

RYDER'S DRIFT

Pamela Ryder. *Correction of Drift: A Novel in Stories*. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Fiction Collective Two. 2008.

Renée E. D'Aoust

Pamela Ryder's *Correction of Drift: A Novel in Stories* deals primarily with several characters splintering interpretations of what is, at its foundation, a famous, yet elusive, historical event: Ryder imagines the lives of those involved in the notorious Lindbergh baby kidnapping—everyone from Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, to the family maid, to the kidnapers, who attempt to steal the American dream. While the subtitle obviously suggests this is “a novel in stories,” and Fiction Collective Two (FC2) is well-known for its long-standing commitment to provocative, out-of-the-mainstream prose, I thought the “novel” becomes less a sequential, linear progression of stories than an interlacing of dreamlike symbols which, ultimately, build a whole. I refer to the symbolic use of Charles Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight, to Anne Morrow Lindbergh's shells and love of the sea, which Ryder effortlessly uses to allude to Morrow's own books, and, of course, to the almost bizarre public response to the kidnapping of the Lindbergh's first child, which Ryder deftly references by including contradictory newspaper reports.

While I felt briefly uncomfortable reading Ryder's imagined prose of the Lindbergh's response to a deeply personal tragedy, I soon felt that Ryder was sensitive to the pain of such an event. Colonel Lindbergh believes, “The boy would know—he would teach him—recovery for a spin and reduction of flutter. He would teach him dead reckoning, a sense of direction, and he would know north any night without a star.” Ryder, I think, suggests that memory makes it hard to pin down a past, because we are stuck in a subjective consciousness that doesn't really remember the same past. What we remember are certain narratives we've made that are associated with the past. Here, the Lindberghs also remember their plans for the future, yet the imagine past and impossible future both splinter because of irreplaceable loss: “She does not tell him that pearls—when genuine—are gritty, never smooth, when pulled across the teeth. (Is it not the opposite of what one would expect?) Or that she barely feels what makes its wayward way inside of her; its bloodless burrow in the flesh.”

Ryder writes more than a fictional, historical reinterpretation of a well-known event and famous people. Ryder is too generous a writer not to give

us the full deal. Her prose is far too descriptive and lyrical to reduce itself to a pop-psych analysis of characters, whether or not they are based in reality, or in Ryder's imagination. What is real, Ryder insists, is both imagined and factual. The result is a fully-realized and genuinely affecting work.