

NEWS FROM

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With shakemyheadhollow.com press and KDP

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October 1, 2019
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Goodbye, Maggie

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637 N Hennessey St., New Orleans, LA 70119
ISBN 13: 9781724881878, 157 pages
Price: \$11.88
Release date: January 27, 2020
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In a culture of health food stores, gurus, quacks and seekers, Phil's stagnant life takes a new direction when his charismatic brother, Magnus, shows up with the news that he has murdered Maggie Leblanc and asks for sanctuary. Thus starts a dramatic comedy of rollicking misdirection, as Magnus disappears – with Phil's girlfriend – and Phil lands on an uneasy road trip through small town Louisiana with Gus, another rival for Hermia's attention. Phil and Gus, white and black, find racism, madness, and unlikely friendships as they roll through the swampland and return empty-handed to New Orleans. But are they really empty-handed? And has Maggie really gone gentle into that good night?

Award-winning writer Gary Gautier has taught writing and literature at flagship state universities and has published a range of works for adults and children. *Goodbye, Maggie* was shortlisted (top 10) in the William Faulkner Competition. He has had a children's book featured in the *Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Market*, a scholarly book selected for Edwin Mellen Press's Studies in British Literature series, and a screen adaptation of his novel, *Mr. Robert's Bones*, was selected to the second round (top 10%) at the Austin Film Festival.



Goodbye, Maggie – Sample

H O M O S E X I S S I N

exclaims a navy-blue banner sailing through the crowd with bold white print

To their credit, the men with the banner, who alternately huddle around it like a lodestone and spread through the crowd like feelers, are not reducibly homophobes. Draped from their shoulders, in the spirit of Corinthians 6, are full-length body posters decrying fornicators, liars, blasphemers, adulterers, thieves, hypocrites, drunkards, abortionists, witches, atheists, and money lovers. They are in the right place on this Mardi Gras day in New Orleans.

One could enjoy this scene from any of the wrought-iron balconies overlooking Bourbon St. On one such balcony, a petite woman with woven dark hair and stunning violet eyes (no one could forget the eyes), costumed as a fairy queen, surveys the festive crowd below. The unholy throng carouses the street in waves. The fairy queen disappears from the balcony. The crowd revels to a crescendo and subsides.

The fairy queen returns to balcony but with her back to us, a red chrysanthemum in one hand. After a moment, she falls, face up, arms spread like an angel in flight as her body nears the street.

* * *

A rickety old paneled Datsun mini-wagon clunks into a supermarket parking lot. Phil, nerdy, early thirties, image of mediocrity, gets out. He tries a couple of times to shut the door but the latch works poorly. He finally kicks it shut and heads toward the store.

“Piece of shit,” our hero mutters.

Phil browses the cake counter for a second. A hefty, middle-aged woman stands behind the counter.

“I’ll take that pink and yellow one. And could you put ‘Happy Birthday Mary Elizabeth’ on it?”

“Too long,” says the countess, heavy, languid, but with a spirit like a coiled spring. Phil wonders. Her hostility. Is it racial animus? Does the black woman behind the counter resent his whiteness? Is she simply beaten down by the drudgery of her job?

Phil wipes his glasses. “What do you mean, too long?”

Goodbye, Maggie

Gary Gautier

Detailed Synopsis

Phil, too old for coming-of-age ordeals and too young for a midlife crisis, can't seem to keep it together. He's the nerdy oddball out at work and seems to be losing his artist girlfriend, Hermia, to a salesman named Gus. His life advisors include the madcaps and mystics of the New Age culture in which he moves, not the least of which is his big brother, Magnus, charismatic, congenial, and a very powerful spiritual guide. An episodic tug-of-war between these characters dramatically changes when Magnus suddenly tells Phil that he has murdered Maggie Leblanc and asks for sanctuary.

After accommodating Magnus for a time, Phil's inner torment reaches a breaking point and he prepares to meet the police. The deeply intuitive Magnus flees just in time – with Phil's girlfriend, Hermia. After some wrangling, Phil (white) and Gus (black) form an uneasy pact and follow the fleeing duo through small town Louisiana. Misfits among misfits, their developing bi-racial bond generates more than a few comic and poignant moments, as they are all oil-and-water on the surface but becoming deeply connected below. Rolling through the country, they find racism, madness and unlikely friendships, but lose the trail of Magnus and Hermia. Empty-handed, beaten down, and deep within the swamps, they meet an old black mystic, Madame Peychaud, with a psychic edge and an instinct that turns the wheel of the story's inner arc.

The two men return to New Orleans with no leads on the missing couple, but with some new ideas about life and the future. In his last attempt to track Magnus, Phil dons Magnus's elaborate Mardi Gras costume, dressing slowly and methodically in a way that recalls the Homeric "arming of the warrior." Since Magnus is always a high-profile celebrant of Mardi Gras in the French Quarter, Phil hopes someone will recognize the costume and mistake him for Magnus, and that the ensuing discussion might yield clues about the real Magnus and Hermia.

In the French Quarter, Phil is surrounded by the phantasmagoria of mock-identity and excess that is Mardi Gras, but no sign of anyone who can help. But the one person he does find, in the shadow of the Cathedral, is the living, breathing Maggie Leblanc! Thus begins a rapid discovery sequence that brings Madame Peychaud back and leaves Maggie dead, Magnus ambiguously dead or "in India," and Phil and Gus setting up shop to sweep the New Age markets with Magnus's memoirs and notebooks, which they have received from Maggie in sealed boxes with instructions from Magnus "to my brother, who will be ready for this when he receives it."

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. (English), Univ. of Colo. at Boulder, 1993; M.A. (English), Univ. of Texas at Austin, 1985.

PUBLICATIONS

Fiction

Hippies (CreateSpace, 2017), view at www.garygautier.com

Mr. Robert's Bones (shakemyheadhollow.com press, 2015), view at www.garygautier.com.

Children's Literature

Spaghetti and Peas (All About Kids Press, 2002), view at www.garygautier.com.

Poetry

Year of the Butterfly (shakemyheadhollow.com press, 2017), view at www.garygautier.com

Poetry published in *Solid Quarter* (2010), *Natchez Poetry Anthology* (2006), *Concrete Wolf* (2002), *Louisiana English Journal* (1998), *Silver Quill Anthology* (1996) and *The Cannon* (1986).

Literary Criticism

Books

Landed Patriarchy in Fielding's Novels (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 360 pages.

Intro. to the Random House edition of John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (2001).

Selected Book Reviews

"Separation and Contact," Review of *Terra Firma* (Austin: Agave Noir, 2005), in *FYI* 2:1, p. 18.

Review of Michael Ford's *Carbon* (poetry), *Pulse Literary Jour.* (www.heartsoundspress.com, 2007).

Selected Articles

"Slavery and the Fashioning of Race in *Oroonoko*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and Equiano's *Life*," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 42 (2001): 161-79.

"Gothic Villains, Romantic Heroes, and a New Age of Power Relations," *Genre* 32 (1999): 201-34.

"Henry and Sarah Fielding on Romance and Sensibility," *Novel* 31 (1998): 195-214.

"Class, Gender, and the Unreliable Narrator in *Fanny Hill*," *Style* 28 (1994): 133-45.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Children's Literature

- "The Angel, the Clown, and the Chinese Dragon." 1st prize, Deep South Writers Conference.
- *Spaghetti and Peas*. Featured in the *2002 Children's Writers and Illustrator's Market* (p. 112).

Scholarly Books

- *Landed Patriarchy in Fielding's Novels*. Selected for Edwin Mellen Press's Studies in British Literature series.

Novels

- *Mr. Robert's Bones*
 - Screen adaptation of this novel was selected to 2nd round (top 10%) at Austin Film Festival.
 - Screen adaptation selected as semi-finalist at Moondance Film Festival.
- *Goodbye, Maggie*. Shortlisted (top ten) in 2019 William Faulkner Writing Contest.

PERSONAL

I've taught writing, literature, and humanities at CU-Boulder, LSU, and The University of New Orleans, and spent two years volunteering in elementary classrooms. I was born in New Orleans, have hitchhiked through 35 states and 16 countries, bartended in 3 states, run two marathons, and once, due to a series of misadventures, spent six months as the chef at a French restaurant.