

The strumpets are back

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I remembering writing about the peonies a year ago, comparing them to garish, over-made-up women, sprawled in the gutter after a night on the town. Now they're back, and I still feel that way about them, that they should have a mother who says, "You're not going out like THAT, are you?" They are SO over-the-top.

I am back in Maine after a night in New York and a night in North Carolina traveling from one to the other on what the newspaper later described as the worst travel day so far of 2007, especially at La Guardia After a crashed computer system that apparetly destroyed all the flight plans for the East coast, my plane sat on the runway at La Guardia for three hours, and I was in a seat next to a woman with a baby on her lap. Actually, it was a pretty good baby, and I felt sorrier for the mom than I did for myself, though only slightly.

Last night, despite a shelf full of old Bette Davis videos waiting to be watched, I read the book "Eat Pray Love" by Elizabeth Gilbert. Someone I know had emailed me that she had read and enjoyed it. "But I skipped the pray part," she said. Excuse me? I remember years ago, in one

of the Anastasia books, Mrs. Krupnik confesses to her husband that she skipped all the war parts in "War and Peace." But I wrote that as a humorous moment, not realizing that there are actually people who leap over whole sections of books. Sad for the writer who strives for continuity... and in the case of the Gilbert book, it was carefully put together so that each section flowed from the previous one.

The last section of the book (the "love" section) takes place in Ubud, the small town in the center of Bali where I spent some time eleven years ago. So some of the places were familiar (and it sounds as if it hasn't changed much in the years since I was there) and I became nostalgic for the colorful and cheerful life in that incredible place, even nostalgic for the monkeys who grabbed at my clothes in 1996 and seem still to be doing it today.

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