

Remembering

With the support of the Simons Foundation, SFU students were invited by the Institute for the Humanities to submit written research proposals that focused on issues related to citizenship. Bethany Koepke presented the following selected paper on November 15, 2007, at SFU Harbour Centre.

Bethany Koepke is a third year English major, Humanities minor. She has interests in creative writing and the ways fiction can access realms of thought and discussion. She is also interested in folk and fairy tales, the use of magic as a literary device, and the genre of fantasy. Earlier this year, Bethany presented a paper at the University of Alberta Undergraduate Classics Conference. She is also a co-op student and has recently completed two terms with a research group in the communications department at SFU.

Lethia felt herself slowly rise into wakefulness. She shifted slightly as her eyes blinked open, and she felt the weight of her lover's arm cast casually across her. Her head was nuzzled into the space between his neck and his shoulder, and the first thing she smelled that morning was his hair: sweet, musky, and strong.

She must have woken him when she stirred. He turned his head and the rough stubble of his chin scraped caressingly against her forehead. "Good morning," he said, as he craned his neck to place a gentle kiss on top of her bed-messed tawny hair.

"Good morning," she replied. His arm slid slowly across her flesh, his hand trailing across her chest and down her abdomen. Her toes curled, and she smiled, remembering. She smiled at their domestic bliss as his hand stopped over the gentle rise of her stomach and he again said, "good morning."

Her smile deepened. She curled into him, pressing as much of herself as she could against him. "Flynn," she said to him.

"Yes?"

"I love you." She spoke the truth, and he knew it. "Flynn," she said again.

"Yes?" he repeated.

"I will always love you."

Lethia and Flynn lay entwined in each other's love, revelling in the security and warmth that they felt there. Neither of them spoke. They clung to one another. Both of them knew that Lethia's last statement was not true. She would not always love him. And he would not always love her. They would not fall out of love, exactly. The flame would not sputter out between them until they disintegrated into in a mutual state of distrust and distaste. No, that would not be how their relationship ended.

One day Lethia and Flynn were going to wake up, and neither of them would remember that they were in love. One day, they were simply going to forget. That day would be soon.

Flynn held Lethia tightly against him. "I love you," he told her. He spoke the truth, and she knew it.

"We are trying to prepare for a situation that we can only imagine. We try to know, but we cannot. It is beyond the realm of our experience, but we are the ones who have to make it work." Lethia spoke before the Assembly of Citizens. She was fed up with their arrogance. So many of them insisted that they knew what was right for Galia, that they had the perfect answer, but Lethia was fed up. As she under-

stood it, there was no perfect answer. Even if there was, these people, her peers, could not possibly know it.

She continued. "I wish I knew what it felt like to wake up. I wish I could know what it feels like to open my eyes and not know who I am, or where I am, or what is going on. We can only imagine the panic that will ensue when we realize that everyone else is feeling the same way: that no one knows who they are, or where they are, or what is going on. I would love to know and to keep that knowledge. Better yet, I wish what was coming wasn't so, but it is." She leaned over the podium and looked slowly about her, making direct eye contact with as many of the Citizens as she could. She was especially sure to reach those who were especially guilty of the arrogance that so annoyed her. "And *you*," she said clearly. "You, like me, can *only* imagine. Yes, we have the documents from the past Civilizations, yes we have the cave and everything written in it, but we still cannot *know*. Those of you who think you know what is best, who think you know precisely what it takes to build Galia from the ground up after catastrophic chaos, cannot know. I cannot know. You cannot know. Please stop pretending that you do."

Lethia, like those in the assembly who she spoke to, was a Citizen of the Eighteenth Civilization of Galia. Her twenty-fifth birthday was six months away, but she would not celebrate it because she will not know when it arrives. This is because the next Civilization will begin in two months, and Galia will once again wake up. When Galia wakes up, Galia forgets. Thus, Lethia's birthday will come and go and she will only be able to guess at her age. She will no longer be Lethia. She will no longer be a Citizen, and it will no longer be the Eighteenth Civilization. Lethia was frustrated because she seemed to be the only one at the assembly who recognized the implications of this.

Years studying at the Galian Citizens' University had made her peers overconfident. The Citizens, Galians born in the first year of

the Eighteenth Civilization, were devoted to studying the writings left behind by the last Civilization's Citizens. They study because they need to prepare.

Every twenty-five years the Galians forget. Nobody knows why. They cannot even know for certain if they actually do live in the eighteenth cycle—there could have been more, but it has only been recorded for the last eighteen. Eighteen times, the Galians have forgotten. Eighteen times over the last four hundred and fifty years, Lethia's people have woken up in the cave and been very confused. In a mere two months, she, along with the other Citizens and all the people of Galia, will be one of those people who will wake up having forgotten.

Lethia was terrified. Flynn, also a Citizen, was terrified. Perhaps the other Citizens were terrified as well, but if they were, they hid it behind a façade of intellectual politics. As Citizens, it was their job to make sure that when Galia wakes up, the Galians will be able to follow the writings on the wall, and live happily.

"Try to remember," Lethia finished, "That you are dealing in lives. When you forget your lines of alliances and dalliances for power and influence over the Assembly, you will be just one of the many in the chaos of the cave. This is your future too that you shape, not just your people's."

The Assembly grumbled. The speaker of the house declared the day's assembly over. They would meet again on the morrow.

The Citizens, as they left, tried to ignore Lethia's impassioned words. Most of them were not keen on being humbled. Some of them had a tendency to diminish the situation until it was something of an intellectual exercise. It helped them keep a distance from what was going to happen. Lethia meant to tell them that the reality of Galia's curse was somewhat direr than they were making it. She did not realize that they kept this distance to stave off despair. They knew, each of them, the importance of their task. They worried, they feared, just as Lethia did. If they put on airs and got caught up in

their game of distance, it was only so they did not give in to the hopelessness of their task.

Thus, as they left the assembly, most of the Citizens tried to put from their minds Lethia's doomsday speech. They knew it all already, just as they knew that to think too much on what she said would be their downfall.

But Lethia worried even more than some of the other Citizens. She skirted despair on a daily basis. Lethia worried for both of them: for herself, and for the child she would bear some time in the sixth month of the Nineteenth Civilization. Six months was not long enough to settle. She knew that. And when she bore her child, she knew that she would not know who she was, or where she was, or what was going on. She would have a child to care for at the same time.

The responsibility was stifling.

Lethia left the podium and noticed Flynn waiting for her at the side of the stage. She went to him and he put his arm around her. "You did well," he told her. She kissed his cheek.

More than anything, the Citizens had to make it through. They needed something to help them bear the responsibility. Yes, many of them got caught up in the processes and neglected to evaluate the reality of the situation; yes, many of them had a tendency to make their duty into a politicized game. Lethia had Flynn, and Flynn had Lethia.

There was something of a debate going on in one of the University's antechambers about how Citizens ought to be chosen in the next Civilization. Lethia, along with the other Citizens of the Eighteenth Civilization, had been given the title upon birth. They are the Galian born in the first year of the Civilization. One group was arguing that Citizens should be chosen another way. They argue that by naming Citizens at birth, Galia ends up with a class of Citizens who are too young to do their jobs. Citizens of the Eighteenth Civilization began studying the cave and the texts of the past civilizations when they were six years old, and

began holding assemblies to discuss the next Civilization ten years later, at age sixteen. Now, the oldest of them are twenty-four years old, and there are a few still at twenty-three. Some claim that the assembly needs longer to properly debate and decide on the next Civilization's foundation.

Another group, conversely, holds closely to what the texts say regarding why the Seventeenth Civilization chose to write it as they did. That position holds that it does more harm than good to allow Citizens to begin making decisions and holding discussions in the formative years of the Civilization, for to express concern and to move for change before the Civilization has established itself calls for chaos. They argue that it is more important for the good of Galia that Citizens allow the writings of the past Civilization to take their course before they are able to be objectively evaluated.

Lethia was apathetic to the topic. Though she saw definite merit in both positions, she did not care enough to become a part of the pre-assembly discussions. She saw it as a technical issue, and perhaps not where energies should be focussed so close to the next Civilization. Flynn had decided he would go to the discussion in the antechamber, and he promised to fill Lethia in on any important happenings.

She decided to use the opportunity to spend some time alone in the cave. It had been written in texts, which Lethia had studied well, that the Eleventh Civilization feared the cave and thought it was contaminated by evil. They somehow believed that it was the cave itself that was responsible for the plight of the Galian society. They thought that if they spent the last night of the twenty-fifth year of their civilization somewhere other than the cave that they would not forget. They were wrong. It is also written that the Twelfth Civilization was the bloodiest and most chaotic. Apparently when Galia woke up, everybody was so panic-stricken that people turned on one another with suspicion. By the time they found the cave the worst

of the damage had been done, and it was difficult to establish order.

Lethia did not understand how they could think the cave an inherently malevolent place. She rather despised the Galian condition and could want for nothing more than to be the same woman she was now when she became a mother, but she could not blame the cave. To her it was the most calming of places. She knew that the place had seen panic, but she also knew that the writings it held had brought peace and order to very confused groups of people. It was a place of knowledge, where the most essential pieces of information concerning the establishment of the Civilization were kept. Soon, the Citizens would be mounting the ideologies that they have come to more or less agree on. There are parts that they will leave exactly as they are, and other parts that they will re-write all together. That is the duty of the Citizenry. The importance of the job gives meaning when the ephemeral nature of their society might influence the Citizens to take on a demeanour of purposeless despair. The whole feeling of the cave is one of meaning, one of hope. What is written on the walls might inspire a Civilization better than the current one, one that has fewer problems, knows less pain. The Eighteenth Civilization is pretty good, especially compared to what Lethia had read about some of the others, but there is always room for improvement.

The cave is a place of hope for the future. It is a place of knowledge and wisdom passed down through the ages. It is eternal, a place that all of the Civilizations have in common, despite the brevity of their self-awareness. And it is a place of mystery.

Lethia considered the importance of the cave and the role that she was going to play shaping it for the next Civilization. She smiled and scanned the western wall until she saw the phrase she sought: "Any babe born this first year of the Civilization shall be named Citizen of Galia." Some, if they had their way, would have that statement changed. The Citizens had

no way of knowing how many dozens of statements have been altered or eradicated completely from the walls. There are some parts, for example the crude but effective map that shows the way from the cave to the homes and other shelters that make up Galia, that have obviously been on the walls for many Civilizations. Their markings are carved into the wall and the marks have been rounded and smoothed with time. Indeed, it had been passed at one of the recent assemblies that the Citizens will recast some of the older writings because they are beginning to get hard to read.

Lethia pondered how much wisdom had been lost, and how much trouble had been eased based on what has come on and off the walls of cave.

She gently lowered herself onto the ground and lay down on it. She looked up at the jagged stones across the top of the cave and tried to imagine what it was going to feel like going to sleep the night the Civilization changed and know that she would not be herself in the morning. She closed her eyes. She tried to imagine herself slipping away, trying to know what it would mean to wake up.

Lethia opened her eyes. It was a silly game. She turned her head, laying her cheek against the ground and enjoying the coolness of the stone. She twitched her brow. From this unique angle she noticed something in the cave that she had never seen before. There was a pile of loose stones, laid most casually together. It was not an unusual sight in a cave, and it was no wonder that the other Citizens had paid it no notice. From where Lethia lay, however, she could see the slightest corner of leather. She righted herself and crawled toward the rocks. She cleared them away and revealed a book that seemed to have been very carefully secreted away.

It was small, barely the size of her hand. The cover had probably once been black but it had faded to a dusty grey and was creased where stones had lain on top of it. It was not a thick volume, but it was heavy. Lethia carefully opened the book. She read.

“But she’s here!” Lethia said at home. “I should try to find her!”

Flynn took Lethia’s hand and sat, making her sit as well. “You don’t know that,” he said reasonably. “She would be a very old woman. She could be long dead.”

Lethia shook her head. “It says it was written in the Sixteenth Civilization. Assuming their Citizens were selected as ours are—”

“They were,” Flynn interjected. “We discussed it today: at least the past four Civilizations have selected Citizens at birth.”

“Then she turned twenty-five the year the Civilization changed, turned fifty the year we were born, and turns seventy-five this year!”

“Again, she’s very old, if alive at all. Why trouble an old woman like that?”

Lethia sighed. “Because she wanted to remember. She wanted to be herself. It says so in her journal.” Lethia picked the book up of the table that she had put it on in the room that she and Flynn shared. After reading the journal she had immediately sought to share it with him, and to seek out its writer. She read: *“I sometimes wonder if it will take only one—only one person—to remember. If I can know, if I can be me when I am supposed to forget, maybe it can break the cycle. What if I can end Galia’s curse? What if I am the Citizen who will set us free?”*

Flynn gently took the volume from her hands. In it were written thoughts that every Citizen had thought at some point. It was the “what if” that haunted them all, tormenting each of them. A terrifying day was rapidly approaching, but there was nothing they could do about it. Flynn did not want his lover to find new hope only to have it taken jarringly away. He put the book back on the table. “They tried that, Lethia. You know this already.”

She did. It was the disaster of the Fifth Civilization. The Fourth Civilization had been desperate to remember and had had each Galian write a detailed summary of their life. They had clutched these documents as they had gone to sleep in the cave. When they woke up, everyone read who they had been married to, what they

had done for a living, what their best and worst qualities were, what they liked to do in their free time. Everyone tried to reconstruct the life they had lived, but it was all artificial. The people could not fit into the life they tried to mould themselves to, because the memories were fake. They were starting over as different people and could not pretend to be who they no longer were. Eventually order decayed: people were unhappy, rebellious, adulterous, angry. They ended up abandoning the project and were left trying to fix a rather dysfunctional society.

“I know.” Lethia sighed and sank into the sofa, and thus into Flynn. “But this,” she said, gesturing to the woman’s, Mina’s, journal, “is different some how. It is one person. The Fifth Civilization was trying to deal with remembering themselves while also dealing with the chaos of establishing order. Fewer things are better documented in this university than the chaos of waking up. No wonder it did not work—the people were somewhat preoccupied with figuring out how to live.” They sat in companionable silence for a moment. “And it is what she wanted.”

Flynn sighed—noting that between them they were doing a lot of that in this conversation. “This woman—”

“Mina,” Lethia provided.

“No, not Mina,” he countered. “Mina does not exist anymore. She has changed her name, her life, *twice* since she wrote that. This woman, whoever she is, if she is even alive, has a life now. It is a life very different from Mina’s. It would disrupt her, upset her. Why don’t you just let her live her life?”

“Because,” Lethia replied. For a moment Flynn thought she might leave her answer at that. Then she continued. “Because otherwise, how will we ever know if she was right? What if this could break the curse?”

Flynn shook his head and chuckled under his breath. “Indeed,” he answered. “What if?”

Flynn managed to talk her into waiting until the next day to seek out Mina-twice-renamed.

Lethia had resisted at first, but he pointed out that if there really were a seventy-five year old woman out there for them to talk to, by the time Flynn had become resigned to finding her it was so late into the evening that surely she was preparing for bed, if not already sleeping.

Once morning came, even Lethia had to agree that their quest had to wait until after Assembly. As her sworn duty, she could not simply decide not to attend. She only hoped that it would be a relatively short one.

The Citizens discussed the issue of Citizen selection. Lethia chose not to contribute, though Flynn did say a few short things. In truth, the Assembly was not an unusually long one, though the time did drag for Lethia. The Citizens did not reach any conclusions, but it gave the Citizenry things to consider. A motion was passed that the issue would be readdressed in a week's time.

After the Assembly, Lethia wasted no time in getting herself and Flynn set to task. Seeking the woman out was going to be difficult, but not impossible.

Mina had described herself as a mid-height brunette with long straight hair and blue eyes. Fifty years later, this description was next to useless. More pertinent was the fact that Mina had apparently caused a scar on her left hand. Lethia had been moved to tears when she read about how Mina had driven a wooden spike clear through her hand so that no matter what she would be recognizable. A stake, straight through the hand! It must have been nearly unbearably painful, but hopefully she had been correct: it should be enough for them to be able to find her.

They began by canvassing the shelters of the old and sick. They asked after women aged sixty to eighty—depending how well Mina aged, the perception of her age would alter radically. Lethia and Flynn both knew exactly how old she was, but Mina would have long since forgotten. They did not find her in the old age shelter. Next they went to the market. Lethia approached people saying that an elderly

woman had left a book at the university and that she was trying to return it. She told them that she did not catch the woman's name, but knew she had blue eyes, and she noticed a scar on her left hand. Eventually they found someone who knew her.

"Of course," said a sunny blond woman with two toddlers at her skirt. "That's my mother. I did not know she went to visit the university."

"Your mother?" Flynn said.

The woman laughed. "Well you know how it is. When I woke up in the cave I about seven or eight. Telma took me in as her own. I know now that she was a bit old to have been my natural mother, but she was nothing but good to me." She looked down to the little ones at her skirts, and placed a hand on each of their heads. "You will find someone just like grandma, won't you?" The children nodded vehemently. The woman smiled. "They are not afraid." Something in her voice betrayed her.

Lethia smiled sadly. She put a hand over her own stomach. "I understand." Flynn squeezed her hand reassuringly. "Anyway, can you tell us how we can reach your mother?"

The woman smiled. "Oh I can take that to her. It's not a problem."

Lethia glanced at Flynn. "I would really like to talk to her if I could . . . I . . ."

"She gave us an interesting perspective on an issue and we would like to further discuss it," Flynn supplied.

The woman looked confused, and then the realization hit her. "Oh my! Are you Citizens? I'm so sorry. How stupid of me!" She put her arms up and tried to fix her hair, while also straightening her dress.

Lethia reached out a hand. "Please. That is not necessary. Can you please just take us to your mother?"

The woman nodded quickly. "Of course," she said. "Right this way." She took each child by the hand and began to lead Flynn and Lethia with a nervous smile.

Lethia looked harshly at Flynn. The woman's change in demeanour was the result of the

decision of the past Civilization's Citizens that Lethia despised the most. They had decided that order would be most easily established if the Galians revered Citizens. The Citizens were seen as people above the masses, far beyond normal respect and equality. Their power and importance had been emphasized in the cave, and as a result the average Galian all but worshiped the Citizens whenever they deigned to descend from the tower on the hill. Lethia hated it. It was one thing that she had been adamant about during Assembly, and enough shared her view that the wall would be altered before the next Civilization.

The woman led them to a midsize home, close to the central market. "Telma lives here," she said. "With my husband, my children, and myself. My husband is working—if you like, I can—"

Lethia shook her head. "Thank you. You have done more than enough. Please continue with your day, go back to your shopping, as if we were not here."

The woman smiled as if to say that would be impossible, but that she would do as she was asked. "If that pleases you most honourable Citizens, honoured lady, honoured sir."

Lethia had to consciously refrain her eyebrow from rising. She did not spend much time outside the university for just this reason. She did not see herself above any other Galian, and she could barely stand being treated as if she were. Nonetheless, she had never heard the word *honour* used quite so many times for the sake of the Citizens. Lethia reached out and gently touched the woman's face. "You have beautiful children. And you have done a good thing taking care of your mother in her old age, as she took care you when you were a child. You are a good woman, and I am grateful."

"My lady," was all that the woman could say, as tears welled in her eyes. She motioned, as if asking them if she should leave, and Lethia gently nodded.

When she was out of earshot, and before they went inside the house, Lethia glared at Flynn. "That wasn't necessary."

Flynn shrugged. "It got us where we wanted to be, and quickly." He smiled playfully. "Shall we go in . . . *honourable lady?*"

Lethia sighed. "The Assembly will be hearing from me about that exchange."

The old woman herself let them in. Indeed she did look old, but not as old as Lethia had thought she might, considering she was nigh seventy-five years old. She did not seem perturbed by their visit, but rather glad of the company. She did not ask many questions about why they were there, and when Lethia said they were friends of her daughter's, she just answered that that was very nice. Lethia was happy to not have to jump into explanations so soon.

They chatted for a while over tea. Telma was a lovely lady and so pleased to have guests to entertain. Lethia idly wondered what her awestruck daughter would think if she knew that her kind old mother had been a Citizen two Civilizations ago. After a few minutes of chatter, Flynn looked pointedly at her, and she took it as a cue to begin.

"Telma," Lethia began. "Would you be able to tell me how you got that scar on your hand?"

The old woman held out her left hand and splayed her fingers wide to show off the scar. Lethia felt Flynn cringe beside her, and she had to fight off a similar response. They both knew exactly how it had gotten there. The woman smiled. "I got this scar when I was a young woman."

Lethia's eyes widened slightly, but it was Flynn who asked the question. "Do you . . . remember that?"

The woman laughed a throaty old woman laugh. "Of course not, son. But

when I woke up in that chilly cave, it was there, and healed over almost just like this. I could tell it had been there for a while."

"Telma," Lethia said as she pulled the journal out from her bag. "We're here to talk to you about this. Do you know what this is?" Telma smiled, but shook her head. "It is a journal, and it was written two civilizations ago."

“You wrote it,” Flynn said. “It describes that scar on your hand. It is written in that book so that future Citizens could find you based on that mark. It took us nearly two Civilizations, but we’ve found you.”

Telma looked at her hand, and then to the book. “I wrote that?” she asked.

Lethia nodded. “Yes, you did. You were twenty-four years old when you wrote it—the same age I am now. You were a Citizen.”

Telma blinked and raised her hand to the level of her mouth, partially covering it. “A Citizen?” She shook her head. “No, no I couldn’t have been.”

Lethia smiled patiently. “Yes, Telma, you were. Your name was Mina then.”

“Mina?” the woman repeated. There was a flash in her eyes, and the woman looked very thoughtful. “Mina? Yes . . . of course.”

Lethia tried to remain silent until the woman chose to speak, but after a few moments passed she could hardly sit still. “Do you . . . ?”

The woman smiled. “No, dear, I do not remember being called Mina. If I *was* her . . . that was a very long time ago, and I have forgotten. It is a beautiful name, though.”

Flynn leaned forward in his seat. For all his early scepticism, Lethia could see that he was now at least curious. “When Lethia told you that your name had been Mina, you seemed to have some kind of response. Can you tell us about it?”

Telma picked up the teapot and refilled each of their cups. “It is an important name, but it is not mine.” Flynn asked her what she meant by that, but she just smiled thoughtfully.

Hoping to reach her, and to possibly inspire a similar look of revelation, Lethia began to tell Telma about her life as Mina based on what was in the journal. She told her about lovers and friends and her family. She even read some sections aloud. While Telma listened respectfully, she never gave any indication that she recognized anything that Lethia told her about.

“That is lovely, dear, but you are telling me about a stranger. I do not know this woman,

and I am certainly not her.” Lethia kept on. The woman continued to deny having any glimmer of memory connected to anything in the book.

After some time, Telma, beginning to look haggard, rose to take the empty teacups out of the room. When she had left, Flynn spoke quietly to Lethia. “We’re badgering her. She is getting tired. We should go.”

“But she knew the name,” Lethia said. “That’s something.”

“And nothing else,” he replied. “Maybe she has a friend by that name. We know that Galian use names now that they have used for many Civilizations. If she knew anything else, she would have no reason to keep it from us.”

“You’re right.” She leaned into him and he put his arm around her for a quick embrace. “It’s just so disappointing.”

“I know.”

When Telma returned, Flynn and Lethia thanked her profusely for her hospitality. “I am so sorry I couldn’t help you more,” the woman said.

Lethia smiled and shook her head. “You did everything you could. Thank you so much for your cooperation.” They headed out towards the street, but just before she left, Lethia turned once more to speak to Telma. “Your daughter is a lovely person. Please give her my appreciation.” She smiled. “I’m sorry, but I do not think she told me her name.”

Both Lethia and Flynn saw the twinkle in her eye as she responded. “I named that little girl the day I saw her in the cave, the day I took her home with me. I named her Mina.”

“Mina,” both Flynn and Lethia repeated.

“Mina,” Telma said again. “That is what I called her.”

Thus it was that Lethia returned to the University with hope. She had not gained all that she had desired, but she had hope. When she went to sleep that night, after making gentle love to ever-devoted Flynn, it was with the sense that the world might be all right for her unborn child after all. She was not convinced

that she would remember, but she was no longer so afraid of forgetting.

**A F I C T I O N A L D I S C O U R S E
W I T H R E A L I T Y : A N
A N A L Y S I S O F R E M E M B E R I N G**

Remembering is set in a fictional land called Galia, a land where the people forget everything about their civilization every twenty-five years. The Galians are cursed to “wake up” four times a century, each time having to rebuild their world based on the writings left behind by the “Citizens,” a class of governing Galians who are devoted to the study of past Galian civilizations at the Galian Citizens’ University. The purpose of the story is not to outline the ideal society, but rather to raise the kinds of questions that one would have to raise if set to the task of building a society from scratch.

The most important factor for understanding the motivations of the characters in the story, particularly the motivations of Lethia, the protagonist, is to understand the urgency of their situation. The next Civilization is only eight weeks away, and the Citizens are frantically trying to prepare. They deal with their stress in a number of different ways, and this occasionally causes friction between them. For Lethia the situation is even more urgent. She has no patience for the way that most of the Citizens deal with their stress. The world that they are trying to build will affect not only her own life, but the life of the baby she is pregnant with.

The situation of the Galians, although rooted in a supernatural sort of circumstance, is not altogether different from what Canadians in the twenty-first century deal with; indeed, it could be argued that it is a part of a universal human concern. All that the Galians want is for the future to be better than the present. They want to build a better world for their children, and really, what society does not want to do that? If the Galians thought that their world was perfect, there would be no need for the Citizens, or for the University. If the Galians

thought that the last Civilization had gotten it right, there would be no need to change what was written in the cave, for they would simply hope to repeat the process identically each time they woke up.

Lethia is a woman who cannot escape the humanity that is caught up in the Galian condition. She sees nothing but the people who are affected by the curse and wants nothing but to help ease their pain. Her own fecundity makes it so that she can never lose focus on this ultimate end. She gets angry with the other Citizens for distancing themselves. Her own method of coping is her deep connection with another person, her lover, Flynn. She identifies with the cave as a location of great human feeling and wisdom. She reads the first person journal of a Citizen much like herself, who hopes beyond hope that she will be able to remember her childhood past age twenty-five. Lethia cannot neglect the opportunity to meet with the woman who was once named Mina. Everything she has read suggests to her that Mina’s case will be a dead end, but she has to try.

Flynn, Lethia’s lover, is philosophically quite different from Lethia. Ultimately he is more pragmatic. He sees Lethia’s hope as a destructive force—he would rather accept conditions as they are than uselessly hope that he could change the things beyond his control. Nonetheless, he cannot crush her hopes. When she says that she will always love him, even though they both know that is false, he says nothing. When she wants to find the woman who used to be Mina, he goes with her, even though he knows that it will not break Galia’s curse. He does not seem to hold any particular grudge against the Citizens who occasionally lose sight of the great importance of their task. As long as they get their jobs done, he is satisfied. Flynn is more concerned than Lethia about the more mechanical aspects of the Citizenry. How the Citizens should go about their conversations is just as valid an issue to him as what the conversations are about in the first place. It is he who participates in the discussions about

how Citizens are selected, while Lethia chooses to contemplate in the cave.

Though Lethia's point of view is perhaps more sympathetic, she does need the steady force of Flynn to balance her rosy idealism with the practical concerns of getting things accomplished. Overall though, the structure of the Citizenry and of the University is worth considering. The bureaucracy appears considerable. On the issue of Citizen selection alone, the Citizens participated in pre-assembly discussions to which they brought their already well-formed arguments, followed by an Assembly discussion at which point they decided they might make a decision at a later Assembly. Is this the most efficient way for the Galian Citizens to make decisions? Lethia probably finds the system tedious—especially when it focuses on a subject that she considers less than crucial. Does this system of checks and balances and thorough discussion prevent rash decisions or the abuse of power? That might be how Flynn sees it.

There are a huge number of issues that the Citizens must consider before Galia forgets. Decades of study and nine years of Assemblies go into the construction of the next Civilization. The story did not cover these discussions, largely because the author did not feel qualified to speak authoritatively in answering the questions. It is implied, however, that these discussions have taken place, and will continue to take place over the weeks preceding the next Civilization.

Hopefully the reader will follow the thought experiment and place him or herself in the role of a Galian Citizen. There are so many important issues. For example: How do the Citizens deal with religion? Do they provide holy texts and dictate how people are to worship? Do they allow many religions or only one? Does the religion somehow explain why the Galians forget?

Or do the Citizens leave it up to the people to find their own faith? A primary concern of the Citizenry appeared to be how to deal with the initial few weeks of the Civilization. They wanted to minimize the damage that the inevitable chaos and panic would cause. Perhaps a theological framework would ease the transition of Civilizations. Perhaps it would not.

Other topics that the Citizens would surely have discussed: family, education, healthcare, laws and law enforcement, customs, culture, arts, government, economy, morals, ethics. These are the same issues that occupy the minds of people concerned with today's society. Yes, the Galians face the urgency of their curse and know that they need to lay foundations for their people to rebuild, but people still worry about these issues here. In Galia, it is the Citizens' responsibility to be concerned about these matters. In Canada, social responsibility drives our citizens to be accountable for these same matters in our society. Galia may seem far away, and even impossible, but their concerns are certainly relevant.

Hopefully it is now clear the fictional and speculative realm of Galia holds considerable relevance to the society that we know as reality. The questions that *Remembering* raises are many, and they have not been exhausted by this short analysis. An intention behind the story was to provoke discussion about the nature of citizenship and the role of citizens in shaping and maintaining a society. Through the use of literary techniques that have attempted to heighten the urgency of the situation while also distancing familiar concepts from conventional modes of consideration, *Remembering* is an exercise for the socially responsible imagination. It bids the reader to ask what he or she would do as a Galian Citizen, and it begs the question of what that implies of the reader as a contemporary Canadian citizen.