

Jennifer A. Miskov, *Silver to Gold: A Journey of Young Revolutionaries*
(Silver to Gold, 2009), pp. 138

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Jennifer A. Miskov, the author of *Silver to Gold: A Journey of Young Revolutionaries*, dedicates her book “to those who have stepped into the infinite abyss of uncertainty to follow their hearts” (i). This is a sentiment that is present throughout the course of the story which is centred on the journey of a young woman named Desire, a character who has to overcome countless challenges while keeping faith in her dream in order to make this dream come true. *Silver to Gold* clearly belongs to the genre of inspirational fiction and aims to create a “Desire” in its readers to always strive for the best. The book is divided into three parts, each representing a step in Desire’s journey towards the fulfilment of her dream. A prologue introduces the reader to the main characters and their situation. Desire and her group of friends, the Young Revolutionaries, are surrounded by the army of King Laird, whose land they are attempting to flee. It is only through a lucky coincidence that they yet manage to escape and begin their journey towards the Silver Mountains and the Golden Pastures beyond.

In the first stage of their journey, the Young Revolutionaries struggle with their own fears of failure and have to learn that they can only progress if they meet the challenges that are thrown in their way. Desire’s own struggle is to overcome her fear of the unknown and find the faith within her to reach her goal – the Golden Pastures – no matter what. This faith is first tested when her friend Dawn decides to settle on one of the Silver Mountains, rather than continue the journey. Desire is compelled to learn to understand Dawn’s choice to settle for less than she could have, while not losing her own new found conviction to strive for the best.

This theme of the temptation of the comfortable and mediocre is further explored in the second part of the book. The pull of it on Desire is much stronger in this chapter than in the previous one. This time Sam, Desire’s boyfriend, is trying to persuade her to remain on one of the Silver Mountains and forsake her dream. Desire not only needs to hold on to her faith in the Golden Pastures, but has to question whether this faith is stronger than her other dream of having a family. She needs to decide what her real dream is. After much agonising, “I thought that following the Legend would bring fulfilment and happiness, yet I suddenly feel more lost and confused than when I started” (81), Desire finds the answer. She continues to strive for the best, the Golden Pastures.

These she finally reaches, with just a few of the Young Revolutionaries that had started out on the journey with her, in the third part of the book. Once living in the

Golden Pastures, Desire seems to have realised her dream, but the loss of so many of her friends on the way nags at her. Along with some of the Young Revolutionaries that had already joined Desire on her journey towards the Golden Pastures, she now sets out from them back towards the Silver and Bronze Mountains to persuade those that were lost on the journey to take it up again, and not settle for silver when they could have gold.

This is the core message of Miskov's book, conveyed in not very subtle allegory. *Silver to Gold* is essentially an inspirational story rather than a genuine novel, or novella as the book is quite short. It obviously takes its inspiration from Christian motifs and the entire arc of the story is strongly reminiscent of the biblical description of the Israelites' journey through the desert towards the Promised Land. Miskov does depart from her source enough though to create a story that is independent and adds interest to it by constructing it around a strong central female character. Desire's choice to forsake a secure family life in order to follow her dream is the book's most intriguing moment. It is a radical departure from conventional narratives which usually determine the happy family as the ultimate desire of any female character. In this story, the female rejects this socially constructed dream in order to follow her own. Unfortunately, this brave and radical choice is not explored any further since Miskov concentrates her entire literary effort on conveying the central message of not settling for anything less than the best, rather than on character development. *Silver to Gold* does hint at some very pertinent questions regarding an individual's struggles with life's obstacles, but does not allow its characters to really explore these, as it is too concerned with its own central message. Therefore it will only appeal to an audience wanting to hear such a message.