

Dictionary, or the Scattering of the Nations

Martin Porter

Blank paper still keeps pouring out of the mill, piling over the floor, stacking into a column that reaches to the heavens and spills across the sky.

The scroll of consensus was written on an everlasting roll generated through all time by the gods. It denoted everything, pictographs of antelope and strangely shaped beads, telescopes and beds of reed. The enthusiast would ramble through the many miles of words like a naturalist searching for new species. When there was doubt in the meaning of some declaration, parties would confer, searching for the relevant entry in the scroll. Learned colleagues would send a clarion call for help in struggling over the mountains of paper. Even thoughts were captured in ideograms, some simple to solve, some long and convoluted, some cryptic, secrets that would ramble over great distances to capture the definitive meaning, some even in colour.

Some even in colour... In the orthodoxy of the gods, all was constructed in black and white. Unknowingly, yellow was printed in royal blue ink, green defined in an effervescent scarlet. Arguments fomented across the spectrum of leading elders. Schools of academics were formed to discredit opposing shades of meaning. The people of the Earth came to distrust the scroll of consensus, then ignore it, finally to forget it.

So the nations were scattered across the face of the globe, staring with different eyes and licking their wounds with strange tongues.

Martin Porter, born in Jersey C.I., writes from his home in New Zealand, where he weaves themes of migration and change with his scientific background. His work has been published internationally and on the web at poetrynotesandjottings.com.