

Typos

by BRENDA MILLER • January 14, 2017

8 Comments

typos“Maybe we’ll go wind tasting”

Perhaps, but only if there’s time. We’ll sample many varietals: breeze, whisper, gale. Winds assume the flavor of the land in which they originate—a terroir—and vary by how long they’ve aged. Cup them first in your palms. Take your time (though I know your time is fleeting). Smell the nuances: a hint of lavender, a soupçon of apple, a tinge of salt. Try a Chinook first, with its glacial overtones. Or perhaps a Santa Ana will be more to your liking, with its dry, hot finish? A Sirocco has a playful hint of spice: is it cardamom? saffron? coriander? A Mistral could be the winner. Blind yourself and take a sip: first through the nose, then the lips. Let the Mistral play along the tongue. Think of France, that time you walked alone in a village at sunrise, your heart breaking in silence. The ancient buildings looked on; cobblestones swayed beneath your feet. Can you remember the taste of dawn? You could never describe it: the way this wind takes you away.

“She looks deep in though”

Yes, she is. Deep in the unreal tense. Or in the alternate real, where all things are possible. Perhaps she never had the miscarriages. Perhaps she was well enough to marry that boyfriend. Perhaps she didn’t spend her last two years of college taking care of a drunk man. In the land of though, the future is built of flimsy wood, like a stage set—easily dismantled and reassembled. She studied theater in college, learned all the key skills: acting, playwriting, stage management. She built a miniature set for an Edward Albee play, “A Delicate Balance.” She used dollhouse furniture—tiny chairs and couches, impossibly small wineglasses and teacups—to create a space where a family teeters on the edge of chaos. She played minor roles in classic dramas—“The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie,” say, or “Awake and Sing.” She learned to wait in the wings for her cue, costumed, her face silky with powder. She became characters thought up by someone else, embodiments of another’s imagination.

“This fills me with hop”

You know the feeling. It came over you all the time as a child: the overwhelming need to jump, to stand on one leg and skip, the ground rising to propel you forward. You played hopscotch

every day, drawing the court with your blue chalk, hopping as quick as you could through the squares, collecting your prize. Sometimes you hopped down the hall to your bedroom, or hopped along the curb to school. Mere walking was never enough—your body needed to be off balance, then balanced, then off again. Your body could never hold with two feet on the ground. But eventually gravity seized you, and the ground became more solid, your blood settled in its veins. But you can imagine it still—the uplift, a sudden urge to fly.

“Do you want to go to the god park?”

Oh yes. Especially the off-leash area, where the gods run free. My god and I will enter through the double gate; he’s always a little wary at first, slinking behind my knees, but gets up his courage soon enough. I’ll unclip his leash and urge him go on boy, play! There’s a separate area for the small gods, though often they look wistfully through the chain link at the bigger gods who galumph and wrestle across the grass. Always, there’s one god who wants to steal the show, grabbing every ball and stick, running with his head held high, baiting anyone to chase him. Always there’s one owner who refuses to clean up after her god, willfully turning a blind eye. Sometimes it’s all too much for us, my god and I. We sit quietly on a bench and watch. I feed him small treats and murmur good god under my breath. We leave the way we came, walk the trail around the lake, tethered happily to one another. Who’s a good god? You are! My god stops to sniff the air, the ground, a tree—always on the scent of some invisible thing.

Brenda Miller is the author of five essay collections, most recently *An Earlier Life*. She also co-authored *Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining and Publishing Creative Nonfiction* and *The Pen and The Bell: Mindful Writing in a Busy World*. Her work has received six Pushcart Prizes. She is a Professor of English at Western Washington University, and associate faculty at the Rainier Writing Workshop.

Artwork by Allison Dalton

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