

An Interview – May 2018



*Regan Lee Homeward
in front of some of his
favourite things*

Hello, and welcome to my blog, Author Interviews. My name is Fiona Mcvie.

Let's introduce you to everyone. Please tell us your name and age.

Hello Fiona, my name is Graeme. I go by the pen name GH Neale. My wife calls me other things, some good, some not so good. I am older than my teeth.

Fiona: Where are you from?

I am from Kent, a small county in the United Kingdom. It is a beautiful place to live; everywhere smells of apples, hops, and damp washing. I studied hard at college, kept my nose clean, got my head down, packed off to university, and was finally released into the broader world with qualifications in Philosophy and History of Art, both entirely helpful subjects.

Fiona: Tell us your latest news.

I am working on *Argonautica*, my third novel. It is a travelogue about a family cruising the Mediterranean, written as a paean to and a pastiche of Apollonius. It explores art, politics, and identity.

Fiona: When and why did you begin writing?

From about three years old. I swiftly progressed

from daubing colourful crayon glyphs on my mother's wallpaper to the sophisticated medium of the ostrich quill. Once electricity was invented, I progressed to using the computer. I am up to speed with this device, employing three fingers more often than not.

Language and its nature have always interested me. I explored its ineffable qualities with my first novel, Archipelago. It was relatively well received, and I was rather pleased.

Fiona: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

It may be true that there is no starting point and no end to being a writer; instead, like a guitarist, you are constantly discovering new chords and arpeggios.

Fiona: What inspired you to write your first book?

Wine and long conversations with my child-minder. I realised then that I had a half-decent tale to tell.

Fiona: How did you come up with the title?

Initially, the first novel would be called, 'All things are A part' but I thought Archipelago was more expressive. Similarly, the second, set in Madrid, had a working title of 'Four Go Mad In Madrid', but I was concerned the estate of Enid Blyton may take me to task. Hence, I settled on Arriba. I now seem to be headed in titling everything with 'Ar'. The third novel, as mentioned, is called Argonautica. Perhaps the fourth is Arachnid or Arithmetic. You can see where this is going, can't you?

Fiona: Do you have a specific writing style? Is there

anything about your style or genre that you find particularly challenging?

I am a metafictional author. This means I write books about people who write books in an arrogant, Tower of Babel-like way. One that either leads to infantile regress or attempts the summation and final zed of all and everything. This is fun to try but equally arduous work.

Fiona: How much of the book is realistic, and are experiences based on someone you know or events in your own life?

Almost all the characters in my novels are based on real-life people I have met through acquaintance or love through friendship. I am often a little unkind, but I am an author, and authors are vampires.

Here is one of my best friends:

"A heavily-set woman, an obvious Englishwoman, squashed piles of heavily-set, woolly sweatshirts, hoddies and joggers. She was bingo-winged. Her swollen timbers in a pear-wear, Rubenesque-buttocked way, generally more rotund at the lower half of her considerable frame than at her topper-most bodily aspect, held up a whole engaged column of a monumental formation. She picked up the bottoms of a blue tracksuit which said on an inside label: El Corte Inglés, Medio. She held them up to her three-quartered 'peddle pusher' jeans, four-fifths up her nine-tenths worth of ungulated calves. She stretched their elasticated girth for all that they were worth and decided, no, it would not encompass her bulky, hippopotamus hips and elephantine-trunked, reared-up posterior."

Fiona: To craft your works, do you have to travel? Before or during the process?

Yes, as much as possible. Google Maps is a real boon, though, enabling me to get to places I could not afford to go. As mentioned, while I have been to Madrid many times, I could check the details for Arriba at home.

The first novel is set in Sevenoaks, Kent. I walked around it thousands of times, noting many points of interest and disinterest, but all of them were accurate, or at least accurate, at the time the novel is set.

“After completing one of the essential matters that she needed to attend to, she had strolled a mere three hundred and fifty feet down the High Street, past the Woolwich Building Society, the Plaxtol Bakery and Boots, and, after turning into Bligh’s Court, she was waiting with her usual air of adventure in the reception area of ‘Tan and Float,’ number one specialists in high-pressure tanning and Jessica Nails.”

Fiona: Is there a message in your novel that you want readers to grasp?

I like to wish other people well, apart from those who don’t wish other people well.

Fiona: Are there any new authors that have grasped your

interest? Who is your favourite writer, and what about their work strikes you?

I like Flann O'Brien, an unsung genius. Calvino, Beckett and Joyce, of course. Modern writers such as Stephen Moran impress me greatly. His novel, 'Server', will be one of the great works of literature. I am sure of this.

Fiona: Outside of family members, name one entity that supported your commitment to become a published author.

My dog likes to offer her opinions from time to time. Long walks are good for the mind. I would encourage every author to get a dog or a Segway.

Fiona: Do you see writing as a career?

I proofread professionally but have little opportunity to express my artistic ideas. Even the great Philip Larkin had to be a librarian to pay the gas bill.

Fiona: If you had to do it all over again, would you change anything in your latest book?

Seriously, no.

Fiona: Did you learn anything while writing your recent book?

Yes, quite a bit. The research aspect can be most revelatory. I order old newspapers to correct the embedded cultural and historical references.

"Passing by the extravagant plastic floral displays in the reception area, Mr Williams wandered into the living room and looked gloomily at the jabbering

television set displaying Marti Caine's "talent galore" on New Faces."

Fiona: If your book was made into a film, who would you like to play the lead?

The main protagonist in Archipelago is an émigré from the Galapagos Islands. Penelope Cruz would seem to be ideal. Am I allowed to blush at this point?

Fiona: What book are you reading now?

I am reading a historical narrative of Granada. It is pretty brilliant.

Fiona: Do you remember the first book you read?

Yes, 'The Green Pirate' I remember working out that abstract word, 'because'. It was quite a moment for me.

Fiona: What makes you laugh/cry?

I cry a lot more than I ought to and despair more.

Fiona: Is there one person you would love to meet, past or present? Why?

I would love to meet my grandfather again. My only memory of him is that he was a very kind man.

Fiona: What do you want written on your headstone?

This:

“To the memory of Regan Lee Homeward, who resided in this district for upwards of half a century. He was born in England on 2nd November 1964. He possessed a vigorous mind and a habit of untiring application. In disposition, he was humble, kind and affectionate, and his life was marked with a high regard for the interests of religion and devoted piety to God. He died in the peaceful assurance of everlasting life. His sorrowing wife and three children gratefully record in their loving remembrances the many excellences which adorned his character. ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Job 1:21.’”

Fiona: Do you have a blog or website readers can visit for updates, events and special offers?

I have a website: www.pmvideos.com

Fiona: Any advice for other writers?

Do what you want to do. Do not chase the money god. True artists have no concern with money.

Fiona: Finally, is there anything specific you want to tell your readers?

Be kind.

Always be that.