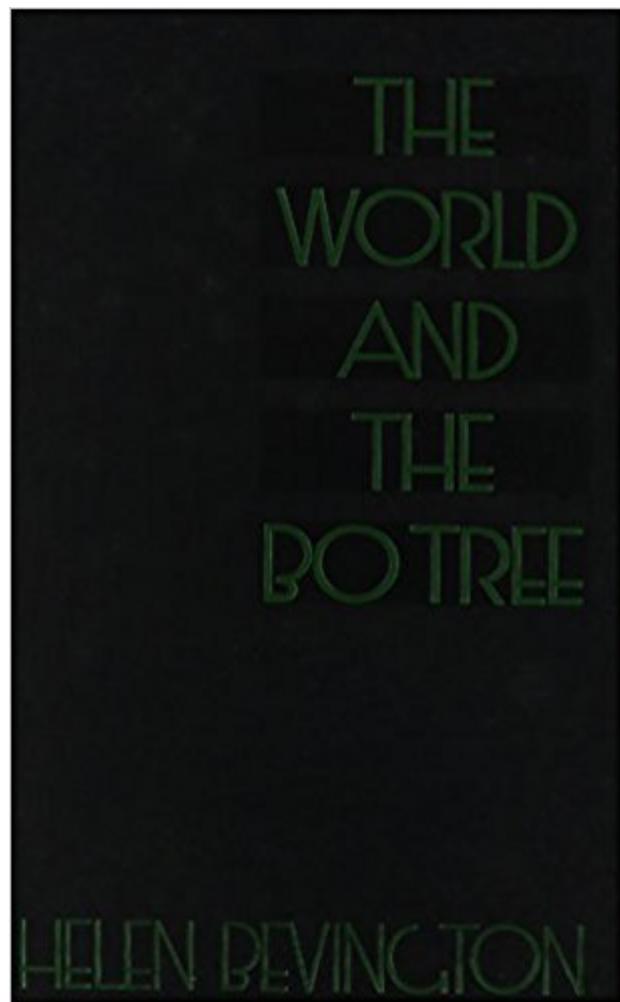


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The World And The Bo Tree



Synopsis

â œEach time I leave home I seem to go in search of somethingâ "call it a bo tree, or Shangri-La, or paradiseâ "which is only another name for peace itself and these days decidedly a foolâ ™s errand.â •So writes Helen Bevington in *The World and the Bo Tree*, a book that describes her travels taken amid the turbulence of the 1980s. The â œworldâ • of the title is the one everybody knows, a fairly troubled, even threatening place to inhabit these days. The bo tree, which has flourished for centuries in India and Asia, is itself a meaningful symbol of peace, since under it the Buddha sat when he gained enlightenment and sought thereafter to share it with the world. The book fashions a delightful fabric, a weave of exotic journeys and chaotic recent history. While we travel with Bevington to and from various destinations in Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, China, and elsewhere, we are conscious of the look of the world at home in striking contrast to the serenity occasionally glimpsed in distant places. At home she reminds us of such global disturbances as the demise of the Equal Rights Amendment, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger, and the possible destruction of the planet. Abroad, on some quest of their own, we may encounter such fascinating passersby as Mark Twain in Bangkok, Lord Byron in Italy, Goethe in Sicily, Marco Polo in China, Isak Dinesen in Africa, and Gladstone in the Blue Grotto of Capri. Against the backdrop of the world, Bevington discovers moments of peace in unexpected and unlikely placesâ "visible, she says, in Tibet or on the road to Mandalay, in the look of the midnight sun, or in the silence of Africa. Fleeting and elusive though these moments are, they are real and in themselves strangely enlightening.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bevington, English professor emeritus at Duke University, captures minds and hearts here as, writing with grace and lethally sharp wit, she ruminates on why "travel is of infinite worth to her." With life and earth itself seeming to the author to be abused past saving, she searched the world for occasions to rejoice in art created by humans (Michelangelo's David) and by nature (the northern lights). Bevington's ultimate goal, however, was personal peace, which brought her to the banks of the Ganges to the bo tree, descended from the tree under which Buddha sat and warned against greed, ignorance and anger. There is also much spirited humor in the book, if a little crankiness, when Bevington takes on easy targets like the Reagans and posturing hosts on PBS. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"Bevington captures minds and hearts here as, writing with grace and lethally sharp wit, she ruminates on why 'travel is of infinite worth to [her].'" --Publishers Weekly

By Antonio Gonzalez (Amarillo, TX U.S. A.)
THE WORLD AND THE BO TREE, by Helen Bevington, Duke University Press (Durham and London) 1991.
THE WORLD AND THE BO TREE was next to the last books of Mrs. Bevington and perhaps one of the more delightful. It's a travelogue, more or less, a lounge-chair trip, in the company of some very nice people. Expect to travel along with Helen's multitude of historic and literary acquaintances, the usual menagerie, from Buda to Wallace Stevens. She mixes the "group" nicely, however, so that everyone has a good time and no-one's left out. This is "a journey into June," one like we would imagine a bored deity commanding to a peacock troika: "from the higher Pyrenees to...Zanzibar tomorrow!" We shuttle to Peru, not missing Lima (which a fellow travel thinks gets its name from its people, "the Lima beneaners" rather than the beans getting their name from the town (which is historically correct.)) There is the "de rigueur" stop at Machu Pichu, continuing to Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, and furtively to Uruguay. After a stop for American rest, in Durham, N.C., Helen's continues to travel, this time to Spain, (reminiscing in Granada of Garcia Lorca's assassination by Franco, or of St. John of the Cross and Santa Theresa of Jesus and their nearly hormonal infatuation with the saints). The trip livens on the way to Italy, (without missing Sicily!), and then to Africa, a "Safari into silence." We fly to China where a computer glitch sends everyone off the beaten-path to the seediest unlisted hotel in Beijing! and the to Tibet, where Helen's thoughts turn to the Dalai Lama, so plaintive of the immediate, and so

oblivious of ancient past...Well, we don't get to paradise, but may feel near it, meditating with Buda and Helen under his Bo tree. And to my mind, it brings the sense of nostalgia, rememberance of her writing of the days when she traveled with her beloved husband, "B.":Take the TWENTIETH CENTURY, bound for beyond,...Or the Fitchburg Line to Thoreau's pond...Take a QUEEN to more mansions stately.But take me, darling, if you please--"Trip-of-a-Lifetime, by Helen Bevington, 1956

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