

LLED 445
Assignment 2
Emily Montgomery

Poems

History Lesson
By Jeannette Armstrong

Out of the belly of Christopher's ship
a mob bursts
Running in all directions
Pulling furs off animals
Shooting buffalo
Shooting each other
left and right

Father mean well
waves his makeshift wand
forgives saucer-eyed Indians

Red coated knights
gallop across the prairie
to get their men
and to build a new world

Pioneers and traders
bring gifts
Smallpox, Seagrams
and rice krispies

Civilization has reached
the promised land

Between the snap crackle pop
of smoke stacks
and multicoloured rivers
swelling with flower powered zee
are farmers sowing skulls and bones
and miners
pulling from gaping holes
green paper faces
of a smiling English lady

The colossi
in which they trust
while burying
breathing forests and fields
beneath concrete and steel
stand shaking fists
waiting to mutilate

whole civilizations
ten generations at a blow

Somewhere among the remains
of skinless animals
is the termination
to a long journey
and unholy search
for the power
glimpsed in a garden
forever closed
forever lost

Washing-Day
By Anna Laetitia Barbauld

The Muses are turned gossips; they have lost
The buskined step, and clear high-sounding phrase,
Language of gods. Come, then, domestic Muse,
In slip-shod measure loosely prattling on,
Of farm or orchard, pleasant curds and cream,
Or droning flies, or shoes lost in the mire
By little whimpering boy, with rueful face —
Come, Muse, and sing the dreaded washing day.
Ye who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,
With bowed soul, full well ye ken the day
Which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on
Too soon; for to that day nor peace belongs,
Nor comfort; ere the first grey streak of dawn,
The red-armed washers come and chase repose.
Nor pleasant smile, nor quaint device of mirth,
Ere visited that day; the very cat,
From the wet kitchen scared, and reeking hearth,
Visits the parlour, an unwonted guest.
The silent breakfast meal is soon despatched,
Uninterrupted, save by anxious looks
Cast at the louring, if sky should lour.
From that last evil, oh preserve us, heavens!
For should the skies pour down, adieu to all
Remains of quiet; then expect to hear
Of sad disasters — dirt and gravel stains
Hard to efface, and loaded lines at once
Snapped short, and linen-horse by dog thrown down,
And all the petty miseries of life.
Saints have been calm while stretched upon the rack,
And Montezuma smiled on burning coals;
But never yet did housewife notable
Greet with a smile a rainy washing day.
But grant the welkin fair, require not thou
Who callest thyself, perchance, the master there,
Or study swept, or nicely dusted coat,

Or usual 'tendence; ask not, indiscreet,
Thy stockings mended, though the yawning rents
Gape wide as Erebus; nor hope to find
Some snug recess impervious. Shouldst thou try
The 'customed garden walks, thine eye shall rue
The budding fragrance of thy tender shrubs,
Myrtle or rose, all crushed beneath the weight
Of coarse-checked apron, with impatient hand
Twitched off when showers impend; or crossing lines
Shall mar thy musings, as the wet cold sheet
Flaps in thy face abrupt. Woe to the friend
Whose evil stars have urged him forth to claim
On such a day the hospitable rites;
Looks blank at best, and stinted courtesy
Shall he receive; vainly he feeds his hopes
With dinner of roast chicken, savoury pie,
Or tart or pudding; pudding he nor tart
That day shall eat; nor, though the husband try —
Mending what can't be helped — to kindle mirth
From cheer deficient, shall his consort's brow
Clear up propitious; the unlucky guest
In silence dines, and early slinks away.
I well remember, when a child, the awe
This day struck into me; for then the maids,
I scarce knew why, looked cross, and drove me from them;
Nor soft caress could I obtain, nor hope
Usual indulgencies; jelly or creams,
Relic of costly suppers, and set by
For me their petted one; or buttered toast,
When butter was forbid; or thrilling tale
Of ghost, or witch, or murder. So I went
And sheltered me beside the parlour fire;
There my dear grandmother, eldest of forms,
Tended the little ones, and watched from harm;
Anxiously fond, though oft her spectacles
With elfin cunning hid, and oft the pins
Drawn from her ravelled stocking, might have soured
One less indulgent.
At intervals my mother's voice was heard,
Urging dispatch; briskly the work went on,
All hands employed to wash, to rinse, to wring,
Or fold, and starch, and clap, and iron, and plait.
Then would I sit me down, and ponder much
Why washings were; sometimes through hollow hole
Of pipe amused we blew, and sent aloft
The floating bubbles; little dreaming then
To see, Montgolfier, thy silken ball
Ride buoyant through the clouds, so near approach
The sports of children and the toils of men.
Earth, air, and sky, and ocean hath its bubbles,
And verse is one of them — this most of all.

Roméo kiffe Juliette
By Grand Corps Malade

Roméo habite au rez-de-chaussée du bâtiment trois
Juliette dans l'immeuble d'en face au dernier étage
Ils ont 16 ans tous les deux et chaque jour quand ils se voient
Grandit dans leur regard une envie de partage
C'est au premier rendez-vous qu'ils franchissent le pas
Sous un triste ciel d'automne où il pleut sur leurs corps
Ils s'embrassent comme des fous sans peur du vent et du froid
Car l'amour a ses saisons que la raison ignore

Roméo kiffe Juliette et Juliette kiffe Roméo
Et si le ciel n'est pas clément tant pis pour la météo
Un amour dans l'orage, celui des dieux, celui des hommes
Un amour, du courage et deux enfants hors des normes

Juliette et Roméo se voient souvent en cachette
Ce n'est pas qu'autour d'eux les gens pourraient se moquer
C'est que le père de Juliette a une kipka sur la tête
Et celui de Roméo va tous les jours à la mosquée
Alors ils mentent à leurs familles, ils s'organisent comme des pros
S'il n'y a pas de lieux pour leur amour, ils se fabriquent un décor

Ils s'aiment au cinéma, chez des amis, dans le métro
Car l'amour a ses maisons que les darons ignorent

Roméo kiffe Juliette et Juliette kiffe Roméo
Et si le ciel n'est pas clément tant pis pour la météo
Un amour dans l'orage, celui des dieux, celui des hommes
Un amour, du courage et deux enfants hors des normes

Le père de Roméo est vénèr, il a des soupçons
La famille de Juliette est juive, tu ne dois pas t'approcher d'elle
Mais Roméo argumente et résiste au coup de pression
On s'en fout papa qu'elle soit juive, regarde comme elle est belle
Alors l'amour reste clandé dès que son père tourne le dos
Il lui fait vivre la grande vie avec les moyens du bord
Pour elle c'est sandwich au grec et cheese au McDo
Car l'amour a ses liaisons que les biftons ignorent

Roméo kiffe Juliette et Juliette kiffe Roméo
Et si le ciel n'est pas clément tant pis pour la météo
Un amour dans l'orage, celui des dieux, celui des hommes
Un amour, du courage et deux enfants hors des normes

Mais les choses se compliquent quand le père de Juliette
Tombe sur des messages qu'il n'aurait pas dû lire
Un texto sur l'i-phone et un chat Internet

La sanction est tombée, elle ne peut plus sortir
Roméo galère dans le hall du bâtiment trois
Malgré son pote Mercutio, sa joie s'évapore
Sa princesse est tout près mais retenue sous son toit
Car l'amour a ses prisons que la raison déshonore
Mais Juliette et Roméo changent l'histoire et se tirent
A croire qu'ils s'aiment plus à la vie qu'à la mort
Pas de fiole de cyanure, n'en déplaise à Shakespeare
Car l'amour a ses horizons que les poisons ignorent

Roméo kiffe Juliette et Juliette kiffe Roméo
Et si le ciel n'est pas clément tant pis pour la météo
Un amour dans l'orage, celui des dieux, celui des hommes
Un amour, du courage et deux enfants hors des normes

Roméo kiffe Juliette et Juliette kiffe Roméo
Et si le ciel n'est pas clément tant pis pour la météo
Un amour dans un orage réactionnaire et insultant
Un amour et deux enfants en avance sur leur temps.

Detailed analysis of History Lesson By Jeannette Armstrong

I have reminded my students a hundred times to read the full outline before beginning the assignment. The reason for that being you have an idea of what is expected and what will be covered before you begin. I did not do that. That is why I wrote my analysis on a poem that is the suggested read for August 3rd, Jeannette Armstrong's History Lesson. It is always good to begin a lesson with a lesson you learned yourself, the kids love that.

I will begin by looking at the formal properties of the poem. The History Lesson is 47 lines long, written in free verse, with no consistent rhyme or metre. The structure of the poem is irregular, each stanza having a different number of lines. The tone of the History Lesson is fatalistic from a human and environmental perspective. The title of the poem is echoed in the focus and progression of each group of verses.

In addition, I will analyse certain features of the poem verse by verse. The first group of lines lays out contact between indigenous people and Europeans. It is more so the first observations of indigenous people as they stand apart, initially, from the destruction. The language is violent, frantic, frenetic. There is repetition, "shooting buffalo shooting each other"(5-6), indicating no difference between one and the other. Justine Gieni suggests calling the

initiator Christopher rather than Columbus strips him of some authority in the situation. I believe this is true, but also it takes away the signifier that lets the reader know it is Columbus the great explorer. He becomes more of an everyman. Columbus did not, in fact, come to North America, to Canada. But his exploration opened the door for everyone that came after. So, in a sense it does not matter who he was. The reader does not need to know his last name.

The voicing in the second verse changes, becoming simplistic like a new English speaker. This is significant because this section is the next step in reciting a history. After first contact come the missionaries. And like learning a new language, the language of organized religion was unfamiliar and seemed ineffective, “[waving] his makeshift wand” (9). Jeannette implies the intentions were good but not genuine, somewhat misguided (what had the “Indians” done at his point in the poem requiring forgiveness from a fellow man).

The next step in history is establishing order. I understood the “red coated knights” (11) to be a reference to the North West Mounted Police. It is possible that in calling them knights with the desire to “build a new world” (14) Jeannette refers to the crusades, the disaster that was for the invaded countries, and the refusal to recognize there was already a world there in the first place.

The following verse is the beginning of economy in this new world. Phillip Allingham noted the irony of European gifts being smallpox and Seagrams. There is also harsh realities, disease and addiction, juxtaposed with the innocence of gifts and rice krispies.

The “promised land” of line 20 is an allusion to the Bible. The Israelites wandered in the desert for years and were finally given the promised land by God. It is implied that this new civilization, these new people are also God’s chosen people and they are being given the land by divine right.

Lines 21 – 29 are a phase of industrialization. The seemingly harmless onomatopoeia in “snap, crackle, pop” (21), refers to the rice krispies but also the changes in the landscape. There is an intensification in these lines with pollution (7), unending loss of life (25), and disillusionment (27-29). Green paper itself has no value and if you don’t serve the system it supports it doesn’t matter whose face is on it.

The second to last verse marks a point in this history where the invading forces are poised to spread outwards and begin conquering something new. It contains another allusion to the Bible but twists it, saying the invaders trust static inanimate things (30-31). To kill is to have an ending. “Mutilate” (36) is a strong word and Jeannette uses it purposefully to show the lasting effects on the people and the land.

The final verse is the reflective period of the history. Again, Jeannette references the Bible and the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were forced to leave because they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I think Jeannette is saying the unholy search for the power to decide good from evil, that power wielded by the invaders of North America is what closed off the land, the second Eden.

Resources

Jeannette Armstrong's TEDx "Indigenization" – for further discussion on sustainability, is it enough?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLOfXsFlb18&index=2&list=PLsAeK7VJlymfiOY26c39M4kyjSdPcGIUA>

Joy Kogawa's poem "Invasion – for comparison

<http://www.joykogawa.ca/invasion.html>

Works Cited

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Findlay et al. 1st ed, Harcourt Canada Ltd., 2001, 248-249.

Allingham, Phillip V. "A Post-Colonial Poem in the Classroom." Lakehead University.

[http://flash.lakeheadu.ca/~pallingh/lesson/history%20lesson%20\(poem\).htm](http://flash.lakeheadu.ca/~pallingh/lesson/history%20lesson%20(poem).htm). Accessed 2

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Gieni, Justine. "Jeannette Armstrong's poem 'History Lesson.'"

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