

LAVENDER INK



May 26, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bill Lavender
(504) 813-9891
bill@lavenderink.org

ISLAND FOG

Stories by John Vanderslice
ISBN: 978-1935084-41-9
RELEASE DATE: October 1, 2014

"...a chilling tour-de-force worthy of Chesterton or Borges..."

—Garry Craig Powell, author of *Stoning the Devil*

”

This thematic, novel-length collection of stories, is set on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, where in the heyday of its nineteenth century success as a whaling center, sailors from across the globe mingled with the mixed local population of descendants of the original English settlers, black Americans, and native Americans. When one travels there, even today, one feels no longer in the United States but in a culturally indistinct, in-between land, somehow equidistant from North America, the Caribbean, and Northern Europe.

The stories in *Island Fog* track the history of the island and the nation. The opening story, "Guilty Look," is set in 1795, when an alarming bank robbery divides the island. Next is "King Philip's War," set in 1820 in the remote island village of Madaket, concerns an encounter between a twelve-year-old white boy and a mixed-race Native American. In "On Cherry Street" a frustrated "whaling widow" in 1837 finds herself waking to her latent lesbian nature.

The book moves into the 20th Century with "How Long Will You Tarry?" set in the days of prohibition. Then, in "Morning Meal" a 1990s plumber whose wife committed suicide years before is forced to realize the true extent of her despair, and in "Beaten," a young couple vacationing on the island tries to put behind them the latest in a devastating series of miscarriages.

"Haunted," set just after the turn of the 21st century, concerns the leader of a ghost tour who finds himself haunted by a letter from a former lover, while in "Newfoundland," a retired Philadelphia business man is disgruntled to find himself reduced to a shopping bag caddy for his wife and a bank roll for her expensive tastes.

And in the title story a failing college student gives up on his final exams and escapes to the island for a prearranged summer job— except that once on-island he finds a very different job prepared for him, one that forces him to reconsider everything he thought he understood about himself, his life, and Nantucket.

Praise for *Island Fog*

"This island feels like some mad doctor's lab experiment"—so says one of the fictional residents of Nantucket Island, the setting of John Vanderslice's extraordinary story collection *Island Fog*. But Vanderslice is by no means a mad doctor, though he is definitely one insanely talented writer. In the eleven literary experiments that comprise his book, he brilliantly parses the soul of America from 1795 to 2005 through the microcosm of Nantucket Island. To borrow the words of yet another of his characters, he conveys "the awful weight of history pressing down upon the island" and conveys it so viscerally that we feel that "time has stopped or has circled around on itself" and we are "back inside that living spiraling body, that awful protean force" that was, and is, not just the island but America. This is a book that anyone interested in the grand, failed experiment that is America should read. It will open your eyes, and your heart.

—**David Jauss**, author of *Glossolalia* and *Black Maps*

John Vanderslice's debut collection is a whopping cycle of beautifully crafted stories spanning over two hundred years of Nantucket history, each emerging from the fog of the past crystal clear, complete, and poignant. Reading Vanderslice's stories, it's as if Ishmael has never boarded the whaleship Pequod in Nantucket, as if he's remained island-bound to tell these far-reaching, masterful tales.... Read this book! Rarely have I enjoyed a story collection with such artistic and historical sweep, one so quintessentially and vibrantly American.

—**Wendell Mayo**, author of *The Cucumber King of Kedainiai: Fictions*

John Vanderslice's *Island Fog* is far more than just a collection of stories. Tied together by a place and its history, the collection tells the story of Nantucket Island through the desperate lives and conflicts, hopes and sorrows of its inhabitants. I began reading the collection assuming it was for folks who have known or loved Nantucket and by the third story I was convinced that *Island Fog* is for anyone who loves good stories, beautifully told, with a good slice of the twisted history of humanity thrown in.

—**Robert Hicks**, author of *The Widow of the South* and *A Separate Country*

In this quirky yet captivating collection of ten stories and two novellas, all set on Nantucket, the island is both microcosm and prism, through which the reader catches illuminated glimpses of American life, from the hard, dangerous times of the whaling community to the present-day tony resort of the super-wealthy—and yet the same problems beset the inhabitants through the centuries: racism, class exploitation, sexual identity, envy and fidelity. The essence of all the fictions is "the awful weight of history pressing down upon the island", and in a twenty-first century America struggling to reconstruct its identity, the reader cannot but hope that the idyllic and mythic island might give us a clue about who we are. And yet in the final novella, "Island Fog", a chilling tour-de-force worthy of Chesterton or Borges, we find ourselves in a place so far from reality that, like its hapless and trapped protagonist, we wonder if we are doomed to play parts in someone else's fantasies forever. John Vanderslice is a writer of vision and this is a haunting, essential collection.

—**Garry Craig Powell**, author of *Stoning the Devil*

About John Vanderslice

John Vanderslice teaches in the MFA program at the University of Central Arkansas, where he also serves as Associate Editor of *Toad Suck Review* magazine. His fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in *Seattle Review*, *Laurel Review*, *Sou'wester*, *Crazyhorse*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *1966*, *Exquisite Corpse*, and dozens of other journals and anthologies, including *Chick for a Day*, *The Best of the First Line: Editors Picks 2002-2006*, and *Tartts: Incisive Fiction from Emerging Writers*. He lives in Conway, Arkansas with his wife Stephanie and their two sons.

About Lavender Ink

Lavender Ink is a literary publisher in New Orleans, founded in 1995 by current Director and Editor in Chief, Bill Lavender. Lavender Ink publishes exceptional works of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and other genres including books of reference, poetry, prose, drama and—through its Diálogos imprint—literature in translation. Recent releases include *N.O. Lit: 200 Years of New Orleans Literature*, Nancy Dixon, ed., the first comprehensive collection of New Orleans fiction and drama; a new illustrated translation of the ribald Roman poet Catullus, translated by Joseph Bienvenue; the latest novel by Moroccan cultural icon Youssouf Amine Elalamy, *Nomad Love*; and *Vital Signs*, a book of stories exploring the lives of gays in contemporary Havana, by Pedro de Jesús.

Contact

Bill Lavender
 Lavender Ink / Diálogos
 3216 Saint Philip Street
 New Orleans, LA 70119
 (504) 813-9891
<http://www.lavenderink.org>
orders@lavenderink.org