
Marc Bojanowski

Dog Fighter, The
ISBN13: 9780060597580

What first attracted you to this story?

In the winter of 2000 I was working at a certain used books store on Clement Street in the inner Richmond district of San Francisco. At night, after work, I would take long walks to unwind. One of my favorite routes took me past an abandoned movie theater which was under construction at the time. (I believe it now houses condominiums and a pharmacy chain.) One night I happened to notice several young men climbing the scaffolding. I had met them earlier in the evening while on a break and eating in a diner across the street from the theater. They were sitting at the counter admiring a waitress I often visited the diner to admire as well. Having this in common, the several young men and I struck up a conversation. We discussed hometowns, city-life, construction, women and movies. They informed me that they were working on the theater. We lamented its fate. What they did not tell me, understandably, was that they were sleeping high up on the scaffolding. At the time, I romanticized their lot, while taking for granted the luxury of my own.

Did you have any reservations about writing in the first person voice of a Mexican?

Absolutely; I am a privileged young white male — born, raised and educated in the state of California during the latter part of the 20th century — which is to say that my education and experience is far removed from that of my narrator. I am interested in confiscation, especially in taking what is not yours to gain a profit for yourself. I spent a great deal of time deliberating whether or not I should attempt to appropriate a voice so different from my own which is something I believe to be impossible and, frankly, deceptive. However, as we live in a confessional age, brought about, in my opinion, by television, the threat of nuclear holocaust, and the self-consciousness the existence of these encourages, I felt that writing in such a voice would ultimately serve the story I wanted to tell and the themes I wanted to explore.

The fight scenes are so breathtakingly vivid — have you had any experience with fighting or violence of this nature?

I take the fifth on this one.

How did you decide to risk playing with grammatical conventions in *The Dog Fighter*?

My own understanding of grammar is limited at best. I doubt I'm alone in this. I think punctuation and spelling can be sensitive issues for most literate and semi-literate people. I suspect one's understanding of grammar is often a result of social standing, education, or both. I don't know. I do know that I wanted to write a boy's adventure story that was accessible and easy to read (and see) once the reader got underway. I believe that reading is important and that television is bad news. I suspect typing with both hands for a reasonable period of time each day, while words and pictures appear simultaneously on-screen, is beneficial to one's personal development in this day and age. What role will grammar play in future forms of communication? I'm as interested as the next person.

Was it difficult to write from the perspective of a man who is uneasy with words?

No.

A *New York Times* review noted that you pull off "the wicked trick of making its clichés seem vital and new, just as that great fight writer Hemingway did." How does it feel to be compared to Hemingway?

I've written a novel, not many, not even two, just one. While it's a very generous compliment, I think it's premature.

Have you thought of Hemingway as an influence?

Yes, but not as one whose influence on me is as substantial as other novelists, short story writers, playwrights, historians, painters, musicians, architects, teachers, mentors, friends, athletes, etc.

Could you discuss some of the writers you admire?

I find Emily Dickinson's poetry interesting and fun to try and wrap my head around. I'm also an enthusiast of Cormac McCarthy's work, particularly *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men*. London and Steinbeck were early favorites of mine; they are both deceptively accessible. Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* is a book I re-read each year. I think it's about as good as a novel can get. I enjoy Poe's poetry and stories. Melville and Conrad. Too many to mention here. Influence is all over this novel, as I believe it is in any apprentice's effort.

Any plans for your next novel?

I am still very interested in the role tourism plays in globalization. That and the relationship between television and history, particularly in the United States. All of the above and some more, neatly packaged in a love story, but this time one with a hopeful ending.