Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

John Brantingham: "Ah, That the World Could Be L.A."

John Brantingham · Wednesday, May 9th, 2012

John Brantingham teaches composition and creative writing at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, California. He has had hundreds of poems and stories published in the United States and the United Kingdom in magazines such as *Tears in the Fence, Pearl, Confrontation,* and *The Journal*. He is the fiction editor in charge of novellas at the newly formed Spout Hill Press and is one of two fiction editors at the *Chiron Review*.
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Ah, That the World Could Be L.A.

Instead of taking roll every morning,
I ask my students a question of the day,
and this morning's question is what
other time period would they have liked
to have lived in. It's a fairly banal question,
but they have fun with it, especially
a group of four friends sitting in the back
who all say they wished they could be
a part of the Crusades. When it's Sepehr's
turn, my one Persian student , he turns
to them and in a fist shaking parody
of what we see presented in movies
and on television, he says "I would
like to live during the Crusades too."
This is the Los Angeles I'm so in love with.
The ones sitting in the back were serious
about wanting to Crusade, and maybe
Sepehr's answer was only half joking,
but the Middle East is the Middle East,
and it's as far away as it could be,
and they all like Sepehr, and in fact
in the class, Ben, a conservative Jew is
Sepehr's closest friend, and the two leave
the classroom later talking about their
weekend plans. Perhaps LA is as vanilla
and plastic as the world says it is,

and maybe out here we've lost touch
with the traditional values of the East,
but in the end, I believe I'd take this peace
over that kind of authenticity every single time.

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