

ABSTRACT

VALLEY FOG, AND OTHER ESSAYS

Montaigne said of his own essay collection, “I have no more made my book than my book has made me—a book consubstantial with its author, concerned with my own self, an integral part of my life; not concerned with some third-hand, extraneous purpose, like all other books.” Likewise, the essays of Valley Fog are an exploration of my own self, a demonstration of my yearning for knowledge, stability, and peace of mind. These essays find surprising places of self awareness and solace: before a computer screen in a classroom; after a near-death experience; in a pottery repair studio; through a student’s perseverance in the face of impossibility; and in the confounding, foggy landscape of the Central Valley. This work is a coming to terms with the limits of knowledge, the limits of self-exploration, and the awkward peace that comes from realizing where one stands. I hope, just as Montaigne did some 600 years earlier, that what I have learned of my self provides for readers some small connection—that they feel their humanity enlarged, their isolation diminished, and their understanding of their own selves deepened.

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