REVIEW

The owl that fell from the sky: stories of a museum curator

Brian Gill

Awa Press, Wellington. 2012. ISBN 9781877551130. 139 pp., Soft cover NZ $35.00

Kevin Parker had handed over the reigns as book review editor, and the first collection of books arrived. How exciting! I didn't know which to look at first. After dividing up the more specialised and technical books, and sending them to the more experienced, I had a wee pile for me, and then I needed to make a decision. Brian Gill's, *The Owl that Fell from the Sky* was the winner.

The size is different from most other books, as it is small and transportable. I had a sense I was opening a wee treasure, excited to discover what was inside. It is an odd feeling reviewing a book when you have met the author. I suspected the title was referring to a story I had heard him tell. It was, but it was still nice to hear it again. If you have heard Brian Gill speak, you will hear him through the book. Hearing Brian Gill inspired my friend and I to revisit, and now regularly meet at museums.

The introduction of 23 pages seems long only in concept; in reality it is really interesting. There is a well reasoned arguement on the importance of Natural History Museums, tackling head on the usual criticism of early collectors and museum cruators putting further pressure in reducing numbers of endangered species. *"Collections lie at the heart of the natural history museum (p. 7)"* and "*Nature conservation requires a clear understanding of biodiversity properly documenting the world's biodiversity needs large museum collections of voucher specimens (p. 11)*" are just 2 quotes indicating the expansive topics this book covers.

The book also solved a few mysteries for me regarding questions we had regarding Rajah the elephant, and again, Brian Gill has planted the seed to go and seek more knowledge. It is time for another visit. This is a delightful book, easy to read, suitable for all, and it is also available as a Kindle Edition.

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