

Simmers' unanswered questions reveal our relationship to the land: "If you don't bike or ski or climb / why live here?" The final poem has residents of her tourist town asking one another, "Do you rent or do you own?"—as if one could possess the land when "we're just layers of geology." "The land is not ours. It's just there. It's just data."

There is little separation between past and present in *If, When*: the effects of the long-ago mining and logging linger. Likewise, the human and non-human swirl together in Simmers' imagery as "icebergs calve and slide ribs." "Elderberries sprout breast buds," demonstrating growth is not the same as health.

The reappearing bears that should be frightening are gentle and unassuming in contrast to the thoughtless violence of humanity. "Icy Hole Death" is a treacherous bike trail, but in the poem "Lost & Found," it is the daredevils endangering the mountain ecosystem, not the other way around. Each glimpse of the ursine Groundskeepers moves the reader closer until, in dream, we enter the creature's mouth to become its muscle.

Simmers offers us, like trapped miners, "a sliver of light through the rubble." Like a childhood trophy's inscription weathering away outside in the log sort, the effects of humanity on the land can be eroded.

Her vivid "Aubade" captures the sensations of sleeping late on a cold autumn morning: amid the "whine and thud / of the garbage truck" "roll into each other like fall's / windspun leaves ... wear prolegs till the sun." In *If, When* a rest deeper than a lovers' morning in bed is in view; the hope for the earth's renewal is "a battery to charge."

"Stay still," Simmers and her ancestors tell us. Be "chamoised by mountain air boughs, / scrubbed clean by bottlebrush." The most productive way to care for the earth is to do nothing; breathe it in.

Annie Wesko

a Review of

You Look Good For Your Age

An Anthology

Rona Altrows, Editor

University of Alberta Press (2021)

ISBN: 978-1-77212-532-0

\$26.99



This is a brilliant collection of women's writing about aging, some of which shows reluctant acceptance, some of which shows reinvention of oneself. Some stories are sad and debilitating. I wish to illustrate just a few to whet the readers' appetites. My own story would show a 79-year old woman setting out on a new journey of love and enthusiasm for the last best years—not unlike the words of Joan Crate's poem, *One More Minute*, "Just give us a few more fucking minutes" (190).

"I'M AWESTRUCK by the woman who used to occupy my body" is how Julie Sedivy begins her 10 page essay titled "Telescoping." She writes about her earlier energetic, hectic schedule involving mothering, teaching, meetings, making dinner, reading bedtime stories to her children, writing in evenings, and muses,

Where was the fuel for all this activity? When I look back in time, I see a woman ravenous for expansion. The world was large and she wanted to pour herself into as much of its space as possible, to absorb as much of it into herself as she could. (201)

Joy Kogawa writes, "Forgiveness is the task I feel for this final leg of the journey. For me, its eternity's path" (30).

Maureen Bush's nonfiction piece, "Who Counts the Years?" shows a woman who embraces life and changes. Her secret:

I meditate Meditators let go of society's assumptions and pressures, beliefs and values about aging. Instead we rest in silence, in vastness. Our faces light up, eyes dancing, warmth beaming out. And no one counts the years. (26-27)

Cecelia Frey's "The Roxy Project" is a brilliant magic realism piece of fiction that astounds the reader, and even at its conclusion, one is still not sure what had transpired, so skillfully Frey renders her story about fighting against aging until finally embracing it.

Sharon Butala's nonfiction story, "The Fixable," is a thoughtful, honest offering of how she views aging, concluding with

If you're lucky, as I am, this is how you get old: incrementally, your body wearing out bit by tiny bit, small wound by small wound, your soul wearing away with it all, thinning, loosening from its anchors, eternity coming closer every day. (12)

In her fictional piece Debbie Bateman explores extramarital sex and its thrills and complications. She recalls a poignant scene when husband confesses his transgression.

Joann McCaig writes of "the rights and freedoms of cronehood" (123). Her concluding words, "Be joyful. You are alive. You are still alive" (125).

"Lookin' Back" by Lorri Neilsen Glenn relates how being young in its perfection is gawked at; yet "[d]ecades on, she notices she is rarely noticed ... " (273).

The last verse of Moni Brar's evocative poem "Kissing Kismet Goodbye" reads,

An old crone,
Barren, with crows feet
Where birds used to alight
And dance on my face
In the corners of my eyes,
Before Miss was replaced with Ma'am (272)

Shelley McAneeley

a Review of

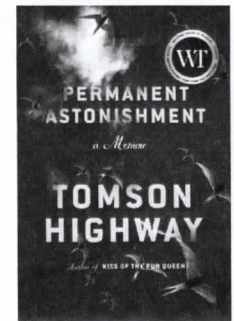
Permanent Astonishment: a Memoir

Tomson Highway

Penguin Random House Canada (2021)

ISBN: 0385696205

\$32.95



Perhaps the words, "permanent astonishment," are the best words to describe Tomson Highway because what most people perceive as obstacles, Highway sees as joyful opportunities. She remains a child in the state of perfect wonder even as he grows older.

Highway, a true polyglot, starts his book with a look at the tangled tongues of Dene, Inuit, Cree and later, English, all blended into a strange linguistic ménage in the tiny isolated village of Brochet. He provides comic insights into the misuse of words that came to name people, things, places and other oddities. Her lighthearted approach to what could be misinterpreted as language barriers, illustrates why she is so astonishing.