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Driving directions to Perth, Perth and Kinross, UK

This route includes a ferry.



Kirkwall, Orkney Islands
UK

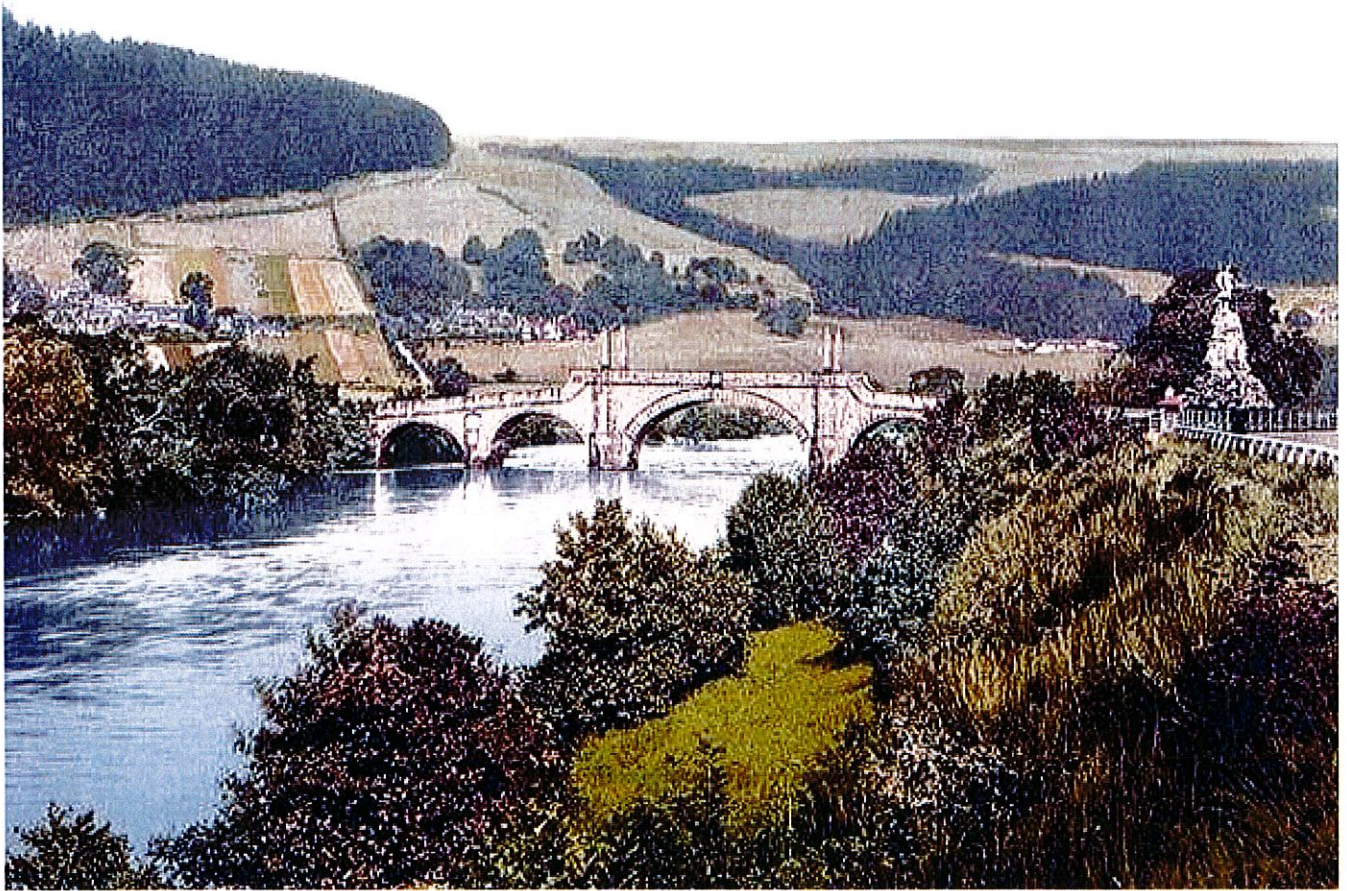
*Strathmuir is a
fictitious village.
May be situated north of
Perth by the Inchtuthil
Roman Fortress ruins*



Roman Fort Ruins
Near Perth

Hawick Estate





ABERFELDY
WADE'S BRIDGE

Black Watch
Memorial

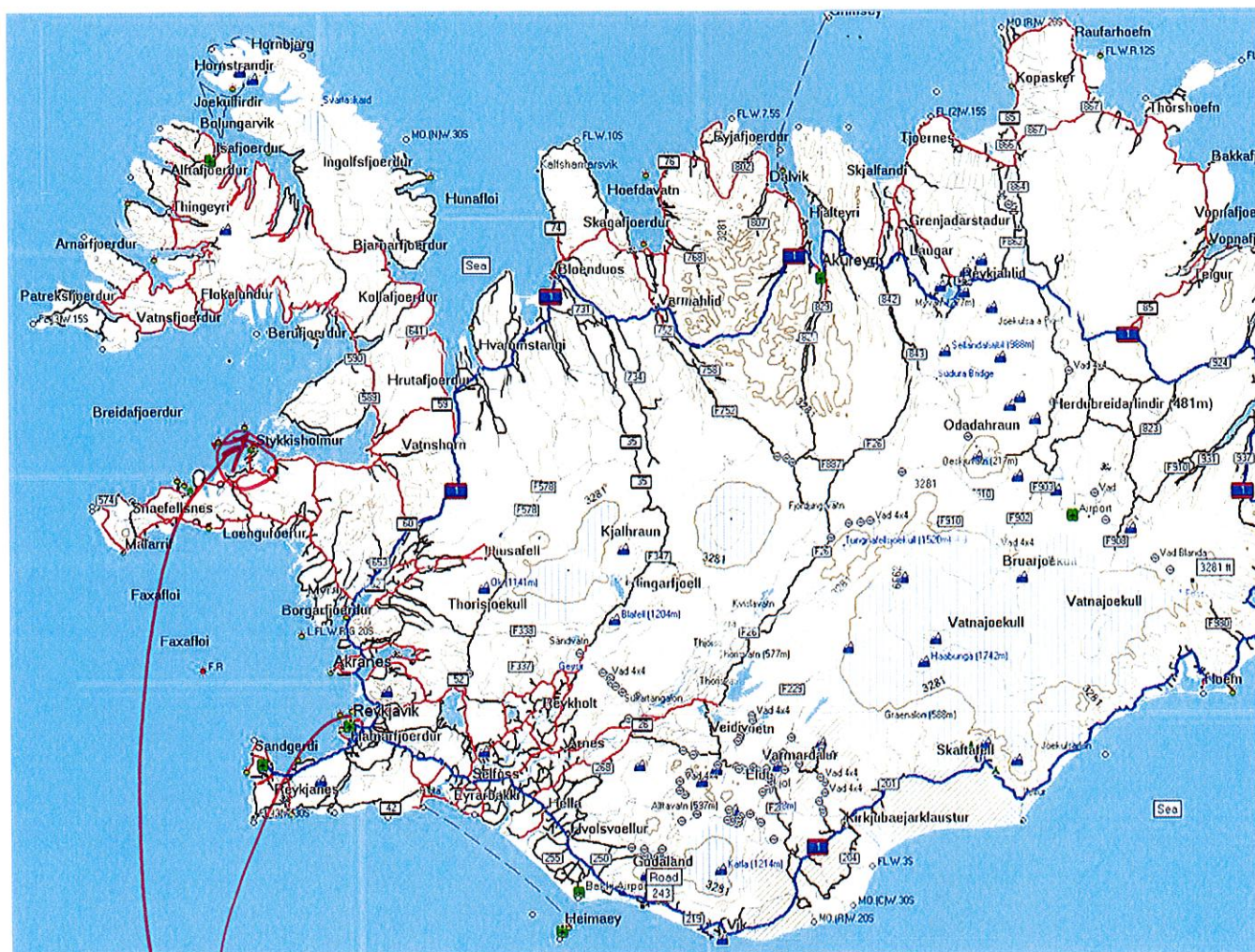
A small market town, Aberfeldy is located in Highland Perthshire and houses a population of about 1,895, as of the 2001 census. It is also mentioned in a well-known poem by [Robert Burns](#).

Beyond its association with Burns, who mentioned Aberfeldy in his poem *The Birks of Aberfeldy*, the town is known for "Wade's Bridge", built in 1733 and designed by architect [William Adam](#), father of the more famous [Robert Adam](#). [General Wade](#) considered this bridge to be his greatest accomplishment. The town also includes a memorial to the [Black Watch](#) and a town square that features stores, restaurants and art galleries. In 2002, Aberfeldy was granted [Fairtrade Town](#) status, which was renewed by the [Fairtrade Foundation](#) on 15 December 2003.

Aberfeldy is situated in the Tay Valley on the upper reaches of the River Tay, which begins up-valley from Aberfeldy at [Loch Tay](#) and carries on south and east from Aberfeldy until it discharges at its estuary east of [Perth](#) at the [Firth of Tay](#). Lying in a u-shaped valley common to Scotland's glaciated landscape, the terrain in and around Aberfeldy is gently undulating. Farming and agriculture border the town in the valley's floor. Areas further outside of Aberfeldy (particularly to the north and west) give way to the extensive [Grampian Mountains](#), with scenic peaks such as [Creag Odhar](#), Farragon (780m), [Schiehallion](#) (1083m), [Ben Lawers](#) (1214m) and Sron Mhor punctuating the landscape.



The Auld Kirk, now a Thrift Store in Aberfeldy.



Iceland

↓ Reykjavik

↓ Stykkisholmur

No worries, I had hoped to get it higher, but it seemed to turn out fine.

Heads up! Flickr will be down for planned maintenance this Friday from 12 AM EDT to about 8 AM EDT and won't be available during that time.

royengineer19 months ago

No doubt! Turned out absolutely fine!

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TRADITIONAL ORKNEY FARM

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Kirbister Farm Museum, Orkney Islands

By Craig Taylor - Orkney

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9/12/2013

Hallgrímskirkja

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

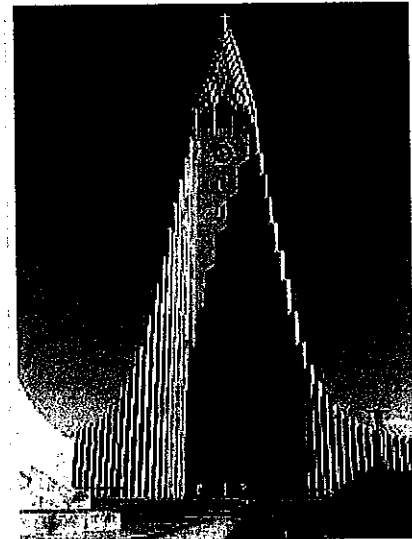
Hallgrímskirkja (Icelandic pronunciation: [ˈhatlkrimsˌcʰirca], *church of Hallgrímur*) is a Lutheran (Church of Iceland) parish church in Reykjavík, Iceland. At 74.5 metres (244 ft), it is the largest church in Iceland and the sixth tallest architectural structure in Iceland after Longwave radio mast Hellissandur, the radio masts of US Navy at Grindavík, Eiðar longwave transmitter and Smáratorg tower.^[1] The church is named after the Icelandic poet and clergyman Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614 to 1674), author of the Passion Hymns.^[2]

State Architect Guðjón Samúelsson's design of the church was commissioned in 1937. He is said to have designed it to resemble the basalt lava flows of Iceland's landscape.^[3] It took 38 years to build the church. Construction work began in 1945 and ended in 1986, the landmark tower being completed long before the church's actual completion. The crypt beneath the choir was consecrated in 1948, the steeple and wings were completed in 1974,^[3] and the nave was consecrated in 1986.^[1] Situated in the centre of Reykjavík, it is one of the city's best-known landmarks and is visible throughout the city. It is similar in style to the expressionist architecture of Grundtvig's Church of Copenhagen, Denmark, completed in 1940.

The church houses a large pipe organ by the German organ builder Johannes Klais of Bonn. It has mechanical action, four manuals and pedal, 102 ranks, 72 stops and 5275 pipes.^[1] It is 15 metres tall and weighs 25 tons. Its construction was finished in December 1992. It has been recorded by Christopher Herrick in his *Organ Fireworks VII* CD.

The church is also used as an observation tower. An observer can take a lift up to the viewing deck and view Reykjavík and the surrounding mountains. The statue of explorer Leif Eriksson (c. 970 – c. 1020) by Alexander Stirling Calder in front of the church predates its construction. It was a gift from the United States in honor of the 1930 Alþingi Millennial Festival, commemorating the 1000th anniversary of Iceland's parliament at Þingvellir in 930 AD.^[3]

In 2008, the church underwent a major restoration of the main tower, and was covered in scaffolding. In late 2009, restoration was completed and the scaffolding was removed.



Hallgrímskirkja (Lutheran church), Reykjavík, Iceland.

Hallgrímskirkja (church of the pilgrims) - Lutheran Church of Iceland





Stykkisholmur, Iceland

Fishing Village where Fjola spent her 1st 3 years.

Helgafell, Three Wishes, and Our Ancestors ⁵

Yesterday, we climbed the famous Helgafell (holy mountain). It is very close to the childhood home of our friend and guide, Halldór Arnason, of Stykkishólmur.



(<http://icelandicroots.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/helgafell.jpg>)

It is an important place on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula that was considered highly sacred from early settlement times. People were thought to enter the mountain upon their death.

There was an Augustinian monastery here from 1184-1550. This site is still regarded as sacred today.



http://icelandicroots.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/img_2608.jpg

A famous woman from the Laxdæla Saga, Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir (970-1008), is buried at the foot of the mountain. I am a descendant of hers in many different ways – the closest one being the Ólafsson lineage and she is my 25th Great Grandmother – so maybe your ancestor, too.



http://icelandicroots.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/img_2594.jpg

You can make three wishes at the top of the mountain if you follow these exact rules:

- First, find the grave of Guðrún. It is north of the church and the cemetery.
- Make sure that your mind is free of bad thoughts
- Make a cross over Guðrún's grave with your right hand

- It is important that you climb the mountain with good thoughts
- Make sure that you are not dirty and that you have washed your face
- Do not talk at all on the way to the wishing place
- Do not look to the right or to the left – just look straight ahead
- Go into the small enclosure (maybe this was once a chapel of the monastery and they prayed from here. A part of the wall has been dated at 1184.)
- Face to the east. (The town of Stykkishólmur can be seen to the north)
- When you make your wishes, they must be only for the good
- Make three wishes
- Tell no one about your wishes
- Enjoy the view and have the freedom to talk and look all around — even backwards.

Helgafell - Iceland

Helgafell is a mountain to the west of Stykkisholmur on a peninsula in western Iceland. The mountain was once the place where worshipers of the god Þór gathered. In the 9th century the Icelandic assembly met here for the first time, before moving to Þingvellir near Reykjavík. A church was built on the top of Helgafell after Iceland converted to Christianity. Today, visitors can easily reach the summit and take in great views over the fjord and surrounding landscape. The ruins of the church can still be seen at the top.

Helgafell

View



The Flight of Gemma Hardy

A Novel

by Margot Livesey

List Price: \$15.99

Pages: 480

Format: Paperback

ISBN: 9780062064233

Publisher: Harper Perennial

About This Book

> The resonant story of a young woman's struggle to take charge of her own future, **The Flight of Gemma Hardy** is a modern take on a classic story—Charlotte Brontë's **Jane Eyre**—that will fascinate readers of the Gothic original and fans of modern literary fiction alike, with its lyrical prose, robust characters, and abundant compassion. Set in early 1960s Scotland, this breakout novel from award-winning author Margot Livesey is a tale of determination and spirit that, like **The Three Weissmanns of Westport** and **A Thousand Acres**, spins an unforgettable new story from threads of our shared, still-living literary past.

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BookPage

Discover your next great book

Following in the footsteps of a legendary heroine



Interview by Amy Scribner

- **The Flight of Gemma Hardy**
- By Margot Livesey
- Harper
- \$26.99
- ISBN 9780062064226
- Published 01/24/2012

Loosely based on Charlotte Brontë's beloved classic *Jane Eyre*, the newest gem from acclaimed novelist Margot Livesey follows the trials of a determined young orphan as she searches to find her place in the world.

The Flight of Gemma Hardy is every bit as enchanting as Livesey's previous novels, including the 2009 award winner *The House on Fortune Street*. Still, one has to wonder why any author—let alone one as critically and commercially successful in her own right as Livesey—would choose to re-imagine Brontë's archetypal character in a 20th-century setting.

"I hope the novel is sufficiently richly imagined that it's its own thing."

"I've asked myself that question 417 times while I've been working on this book," Livesey replies with laughter during an interview from her home near Boston, where she teaches writing at Emerson College. Funny and frank, with a lilting Scottish accent, Livesey admits to some nervousness about how her new novel will be received.

"I hope entering into the book or enjoying it does not depend on having read *Jane Eyre* or knowing *Jane Eyre*," she says. "I hope the novel is sufficiently richly imagined that it's its own thing. I didn't want to write a novel that excluded any readers or made anyone feel they had to be brainy in a sort of annoying way."

Born in 1948, Gemma Hardy is orphaned as a toddler after her mother dies in a freak accident and her father drowns. She is taken in by her uncle, a kind and well-educated minister, and his family in Scotland. After her uncle dies, Gemma is left alone with her indifferent cousins and cruel aunt, who resents the time her husband dedicated to his orphaned niece. When Gemma suffers a panic attack while locked in a closet as punishment for fighting with her cousin, a local doctor takes notice of her abusive situation.

At the age of nine, Gemma is shipped off to a faltering boarding school, Claypoole, where she'll earn her way by cooking and cleaning. Plain but smart, she is self-reliant and confident she'll make her way in the world (much like a certain Brontë heroine).

"Well, Gemma, we've reached the parting of the ways," her aunt tells her as she drops her at the train station to travel alone to Claypoole. "You're an ugly child—my poor sister-in-law was a plain Jane—but I hope you'll study hard at Claypoole and be a credit to me."

"I'll always try to be a credit to my uncle," Gemma retorts, "but you've treated me like a leper. If I win every prize in the school it won't be because of you."

Gemma struggles through her years as a “working girl” at Claypoole, dodging school bullies and trying to get a decent education in between mopping floors and serving meals to the paying students. When the struggling school finally closes, she takes a job as a nanny in the Orkneys, a cluster of islands in northern Scotland. It is there that Gemma’s life begins in earnest. She is drawn to the wealthy owner of the home in which she lives, but slips away to Iceland to search for her roots.

Certainly the pristine writing evokes the moody, misty feel of Brontë, and the plotlines are undeniably similar. But Livesey needn’t worry about how her tale compares to *Jane Eyre*. In **The Flight of Gemma Hardy**, Livesey has created a character fully her own; her novel is more of an homage than a faithful retelling.

“I really felt more like writing back to Charlotte Brontë,” Livesey says.

Her inspiration for the book came, oddly enough, during an appearance at a book club, during which the group began talking about *Jane Eyre*. “Some of the best discussions and most illuminating moments I’ve had have been at book clubs,” she says. She decided to write a modern version of the book—or, at least, modern compared with the original Victorian setting.

“If she came of age when the Pill was available and women’s rights were a topic of discussion, it would really change the novel and what I was trying to do,” she explains of her decision to set **Gemma Hardy** in the early 1960s. Livesey aimed to write a story about a girl determined to find a place in a world with few choices for a female of her status.

Once she began writing, Livesey had no difficulty imagining a crumbling Scottish boarding school. As a girl, she herself was enrolled in one as a day student. Her father taught at the neighboring boys’ school and her mother was the school nurse.

“I ended up in a class with girls three years older than me. It was just an enormous gulf,” the author recalls. “There were long, dark corridors, cloakrooms and stairwells. I was always hiding in some stairway trying to avoid some particularly hefty girl.”

The school eventually went bankrupt. “It was one time I felt my prayers were answered,” she says, laughing at the memory.

After graduating from the University of York, Livesey moved to Canada in the 1970s to be nearer to a love interest, and took a series of odd jobs.

“I discovered this amazing thing called creative writing and even more amazing was that I was qualified to teach it,” she says. “That changed my life in a more radical way than romance. It tied me to North America more than, say, waitressing or working at a dry cleaners.”

The places at which she’s since taught reads like a high school counselor’s dream list: Boston University, Bowdoin College, Brandeis University, Carnegie Mellon, Tufts University and Williams College. Yet she’s still found time to write a handful of compelling novels that have earned her a loyal following and the 2009 L.L. Winship/PEN New England Award.

“I write novels that have what I so admired growing up: a strong plot and vivid characters and an exploration of moral questions, although that sounds incredibly pompous and dreary,” Livesey says. “Maybe there’s a way to better say it that is fun.”

She plans to celebrate finishing **Gemma Hardy** by traveling to the Brontë family home in England, which, ironically, she never visited while studying at the University of York.

“I’m ashamed to say as an under-grad I was too absorbed in the emergency of self,” she says wryly. “I didn’t have time for a literary pilgrimage!”

The Flight of Gemma Hardy is the beautifully melancholic and wholly transporting story of one courageous girl searching for her place in a changing world. And now that it’s finished, Livesey may even re-read the novel that inspired it.

“I never read *Jane Eyre* once I started my book,” she admits. “I thought, if I do, I’ll just throw down my pen.”

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Discussion Questions

1. Did Gemma's name take on new meanings for you in the course of reading the novel? What about the other names she uses at various points?
2. In the opening chapters, Gemma's aunt is quite hardhearted, even cruel. Did your opinion of her change by the time you finished the novel?
3. How do you think the various landscapes that Gemma passes through help to change, or inform, her journey?
4. Gemma's uncle is a devout Christian. Do you think Gemma minds losing her faith? Do her childhood values continue to govern her actions as she matures into adulthood?
5. Throughout the novel there are various supernatural occurrences. What is their significance to the story and how do they impact Jane?
6. How do Gemma's relationships with the various orphans she cares for deepen your understanding of her?
7. Gemma is at the mercy of chance but she also takes charge of her life and makes certain crucial decisions. How do you feel about those decisions?
8. What role do animals and birds play in Gemma's life?
9. If you've read Charlotte Bronte's **Jane Eyre**, are there places in **The Flight of Gemma Hardy** where you find yourself remembering Jane particularly vividly? How do those memories impact your reading of Gemma?
10. Did **The Flight of Gemma Hardy** make you think of other orphan stories beyond **Jane Eyre**? Why are orphan stories so endlessly appealing?

The Flight of Gemma Hardy

by Margot Livesey

At one point in Margot Livesey's evocative new novel, *THE FLIGHT OF GEMMA HARDY*, one character remarks, "This isn't the nineteenth century." Characters, not to mention readers, can't really be blamed for confusion. Although Livesey's latest is set firmly in the middle of the 20th century, the very occasional references to pop culture, fashion and airplane travel can seem jarring up against a setting that abounds with boarding schools, manor houses, orphans, governesses and ghosts.

"If readers go into this novel expecting to meet Jane Eyre, they'll likely be disappointed. But if they encounter Gemma Hardy on her own terms, they'll discover a novel full of merits of its own."

It's no wonder that these elements fill the pages since --- at least on a very broad level --- *THE FLIGHT OF GEMMA HARDY* is a retelling of Charlotte Brontë's *JANE EYRE*. As Livesey comments in an author's note, however, this story is as much inspired by her own biography as it is by Brontë's novel, so readers looking for a straightforward retelling would

be better served elsewhere. There are no madwomen in the attic or blinding fires, and although drama abounds, the book's stakes never verge toward the Gothic in quite the way *JANE EYRE* might feel if it were published in 2012. If readers go into this novel expecting to meet Jane Eyre, they'll likely be disappointed. But if they encounter Gemma Hardy on her own terms, they'll discover a novel full of merits of its own.

The broad outlines of the story will be familiar to many. Gemma Hardy, raised in an Iceland she doesn't remember and orphaned at a young age, is sent to live with her aunt and uncle in a remote part of Scotland. When the book opens, nine-year-old Gemma's beloved uncle has recently died, and her aunt (who hates the child for reasons that become apparent only much later) is determined to get rid of her. An answer presents itself in the form of the Claypoole School, where Gemma is soon accepted as a working pupil. Gemma, who loves schoolwork, is at first eager to be heading to boarding school far from the adoptive family that detests her. But when she discovers that working pupils are treated no better than the most despised servants, her fantasies of a blissful school career vanish.

Over time, though (and with the help of a cherished but short-lived friendship), Gemma excels at Claypoole, scoring well enough on exams to make university a possibility. But before she can get there, a turn of events leads her to a new assignment --- as tutor and companion for a poorly behaved child named Nell, in a grand house located in the harsh and unforgiving landscape of the Orkney Islands. There Gemma thrives, surrounded by birds and her beloved sea. Even when she finds love, she is reluctant to settle into her perch there, instead taking flight once again, seeking any vestige of the family she hardly remembers.



Margot Livesey infuses every sentence of her novel not only with Gemma's quite compelling personality, but also with the details of the world she inhabits. As the title suggests, the book is filled with the imagery of birds, but they serve more than a thematic purpose. Gemma's affection for birds reveals her attention to detail and her desire to understand the relationships of things. These characteristics might also apply to Livesey herself, as her sharply observed, firmly grounded narrative transforms a classic tale into a story --- and a place --- all its own.

The Flight of Gemma Hardy

Margot Livesey 2012

HarperCollins

447 pp.

ISBN-13: 9780062064226

Summary

When her widower father drowns at sea, Gemma Hardy is taken from her native Iceland to Scotland to live with her kind uncle and his family. But the death of her doting guardian leaves Gemma under the care of her resentful aunt, and it soon becomes clear that she is nothing more than an unwelcome guest at Yew House.

When she receives a scholarship to a private school, ten-year-old Gemma believes she's found the perfect solution and eagerly sets out again to a new home. However, at Claypoole she finds herself treated as an unpaid servant.

To Gemma's delight, the school goes bankrupt, and she takes a job as an au pair on the Orkney Islands. The remote Blackbird Hall belongs to Mr. Sinclair, a London businessman; his eight-year-old niece is Gemma's charge. Even before their first meeting, Gemma is, like everyone on the island, intrigued by Mr. Sinclair. Rich (by Gemma's standards), single, flying in from London when he pleases, Hugh Sinclair fills the house with life. An unlikely couple, the two are drawn to each other, but Gemma's biggest trial is about to begin: a journey of passion and betrayal, redemption and discovery, that will lead her to a life of which she's never dreamed.

Set in Scotland and Iceland in the 1950s and '60s, *The Flight of Gemma Hardy*—a captivating homage to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*—is a sweeping saga that resurrects the timeless themes of the original but is destined to become a classic all its own. (From the publisher.)

Author Bio

- Birth—July 24, 1953
- Where—Perth, Scotland, UK
- Education—B.A., University of York, England
- Currently—Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Margot Livesey is the award-winning author of a story collection, *Learning by Heart*, and of the novels *Homework*, *Criminals*, *The Missing World*, and *Eva Moves the Furniture*, which was a *New York Times* Notable Book, an *Atlantic Monthly* Best Book of the Year, and a PEN/Winship finalist. Born in Scotland, she currently lives in the Boston area, where she is writer in residence at Emerson College.

Extras

From a 2004 Barnes & Noble interview:

- My worst job was a very brief stint at a Hare Krishna factory in Toronto, packing incense. The combination of compulsory prayers and of having my friends get out their handkerchiefs whenever I entered a room soon made me give notice. My favorite job was working as a cleaner at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. We managed to do the work in half the time we were paid for and I loved pushing my broom around the galleries, getting to look at the art day after day.
- The first Americans I ever met were a family who came to teach for a year at the boys' school where my father taught. They invited us over for New Year's Eve and instead of the usual festivities spent the evening showing us slides of their very extensive holidays in Yosemite. Ever since I've had a mild aversion to slide shows and I still haven't been to Yosemite.
- When asked what book most influenced her life as a writer, here is her response:

This sounds self-centered but the book that had the biggest impact on me as a writer was the novel I wrote when I was twenty-two and traveling around Europe and North Africa. When I reread it at the end of the year I was amazed at how completely I had failed to be influenced by the many wonderful books I'd read. My characters were unbelievable, their conversations preposterous, the plot simultaneously dull and far-fetched, etc., etc. Seeing the enormous gap between the books I loved and my own was what made me want to be a writer in a serious way.