

Steve Shilling

Today My Book Report Is
On

mollusks, birch trees, the erosion of Yugoslavia and the demise of Republics, socialist, federal, or otherwise. I don't do this anymore: read enough, write it down on 3x5 cards, present it in front of the room. Today I'd pick the Mackinac Bridge because it came to me in a dream where you and I were driving a snow plow from St. Ignace and somehow ended up in a hardware store in Petoskey. Tomorrow I'll look into Hybrid Tea Roses, because it is getting late in the season for mine and I should probably know more about their lack of disease resistance and susceptibility to cold temperatures. By the end of next week, I could probably stand and deliver to you something on the remaining operational steel mills in North America, the seasonal and philosophical differences in the wine making regions of Napa Valley and Northern Italy, while maybe squeezing in something persuasive on why I'd pick a Clumber Spaniel over a Bernese Mountain dog. But now, staring out the window I am stuck on variations of the hot dog, as I research another slathered in chili and oozing cheese, my mouth framed in mustard.

Meet You in Switzerland

At the little town of Vevey, in Switzerland,
there is a particularly comfortable hotel.

—Henry James

I wish I was there, Henry,
on this particularly cold October Friday,
the leaves void of any vibrant color,
nearly all down.

We are in the library checking out books,
but no one has stumbled across yours in
nearly two decades, so says the card
in the back pocket, last checked out by
James Thomas in 1989, also a guy
with two first names.

Some editor has wedged together
these *two world famous short novels*
of yours. Perhaps Daisy Miller would
find that the real Turn of the Screw.

But I have found it here today,
perhaps not as you intended when
you took them to the printer in
June of 1878 and some unseasonably
mild October morning twenty years
later. Nor pleased that the cover
is detached and half torn,
two more turns of the screw.

When school is out in June,
Daisy and I could share a bottle
from Chardonne with you out on the
veranda of the Hotel des Trois Couronnes.
I will be in the Yankees cap, she in
the white dress with a hundred frills
and pale colored ribbon, our hands
intertwined the way we Americans do,
overlooking that remarkably blue lake,
Alps in the distance, all dozen flags
flapping on the roof above us.

Steve Shilling has published work in *Red Wheelbarrow*,
Aethlon, *Main Street Rag*, and *The Loyalhanna Review*.

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