

From the novel: *John Passfield: Saturday Morning*

1

Shifting down as we chug up the hill. This old truck likes to take its own time. Like an old horse pulling a wagon and plodding along. She's hauled a lot of garbage in her time. A lot more garbage than I have, that's for sure.

2

Geez – I hope I'm not getting nostalgic. It's a little too early for that. I'm still only twenty-one – going on twenty-two. A little too early to look back fondly over all my years. But it is my last summer – my last month – my last year. The end of what I could call 'my garbage years'.

3

So it's quite a big summer for me. End of my education – got my BA at Convocation, last month. The Centennial of my country – one hundred years last Saturday. My last month at twenty-one – I'll soon be twenty-two. Getting married at the end of August. And in September, a whole new career – teaching school. That'll make 1967 a banner year.

4

Chasing the puck for miles and miles. Just my brother and me and that's all. Nobody else has arrived for the Saturday hockey game. Once in a while the ice makes a noise. A hollow boom or a creaking sound. That just means that it's expanding as the air gets cold. We pass the puck back and forth. If we miss it, we skate to catch up. It bounces over the little pebbles on the surface of the pond. The perfect ice on the perfect winter day.

5

I stand and watch as the perfect load is driven away. Nobody else bothers to look at it. Herm and Fivey walk away. Maybe they've seen a high load before. But it's the highest one that I've ever seen – and I built it all by myself. Bud will back it up and dump it – and the bulldozer will squash it down. Maybe Ivan will stop the dozer and have a thought. Though maybe, if he wants to get home, he won't bother at all. How often do you reach perfection at anything in this life? It was the perfect load of garbage and now it's gone.

6

So what to write about, he would wonder. Thousands of years of wonderful literature. Was there anything left to write? What could he write that had never been written before? It looked like a long, long road and a steadily-rising hill.

From the planning notebook: *Planning John Passfield: Saturday Morning* (free access at johnpassfield.ca)

1

Reading over a few chapters of my novel, *Pompeii: Vesuvius Dominus* this morning. Thinking of the ambiance of what it is like to live in Pompeii. Thinking of what it is like to live in St. Thomas, in my home town, in 1967. Thinking that the world politics & other news of the day would be the volcanic menace of the novel: everyday events in St. Thomas and world politics & world concerns, all in a day in 1967 in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada.

2

There will be no sources for *John Passfield: Saturday Morning*, except my memory, a St. Thomas newspaper from July 1967 and a book or two about the festivities on Parliament Hill and across Canada for the 100th Anniversary of Canada.

3

Those were early days for me, when I was a university student, from ages 19 to 21, and my 'next-to-be-planned-and-written' novel, *John Passfield: Saturday Morning*, will try to capture that phase of my life. I don't want to overdo the 'falling in love with literature / wish to be a writer' element in my life at that time, but it will be there for sure.

4

The Personal stories are in chronological order, but random in that they are chosen from thousands of experiences in the main character's almost 22 years. The Literary stories will be random in that they are simply the stories of the great books that he has been reading over his high school and university years. How do they all interact, if at all?

5

The novel wants to be written. I am getting a sense of the flavour, the ambiance and the motifs that will be present when the novel is complete. The door is opening on the experience of the writing process for this novel, *John Passfield: Saturday Morning*.

From the journal: *The Making of John Passfield: Saturday Morning* (free access at johnpassfield.ca)

1

I feel that I have made a very freeing breakthrough in my last five or six novels, and it is simply that I have learned to weave stories – discontinued narratives – that deepen the potential meaning of the action-story.

2

Am I wrong to assume that the literature and criticism that I was reading was not working on a problem-solving assignment during all of those years, commencing when I was 18? The novel-form that I have devised is the closest thing – in ink and paper – that I can imagine to render the ways in which the mind operates to generate potential meaning.

3

These three historical events (The assassination of John F. Kennedy, the landing on the moon and the Vietnam War) have had a great impact on me and on my generation, form a layer of imagery in our minds, and although they do not intrude on our conscious thoughts on a daily basis, they have affected the way in which we regard the world, the way in which we live our lives and the way in which we respond to the events that happen to the world, to our societies and to ourselves in our personal lives.

4

I can say that almost every element in the novel is based on an actual happening or person, but if I were to list the categories under which I would place this novel, 'a serious item of literature' would be number one and 'a personal memoir' would be number ten or lower.

5

I have thought, lately, of this novel as 'Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town meets A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'.