

A Poetic Rediscovery of The World: Written Images

By **Nada Moghaizel Nasr**

Reviewed By *Mona Takieddine Amyuni*

The English Romantic poet Blake asks for a "cleansing of the doors of perception". The broadly cultured Nada Moghaizel Nasr may or may not have read Blake, yet she is asking for a similar "cleansing". She looks at the world afresh, opens the doors of perception and penetrates into the magical world of children's drawers, "extensions of their pockets", "imitations of their voices", with textures similar to their pinky cheeks "which call for the caress of our lips", and "the softness of brown hair under our touch", Peals of laughter come out of children's drawers, notes Nada in **Written Pictures**. Her "pictures", in fact, awaken all our senses as they play with paradox, ambiguity, and shock surprises. Made up of about sixty vignettes of one or two pages each, the book adopts children's games in its shape, playfully picks up one idea or one image, unfolds it, allows it to run its course as on a stage, then drops it, leaving behind the "curtain" a hug, a tender smile, or a zeal of laughter. Senses are made alive, sensibilities sharpened, when we read in the table of contents titles such as: "We swim in their drawers; Boredom is fun for them; Because a six-year old can see the wind; Legs ache in homes without mothers;

Our footsteps in Beirut, and identity;" and others.

Thus, Nada picks up an idea, a feeling, an impression, an image, tries it out, exposes it, takes us along, and teasingly leaves us to catch the shimmers

and the echoes behind its footsteps. She cultivates paradox to shake us out of our routines ("Habit, says Beckett is the cancer of time"), and force us to look "poetically" at the world, in the wake of the Sur-

Boredom is Fun for Them

Naturally, his parents thought he was bored. They planned to make him join a summer camp so that he would take up some activities, so that he would learn a few things.

What he wanted, however, was to stop learning. He wanted to idle away time, to stop being solicited, to reach a degree of vacuity just like when you fall asleep, that degree of vacuity where one begins to create, to invent, to foreshadow things. All he wanted was to stop being solicited. The great boredom, the marvelous boredom of the summer, such creative boredom.

Three months to allow imagination to be born again. He would want to give himself up to the slowness of gestures, to the rhythm of the body. To have breakfast in the afternoon, sleep later than his parents, read throughout the day forgetting meals. To live in "time without clocks"

That time when one was left on his own, time which anguished parents. Who has ever seen parents lost in a bird's flight?

Summer camps are made for them, surely. Kids have so many schedules invisible to parents.

Kids have lots of fun in the midst of boredom (pp. 11-12)

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realists of our epoch. The vignette entitled "*Boredom is fun for them*" is a case in point. It illustrates well Nada's world vision for it does not stop at children's needs and perceptions but reaches out to incorporate a transmutation of daily life into a renewed experience of walking into the streets of Beirut, for example, which becomes an act of allegiance, a rebirth of one's individuality, a renewed sense of identity and belonging.

As for living in times of war, it becomes a short cut between us and ourselves, us and the others. The slowness of the war teaches us to go to the essential, shed trivial problems and anxieties, define our real needs, feel so light compared to such heaviness. War breaks up time and we rediscover the present. We recreate the moment and enjoy it fully. When war dogs us down, we discover hidden treasures within us and become far more creative. In short, we become again the children we have always been under Nada's spell. Below is a foretaste of the book all would enjoy. Finally, under Nasr's spell we rediscover ourselves and the others, we pick up the conversation and carry on, aware of the preciousness of dialogue. We relish the audacity of meeting again as if "all has changed" instead of the security of "nothing has changed". We meet again with neither prejudice, nor nostalgia, creating a space for new



footsteps. We go back to what will be and not to what has been We love those stories children demand, and to which they listen differently each time (pp. 117-118).

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a collection of short "images" in French. Excerpts are in Mona T. Amyuni's translation.