

OLD MYTHS RETURN FOR A WHILE

At the age of six Jason enjoyed summer trips down to the North Platte River to try to catch tadpoles and young frogs. It was a time of free movement and exploration. He thought if he could catch one it would become a pet and eventually a friend. But he was never fast enough to do that.

When he was in Grade 9 at Bishop Del Monte High School in High Desert City, Sr. Matthias taught Latin 1, and in the spring semester one of the stories to be translated was "Latona and the Frogs." It was simplified Latin, and the mythical story was reduced to just the essential details to remove references to the gods' immorality:

Latona was banished from Olympus by Juno. Ending up thirsty and disoriented in distant Lycia, Latona was denied access to a pond by peasants working nearby. She used her powers as a goddess to turn the inhospitable peasants into frogs.

But Jason liked the illustration in the Latin textbook, and he still liked frogs.

In a couple of years he inherited a copy of Bulfinch's Mythology from a great uncle, and that further stimulated his interest in the classics.

In Grade 12 a friend, Doug, and he were interested



in aestheticism and considered themselves non-conformists. They had read many of the British writers of the late nineteenth century who were excellent students of the classics, knew all the Greek myths and referred to them constantly in their poems, short stories and essays.

Their interests didn't draw favour from members of the football team or the basketball team or any of their friends. To avoid any unpleasant encounters in school hallways in the fifteen or so minutes they had between arriving at school and the bell summoning them to first period, they would cross the tracks to a marsh in a meadow across from the school. They imagined Latona hiding in the reeds, and they voiced the occasional pagan prayer.

By late fall, the nearby university had bought some of the meadowland across from the school, and had proceeded to fill in the marsh with gravel and concrete blocks. Jason and Doug were downcast about this. They also thought social conformity in the school was due for a protest.