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A Perfect Meal

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A Perfect Meal

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A Perfect Meal

I am a huge fan of travel writing. Travel and food. Oh, there is some great writing about travel and food to be had. I just finished a wonderful book by Anthony Bourdain about the gastronomic odyssey he undertook for one of his TV series, and let me tell you, that cook could write. Food I would never in a million years allow on my plate he made sound somehow exotic and delicious. Jim Harrison had the same qualities in his essays on food, but with his work I was always trying to fish out the finer details from his preparations, tricks that I could try in my own kitchen. I am very much looking forward to reading *One More Croissant for the Road* by Felicity Cloake, which promises a greedy gourmand's take on cycling the French countryside.

Anyway, writing editorials for scholarly journals is a pretty tedious affair, comparatively speaking.

I like how my partner-in-crime, Chris, for years would refer to the founding of *CIL* as, "Stew proposed, and I said yes." What he never says in that is that while this journal started out as our shared brainchild (with my wife Molly as our technical expert who held our first website together with glue and rubber bands), Chris very much became the full-fledged editor-in-chief of the operation while I quietly plugged away at layouts and business plans and the like. I did not mind shooting my mouth off in editorial decision sessions, but the larger burden of being an editor was not something I really sought out or ever felt too comfortable with.

Still, it was a hoot. We would have planning sessions over plates of ravioli and cold beers at one of the little Italian restaurants near the University at Buffalo main campus. When we needed to do edits and then layouts, we would huddle in one of our offices, one of us hunched over the keyboard while the other paced in the background. We would present about *CIL* at talks around Western New York or at WILU or LOEX. One time, at LOEX, we had a devil's time finding any dinner and ended up eating half a peach pie with a six-pack of brews back in the hotel room. And when *CIL* was honored by the ACRL Instruction Section in Chicago, we had some of the best pizza and coldest beer I think I have ever tasted.

Bourdain (2010) pointed out, "The whole concept of the 'perfect meal' is ludicrous. ... It's a fleeting thing" (p. 272). But I have had my share of perfect meals over my lifetime, and whether it is at a high-dollar restaurant with a vendor in Indianapolis or whipping together

a casual dinner with friends from groceries procured at Baltimore's Cross Street Market, a lot of those meals have been with my good friend Chris.

When my career brought me back to Oklahoma and away from New York, Chris and I had to manage the journal for years by email and over the phone, and it got a lot harder to do well. But Bob Schroeder came on board and lightened both the load and our mood, and he brought so many great ideas with him. Then April Schweikhard joined us and the journal improved immensely—she is a better editor than me by far and has ushered through several of the very best articles we have published in recent years.

I am hard pressed to think of many professional accomplishments of which I am prouder than this journal and the team behind it. Fifteen volumes so far, and *CIL* continues to grow. But my own interests have changed over the last 16 years. I do not really teach many IL sessions anymore, and my own scholarly focus has shifted dramatically. I teach more classes and workshops about comic books than anything else these days. In the coming years, I am more likely to be found at the Popular Culture Association meeting than any event with the word “library” in it.

And because of these changes, I really feel like it is a bit past my time to step back from *CIL*. Lori DuBois knocks out better copyedits and layouts than I ever did or could. I am eager to see what Andrea Baer does with the Perspectives section—she has a keen “ear” and knows how to get the best voice out of an author. She, Carolyn Gamtso, and Merinda McLure will continue to produce stellar Innovative Practices. Allison Hosier and Jacquelyn Williams will be top-flight editors-in-chief.

I love it when all these things work out for the best, and so I am stepping down from my editorial position. I will quietly keep plugging away at the business end of the journal, managing our meager treasury, and taking on the occasional special project. Mostly, I do not want to drop off completely because I know there are many perfect meals in our future, more beers to share with my good buddy Chris, and I do not want to miss out on any of *CIL*'s journey.

It will all make a helluva travelogue someday.

References

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