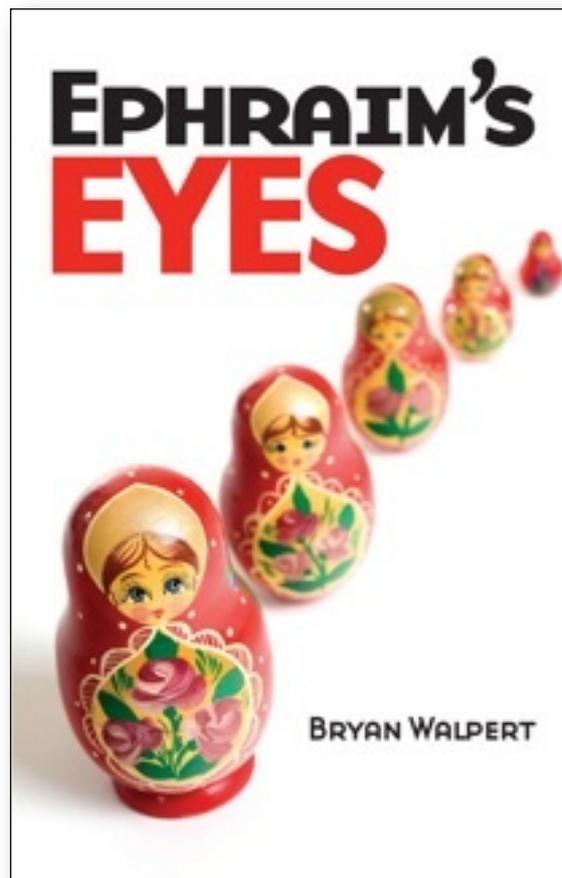


# Readers' Notes



In *Ephraim's Eyes*, why does the narrator tell his story in the way that he does? In what way does the nesting of the Russian Dolls act as a metaphor for that story and for the collection as a whole?

In *Grifola Frondosa*, what does the knowledge of mycology add to the story? At the end of the story, Carol is trying to imagine an answer; what could that be?

In *417 Feet*, does a shift in perspective help to resolve some issues?

Why has the author used *Word Problems* in this story? Does it add or detract from this story?

What is the *Speckled Hen* problem and why is it important in this story?

How does the author use the theme of escape throughout the *Man in the Box* story? Who escapes and who is trapped? How does the arrival of the boy's father affect the shop owner?

What role does storytelling play for the narrator in *Feijoa*? What role do facts play? Where else in the collection is the gathering of facts work with or in tension with the telling of stories? To what ends or effects?

In *16 Planets*, does the narrator succeed in holding onto his sanity?

To what extent is the final word of Earth-One, Earth-Two meant sincerely? To what extent is it meant ironically, with regard to the theme of speed?

In *Speculative Geography*, how does the author grapple with the anguish of caring for a severely ill child?

In what way does the narrator's mother in *Arrivals and Departures* adopt the kind of Zen mindfulness or presence that is meant to be cultivated by sitting meditation? In what way does she depart from it? Is the life of Zen contemplation a luxury? The narrator loses patience with what he sees as mystic mumbo-jumbo. Is he right to do so?

How does the *Acknowledgements* story tie in with other stories in the collection? Does it necessarily say anything about the author?

## About the Author

Bryan Walpert grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, received an MFA from the University of Maryland and PhD from the University of Denver, and now teaches creative writing at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand, where he won the 2007 Royal Society of New Zealand Manhire Award in Creative Science Writing-Fiction. He is also the author of a collection of poems, *Etymology* (Cinnamon Press).

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## Critical Praise

*"Fantastic insight ... and I can honestly say I've never read anything like it!"*

*"An unusual collection of short stories about feelings and perceptions. Most had a little twist or surprise towards the end. Some are rather odd but strangely haunting and sad.*

*Cleverly written!"*

*"This book is written by a very talented author. Bryan Walpert has a unique way of setting up a story, with most of the stories in this book very little "extra" information was given to the reader making them thirsty for more and more information about who the character is and why. Quite often the conclusion was not so much explained than assumed which was a really nice way to deal with quite delicate subject matter."*