had learned to love Henry, a stable man, deceived, but honest. A good father. Loyal. Affectionate in quiet ways that once seemed tepid, but now felt dear and vital. She no longer meant to leave him. Seeing how desperately John needed children, a family he could call his own, she urged him find a young wife, to cure his loneliness with babies. So he married Charlotte. The deception grew, but so did his family, his happiness. Mary's second surviving son was now a student at Oxford. Dante was the artistic father of two girls, living in Dublin. Mary's youngest, a vivacious daughter, was at home, with Henry.

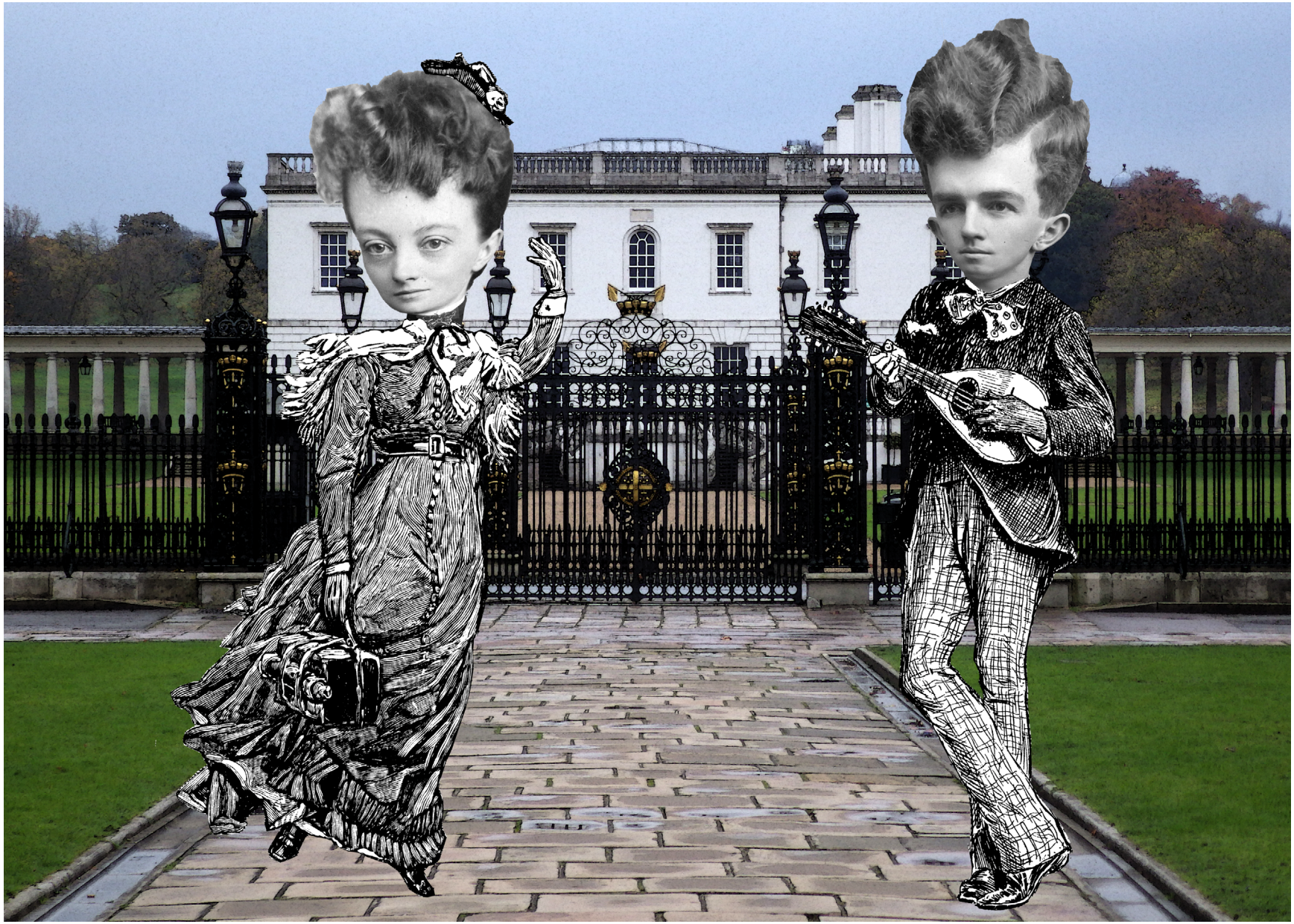
As bright stars shot across the sky, Mary O'Brien Hughes congratulated herself for living such a long good life, despite the oppression, as she ate that delicious mound of cake, bite after bite, after bite, until the dryness of her throat made it impossible to swallow. She sat up and reached for her wine, to wash that lump of cake down, but the goblet had fallen and spilled. She could not speak or scream for help. She hit herself on the chest. That did nothing. She waved her arms, but who could see her there, in the dark? Only the stars, the gods. The angelic dead: her lost children and siblings and members of generations that went before. She made the sign of the cross and lay flat to let her eyes fill with the glorious beauty of those far lights, her last sights, feeling unexpected ecstasy as she silently spoke to all her lost beloved — Here I come. Now I come, to join you.



Missing Gravestones
1862
Whitby, Yorkshire, England

Robert Richardson

Everyone knows God takes babies. Everyone's earliest memories include the loss of wee siblings, tiny cousins, the neighbors' infants. Everyone remembers that when they were young many good seasons were broken by stormy fevers and puking and pain and the innocent dead were lain on tables in the midst of candles, flowers, and lace for a day, then buried in boxes by the church. Everyone who lives long enough to have children of their own expects to lose a few, and when babies die, they all want to have more. They always to hope replace dear ones lost to God, not to lose another, as they so often do. When Robert Richardson lost his first son, his mother tried to comfort him by patting his hands as she said God takes half. He asked, is that the price of life? If God were a man, Robert Richardson's grief would lead him to chase the villain down and kill him for revenge. But God was a spirit in the sky, untouchable, immortal, invisible, and everyone knows that saying God murders children, would be blasphemy, blasphemy, the kind of sin that would send a parent to Hell, that would ensure Robert Richardson never joined his child in Heaven. So he did his best to praise God's deed, and bring more children to life with his wife, Margaret. They lost two more in infancy. Dan was almost five. Two years later, Robert was offered work on a ship. He sailed to Canada and back, and walked up the hill to find his home empty. The neighbor explained both his children died of typhus, then Margaret perished trying to give birth, again. Robert Richardson went to the church to find three new graves beside Dan's. His parents were long dead by then. His mother said God takes half but Robert Richardson walked home to sit in the gloom of that dusty cottage, thinking no, no. God takes all. God takes all. The price of life is death. His entire family was already dead. Everyone lay buried in graves marked by pieces of wood: flimsy fragile rotting wood. He was the last survivor. His health rapidly declined. He couldn't work much, could hardly buy food. He struggled to save money for the lovely gravestones he truly wanted, but couldn't pay the rent. He hid the last coins buried in a bottle, moved to the Work House, and toured the churchyard on Sundays, to visit his beloved and bring them everything he could: poetry and hope.



Dear William and His Wife
1864
Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, England

Mary Barnard

William Barby, brightest of the young Barnards, was a rebellious boy: a troublemaker according to some, a future admiral as viewed by others. Hence he was sent by his father to London to study navigation and maritime law. His mother, Mary, knew her son would have a better life at home in Yorkshire. London was always the center of trouble, the capitol of sin. But no man ever listened to Mary Barnard, so her precious darling went away to be seduced by Isabel, a rebellious girl, a pub owner's daughter, whom he soon felt compelled to wed. In the heat of August, the wee dreadful witchy wife daily advised her young husband to cool himself by diving in the River Thames, until at last dear William did — and drowned. And that is why, when the senior Mr. Barnard convinced poor William's widow to lodge with his bereaved family until long after the birth, Mary decided to malnourish the wench with daily doses of arsenic tea.


COURAGE

Lucy Allen's Thirteenth Child
1872
Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, England

Lucy Allen

After her husband, Thomas, died, Lucy Allen collapsed in a trench of sorrow. During his life, dear Thomas helped her cope with grief after grief, troubles galore, the loss of too many children. Charles, Mary, Alice, Kate, Helen, and Henry were taken by Jesus, to Heaven. Godfrey, Herbert, and Thomas were lost to ambition. They all found careers at sea, or abroad. Lucille and Elizabeth married and rarely came home. Soon after Thomas died, Mary's only remaining joy, their youngest surviving daughter, darling Henrietta, ran away to London to help Elizabeth manage her household and to seek a husband of her own. How could Lucy carry on, alone? What did she have to live for? Nothing, nothing. She devoted herself to tears and the hope she would die soon, too, until the letter arrived from Elizabeth. The letter told her of Henrietta's secret, Henrietta's death, Henrietta's baby: a little orphaned girl. Lucy Allen thanked God for keeping her alive, packed her bag, and caught the next train to London to meet the granddaughter, Edith, she would raise as her own.



Maritime Roses
1884
Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, England

Margaret Bedlington Lothian

As long as she could remember, Margaret feared storms and sinking ships. She was raised beside the sea. Even as a child she knew too many dead. Too many dear people who were tragically, suddenly, dead. While growing up she promised herself she would never wed a sailor, never need to join those widows who spent Sundays at the harbor throwing flowers away, mourning their long lost husbands. But who did she love? The neighbor's son, Edward Lothian, a mariner, a sailor, a strong cheerful man, two years older than she, who always treated her well. She resisted his pleas to marry. She refused him again, and again, and again. But she never cared as much for anyone else. Then, at last, Edward earned his promotion to be Captain of the S.S. Laxham, a modern steamer, a cargo ship with generous cabins for the crew. He proposed to Margaret again. He promised to share the wide world with her, to take her with him, to show her the pyramids of Egypt, the temples of Athens, the ruins in Rome. He said she could grow old knitting in her parents' house and die alone, or she could marry him and go waltzing in Paris, learn to tango in Spain, and teach their children to say prayers in Bethlehem. She said yes. He was right, she loved travel. For three years they went steaming along the North Atlantic coasts, visiting ports in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, delivering cargos of food and goods. They had a beautiful baby boy. They cherished each other. All was well until the middle of a foggy night off the coast of Spain when a huge looming passenger ship smashed the Laxham's hull and broke its own. It crushed the Laxham's lifeboats. Edward and his sailors rushed to place Margaret and her baby in safety on the other ship. She stood in her nightgown on the unfamiliar sloping deck, holding the babe close in her arms, resisting the urge to scream, tearfully singing lullabies as long as she could.

Mrs. Bedlington

The news arrived in a copy of THE TIMES, from London. The news described the collision, the sinkings. How the crews launched three lifeboats. Then both ships sank. The night was dark and terrible, few passengers could be found in the water. When the men at the oars heard no more cries they rowed toward Spain through the foggy night and the stormy next day, sure they would die at sea, but unwilling to give in. Thank God! He delivered their broken hearts, in half dead bodies with haunted souls, to the coast, where they spoke the truth of the dread event. Two hundred people drowned that night, including Margaret, her husband, their beloved child. Dear Margaret never joined those sorry widows throwing flowers in the sea. But her mother did, and so did Edward's.


GIGGLES

The Barque George Thompson
1890
Whitby, Yorkshire, England

George Smith

Do you want to waste your life in the dungeon of a steamer, shoveling coal in deafening darkness hour after hour, day after day, chugging back and forth between the same old ports on the same old coast? For a few pounds a year? Or would you rather be a sailor who climbs high as a bird flies and stands in the wind on the rigging of a beautiful ship, lit by a dawning sun or setting moon, sailing round the world, like Captain Cook? George Smith's favorite brother, Thomas, worked the steamers. This was Thomas's complaint, his question. They had rowed out of Whitby's harbor to fish. George worked the oars while Thomas drank his rum, sprawling flat on the hull, waving the bottle with one hand and a fishnet with the other, giving this lecture. Winds are unpredictable, he said. Sailing ships are slow. They're made of wood. They rot and sink. Their days are numbered. Iron lasts forever. Everything will go by steamer, soon. You'll never sail round the world, if you don't go now. George listened. It was springtime, breezy, with puffy clouds soaring by, the kind of day that makes boys restless, ready to go anywhere, eager for adventure. The tide changed. Thomas sang shanties as George rowed back to the harbor. Thomas stumbled onto the dock and staggered toward the pubs. George pulled the boat from the water, carried the oars home, packed his bag, and slung it over his shoulder, imitating his older brothers. He strode along the docks using his best imitation of a sailor's gait. He lied about his name, his age. Said he was his cousin, Frank, already sixteen, and yes, he'd gladly crew on a schooner down this coast to Scarborough. From there he went to Dover. Then Lisbon, Gibraltar, Malta, Tunis, Tripoli, Cypress, and finally, through the Suez Canal and east to India, Burma, and Indonesia, arriving in Sydney after a full year at sea. He was brown and blonde and strong, six inches taller than he stood when he left. He felt transformed in a thousand ways. He was manly now, not a boy. He was training a parrot. It liked to stand on his shoulder, bobbing, and say 'fifteen men!' George would finish the line, 'on a dead man's chest! Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum!' He wanted his mother to see that. When he was a kid she read **Treasure Island** aloud on winter nights. In retrospect, those were precious hours. He had his portrait taken at a studio in Sydney, with the bird on his shoulder shaking its wings so it looked like a blur. He sent his mother the picture, with the longest letter he had ever written. Two pages. He wrote a picturesque description of the last voyage — minus mentions of the storm that almost sank the ship and the fever he thought would kill him — followed by a list of personal messages. Tell Thomas he's smart as an ass. Tell Jane to come here: it's warm and dry. Tell Father he's now shorter than me. He missed them all. Would it take another year to get home? He didn't know. He hoped

not. The next day a Captain, James Barneson, hired him to cross the Pacific in a barque bound for North America with a load of coal. That wasn't a direct route to England, but George always wanted to see snowy volcanoes and giant redwoods. Maybe he'd ride a train across the Rockies and plains and sail home from New York. Maybe he'd get off the boat in San Francisco and go pan for gold. Either would be a great adventure. The ship sailed from Sydney into horrible weather. Terrifying gales and hurricanes, one after the other, rocked the ship, sent waves crashing over the deck, tore the sails to bits, and broke the rigging. Every storm taught George more about strength and courage, gave him the skills of facing danger to survive, taking swift action, making quick decisions, holding on tight to resist the pull of waves, climbing high and fast to change the sails, defying certain death to obey orders and do what had to be done to keep the boat afloat. Sighting Tahiti felt miraculous. To walk on solid land after you nearly drown is a dose of bliss. Six weeks in Tahiti changed his life. It felt like an eon in Paradise. The parrot introduced him to a young Tahitian woman who found the bird beautiful and charmingly silly. George met her on the beach every morning. They fished and swam and fed the bird and fell in love. She completed his transition to manhood. When repairs readied the ship, George wept. He didn't want to leave his lover. He didn't want to leave land, to ride another hurricane, to die at sea. She wanted him to go, to see more of the world, to study his heart and only return if he truly loved her. She said he was brave and strong and would be safe — the stormy season was gone. He boarded the ship, despite his dread. The barque sailed forth with good winds through mild weather, swiftly passing north of the tropics, entering the temperate Pacific in the autumn, and arriving at Puget Sound in November. The climate felt much like Whitby's: long nights, daylight dimmed by fog and rain. George shivered and froze until he bought new clothes. The seawater was nearly cold as ice. If the clouds parted, the volcanoes stood like spectacular towers of snow looming on the horizon. Dripping wet forests covered the hills with groves of straight tall evergreen trees. Their trunks stretched wide as cottages. The sea was filled with giant fish, seals, whales. Yes, America was beautiful, but no, it was not where George should be. His heart ached. The coal was unloaded from the barque. The former first mate, Albert Ransom, took the job of Captain. He told George the hold would soon be filled with lumber bound for Sydney. He asked, will you stay on the crew? George knew panning for gold would be twelve kinds of futile. The Rocky Mountains would freeze him to death. Everything he needed, everything he wanted, waited in the South Pacific. He said yes, he'd stay on the crew, till the ship reached Tahiti. Captain Ransom smiled as they shook hands, saying good, good, we need you, you're such a brave young sailor. The journey from Puget Sound began in mid-December, and crashed into a furious storm loaded with snow and air so cold it turned the spray to ice. They fought the wind. It tore whole sails away and blew the ship toward rocky cliffs and reefs and islands day after day. The chill was killing

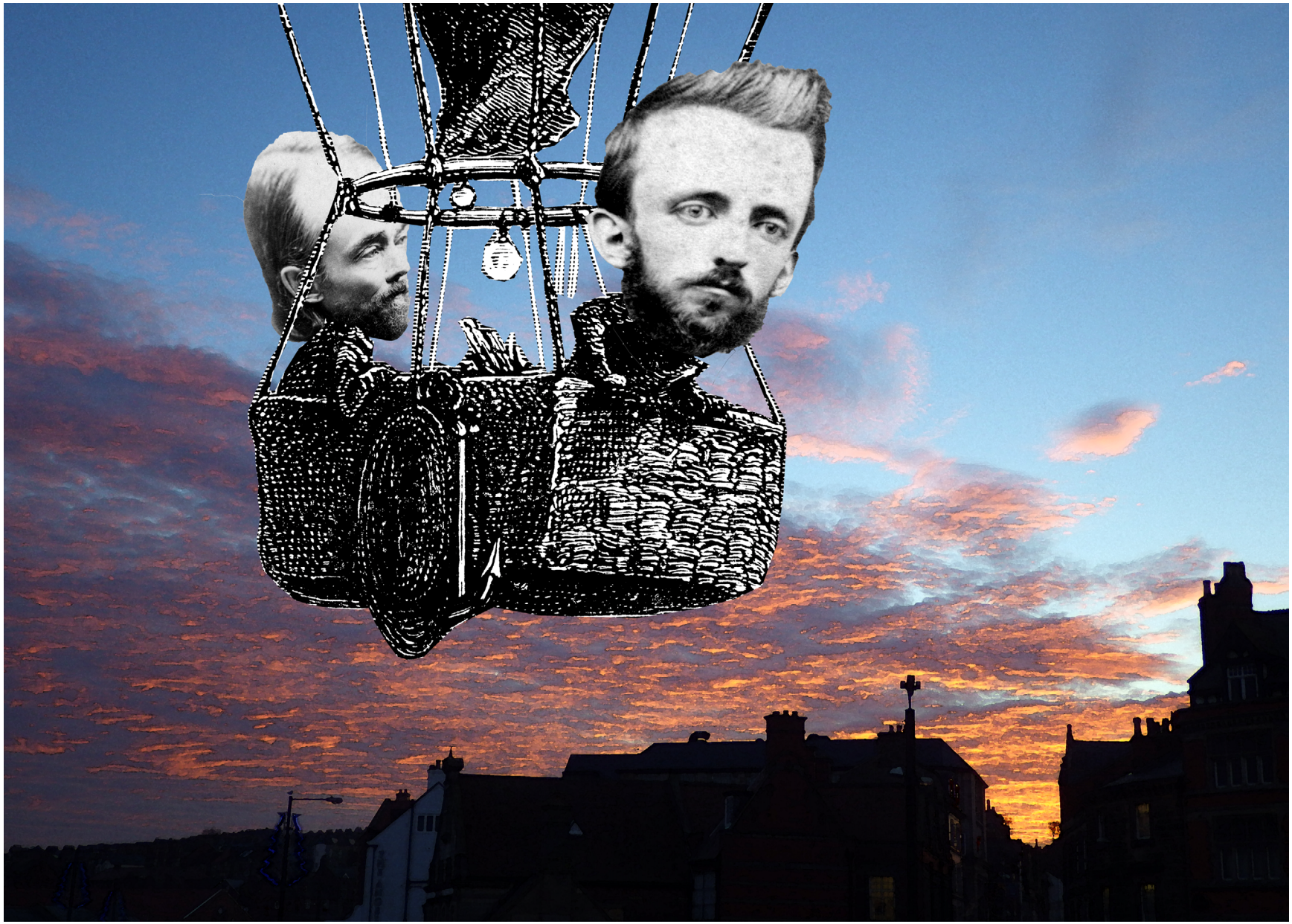
them. Waves flooded the deck and crushed the cabin. They passed a mess of wreckage: the masts and spars and boards and beams of another ship that capsized and was crushed. There was no refuge to anchor in, no safe harbor nearby. The topgallant sail needed bending. George climbed the mast to reach the top spar in fear and ice, determined to see Tahiti again. He worked the ropes with his stiff numb hands as the blasting snow blinded him until he forgot where he was and slipped and fell, and died.



The Novelist
1891
Whitby, Yorkshire, England

Mary Linskill

Her first novel was the 200 page illustrated tale of love between a rabbit and a hedgehog who dwelt in burrows on opposite sides of a garden and, in the shocking end, were eaten by wildcats. In the 300 page sequel their orphaned offspring, a hedge of young rabhogbits, hopped on a train to go touristing in London, where they were tragically devoured by tigers at the zoo. Unable to find a publisher for either of these works, fifteen year old Mary bundled her manuscripts in brown wrapping paper, tied them securely with string, and hid them under her bed. In retrospect, the plots were much too childish. The characters were too shallow, too primitive, too difficult to imagine, especially the rabhogbits. Why did she give them red ears and bushy tails? She could not remember. What a bad idea. It was time to write something more complex, adult, and sensitive. She began the epic romance of Bernard, a tall strong dark young fisherman, and a delicate princess, Loretta, who was secretly being raised by a dairy farmer's family to keep her safe from traitorous villains. The princess spent her days milking cows, polishing her diamond-encrusted crown, flirting with Bernard, and embroidering pink roses onto handkerchiefs — until the day a terrible hurricane swept her and him out to sea, where they were mistaken for seals by a pod of whales and swallowed whole. No publisher admired that manuscript, either. Mary was undaunted. As long as she could remember she had been encumbered by a malady, consumption, that made the kinds of love and adventure she dreamt of impossible to experience. She lived in weakness and misery but imagined strength and happiness. She was almost seventeen. It was time to start a new novel. She shoved the latest manuscript under her bed to moulder with the olders and sat facing the open window. Sunlight shone on her table. The sky glowed blue. Green oaks shook in the wind. A dozen rooks flew by. She decided her next princess should run away to hide in an ancient forest and meet the lion who would help save her kingdom from a winged witch's ravenous dragons. This would be her best story yet! Mary smiled, pulled a new sheet of paper from the box, dipped her pen in the ink, and began to write.



Three Accidents
1892
Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, Scotland

Margaret Graicie

Everyone who cowers at home is just as sure to die in the end as anyone who doesn't. Margaret Graicie's husband senselessly worked himself to death at a desk. What was the point of living like that? She always encouraged the children to pursue the joys of adventure. They especially loved to fly. But then one stormy day James landed his balloon in the wrong pasture and was trampled by a bull. William soared away above a desert canyon along the Colorado River in the heart of an American wilderness, in the heat of a summery day, and was never seen again. After James met that deadly bovine, John always avoided cattle but one morning he launched from the beach at Leith, aiming for the peak of Arthur's Seat, and a windy tempest blew him against the spire of a church. He fell to his death. That was the day Ann declared her aeronautic years complete and locked her balloon in the stables. But flight is not the only danger. Four years later she went speeding toward London in her new motorcar, stopped to visit relatives in Galashiels, and influenza caught her.



The Price of Gold
1900
Seattle, Washington

Wilford B. Hoggatt

Young Wilford Hoggatt's ambition to explore unchartered portions of the world and make discoveries of major significance was the first and foremost reason for his dedication to the Navy. Second, was his desperate need to escape the dull fields of Indiana. Third: he meant to achieve greater fame and fortune than a dairyman could ever imagine. Fourth: he knew the Captain of a giant ship steaming from port to port was guaranteed to be attractive to more women than a dairyman would ever meet. It didn't occur to him that steaming from port to port and exploring uncharted coastlines were not the same thing. Yes! He was eager to survey the coast of Alaska! He hardly glanced at the contract before signing, and spent the next six years mapping a sparsely populated stormy wet region. Here's a rock, there's a rock. The water is so shallow. No, deep. Yes, this inlet is filled with ice. Yes, many women on the rugged coast clearly adored him, but none of them seemed to be virgins. The ship's doctor kept warning they might be diseased. This was definitely the wrong place for a young man who aspired to marry the beautiful pure daughter of an aristocrat. Yes, he was the handsome Captain of a ship, but Wilford Hoggatt felt doomed to live as chaste as a priest. Forget the damn wilderness. He would rather have a wife. He applied to attend law school in a great city he knew was full of ambitious young ladies: Washington, D.C. The Navy agreed. The first time he ever saw Marie Hayden she had both hands on an oar, and was rowing a dinghy up the Potomac, with her sister. They were laughing. They were beautiful young ladies, beautifully dressed. Wilford followed along the shore, enchanted, bedazzled, determined to meet her, already in love. Captain Hoggatt married Marie when he finished law school. They were eager to have babies, but none were born. They fought about the cause of that. He blamed her. She blamed him. The Navy sent him back to Alaska. Marie stayed in Annapolis. When gold was found in the Yukon, Wilford didn't know minerals but he learned to pan for nuggets in the creeks he was mapping along the coast. He kept making claims, till he was ordered back to the Capitol to help win the war, the Spanish-American war. He put his brother in charge of the gold and returned to Annapolis. He planned battles all day, attended the School of Mines in the evenings, and slept with Maria at night, hoping she would get pregnant at last. She begged him to quit the Navy. To stay home. To write tender poems, like he used to do. The war ended. He finished the mining course. He quit the Navy and returned to Alaska. What he really wanted was gold. Marie followed. She surprised him by landing on the beach by his mine in a boat filled with rouge and jewels and trunks of books and ridiculous lacy clothes. Wilford was annoyed. Why was she so determined waste his time? She didn't belong at the mine. It wasn't a safe place for

women. He had to buy her a house in Juneau. She did her best to make it warm and elegant. She rejoiced whenever he came to town. She planted flowers, baked cakes, served wine, and read his poetry over and over again. Whatever she did, he always thought about gold, gold, gold. Ounces, pounds, tons. Until the fall of 1900, when she coughed and coughed into a handkerchief and he saw it was spotted with blood — a sign that consumption was killing her. How could he be so foolish? Why didn't he notice she was growing too thin? His knees shook. He almost wept. What did he want all that gold for? It would never love him. He said, let's spend the winter in Seattle. He took her south to a luxurious hotel. They went to see plays and concerts and doctors who had no cures to offer. Wilford wept alone, on the beach, in the rain, almost daily. He wrote her poetry for Christmas and held her hand as she waned and deeply regretted letting the gold make him forget how much he loved, loved, loved her.



Women of Crooderaft
1900
Seattle, Washington

Maddy McLean

How embarrassing to be unwed and pregnant at the ripe old age of forty-three when a woman ought to be wise. How could such a mistake ever be explained? Maddy McLean could not imagine. She was a teacher. No one must ever know of this mishap or she would be condemned for immorality. She would lose her position, never find work again. Had this been caused by an act of love, had the man been a sensible bachelor, she would gladly marry him. But no, the fool was already married, and, as she realized a bit too late, rather crazy. At first she told herself this baby could not possibly be. No, no, her menstrual cessation must caused by the ultimate pause, but finally, yes, she had to admit she kept getting kicked and was unbelievably pregnant, thanks to an act of drunken frivolity, a summery day, too hot, a sea-side party. It was caused by a reckless dip in the water, too much sloshing about in the shallows, stupidly frolicking upon a nutty man whose name she would never reveal. She gathered her savings, wrote a letter to resign — My dear sister is terribly ill! I must be her nurse! — packed a bag, covered her bulging self with a heavy coat, boarded a train in secret, and rode across the country. She meant to give birth where nobody knew her, hand the baby to a nun, and return to Boston alone. Her husband, Filbert Hazelteen Davidson, was a complete fiction, a hilarious lie, an antidote for the worst shame she ever felt. She found a women's boarding house on Queen Anne's Hill in Seattle, not a luxurious place, but reasonably priced: Crooderaft Mansion. Her room was simply furnished. It had a small closet and a large window facing the garden. The housekeeper's cooking was plain but good. Nourishing. Almost everyone was friendly. After dinner the ladies spent their evenings in the drawing room: sewing, playing cards, drinking tea or wine, eating caramels, while they gossiped. Nobody knew Maddy's real name, or age, or where she was actually from. She lied about everything to ensure news of this episode could never find its way home to Boston to ruin her life. She told fabulous tales of her imaginary husband, who was said to be on his third voyage 'round the world, second mate on a ship hired by aristocrats in search of holy bits, pieces of Noah's Ark, for instance, of which they had already found a splinter or two. The winter was miserably wet. The rain rarely quit. As her due date approached, birds sang brightly each morning, flowers bloomed, and Maddy felt worse and worse, perpetually fatigued. Then pain struck, blood gushed, and she was sped to the hospital for the baby to be surgically birthed, but as the doctors ran down the hall pushing her on a cart, she knew it was already too late.


FEDERAL STATION
SEATTLE POST OFFICE

A Farmer From Virginia
1908
Seattle, Washington

Gilbert S. Meem

He never meant to be a soldier. He was a farmer, a man who found joy in raising children and crops, a man whose career was all about bringing things to life. When the Governor named him General of the Shenandoah militia it wasn't a gift, but a curse. Gilbert Meem never wanted to go to war, but what if it came to him? What if an army of gunmen, an army of evil, came shooting forth, determined to kill everyone who lived in his Valley, determined to burn and destroy everything he loved? That nightmare terrified him. He would do whatever he could to defend his family, their farm, their neighbors and friends, to save his world. So Gilbert Meem accepted the position, the brief bout of training, the uniform and guns. He hoped it was all for naught, no war would happen. But it did.

Recruit every able man you can find, he was told, and report for duty, rush, hurry. The Yankees are coming! His brigade was sent toward Manassas, where all Hell broke loose. Everyone shot, and ran, and hid, and shot some more, in the tormenting heat of July. His men needed water, but all they could find was blood. Blood, blood, blood. The wounded, the dying, the dead. What can you do for a young man you never met before or a boy you've known all his life, who lays on the ground, weeping for Mother, in a pool of red, when you have no water to share with him, nor food, nor medicine? Did it matter which side he was on? General Meem knew if his family lived in the north, he, too, would wear the blue.

Which is worse? To die, or to kill and live with guilt? Bull Run was always described as a field of glory, not the thousand tragedies and horrors it really was. Bull Run made every peacetime nightmare seem naively simple and dangerless in retrospect. Before Bull Run, every fear in Gilbert Meem was a dread of something he could imagine, but after the battle he knew the true possibilities were much worse. Sleep became more and more impossible. He struggled with everything, worked to exhaustion and beyond, drank himself unconscious, to sleep, and when the nightmares woke him he always hoped he was dead, waking in Heaven, but no, he was always still there on earth, alive, destined to go on being tormented by the Hell of the war, until, thank God, General Lee asked, why did you retreat? Your men were a wall of flesh, meant to stop the Yankees. General Meem said he joined the army to save lives, not to force men to kill and die. Lee shook his head in disgust. He decided civilian brigades should be disbanded, and let General Meem resign. He said go back to your farm, we'll always need food.

As General Meem rode his horse on the road that wound through his father's fields by the Shenandoah River, he saw the crew of ragged slaves standing by that precious clean water flowing under the bridge. They were looking at him. He saw that the preachers, who always said slavery

was good and right, so God would protect the South from the North, were all fools or liars. Slavery was wrong and evil and one day God would punish the Meems by bringing the war down this road to this farm, to this bridge.

Gilbert Meem survived the day of that battle, too. Stonewall Jackson ate heaps of ham and eggs for breakfast. He said thank you, the fire is coming, get ready. He mounted his horse and led his troops away. Gilbert Meem hid his wife, his children, his people. The crops were burnt, the bridge was burnt, livestock were killed, the river turned to filth. Bloody pieces of young men lay scattered across the landscape. Gilbert Meem took the wounded to his brother's hospital. He offered a patch of ground to bury the dead. He offered to build a memorial, a statue of grief and regret, but that was refused.

The bodies were hauled away to be buried in town, to be glorified, to be used to recruit more young men for the war, the war that continued till the South was utterly ruined, the war too many people were determined to carry on, in secret, in their selfish stubborn hearts, forever. The end of the war was not the end of the pain or hatred or grief.

Gilbert Meem was a farmer. He had lost a beloved brother, his first wife, a beloved son. Too much of his world was gone, but he knew he had to stop drinking liquor or die. He hated himself but he still deeply loved his surviving children, his new wife. She had her first baby, a beautiful girl, Elsie, another child who needed a father. Gilbert Meem had been willing to kill for his family, to die for his family. Was he willing to live for them, too? That took much more courage. He couldn't imagine ever having another moment of true happiness, but he quit drinking. He stayed sober, did his best to forget the blood and the dead, to raise bountiful crops of wheat and corn, to breed better sheep and cattle. He paid everyone who stayed to work for him and treated them well, with respect.

Like every farmer, he had some good years and some bad seasons. Like every soldier, he was haunted. Haunted by scars and memories, and as he worked in his fields, haunted by the recognition that here a man died, shot. There, a man died, burned. Here, a man died, hit by the cannon. There, in the sparkling Shenandoah, many men drowned.

The war was officially over but two decades later, peace still hadn't come. Peace was what Gilbert Meem wanted more than anything. He sold the farm his father left him, his new house, his whole estate, and took his family west. They were refugees in search of a place never stained by slavery or war. They settled in Seattle, where all the waters ran pure. Thanks to the President, Grover Cleveland, Gilbert Meem became a master again, a postmaster, not a man who ruled slaves, like his father did. General Meem was old when he went west, but his time in Seattle was the best. His new brigade fought the heat of summer, the rain and fog and snow of winter, and they delivered, not bullets and bayonets, but news, bills, packages, and messages of love.



Wee Titty
1916
Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, Scotland

The Coroner

Tragedy struck and left the darkest, most haunting kind of shadow. A young lady's body was found, but her name was not. Where did she come from? No one knew. No one recognized her. A sketch of her face was published in the Kirkwall paper, but no one came to claim her. Was a grieving family, stricken with sorrow and terror, searching a distant countryside, praying for her return, kneeling daily in a church, somewhere? No one knew. Had she a mother? A father? A husband? A daughter or son? Surely someone loved her. But the Great War was on. Perhaps she was a refugee. Perhaps her family was trapped beyond the front, behind the lines, in Russia, Poland, Romania. Perhaps they had all been killed by guns or mortars or fire, and she fled, the lone survivor, now equally dead. She was buried in a grave marked with a temporary stone, waiting to be named, retrieved, interred elsewhere. But no one who loved her was ever found.

Material Inspiration for Historic Fiction:

Gravestone Images

Transcribed Inscriptions

Notes About Research & Invention



Transcribed Inscription

In memory of Rebecca Richardson, Daughter of William & Ann Richardson, who died June 5th 1785, aged 50 years.

What heavenly thoughts while dying she
express'd
Undoubted cause __ of eternal rest
With closing eyes and [_____ing?] voice she
said
How [pleasant?] pain and [sank?] among the
dead.
Tho dead she lives safe on the happy shore
Where _____ pain and sin no more.

Also of her sister Ann, died Oct _____ aged __ years.

[2 unreadable lines]

Notes About Research & Invention

Unlike most poetry inscribed on gravestones, I did not find another source for these poetic lines. The last two are adapted from cliché, but the first four are apparently original, having been written by an unidentified author for this stone. Rebecca's sister Ann was likely her caretaker during the fatal illness, which would enable her to witness Rebecca's last words and write the poem, although history does not recognize her as a poet. Erosion has rendered some of the original words indiscernible. They are missing from the transcription but have been replaced in the fiction to complete the poem.

No documents describing the lives of these sisters was found. The details were all invented, based on general history and the local context of Whitby, a small harbor with numerous farms on nearby lands.

The backdrop used in the illustration is a photograph of the ruins of the Whitby Monastery, which is a few hundred yards east of the churchyard where the Richardson sisters were buried. This Monastery was built during the 7th century, and occupied by both monks and nuns.


In
Memory o
Mary the Wife of

Transcribed Inscription

To the memory of Mary, the wife of Thomas Jefferson, who died the 25th of January 1787, aged 22 years.

Having delivered the first tender
Plege of conjugal Feliety [felicity?],
She hovered here awile
Then fled from Earth to Heaven
Ere the to liffes Meridan had atta??
Beloved and lamented.

Notes About Research & Invention

This title is, of course, meant to be a pun. Upon finding the gravestone of a young Englishwoman briefly married to 'Thomas Jefferson' in the 1780s, I laughed. Wild imagination inspired the fiction that romance abroad wedded the America Revolutionary to a young resident of England. I assumed that was impossible. But it was not. Research didn't find anything about a Thomas and Mary Jefferson living at Robin Hood's Bay. It produced no indication that a young woman from there ever married the future president of the United States, but it also showed how such an event could have taken place in secret.

The now famous Thomas Jefferson's wife, Martha, died in 1782. He seemed so depressed after her death, that his peers feared he might be suicidal. Such concerns are rumored to be among the reasons that led to the decision to send him to Paris to take Benjamin Franklin's place as the American consul to Louis XVI's government.

John Adams was the American consul in London in 1786. He lived at Grosvenor Square with his wife, Abigail, and their children. Early that spring he wrote Jefferson a letter telling him to hurry from Paris to London to help with diplomatic matters. Jefferson's initial correspondence indicates he meant to spend three weeks, at most, in London. After that, his correspondence during the trip is most notable for its lack of existence. Clues about how Jefferson spent his six weeks in England include a list of things he bought: numerous books, plus instruments of navigation and astronomy. Sporadic notes in the diary of John Adams indicate that when Jefferson arrived, he and Abigail took him to multiple social events, including parties attended by young women.

Two lines of the inscription on Mary Jefferson's gravestone:

Then fled from Earth to Heaven
Ere the to liffes Meridan had atta??

were included in a history of the nearby town of Whitby, published in 1777. They were reportedly found inscribed on the gravestone of another female, dating from the 1750s, but spelled more readably —

Then fled from Earth to Heaven
Ere the two lives Meridian had attained

The eighteenth century astronomy books mentioned in the story both mention connections between earth and heaven via meridians. The study of cartography, navigation, astronomy, and religion could apparently be viewed as closely linked at that time, and these lines seem to refer to those connections.

The opportunity to achieve self-education was

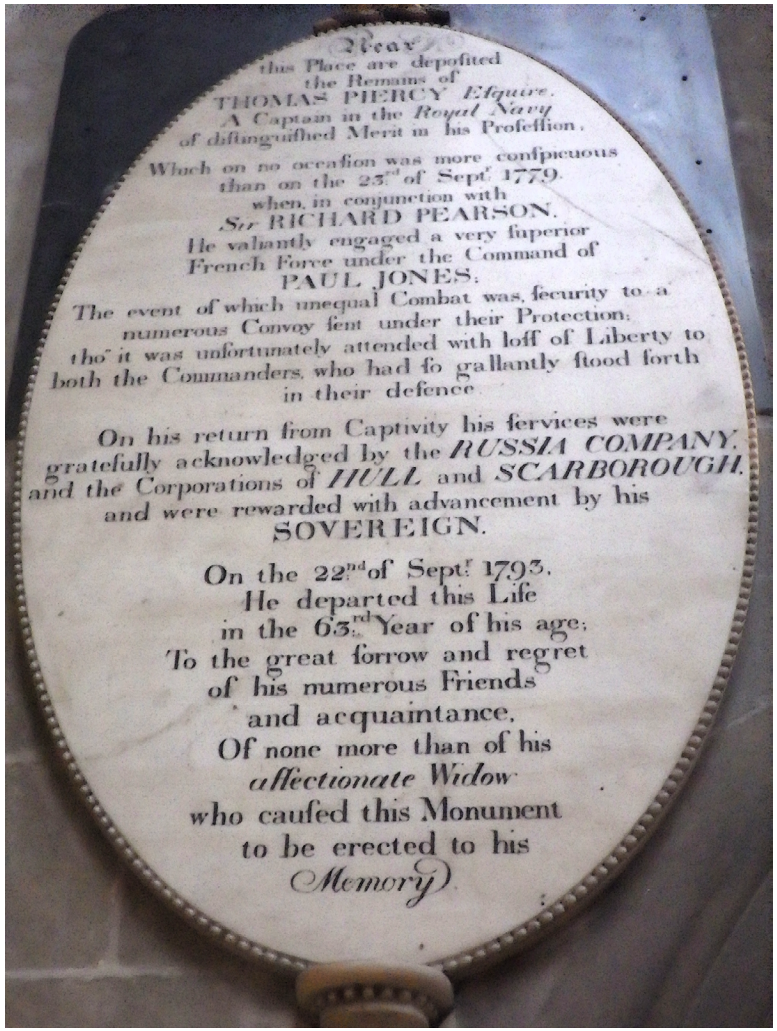
important for women during the 18th century. They were banned from colleges. Advanced literacy and knowledge of science were usually not possible to achieve without access to extensive family libraries. Abigail Adams publicly advocated greater access to education for women, and would surely have urged Mr. Jefferson to support a young wife's interest in astronomy by providing her with relevant books and instruments. If we suppose these lines were included on Mary Jefferson's gravestone because her interests included astronomy, that works beautifully as a theme for connecting her to the revolutionary Thomas Jefferson and for 'explaining' his decisions to purchase so many books and astronomical / navigational instruments during his weeks in London.

Mary's parents are not identified on her gravestone. All those family characters were invented for the fiction. 'Middleton' was mentioned in John Adams' diary as a participant in social events that he and Abigail attended with Thomas Jefferson. Storm was chosen for the maiden name of Mary and Margaret because it is apt for the story and also a surname found on many gravestones in the churchyard where this stone is located.

The cause of Mary Jefferson's death was left off her gravestone, as usual. She died about nine months after Jefferson left London, but her cause of death in the fiction is tetanus, not childbirth, because I wanted her to be adventurous, not just doomed by a faulty uterus, and sudden death caused by tetanus was not rare in those days. Also, now that so many people avoid inocculations, it seems important to remember what tetanus can do.

The backdrop in the illustration is a photograph of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The face of this 'Thomas Jefferson' is not adapted from a portrait of the revolutionary. It is a photograph of some unidentified 19th century gent, which should serve as a reminder that the story is a fiction.

The light was so dim when I found this stone, and the inscription was so difficult to read, that I took several close photographs showing different parts of the inscription and did not include a photograph of the entire stone taken from a greater distance.


Near
this Place are depofited
the Remains of
THOMAS PIERCY Efquire.
A Captain in the Royal Navy
of diftinguifhed Merit in his Profeffion.
Which on no occafion was more confpicuous
than on the 23rd of Sept. 1779.
when, in conjunction with
Sir RICHARD PEARSON.
He valiantly engaged a very fuperior
French Force under the Command of
PAUL JONES;
The event of which unequal Combat was, fecurity to a
numerous Convoy fent under their Protection;
tho' it was unfortunately attended with loff of Liberty to
both the Commanders, who had fo gallantly ftood forth
in their defence.
On his return from Captivity his fervices were
gratefully acknowledged by the RUSSIA COMPANY,
and the Corporations of HULL and SCARBOROUGH,
and were rewarded with advancement by his
SOVEREIGN.
On the 22nd of Sept. 1793,
He departed this Life
in the 63rd Year of his age;
To the great forrow and regret
of his numerous Friends
and acquaintance,
Of none more than of his
affectionate Widow
who caufed this Monument
to be erected to his
Memory.

Transcribed Inscriptions

1

Near this place are deposited the remains of Thomas Piercy, Esquire, a Captain of the Royal Navy of distinguished merit in his profession, which on no occasion was more conspicuous than on the 23rd of September 1779, when, in conjunction with Sir Richard Pearson, he valiantly engaged a very superior French Force under the command of Paul Jones. The event of which unequal combat was security to a numerous convoy sent under their protection, though it was unfortunately attended with loss of Liberty to both the Commanders, who had so gallantly stood forth in their defense.

On his return from Captivity, his services were gratefully acknowledged by the Russia Company, and the corporations of Hull and Scarborough, and were rewarded with advancement by his Sovereign.

On the 22nd of September 1793, he departed this life in the 63rd year of his age; to the great sorrow and regret of his numerous Friends and acquaintance, of none more than his affectionate widow who caused this Monument to be erected to his memory.

2

Near this place are deposited the remains of Susannah Piercy, widow of Thomas Piercy, Esquire, Captain in the Royal Navy; who with a disposition formed for friendship and society, united every other virtue that can adorn a Christian. She died the 18th day of August 1806, aged 74.

Notes About Research & Invention

One of the goals of this project was to discover and write about ways the United States and the United Kingdom were historically connected on the scale of families and individuals. In Britain I kept looking for inscriptions noting the deceased had fought in the 'American Revolution', but none of the stones that I read ever used that phrase. They never said 'Napoleonic Wars,' either. Those names are used for generalizing talk about thousands of events. They do not describe an individual's experience. British gravestone inscriptions from the 18th and 19th centuries are more specific. They usually name a military unit, a ship, a battle location, or a place of death, not a war.

Memorials on the interior walls of churches and cathedrals are usually better preserved than stones placed outside. Some, like this one, provide detailed summaries of historic events as understood by people who knew the deceased. In the case of this inscription, which describes the event American children are told was a major battle of the Revolution, one of the most remarkable details in this inscription is the complete absence of the word 'American.'

These are the men who famously fought John Paul Jones. They did it to save a convoy attacked by the French. What? Weren't they trying to suppress the civil rights and national independence of Americans? No. As far as they knew, this was a fight to save civilians from pirates. They were willing to die to achieve that, and many of them did.

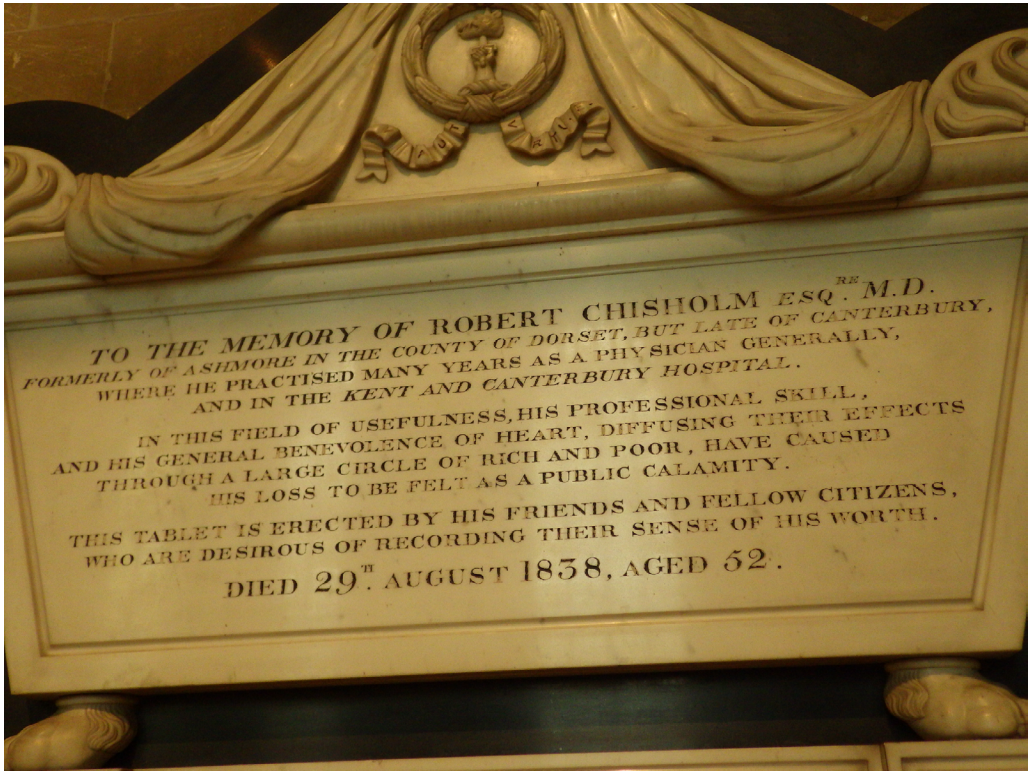
Research discovers abundant relevant documents, including descriptions of the battle written by Captains Pearson, Piercy, and Jones, plus a sequence of letters written by Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Paul Jones that continued for years. Those documents contain many contradictions and surprises. What was

true and accurate? What was believed in error? What was meant to be deceptive — a politically correct statement the author knew was absolutely false? We don't know.

This fiction uses information found in multiple sources. Captain Pearson is the narrator, not Piercy, for several reasons. Pearson was in charge of the British convoy. He made critical decisions that resulted in this battle, signaled to the civilian convoy to seek safety in Scarborogh, and commanded the ship that directly fought Jones. He witnessed the actions Jones took during and after the battle. He surrendered to save the lives of his men, and saw who was evacuated from the ship that sank. I found Pearson's written descriptions of the battle, its aftermath, and the treatment of his men in captivity. I only found a summary of the battle written by Captain Piercy. Also, Pearson shared a Scottish heritage with Jones. Pearson was honored for his actions with knighthood, and eventually retired from active service to be a manager of the Royal Navy Hospital in Greenwich. Piercy's career in the navy continued after the battle at Flamborough Head, but my research found basically nothing about his personality or the rest of his life.

Research indicates Jones never intended to return to Britain because he feared being arrested for murder, but he did end up there by accident in 1787, thanks to a ship's captain who decided to land at Dover, not France. Jones reportedly went to London during the brief time he subsequently spent in England. No document claims Pearson ever saw him there, but I think an episode of sinister slinking through alleys works well in fiction.

The backdrop of the illustration is a photograph taken of Canterbury Cathedral's cloister walkway. The open space within the square of the cloisters was formerly used as a cemetery and might have been the location of Captain Piercy's actual burial. As is the case with most urban churches and cathedrals in Britain, memorial stones remain on the walls but the historic burial plots in the cloisters and nearby yards are no longer visible. They were either flattened and covered with fresh dirt and grass, or excavated and removed.


TO THE MEMORY OF ROBERT CHISHOLM ESQRE. M.D.
FORMERLY OF ASHMORE IN THE COUNTY OF DORSET, BUT LATE OF CANTERBURY,
WHERE HE PRACTISED MANY YEARS AS A PHYSICIAN GENERALLY,
AND IN THE KENT AND CANTERBURY HOSPITAL.
IN THIS FIELD OF USEFULNESS, HIS PROFESSIONAL SKILL,
AND HIS GENERAL BENEVOLENCE OF HEART, DIFFUSING THEIR EFFECTS
THROUGH A LARGE CIRCLE OF RICH AND POOR, HAVE CAUSED
HIS LOSS TO BE FELT AS A PUBLIC CALAMITY.
THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY HIS FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,
WHO ARE DESIROUS OF RECORDING THEIR SENSE OF HIS WORTH.
DIED 29TH. AUGUST 1838, AGED 52.

Transcribed Inscription

To the memory of Robert Chisholm Esquire, MD. Formerly of Ashmore in the County of Dorset, but late of Canterbury, where he practiced many years as a physician generally, and in the Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

In this field of usefulness, his professional skill, and his general benevolence of heart, diffusing their effects through a large circle of rich and poor, have caused his loss to be felt as a public calamity.

This table is erected by his friends and fellow citizens who are desirous of recording their sense of his worth.

Died 29th August 1838, aged 52.

Notes on Research & Invention

Dr. Chisholm completed his medical training at the University of Edinburgh in 1808, long before the germ theory of disease existed. He started work at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital in 1823. Nothing mentioning his cause of death or any marriage was found in the research. He and Dr. Carter published descriptions of their treatments of several patients, plus some data about diseases and survival rates of patients at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, in the LONDON MEDICAL REPOSITORY MONTHLY JOURNAL AND REVIEW, during the mid 1820s. Research did not find any descriptions they made of treating patients with tetanus. The case descriptions in this story merge a few elements of Dr. Chisholm's case descriptions with details from several case descriptions published in British and Irish medical journals during the 1820s that specifically described the symptoms and treatment of tetanus. The treatments described would all be regarded as harmful or poisonous today. Tetanus is caused by a chemical produced by a common kind of bacteria. That chemical interferes with the function of the nerves that control muscular movements and generally leads to death through making it impossible to breathe. Thanks to modern medicine, inoculation that effectively prevents tetanus is widely available. Even with modern treatments, up to 80% of the patients who develop tetanic paralysis still die from it.

The engraved portion of the figure in the illustration is one of John Tenniel's satirical characters from PUNCH magazine. He is holding a bottle labeled 'Soothing Syrup.' The backdrop is a photograph of an historic building in the city of Canterbury, next to the Great Stour River.


SON OF
ABRAHAM &
ELEVERINA &
ELIZABETH JONES
HOLGATE
BORN APR. 8 1843
IN WINCHESTER
VAN BUREN CO. IOWA
FELL ON THE MORNING
OF JAN. 26, 1856
DURING THE ATTACK
ON SEATTLE
BY INDIANS
BRAVE IN LIFE HEROIC
IN DEATH

Transcribed Inscription

Abraham Levering Holgate, son of Cornelius and Mary Levering Holgate, born March 1, 1791, in Roxboro, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. United in marriage to Elizabeth Jones, March 1818 in Pittsburgh PA. Died at the age of 56 in Winchester County, Iowa, November 8 1847.

A true disciple of Jesus, in whom was no guile.

Milton Gilbert Holgate, son of Abraham Levering & Elizabeth Jones Holgate, born April 8 1840 in Winchester, Van Buren County, Iowa. Fell on the morning of January 26 1856, during the attack on Seattle by Indians.

Brave in life, heroic in death.

Deacon Lemuel J. Holgate, born in Trenton Ohio October 19 1834, died October 22, 1892.

Notes About Research & Invention

This stone is square in cross-section and has inscriptions on multiple sides.

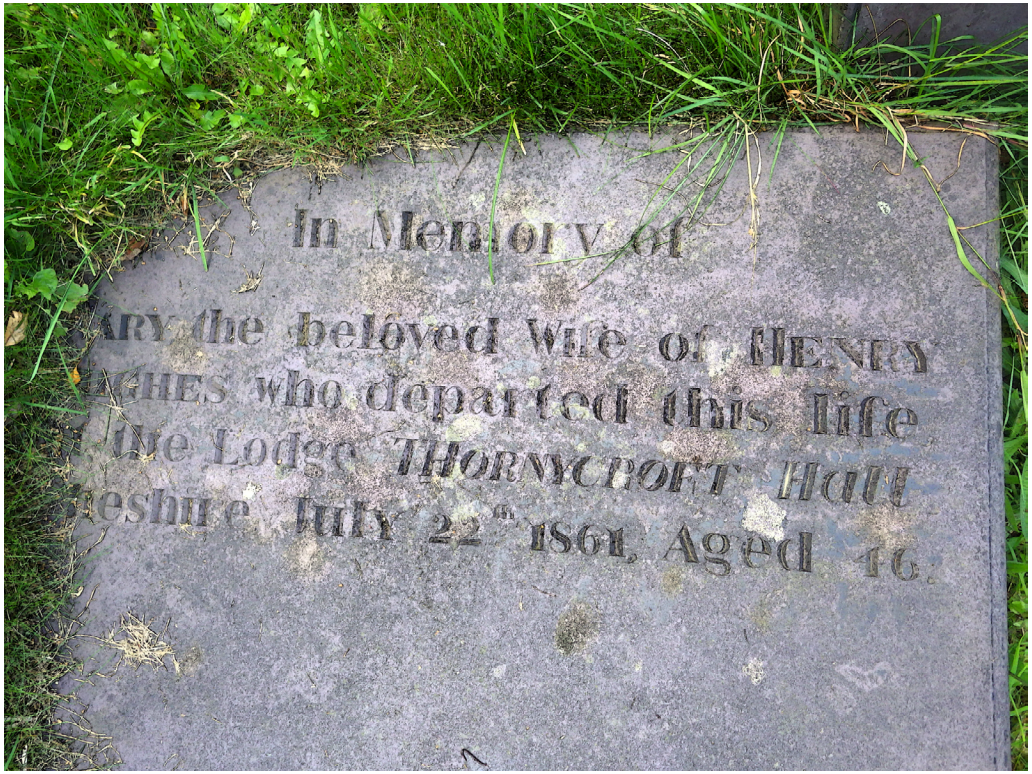
The Holgate family made a series of westward movements. Abraham Holgate and his wife and children and grandchildren were 19th century American 'settlers' who sought better lives for themselves by going West and establishing homesteads in 'new' territories.

Abraham Holgate moved his family from Pennsylvania to Ohio, and then to Iowa, where he died. His sons named on this stone, Milton Gilbert Holgate and Lemuel J. Holgate, traveled west from Iowa on the Oregon Trail with a large group of relatives and friends. That group was inspired to establish homesteads near the Duwamish River, in the area now known as Seattle, by letters of encouragement sent by another of Abraham Holgate's sons: John Cornelius Holgate.

Abraham Holgate's daughter, Abby, the storyteller, married a man named Hanford, and joined the wagon train coming west from Iowa. Her son, Cornelius H. Hanford, grew up in Washington State, became an attorney, and eventually was appointed to be a judge. He wrote an essay including a description of the family's history published in the 1911-1912 in the Annals of Iowa. That essay has some appalling content, but Mr. Hanford's descriptions of his mother, her influence on his uncle Cornelius, and their family dynamics, provided much of the information used here.

It isn't clear how long Cornelius Holgate stayed in the Seattle area after his little brother, Milton, was killed, but he eventually joined a gold rush in Idaho, where he died in a gunfight over mine ownership.

The backdrop of the illustration is a night photograph of a street in Seattle, near the scene of the battle, a place transformed into the center of a major city, not preserved as a cluster of cabins. More information about other aspects of the settlement of Seattle, this battle, and other interactions between nineteenth century settlers and the Duwamish people can be found in multiple sources.


In Memory of
ARY the beloved Wife of HENRY
HES who departed this life
the Lodge THORNYCROFT Hall
eshire July 22nd 1861 Aged 16

Transcribed Inscription

In memory of [Mary?], the beloved wife of Henry [Hughes?], who departed this life at the Lodge THORNYCROFT HALL, [Cheshire?], July 22nd 1861, aged 46.

Notes About Research & Invention

Conwy is a very old small town on the north coast of Wales. The English spelling, Conway, is not locally used. The Welsh spelling does not include 'a' so I use Conwy for this piece.

Hughes is a very common name in Wales. So is Mary. One of Conwy's residents told me the Welsh share so few surnames; research based on those names isn't sufficient for tracing their ancestry. It was therefore no surprise that research failed to find this Mary Hughes or her husband, Henry.

Research did produce abundant information about the families that owned Thornycroft Hall. The Hall is an historic manor on a large estate that is currently used as a retreat for members of the Catholic organization, Opus Dei. John Mytton Thornycroft's father made his career as a minister at a Protestant church near Chester, a town on the English coast, just east of the Welsh border. Thornycroft Hall is in the midlands, east of Chester. John's father added Thornycroft to his own name to inherit the estate of a wealthy friend who had no suitable relatives to leave it to. He sent young John to Oxford to study theology. John received both a bachelor's and a master's degree in theology from Oxford, but apparently never actually served as a minister. He was an entrepreneur, and also added Thornycroft to his name to become eligible to inherit the estate from his father. He did not marry until he was over age 40, which was unusual among wealthy Englishmen at the time.

I found no reason for Mary Hughes to ever visit Thornycroft Hall. It was not a hotel or hospital or spiritual retreat at that time. Conwy seems too distant for anyone to commute from there to work at Thornycroft during the 19th century, although a train route connected Conwy directly to Chester.

One of the issues inherent in writing fiction inspired by inscriptions found on old gravestones is the sectarian alignment of those inscriptions. The sectarian nature of churches, churchyards, and historic cemeteries in Britain supported the censorship of gravestone inscriptions and the destruction of stones that were later deemed blasphemous. Only deceased members of a single sect were interred in most of those places, with few exceptions.

It was never my intention to restrict the stories in this collection to any sectarian convention. I decided that the fictional reason why no reason can now be found for Mary Hughes to die at Thornycroft Hall was that her relationship to John Mytton Thornycroft was her true reason for going there. And the nature of that relationship was a very well kept secret. A romance. True love. Two young people without the option of birth control — denied the right to marry by their families, for sectarian reasons. They felt like Romeo and Juliet, but were not so young and suicidal. So they invented a way to cope, a way to publicly be friends while secretly being lovers that was so effective they continued to be lovers throughout their youth and into

middle age, when Mary died of a sudden accident.

The building in the backdrop of the illustration is Oxford University's Radcliff Camera, which was photographed at dusk. The blank sky in that image was replaced with a blue sky full of birds I photographed at Whitby.



Transcribed Inscription

DANIEL, MY YOUNGEST CHILD,

Who died November 18th, 1835, aged 4 years 7 months.

COMPOSED ON THE DAY OF HIS DEATH.

To him,
How vain, insignificant, little, and dim.
Every thing here must appear
To his soul now expanding in glory!

The children came to school, but, ah! my child —
My youngest child was not amongst the throng;
The dire small-pox his absent face despoil'd,
Rack'd his whole frame, and check'd his prattling tongue.
Each day I look'd around with anxious care;
Some wrought, and some would laugh and talk, and play;
But my once sprightly boy! he was not there,
For on his bed or mother's knee he lay.
Too weak, and full of pain, to play or stand,
Blind — and disfigured with the sad disease;
Yet patient under the afflicting hand —
With fever parch'd — his slumbers gave no ease.
My Dan! whose looks beam'd cheerfulness and joy,
And who so readily and nimbly ran;
Who told his mother he was her best boy,
And often said, "When me get up a man!"
A far more rapid growth, and greater height
Than up to man, my child, thou hadst that day—
When, instantaneous, to the world of light,
Thy soul — a glorious angel — soar'd away.

Notes About Research & Invention

This 'inscription' is part of a poem recorded on paper, not stone. It was included in Robert Richardson's book: THE MUSE'S FLIGHT, AND OTHER SERIOUS POEMS, published in London and Whitby, 1837. This was one of a series of chapbooks written while he was a teacher at Whitby. His writings described his parents' lives, a visit to stay with relatives at the Lake District, and his youthful years spent on a farm near Whitby, where his father worked to construct and maintain hedges, stone fences, and footpaths with stairways and bridges and styles. More research revealed that Robert Richardson spent some time working as a sailor and finished life as a widower, the resident of the Whitby Work House. He died at age 52 in 1862. That information was utilized in the fiction. I suspect the footpaths his father built are still being used, and hope that I walked on stretches of them while hiking from Whitby to Robin Hood's Bay, but there is no way to verify that.

The book of poetry and information about this Robert Richard were discovered during my search for information about a resident of Whitby with the same name who died before this one was born.

As far as I can tell, none of the gravestones I photographed commemorate this Robert Richardson, his parents, his wife, or his children. I was not able to find any transcribed gravestone inscriptions published on the web that seem to refer to them, either. Gravestones were never universally affordable, and many that once existed no longer do, or have been eroded by acid rain to a state of

illegibility. This poet's economic situation very likely made gravestones for his family impossible to acquire.

Mr. Richard's poignant description of his son's death from smallpox, a disease that no longer exists, that no longer sickens or kills anyone, is treated like a graveyard inscription here because it serves a similar commemorative purpose and provides a unique description of life and death as experienced in Whitby during the 19th century.

The backdrop of the illustration is a photograph of clouds, a rainbow, and the sea. It was taken on a beach between Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay that was surely a place well known and loved by Mr. Richardson and his children.



Transcribed Inscription

In Affectionate Remembrance of William Barby Barnard, who was unfortunately drowned in the River Thames, August 20th and was interred in Greenwich Cemetery, September 8th 1864, aged 23 years.

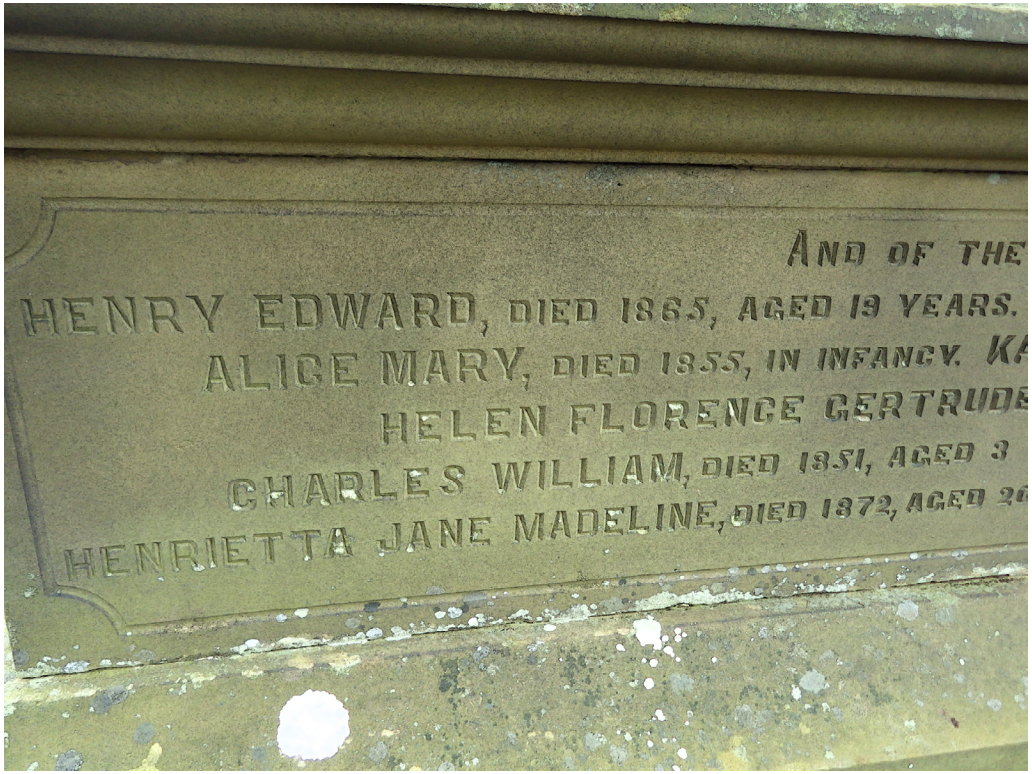
Also Isabel, his wife, who departed this life March 28th 1865, aged 23 years.

Notes About Research & Invention

The search for historic documents about William and Isabel Barnard did not produce anything. The reasons for William to be in Greenwich and to drown there had to be invented. In the mid-19th century, the Royal Navy's academy for officers was in a beautiful facility beside the Thames in Greenwich. When I was there, the River looked very hazardous for swimmers, although perhaps on a hot day in August that water would seem like a refreshing place to take a cooling dip.

The lack of any note of affection or grief in the statement describing Isabel's death seems like a clue that whoever installed this stone felt much more grieved about William's death than Isabel's. It seemed odd that he died in Greenwich and she died in Yorkshire, which the stone implies was home to his parents, but perhaps not hers. I guessed — well, if William's parents installed this gravestone, apparently they never liked his wife and blamed his death on her. Her death followed his so quickly, it seems like they must have been related. Perhaps they were newly wed and she died from complications of pregnancy, which commonly killed young women in the 19th century, but pregnancy was not the only reason young women ever died.

By the mid-century arsenic was still being used as a medication, though it was known to have poisonous qualities, which made it seem like a reasonable means for William's fictionally evil angry mother to take her revenge. The illustration is meant to portray William and Isabel as happy together, in contrast to the harsh opinion of his mother expressed in the text. The backdrop is a photograph of the 17th century 'Queen's House' beside the grounds of the Navy's Academy, which is now the University of Greenwich.


AND OF THE
HENRY EDWARD, DIED 1865, AGED 19 YEARS.
ALICE MARY, DIED 1855, IN INFANCY.
HELEN FLORENCE GERTRUDE
CHARLES WILLIAM, DIED 1851, AGED 3
HENRIETTA JANE MADELINE, DIED 1872, AGED

Transcribed Inscription

Thomas Allen, of King's Lynn, Norfolk, 15 years surgeon in Fylingdales, born October 11th 1814, died August 17th 1869.

And of Lucy Sarah Allen, wife of the above, born November 14th 1819, died March 6th 1895.

And of their children:

Charles William, died 1851, aged 3 years, interred at King's Lynn.

Mary Constance died 1855, in infancy.

Alice Mary, died 1855, in infancy.

Kate Agnes, died 1863, in infancy.

Helen Florence Gertrude, died 1864, aged 3 years.

Henry Edward, died 1865, aged 19 years.

Henrietta Jane Madeline, died 1872, aged 20 years, interred at Brompton, London.

Elizabeth Adelaide, wife of Edward Wright, died 1909, aged 60 years, interred at Brompton Cemetery, London.

Godfrey Woolley Allen, born June 10th 1853, died April 24th 1920.

Lucy Catherine Fischart, born July 6th 1843, died March 30th 1924.

Herbert Reginald Alfred Allen. Born April 3rd 1857, died March 30th 1935.

Thomas Allen. Died January 2nd 1931, aged 86 years.

Edith Mary Emily Allen. Died December 8th 1956, aged 85 years.

Notes About Research & Invention

This gravestone is shaped like a box and has inscriptions on all four vertical surfaces. There are so many gravestones from the 19th century that contain long lists of deceased children, it seemed pointless to photograph them all. This one is exceptional because the youngest 'daughter,' Edith, was born in 1871, two years after the death of her 'father' when her 'mother' was 52. Edith could not be their daughter. I guessed she was a granddaughter, most likely born to an unwed daughter of Lucy's who died soon after the birth. Review of the other inscriptions on the stone showed who the real mother probably was.

Edith was born when her 'sisters' Elizabeth and Henrietta were age 23 and 19. Those two were apparently living in London, where Elizabeth had a husband. Henrietta died the next year, without a husband. If she was Edith's mother, she left an orphan behind. It struck me as a very heroic and loving act for a widow in her '50s to adopt a grandchild during the 1870s. The size and shape of the gravestone makes it clear the Allen family was not impoverished, but raising Edith must have made Lucy's life as a widow a lot more economically challenging than it would otherwise have been.

The backdrop of the illustration is a photograph of an historic building in the Blackfriars neighborhood of London, between St. Paul's Cathedral and the River Thames. It was chosen because the word 'courage' is painted on the building.

Later I saw a BBC documentary about William Shakespeare's secret connection to the Catholic church,

and was surprised that a scene was filmed right here, at this building, with two men standing where I placed the character for this illustration. They said this is where Shakespeare bought the house that served as headquarters for the Catholic underground during the early 17th century. So this backdrop has additional meaning for some people and might be interpreted as a subtle sign that the Allens were secretly Catholics, too. That can work for the fiction, but there is no reason to think it is true.


In Affectionate Remembrance of
EDWARD,
THE BELOVED SON OF
EDWARD AND MARY LOTHIAN,
OF ROBIN HOOD BAY, CAPTN OF THE S.S. LAXHAM,
WHO WAS DROWND THROUGH
COLLISION, WITH HIS BELOVED WIFE
AND CHILD, IN THE BAY OF BISCEY,
JULY 21ST, 1884.
EDWARD LOTHIAN, AGED 32 YEARS.
MARGARET BEDLINGTON LOTHIAN,
AGED 30 YEARS.
EDWARD, THEIR SON AGED 1 YEAR.
WE CANNOT MOURN BESIDE THEIR GRAVES,
NOR MARK THE PLACE THEY LAY,
GOD ONLY KNOWS.

Transcribed Inscription

In affectionate remembrance of Edward the beloved son of Edward and Mary Lothian of Robin Hood bay. Captain of the S.S. Laxham who was drowned through collision; with his beloved wife and child, in the Bay of Biscey, July 21st 1884.

Edward Lothian, aged 32 years.

Margaret Bedlington Lothian, aged 30 years.

Edward, their son, aged 1 year.

We cannot mourn beside their graves,
Nor mark the place they lay.
God only knows.

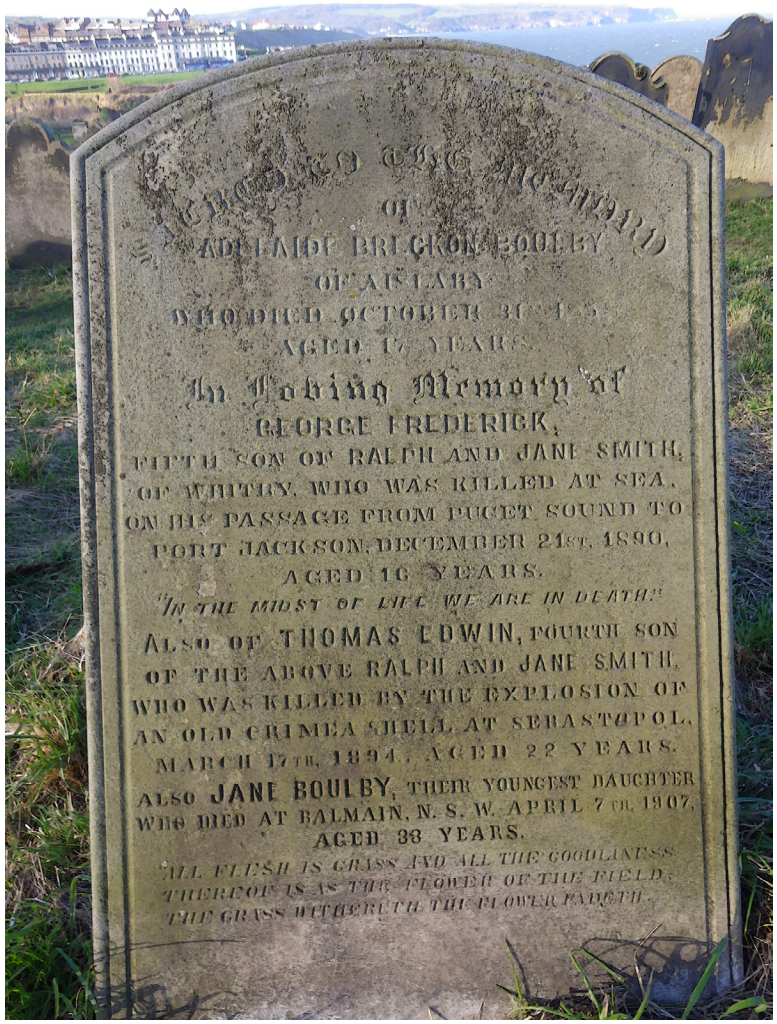
Notes About Research & Invention

I grew up on an island in Puget Sound, where many young men aspired to be fishermen. Several of the boys I grew up with who developed such ambitions were lost at sea as young adults when their boats sank off the coast of Alaska. All maritime communities experience similar losses. The tradition of placing flowers on earthly graves is adjusted for people lost at sea. The ocean is their grave: roses are thrown into the water to be carried away by an outgoing tide, with the expectation that the flowers shall be 'lost' at sea, as the missing person was. This is a widespread tradition. I assumed the rose on this gravestone was a reference to it. I don't know why roses are the usual flowers. Perhaps because the rose is a symbol of Venus - a 'goddess of love' with maritime origins?

Numerous gravestones in maritime communities I visited in the United Kingdom commemorated drownings and people lost at sea. No other cause of death was so commonly noted on 18th and 19th century gravestones. Most of the drowned were men, especially sailors and fishermen.

This gravestone commemorates an entire family killed by shipwreck: an unusual tragedy. The fiction uses information found by research, including the details of Edward Lothian's career advancement, and the mechanics of the wreck. The published statement of a survivor describes how he rushed to help evacuate Margaret and her baby to the other ship, then hurried to launch a lifeboat and searched the sea for others in need of help before realizing both ships were sinking. He was devastated to see his actions had ultimately doomed Margaret, not saved her.

The shore on the illustration backdrop's photograph is just north of Oban, on the West Coast of Scotland. The roses were photographed in Reykjavik, in Iceland, in August 2013. Reykjavik is a maritime community, the capitol of Iceland. Iceland is midway between Europe and North America and was first linked by travel to Britain by Vikings during the Middle Ages. Iceland's roses were apparently introduced by the Vikings.


OF
ADELAIDE BRECKON BOULBY
OF AISLABY
WHO DIED OCTOBER 31ST 1855
AGED 17 YEARS.
In Loving Memory of
GEORGE FREDERICK,
FIFTH SON OF RALPH AND JANE SMITH,
OF WHITBY, WHO WAS KILLED AT SEA,
ON HIS PASSAGE FROM PUGET SOUND TO
PORT JACKSON, DECEMBER 21ST, 1890,
AGED 16 YEARS.
"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE WE ARE IN DEATH."
ALSO OF THOMAS EDWIN, FOURTH SON
OF THE ABOVE RALPH AND JANE SMITH,
WHO WAS KILLED BY THE EXPLOSION OF
AN OLD CRIMEA SHELL AT SEBASTOPOL,
MARCH 17TH, 1894, AGED 22 YEARS.
ALSO JANE BOULBY, THEIR YOUNGEST DAUGHTER
WHO DIED AT BALMAIN, N. S. W. APRIL 7TH, 1907,
AGED 38 YEARS.
"ALL FLESH IS GRASS AND ALL THE GOODLINESS
THEREOF IS AS THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD;
THE GRASS WITHERETH THE FLOWER FADETH."

Transcribed Inscription

Sacred to the memory of Adelaide Breckon Boulby of Aislary, who died October 31st 1858, aged 17 years.

In loving memory of George Frederick, fifth son of Ralph and Jane Smith, of Whitby, who was killed at sea on his passage from Puget Sound to Port Jackson, December 21st, 1890, aged 16 years.

"In the midst of life we are in death."

Also of Thomas Edwin, fourth son of the above Ralph and Jane Smith, who was killed by the explosion of an old Crimea shell at Sebastapol, March 17th 1894, aged 22 years.

Also Jane Boulby, their youngest daughter, who died at Balmain, New South Wales, April 7th 1907, aged 33 years.

All flesh is grass and all the goodliness
Thereof is as the flower of the field.
The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.

Notes About Research & Invention

The inscription's poetic lines are from the Bible. I did not find any mention of an explosion in Sebastopol in 1894 except on this gravestone.

Port Jackson is the inlet where Sydney, Australia, is located.

It looks like Jane was born in the same year as George, as they were apparently both 16 in 1890. She was 16 in April and he was 16 in December. That's only 5 months difference. Either they were twins or Jane was born in January or February and George was born 10 or 11 months later, so his birthday was in November or December. He was listed as age 17 on the list of crew & passengers arriving in Sydney in February 1891 Apparently he lied about his age. And name, he was listed as Frank Smith on the crew list, an in the contemporary newspaper articles that described what happened.

The story uses information about the Barque George Thompson, found in research, but George Smith's reason for leaving Whitby, lying about his age and name, possession of a parrot, and Tahitian girlfriend are invented fictions.

The backdrop of the illustration is a photograph of a walkway along the mouth of the River Esk, which is the harbor of Whitby, where the famous Captain Cook was based as a nautical apprentice during his youth, and the George of this story grew up.


TO
THE MEMORY OF
MARY LINSKILL
NOVELIST
1840 - 1891
WORSHIPPER AT THIS
CHURCH

Transcribed Inscription

To the memory of Mary Linskill, Novelist, 1840-1891.
Worshipper at this church.

Notes About Research & Invention

While transcribing the inscriptions photographed on the interior walls of St. Mary's Church at Whitby, I misspelled Ms Linskill's name as Kinskill. Google never heard of a novelist named Mary Kinskill so I wrote the fiction while believing her novels were read by friends but never published. However, when I discovered the spelling error I checked the web again. According to Wikipedia, Mary Linskill stopped attending school at age 11 but was able to educate herself sufficiently to write several novels published with the pseudonym Stephen Yorke, and a few were eventually published using her own name.

After pondering the significance of that information, I decided not to rewrite the fiction. It was written with the assumption that Ms Linskill must have taught herself to write novels, which was exactly what she did. In the fiction she suffers from 'consumption', tuberculosis, and writes to improve her quality of life. During the 19th century tuberculosis was the most common cause of death in western Europe, but it was not always fatal. In this fiction it limits her ability to be physically active as a teenager, but does not kill her. A woman crippled by consumption would be regarded as unmarriagable, which might add to her motivation for writing novels. Writing was one of the few ways women could financially support themselves in the 19th century. Being unmarried would also explain why this unusual gravestone lists only the novelist, without including the names of a husband or children.

Information found when I spelled her name correctly makes it clear she was not physically impaired. As a teenager she went to work at Newcastle, a large town up the coast from Whitby. She was eventually hired to teach at a grade school, and worked there until her novels began to be published.

The backdrop on the illustration is a photograph taken in the forest along the English side of the River Wye. The Wye forms part of the border between England and South Wales. The landscapes beside the river are steep forested hillsides with some groves of very old trees. I spent a lot of time hiking along the river and through the forests while staying at St. Briavel's Castle, a Norman structure in a village on the hill top rumored to be a place visited by Tolkien that greatly influenced his vision of the land occupied by Hobbits. The Forest of Dean, where JK Rowling set some scenes in the Harry Potter novels, is located nearby. The history of forests in this area being used as settings for popular works of fantasy fiction made it seem like the ideal place to set Ms Linskill's imaginary fiction about a princess and a lion. But I created this story and the illustration with no information about her real books. According to Wikipedia they were all set in Yorkshire, on the other side of England, in the vicinity of Whitby. This is meant to be fiction about fiction, though, not her biography, so I didn't see a need to change it.



Transcribed Inscription

Erected by Margaret Graicie [Craicie?] in memory of her son James Graicie [Craicie?] who was killed by accident 19th June 1882, aged 35 years.

Also her son William, who was killed by accident at Colorado, America, 6th August 1880, aged 29 years.

Also her son John, who died by accident at Edinburgh 1st October 1892, aged 40 years.

And her daughter Ann who died at Galashiels 21st March 1896, aged 52 years.

Notes About Research & Invention

This inscription is unique in failing to mention a husband/father and stating that three sons died of unspecified kinds of accidents, including one in a rugged part of America. How intriguing. Research revealed nothing about the Graicie/Craicie family. Travel and exploration by balloon were popular topics for magazines during the 1880s and 1890s. It was disappointing to fail to find any gravestones mentioning balloons, but the nature of these three accidents had to be invented, so, thanks to fiction, Ms Graicie's children all became balloonists.

This transcription was recorded on paper during a day I spent transcribing stones at the Kirkwall Cathedral churchyard. The camera's battery charger got lost somewhere between Aberdeen and Orkney so most of my time in Orkney was spent sans the benefits of a working camera. When the new charger arrived I only had one day left, and didn't photograph every stone transcribed in the churchyard. It isn't possible to provide an image of the gravestone, so the image provided is a photograph of the Kirkwall Cathedral and its churchyard. The Orkney Islands are in the North Sea near the northeast tip of the Scottish mainland. The islands were a Viking / Nordic territory for over a thousand years, until they were transferred to Scotland as part of the dowry of Princess Margaret from Norway, who married the Scottish King, James II, in the 15th century. During the 17th century the sectarian violence of Cromwell's army included destruction of all cathedrals in Scotland except Glasgow Cathedral and Kirkwall's Cathedral. During my time in Whitby, it was explained that Kirkwall's Cathedral is not considered a Scottish relic because it was built by the Vikings and used by people with Nordic heritage for several centuries before the islands were transferred to Scottish rule.


MARIE HAYDEN
WIFE OF
WILFORD B.
HOGGATT
DIED DEC. 31, 1900
AGED 30 YEARS
BEAUTIFUL
BLESSED
BELOVED

Transcribed Inscription

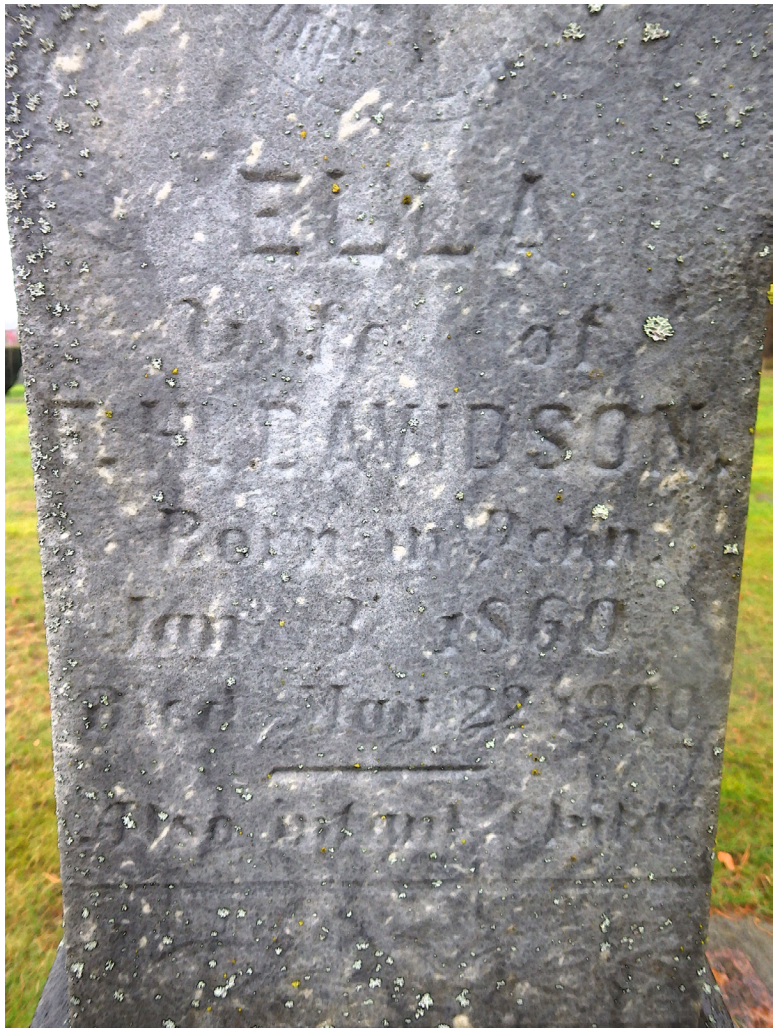
Marie Hayden, wife of Wilford B. Hoggatt, died December 31 1900, aged 30 years.

Beautiful.
Gifted.
Beloved.

Notes About Research & Invention

This story focuses on the husband of the deceased for two reasons. First, because of his poetic choice of those three words describing Marie. Second, because the only bits of history I found about her were mentions of her childless marriage to him, but he left a thick and interesting history.

Multiple sources inform us that Wilford Bacon Hoggatt was born in 1865, in Indiana. He graduated from the Annapolis Naval Academy in 1884, and began his career as a naval officer. He spent several years surveying the coast of Alaska, then moved to Washington DC, where he attended the Columbia University Law School, and married Marie Hayden in 1893. He returned to surveying the coast of Alaska, and started making claims for gold in 1897. He put his brother in charge of the gold mines when he was ordered to return to Washington DC, where he served on the naval strategy board during the Spanish-American war, in 1898. He simultaneously attended the Columbia University School of Mines. He resigned from the Navy in 1899, returned to Alaska and took over as the superintendent of the Julian gold mines. Marie died in Seattle the next year. Mr. Hoggatt was one of the few people who actually made a fortune mining gold in Alaska, but in 1906 he relinquished all his shares of the mines and Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to be the Governor of Alaska. He remarried that year and had three daughters with his second wife. The Hoggatt family eventually moved to New York City, where Governor Hoggatt died in 1938. He was buried in the Bronx.


ELLA
Wife of
Born in Penn
Jan 3 1860
Died May 22 1900

Transcribed Inscription

Ella, wife of F.H. Davidson, born in Pennsylvania January 3 1860, died May 22 1900.

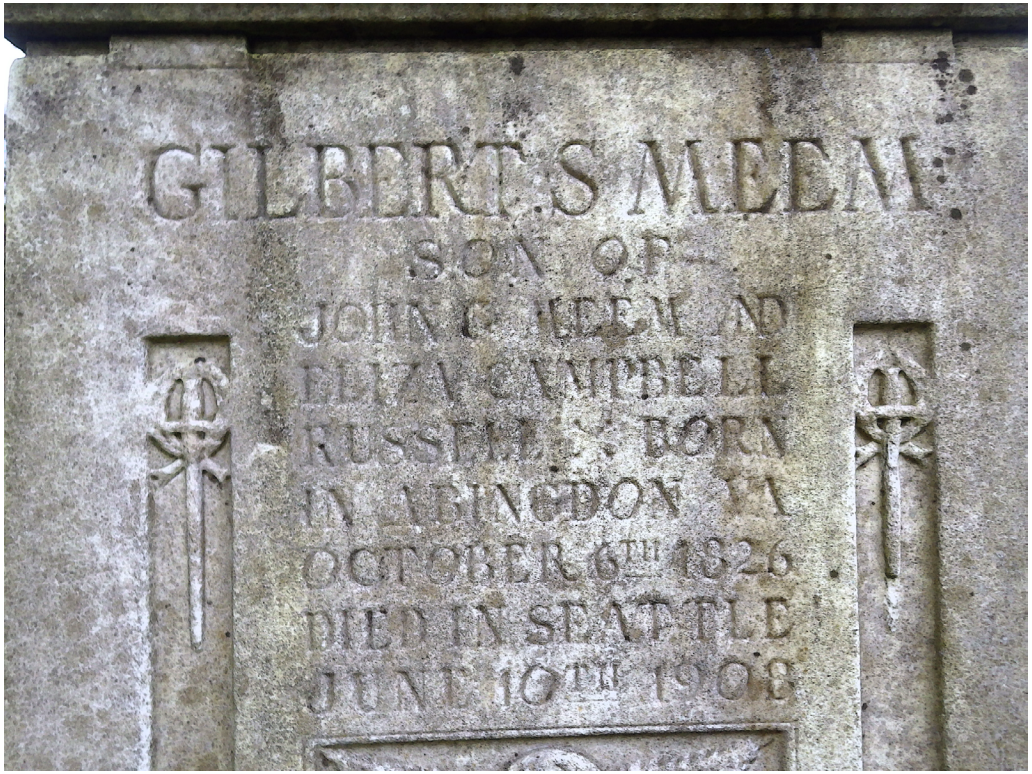
Also Infant Child.

Erected by the Women of [Arooderaft? Crooderaft?]

Notes About Research & Invention

Research did not discover who Ella or F.H. Davidson were. The gravestone documents the husband's failure to name this infant or be responsible for putting up the gravestone of his wife, who apparently died in childbirth. Either he was dysfunctional or he didn't really exist, so I turned 'Ella' into a character who only pretended to be married in an attempt to avoid the social rejection unwed mothers usually suffered.

Google never heard of Arooderaft or Crooderaft. That part of the stone is affected by erosion: the spelling was guessed. The inscription was likely meant to say 'Women of Woodcraft,' which was the name of an organization that provided life insurance and burials for women. But the made-up amusing qualities of the word 'Crooderaft' set the tone of the story.


GILBERT S MEEM
SON OF
RUSSELL BORN
IN ABINGDON VA
OCTOBER 6TH 1826
DIED IN SEATTLE
JUNE 10TH 1908

Transcribed Inscription

Gilbert S. Meem, son of John G. Meem and Eliza Campbell Russell, born in Abingdon Virginia October 6th 1826, died in Seattle June 10th 1908.

Notes About Research & Invention

Unlike many of the gravestones in Seattle's historic Lakeview Cemetery, the inscription on Gilbert S. Meem's stone does not tell us he was a veteran of the Civil War. He was briefly a Confederate General. Numerous historic documents mention him and his family, or events that affected their lives, or events that took place on or near their land. Those documents provide bits of information but I did not find a complete biography. Many of the documents contradict each other. This fiction makes use of some found information and fills the blanks with speculation.

What seems clear: Gilbert S. Meem attended a high school seminary in New Jersey with the intention of following the example of his older brother, Andrew Russell Meem, who graduated from the same seminary, finished a bachelor's degree at Princeton, and then completed medical school at the University of Pennsylvania. But their father purchased a huge farm in Shenandoah County, Virginia, in 1841 and Gilbert dropped out of school to help manage that farm. He was elected to the Virginia legislature in the 1850s, and was made a Brigadier General in the Virginian Militia in 1861, despite his lack of prior military training. He was asked to resign by General Lee in January 1862 and returned to manage the family farm and serve in the local government of Shenandoah County.

Dr. Andrew Russell Meem managed a Confederate hospital in Shenandoah County and provided medical care for soldiers of both armies, until he died of an unidentified disease early in 1865. When the wounded soldiers in Dr. Meem's care were too numerous to be housed at the hospital, some of them received nursing and shelter on civilian properties, including the Meem family's farms at Mt. Airy and Rude Hill that were being managed by Gilbert, the former General.

After the war Gilbert Meem served as a member of the Virginian Senate and continued farming on the estate he eventually inherited from his father, with emphasis on improving breeds of cattle and sheep, and selling animals raised on his land to other farmers. In 1892 he sold the entire estate and moved his family to Seattle. Grover Cleveland appointed him to be Seattle's Postmaster.

A few documents report that General Meem was often drunk during his months in the army, and that shortly before his resignation his brigade retreated from the side of a major battle, making it possible for many Union soldiers to escape. Excessive drinking is still rumored to be the reason General Lee asked Meem to resign shortly after that unauthorized retreat.

In this fiction General Meem suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, and 'self-medicates' using alcohol in an unfortunate attempt to deal with his mental anguish, as so many people do. Descriptions of his actions and personality and the decisions he made before, during, and after the war give me the impression that Gilbert S. Meem kept trying to save people's lives — whoever they

were — which was the main reason General Lee regarded him as such a failure in the military context.

The backdrop of the illustration is the entry to a federal building. the regional post office headquarters built early in the 20th century near Seattle's waterfront. The doorway is decorated with the faces of lions, sheep, cattle, and wolves that are designed to look like equals. I have long wondered why anyone would decorate the entries to a post office with such faces. I now like to think they are meant to honor Postmaster General Meem.


WEE TITTY

Transcribed Inscription

Wee Titty. Born 13th April 1897. Died 9th March 1916.

Notes About Research & Invention

The inscription of a mere nickname on this gravestone is mysterious and singular. Research failed to discover any information. The year of her death looks like 1910 in the image of the gravestone, but the stone has some erosion issues and when I zoom in on the original full scale image, a line that turns the apparent 0 into a 6 becomes visible.

I could easily invent an identity for Wee Titty and a cause of death, but my background in physical anthropology and forensic science makes this look like a case in which she was never identified and whoever was responsible for installing this stone felt haunted by that failure. To me, the creation of a gravestone for an unidentified young woman is more interesting and revealing about the community of Kirkwall than a dramatic 'mystery' based on a completely false scenario and an invented identity would be.

The backdrop of the illustration is the beach at Brighton, on the south coast of England, where the ghostly framework of a 19th century pier built to attract tourists haunts the bay. It is meant to portray a day of Wee Titty's life, as imagined by the coroner.

Poetics

This collection of short historic fiction is basically the beginning of a project intended to ultimately include many additional stories inspired by gravestones found in these places, and many more locations. Consider it an introduction. Intentions for the future of these seventeen stories include additional revisions and the creation of broadsides and artist books.

TIME TRAVEL

My ultimate literary ambition is to write several novels about time travelers. Setting a time-travel novel in Britain makes a few thousand years of history available, if you can effectively describe the landscapes, settlements, and cultures of the people who lived there/then. The research that made this collection of stories and images possible, began with the intention to increase experiential understanding of historic Britain by visiting places containing features created or ruined during the centuries between the Iron Age and Roman Invasion and the end of the Victorian era.

Washington Irving wrote what feels to me like our joint poetics statement 200 years ago, and published it in his 'Sketch Book.' We both felt driven by interests in writing fiction and exploring the world from a young age, and always found those interests more compelling than homebuilding. We both felt the need to expand our understanding of the world and to expand the content of our writing beyond our personal experiences. We both wanted to address the creation of the contemporary by writing about the imaginary, by writing about times and places and people of the past. We both believed the quality of such writing would improve if we visited the region where English language and culture originated because travel abroad seemed like the most productive way to improve our understandings of the landscapes, mythology, conflicts, and history that were described, contained, and created by English literature. Washington Irving was able to stay in Britain for seventeen years, early in the 19th century.

My first visit to Britain was brief, a few weeks in the summer of 2008, a trip made possible by a fellowship at Florida Atlantic University. What I learned on that excursion significantly contributed to my thesis for the master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning at FAU: a plan to locate an Elizabethan Theater Center in an historic neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland.

During the 2008 trip trip to Britain, I went walking around Glasgow, Scotland, and saw a lovely small historic building in desperate need of restoration. It was deteriorating due to lack of maintenance. While I was photographing that building an elderly gentleman crossed the street to talk to me. He was very excited to see that someone had enough interest in the building to photograph it. His family had some connection with it a few generations ago. He wanted to tell me about the building and ask about my interest in it. My accent made it obvious

I was an American. He told me about his brother, who went to America — Chicago — when they were both young, and never returned. They never saw each other again. It wasn't clear whether they were still in communication at all, or whether they had long since lost contact with each other. It was clear that the loss of his brother had long been a source of grief to this man. He missed him with a magnitude of sorrow comparable to what people feel after someone has died.

Partly due to the experiences of 2008, when it was time to plan my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Washington - Bothell I was sure travel in Britain would be an incredibly productive form of research for diverse creative writing projects and no amount of reading would be travel's equivalent, so I planned to return to Britain. Critical research for this Creative Writing and Poetics thesis was done during four months abroad: August to December in 2013.

One of the reasons I chose UW-Bothell's Master of Fine Arts program was the opportunity to do a multi-disciplinary project. In addition to writing I have always done visual art, and aspired to do a thesis including text and imagery. I expected to design a thesis in the form of an artist book including numerous maps, artistically created. Preparation for research abroad included collecting and reading 19th century travel guides, creating pdfs of those books, and attending artist book workshops at the Focus on Book Arts Conference at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, in June, 2013; and at the Oregon College of Arts and Crafts near Portland, in July, 2013.

While attempting to drive from the hostel in Portland to the College of Arts and Crafts to attend the workshop in Historic Book Binding Techniques For Contemporary Book Making taught by Pam Spitzmueller in the last week of July, 2013, which was excitingly going to include multiple ways to incorporate maps in artist books, I got lost, which resulted in making an unplanned tour of a sparsely populated hilly area west of Portland. While zooming along I noticed a large cemetery with a clump of gravestones on a forested hilltop that resembled gravestones I saw in historic cemeteries in Britain, during 2008. They were tall and broad, sometimes with curves and other sculptural features, and placed among tall trees — unlike the flat rectangles designed to be run-over by lawn-mowers that are required by the managers of so many modern treeless cemeteries.

At lunchtime I wanted a nice peaceful place to eat a sandwich and returned to the hilltop cemetery. Several gravestones among the trees dated from the mid-19th century and their inscriptions very specifically named the place in Ireland or Britain where the deceased was born. Those inscriptions seemed like messages to the future, intended to help visitors from abroad identify long lost family members, and to make sure members of future generations living in Oregon would always 'remember' where their ancestors came from. *I* wondered if there were corresponding gravestones in Ireland and Britain with inscriptions listing family members who departed as

emigrants.

One of my goals for this thesis was to research and write about 19th century connections between maritime Northwest North America and maritime Europe, with particular focus on Britain and the former Oregon territory. I grew up in the San Jaun Islands, where the boundary between the United States and Canada was not completely finalized until after the American Civil War. The Northwest was colonized by immigrants with European ancestry in the 19th century. The initial claim to the territory by both the British and Americans resulted in a large proportion of immigrants who created the contemporary culture of this region during that century coming directly from diverse parts of the British 'Empire' — including countries in maritime Europe and Asia, as well as Canada. Gravestone inscriptions that tell of an immigrant's place of birth document direct cultural connections between places.

I photographed a few dozen old gravestones in that cemetery near Portland, and spent much of that week searching for and photographing 19th century gravestones in other historic cemeteries in Portland and across the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington. I decided to look for such inscriptions in graveyards on the upcoming trip to Britain.

I flew away in mid-August via Iceland Air, which made it possible to visit Iceland on the way to and from Britain. I returned in mid-December.

To record visual qualities of places I took a small digital camera, a laptop equipped with Lightroom, and two hard drives for managing the photographs. For the writing, I took an iPad with a keyboard to carry on day trips. I also took small pads of waterproof paper and mechanical pencils for sketching and writing notes outdoors and in places where photography is not allowed.

While abroad conversations with local people, plus the landscapes, cities, and historic sites were my primary sources. These included old buildings, bridges, pathways, and train routes. Museums. Old ships. Hadrian's Wall and other structures and artifacts left by the Romans. An all day symposium about London's Underground train system at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Gardens and parks. Forests. Beaches. Ferries. Cafes. Castles. Dungeons. Medieval places. Villages. Churchyards. Cathedrals. Cemeteries. Monastic ruins. I travelled by train, whenever possible, and also did a lot of walking, up to sixteen miles a day. In Iceland I went to museums and parks, a zoo full of farm animals, and a frozen lake in Reykjavik.

Here in the US, before and after going to Britain, I photographed the gravestones of 19th century migrants found in several historic cemeteries in Portland, Oregon, Vancouver, Washington, and Seattle.

While abroad, I filled one and a half paper notepads with notes, wrote an electronic journal over 160,000 words long, and took over 70,000 photographs. I am now writing a collection of short historic fiction stories informed by everything I saw, heard, and experienced during the trip.

I did find gravestones in Britain that listed family members who emigrated to other continents, including

North America, Asia, Africa, and Australia. In the beginning, I focused on gravestones with inscriptions that indicated the person had traveled during the 19th century. Most of the stones dating from the 19th century or earlier are difficult to read because of erosion, bad lighting, archaic spelling, and vegetation that covers the letters. I photographed them with the intention of doing transcriptions later, and using the transcripts in writing projects. In order to conserve camera battery power and time, I rarely photographed unreadable stones, whether the illegibility was due to language, lighting, or erosion. I photographed most of readable stones found that dated from the 17th and 18th centuries, because of their rarity. In the beginning I rarely photographed 20th century stones, but in the end I decided to include stones dating from the World War I. The consequences of that war did more to change the culture, economy, politics, technology, and scope of travel than the end of the 19th century. The more cemeteries and churchyards, etc., I visited and the more gravestones I read, the more diverse and unexpected kinds of messages I found, and the more diverse kinds of stories I realized I could write, working with them.

Each story in the collection is inspired by the inscription found on a gravestone that conveys a message about a particular person's life and death in the 19th century.

The basic process for creating the stories began with finding a place where historic gravestones still existed and photographing the stones. This was mostly done during travel, so the amount of time available to spend at any churchyard or cemetery was very limited, especially in November and December, when the daylight hours were very short. The number of photographs that could be taken in a day was limited by the power of the camera's batteries. No attempt was made to photograph every gravestone in a churchyard or cemetery. I didn't photograph stones I couldn't read, whether that was due to lighting issues, erosion, language, crazy fonts, or other problems. Most old gravestones in outdoor settings are difficult to read unless they were made of slate, which was, unfortunately, not commonly used, except in North Wales.

The inscriptions on stones photographed in several single locations were transcribed to create long lists on easily read computer documents. Those lists were used for research. The internet was checked for information about the identity and specific circumstances of each person's life and death, and for sources of the poetry. Such searches don't always produce anything. Decisions to write stories for this collection inspired by particular stones were only made after completing that stage of research. Additional research about the general context of time and place and historic events was done for several of the stories. No doubt it would be possible to find additional information about these people in church archives and other local collections of historic documents, but such research was not feasible for this project. Nor was it necessary.

These stories are not intended to be biographies. They are fiction. Historic fiction always combines

information found by research with invented details. Among the stories in this thesis the ratio of 'facts' to 'invented details' varies, depending in part on how thick a person's discovered history was.

The illustrations were created using my photographs of contemporary places with historic qualities as backdrops. Taking photographs with the intention of using them for illustration backdrops was a high priority everywhere I went. Illustrations in this thesis are all populated by characters created by collaging antique photographic portraits with engravings found in 19th century books and periodicals. The illustrations don't simply show what the stories describe. They are meant to supplement and sometimes contradict the fiction. The photographs used to create characters' faces were acquired from sellers on eBay. Their histories are lost. Their family relationships are unknown. In a fictional way, being used to create these images transforms these forgotten people to actors and actresses. This thesis uses fiction to explore/rewrite the past by giving these individuals, and those described on the gravestones, new identities, new lives.

THE END