



Lynn Sloan: TNB Self-Interview

By TNB Fiction February 12, 2015



Principles of Navigation tells the story of a marriage. Isn't marriage a kind of ho-hum topic?

While I enjoy reading about a boy stuck on a raft in the middle of the ocean with a tiger as much as the next person, what I like best are novels and stories about people who are recognizable to me. We are all surrounded by marriages. Some of us are even married. Marriage is a fundamental institution. And marriage is a real cauldron. It can protect the individual and it can bury the individual.

So you picked the topic of marriage?

The topic of marriage is kind of ho-hum. I began by watching two people, a married couple, at an art gallery. You know the cliché about how dog owners look like their dogs. Married people look alike. Not physically, but they look like they share the same values and inhabit the same culture. This young couple at the art reception seemed entirely mismatched. He, the exhibiting sculptor, was charismatic and happy at the center of attention. She was quiet and self-effacing. He looked like an artist, she looked like a research librarian. They were too young to have grown apart over the years, so, soothsayer and storyteller that I am, I foresaw troubles ahead. That's where I began.

Principles of Navigation is told from alternating points of view, the wife's and the husband's.

Fair is fair.

Do you like one of them better than the other?

I love them both.

Why did you set the novel in the period around the Millennium?

The times we live in affect us. I wanted my characters to live during a time where what was going on in the culture influenced them without there have been profound changes in America, and I'm working on a novel set among those changes, but with *Principles of Navigation*, I wanted to write about a more innocent time. And I liked the craziness that bubbled up as the Millennium approached: the nutcase predictions, the fears of computer malfunctions, airplanes falling from the skies, the financial system collapsing, clocks going awry, all the misplaced worries. What happens in real life, well, in the real fictional lives of my young couple, is shattering enough. Even without a tiger.

What is your writing process?

I start out writing sentences in a notebook using a much-loved mechanical pencil, but within a page or two, I switch to the computer. I can't write fast enough, and I can't read my handwriting.

What is your favorite color?

The prismatic display.

LYNN SLOAN's work has appeared in *Ascent*, *American Literary Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Inkwell*, *The Literary Review*, *Nimrod*, *Puerto del Sol*, *The Briar Cliff Review*, *American Fiction Volume 13*, *Roanoke Review*, *Thin Air*, and *The Worcester Review*, among other journals. Her stories have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and been finalists for the Dana Award, the Katherine Anne Porter prize, and the Faulkner-Wisdom Competition. A visual artist, Sloan's fine art photographs have been widely exhibited and collected by museums, galleries, and private collections in the United States and abroad. She received her Master of Science from the Institute of Design and taught at Columbia College of Chicago. She lives in Evanston, Illinois. Visit her at lynnsloan.com.

Author photo: Chester Alamo-Costello