Reviewer's Bookwatch

Volume 14, Number 11  November 2014  Home | RBW Index

Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer's Choice</th>
<th>Ann's Bookshelf</th>
<th>Deacon's Bookshelf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gail's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Gary's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Gloria's Bookshelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Jaclyn's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Julie's Bookshelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karyn's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Katherine's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Kevin's Bookshelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Margaret's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Mason's Bookshelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Peggy's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Sarah's Bookshelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Teri's Bookshelf</td>
<td>Theodore's Bookshelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulfiqar's Bookshelf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewer's Choice

Vintage
Lisa Ezzard
New Native Press
Post Office Box 661, Cullowhee, NC, 28723
http://newnative.wordpress.com
1883197325, $12.00, www.amazon.com

Laurence Holden
Reviewer
Vintage, (New Native Press 2013) by Lisa Ezzard explores the connection between place and self, past and present - about being bound to that intersection, committed to it, hazarded by it, in both hope and suffering. Taking us through one year in the life of a vineyard, she pulls us through one person's grappling with her own growth through the inner seasons of a life.

Ode to the Goddess of Surrender

Mothers, it will always be that the Earth is too small for the love of our children. Even when we find the small black pearl or the yellow-flowering medicine we will always nod our heads and keep searching for new habits, remedies, and rightness, shaping what Is -- into memories, into shawls and biscuits and sacreds, turning family tale to legend, legend to oath, oath to wine.

So begins Ms. Ezzard's book. She returns home after 18 years to her sixth generation family farm to join her mother and father, learning to grow grapes, make wine, and make sense of her life. Not a romantic back to nature book, nor even a sojourn to a simpler life on the land, these poems chronicle the inner and outer seasons of growth of one year, from one winter to the next.

The journey begins in winter,

"each gnarled vine brought to winter stillness, tied off, quiescent and harboring life"

In "Eupheme," the poet calls on the voice of the ancient Greek spirit of praise and good omen, proclaiming "the muses sang the blues / like an old Appalachian folk song," then gathers around the nine muses "shaping their sorrow into stars, their loneliness into painted angels, and their song into a string of lights"

and pours them moonshine "as a foretaste / of forever."

"Then in the full-moon-lit night Eupheme crafted me the honeycomb candle which I have lit only in my dreams"
Then in "Blaspheme" she conjures another spirit "drunk on the years we'd wasted / and the husbands never good enough," and in another, waking on a winter morning and putting on her socks, awe-struck

"as if the Earth has been tilled in my sleep,
all the dead vines turned over, the rotten seeds exposed."

Each season reverberates to her inner life, past and present:

"the mass of never-endings and boredoms
and demands and chaos, the screaming matches,
the matches lit, the unlit journeys, the gamble."

But the demands of the seasons on a farm are inviolable. What the land needs to be done must be done when it needs to be done. Early spring finds the poet with a "hunger to understand / the four elements - " "broken in tears and sweat," "a root grubber, trading jokes / with earth worms." The dangerous spring frost that threatens all the hopes for the year brings sharp recognition of how "once we've been wrecked / This loss of virility, beauty / and substance" we "begin again, / lesser than we were / but twice as potent." Summer finds her training Tannat vines, humbled by the work, liberated from her past thirty years roaming the West Coast, and now here on Tiger Mountain having to admit

"I have been lopped
by the farmer's skillful knife
in case I should turn to wood or spread too luxuriantly."

Fall finds her coming to terms with the full life of vines, her father's war with rotting grapes, her mother's sadness at having to harvest the plump bundles of grapes echoing her own now grown relationship to her mother's life.

What makes a year in the life of a vineyard, or in the life of one woman, or of any one? Is it the yearnings, the shapings, the prunings, the plans, the harvests, the failures, the regrets? What does make a year of one's life? How is it to be truly measured - by loss, by gain, by some measured steps toward fulfillment, appeasement, folly, or bargain?

In our time cloaked and clocked lives, a nanosecond on the stock exchange marks the difference between profit and loss; the timing of our heart beat tells us of our health. In this, Chronos time, we've all but forgotten that other dimension of time, Kairos, the time that circles, returns, enfolds, and cycles. In our so much measured lives, the measureless becomes quite oblique to our line of sight, the
"arrow of time" rules, and never is there ever returning.

But this is not so, and these poems tell us how. In the sense that this journey is a coming home, it is one that cycles into the maturity that a life can harvest. Like the wine she makes out of air, water, soil, sun, and seasons rich with layers of flavors, tones and after tones, these poems echo with layer after layer of the connected, humming, chordal meanings of a life: all the blessings and the curse of entanglement with land and life. And in this Lisa Ezzard reveals a hard won wisdom available to us all:

shaping what Is -- into memories,
into shawls and biscuits and sacreds,
turning family tale to legend,
legend to oath, oath to wine.

keeping the intertwined poetry of the land and self alive.

Sorrow
John Lawson
Dragonwell Publishing
2711 Centerville Rd., Suite 120, Wilmington, DE 19808
http://publishing.dragonwell.org
9781940076157, $16.95, 256pp, www.amazon.com

Mayra Calvani
Reviewer

Genre: Fantasy

Sorrow begins with a mysterious traveler on a mission, secretly carrying a box which contains a precious, powerful weapon.

Then the story moves to Vestiga Gaesi, where we meet Faina, the seductive yet naive fourteen-year old girl with a mysterious past who is staying at the Viscount's luxurious home - where the story mainly takes place. Then, that night, an important Bishop is murdered, and Lord Ash is called to solve the case. It appears this isn’t the first crime committed against members of the clergy in the past few months. Thus begins his investigation. Soon, he has a suspect: Sorrow. Unfortunately, no one knows who this Sorrow really is, for this killer appears to be a supernatural creature that sheds black tears while killing. Who is Sorrow? Why are victims clergymen? What is Faina's real identity and why is she in Vestiga Gaesi?

Lawson has created a very real, dark fantasy world that readers will be able to picture vividly in their minds. The descriptions, mood, and dialogue all help
bring this story’s detailed world to life. The characters are deftly drawn and come across as genuine people. The prose sparkles with beautifully crafted language. Lawson’s strength lies in characterization and creating an imaginative dark world. I’d like to add that I found the details about religion and the clergy to be very well researched.

There's an array of interesting characters with equal levels of importance that, together with intriguing twists and turns, will keep readers guessing: Phindol, the unfortunate traveler; Lord Ash, the detective who tries to solve the murder; and, of course, Faina, the alluring Lolita-like protagonist shrouded in mystery who seems to unwillingly seduce all men who set eyes on her. Though the writing is in good taste and there's nothing graphic, I should mention that some of her scenes with Lord Ash and Phintol, both adult males, might be considered a bit disturbing to sensitive readers.

Sorrow is a standalone novel. However, it takes place in the same world - though hundreds of years apart - as Lawson's previous novel, The Loathly Lady, also by Dragonwell Publishing.

Recommended for fans of dark fantasy who like a strong touch of mystery.

The Mystery of the Missing Ming
Anne Louder McGee
Vendera Publishing
www.venderapublishing.com

Michael Thal, Reviewer
www.michaelthal.com

Teen sleuth Mallory Gilmartin is back in a new adventure. Last time we heard from her in The Mystery at Marlatt Manor, Malory was unraveling a devious plot regarding a deserted mansion. In her new Cedar Creek Mystery, someone stole librarian Edna May Florentine's valuable Ming vase from her home. To make matters worse, a mysterious interloper is accusing the elderly librarian of stealing that same vase from his house 30 years ago; so the local heat takes Edna May away in handcuffs.

Anne Loader McGee brings us book two of the Cedar Creek Mystery series, The Mystery of the Missing Ming. With her signature crisp sentences and humorous dialogue, McGee keeps readers engaged in a fun-filled adventure that unfolds during the 1970s in Cedar Creek, Virginia.

The cast of characters include Aggie Hobbs, Mallory's 60 something grandma, who expects her grand children to call her Aggie, OR ELSE! Sidekick, Kyle,
In "Phi: A Voyage from the Brain to the Soul," Giulio Tononi pays homage to Dante, and casts Galileo as the pilgrim in an epic voyage of discovery about the mysteries of consciousness. While Dante's pilgrimage in the Commedia was guided by Virgil and Beatrice, here Galileo's voyage is led by a troika of guides: Frick, a simulacrum of Francis Crick who framed consciousness as the central question in biology leads Galileo through the biological substrate of being, while Alturi, avatar of the mathematician and inventor of an early computer Alan Turing, leads the scientist through the computational complexities of thought, culminating in Tononi's theory that consciousness is integrated information. Charles Darwin is Galileo's third and final guide, placing consciousness in the context of the organism. Throughout this narrative, the author provides commentary, at times disparaging, other time cryptic, about Galileo's journey, a clever artifice reminiscent of the commentary that Dante employed in his Vita Nuova. (Alighieri, 1969). This commentary allows Tononi to retain the appearance of objectivity and scientific credibility while discussing such ethereal subjects as the soul. Galileo, Tononi reminds us, could recite the Commedia from heart, and once calculated the size of heaven and hell from the verses of Dante's poem (Galilei, 1588): Here exploring consciousness, Galileo maps the universe that can be known.

Tononi paraphrases the opening lines of the Commedia to introduce his own book: but where the poet found himself lost "midway in our life's journey (Alighieri, 1954)," he places Galileo "Midway upon the journey of his dream." The distinction is important because sleep, the perturbation of consciousness in the dream state, or annihilation of consciousness in dreamless sleep provides the means to interrogate the physical substrates of consciousness. Recent studies
have shown that the return to consciousness from the oblivion of anesthesia involves integration of the activity of both cortical and primitive subcortical structures, with the latter performing perhaps a surprisingly large part in what is widely regarded, in an evolutionary sense, as a relatively recent and characteristically human trait of consciousness (Langsjo, et al., 2012). Yet it has long been recognized that lesions of those primitive midbrain regions lead to irreversible coma, while damage to phylogenetically more recent neocortical structures may leave an individual conscious and responsive, even if lacking in self awareness. Indeed degrees of consciousness are likely shared among a large number of vertebrates (Mashour & Alkire, 2013). In order to illustrate this, Tononi tells a story of "a human ox and a donkey human" loosely based on story by the Italian author Giovanni Verga about a mineworker boy and donkey, likening the existence of each to the other in the throes of harsh menial labor. Just as traces of consciousness among animals are subtle, the emergence of consciousness among infants is gradual, almost imperceptible and widely thought to take months or years to occur. Yet just as with animal consciousness, evidence is accumulating that early sparks of consciousness may be found in infants as young as five months of age (Kouider, et al., 2013).

Darwin guides Galileo through part of his journey to remind us that the biological substrate of consciousness evolved in humans and animals alike. But if consciousness evolved, and provided selective advantage, why the relentless urge to escape it through sleep, or the addictive enjoyment of altering consciousness through alcohol or drugs of abuse? Moreover, why does inability to escape consciousness result in an agonizing ordeal, such as the torment suffered by those rare individuals who succumb to fatal familial insomnia. Tononi explores diminished consciousness in death, disease and pain. For all the deference he pays to the notion of a soul, he acknowledges that consciousness ends with death, while dementia is presented as a living death, for if consciousness is, as Edelman described, "a remembered present (Edelman, 2001)," it must wane with the loss of episodic memory. Sleep disorders herald the onset of dementias, particularly the type of dementia that often accompanies Parkinson's disease (known as Lewy body dementia) reflecting the altered conscious arousal found in these diseases. Tononi focuses upon pain as a sensation that can be turned into "the only real and eternal Hell." Noting that "when it is most intense, pain loses its identity," Tononi describes a scenario where pain could become the sum of conscious existence but curiously, he doesn't venture into the realm of pleasure. Like intense pain, consciousness itself does not require identity: It does not require reflection or self-consciousness since autonoetic consciousness, that form of consciousness that entails self-awareness and autobiographical (episodic) memory is but one in a continuum of states of consciousness that includes noetic (based upon knowledge, or semantic memory) and anoetic (based upon functional, or motor memory) states, neither of which is self reflective or self-aware, but both of which entail sentence.
Tononi contends that consciousness is integrated information, and such integration yields more than the sum of its parts: phi is a measure of that emergent information. He published this controversial theory in the form of a manifesto, thereby acknowledging its controversial nature (Tononi, 2008). Interestingly, Tononi's avatar Galileo likens the emergent potential of consciousness to the mass of a body: although the mass of a body determines the extent to which a force will influence its motion, "a body doesn't need to calculate how its speed would change subject to a force, to actually have mass...A brain's consciousness is as much material, or as little, as a body's mass...Both are potential, yet both are actual." It is precisely this emergent and dynamic state of matter that led Galileo's protege Evangelista Toricelli to liken matter to "the magic vase of Circe," referring to that sorceress who transformed Odysseus's men into pigs just as matter transforms force into movement in proportion to mass (Martone, 2004): Far from explaining a phenomenon, it conceals it in a veneer of a quantitatively measurable artifice. Similarly, Tononi's Phi objectifies consciousness without explaining it. He doesn't address the hard questions about consciousness, but his book, is erudite, lavishly illustrated and a thoroughly enjoyable travelogue.

References:


Galilei, Galileo (1588). Two Lectures to the Florentine Academy on the Shape, Location and Size of Dante's Inferno. Two Lectures to the Florentine Academy on the Shape, Location and Size of Dante's Inferno. Retrieved from https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/mpeterso/galileo/inferno.html


Blossom the Possum Learns to Swim
William L.B. Wharton
Broad Creek Press
P.O. Box 43, Mt. Airy, NC 27303
9780990466208, $8.50, 20 Pages, www.amazon.com

Sandra Heptinstall
Reviewer

Master Wharton is one talented young man. If he keeps writing there is not a doubt in my mind that one day he will write more than one best seller.

This is a small book but younger children will enjoy it. It is not easy to keep a child's attention span, but this book will do it I think. Blossom the Possum and Turt the turtle are adorable characters.

The whole book is well thought out and delightful. At the end of the book William, gives an interview that I found quite interesting for such a young author.

I was surprised to find out why my ma would always say to me "Quit playing possum and get out of bed now." You will also know what really happens to possums.

Way to go young Will...job well done.

What's Under Your Cape?: SUPERHEROES of the Character Kind
Barbara Gruener
Nelson Publishing/Ferne Press
366 Welch Road Northville, MI 48167
www.nelsonpublishingandmarketing.com
ISBN-10: 1938326334
ISBN-13: 9781938326332, $12.95; 120 pages

Bill Corbett
Reviewer

What an amazing book! Barbara Gruener has created an official operating guide for teachers of all children and teens! She has literally spelled out the principles all teachers must adhere to if they truly hope to make a difference in their
classroom and the world; not talk about it, do it. This book provides easy-to-implement methods for saving one child at a time. Even the most tired and stressed-out teacher can use concepts from Gruener's book to not only save a child's life, but turn around her success rate at the same time. My favorite selection was the chapter on empathy. Although most know what it means, few take the time and energy to implement it. I used a quote from her book recently in one of my lectures to teachers ... the excerpt I used is her point that teachers must demonstrate what empathy looks like to their students and teach children to look for it all around them. Each chapter is laced with examples, exercises, anecdotes and references to other works. This is definitely a must-have manual for every teacher's desk!

A Fickle Wind
Elizabeth Bourne
Amazon Digital Services
The Cadence Group
9780991241705, $14.99, 264pp (PB), $6.99 (Kindle), www.amazon.com

Eileen Granfors, Reviewer
Word of Joy

I love a book in which I can feel the author's voice as an individual person out there in the world.

A Fickle Wind is quite episodic, with sections devoted to moments of childhood games and childhood follies as well as big events like the bombing of London during World War II. That the author can move smoothly from the pathos of feeling unloved by her austere grandmother to delight in her father's way with the world gives one more glance into Bourne's talents.

This is a globe-trotting book covering decades, from little girl herself, scolded at school, to mother of daughters Briana and Paige. The daughters, different as night and day, are also a source of both wisdom and recriminations. What mother hasn't felt the "job" of motherhood is way more than one mom can handle. Husband is fine; job is fine; but her doubts continue.

This is a book you can read in little snips. It's not a barn burner of suspense. It is loving and wise and reassuring. A FICKLE WIND blew my way via a review request, and I am so glad that it did.

Note: This review also appears on the Amazon.com web site.

Freedom's Nation: A Return to Free Markets and Prosperity
Jack E. Reinhard
Family Publishing
Reinhard says, eloquently at times, that he has a plan to set the nation back on the right fiscal course.

Jack E. Reinhard's Freedom's Nation presents a well-written and well-argued plan for fundamental change in the way the US government operates its economy.

The book begins with a review that traces the country's economy from its birth through the present. Reinhard does an admirable job of summarizing events, in particular the Great Depression of the 1930s and what he refers to as "the second Great Depression," which started in 2007. Setting the tone for the remainder of the book is his conclusion that "the congressional and political actions, along with Federal Reserve operations, have contributed to the turbulence that the US economy has experienced."

Reinhard describes a plan he believes will address several critical issues: the Federal Reserve's unchecked power, the country's debt, the growth and cost of entitlements (such as Social Security), the inflated size of the federal government, inequitable tax policies, and the emphasis on international policing rather than international trade. He discusses each of these areas in some detail and offers specific suggestions for fundamental change in well-written, even eloquent, text.

Perhaps the most intriguing portion of the book is his concluding section, "Freedom's Nation in Practice by 2030." Here, Reinhard outlines the differences in the way the country would operate if his recommendations were to be adopted. For example, he foresees an economy guided by the US Treasury rather than the Federal Reserve, limitations on the annual increase in the federal budget, a renewed emphasis on the United States becoming a trading nation, and a maximum personal income tax rate of 20 percent. He also envisions that "members of Congress will eventually become the public servants that the first members of Congress actually were," and that "the United States will have become the country that was once known as Freedom's Nation."

The book contains no notes or references and provides no list of additional resources. The absence of the author's biography undermines the book's credibility; the reader is informed on the back cover only that Reinhard has "more than thirty years of experience." The cover photo of an eagle in flight is...
somewhat contrived and overdone.

Nevertheless, Reinhard does make a strong case for an argument that seems to have its roots in the call for a smaller federal government and increased states' rights. While some readers may find merit in Reinhard's ideas, others may view portions of his plan as somewhat radical. Still, Freedom's Nation echoes results of national polls indicating widespread dissatisfaction with the way Congress is doing its job and for the direction of the country. If nothing else, this is a book that recognizes unrest and proposes serious change.

---

Ann's Bookshelf

Infidelities
Kirsty Gunn
Faber
9780571308910, A$27.99 (paperback), 209 pages.

"...those stories I have written. It was always me inside them, I was involved". This is how the book begins and our narrator in all these stories is, it seems, to be this woman. It is, perhaps, a dangerous way to start, since her repetition "Richard. Richard, Richard, Richard" and the reference to his being "still the same man, after all these years, with the same wrecked and gorgeous look" almost had me abandoning the book as a slushy romance. Luckily, I did not. The story-teller in each of the book's very different chapters may well be the same woman, even if her manifestations differ, but the stories she tells are far from slushy romances.

At one time, she is a woman suddenly determined to find that self which has been buried by her role as wife and mother. At another, she is a woman returning to an old familiar place to die - remembering, hallucinating, and accepting endings. In one virtuoso chapter, the narrator recalls summer holidays when she was sent to live with her New Zealand grandmother. She remembers the half-formed sentences and the strange grammar her Nanni used, especially when her Maori friend visited her. And she picked up hints from their conversations about her grandmother's past and her mother's reaction to it. By the end of the story, she has adopted her grandmother's way of talking: "But the story told by now, I guess, and listen to me now, you. How I sound".

Some stories are related in the third person and in some the narrator is fully present. Again and again, however, these are stories of self-discovery, new awareness, endings and beginnings. Not everything is spelled out. Often the true depths of the story are hidden in the details of everything surrounding them. One story, 'The Caravan', works backwards, day-by-day, describing details of the van and revealing, in the end, the reason for the van's existence and for the changes
which occur. It is a device which, despite its repetitions, works well.

'Staying Out', in the middle of the book, consists (it begins by telling us) of "four separate narratives that are related". The first is impersonal, setting a scene in which a grandfather (called only 'The Father'), his two daughters and their three young children are gathered in a Highland farm close to the sea. "There'd been daddies once, her mum and Aunty Pammy told them, but that had been a long time ago when the children were very little and Ailsa was a tiny baby". The final three narratives are by Cassie, remembering a time when her sister, Ailsa, was four, she herself was ten and Bill, their cousin, was just a little younger than her. So, we see everything partly through a child's eyes, but also with the adult understanding of small details which Cassie now recalls.

"Detail, all detail", says Helen, with whom we began this book. "Because that detail is important, isn't it?". She is repeating the instructions given to her by her creative writing tutor, as she tries to turn her apparently happily-married life into a story to which she has given the title 'Infidelity'. She wants it to be "a real story" but she worries about the way people will interpret what she has written. She expresses every writer's dilemmas about mixing fact and fiction. And it is in this, the final story, that "Richard. Richard, Richard, Richard, Richard" appears again, and in such a way that I had to turn back and re-read the opening chapter of the book.

Infidelities in this book are many things. Often not so much the faithlessness of one person to another, as the discovery that a seeming reality is not the real truth of a person's life: that beneath the surface details there may lie many quite different intentions, emotions and meanings. In these stories, Kirsty Gunn, like her character Helen, has "opened the door and stepped inside, out of the golden morning and into the darkness". Her story-telling is unusual, seductive and beautifully nuanced and, in many ways, it demonstrates the lessons Helen was learning in her creative writing course: as well as detail and repetition "the author is also the person in the story...she knows because all this happened to her, because she's writing from life".

Faber & Faber Poetry Diary 2015
Various
Faber
9780571311583, A$24.99

This is a diary for the Luddite poetry lover who prefers pen and paper to expensive electronic gizmos. Or, maybe, for geeks who just like to have a handsome diary on their desk with a handy selection of poetry to browse through. And if it seems a little early to be thinking about a diary for 2015, the eclectic mixture of poems in this diary can certainly be enjoyed at any time. Some are well-known and well loved, others will be much less familiar; and the range of Faber book covers which are interspersed with the poems is attractive.
Some poems, like Simon Armitage's, 'Poetry', or Ezra Pound's, 'Ancient Music', will put a smile on your face. Others are more thoughtful or are chosen to suit the time of year. John Donne, John Clare, Sylvia Plath, John Betjeman, Daljit Nagra, W.B. Yeats, Stevie Smith and a pleasing mix of other poets are included.

The unusual green and yellow colour scheme chosen for the diary is that of Fabers' first edition of Seamus Heaney's District and Circle, and, as a diary, this book has everything you need. Each double page has space for appointments and reminders for one week, with a poem or book-cover illustration opposite. There is a calendar for 2015 and 2014, a ribbon bookmark, an elastic book-closure band, and several blank pages for notes at the end of the book. Also at the end, is an interesting chronology outlining, with notes, the history of Faber & Faber publishing.

The end-papers, unlike the rest of the book, are multicoloured and a bit jarring, and if you are given the book as a present on Christmas Day and are a little under-the-weather from your Christmas Eve celebrations, you would be wise to avoid the vivid lime green and lemon yellow pages which immediately follow the title page and publishing details. Apart from that, there is much to enjoy.

Mr Mac and Me
Esther Freud
Bloomsbury
9781408857182, A$32.99 (hardback), 296 pages

This book is a delight. It is set in 1914 and Thomas Maggs, our story-teller, is the only surviving son of the owner of the Blue Anchor Inn in Southwold on the Suffolk coast. He is slightly lame, so, as his father frequently tells him, he will never go to sea. But he dreams of being a sailor, and annoys his schoolmaster by wasting paper drawing ships in the margins of his exercise books. Tom is twelve when he gets himself a job with George Allard, the rope maker. Allard tells him stories of glorious naval battles as Tom turns the wheel, twisting the ropes which Allard, walking backwards down the garden path with the raw twine wrapped around his waist, expertly plaits and feeds to him. This is just one of the activities which are part of Tom's everyday life in Southwold and we hear more of this, of his school life, of his home life with a sometimes drunken and abusive father and a loving, protective mother; and of local gossip, often brought by his older sister, Mary, who works in service at nearby Blyfield House. We hear, too, of Tom's early encounters with Mac and Mrs Mac, mysterious newcomers to Southwold, who are both artists and who encourage him to draw.

Mac is, of course, the renowned Glaswegian architect and artist, Charles Rennie Mackintosh; and Mrs Mac is Margaret MacDonald, who often collaborated on her husband's projects but who was a talented artist in her own right. For Tom, Mr
Mac is, at first, a curiosity - a big man, slightly lame like himself, who walks alone at night amongst the dunes in a black cape and a felted wool hat, often peering out to sea through binoculars. Tom thinks he may be looking for smugglers, like those who used to use the secret cellar beneath his father's inn. Then, as he gets to know Mac and Mrs Mac better, he puzzles over the foreign language he sees in some of their books when he visits their house. He decides it is Gaelic, but eventually learns that it is German. This, at the onset of war, makes him worry that Mr Mac might be a spy. But he is almost sure he is not, because the binoculars and the late-night walks seem mostly to be related to Mac's rambling and drinking habits, and to his observation of nature. Tom is fascinated by Mac's drawings of flowers. He is beguiled, too, by Mrs Mac's odd ethereal paintings of semi-naked females.

Tom's account of his life is as natural and open as he is. Through him, we get to know his family, his neighbours, and life in this small fishing and farming community. Tom, verging on adolescence, makes friends with one of the young 'Herring Girls' who come each year, from as far away as the Hebrides, to gut and pack the herring catch into barrels. We glimpse the hard work and skill of these girls, whose lives, like those of the whole community, are drastically changed once war is declared.

Young local men are recruited and proudly farewelled by their families; soldiers are billeted at the two inns and in other local houses before leaving for France; blackout regulations and war-time restrictions on trading are enforced, as are the rules laid down in DORA (the Defence of the Realm Act). Tom experiences the first horrifying news of casualties, the arrival of refugees, and the first sight of Zeppelins flying over on their way to bomb inland cities. All these changes become part of Tom's life. Most worrying of all, for him, is the conversation he overhears between local men who believe Mr Mac to be a spy and who plan to confront him.

How Tom deals with this threat to his friend, provides part of the dramatic ending to the book. It is an ending, however, which I found rather confusing and which left me uncertain whether it was meant to be real or hallucinatory. Perhaps, however, this is appropriate, since the facts of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's life are carefully woven into this fictional story and Tom, delightful story-teller 'though he is, is purely a figment of Esther Freud's imagination. Such a small uncertainty did nothing to mar my enjoyment of this book, which is as full of Tom's love of life as it is of the ways of a bygone era and the tribulations of a talented (but at the time unfashionable) artist.

Ann Skea, Reviewer
http://ann.skea.com
In his prologue to The Doors: A Lifetime of Listening to Five Mean Years, critic Greil Marcus describes the impact of The Doors on youth of the sixties. So powerful was their impact, Marcus writes, that today - more than 40 years after the singer died and the band broke up - mention of the band still strikes a chord. It is not a chord of memory, Marcus argues, but "a note of possibility, of promises made that remain to be kept, promises that in life were inevitably failed and in the music left behind were kept over and over again."

I think Marcus meant that a lot of people still groove The Doors. For sure, if airplay means anything, The Doors are more popular today than many contemporary bands - even among the younger set, who never heard them when. That's why we still hear their music on FM rock when we ride in a car to score groceries or cash our 'entitlement' checks.

Time ago we used to groove The Doors on our way to-and-from work, but nobody does that any more. Citizens of 'the Woodstock Nation' who 'grew up' and 'worked for change within the system' have worked changes within the system so we don't need to commute because we have no jobs. We have wars, instead. Ours is the living manifestation of the yuppies' idea of a Brave New World. Surfboards and mescaline and bell-bottoms are out; water-boards and pepper spray and hazmat suits are in. Today, everything the music of the Sixties promised is NOT. But The Doors recall us to our dreams. The Doors still give us hope.

Marcus quoted English novelist Jenny Diski, who puts on a rhetorical napkin before making the same points. Evidently she doesn't like plain language to splash on her clothes:

"There were, of course, those, the great majority, doubtless, who, having finished with their wild youth, put on proper suits come the mid-Seventies and went off to work and a regular life, becoming all their parents could have wished, having just gone through a phase, as the more liberal of the grown-ups had always suggested. But some - these days called, derogatorily, idealists - maintained their former sense that 'society' exists, and believe it persists, even beyond the strident years of Margaret Thatcher and the official approved decades of self-interest and greed"
Beyond the Prologue, the rest of "The Doors" is something of a mashup, which is OK if you think about it. "The Doors" is not a novel, so it doesn't need a plot. Even so, Marcus's tale of The Doors functions as a plot of sorts because it draws us onward, into the book, as it leads us through descriptions of tune after tune, concert after concert, on an annotated tour of the Sixties and of rock music at large.

Along the way, we see that some bones of an argument are present. In the Prologue, Marcus reminds us that The Doors are still popular. Later, he explains the difference between pop art and fine art: pop art is flash-in-the-pan stuff; it's here for a month or two and gone soon after. Fine art, by comparison, is created for the ages. Think Leonardo, Rubens, etc. Of course, if The Doors are still popular 40 years after Morrison died and the band broke up, one could argue that The Doors' music is 'fine' art, not to be disparaged as 'pop' art. It is with us now and will remain here when, in the nature of things, our personal shows all close and we leave the venue for good.

But Marcus doesn't press the point. Having led us to it, he sensibly leaves the argument to those who think it matters - pretentiously artsy, table-bangin' drunks, most probably. All such arguments are a waste of breath anyway. The world will know who was right in a couple of hundred years. If by that time people still listen to The Doors, the argument will be settled without anybody having said a word about it.

So the book is all sort of breezy and quite a bit of fun. Marcus makes some points but doesn't pick fights. His descriptions of the music are as lyrical and moving as the music itself. Reading his description of a concert is almost like having been there and is in some ways better (I've experienced a few, so I know). If the reader is interested in pop music and Sixties cultural trivia, the notes are swell. I sat in front of my Internet connection while reading the book and used the Web to explain references to people, tunes, books and films I never heard of before. Marcus knows more about the Sixties than the sum of everyone with whom I've ever conversed.

Greil Marcus. 'The Doors: A Lifetime of Listening to Five Mean Years'. Get it. Read it slowly while you sip a bottle of Dago red and nibble at a sack of chips. When Marcus describes a song, play that song after you read the description. Give Marcus time to spread out in your mind and seep into your soul. You'll be glad you bought the book. Marcus may make a Doors fan of you if you never liked them before.

'Five to one, baby! One in five....'
Writing a review of Mark Twain in 'The Smart Set' magazine for October of 1919, H.L. Mencken said of the American people: "To be an American is, unquestionably, to be the noblest, the grandest, the proudest mammal that ever hoofed the verdure of God's green footstool. Often, in the black abysm of the night, the thought that I am one awakens me like a blast of trumpets, and I am thrown into a cold sweat by contemplation of the fact."

I quote that passage here because I want readers to understand up front why intrepid essayist Hal Crowther titled his new book 'An Infuriating American: The Incendiary Arts of H. L. Mencken.' In that book, Mr. Crowther takes a whack at discovering, exposing and explaining what made the so-called 'Sage of Baltimore' tick. What was it that drove Henry Louis Mencken to think as he thought and write as he wrote? How could it be that the most acerbically eloquent and perceptive American nag who ever owned a typewriter was also a man who enjoyed the professional respect and the kind regards of those Americans who knew him best? How could anyone count themselves a friend of Mencken if Mencken was known to say cruel things about his 'friends' when their backs were turned?

Crowther's 'Infuriating American' sorts internal evidence from Mencken's works and discusses possible answers - good, bad, and ugly - across 75 impeccably written and highly amusing pages. I recommend Crowther's book to anyone who hankers for an intelligent and entertaining introduction to the critical style and the personality of H.L. Mencken.

Of course concrete answers to riddles such as those posed by Crowther are at least as plentiful as unicorn feathers and even more ephemeral. Anyone seeking plausible answers must read Mencken deeply and at length, as Hal Crowther apparently did. But doing so is like stepping into quicksand because the more of Mr. Mencken one reads and the more closely one reads it, the more often the answers change. The changes force seekers to read more still and, according to Crowther, the Mencken corpus numbers some 10 million words.

But wait! There may be some shortcuts to understanding Mencken. For example: reviewing H.G. Wells in 'The Smart Set' of March 1921, Mencken wrote of himself and others in a way that tables an answer of his own.

"All of us, even on the rare occasions when we try to think fairly and honestly, have
to think within the limits of our congenital prejudices and current interests. No man suffering for a drink can take a detached and politico-economical view of Prohibition; no man married to a virago can ever quite enjoy the passionate poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne. I have prejudices as an American, as a High Church Presbyterian, as a Brahmsianer, as a magazine editor, as a capitalist, and as a literary popinjay. I detest men who put cologne water on their pocket handkerchiefs, and hence am blind to much that is high and noble in the French genius. Blonde, scanty eyebrows revolt me, and so I rejoice every time I hear that another Dane has been hanged. I was born, for well or for ill, with a fixed conviction that anyone who spells 'all right' as one word, 'alright,' may be trusted to blow into his soup to cool it, and so I always decline dinner invitations from such persons, and from their relatives and friends. I believe, as I believe in infant damnation, that all Methodists are scoundrels, and the more you prove that a given one isn't, the more I am convinced that he is. Wells, for all his intellectual suppleness and cunning, has prejudices of precisely the same sort; it is a common human bond between us, like our joint incapacity to move our ears.

I see in that paragraph what I personally believe is the one fact of all facts about Mencken, and that fact is just this: If the reader finds a fault in Mencken that (s)he cannot find within him/herself or any of his/her friends and relatives, then it is the reader - not Mencken - who has a problem. So it is that perceptive readers love and admire the Sage. Other readers hate and despise him for one of two reasons: either they're incapable of taking a gimlet-eyed look at themselves and their friends or they fail utterly to comprehend what they've read. Through it all, H. L. Mencken and his work endure because so many folks know him for a stand-up fellow, a brilliant wit and an almighty great writer.

Moral cretins like Newt Gingrich (to name just one) hate Mencken's guts even after the critic has been dead for nigh on 60 years and that's not for no good reason, methinks. Tinhorns and swindlers and hypocrites of Mencken's day (He called them 'wowsers') lived in terror of his attention. Wowsers of our day live in fear that another such as Mencken may yet appear among us, typewriter in hand, an evil glint in his eye, and a large chip on his shoulder. Hal Crowther would probably agree.

Readers of this column - if they're at all curious about Mencken - should get 'An Infuriating American' and read it. It's a fine introduction to H.L. Mencken, his style and his works. It's entertaining, it's informative, it asks some serious questions, and the bibliographic essay will help those who want more.

Thanks to Mr. Crowther for some good yocks from an afternoon's read and to the University of Iowa for publishing Mr. Crowther.

Deacon Solomon, Reviewer
http://dekesolomon.wordpress.com
Dr. James Devine, senior pastor of Oregon's Powell Valley Evangelical Covenant Church believes the world's most "pressing" need is to pursue Christ's last command to "...go and make disciples." The last words Jesus spoke before He ascended into heaven.

He questions if churches and Christians "are stuck in neutral" over Jesus's last words since he sees many majoring in what he calls "secondary" activities instead of spreading the "Good news of Christ" that He died to deliver. To draw attention to the importance of discipleship and Christ's command he penned, Jesus' Last Words: Make Disciples!

There he presents a persuasive argument for believers to focus on Christ's message of salvation that also includes mentoring Christians in their new found faith and helping them to mature. Otherwise the church is little more than an "evangelism factory" he writes, "a spiritual organization that stamps out converts in cookie-cutter fashion." That focus creates a "distorted emphasis," notes Devine, where "secondary" activities come first, such as "church building programs and the forms and formulas of church organization."

In these pages he explores the "Great Commission texts" found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to formulate his "bible-based blueprint" of discipleship. Then he uses charts, diagrams and reporters 5 W's and H questions to form a working definitions of what he considers "key elements of discipleship - place, person, power, purpose, program and promise."

Devine's close involvement with The Navigators whose motto is to "know Christ and make him known" is evident and his discipleship philosophy biblically sound and practical. There is much I agree with, especially his thoughts on churches and Christians who "busy" themselves with caretaking property and programs rather than people. However, his writing is well above the recommended seventh grade reading level for readability in this otherwise well done book.

Radically Normal
Pastor Josh Kelly, Mount Vernon, WA takes a thought-provoking, often entertaining look at why Christians shouldn't feel they "have to live crazy to follow Jesus," the sub title of his debut release, Radically Normal. Where he writes, "normal Christians" can act in radical obedience to Christ "without acting obsessive or complacent."

He doesn't intend to discourage Christians from doing "radical things" for the Lord if that's what God calls them to do. Instead, "Radically Normal" is for the believer who feels a nagging sense of guilt, "haunted by the feeling that God would be happier" if he or she were more spiritually minded.

Kelley questions if such guilt is fostered by a culture that tells them to "live for today," or by the church who tells them to "live for eternity." He assures readers God doesn't want that to be an either or choice. Rather, Jesus wants us to live normal lives, to find joy in ordinary routines and love others like Christ loves us. That's his definition of "radically normal Christianity" lived out with God's grace.

Sometimes the concept of "grace" is difficult to grasp because grace can involve hard lessons we'd rather avoid even though grace is defined as "getting what we don't deserve," by O.S. Hawkins in "The Jesus Code."

That's the situation Pastor Kelly found himself in after twenty-five percent of his congregation left The Gathering, a church he'd been lead pastor of for three-and-a-half-years. It took a gulp of grace to realize "his faith and optimism" had concealed his naivete" and lack of business training. The church had run out of money and desperate measures had to be taken.

To ease the financial crunch he became a "bi-vocational" pastor and "found himself in the back room of a Mount Vernon Starbucks putting on his green apron for the first time." He learned serving customers was not that much different from ministering to his congregation. Whether serving "Ice Tea Lady," who challenged his patience or engaged in conversation with an obsessive, super spiritual customer he nicknamed, "Radical Randy." Such customers challenged his patience, yet he saw them as "God's gift of grace."

His Starbucks era included a rough draft of this book and a reevaluation of what he believed was God's plan for his life that has yet to be answered. His writing reads like he knows he's in the right "ballpark," (read ministry), but perhaps the wrong "seat." And the question remains, should he continue in a pastor's role or shift to the teaching, writing and speaking side of Pastoral Ministry?
There's no question Kelley is a talented writer because "Radically Normal" is like reading preaching at its best; entertaining, yet filled with personal examples and vibrant word pictures, circumstances and situations that illustrate and encourage spiritual growth. Kelley teaches believers not to feel unnecessary guilt. "It's okay to be normal," to be in the world, just not of the world. On a scale of 1-5, "Radically Normal" is a five plus! I look forward to seeing more from this undecided preacher.

The Miracle of the Kurds: A Remarkable Story of Hope Reborn in Northern Iraq
Stephen Mansfield
Worthy Publishing
134 Franklin Road, Suite 200, Brentwood, TN 37027
9781617950797, $22.99, www.worthypublishing.com

ISIS, Peshmerga, Kurds and Kurdistan lead national news stories, yet the average American knows little about them except for ISIS's recent barbaric acts of terrorism. However, Stephen Mansfield, New York Times bestselling author hopes to change that with his October 14 release, The Miracle of the Kurds, where he offers "an informal retelling" of the little known Kurdish story.

A longtime friend of the Kurdish people, Mansfield wants others to understand why the Kurds call themselves a "people without a friend." He believes they have reason to feel that way and considers them "the most misunderstood people of the 21st Century war on terror."

Mansfield notes the Kurdish ancestry stretches back to the ancient Medes in the times of Daniel and Babylon and today they reside in Northern Iraq. Even though the Kurds number in the millions they are the only people group of this size without a homeland of their own. Yet they have always held an "undying dream of freedom" illustrated by the Kurdish journey the author included, from 6300 BC to 2013 AD that overflows with "epic battles, religious passions and vile betrayals."

To create a better understanding of this humble, yet fierce and passionate people the author begins with a memorable Kurdish saying that needs explanation to understand. "We have jam, but we have no jam." The phrases broader meaning applies to the "unfortunate truth that the world often disappoints." Promises are made, but not kept. The saying contains a bird's eye view of "the aching reality" of Kurdish life that the "Gulf War and No-Fly Zone" changed.

When United States and Britain's No-Fly Zone war of the 1990's provided the Kurds protection from their enemies they began to flourish. The story of how they began to build "one of the most prosperous economies on earth" that causes them to be called the "miracle of the Middle East" is indeed miraculous.
They are Muslims who welcome all religions, Muslim, Jew and Christian. They are "largely pro-American, pro-Israel, and pro-democracy...in the belly of the troubled Middle East," writes Mansfield. Their story is similar to America's fight for independence from Britain in the American Revolution.

Although Mansfield writes an informal account from the perspective of friendship about the Kurdish people, their history, their fight for independence and a homeland, he captures who they are, a humble, yet resilient people who will fight to the death for independence and their way of life. On a scale of one to ten, "The Miracle of the Kurds" is a ten plus for story, historical content and enjoyment.

The Jesus Code
O.S. Hawkins
Thomas Nelson
P.O. Box 141000, Nashville, Tennessee 37214

When O.S. Hawkins, retired pastor, now president of Guidestone Financial Resources, noticed Jesus used a question and answer format in the Gospels in the same way He used parables to teach biblical concepts. That's when the idea for The Jesus Code, similar to his popular The Joshua Code was born.

He considered the technique a "distinctive code" and identified 52 of the "150 questions Jesus asked" as questions believers "need to know the answers to." Knowing the answers not only would "show God's will for your life," the answers equip believers to share their faith with confidence.

Hawkins uses a devotional style format designed for a year-long personal, family or small group study where he considers one chapter-length question per week. This arrangement permits time to study, read and meditate on the Scripture references, yet allows time to pray and prepare for discussion if used in a group study.

Chapters build on a foundational Scripture verse that includes the cultural context for the question with a simple biblical overview. Then the question is considered in a modern context with examples of why it matters to believers today.

In chapter one for example, Satan, disguised as a serpent, asks Eve, "Has God indeed said?" about the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The setting is Eden before the fall and the clever question by the "cunning creature" plants a seed of doubt that Eve acts on. This chapter shows how Satan uses doubt to "bring to the surface sinful, selfish desires" that reveal how "Satan's battle is half won" when doubt us allowed to settle in.
Other thought-provoking topics include self-image, ("Who Am I" Exodus 3:11) trust, ("Why Have You Brought Us Out of Egypt to Die?" Numbers 21:5) and Jesus' return, (What Will be the Sign of Your coming and of the End of the Age?" Matthew 24:3).

Hawkins wrote "The Jesus Code" to encourage spiritual discipline because he thinks believers reach a "dangerous point in their spiritual journeys when they feel they have all the answers and stop asking questions" The devotional concludes with a salvation prayer in the Epilogue.

Outside of Scripture quotations, "The Jesus Code" is written in personal opinion format from the perspective of a twenty-five year Baptist preacher with multiple advanced degrees. Hawkins extraordinary ability to write with clarity about complex subjects and make them interesting and relevant to readers is far above average.

Small in size and bound with imitation leather over a hard cover the book is comfortable to hold and fits easily into purse, bag or on the night stand or coffee table. It would make an excellent gift choice for those who want to deepen their relationship with the Lord, use as a Bible study or devotional or for anyone who questions their faith. On a scale of 1-5, this is a 5 plus!

As with The Joshua Code, all royalties will go to Mission: Dignity, whose mission supports retired pastors and their wives (or widows) living near poverty level.

Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at End-Time Players & Events
David Jeremiah
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
351 Executive Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188

Noted prophecy expert, Dr. David Jeremiah asks, "Are we living in the end times?" in his October 7 release, Agents of the Apocalypse where he looks at prophecy through chapter length treatments that include fictionalized accounts of Revelation's cast of characters and events as well as "the Scripture behind the story."

He believes his unusual approach brings prophesy "to life in a new way," while maintaining the integrity of Scripture. The "dramatized elements," he writes, are only used to "fill in the gaps that Revelation does not address," while "...the overarching truths of Revelation" remain.

Each of ten chapters begin with a dramatized short story and conclude with "the Scripture behind the story" from the book of Revelation. Jeremiah begins with
"The Exile," an account of the Apostle John's exile to the Isle of Patmos where he was given several visions and told, "What you see, write in a book..." what readers know as Revelation - the last book in the Bible.

Chapters include:

The Martyrs
The 144,000
The Two Witnesses
The Dragon
The Beast from the Sea
The Beast from the Earth
The Victor
The King
The Judge

The narrative about "The Martyrs" carries a new reality for our nation with the recent beheadings of American journalist's James Foley and Steven Sotloff. In addition to Alton Nolen who was shot by a co-worker after beheading 54 year-old Colleen Hufford subsequent to being suspended by Vaughn Foods in Moore, OK.

The book concludes with an epilogue, "The Overcomers." Here Jeremiah features Revelation, chapter twenty-one where he "reveals - a peek at the perfect home God has prepared for his people." This chapter also includes the "last invitation in the Bible" to accept Christ.

Jeremiah penned the book in response to questions about world events. Such as 2013 and 2014, natural disasters, growing anti-Christian sentiment and the New York Times report, Europe's Anti-Semitism Comes Out of the Shadows. Such events cause anxiety, uncertainty and raise the question, are we indeed living in the final days before Christ's return.

In addition to a story that includes the "rapture," Jeremiah also follows "Secretary, Judas Christopher" through the chapters, from Secretary to "Prime Minister" and the recruitment of "Archbishop Damon Detherow" and their plans to unify world governments and religions.

The dramatized characters and events "hook" readers with the power of story, while the teaching segments explore "important prophecy lessons from the Bible." Since chapters deal with major characters and end-time events "Agents of the Apocalypse" would also be an excellent choice for an individual or group Bible study. However, the stand alone stories could be read for entertainment value alone similar to the new Left Behind movie starring Nicholas Cage.

I've read many books on biblical prophecy, both fiction and nonfiction and this
one belongs in the top tier of prophecy books. Jeremiah's writing equipped me to adjust my thoughts on the timing of end time events and where we are today according to Revelation. The compelling fictionalized accounts followed Scripture and the Scripture portions followed Revelation word-for-word.

If you entertain questions about current events in relation to prophecy, "Agents of the Apocalypse" belongs on your bookshelf.

Gail Welborn
Reviewer

---

**Gary's Bookshelf**

**Keep Quiet**
Lisa Scottoline
St Martin's Press
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010
www.stmartins.com
9781250010094, $27.99, www.amazon.com

A cover up of a tragic situation that involves Jake Bucman and his sixteen year old son Ryan soon mushrooms out of control to include Jake's wife who is being considered for a federal judgeship. Scottoline in "Keep Quiet" takes a very simple situation and shows how so many people are affected by one act. She keeps the reader in suspense with many twists and turns to the very end. "Keep Quiet" is a grand tale of human nature as well as a great legal thriller.

**Robert B. Parkers's Blind Spot A Jesse Stone Novel**
Reed Farrel Coleman
Putnam
c/o Penguin Group USA
375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014
www.penguin.com
9780399169458, $26.95, www.amazon.com

I liked that in "Blind Spot" readers get to read about the past of Jesse Stone, but that is all. I found the book to be very different in feel and style. Where Parker and Michael Brandman who continued the series wrote with snappy dialogue and a fast pace Coleman is very detailed and very slow reading. The Parker books have always been fun to read and enjoy but not so this time. Fans of Jesse Stone will be disappointed in "Blind Spot"

**Destiny Made Them Brothers**
Andrew J. Fenady, who created the show "The Rebel" and the theme song, now tells a fictional story of Johnny Yuma that involves George Armstrong Custer and Ulysses S. Grant during and after the Civil War. Fenady brings the two generals to life with factual material about them that makes the story a lot more interesting. "Destiny Made Them Brothers" is a book to pick up and enjoy for any fan of the TV show "The Rebel," currently showing Saturday mornings on ME TV.

The Last Kiss Goodbye
Karen Robards
Ballantine Books
c/o The Random House Publishing Group
www.ballatinebooks.com
9780345535849, $7.99 www.amazon.com

For me "The Last Kiss Goodbye" was a snail paced tale that was very boring all the way through. The story sounded interesting of a psychiatrist who deals with serial killers but there is something wrong from the first line where she encounters a dead man on her couch who just two or three paragraphs later opens his eyes to look at and talk to her. I found the writing to be very confusing and the characters were not believable. "The Last Kiss Goodbye" was very disappointing.

Here By The Bloods
Brandon Boyce
Kensington Publishing Corp
119 West 40th Street, New York, NY 10018
www.kensingtonbooks.com

"Here By The Bloods" opens with a bank robbery that leaves the town of Caliche Bend, New Mexico without a sheriff. Harlan Two Trees who was like a son to the murdered sheriff, sets off to bring the killers to justice. Boyce who has written screenplays for different films, has written a fast paced western that is a delightful read. "Here By The Bloods" is a perfect shoot um up western with all the action fans look for.

Dead Don't Lie
L. R. Nicoleolleo
Harlequin HQN
225 Duncan Mill Road, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3B 3K9
As "Dead Don't Lie" opens, Evelyn Maslin's family has been brutally murdered in Phoenix Arizona. Fifteen years later she has changed her name, is a police detective with the Seattle PD, and has put the past behind her. Now there is a killer on the loose that she and her department are determined to take down. As the murders continue to happen, the department begins to see certain similarities to the case of Maslin's butchered family. The novel races along like a runaway train to its climax with great writing and well fleshed out characters guaranteed to please suspense fan readers. "Dead Don't Lie" is the first of a new series that is off to a great start with this chilling thriller.

Don Pendleton's The Executioner Deadly Salvage
Gold Eagle
World Wide Library
225 Duncan Mill Road, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3B 3K9
www.harlequin.com

"Deadly Salvage" is another great action adventure story of the Executioner series. This time Mack Bolan must find two people who have been kidnapped on a Caribbean island. Simple enough until he encounters a corrupt police force, Russian agents and a rich American businessman. Pilot Jack Grimaldi has a much bigger role this time as he works with Bolan to reveal the reason the two people were kidnapped. Fans of the series can not go wrong with "Deadly Salvage."

Frogs, Hogs, Puppy Dogs Funny Children's Poems About Animal Friends
Leslie C. Halpern, Illustrations by Oral Nusbaum
Cricket Cottage Publishing
409 Hoffner Avenue # 127, Orlando, Florida 32812
www.thecricketpublishing.com
9780692258996, $9.95, www.amazon.com

Halpern and Nussbaum are back again with another wonderful book of poems and artwork for kids. "Frog, Hogs, Puppy Dogs Funny Children's Poems About Animal Friends" like the rest of the series contains lots of symbolism. This time they teach children about many different animals all around us. The series of books are fun reading and educational for all ages and "Frogs, Hogs, Puppy Dogs Funny Children's Poems About Animal Friends" fits right in with the rest of the previous titles.

Milfred Made the News
Maureen Jacobson Illustrated by Chad J. Thompson
For so long the question has been "Why did the chicken cross the road?" Now author Maureen Jacobson answers that question in "Milfred Made the News." Based on a real situation that happened in Oakland, Florida Milfred tells why he crossed the road. Milfred tells his friend Bella, the dog about his journey and all of the animals he encountered. Chad J. Thompson's artwork reminded me of Buttons, and The Good Feathers from "Animaniacs." "Milfred Made the News." is for all ages to enjoy and is a perfect gift for any occasion.

Reflecting On Domestic Violence Understanding the Emotional Aftermath
Lauren Makarov
Legacy Book Publishing
1883 Lee Road, Winter Park Fl 32789
www.legacybookpublishing.com
978193752655, $19.95, www.amazon.com

In the last few months domestic violence has been ruled an epidemic. Pick up a paper and there is a story every day about domestic violence ranging from the Baltimore Ravens player Rice and the way the NFL deals with domestic violence to charges of rape by quarterbacks of the Florida Gators and Florida State Seminoles. These are some of the famous ones but we are made aware of the non famous people's cases as well. This adult bullying must be stopped. "Reflecting on Domestic Violence" is a book that addresses the issue with solid information to women and men from why it happens, to victims becoming survivors. Makarov uses her personal experiences as well as her expertise as a counselor to give hope to women who have been abused. "Reflecting on Domestic Violence is different from other books on the subject because Makarov uses her own poetry and by women she has encountered to convey the feelings of a victim and becoming a survivor. "Reflecting on Domestic Violence Understanding the Emotional Aftermath" should be used by men and women as a rallying cry to say "We have no use for abuse."

Gary Roen
Reviewer

Gloria's Bookshelf

Dead and Buried
Stephen Booth
As this book opens, firefighters in the Peak District of England are fighting what seems to be a losing battle, trying to contain the flames engulfing this part of Derbyshire, with smoke covering acres and acres of the moors from the catastrophic wildfires that have been springing up, the worst seen in the area in decades, many undoubtedly the result of arson. But to D.S. Ben Cooper, his more immediate problem are the buried items found by the crew working one of the sites, and which appear to be clothing and other items - including a wallet and credit cards - which had belonged to a young couple who had seemingly disappeared over two years ago, in the middle of a snowstorm. They had last been seen in a local pub, with no trace found since, and the case, while no longer active, is as cold as it could be.

The Major Crime Unit is called in, and DS Diane Fry, Ben's old nemesis, is put in charge. [Diane had been his immediate supervisor before his promotion to detective sergeant.] Diane, for her part, couldn't be happier that she had, as she thought, put Derbyshire behind her, her career taking her on an upward path - - she has been with the East Midlands Special Operations Unit for six months, and is less than thrilled to be back again. In a bit of one-upsmanship, she soon discovers a dead body in the old abandoned pub - - Ben's office had received a call about a break-in there, but had yet to investigate.

With Ben's upcoming marriage to Liz Petty, a civilian crime scene examiner, coming up in a few months, the distraction of the wedding plans in which his fiancee is immersed causes him not a little irritation. Ben and the rest of his CID team at Derbyshire Constabulary E Division have their hands full, with the two investigations proceeding simultaneously, although Diane makes clear that the old case is her jurisdiction. Behind everything, the raging fires continue, a constant backdrop underlying everything which follows. The author's meticulous descriptions of the landscape make for a visceral sense of place. Mr. Booth has once again created a suspenseful scenario, with many a twist and turn. This elegantly written novel is the 12th entry in the Cooper and Fry series, and at the end this reader reluctantly closed the book, fervently hoping it won't be the last, which I now know is, happily, not the case.

Recommended.

The Murder of Harriet Krohn
Karin Fossum
Translated from the Norwegian by James Anderson
This newest book by the author of the lauded Inspector Sejer series is presented from the point of view of Charles Olav ("Charlo") Torp, a widower just over 50, unemployed for the past two years after he was found to have pilfered a relatively small amount of money, following the discovery of which he was fired on the spot. An inveterate gambler, and in serious debt, he is terrified by the thought of what the unsavory people from whom he borrowed the money have in mind for him as his debt grows ever larger. And worst of all, his greatest humiliation comes from the fact that money he had promised to his 16-year-old daughter has been gambled away, along with everything else. He has been completely estranged from her ever since.

He comes to the conclusion, out of utter despair, that he must steal a valuable antique silver collection owned by a wealthy woman in her late seventies so he can pay off his debts and start a new life, and familiarizes himself with her habits and the area where she lives. The reader sees all of this from Charlo's point of view, the events leading up to the planned burglary, and the crime itself which, as the title intimates, results in the woman's death when Carlo becomes violent after his victim does not simply succumb and give him her money and valuables.

The question for the reader becomes: Do I want to go inside the mind of a murderer? Surprisingly, I found myself sympathizing with him, despite the brutality of the crime, to the extent that when Charlo thinks that "perhaps he'll get away with it. Some people do escape," this reader couldn't help but think, "maybe he will," and wants him to do so.

The author's series protagonist, Inspector Sejer, makes a critical appearance relatively late in the novel, and what ensues is a battle of wills as much as anything else. There is nothing that Charlo will not do to try to salvage his new life and his re-established relationship with his daughter, but who will prevail? This is a very different kind of book, from this author and to this reader, but I do not hesitate to recommend it.

The Accident
By Chris Pavone
Crown Publishing
1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019
www.randomhouse.com
9780385348454, $26.00, Hardcover, 381 pp.

"The Accident" is, nominally, about a manuscript which bears that title, the
author shown as "Anonymous." It is a memoir (perhaps), an expose or unauthorized biography (possibly), of an international media mogul (think Rupert Murdoch), with some little-known (or until now unknown) and potentially ruinous events in his past, most shockingly the one which gives the book its title, the person who wrote it identified only as "the author." But more importantly, the novel, written with a sly humor, provides an inside look at the publishing industry, in ever greater danger of extinction, that is as fascinating (in a schadenfreude kind of way) as that ostensible main story line. We are told the "the publishing business is a business, and books are published for an audience to buy from bookstores, who buy units from distributors who order cartons from publishers who acquire titles from literary agencies who sign up careers from authors, money changing hands at every transaction."

The book opens with the surveillance of a woman, as yet unnamed, by a man watching a live video feed as she lies in bed, reading, typical of the espionage, literal and figurative, found here.

The manuscript, hand-delivered to the office of Isabel Reed, a powerful literary agent in New York, is full of shocking revelations implicating, e.g., various American presidents and CIA directors, and is, almost literally, dynamite, putting those few individuals who are privy to its contents in mortal danger. On the other hand, each of those individuals, initially at least, see in it their salvation. Written from their various points of view, the novel takes the reader from New York to Zurich, Copenhagen and Los Angeles, all of it taking place in a single day, and exposes the staggering machinations which routinely abound in the publishing industry. The reader is treated to brief excerpts from the manuscript, interspersed periodically, as it is read by the players in that select group.

With wonderfully well-drawn characters, this is a terrific read, and highly recommended.

Little Failure
Gary Shteyngart
Random House Trade Paperbacks
1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019
www.randomhouse.com
9780812982497, $16.00, Paperback, 368 pp.

Born in a birthing house in Leningrad on July 5, 1972, Igor Semyonovich (his pre-Gary Russian name) Shteyngart's early years are difficult, as is his relationship with his parents: His mother goes through long periods giving him the silent treatment; his father belittles him and, frequently, beats him. His nickname becomes "Failurchka," or Little Failure. His mother, who looks half Jewish, which, given the place and time, is too Jewish by half, teaches piano at a kindergarten; his father, seven years her senior, is a mechanical engineer."
In 1978 Soviet Jews are finally able to leave for Israel, the US and Canada. And the Shteyngarts soon do. Except for his mother's sister, who was not allowed to emigrate from Russia until after Gorbachev took power (an unbearable separation for his mother). He arrives in the US at seven, poverty-stricken, severely asthmatic, with very bad teeth and "doubly handicapped, living in a world where [he] speaks neither the actual language, English, nor that second and almost just as important language, television" (which they cannot afford).

He knows early on that he wants to be a writer (part of the equation being that he must find a way to 'bridge that gap between being a Russian and being loved"), and begins his first unpublished novel in English in 1982, at ten. A good scholar, his young adult years see him becoming less a "melancholic Austrian" and more of an "alcoholic and doped-up urban gorilla." But don't think for a moment that the book is down-beat. Though certainly poignant, the author displays much of the humor for which he is as well-known as he is for his wonderful writing.

After the family's arrival in the US, he eventually attends a Jewish day school, Solomon Schechter School of Queens, followed by the prestigious Stuyvesant High School in lower Manhattan at 15 and then Oberlin College, from which he graduates in 1995 (with 2/3 of what will be his first novel finished). Of course, he has since published two others, all of which have been very well received. In the 1980's the family spend their summers at a Russian bungalow colony in the Catskill Mountains. He suffers occasional panic attacks, and spends 12 years in four-times-a-week psychoanalysis. He is no longer impoverished, nor asthmatic, and his teeth have been fixed. He is and has been very ambivalent about Russia. But by the end, everything comes full circle, and in 1999 he returns to the country of his birth, where he visits almost every other year since. In 2011, at 38, his parents join him. It is his mother's "first visit in 24 years, since her mother died, and my father in thirty-two years, or from the time he left the Soviet Union in 1979. We are coming home. Together."

A thoroughly enjoyable, compelling, ultimately very funny and touching book, and highly recommended.

Missing You
Harlan Coben
Dutton
c/o Penguin Group USA
375 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014
www.penguin.com
9780525953494, $27.95, Hardcover, 399 pp.

As Harlan Coben's newest blockbuster novel opens, Kat Donovan's best friend, Stacy, who runs a p.i. agency, tells Kat that she's bought her a one-year
subscription to an online dating service. It's been eighteen years since Kat's then-fiance broke up with her, and she's never allowed herself to really get involved with anyone else. Kat, 40 years old and the third generation in her family to be a cop with the NYPD, soon finds herself checking out the site, and is stunned to discover there the face and profile of her long-lost almost-husband. Needless to say, she's never gotten over him, and responds to his on-line invitation.

The break-up of her engagement is not the only thing Kat is grieving over and about which she has never found 'closure,' the other being her detective father's murder many years before. The man who is serving a life sentence for the killing is now critically ill in the hospital, and Kat's last chance to identify the man who paid for the killing, a big-time crime boss, so that the cops can finally put him away, is slipping away.

Back at the precinct house, Kat is approached by Brandon Phelps, a young man who specifically seeks her out, asking for help in finding his mother, who apparently has vanished, with no contact in several days, something that has never happened before, and Kat agrees to investigate.

The author introduces, in the second chapter, another character, Gerard Remington by name, but any link to Kat and her personal and professional problems does not become known until about one-third of the way into the book. And the real significance of Remington is not more fully disclosed until well after that. The connection among all these threads is one that will have readers turning pages ever more quickly, even more so as the novel races to its conclusion. As with every Harlan Coben novel, it is cleverly plotted, with wonderfully well-drawn characters, including "Aqua," Kat's yoga teacher, a "cross-dressing schizophrenic gay man." The surprises don't stop, and the pulse-pounding denouement is terrific. (And I loved the author's tip of the hat to fellow mystery writer Parnell Hall.)

Highly recommended.

Murder at Cape Three Points
Kwei Quartey
Soho Crime
853 Broadway, NY, NY 10003
www.sohopress.com
9781616953898, $27.95, Hardcover, 319 pp

Described by the author as "the land nearest nowhere," Cape Three Points appears to be a place of unspoiled beauty on the Ghanaian coast in West Africa where two bays form the three peninsulas which give it its name, jutting into the Atlantic Ocean, where the horrific murder of a wealthy middle-aged couple, Charles and Fiona Smith-Aidoo, is discovered. Their bodies are found in a fishing
canoe drifting near a deep-sea oil rig, the man having been beheaded. Inspector Darko Dawson and his assistant, D.S. Chikata, are sent by CID Headquarters to assist the local police with the investigation.

Dawson is a fascinating protagonist. He has synesthesia, which usually manifests itself when he is confronted with a liar; he has a fear of water, and has never flown before in his life, but the need to visit the unique crime scene, the area around the oil rig, necessitates him taking helicopter underwater escape training as well as fly in a helicopter to get to the site. There is no paucity of suspects, or of possible motives, among which are family feuds, blackmail, a corruption cover-up, ritual sacrifice, and even voodoo, as well as one suspect's grief over the death of a beloved child.

The setting, Ghana, where lack of potable water (or water of any kind) and dependable electricity are among the trials of daily life, is brought to vivid life by the author. Dawson loves his wife and children dearly, and fears for their safety as the investigation continues. There are those who are committed to preserving the environment, the local fishing industry, and the livelihood of the coastal peoples, all of which may be threatened in the scenarios which play out in this deftly plotted book. My one reservation was that while the intricacies of the families and their generational complexities are, admittedly, central to the plot, at times I felt the novel bogged down by them. Nevertheless, the book is recommended.

The Good Boy
Theresa Schwegel
Minotaur Books
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010
www.minotaurbooks.com

This newest novel from Theresa Schewegel is at its heart a tale about a boy and his dog, either (or both) of which could be the eponymous Good Boy. The boy is 11-year-old Joel Murphy; the dog is his father Pete's K-9 partner, Butchie (more formally Lieutenant Commander Edward Henry Butch O'Hare, and from time to time variations of any part of that "full title"), a hundred-pound shepherd mix. I opened this book expecting something along the lines of the author's earlier books, specifically a crime thriller/police procedural, and must admit that at first I was disappointed to find that this book is not that at all (although Joel's father is a cop, and there is no shortage of suspense to be found here). And the early portions of the book, told from Joel's p.o.v., were a bit difficult to follow and somewhat off-putting. I hasten to add at this point that in the end, the novel is thoroughly satisfying.

Joel is a very bright young boy with an incredible memory, also a boy who "sees things differently - - a high-spirited version of the overlooked and ordinary." One
night he takes it upon himself to protect his teenage sister, McKenna ("Mike"), as she heads out for a party in a dangerous part of town, at the home of someone equally dangerous, where known gang-bangers and criminals are likely to be present. And that is exactly what transpires; a gun is discharged and someone is shot soon after he shows up, with Butchie, his best friend in the world, at his side. It's a toss-up as to who is protecting whom. The remainder of the book follows the path each member of the Murphy family takes in the aftermath of this event, the all-important message being that "home is being together, no matter where they are," and whatever it takes to accomplish that. Initial reservations aside, the novel is very enjoyable, and recommended.

Moving Day
Jonathan Stone
Thomas & Mercer
c/o Amazon Digital Publishing
440 Terry Ave. NY, 5th fl., Seattle WA 98108
9781477818244, $14.95, Paperback, 298 pp, www.amazon.com

Stanley Peke (born Stanislaw Shmuel Pecoskowitz in Poland during the Nazi regime) is a 72-year-old survivor; Rose, his wife of over 50 years, is 70. After moving from their Greenwich Village apartment, and 40 years living in their large house in Westchester while raising their three children, it is finally moving day, when they are about to start the newest chapter of their lives in Santa Barbara, California. Now long retired, Stanley thinks of himself as a "half-attentive homebody, like Voltaire's Candide." They watch the four-man crew pack up all their possessions, including their Mercedes SL convertible. But they soon discover that they have been the latest victims of a sophisticated scam, and all their worldly possessions, including heirlooms, expensive artwork and the more mundane possessions of your average householder, have been stolen. Even the clothes for their trip west were packed into two suitcases in the trunk of the convertible.

Stanley still feels that he is first and foremost an assimilated Jew, the intervening decades notwithstanding. He can't help but think back to the nine-year-old boy he was, arriving in New York, alone and penniless, all those years ago, and his survivor mentality kicks in. He determines to track down his possessions, and the men who prey on elderly, wealthy people such as himself and Rose. He has never spoken to his wife of his experiences as a child during the war in Europe, nor "the rage harbored, intact, since seven," which now stand him in good stead

This is an excellent novel, the writing elegant, but it is much more powerful than merely a tale of a crime and criminals, and it is highly recommended.

The Black-Eyed Blonde
Benjamin Black
John Banville, the Irish author here writing under his pen name of Benjamin Black, has written a book certain to give exquisite pleasure to the many fans of Raymond Chandler and his creation, LA private detective Philip Marlowe with a reputation as a "thinking man's detective.". The masterful re-imagining is evident from the first words: "It was 'one of those Tuesday afternoons in summer when you wonder if the earth has stopped revolving. The telephone on my desk had the air of something that knows it's being watched. Cars trickled past in the street below the dusty window of my office, and a few of the good folks of our fair city ambled along the sidewalk, men in hats, mostly, going nowhere."

The eponymous woman makes her first appearance moments later. "Her hair was blond and her eyes were black, black and deep as a mountain lake, the lids exquisitely tapered at their outer corners. A blonde with black eyes - - that's not a combination you get very often." As Marlow later summarized things, he is "hired to look for a guy who was supposed to be dead. Next thing I know I'm up to my knees in corpses, and I damn near became a corpse myself." What happens in between, taking place in a little more than a week, is laid out in Chandler-esque form, with a wholly unexpected ending. To say that Mr. Banville has "captured" the charm of that author seems inadequate.

Apparently this title was one that Chandler had listed as a possibility for a future novel, and Mr. Banville has made of it a terrific mystery. He evokes the Marlowe era perfectly, conjuring up memories with names like the Marx Brothers, Paul Whiteman, Lon Chaney, Raymond Burr, and Errol Flynn.

I highly recommend that you give yourself the deep pleasure of reading this book.

The Question of the Missing Head
E.J. Copperman & Jeff Cohen
Midnight Ink
2143 Wooddale Dr., Woodbury, NN 55125-2989
www.MidnightBooksInc.com
9780738741512, $14.99/$17.50 CA, Paperback, 324 pp

Samuel Hoenig, the protagonist and first-person narrator in this newest book by E.J. Copperman, 29 years old and still living with his mother, opened Questions Answered, in Piscataway, New Jersey, three months ago as our story opens. His first client of the day is one Janet Washburn, who quickly becomes his invaluable colleague, assisting him in handling his second client of the day, one Dr. Marshall Ackerman, proprietor of Garden State Cryonics Institute, in North Brunswick,
where they freeze the body, or just the cranium, "of people who have just died in
the hope that someday there will be a means to reanimate them and cure their
disease." Dr. Ackerman's problem is quite unique: One of the facility's heads is
missing. Since any job requires that a specific query must be posed, Dr. Ackerman
asks "Who stole one of our heads?" Daunting as this is from the outset, it becomes
only more so when the three go to the facility in question, and a dead body is
found in the room in which the head was stored.

The novel displays equal amounts of the usual components of this author's
writing: suspense and humor. But perhaps one of the most intriguing things
about this particular book has to do with the character of Samuel, who has
Asperger's Syndrome, which Samuel believes is not a disorder, but merely a "facet
of his personality." No one questions his intellect, which borders on brilliance. He
tends to be obsessive about some things, e.g., the Beatles and the New York
Yankees (there is a priceless paragraph about baseball as a sport). The plotting is
ingenious, and I devoured this book in little more than twenty-four hours. I
probably don't have to add that I loved it, and it is highly recommended.

Whirlwind
Rick Mofina
MIRA Books
225 Duncan Mill Rd., Ontario, CA M3B 3K9
www.MIRABooks.com

The newest tale from Rick Mofina begins and ends with the whirlwind of the title,
which, at 260-300 mph, accompanies tornadoes and the chaos they bring. The
story begins at a huge flea market in the Texas town of Wildhorse Heights, in the
Dallas/Forth Worth area, where the devastating and almost apocalyptic weather
terrorizes those trapped in its path. Jenna Cooper is caught there with your baby
boy, Caleb, in the aftermath of which she finds that the apparent good
Samaritans who offered to assist her with the baby's stroller have kidnapped the
child.

The reader is soon introduced to 29-year-old Kate Page, an intern reporter at the
Dallas bureau of a global news service, a job she desperately needs to win so that
she can get out of debt and reunite with her young daughter back in Canton,
Ohio. The two women meet when Kate covers the story of the storm and the
people affected by it, and having herself suffered the horrific loss of a loved one
years ago, she can relate only too well to Jenna's situation, and feels compelled to
follow the investigation, which leads down unexpected avenues. The stakes are
raised, and the suspense quotient as well, as the tale plays out.

This is another very good and very fast read from Rick Mofina (although with
some graphic violence not for the faint of heart), and is recommended.
This is the ninth entry in the Jonathan Quinn series, and brings back many of the usual cast of characters: Nate, Quinn's mentee and now an elite cleaner himself (the job entailing discreetly cleaning up crime scenes and the occasional body after the always possible bloodshed); their colleague, Daeng; and of course Orlando, the love of Quinn's life, an Asian woman who is a brilliant computer hacker; and Helen Cho, described as "head of a growing network of government [and quasi-government] security and intelligence agencies" and now a client of Quinn and his team, and we meet Abraham Delger, who had mentored and trained Orlando years ago, now 60 years old.

As the book opens, seven years ago in Osaka, Japan, Abraham, has been tasked with basically acting as a courier, far below his level of expertise, now waiting to take possession of a "package he was to transport - - no questions asked." Only the package in question turns out to be a four-year-old child. Ultimately Abraham does not carry out his instructions, and sees the child delivered safely into the hands of people he can trust to keep her that way. In the intervening years, and since his voluntary 'retirement' from the espionage business, he has remained obsessed with finding out where the young girl is, and whether or not she is still safe. But now it appears that Abraham is not the only one trying to track her down, and one by one those who had any knowledge of the operation are being hunted down and killed.

As Mr. Battles always does with the thrillers in this series, he takes the reader to various places around the world, including Denmark, Florida, California, Mississippi, Texas and Hawaii, with the stakes and the suspense increasing as he goes. The nail-biting plot is never less than realistic, and the characters very well-drawn. At the end, the reader is left with a tantalizing hook which will make the next book in the series that much more eagerly anticipated, and I can't wait!

Highly recommended.

[This book is self-published, and can be ordered through Amazon, B&N or from the author, at www.brettbattles.com, either as a paperback or an e-book ($4.99)].
The newest novel in the Ben Cooper and Diane Fry series opens on an ominous note, with the death of an adult male, found lying naked in a shallow stream in "the rural wastelands of the Peak District," where the roads have been flooded and travel difficult if not impossible, for pedestrians and vehicles alike, in this monsoon-like summer.

The Derbyshire E Division CID, to whom the investigation initially falls, quite literally has no clues, as it appears that the torrential rains have washed away any potential forensic evidence, and no apparent witnesses. DS Dianne Fry is here on short-term assignment, after DS Ben Cooper has been placed on extended leave since the tragic death in an arson fire of his fiancee, scene of crime officer Liz Petty, which ended the last book in the series. Ben is still suffering from panic attacks, nightmares, and the occasional flashbacks to that horrible event, just weeks before their meticulously planned wedding. He is still, not unnaturally, obsessed with the one person still walking free who was a participant in the events of that night.

A secondary plot line deals with another area death which falls to the local police to investigate. Ben's relationship with Diane is a famously ambivalent one. She finds herself thinking that "his absence was more powerful than his presence." But despite his official just-another-member-of-the-public position, he manages to provide pivotal clues and insight. Finally, "when it came down to it, there was the question of loyalty."

The events that fill the book take place over a one-week period. The writing is less action-filled than it is wonderfully descriptive, both of local atmosphere and geography, and including as it does occasional bits of fascinating historical lore. All the better to savor the terrific writing and character development of which the author is a past master. The wholly unexpected shocker of an ending is a perfect cap for this thoroughly enjoyable novel, which is recommended.

The Poor Boy's Game
Dennis Tafoya
Minotaur Books
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010
www.minotaurbooks.com

U.S. Marshal Frannie Mullen has had a difficult life: Her father, after years of being an enforcer for a corrupt Philadelphia union, has just escaped from Federal
prison; her sister has just come out of rehab after being sober for 28 days; she herself is in a relationship with a reformed outlaw (with similar issues in his family background), her ambivalent feelings notwithstanding. And, as the novel opens, she is conducting a routine apprehension of a fugitive during which one of her best friends/colleagues is killed, for which Frannie, as the team leader, would take the weight. (It was the first time in seven years in the Marshals service that she has had to fire her gun.) But of more immediate concern is her father's escape. She is being hunted by both law enforcement and the underworld, targeting Frannie, her sister, and her father's 26-year-old pregnant girlfriend as links to her father, and she doesn't know who to trust.

The novel is written in the language of the streets of Philadelphia: "... there was that thing coming out from behind his eyes, that presence that was inside us and only made itself known when things got as bad as they could be. The part of us that was left over from when we tore at each other with teeth and claws and only stopped when we tasted blood."

After Frannie is attacked by men who are strangers to her, and bodies begin piling up, the pace of the novel, already totally absorbing, picks up to even greater speed, and it never lets up, with some literally jaw-dropping moments, this reader already holding her breath. A very fast read, the novel is recommended.

Lineup
Liad Shoham
Translated from the Hebrew by Sara Kitai
Bourbon Street Books
c/o HarperCollins
10 E. 53rd St., NY, NY 10022
www.harpercollins.com

This novel is the first to be published in the US by Liad Shohan, an Israeli attorney and the author of five best-selling novels in his native country, apparently considered "the Israeli John Grisham." I was immediately intrigued by the setting, and by the protagonists, for the book presents wonderful character studies of three men: Amit Giladi, a would-be investigative journalist who'd been covering crime and education for the local Tel Aviv paper for 7-1/2 months; Police Inspector Eli Nachum; and Ziv Nevo, a man who in the last eighteen months had lost his job and his wife.

A brutal rape in a quiet Tel Aviv neighborhood leads to the arrest of Nevo by Inspector Eli Nachum and Giladi is sent by his editor, in the most urgent terms, to cover the story and get a scoop for the paper. There is no evidence, forensic or otherwise, and the girl couldn't see the face of her attacker, but Nachum is led to Nevo when the victim's father, who had been haunting the street where the
daughter lived in the firm belief that the attacker would be back looking for another victim, sees him on the same street, acting suspiciously, a stalker, and becomes convinced that he is the one they are seeking; he soon convinces Nachum as well. The problem arises when that certainty leads to a fatally contaminated lineup: The father had followed and taken photos of Nevo after spotting him on the scene, and shown his daughter the photos, and Nachum knows this. Nevo, guilty of something totally unrelated to the rape, shows clear signs of having done something about which he is keeping silent, and does not divulge what he was doing on that street that night. With the best of intentions and determined to prevent another young woman from suffering the same fate, Nachum sees to it that the man is convicted of the crime, determined to "do whatever it took to put the rapist behind bars."

The tale is well written (despite the fact that the first half felt as it needed some judicious editing). It is a compelling plot, and the characters are ones that this reader came to care about. I will be certain to watch for the next book from this author, and the book is recommended.

**Murder on Bamboo Lane**
Naomi Hirahara
Berkley Prime Crime
c/o Penguin Group USA
375 Hudson St., NY, NY, 10014
www.penguin.com
9780425264959, $7.99, Paperback, 304 pp

This is the first in a new series by this author (who has won an Edgar Award in the past and apparently has just won another award for this one). It introduces rookie LAPD Office Ellie Rush. Twenty-three years old, Ellie has followed in the footsteps of her aunt, the #2 person in the LAPD, Assistant Chief Cheryl Toma. Which appears to be both a blessing and a curse.

Ellie is a member of the Central Division's Bicycle Coordination Unit, i.e., a bicycle cop, but her dream is to become a detective. She is of mixed ethnicity: Her dad is white, her mother Japanese-American. In the opening pages, she comes across flyers posted in the neighborhood, and recognizes the photo of a missing girl as that of Jenny Nguyen, a Vietnamese-American girl who was her friend and college classmate. Not long after, the police find Jenny, shot to death.

Jenny's world is rocked. She is already in a difficult place, having recently broken up with her boyfriend of two years Her brother, Noah, is heavy into smoking pot, to which her father responds by saying that "based on neurological studies, the brain of a teenage boy is not fully developed, and my brother is a perfect example of that. Half human, half swamp creature." More violence follows, and Jenny resolves to catch the killer.
Jenny is a wonderful protagonist, conflicted about her work but with good instincts. Two things she learns early on: Trust no one, and stay one step ahead of everyone else. The author includes a lot of geographic descriptive material, as well as a great deal of culinary information on the availability of ethnic restaurants in the LA area. A very entertaining novel, and one that is recommended.

Gloria Feit
Reviewer

Gorden's Bookshelf

The Winter War
Antti Tuuri
Aspasia Books, Inc.
B25040 Maple Beach Road, R.R.1
Beaverton, Ontario, LOK 1A0 Canada
097310533X, $20.00, paperback, 208 pages

Most contemporary readers have never heard of the Winter War. The war happened in the winter of 1939 just before the official start of World War II. It was part of the pre-war expansion of the Soviet Union by Stalin. Stalin demanded huge concessions of land from Finland under the guise of self-defense. He had just annexed the other smaller Baltic countries and Finland worried that the land grab was part of a plan to annex all of Finland into Russia. Russia attacked with millions of troops on November 30th. Finland defended itself for nearly three months before letting Russia annex its land. The semi-official casualties were nearly 70,000 killed and wounded Finns and nearly 400,000 Russians. But Khrushchev later implied that the real Russian casualty numbers were closer to a million.

Tuuri's novel is a composite of diaries and letters written by Finnish troops at one of the most bloodiest battlefronts during the brief war. It is a stark retelling of the war. There are few embellishments to the story. The narration is styled as a memoir of a front line infantryman. It tells about the viciousness of battle but glosses over most details that he might not want his family to read. Nothing can hide the carnage of the war but this narration style permits the humanity of the characters standout amidst the death.

The Winter War is a must read for history and military buffs and a great read for anyone who has an interest in either the period or Finland. It is priced a little high for the current market but you should be able to find the book in a library or used
if price is an issue. The stark narration fits the story better than the prose used by most contemporary writers and it brings out a feel for the underlying tale that fits the style of the historical period. The Winter War is an easy recommendation.

Blown Circuit
Lars Guignard
Fantastic Press
Amazon Digital Services, Inc.
B00AMRGX2A, $4.99
9780992118204, $13.95 pbk, 342 pages

Blown Circuit is a spy action adventure. The action adventure is solidly written and has a better timeline and logic base than many contemporary action tales. The story revolves around an invention by Tesla of an ultimate weapon. Here the story falls short. Both the science and history is not adequately explained or developed. The result is that the reader has to move this portion of the story from a loosely possible tale into a fantasy. This is unfortunate because with a few tweaks the story could be improved.

Michael Chase is a CIA spy who joined the agency when his father disappeared. He is focused on finding his father. A message from his father is sent to Langley giving the location of a ship in the Bosphorus Strait near Istanbul. He sneaks aboard and finds the ship rigged to explode and evidence that his father had been held there. In his father's locked cabin he finds a locket with a clue. He escapes the ship just before it blows up. But that is just the beginnings of his problems. The clue puts him between international terrorists and a shadowy organization powerful enough to corrupt individuals within the CIA. Michael has to survive the dangers and prevent a terrorist attack that could destroy a city.

Blown Circuit is a vacation novel. You can forget your worries with this suspense filled action adventure. Its weaknesses keep it from being the best in the genre but its smooth fast and logical narration makes it a joy to read. At $4.99 it is an easy recommendation for the suspense reader.

Books: Crystal Clear Pond, Days Between Seasons, Faces of Doom, The Deuce of Pentacles, Eyes of an Eagle, Return of the Han (A Buck Rogers story), Murder Picnic Mysteries

S.A. Gorden, Reviewer
www.paulbunyan.net/users/gsirvio/content.html

---

Jaclyn's Bookshelf
Elliot's New Friends
Justin Lambert/John Langton
Privately Published
B00LBDMZAS, Kindle $1.99 US

Have you ever seen an elephant jump into a tree? If not, then you will in this adorable non-rhyming picture book. Elliot's New Friends by Justin Lambert will have you laughing out loud while reading this fun story about friendship and acceptance. Elliot is a not-so-little elephant who has dreams of exploring life outside of his waterhole. Since he has spent his entire life with other elephants, Elliot assumes the creatures he meets must also be some very strange looking elephants. He starts out by judging the other creatures based on their looks. Eventually, he realizes that he was wrong to judge them and searches throughout the land for new unique friends who all have something about them that makes them uniquely special.

The ideal audience for this book is for children in 1st grade to 4th--even though it is marketed to younger groups. The language is a little too hard for new readers to sit and try to read this without assistance. However, I do feel those younger audiences would love the adorable illustrations and the silly actions of Elliot and his friends.

While my oldest daughter enjoyed the message the author conveyed, my younger two enjoyed the dialogue and the pictures. They laughed when Elliot jumped into the tree and giggled at the conversations the characters had with one another. Elliot's New Friends is a great story with a powerful message behind it. I would highly recommend it to anyone looking for a cute story about friendship.

Food Run
Cindy Santos
Amazon Digital Publishing
B00L8OHIU2, Kindle $0.99 US, www.amazon.com

Synopsis (From Amazon.com): It's getting late. An out-of-work, divorced mother of two, makes a last-minute dash to the supermarket before it closes. Referencing her shopping list, she races through the store, compares prices and strives to stick to her limited budget as she buys groceries for her school-aged children and ailing mother. Her late-night shopping trip almost goes according to plan, until it's time for her to pay. An unexpected encounter at the checkout stand forces her to consider all her choices - and their consequences.

Cindy Santos delivers an emotional, descriptive short-story that tackles important issues related to the suffering of some modern day people. Food Run is a story about a divorced mother's dreaded trip to the grocery store. This Stanford graduate is forced to accept receiving government assistance in order to feed her
family. The story throws the reader into the inner thoughts, fears, and frustrations while dealing with the less than ideal situation the main character faces. Ms. Santos does a wonderful job showing the struggles of her character and the prejudice people display toward people who are down on their luck. Additionally, she highlights the human disconnect between big grocery stores and local shops as her character remembers the days when store owners treated people as though they were important instead of the ones that only are concerned with their "bottom line".

This story is relatable for people experiencing similar situations, and is an eye-opener for those who look down on people receiving welfare. In my opinion, the best aspect of this story is the message about not judging people because no one knows what the other person is going through. In this recession, college educated people have lost their jobs and have not been able to recover. Some had to go on welfare for temporary assistance, others are going back to change careers, and many were forced to take low-paying jobs to try to make ends meet. It is a sad truth, and Cindy Santos does an amazing job bringing humanity into this story.

Food Run is a story for people who are experiencing these issues and for those looking to understand the problems in our society. I would not recommend this for anyone who cannot empathize with people down on their luck or those who demonize others for accepting government assistance.

About the Author (Taken from Amazon):

Cindy Santos is a Cuban-American author and writer with a social conscious. Born and raised in Southern California, Cindy developed a passion for writing at an early age and dreamed of one day becoming a journalist. After attending three community colleges, she transferred to the University of Southern California in 2005 where she double majored in print journalism and contemporary American history. As an undergraduate student, she interned at a magazine and three newspapers to make her dream a reality. Upon her graduation from USC in 2008, she initially pursued a career in journalism, but later decided to devote herself to writing fiction based on current events. Known as a champion for Latino literature and multicultural realism, Cindy's stories capture the essence of everyday life in our troubled times. Her recently released short story, "Food Run," is her first published work of fiction. Cindy currently resides in the greater Los Angeles area where she is working on her debut novel.
Have you ever met a Dizzy? I am sure you have. According to the author, "Dizzies are strange peculiar creatures, sometimes funny, sometimes mean... that whisper annoying things in our children's ears which prevent them from doing what they really want." In other words, they are that voice inside one's head that tells them negative things and convinces them to behave in undesirable ways. They can make one feel angry, sad, or embarrassed. We all have them, but how do we help our children cope with them?

Dr. Orly Katz presents a unique solution for self-confidence issues with the intended audience of children from three to eight years of age. Through activities and song, she shows children the way to cope with their inner fears and emotions. The story is written in rhymes and provides a wonderful melodic flow as the text is read out loud. The illustrations are colorful and fun. They are a perfect complement to the text and are visually appealing. The story is set at a moderate pace and the content is certainly enjoyable throughout.

My children loved reading this and wanted to hear it multiple times. They enjoyed drawing their "Dizzies" and singing the song. Some of their comments included: "This story was really cool!", "I want to read this every day!", and "These activities are fun!" Overall, Busy Dizzy was a huge success with the kids and this book is a treasure to have in our collection.

About the Author (Taken from "Busy Dizzy"):
Best seller author, Dr. Orly Katz, is an expert for youth empowerment and life skills, who hold a doctorate in Educational Leadership; she is a sought after guest on TV and radio, and a national speaker and workshop facilitator for parents, educationalists and youth.

Orly is the founder of the "Simply Me" Center for: Leadership, Empowerment and Self Esteem.
Her two book series: Surviving Junior High, and Surviving Primary School, and her yearly Digital course: "Empowering Teachers to Empower Students", are recommended by the Ministry of Education, and are being taught in many schools as part of the curriculum in life skills lessons. Orly lives in Haifa, with her Husband and three children.

Jaclyn M. Bartz, Reviewer
http://jaclynmbartz.weebly.com
Gina Cavalier
Cavalier Originals Publishing
12439 Magnolia Blvd., #217, Valley Village, CA 91607-2450
c/o ChicExecs PR
www.cavalieroriginals.com
9780990565901, $25.00, 107pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: Reader's of all ages will enjoy experiencing "Gina Cavalier's - How I Became Santa Claus" with her amazing blend of art and story. Readers will journey with Nick, an eight-year-old boy with the big destiny of becoming the next Santa Claus, as he faces magical creatures, a formative foe and life-changing decisions that will determine his fate -- and the future of Santa Claus. Told through fifty one hand drawn illustrations, "Gina Cavalier's - How I Became Santa Claus" is a story of hope, dreams, magic and beauty. "Gina Cavalier's - How I Became Santa Claus" combines beautifully hand drawn art and a captivating narrative to form a unique and meaningful Christmas story that's sure to become a classic for the holiday season.

Critique: An original and thoroughly entertain picture book that will be read and appreciated for generations to come, "Gina Cavalier's - How I Became Santa Claus" is truly extraordinary and highly recommended for family, school, and community library Holiday Celebration collections. If you only acquire one new Christmas book for a child, make it "Gina Cavalier's - How I Became Santa Claus"!

Double Exposure
Bridget Birdsall
www.bridgetbirdsall.com
Sky Pony Press
307 West 36th Street, 11th floor, NY, NY 10018
www.skyhorsepublishing.com
9781629146065, $16.95, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: Fifteen-year-old Alyx Atlas was raised as a boy, yet she knows something others don't. She's a girl. And after her dad dies, it becomes painfully obvious that she must prove it now - to herself and to the world. Born with ambiguous genitalia, Alyx has always felt a little different. But it's after she sustains a terrible beating behind a 7-Eleven that she and her mother pack up their belongings and move from California to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to start a new life - and Alyx begins over again, this time as a girl. Alyx quickly makes new friends, earns a spot on the girls' varsity basketball team, and for the first time in her life feels like she fits in. That is, until her prowess on the court proves too much for the jealous, hotheaded Pepper Pitmani, who sets out to uncover Alyx's secret. A dangerous game of Truth or Dare exposes Alyx's difference and will disqualify her entire basketball team from competing in the state championships unless Alyx can
prove, once and for all, that she is a girl. But will Alyx find the courage to stand up for the truth of her personhood, or will she do what she's always done - run away? Whatever she decides, she knows there's much more at stake than a championship win.

Critique: In "Double Exposure", author Bridget Birdsall demonstrates a remarkable talent for original storytelling in her debut novel about a young girl overcoming adolescent insecurities and gender identification issues. As thoughtful and thought-provoking as it is solidly entertaining from beginning to end, "Double Exposure" is very highly recommended for highschool and community library YA contemporary fiction collections and the personal reading lists for teenage readers.

Thief of Glory
Sigmund Brouwer
WaterBrook Press
c/o Waterbrook Multnomah Publishing Group
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80921
www.waterbrookpress.com

Synopsis: For ten year-old Jeremiah Prins, the life of privilege as the son of a school headmaster in the Dutch East Indies comes crashing to a halt in 1942 after the Japanese Imperialist invasion of the Southeast Pacific. Jeremiah takes on the responsibility of caring for his younger siblings when his father and older stepbrothers are separated from the rest of the family, and he is surprised by what life in the camp reveals about a woman he barely knows - his frail, troubled mother.

Amidst starvation, brutality, sacrifice and generosity, Jeremiah draws on all of his courage and cunning to fill in the gap for his mother. Life in the camps is made more tolerable as Jeremiah's boyhood infatuation with his close friend Laura deepens into a friendship from which they both draw strength.

When the darkest sides of humanity threaten to overwhelm Jeremiah and Laura, they reach for God's light and grace, shining through his people. Time and war will test their fortitude and the only thing that will bring them safely to the other side is the most enduring bond of all.

Critique: As exceptionally written and engaging as it is inspired and inspiring, "Thief of Glory" is a rewarding read and continues to document Sigmund Brouwer as a talented and imaginative author of great imagination and literary ability. Very highly recommended for personal reading lists and community library collections, it should be noted that "Thief of Glory" is also available in a Kindle edition ($7.99).
Synopsis: History is brought to life in many historic houses, especially at Christmas time, when special decorations help to welcome the social season and visiting guests. In this revised second edition, learn history and local customs through engaging text and over 420 color photos. Costumed guides interpret Christmas traditions in some of the thirty specially decorated houses that are featured from across America. Both magnificent estates and simple residences offer a variety of styles, tastes, and ideas to inspire your own celebrations. See preserved buildings with illuminated gardens, inviting dining halls, and stunning interiors. Enjoy the many efforts on display here that help to make the Christmas season a magical time of sharing, caring, and gratitude.

Critique: Now in a newly revised and expanded second edition, "Christmas at Historic Houses" is a impressive compendium of beautifully photographed, full color images of Christmas scenes found in elegant mansions and manors ranging from the White House, to Monticello, to Colonial Williamsburg, and so many, many more. It is a pure pleasure to simply browse through the images and read the informative accompanying commentaries. "Christmas at Historic Houses" is very highly recommended and would make an excellent Memorial Fund acquisition selection for community and academic library collections.

Synopsis: Christmas stockings, ornaments, and more -- this is every crocheter's must-have holiday project book! Beginners will love Edie Eckman's useful technique tutorial, and experienced crafters will want to jump right in and start one of these 20 exciting projects. The book includes eight different stockings, festive ornaments for trees and tabletops, a tree skirt, and other decorations for the home. Each pattern includes a symbol chart and is labeled with the skill level required to complete it, so crocheters of all levels can pick the perfect project for their own holiday season.

Critique: Ideal for both novice and experienced needlecrafters alike, "Christmas
Crochet for Hearth, Home & Tree: Stockings, Ornaments, Garlands, and More" is a wonderfully illustrated compendium of ideas and instructions for employing crocheting skills in creating all manner of memorable Christmas Season decorations. Thoroughly 'user friendly', "Christmas Crochet for Hearth, Home & Tree: Stockings, Ornaments, Garlands, and More" is enthusiastically recommended for personal and community library Needlecraft instructional reference collections. It should be noted that "Christmas Crochet for Hearth, Home & Tree: Stockings, Ornaments, Garlands, and More" is also available in a Kindle edition ($9.99).

Taking the Stage
Judith Humphrey
Jossey-Bass
c/o Wiley Trade Publishing Group
111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.josseybass.com
9781118870259, $29.95, 240pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: Based on a program from the Humphrey Group that has been delivered to over 400,000 women worldwide, "Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out, and Succeed" by Judith Humphrey shows women regardless of age, rank, or profession, how they can communicate with courage and confidence in every situation, from formal speeches to brief hallway conversations. "Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out, and Succeed" will enable women to make the most of every opportunity by understanding how best to: Speak up confidently, even when others don't agree; Convey their accomplishments without self-doubt; Be assertive but not aggressive; Deliver clear and convincing messages; Move beyond "minimizing" language and apology; Find their own powerful and authentic voice; Achieve confident body language and a leadership presence. By applying these techniques and others to every communication ranging from making a presentation, to speaking at meetings, to conducting an elevator conversation, to selling themselves in job interviews, women will be recognized as the leaders they are and attain positions of influence.

Critique: Women in a male dominated culture are conditioned from early childhood against being assertive or confrontational. In the pages of "Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out, and Succeed", Judith Humphrey provides a practical and coherent instruction manual to overcoming that cultural handicap and to succeed in 'being heard'. Very highly recommended for personal 'self-help / self-improvement reading lists and community library collections, it should be noted that "Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out, and Succeed" is also available in a Kindle edition ($14.99).

The Red Sun: Legends of Orkney
Synopsis: Twelve-year-old Sam Baron is no hero. He's prone to losing his temper and believes his dad is the worst lout in the world for taking off and leaving him and his mom to fend for themselves in their home town of Pilot Rock, Oregon. But Sam's world turns upside down when a strange dwarf appears in his garage and Sam discovers his father has been trapped in a stone in some magical realm called Orkney. Worse, his substitute English teacher is a bona fide witch and seems to want him dead. With his friends gone missing and vicious Shun Kara wolves stalking him, Sam must travel through a stonefire to this far away realm of Orkney to save his friends from the dark powers that hold them and find a way to rescue his father. Thrust into this new world, Sam must unravel the secrets of his past while trying to stay alive as witches, wraiths, and other menacing creatures pose serious peril to the unsuspecting Sam. With only a young witch girl named Mavery to guide him, Sam must find a way to control his dark side and stop an ancient curse which turns the sun a poisonous red, threatening to destroy the land of Orkney.

Drawing on Norse mythology, The Red Sun is the first book in The Legends of Orkney, a spellbinding series of adventure fantasy novels by Alane Adams. This fantastical story will enthrall middle grade and tween readers with a taste for adventure. Follow Sam as he grapples with dark and dangerous elements from his past and confronts his burgeoning powers. The Red Sun is a must read for tweens and adults with a taste for adventure, magic and fantasy.

Critique: Exceptionally well written, "The Red Sun" introduces author Alane Adams as a major and imaginative storytelling talent. Very highly recommended for fans of YA fantasy; it should be noted that "The Red Sun" is also available in a Kindle edition ($2.95). Author Alane Adams has now completed the second volume in the Legends of Orkney series, "The Moon Pearl" (9781497483750, $9.95) which continues the saga of Sam Baron. The third volume, The Raven God" is scheduled for publication in January 2015.

Julie Summers
Reviewer

Karyn's Bookshelf

Santa Clauses: Short Poems from the North Pole
Young readers get to peek into the private, December northwoods world of Santa Claus in this warm-hearted, sweet and personal haiku journey to Christmas.

Over twenty-five days leading up to Christmas, the same span as a traditional Advent calendar, there are chores, simply joys, and natural beauty.

Santa and Mrs. Claus spread sand on the front steps, read bedtime stories to the reindeer, wrap gifts, and update "naughty" and "nice" lists.

There are snow angels to make, mistletoe kisses, popcorn strings, thick wool socks, hand-stitched quilts, fireside hearths, and freshly baked cookies.

And there are frosty moonrises, distant wolf cries, icicles, and northern lights. The elves do come in and so, ultimately, does Santa's annual ride.

But this is a tranquil tale, different from the typical frantic depiction of the pre-Christmas North Pole. The Clauses' quiet, non-public side is uniquely at the forefront.

Unique, too, is the use of haiku, which lends both child-friendly brevity and a tie to a poetry style that young readers may be learning at school or at home.

Just-right word choices connect the everyday and the special. Santa sands down his steps while "thinking of nutmeg on eggnog." Mrs. Claus makes a snow angel "becoming a little girl again."

The illustrations are as lovely as the text. Rich, saturated color - found in the deep blue of a starry midwinter night, the brown log exterior of the Clauses' log cabin, and warm oranges and reds in socks, cold noses, cocoa cups, and kitchen chairs - beautifully compliment the writing.

A new holiday classic.
Issues that deeply matter to elementary-aged children are tenderly addressed in this early chapter book about friendship and bullying.

My Heart is Laughing is a follow up to 2013’s My Happy Life, by the same author-illustrator team. It reunites young readers with Dani, whose optimistic spirit has been tested by the recent moving away of her best friend, Ella.

In this new story, Dani continues to miss Ella. Then, her life is further complicated by a bullying incident that becomes the story's core.

When two classmates verbally taunt her and then physically assault her with pinches hard enough to leave bruises, Dani tearfully runs home, falling to pieces alone in her bedroom. The accompanying, simply-lined illustration of a slumped, broken girl who ”cried so hard that her eyes went as red as a white rabbit's" will move even the most hardened adult reader.

Rising above the vocabulary limitations of its short sentences and brief chapters, this is a story of rare depth that acknowledges the complexities of elementary school life.

It sweeps across a thorny spectrum of emotions - anger, sadness, loneliness, jealousy, disappointment, despair, hope and contentment. And it broaches weighty subjects such as forgiving someone who refuses to atone for a wrong.

Beautiful and relevant; elementary readers will see themselves and situations surrounding them every day.

Ghost Walls: The Story of a 17th Century Colonial Homestead
Sally M. Walker, author
Carolhoda Books
c/o Lerner Publishing Group, Inc.
241 First Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55401
978076135408, $20.95, www.amazon.com

Three hundred years after it fell into ruin in the 1700s, this detailed account of the archaeological unearthing of a once grand colonial Maryland home will inspire middle grade readers to consider what's buried under their towns.

Despite the mysterious title and ethereal, fog-shrouded cover, Ghost Walls is not a ghost story. It is about the succession of influential people who lived on one piece of property, some of whom died there in ghastly ways. It doesn't delve at all into the subject of haunting.

Rather, Ghost refers to the long-gone walls of St. John's House, near Chesapeake
Bay. Stains in the soil are often all that remain to show where wall posts once rose, and where other elements of the home and extensive property were laid out.

Excavation at the site has gone on since the 1960s, and a museum was recently built around the original foundation.

The author expertly takes what might have been a dry subject and, tying together archaeological discoveries and historical records, enthusiastically transforms it into a fascinating tale of the prominent families who lived at St. John's House, the first of whom arrived from England in 1637.

Many details of the occupants' lives are already known, as they made important contributions to Maryland and American history. They included Maryland's first provincial secretary and, later, the governor of Maryland.

But much remains elusive. What did they eat? Where was the kitchen? Where did the families and their servants sleep? Did they have slaves? Was the small addition added in later years every actually used a nursery - and what became of the child that was supposed to have slept there? Were there glass windows? Did they have an orchard? Did they hold fashionable parties? Those questions and many others have been answered through a decades-long, painstaking process of digging and brushing away dirt, analyzing soil, and lifting out artifacts ranging from pottery shards to pipe stems to knife-scraped bones.

Scientists analyzed pollen traces in bricks to discern what time of year parts of the home were built or remodelled. They studied the contents of a former trash heap to find clues to the occupants' diets. And the discovery of an outdoor privy, a luxury in the 17th Century, underscored the wealth of the inhabitants.

A fascinating, richly researched and well-written account of a legendary home's lost past - and the scientists and historians who refused to let it stay buried.

A Bean, a Stalk and a Boy Named Jack
William Joyce, author
Kenny Callicutt, illustrator
Atheneum Books for Young Readers
c/o Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

A classic fairy tale gets a modern makeover in this picture book that begins familiarly with a boy and bean, but quickly and wonderfully diverts.

Jack's town needs water; a long drought has left them high and dry and even the king wanting of a bath.
Taking a bean magically fashioned by a wizard, Jack climbs a beanstalk as expected. There, he finds a giant, friendly boy taking a bath - not the traditional, mean adult giant. When the bath's water is let out, the town's water problems are solved by a cascading downward flood.

Rollicking writing, particularly the wry dialogue, and rosy-cheeked characters will delight young readers and lap listeners. The story has been softened to be more palatable to young children, and the illustrations mirror that.

The surprise, sequel-inspiring ending is a bonus. A perfect update.

Star Bright: A Christmas Story
Alison McGhee, author
Peter H. Reynolds, author and illustrator
Atheneum Books for Young Readers
c/o Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

The Nativity gets a quietly inspiring, contemporary update in this story about a young angel who wants to give the Christ Child a gift.

Like the classic Little Drummer Boy, this angel thinks she has nothing worthy to offer. The lyrical text becomes particularly lovely, in an earthy way, as the young angel weighs her gift options.

"Wind?" she muses. "Wind to blow through the baby's hair. Wind to make the flowers dance. But wind was the gift of the sky."

In a similar fashion, she considers and then dismisses the idea of giving rain and music; those, too, are for someone else to present.

But as she takes in the excitement of the older angels and, in a great, twenty-first century twist watches the Christ Child's descent from heaven to earth on a flat screen television, she has an idea.

Clad in early twentieth century-inspired pilot's glasses and cap, she streaks through the sky to create the bright star that famously leads the Wise Men to baby Jesus.

An endearing, intrepid new holiday heroine whose simple story captures the true spirit of the season.
Katherine's Bookshelf

The Star Giver
Ginger Nielson
Ginger Nielson's Children's Books
278 Sand Hill Road, Peterborough, NH 03458
9780991309337, $18.95, www.amazon.com

There is nothing as sweet as a child who asks questions about the world around him or her. "Why is the sky blue?" "Where do babies come from?" are the two that immediately come to mind. In this case, Little Bear wants his mother to tell him where the stars come from. It gives her a chance to tell him a Native American folktale that will entertain him as well as relate a fascinating story.

With beautiful illustrations done in Native American colors, Mrs. Nielson illustrates the story, as it unfolds through the word of Mother Bear and the imagination of Little Bear.

The Star Giver holds the stars close until night, when it is time to release them, then waits until morning to finish his task. You will love sharing this story with your children at bedtime, as well as any other time of the day. And she tells you to look for the "secret on the last page of this book". What is it? You need to get the book to find out.

From her website: "Ginger Nielson lives at the top of a hill, near the edge of a forest in semi-rural New Hampshire, USA. There is a magic wand on her desk, a dragon in her basement, and a tiny elephant in her studio. Everything else is nearly normal." Sounds like a great place for her imagination to run rampant through the wonderful, imaginative stories that she illustrates, whether that of her own or another writer.

Jonah Prophet
Jeff Hampton
Tate Publishing
127 E Trade Center Terrace, Mustang, OK 73064

Jeff Hampton has written a wonderful allegory of the Old Testament story of Jonah and the whale. This modern interpretation of the parable puts Jonah in the
belly of big business, in the form of a non-productive business that he, as a troubleshooter, is supposed to fix. What happens instead will make you think about the story in the Bible.

Jonah wants to show King Lord that he knows better, so he strikes out on his own. King Lord told him to go to the Ninevah Corporation, but Jonah does not want to.

"...they're a heartless, despicable business that deserves whatever trouble they've created for themselves."

He wants a job that he thinks is more worthwhile. So he goes to Tarshish Manufacturing where everything he does is wrong, even though he knows it should be right. At this point, he finds out who is really in charge. What he does when he realizes this will make you understand the lesson taught in a modern context.

"...within forty-eight hours of King Lord's call, Jonah was in the lobby of Ninevah Corp."

His faith is tested as he learns that obedience is the way to peace.

Jeff Hampton has worked near corporate boardrooms in his capacity of news reporter. This is where he drew his thoughts of faith and doubt. He is a graduate of Baylor University and a long-time member of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas. He and his wife, LeAnn, live in the old downtown district of Garland.

Katherine Boyer
Reviewer

Kevin's Bookshelf

The Lion Trees
Owen Thomas
OTF Literary
www.owenthomasfiction.com/index.php/novels/the-lion-trees
0692235906, $27.00, www.amazon.com

Ties that bind us - A review of the novel 'The Lion Trees'

"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans" - John Lennon

As I finished reading the novel which fully deserves that loosely and widely used epithet 'magnum opus', I realized that The Lion Trees was much more than what
it claims to be and definitely wiser than what I could comprehend in the first reading. And yet, it is those first impressions that matter most of the time and of which I’m about to share with you. As I close my eyes and look back at the book, certain images that my mind crafted while reading this novel comes alive to me in spurts and in solitary, of connecting with another individual, experiencing their angst, their remorse, their resolve, their happiness, their endings. And when I think about it, it sometimes feels like I'm drifting in and out of sleep, recollecting images from a dream that I've seen or perhaps one I'm seeing right now but I know they were from a book, from a novel that is as real as fictionalized reality gets or perhaps and funnily enough from pure fiction shot with an absolute dose of honest reality.

Author Owen Thomas's two part saga on family and the lives of individuals that make up such a social unit form the base for his novel, 'The Lion Trees'. Juxtaposing with the moral and social environment of America circa 2005, his novel reads as a part impressionistic memoir and part anecdotal account of the lives of five individuals of a family. They are the Johns family; papa Hollis, mom Susan and siblings David and Tilly's separate narrative intertwines with each other's and sometimes stays afloat on its own. But the one thing that unites them all is Ben, Hollis and Susan's third child and the one constant presence in all their lives.

The character of Hollis is of a retired banker, a man of many stories, a man with odd hobbies and a stranger interest in a former colleague's daughter. Wife Susan, the proverbial caregiver of the family increasingly finds herself contemplating her individual future separate from that of her family; looking for a more meaningful purpose to her existence. So it would be no surprise to state at this point that their marriage has hit a giant roadblock and isn't going anywhere, a fact that is openly acknowledged by both her adult children. David is the quintessential right guy at all the wrong places, saying and doing all the wrong things. His earnestness and his almost obsessive compulsion to follow a path of righteous integrity lands him trouble more often than not. Ben, the youngest suffers from Down syndrome, is the epitome of love and innocence and a figure that resembles the allegorical home all the four characters return to whenever they go off the track. And then there's Tilly, the only character who's narrative transcends the linear nature of the book and we get to see her explore herself and her story in a retrospective manner down the ages from her struggles as an young aspiring starlet to an established and mature woman and actress. The Lion Trees is their story, part one deals with their falls while part two shows their revival, starting their lives afresh.

You take one look at the novel and your impulsively judgemental mind may be excused for jumping the gun and trying to categorize the novel into that of a genre with a dark theme and heavy duty drama and thinking it to be related to its similar American and Russian cousins. But by the time you are done with The
Lion Trees, you would have forgotten all about the length and will realize what an amazingly entertaining piece of literature it was and do I dare say it, a serious novel that provides you with some genuine laugh out loud moments.

Owen Thomas is so sure of his writing and the unique and individual voices that he has created for his characters that he doesn't feel the need to add (a highly distracting) 'he said', 'she said' after every line of conversation between the characters. The level of detailing is pretty amazing, even the way each character's immediate environment has been made up to highlight and reflect on their unique personalities has been well thought out. In addition to the novel's principal characters, Owen has given us as a fine array of secondary characters as well. Their back stories and their sub plots will be relatable to most. There are some stand out scenes in the book, worth mentioning are Susan's political speech, Angus Mann's diatribe against Hollywood and pretty much all the scenes involving David, especially those of him teaching history to his students, his interrogation scenes and the final courtroom drama. The novel is also filled with great quotable quotes, a true book aficionado's delight.

The Lion Trees depicts people who can't be slotted as just saints or monsters, they fall somewhere in between, just like any of us. Owen Thomas's writing leaves you richer with emotions and contentment even before the ending arrives. And if there is only one book that you are going to read this year, make it The Lion Trees.

Tossed Off the Edge

Patrick Brown
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
B00N43OHFE, $14.95, www.amazon.com

As reel as it gets - A review of the novel 'Tossed Off the Edge'

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars" - Oscar Wilde

Hollywood, that seemingly far away magical land, the land of opportunities, the land of many dreams has seen the dreams of many fulfilled but for most of the men and women, young and old who land up on the streets with stars in their eyes, Hollywood has been nothing short of a crash course on dealing with the dark side of life. So for a place that offers success and failure in such large amounts, stories of them, about them too will be in plenty. And this is such a story, it might be a different story, it might even be a difficult story to believe in but even if we choose to believe in them or not, all stories need to be heard for there is a storyteller behind these stories, sharing with us the highs and lows, the glory and the sufferings, teaching us, warning us so that we may learn from them.

Author Patrick Brown's second novel, 'Tossed Off the Edge' is a finely crafted play on the celebrity tell-all format the literary world is abound with.
revelling in the fact that it is a faux memoir on a non-existent TV star, the author has crafted a fine fictional story based on a fictional lead all the while challenging the reader's mind to believe in and invest emotionally on this outlandish and part sympathetic mega television figure. Sheila Wozniak is the person behind the persona of the rags to riches story of the starlet; she has invested four decades of her career into playing Regina Knight, the lead and perhaps the most important character in the day time soap opera 'The Edge of Conflict'. And after an extended reign at the top, when the show's and her character's popularity is on the wane, the television studio fires her. But if there is one thing Ms. Wozniak has successfully mastered after all these years is to always land on her feet and the ability to salvage whatever is left of her career and her image in the public arena. She gets an opportunity from a publishing house to pen her memoir and she employs the former head writer from her old TV show, who is also curiously named Patrick Brown. Thus then begins the narration of a wild and crazy story about an aspiring actress's struggles, her family and the people who have come into contact with her. And whenever Ms. Wozniak's narration transcends into the absurd and delusional variety, writer Patrick Brown is always close by with an array of finely researched footnotes to keep Sheila Wozniak's active imagination in check.

In 'Tossed Off the Edge' Patrick Brown presents plenty of the nasty behind-the-scenes details of the television world, especially that of day time soap operas and its lead actors. The unreasonable demands of the long serving cast members, the inexplicable story lines churned out by writers, the asinine management by television executives, it's all there. But don't get me wrong, it is never presented as to ridicule the format itself, in fact at some levels the author is even kind of in awe of this format and its work ethics. And when you think about it, it is true to a certain extent, when we compare it to the alternatives that are the 24 hour news channels which brings us more depressing news than pleasant ones and the so called un-scripted 'reality' television, which is an even bigger farce than anything these soap operas churns out. While it may be fiction, this fiction takes itself very seriously as to adapt many contemporary and socially relevant themes as part of its broadcast.

Tossed Off the Edge not only chronicles the made up show's rich history, but it also offers an unpretentious and unapologetic insight into the lead character of Regina Knight played by Sheila Wozniak. Now Ms. Wozniak is everything you imagine her to be and some more, she is extremely self centred but surprisingly never gets truly annoying and all her stories have a hint of fantasy about them. Patrick Brown's imagination is so vivid and yet appears thoroughly researched that by the end of the book you are sure to hit the search engines searching for Sheila Wozniak and a show called 'The Edge of Conflict.' Now even though this book has been written as a humorous play on the tell-all celebrity memoirs, there is quite an emotional depth to the story and it really has a surprising tone of sadness and quiet empathy that you will feel towards this made up character.
And at other times Patrick seems to be having a whale of a time taking jabs at our idiosyncrasies, hypocrisies and moral values. The footnotes provided serve a dual function, they not only make you read the book twice but they also end up cracking you up with an astonishing regularity.

Tossed Off the Edge is a great excuse to laugh at our many contemporary and contemptible values. And you are bound to fall in love with this character of Sheila Wozniak who is hypocritical and so full of herself and yet feels so real and like someone you've known your entire life. And perhaps this is a reflection on the times we live, because this fake memoir is more fun and real than some of the 'real' ones out there in the market today.

Locker Rooms
Patty Lesser
iUniverse, Inc.
c/o Author House
1663 Liberty Dr. Suite #300, Bloomington, IN 47403
www.iuniverse.com
B00HH3YZ1I, $16.95, www.amazon.com

A Soul Story - A review of the novel 'Locker Rooms'

"Seeing death as the end of life is like seeing the horizon as the end of the ocean" - David Searls

Death encompasses us all, death doesn't discriminate, it doesn't care if you are a man or a woman, young or old, rich or poor and more importantly good or bad, everything alive must die one day, but what happens afterwards? A lot of people have theories, about afterlife and souls, various religions too propagate such ideas and the public are free to believe what they want. But what if there were souls and what if our souls couldn't get an automatic entry into either heaven or hell after our death? What if there were middle men, evil middle men with vicious intentions to lock you up in an everlasting purgatory, what would you do then?

Author Patty Lesser's new novel 'Locker Rooms' narrates the story of Alida, a bipolar character leading a quiet life in suburban Canada and who is also the recent winner of a 10 million dollar lottery payout. Alida alternates between being impulsive, moody and solitary to being driven, outgoing and courageous. When she purchases an old mansion with her new earnings, little does she realize that her new home has secret tunnels leading up to rooms with even stranger looking lockers in them. Alida quickly realizes that these are no ordinary lockers and they are in fact a prison for innocent souls captured by a demon that goes by the name Shad. When Alida interferes in the demon's work and tries to free the souls, her whole life is turned upside down and she quickly gets involved in a fight between evil and an even bigger evil. Turning up as her allies are a couple of souls
she has freed from the lockers who support and help her in this fight against evil.

The centrepiece of Patty Lesser's book isn't that it deals with ghosts, demons and other paranormal elements; it does but it is her main lead that makes this book truly interesting. The character of Alida is a non conformist and a closed personality, revealing very little about her and quick to change the subject whenever the topic gets too personal. Alida's character is unpredictable but that is also what makes her so exciting to get to know and in terms of use as a narrative tool, having such an unpredictable lead character constantly keeps the reader in check as you are never sure as to what her next move is going to be. Alida truly is the heart and soul of Locker Rooms.

A sense of mystery envelopes the narrative right from the word go and never lets up until the very last page. A recurring theme of the book seems to be that everything happens for a reason and you have to keep your senses sharp and your mind open to accept changes, whatever form they may come in. And even though there are some farfetched ideas being discussed, you tend to go along with the flow since the writing's good and precise. At first, the experience of conversing with timid and polite spirits are an oddity when the constant image you have of spirits are of the haunting kind but you soon get used to it. There are a lot of pop culture references with regards to many popular films and books which are repeated throughout the book. There are references to biblical passages as well but it has not been overdone. And it also has quite possibly and arguably the greatest sex with a ghost since Ghost the movie. There is an epic battle with Shad and Lucifer towards the end which is very graphic and pretty much how you would imagine when two strong and warring evil forces tee off. It has some very nicely etched out secondary characters as well, the many spirits Alida frees are all distinctive personalities and their back stories too are convincing. Oliver, the spirit that hangs around the longest and Alida's romantic interest is the perfect arm candy and serves his purpose in the book justly.

Patty Lesser's book may be a romance novel with a paranormal edge or a spooky thriller peppered with a love story, whichever way you look at it, is still a good combination of heart-warming and hair raising scenes. The novel very delicately challenges one's ready acceptance of one's fate, beliefs and ideals and leaves you entertained, informed and inspired. The small town setting with its few but compelling characters and riveting story line make this an easy read for the season.

Kevin Peter, Reviewer
www.moterwriter.com

Linda's Bookshelf
The Historic Kentucky Kitchen, subtitled Traditional Recipes for Today's Cooks, is a slender yet significant volume of culinary history, thoroughly tested recipes and vintage photographs. You don't have to be a Kentuckian to appreciate this engaging, lively celebration of home, hearth and modernized 'receipts'. The authors painstakingly researched and re-discovered cooking lore contained within a voluminous treasure trove of nineteenth and twentieth century diaries, letters, hand-written manuscripts, out-of-print cookbooks, newspaper and magazine clippings and archived files from the University of Kentucky Libraries Special Collection. Readers benefit from the expertise of the co-authors in their respective fields. Archivists Deirdre A. Scaggs, author of Woman in Lexington, associate dean of the UK Special Collections and Andrew W. McGraw, the sous chef at Lexington's Country Club restaurant are co-authors. They collaborated on the various tasks of researching the contents of collections selected for inclusion. Deciphering handwriting as old as 150 years written in fading ink with alternative spellings and referencing archaic terms and now rare ingredients were among the many challenges faced by this intrepid team. The more than one hundred recipes selected for the book were tested repeatedly, modified and updated to produce a cookbook containing a wide array of classic dishes that reflect their rich Kentucky heritage to delight contemporary palates.

Each recipe is annotated with a description of its origin, has ingredients readily available in supermarkets or farmer's markets with simple to follow directions and tips for success. The daily question, "What's for dinner," is now so easily answered with a myriad of menu selections whether cooked at home or purchased ready-made at a supermarket deli counter or restaurant. The first regional, full-length recipe book in the Commonwealth, The Kentucky Housewife, written by Mrs. Lettice Bryan, still available, was not published until 1839. Most housewives and household cooks learned by imitation and "cooked by ear" as termed by Scaggs and McGraw. Girls were trained in the domestic arts and many families were responsible for the hunting, butchering, farming, preserving, growing, or foraging the necessary foodstuffs as well as preparation of all meals. Fewer items were 'store-bought', among them staples and luxuries such as coffee, black tea, dried beans, certain spices such as pepper, cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, sugar and molasses. Nearby farms would provide city dwellers their produce, chickens for eggs and meat, fresh pork and local dairy products and beef. The "local food movement" loudly proclaimed as quasi-revolutionary is in actuality well rooted in the Commonwealth of Kentucky culinary history and customs.

Resources cited as source materials for this exceptional book include archival
records from several prominent Kentucky families including: The Scott D. Breckinridge, Jr. Collection that contained extensive and early recipes written in fine penmanship in bound journals; The Henry Clay Memorial Foundation Papers, 1777-1991, organized in a series by families represented; John Sherman Cooper Collection, 1927-1972; and English Family Papers, 1884-1986, among others. Generals, physicians, statesmen, educators and folksinger/poet Logan English who wrote passionately about food and wine are represented in these simple dishes to be enjoyed with family and friends.

The Historic Kentucky Kitchen, a welcome holiday gift or essential addition for any cooking enthusiast or armchair chef, was published by the University Press of Kentucky (UPK) in 2013. UPK represents a consortium of all Kentucky state universities, five of its private colleges and two historical societies with a stated dual mission "the publication of books of high scholarly merit in a variety of fields for a largely academic audience and the publication of books about the history and culture of Kentucky, the Ohio Valley region, the Upper South, and Appalachia." Their focus is on the humanities including exemplary film history biographies and studies, social sciences, history, literature and military history as well as classic novels by Kentucky authors. Lest any reader be ill-advised to labor under the misconception that UPK are publishers of dry academic tomes, please be reminded 'Professor Porkbelly'/Dr. Wes Berry's The Kentucky Barbecue Book is a recent publication. UPK to this reviewer is a guarantee of excellence. Purchasers will find some of the finest contemporary writing in meticulously well-crafted, beautifully bound volumes with arresting covers able to stand the test of time and certain to capture a reader's interests.

The Death of Santini
Pat Conroy
Nan A. Talese
c/o Random House Publishing Group
1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019
9780385530903, $28.95, www.amazon.com, 352 pages

The Death of Santini: The Story of a Father and His Son was one of my top five picks for 2013. Pat Conroy is, in my opinion, if not the finest then certainly one of the finest American authors living today. I have been an evangelist for his work since I first read the then newly published The Water is Wide during my senior year in college. It remains a favorite and inspired me several years ago to vacation in South Carolina and to seek out a boat tour to Daufuskie Island long before it was developed as a golf resort. Pat Conroy did not disappoint his readers with The Death of Santini and is gracious and engaging in person as this fan can attest after hearing him speak last fall at a book launch event.

The Death of Santini: The Story of a Father and His Son, a searing patricentric memoir, reveals the full extent of the shocking brutality and abuse the Conroy
family suffered at the hands of their husband and father that was whitewashed, softened and fictionalized in The Great Santini (1976). It also chronicles the powerful redemptive qualities of forgiveness and love that came to exist between this father and his eldest son so long at odds with one another. The real 'Santini' was not Bull Meechum as scripted for Robert Duvall who neither gave his eldest son his emblematic flight jacket nor surprised his daughter with long-stemmed roses for her prom as depicted in the movie version. Duvall's 1980 Oscar-nominated portrayal of the fictional hero cemented a positive image of the marine aviator that may ultimately have eased family communications. Marine Colonel Donald Conroy was a fearsome peacetime warrior prone to hair-trigger explosions and perilous displays of bad temper which literally drew blood. His wife and children were left with physically transitory yet deep-seated, lasting psychological scars from the abuse administered behind closed doors. Military wives and dependents are also expected to quietly, dutifully support their spouses and fathers during their service which can also exact a high emotional toll. Pat's mother, the cultured, mannered, beautiful and determined Peg Conroy, had signed on for the duration with a tacit agreement to be an exemplary military spouse with full knowledge any public ripples in the facade of their marriage or problems with their children would reflect badly upon her spouse and negatively impact his career. She did her duty without recompense and divorced the self-styled great and powerful Santini before the ink was fully dried on his retirement papers. The Conroy children as is typical in well-run military households were also keenly aware of maintaining proper protocols and the need to protect the image.

Author Pat Conroy has been richly mining his childhood memories filling novels with vivid imagery of his family's colorful history for over four decades to the chagrin and, in some cases, denial by some of his closest relatives. His sister Kathy seemingly cannot recall or has successfully suppressed their father's long reign of terror so effectively her children have accused Uncle Pat of 'telling lies about granddaddy.' Legions of readers have delighted in his lushly extravagant descriptions of persons and places and while able to appreciate the storytelling artistry possibly recoil from the raw emotional intensity and pain lying beneath the surface of the wordsmith's self-deprecating humor. This memoir pulls aside the curtain concealing painful memories in a frank, revelatory and riveting manner. Conroy has said that five of the seven Conroy children have attempted suicide and sadly, the youngest sibling Tom succeeded in a particularly horrific way as chronicled in the book.

Colonel Donald Conroy, the highly decorated larger-than-life Marine combat aviator immortalized in his son's fiction, died in bed of colon cancer in May, 1998. He was tended in his last days by his surviving offspring. As Pat describes the final days any romantic notions or conjured images of a grief stricken family gathered in harmonious unity, exchanging pleasant memories while speaking in softened tones to ease the final passage of the warrior patriarch are quickly dispelled.
Fierce animosity continues unabated between second child, published poet Carol Anne Conroy, and much of the family with most of her hostility and disdain directed towards her best-selling novelist older brother. Their father's death led only to a short-term, brokered cease-fire and not a permanent truce. It comes as no surprise that it took Pat Conroy fifteen years since the death of his father to write this superbly honest, definitive memoir, presumably to exorcising demons and vanquishing past terrors of childhood. Although no apologies were proffered, there was a 'second act' in the relationship between father and son. Donald Conroy came to embrace his role as the fictional hero of The Great Santini and joined his son at book signings, enthusiastically inscribing books and visiting with the fans and readers. He telephoned and stayed in touch with his adult children, financially supported his brilliant poetess daughter and even maintained season tickets to Six Flags Amusement Park where he would ride the roller coasters accompanied by grandchildren or nieces and nephews. Never able to express pride or utter the words "I love you" to his offspring, his actions in later years demonstrated familial bonds unimaginable during their youth. Redemption and forgiveness partner with honesty and humor in this touching, inspiring and unforgettable memoir making it a must-read recommendation.

Linda Hitchcock, Reviewer
Member National Book Critics Circle

---

**Margaret's Bookshelf**

101 Kids Activities That Are the Bestest, Funnest Ever!
Holly Homer & Rachel Miller
Page Street Publishing
27 Congress Street, Suite 103, Salem, MA 01970
www.pagestreetpublishing.com
c/o Trina Kaye Organization (publicity)

Synopsis: For boys and girls from ages 3 to 12, there are hundreds of fun, educational and engaging things to do in the pages of "101 Kids Activities That Are the Bestest, Funnest Ever!: The Entertainment Solution for Parents, Relatives & Babysitters!". Here are fun activities that are the ideal alternative to simply watching television as a way to keep a child entertained. A compendium of time-tested, exciting activities to keep your children laughing and learning for an hour or a day, "101 Kids Activities That Are the Bestest, Funnest Ever!: The Entertainment Solution for Parents, Relatives & Babysitters!" is thoroughly 'user friendly'. These activities range from making edible play dough and homemade sidewalk chalk; to playing shoebox pinball and creating a balance beam obstacle course. And with outdoor and indoor activities and tips for adjusting according to
your child's age, this book will provide hours and hours of never-ending fun with your family.

Critique: "101 Kids Activities That Are the Bestest, Funnest Ever!: The Entertainment Solution for Parents, Relatives & Babysitters!" is the perfect 'what to do' resource and reference for keeping children entertained under any and all circumstances indoor or out of doors. Ideal and highly recommended for parents, grandparents, babysitters, teachers, and anyone else responsible for supervising a child, "101 Kids Activities That Are the Bestest, Funnest Ever!: The Entertainment Solution for Parents, Relatives & Babysitters!" will prove to be an enduringly popular and repeatedly utilized activities instruction guide.

The Discomfort Zone
Marcia Reynolds
Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 650
San Francisco, CA 94104-2916
Cave Henricks Communications
www.bkconnection.com
9781626560659, $18.95, 176pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: You want people to stretch their limits, but your conversations meant to help them often fall flat or backfire, creating more resistance than growth. Top leadership coach Marcia Reynolds offers a model for using the Discomfort Zone - the moment when the mind is most open to learning - to prompt people to think through problems, see situations more strategically, and transcend their limitations. Drawing on recent discoveries in the neuroscience of learning, "The Discomfort Zone: How Leaders Turn Difficult Conversations Into Breakthroughs" shows how to ask the kinds of questions that short-circuit the brain's defense mechanisms and habitual thought patterns. Then, instead of being told, people see for themselves the insightful and often profound solutions to what is stopping their progress. The exercises and case studies will help you use discomfort in your conversations to create lasting, positive, and productive changes in social discourse.

Critique: Exceptionally well organized and presented, "The Discomfort Zone: How Leaders Turn Difficult Conversations Into Breakthroughs" is as informed and informative as it is thoughtful and thought-provoking. Very highly recommended for community and academic library Self-Help and Self-Improvement reference collections, "The Discomfort Zone: How Leaders Turn Difficult Conversations Into Breakthroughs" is ideal for the non-specialist general reader and is also available in a Kindle edition ($9.99).

The Lost Pre-Raphaelite
Nigel Daly
Synopsis: When antique dealer and house restorer Nigel Daly bought a falling down fortified house on the Staffordshire moorlands, he had no reason to anticipate the astonishing tale that would unfold as it was restored. A mysterious set of relationships emerged amongst its former owners, revolving round the almost forgotten artist, Robert Bateman, a prominent Pre-Raphaelite and friend of Burne Jones. He was to marry the granddaughter of the Earl of Carlisle, and to be associated with Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone, and other prominent political and artistic figures. But he had abandoned his life as an artist in mid-career to live as a recluse, and his rich and glamorous wife-to-be had married the local vicar, already in his sixties and shortly to die. The discovery of two clearly autobiographical paintings led to an utterly absorbing forensic investigation into Bateman's life.

The story moves from Staffordshire to Lahore, to Canada, Wyoming, and then, via Buffalo Bill, to Peru and back to England. It leads to the improbable respectability of Imperial Tobacco in Bristol, and then, less respectably, to a car park in Stoke-on-Trent. En route the author pieces together an astonishing and deeply moving story of love and loss, of art and politics, of morality and hypocrisy, of family secrets concealed but never quite completely obscured. The result is a page-turning combination of detective story and tale of human frailty, endeavor, and love. "The Lost Pre-Raphaelite" is also a portrait of a significant artist, a reassessment of whose work is long overdue.

Critique: An absolutely fascinating read from beginning to end, "The Lost Pre-Raphaelite: The Secret Life and Loves of Robert Bateman" is exceptionally informative and extraordinarily well written. Unique and impressive, "The Lost Pre-Raphaelite: The Secret Life and Loves of Robert Bateman" is very highly recommended for community and academic library collections, as well as the supplemental reading lists for students of Pre-Raphaelite art and literature.

Love Never Dies
Jamie Turndorf
Hay House, Inc.
PO Box 5100, Carlsbad, CA 92018-5100
www.hayhouse.com
9781401945343, $26.95, 248pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: In the pages of "Love Never Dies: How to Reconnect and Make Peace with the Deceased", famed relationship therapist, author, and media personality Dr. Jamie Turndorf shares the amazing true story of her spiritual reconnection
with her beloved deceased husband, internationally renowned former Jesuit priest Emile Jean Pin. Discovering for herself that relationships don't end in death, Dr. Turndorf has created a groundbreaking new grief therapy method that combines her acclaimed conflict-resolution techniques with after-death communication. The result: an unprecedented method that enables the bereaved to reconnect, heal unfinished business, and make peace with the deceased.

Critique: Exceptionally well written from beginning to end, "Love Never Dies: How to Reconnect and Make Peace with the Deceased" is as informed and informative as it is inspired and inspiring. Especially recommended to the attention of anyone who is suffering from the loss of a loved one. Appropriate for community library collections, it should be noted that "Love Never Dies: How to Reconnect and Make Peace with the Deceased" is also available in a Kindle edition ($12.99).

Margaret Lane
Reviewer

**Mason's Bookshelf**

**Writing Beat and Other Occasions of Literary Mayhem**
John Tytell
Vanderbilt University Press
VU Station B 351813, Nashville, TN 37235-1813
www.vanderbiltuniversitypress.com
9780826520159, $22.95, 248pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: The story and history of the Beats couldn't be found in the traditional libraries or archives of academic research. For preeminent historian of Beat culture John Tytell, it had to be found in the bars, towns, roads, and hangouts of these writers and figures. And as "Writing Beat and Other Occasions of Literary Mayhem" demonstrates, the same techniques apply to new and future writers. Approaching the history of postwar twentieth-century American literature, and in particular the Beat literary movement of Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and others, Tytell finds himself uniquely positioned as an eyewitness to many of these stories. In this book, he shares his insight with the reader. As he interviewed, drank, traveled, and survived countless moments with some of these literary legends, Tytell discovered much about the craft of nonfiction and biography, and the nature of history. Writing Beat demonstrates, through Tytell's growth as a professor and historian of the Beats, lessons learned and hazards encountered for those aspiring to become writers themselves. As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of Allen Ginsberg's Howl, "Writing Beat and Other Occasions of Literary Mayhem" reminds us writers do not spring to life fully formed, and the
Critique: The Beat Generation was a group of American post-World War II writers who came to prominence in the 1950s, as well as the cultural phenomena that they both documented and inspired. Central elements of "Beat" culture included rejection of received standards, innovations in style, use of illegal drugs, alternative sexualities, an interest in religion, a rejection of materialism, and explicit portrayals of the human condition. The history of this cultural phenomena is wonderfully well reported. Informed and informative, "Writing Beat and Other Occasions of Literary Mayhem" is very highly recommended for academic library American Cultural History reference collections and supplemental studies reading lists. It should be noted that "Writing Beat and Other Occasions of Literary Mayhem" is available in a hardcover edition (9780826520142, $59.95) and an eBook edition (9780826520166, $9.99).

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca: American Trailblazer
Robin Varnum
University of Oklahoma Press
2800 Venture Drive, Norman, OK 73069
www.oupress.com
9780806144979, $26.95, 384pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: In November 1528, almost a century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, the remnants of a Spanish expedition reached the Gulf Coast of Texas. By July 1536, eight years later, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca (c. 1490 - 1559) and three other survivors had walked 2,500 miles from Texas, across northern Mexico, to Sonora and ultimately to Mexico City. Cabeza de Vaca's account of this astonishing journey is now recognized as one of the great travel stories of all time and a touchstone of New World literature. But his career did not begin and end with his North American ordeal. Robin Varnum's biography, the first single-volume cradle-to-grave account of the explorer's life in eighty years, tells the rest of the story.

During Cabeza de Vaca's peregrinations through the American Southwest, he lived among and interacted with various Indian groups. When he and his non-Indian companions finally reconnected with Spaniards in northern Mexico, he was horrified to learn that his compatriots were enslaving Indians there. His Relación (1542) advocated using kindness and fairness rather than force in dealing with the native people of the New World. Cabeza de Vaca went on to serve as governor of Spain's province of Rio de La Plata in South America (roughly modern Paraguay). As a loyal subject of the king of Spain, he supported the colonialist enterprise and believed in Christianizing the Indians, but he always championed the rights of native peoples. In Rio de La Plata he tried to keep his men from robbing the Indians, enslaving them, or exploiting them sexually - policies that caused grumbling among the troops. When Cabeza de Vaca's men
mutinied, he was sent back to Spain in chains to stand trial before the Royal Council of the Indies.

Drawing on the conquistador's own reports and on other sixteenth-century documents, both in English translation and the original Spanish, Varnum's lively narrative braids eyewitness testimony of events with historical interpretation benefiting from recent scholarship and archaeological investigation. As one of the few Spaniards of his era to explore the coasts and interiors of two continents, Cabeza de Vaca is recognized today above all for his more humane attitude toward and interactions with the Indian peoples of North America, Mexico, and South America.

Critique: A masterpiece of biographical and historical scholarship, "Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca: American Trailblazer" is a seminal contribution to the growing library of North American History in general, and the early Spanish explorations in particular. Enhanced with the inclusion of a four page Glossary, thirty pages of Notes, eight pages of a Works Cited bibliography, and a comprehensive Index, "Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca: American Trailblazer" is a critically important and highly recommended addition to academic library collections. It should be noted that "Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca: American Trailblazer" is also available in a Kindle edition ($14.55).

Lamentation
Joe Clifford
Oceanview Publishing
595 Bay Isles Road, 120-G, Longboat Key, FL 34228
www.oceanviewpub.com
9781608091331, $25.95, 201pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: In a frigid New Hampshire winter, Jay Porter is trying to eke out a living and maintain some semblance of a relationship with his former girlfriend and their two-year-old son. When he receives an urgent call that Chris, his drug-addicted brother, is being questioned by the sheriff about his missing junkie business partner, Jay feels obliged to come to his rescue. After Jay negotiates his brother's release from the county jail, Chris disappears into the night. As Jay begins to search for him, he is plunged into a cauldron of ugly lies and long-kept secrets that could tear apart his small hometown and threaten the lives of Jay and all those he holds dear. Powerful forces come into play that will stop at nothing until Chris is dead and the information he harbors is destroyed.

Critique: "Lamentation" s one of those 'can't put it down' page turner of a read and documents author Joe Clifford as a gifted storyteller of imagination and technical expertise. "Lamentation" is a deftly written entertainment from first page to last and highly recommended for both personal reading lists and community library Contemporary Fiction collections. It should be noted that
"Lamentation" is also available in a Kindle edition ($2.99).

The Birth of American Law
John D. Bessler
Carolina Academic Press
700 Kent Street, Durham, NC 27701
http://www.cap-press.com
9781611636048, $75.00, 694pp, www.amazon.com


Critique: A truly impressive and seminal work of meticulous and documented scholarship, "The Birth of American Law: An Italian Philosopher and the American Revolution" is enhanced by the inclusion of 112 pages of Notes, a 10 page Bibliography, and a comprehensive Index. Expertly written, organized and presented, "The Birth of American Law: An Italian Philosopher and the American Revolution" is a unique and strongly recommended addition to academic library
American Judicial History reference collections and the supplemental studies reading lists for students of the legal structures and concepts undergirding the founding of the United States. It should be noted that "The Birth of American Law: An Italian Philosopher and the American Revolution" is also available in a Kindle edition ($39.96).

Gluten Freedom
Alessio Fasano, MD
Wiley
c/o Wiley Professional Trade Group
111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
c/o Victor Gulotta Communications (publicity)
www.wiley.com
9781118423103, $24.95, 320pp, www.amazon.com

Synopsis: World-renowned gluten-related disorders expert Dr. Alessio Fasano (Founder of Massachusetts General Hospital's Center for Celiac Research) presents the groundbreaking roadmap to a gluten-free lifestyle, and how millions of Americans can live better by going gluten free in "Gluten Freedom: The Nation's Leading Expert Offers the Essential Guide to a Healthy, Gluten-Free Lifestyle". This groundbreaking, authoritative guide is an invaluable roadmap for the newly diagnosed with gluten intolerance, for those already dealing with gluten-related issues, and for anyone who thinks they may have an issue with gluten.

Dr. Fasano explains the latest research, diagnostic procedures, and treatment/diet recommendations, helping consumers make the best choices for themselves and their families. Dr. Fasano also discusses important nutritional implications for behavior-related diagnoses such as autism and conditions such as depression, anxiety, and "foggy mind." Other highlights include: The differences between celiac disease, gluten sensitivity, and wheat allergy; Current best practices for gluten-related disorders at any age; Practical information on setting up a gluten-free kitchen, reading labels, and staying safe and healthy in a world filled with hidden sources of gluten; The psychological impact of a diagnosis and its effect on a family; Groundbreaking research for prevention and therapy; Reliable and accurate resources for patients, parents, and physicians; and even recipes for an authentic gluten-free Italian dinner from Dr. Fasano's home kitchen.

Critique: Informed and informative, "Gluten Freedom: The Nation's Leading Expert Offers the Essential Guide to a Healthy, Gluten-Free Lifestyle" is exceptionally well written and presented, making all the information thoroughly accessible for non-specialist general readers, and is so well founded in research that is could well serve for medical student and health worker supplementary studies reading lists. Enhanced with the inclusion of an appendix featuring apps
for mobile phones, a twelve page bibliography of Recommended Readings, a four page Glossary, and a comprehensive Index, "Gluten Freedom: The Nation's Leading Expert Offers the Essential Guide to a Healthy, Gluten-Free Lifestyle" is a significant and recommended addition to both community and academic library Health & Medicine reference collection. It should be noted that "Gluten Freedom: The Nation's Leading Expert Offers the Essential Guide to a Healthy, Gluten-Free Lifestyle" is also available in a Kindle edition ($11.99).

Jack Mason
Reviewer

---

Melissa's Bookshelf

The Man I Love
Suanne Laqueur
www.suannelaqueur.com
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
www.createspace.com
9781499715606, $14.99, 572pp

Is it possible to find that one true love who penetrates our very soul to the core during our short time on this earth? When Erik Fiskare begins his first year of college at Lancaster University he decides to major in lighting and set design. His first big show is a ballet performance and that is when he meets Daisy Bianco, a dance major at the school, and his life is inexplicably changed forever. Suanne Laqueur gives us a love story in this book unlike any other in its intensity and realism. As they slowly get to know each other physically and emotionally, Erik and Daisy's affections are sometimes sweet and romantic and other times they are raw and savage. But they fit together perfectly, flaws and all and cannot seem to breathe without each other.

I have felt lately that foreshadowing has become a lost art form in contemporary literature. Many books seem to be preoccupied with providing the reader with shock value through explosive and unexpected plot twists. The foreshadowing that Suanne Laqueur includes throughout the first part of The Man I Love shows the tremendous talent and literary genius of this author. We know that something terribly tragic will unfold in this book, and the subtle imagery and dialogue gives us a glimpse of what will come. This serves to keeps the reader frantically turning the pages and teetering on the edge of his or her seat.

The language and diction of The Man I Love is lyrical and melodic. I have rarely read a book that, through it's word choice, can capture the myriad of emotions through which the characters move. We feel the intense feelings and bond that
Daisy and Erik share as they fall in love. We feel nauseous and distraught when tragedy strikes the characters. We feel an aching pain when Erik is suffering and trying to put his life back together.

Suanne Laqueur also provides us with a rich and in depth cast of characters that include not only Erik and Daisy but their friends and family as well. Will, who is Daisy's dance partner, experiments with his sexuality and his confident and casual acceptance of who he is provides some of the most hilarious dialogue in the book. We are also introduced to David, Erik's lighting design partner, who is fighting his own demons and uses drugs as a way to cope. Daisy's parents, who are French and rather progressive in their treatment of their adult daughter, are understanding about her relationship with Erik and even embrace him as a son.

Finally, THE MAN I LOVE is one of those books that makes us think about important themes and issues long after we have closed the last page. Can we ever truly run from traumatic experiences in our past? What would we do to save the life of the ones we love? Do we let our scars swallow us and sink us into the abyss, or do we embrace them and wear them as badges of honor? Despite the fact that this is a long novel, I was bitterly disappointed when I read the last page of THE MAN I LOVE and I look forward to seeing what else Suanne Laqueur has in store for her readers.

Behind You
Carly M. Duncan
CreateSpace
4900 LaCross Rd., North Charleston, SC 29406
www.createspace.com
149438793X, $8.50, 208pp, www.amazon.com

When this suspenseful story opens, Heather is in the shower and thinks she hears someone in her apartment. Is she being paranoid, or is there an intruder in her midst? She wakes up later in the hospital hooked up to all sorts of machines as her family visits her one by one. The story is told from alternating points of view that include Heather, her husband, mother, father, aunt and sister.

The way that Carly Duncan slowly unravels this tale is brilliant as each chapter left me gasping and wanting more. One by one, the family member's secrets are revealed as they relate to Heather and her "accident." Which one of them might be guilty of hurting Heather?

The characters that Carly Duncan develops in this book are all deeply flawed in some way and have a hard time forging strong relationships with one another. Heather's mother has spent time in a mental institution after she tried to kill herself, Heather's husband never seems to be as much enamored of Heather as he is for her sister Elizabeth, and Heather's sister seems to drink a bit too much. This
family barely tolerates each other and they put up with one another's annoying flaws simply because they are blood relatives, but there is no love lost among them.

No matter which genres you prefer to read, I highly recommend that you put BEHIND YOU on your "must-read" list. The flawless prose and the page-turning story line will keep you guessing until the very last page.

Harry Patz, Jr.
Alophie
c/o Gondolin Advisors, LLC
http://www.linkedin.com/in/harrypatz

Vergil, Rome's most famous epic poet, tells the story of the hero Aeneas who, after escaping the burning of his hometown of Troy, wanders the seas in search of a new place to settle. At the core of Vergil's Aeneid is the theme of wandering, new beginnings and finding one's place in life. It is no surprise that Mark, the main character in Harry Patz's new novel The Naive Guys, has a dog eared and well-worn copy of The Aeneid among his treasured possessions in his childhood bedroom. Mark has just graduated from Boston College in 1992 and he, like his fellow graduates, believes that the job offers will start pouring in. But after moving back in with his mother and Uncle Frankie, who serves as a surrogate father, Mark realizes that the "real world" outside of the protective walls of college is a lot harder to deal with than he ever imagined.

When Mark finally lands a job as a software salesman at Fishsoft, an up-and-coming company in the infant technology industry, he is too naive to realize that he failed to negotiate his salary. As Mark is trying to navigate the world of office politics, he is also trying to keep in touch with his group of old friends who are a link to the happy and carefree days of college. Mark and his friends have some very funny adventures throughout the book and the author's witty and droll sense of humor was one of my favorite aspects to the story.

Mark and his friends engage in some of the most interesting and hilarious conversations in the book especially around the topic of women and relationships. Mark wants to find a woman who is intelligent and with whom he can have stimulating conversation, but she must also be sexy and "stimulate" him in other ways. Throughout the story Mark has relationships that only fulfill half of this perfect formula. One of the reasons why I found Mark to be such a likeable character is that he truly wants to fall in love and have a connection with the right woman. The fact that he can never quite get it right makes him sympathetic and makes us cheer him on and wish for him to find his happy ending.
Sports, especially football, play a prominent role in Mark's memories about the early 1990's. Another reason that I really enjoyed this book is due to the sports references and history. Mark and his friends use football games as bonding moments and their attendance at the games keeps them close as a group of friends. When his favorite teams win, their victories serve as a pick me up, especially when Mark suffers low points in his personal and family life. Whether young men and women are players on a team or fans cheering on the sidelines, participation in athletic events serves to build their self-confidence and to provide them with a sense of belonging to a community. Part of what helps Mark to cope in his transition period is the fact that he still feels a part of the Boston College community through sports.

I would classify THE NAIVE GUYS not just as literary fiction, but also as historical fiction because of its accurate depiction of life in the early 90's in New York. Mark has to use pay phones, e-mail is a new technology that most people don't know about, and his "laptop" computer is really not at all portable. For anyone who was in high school or college during the 1990's this book is a fun and nostalgic read. The combination of great characters in which the reader becomes truly invested and an interesting plot kept me eagerly turning the pages of THE NAIVE GUYS until the very end.

Stevenson's Treasure
Mark Wiederanders
Fireship Press
P.O. Box 46182 Tuscon, AZ 85737
1611793076 $18.50, 360pp, www.fireshippress.com

The strength of this novel is the character of Robert Louis Stevenson himself. The story is told from two different points of view, that of Stevenson himself and a woman named Fanny with whom he is hopelessly in love. Stevenson has a great sense of humor and even though he is sickly with a lung disease and his life always seems to be a mess, he manages to make light of his turmoil through his humor. Fanny and Stevenson meet at an art colony in France and he is immediately smitten with her. But Fanny is already married, albeit unhappily, and has two children. Stevenson ignores these obstacles that stand in their way of being together. When Fanny leaves to go back to California, Stevenson embarks on a 6,000 mile journey to find her again. How far would you be willing to journey to be with the one you love?

I think that we tend to idealize famous writers like Stevenson and image that stories and novels come to them effortlessly. Mark Wiederanders shows us that Stevenson's writing process was anything but easy and Stevenson never really intended to write fiction at all. He likes to entertain Fanny, her children and
others with his stories but he doesn't start to write fiction in a serious way until he is forced to make a living from his stories.

STEVENSON'S TREASURES is a fun and entertaining read that mixes humor, great writing and adventure. I highly recommend this book for anyone who enjoys historical fiction set in the 19th century and for anyone who wants to know more about the multifaceted character of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Melissa Beck, Reviewer
www.thebookbindersdaughter.com

Peggy's Bookshelf

Stay and the Snow Dragon: An Antarctic Adventure
Ben Maddison and Andrew Peacock
Illustrated by Andrew Peacock
Blurb Books
9781320102001, $38.82, 60 pages, http://www.blurb.com

"Stay and the Snow Dragon" is based on an actual 2013 Australasian Antarctic Expedition. A Russian crew aboard the Akademik Shokalskiy transported a team of scientists and their guests to Antarctica. On Christmas Day, a storm surrounded the ship with thick sheets of ice. The hero of this story, Stay was a VIP - very important passenger - on that expedition.

Stay is not your typical dog. He's made of plastic molded into the sit position, hence the name, Stay. One day he was carried along with a team of scientists on a Russian ship towards a grand expedition in Antarctica. When they arrived at the ice edge of the frozen continent, the real adventure began. Stay tagged along with the scientists as they explored the vast Antarctic tundra and studied penguins, seals, and whales. During a dangerous winter storm, the ship was trapped in thick sheets of ice. They waited for days and days for the Snow Dragon to rescue them. But Stay was surprised to discover that Snow Dragon wasn't what he thought. You will be, too.

Andrew Peacock's digital photos are photo-shopped so as to create the appearance of vibrant watercolor illustrations. The effect is mesmerizing depth and detail that serves to draw the reader into the story. The stunning images portray the stark contrasts of this harsh, yet breathtaking environment.

"Stay and the Snow Dragon" introduces readers of all ages to this mysterious frozen world on an exciting expedition and rescue in Antarctica.
Ten-year old Billy Brahm is so smart he's going into the 6th grade. That is, of course, if he can survive his summer vacation. You see, Billy is "accident-prone" - or so his adoptive mother keeps telling him, over and over. A little sister he once had asked him if he was "cursed." The answer lies somewhere between this time and space reality and another.

Two weeks after his tenth birthday, while visiting his neighbor Mrs. Thomas's cat collection, Billy followed a black and white tabby with golden eyes into the middle of the road where he was hit by a car. A mangled and broken leg would have sidelined any normal 10-year old. But the cat had other ideas. In Billy's dream, the cat lures him into a shadowy sphere where a frightening creature begs for his help. Ordinarily Billy might've dismissed it as a nightmare. But when he wakes up and the black and white tabby's golden eyes are staring at him from the chest in his bedroom, he knows this special cat is hiding a secret. From that moment on Billy is drawn, like a curious cat, into an unusual mystery that takes him on a journey into the realm of the tiger.

"The Cat's Maw" is a haunting fantasy not for the faint of heart.

Peggy Tibbetts, Reviewer
www.peggytibbetts.net
Meanwhile, back home in Terlingua, Margarita is becoming closer and closer to an extravagant newcomer named Billy. Will these charming outsiders help solve the mysteries at hand? Or are they implicated in the dark deeds themselves?

As we try to solve the crime for ourselves, we are treated to all of the beauty, depth, and excitement of Garcia's first novel. We glory in Garcia's breathtaking descriptions of the landscapes of Terlingua and Wyoming. We become even better acquainted with our old friends in West Texas, and we both question and love the strange new characters. And as Margarita searches for answers to decade old questions, there emerges from the shadows of Texas a character darker than any we have yet come across.

If you enjoyed Ms. Garcia's first novel, you will relish this new mystery of even greater proportions. Find yourself a comfortable chair and get ready for the new threat hiding in the depths of West Texas. The Beautiful Bones is another stunning novel that will have you lingering on the distant Chisos mountains as you puzzle over the thirty year old mystery that continues to haunt Terlingua.

Darker Than Black
Elizabeth A. Garcia
John Hardy Publishing
1330 Sherwood Forest St Houston TX 77043
9781495223372, $15.95, 277 pages, www.amazon.com

Margarita Ricos is only 26 years old, but she is experiencing the kind of big-time crime no one ever expected to find in the small town of Terlingua. From drug cartels to dead bodies to body parts, the Terlingua deputies are facing it all.

But something even bigger is happening in Margarita's life, bigger than drug cartels and more terrifying than dead bodies: love. A mysterious government agent has entered West Texas, and he is breathing life back into our heart-broken deputy.

If the first two novels in the Deputy Ricos series grabbed your attention, this one will grab your heart, and wring it a thousand different ways. This is Elizabeth Garcia's greatest success yet. Rarely have I felt so attached to a character as I do to Margarita after finishing the third book in the Deputy Ricos series. Ms. Garcia has a God-given gift for creating original, unforgettable characters, and she is at her best in this touching and exciting tale of crime and love on the border. She delivers all of the mystery we have come to expect from her novels, and all of the beautiful descriptions of West Texas we have come to love. But along with Margarita, we experience something new this time around: a capacity for closeness beyond anything we could have imagined. As Margarita learns to love again, we learn to love her even more.
There have been countless murders throughout the series, but the real tragedy is, as always, reaching the end the book.

Sarah Le Pichon
Reviewer

---

Susan's Bookshelf

The Juno Letters
L. W. Hewitt
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
1500891916, $12.95, 348 Pages, www.amazon.com

This is such a fascinating story for anyone interested in WWI and WWII, I just could not put it down.

When an unexpected parcel arrives for Lawrence Hewitt from Courseulles-sur-Mer in France, it contains letters, they are addressed to his Grandfather Andy. The letters, which were written during WWII had been discovered hidden in a small cottage in Normandy and are from Andy's friend Antoine Bouchard, but they were never posted...

A friendship was forged in WWI between his grandfather, Private Andy Anderson and Antoine Bouchard, who although French was living in the Alsace region at the outbreak of the war and was forced to fight for Germany. Then, after WWI Andy returns home and becomes a chaplain and Antoine stays in France.

As Andy's grandson reads the letters and researches what he finds, we are treated to an amazing insight into real life in France, between the wars and during WWII. The prejudices which existed and the secret underground work of the resistance.

However, love will find a way, and Antoine finds happiness marrying his lovely Marianne and they have a daughter, Ariele, then their world is shattered as the cruelty of war impacts on their lives and they all find themselves faced with circumstances beyond their control.

Living in France as I do, near to Tours, which is featured in this book, the tributes are all around us to the brave young men of many nations who lost their lives, and, not too far away in Normandy are the Juno landings beaches, and Courseulles-sur-Mer so vital during D Day on the 6th June, 1944.

It is very hard for me, even now to remember that this is a work of fiction, the depth of research and attention to detail bring alive all too horrifically the very real dangers facing collaborators during the wars and the bravery of the
resistance and allies working behind enemy lines. The question is, what happens to Antoine, Marianne and Ariele? To find out you will have to read the book or listen to the audiobook version.

This story is a tribute to the author, Lawrence Hewitt's Grandfather Andy. Armed with his grandfather's personal journals which he wrote as a soldier in the Great War, the author visited Paris in 2012 and followed in his footsteps. The journey he took and his visit to the Normandy landing beaches are the inspiration behind The Juno Letters.

The One of Us
John Needham
Autharium
B00OAAUOPW, $4.77, 357 Pages

My first impression of this book was, what a strange title, however, having read it, there could be no more perfect one.

How could Julie have known, way back in 1984 when she left her native Ireland to live in Liverpool that her fancying Paul, at a nightclub, the consequences of that night, and the relationship which followed would change so many people's lives, including her own?

Glyn and Sioned love their daughter Lowri, yet they yearn for another child. Jim and Maureen are trying to come to terms with Maureen's inability to carry a baby to term. Two couples who, for two very different reasons, decide to adopt a baby, but each of their choices leave them inextricably tied in a way they could never imagine.

Life has a way of changing just when we think we are settled, and as a result, Glyn, Sioned, Lowri and little adopted Tomos find themselves moving back to their native Wales. Whilst Jim, Maureen and their little adopted son Wayne relocate to Northallerton in North Yorkshire.

This is the story of these two boys, each having very different childhoods, achievements, plans and dreams. As they grow into men, however, it is discovered that they have one thing in common, and in the end, does anything else matter?

I found this story un-put-down-able, it has a very unusual storyline, plenty of twists and turns, and a real surprise ending.

Those of us who love this author's very humane way of writing are, yet again, treated to another beautifully written story. At the end of the book, as an added bonus, the author has included a couple of chapters of 'Forebears' one of his previously published novels, which also features one of the characters in this
This is the story of Harley, bought up in a dysfunctional home, with an alcoholic and abusive father, who sends the family on an emotional rollercoasters, a weak mother, and her sister Kat with whom she has a very strong bond.

The day after she graduates from high school she packs her bags into her 1970 Chevelle, Charlene, and takes off, knowing only that she must go.

This is a coming of age novel, and we, the listener follow the strong, independent Harley, as she grows from girl into womanhood. As normal, through rite of passage, the woman she becomes is shaped by the people she meets and jobs she does as she moves around the country. However, Harley finds herself, despite her escape, being drawn back home to help her family with each emergency which arises.

And, waiting in the background is Jeremiah Jones, her childhood neighbour and sweetheart, best friend and lover, who joined the Marines the day she took off. Although they don't see each other for years, the chemistry between them when they do, is so strong. He loves her unconditionally, and understands, and knows the fears she battles with after growing up in such a dysfunctional family, but will she ever commit?

This was a compelling story packed with brutal truths about such subjects as growing up in an abusive home and alcoholism, yet a fascinating story which I could not fail to recommend.

Susan Keefe, Reviewer
www.susan-keefe.com

Teri's Bookshelf

Gold in My Pocket
Jewell Tweedt
Create Space Independent Publishing Platform

When gold was discovered in California during the late 1840s, many dreamed of
Living about thirty miles away from Independence, Missouri, Laura Webb’s life is about to change. Her mother died two years ago. Her father has sold their farm and dreams of finding gold, striking it rich in California. She is reluctant about leaving her home, her mother's grave and Jimmy, her boyfriend.

Being only fifteen years old, Laura needs her father's permission for her to marry. Unfortunately, her father wants her to continue with her household duties while traveling with him on the wagon train and in establishing their new home while he searches for gold. So instead of fulfilling Laura's dreams, he gives her a blank book to record her new life experiences as they travel to California. Gold In My Pocket is this book.

The journey to California by wagon train where progress proved challenging. The slow pace as the many families plodded through the prairies and the mountains, created a multitude of challenges along the trails. Laura fortunately discovers that her own resourcefulness is essential for her own survival. She learns that this will be essential in her new life.

Life's dreams seldom come true and even when they do, Laura discovers challenges that she never anticipated. So what happens when you are a young female and discover yourself alone?

This short novel closely resembles the journals in the Dear America series of books published by Scholastic. Like these novels, the intended readers are young teens or anyone who is interested in history.

Jewell Tweedt has written Faith of the Heart, Still Faithful, Faith and Hope, and When Christmas Bells are Ringing. All of these are set in Omaha as the city was just beginning as a prairie outpost while also being Christian romance novels.

Gold in My Pocket is the perfect realistic historical novel for teenaged-girls. With Laura being a realistic heroine meeting the daily life challenges, she proves that her own skills, abilities, and determination as well as friendships are the qualities needed to have a successful life.
"Evil is part of the divine plan."

World Cup victories are known as celebratory events. When Italy won the event in 1982, Elisa Sordi was killed. Although there were many suspects, the true killer was never found. Elisa's death was never solved due to the influence, wealth, and power of those in her life. The guilt of never finding her murderer forever stayed with the main investigator, Michele Balistreri.

The next time Italy wins the World Cup in 2006, Elisa's mother commits suicide. Why?

Investigator Michele Balistreri has carried the guilt of never bringing Elisa's killer to justice. After so many years, can he now find out who killed her and why?

Michele has secrets of his own. His privileged past has the typical young man rebellion. However, his past has large amounts of time when he seemed to have completely disappeared. What was he doing during this time? Finally, he finished his schooling with a degree in philosophy. For some reason he becomes employed with the police and manages to be assigned to one of Rome's quietest neighborhoods upholding the ideal of honor, loyalty, and courage while attempting to overcome his own faults and prejudices.

Unfortunately for this particular police investigation, people do not always tell the complete truth and frequently those of wealth and power hinder solving a crime. Ranging from the Vatican to Romania to Dubai the issues of everyday life in Rome all are part of this investigation which seems to cause more deaths than answers.

The Deliverance of Evil is the story of this investigation dragging on throughout years with constant interferences, avoidances, and hidden secrets. Unfortunately mixing Michele's personal life with the lengthy investigation tended to make the story realistically to drag. However, the pace increases as the secrets are slowly revealed with many regrets from everyone involved.

With any novel which is translated, few people, especially the readers can truly understand how much credit should be given to the author and how much to the translator. Just choosing the best synonym that best expresses the author's intended story has to be a challenge as well as the translating of the sentence structure.

The Deliverance of Evil excels in realism and the pacing matches this investigation. Unfortunately, that alters the style of most mysteries of today. Winning the Scerbanenco Prize for the best Italian crime thriller, this psychological thriller is the story of twenty-four years of Michele Balistreri's life.
For a challenging, realistic story, read The Deliverance of Evil.

The Terzetto File
Albert Samuel Tukker
Lulu Publishing
3101 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27607-5436
www.lulu.com
9781312526198, $14.00, 364 pages, www.amazon.com

"Half way down the ten mile driveway, Falcon's latest mission haunted him. He knew he killed innocent people, a lot of innocent people and their deaths will be blamed on somebody else, just to stir up trouble so they could put somebody in their pocket in power. It was cold-blooded and ruthless and he had been a part of it for a long time now."

This is the opening of The Terzetto File by Albert Samuel Tukker as he introduces his protagonist, Major Neil Falcon of the U.S. Army giving the reader background into this complicated character who is troubled by what has been required of him for years, both physically and emotionally. The upper echelon of brass is the military needs someone who can unquestionably follow orders, doing what needs to be done, someone who can clean-up the messes created by others. Falcon frequently was that person.

Army Major Neil Falcon is finally taking a well-deserved vacation when he receives a phone call about his leave being cancelled. The Major's temporary assignment is to figure out what is killing people in the small community of White Sands and to stop it.

A body has been discovered that was mutilated. Quickly examining what was left of this human, Falcon realizes that this was not done by a wild animal, but something much worse. What begins as a single body quickly becomes an attack on a community. Who or what is killing these people? Why?

Are the same people who want him to solve this problem telling him everything that he needs to know?

The Terzetto File is an action-packed adventure from Major Neil Falcon's perspective. This book is for those who enjoy thriller/adventure novels even though it unquestionably is in the fantasy genre. Although a little predictable at times, the story is intriguing story and the hero, Major Falcon is easily likable with depth as a character.

The underlying theme is both realistic while also considering authentic problems for many military veterans presently, as well as concern about life in this country along with the social evolution of our daily citizens.
Samuel Albert Tukker is the pen-name of a local author who received recent recognition for his novel Pole Shift which was considered to be the best science fiction of 2007 from Books-and-Authors.net for Literary Excellence and Rage which won 3rd Place in the 2009 Premier Book Awards.

It is not unusual anymore for authors to self-publish their books. The only problem with this is availability to readers. Many also pay to have their books available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble. More authors are choosing not to do that but to go through other methods.

For people in the Omaha area, The Terzetto File can be ordered through The Mystery Bookstore in Omaha. This small bookstore is phenomenal in terms of service to the customer. Also people can purchase this book through the author's website www.albertsamueeltukker.com or through the publisher www.lulu.com/spotlight/astukker.

Albert Samuel Tukker is an immensely gifted author. Read his books.

Nobody's Child
A Georgia Davis Novel of Suspense
Libby Fischer Hellman
Red Herrings Press
Chicago, Illinois
9781938733468, $16.99, 350 pages

"No one cared whether she lived or died... Not her mother. Not the half-sister she didn't know but hoped would somehow rescue her. All she had was the memory of a loving father and he was dead. She was Nobody's child. Her life wasn't worth a sheet of used toilet paper. The first time she'd heard the expression, she thought it was just the cynicism of an acne-scarred kid she went to school with. She knew better now."

Georgia Davis realizes the differences between abiding within the law and the actuality of justice. She no longer works as a law enforcement officer but is now a private investigator. That's what occurs when you feel responsible for doing the right thing.

Georgia is hired by a small business to discover who was responsible for organizing a flash mob. Rather than dance at a public place, this particular mob stole over five thousand dollars worth of inventory off their shelves injuring the owner who attempted to stop the crowd. Small shop owners cannot afford to lose that much inventory.

While beginning this investigation Georgia receives a blood-stained napkin with
a note asking for her help. Supposedly this is from her sister, but Georgia doesn't have a sister.

Since Georgia's mother left both her husband and daughter years ago, she had no way of knowing of her mother's new life in another city. She had again married, obviously no legally, and gave birth to another daughter, Savannah. However, Savannah grew up hearing about Georgia living in Chicago.

As a rebellious teen, Savannah wondered about her sister and decided to find her in Chicago. However being young and on your own is dangerous in metropolitan areas especially for pretty and naive women. She quickly discovered herself involved with drug usage and prostitution. Could her sister help her?

Nobody's Child is a realistic mystery set in the present day Chicago area encompassing the problems of black market babies and body parts as well as the illegal trade of drugs and human trafficking creating an enthralling story with an alternating point-of-view between Savannah and Georgia. This strategy created an understandable perspective for the character decisions in a logical and organized story involving many crimes within their complicated personal lives.

Libby Fischer Hellman has written numerous novels including the Georgia Davis series and another featuring Ellie Foreman. Nobody's Child is the fourth novel in this series as well as three standalone novels, Set the Night on Fire, A Bitter Veil, and Havana Lost.

As with all of Libby Fischer Hellman's novels, her characters become real people in situations that make their choices understandable, even when they break the law. These novels are intriguing as the reader along with the heroine attempt to reconcile their lives. Nobody's Child exceeds in being an intriguing novel of life.

Panthers Play for Keeps
A Pru Marlowe Pet Noir
Clea Simon
Poisoned Pen Press
6962 E. First Ave., #103, Scottsdale, AZ 85251
www.poisonedpenpress.com

Finding a dead body is not what Pru Marlowe planned while working with Spot. He was being trained to become a service dog and walking him daily was included in his education. His nose picked up the scent of the body which in turn, picked up Pru's curiosity. Even when the local law enforcement takes over the case, Pru just can't help herself.

The victim appears to have been killed by a wild animal, specifically a wild cat, a
puma. This gruesome death appears as if the victim was mauled and attacked at her throat. There have been no recent sitings of pumas in the local area. How did the animal come to this part of the country?

Pru has an unusual ability. She can communicate her thoughts with animals telepathically. Unfortunately the language is not always common everyday English, but more conceptual in a few basic words. Between Spot and her personal cat who lives with her, Pru is the privileged recipient of their thoughts, memories, and emotions.

What Pru was for Spot's thoughts to link the dead body to his prospective owners. The victim worked for the service dog's new owners as a maid. Why was a maid wearing an elegant blouse? Was she meeting someone? With just glimpses of Spot's memories and thoughts, Pru really couldn't understand the entire picture and was puzzled about how these two were related.

Added to this already complicated life, Pru's former love is the detective investigating this case. He knows that she has some hidden secret. How can you tell a law enforcement officer about your Dr. Doolittle type of gift without him thinking that you are crazy? She quickly learns that her therapist is also her newest rival to his affections. Will her secrets be told to her former lover?

Clea Simon has published numerous novels both fiction and non-fiction including the Theda Krakow, Dulcie Schwartz, as well as the Pru Marlowe's series. This former journalist currently resides in Massachusetts.

Panthers Play for Keeps is a wonderful cozy mystery with a well-planned story involving a gifted protagonist. The story is predictable, but the journey to the end is an adventure.

I Love Grass
Maria Boston
Outskirts Press
10940 South Parker Road, #515, Parker, CO 80134
www.outskirtspress.com
9781478725688, $13.95, 24 pages, www.amazon.com

Once in a while you come across a form of art that makes you stop in your tracks and to really examine the picture. That is my reaction to I Love Grass by Maria Boston.

Imagine a picture of grass with dirt on the ground and a blue sky in the background. Each blade of grass is a separate piece of yarn illustrating the waving fields giving depth and movement to each picture matching the short verses on the opposite page with what appears to be watercolor grass in each
It is difficult to truly visualize the illustrations in this book because they are so realistically perfect for the story. Imagine a tree with the bark made of various shades of brown yarns in pieces with the leaves in green yarns on a background of a blue yarn sky and green yarn grass with yellow dandelions, also made from yarn.

I Love Grass is a beautiful children's book giving a basic overview of grass along with unique textured pictures perfectly matching the words. Even with the flat colorful pictures, the depth of the textures is clearly visible with each page depicting an outside scene with a variety of various materials.

Who could imagine yarn artistically creating a picture similar to a painting of nature with the focus being grass with dandelions intermixed? Imagine a blue sky with white clouds, green grass, a yellow sun, and a variety of flowers made from swirls of yarn accompanied by grass paintings under the writing on each page.

Interesting also is the progression of the seasons completely in yarns. Transitioning from dandelions, to flowers, to autumn leaves, from day to night, to caterpillars, to snow demonstrate originality artistically and as an inspiration for various modes of creativity. Also due to a very artistic creator, each illustration varies in shades as the story progresses, the time of day changes, and the seasons evolve.

I Love Grass is a wonderful children's book by a creative author and illustrator.

Suede to Rest

Diane Vallere
Berkley Crime Mystery
 c/o Penguin Group (USA)
 375 Hudson Street, 4th floor, New York, NY 10014
www.penguin.com

"A breeze rippled through the trees to the left and the right of the storefront. I stood across the street, taking in the blacked-out windows and the once-magnificent sign now covered in bird poop, decades of grime, and spray-painted curse words. Land of a Thousand Fabrics, it said. I wondered briefly if that had ever been true, if my great-aunt, Millie, and great-uncle Marius, had ever actually counted the bolts of fabric in their inventory or amassed that number in order to avoid false advertising. And now that it had been left to me, I wondered if that would become my concern."

What do you name a baby who is born in a fabric store? Polyester Monroe grew up
in her family’s textile store in San Ladron, California. Life was normal and happy until her aunt was found murdered in the family store. Since it was Poly's high school graduation, her parents chose not to inform her until later after the celebration. Her uncle chose to close-up the store immediately.

In the ten-years Poly was succeeded in becoming a well-respected dress designer working in Los Angeles. She is frequently frustrated with her boss using inferior fabrics and cheapening her designs and dreams. Is it time for a change?

Land of a Thousand Fabrics not belongs to Poly, the lone inheritor of the business. Remembering her childhood brings back pleasant memories and makes her realize the positive influence of the family store. As she reenters the store into her past, she wonders about the condition of the bolts of fabric. She realizes the unusual value her family possessed in quality textiles rather than the cheap imitations that she commonly and currently views and uses causing her to hesitate in selling the store.

Her initial thoughts were to sell the store. With a developer ready to buy the store and her boyfriend also willing to assist with unloading her store, selling should be simple. Unfortunately, Poly is hesitant. When a senior citizen on the neighborhood watch is murdered behind her store and two kittens are also discovered in her dumpster, Poly's curiosity makes her hesitant to sell. What difference could a few days make in selling the place?

Suede to Rest is a delightful romp through bolts of fabric complete with kittens, murders, and even instructions for making glamorous throw pillows and even an enlightened perspective regarding the fashion industry today.

Author Diane Vallere bases her books on years of personal experience as a seamstress as well as owning her own detective agency. She has three series the Style and Error Mysteries featuring Samantha Kidd, the Mad for Mod Mysteries featuring her interior decorator Madison Night, and the Material Witness Mysteries with Polyester Monroe.

Suede to Rest is a delightfully realistic cozy mystery featuring a wonderful new protagonist, Polyester Monroe.

Teri Davis
Reviewer

Theodore's Bookshelf

The Last Dead Girl
Billed as a prequel, this novel is a carefully constructed murder mystery which begins one night on a lonely dark road, a chance encounter between David Loogan, riding along in his truck, and Jana Fletcher, a young law student, standing next to her inoperable car. What follows is a brief 10-day love affair. Until one day David enters her apartment to find her lying on the living room floor, murdered.

As usual, the lead detective suspects the boyfriend, but there is no proof. Released, David is fixated on learning the truth about Jana and follows his nose, investigating her past and discovering a death in the past that might be related to hers.

The novel moves ahead straightforwardly, and the mystery unfolds so that it comes as no surprise when the killer is disclosed, but not before red herrings are introduced. It is a well-written story, well worth reading, and recommended.

A bizarre case takes its toll on this Decker/Lazarus novel, setting the stage for the future of the series. A multi-millionaire is found dead from blunt instrument trauma and a shot in the back. What makes the story weird is the fact that he kept a full-grown Bengal tiger in his apartment as a pet. And to add to his eccentricity, he rented two apartments on either side to house venomous snakes, deadly insects and dangerous fish, and previously, an apartment beneath the one he occupied for illegal purposes.

As a subsidiary and much lesser side plot, the love affair between foster son Gabe and his 16-year-old would-be girlfriend Yasmine is provided for relief, even though he is forbidden contact with her. A long, drawn-out investigation takes its toll on Decker, as he nears the 30-year mark, and he contemplates taking his pension and moving on.
All the entries in the Decker/Lazarus series are interesting, well-written, and excellent reads. "The Beast" joins a long list of such worthies.

A Nasty Piece of Work  
Robert Littell  
St. Martin's Griffin  
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010  
www.stmartins.com  

Lemuel Gunn, now a private detective in New Mexico, once was a CIA agent in Afghanistan before being unceremoniously sent home and cashiered out of the service, and, before that, a policeman in New Jersey. While he holds a PI license, he basically whiles his time away in a gigantic trailer built for Douglas Fairbanks Jr. while he was making a movie.

That is, until one day he is approached by Ornella Neppi, a beautiful but tarnished bail bondswoman who put up $150,000 to spring one Emilio Gava after he was arrested on a cocaine charge. Her problem (and she has lots of them) is that Gava has skipped town and she is in danger of losing the funds if he doesn't show up in court. She asks Gunn to find Gava, and he undertakes the task. And what an adventure it becomes.

The author, known for his spy thrillers, has proved he can write a detective novel with the best of them, with excellent characters, unexpected plot turns, and interesting human emotions. The plot keeps moving forward at a steady pace, and even the description of a My Lai-type massacre in the present-day Asian action is startling.

Recommended.

Without Warning  
David Rosenfelt  
Minotaur Books  
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010  
www.minotaurbooks.com  

It must be satisfying for an author of a popular series like the Andy Carpenter novels to write not one but two well-received standalones. This, of course, is the second, and is a thriller of the first order. While the concept, predictions in an unearthed time capsule, is not novel, the execution of this story is. It seems that burying a time capsule by the town's newspaper every 50 years is a tradition. But four years after its burial a hurricane flooded the area, and fear that the contents might be damaged led to its being unearthed.
When the dirt burying the time capsule was removed, a skeleton was found on top of it. Then when the contents were exposed, a series of bizarre predictions not originally included were discovered. Thus begins an intense investigation led by Chief of Police Jake Robbins and deep investigative reporting by the local paper, complicated by the fact that the husband of Katie Sanford, the editor and publisher, was convicted years before of killing Jake's wife. To further muddy the waters, Jake and Katie had a one-night stand before he was married and they seem still attracted to each other.

The plot and writing are top-notch, and the twists and turns keep the reader's interest at a maximum. And even once in a while, the humor of such a character as Andy Carpenter sporadically shines. The tension mounts page by page and in wrapping the story up, the author concludes in a manner so completely unexpected that the reader has to wonder what was missed along the way.

Recommended.

**Full Measure**
T. Jefferson Parker
St. Martin's Press
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010
www.stmartins.com

T. Jefferson Parker is a top mystery writer, but, in this narrative, chose to write a story about the trials and tribulations of returning veterans from Afghanistan. Given recent news stories about the problems at the Veterans Administration, it is a topic certainly worthy of being told and retold many times. However, he has plotted a different course: A story about two brothers and their relationship with their parents, who are trying to salvage an avocado farm that has been devastated by a massive fire that has destroyed much of the California town in which they live and work.

Patrick Norris served in a Marine group that suffered the worst casualties of the long Asian war. When he returned home, he dreamed of buying a boat and running a fishing charter service from San Diego Bay. Instead, he has to help his father resurrect the avocado farm. And he has to cope with his brother Ted, who can't seem to do anything right.

The plight of returning veterans seems to be an afterthought as the novel moves ahead despite the author's avowal that the subject was his intent when he set out to write it. Instead, we have what amounts to a love story interspersed with the hardship of farming as a way of life, a possibly dysfunctional family situation, and occasionally an exhibition of violence or PTSD. Given the high bar set by this
author in past novels, I must admit that I found this one disappointing.

The Disappeared
Kristina Ohlsson
Emily Bestler Books/Atria Books
c/o Simon & Schuster
1230 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10020
www.simonsays.com
9781476734002, $25.00 / 28.99 CA$, 406 pp., www.amazon.com

Scandinavian crime novels have a lot in common. And "The Disappeared" certainly reflects most of these characteristics: a police procedural, lots of murders, an unusual plot and set in Stockholm (or some other Baltic city or country). The story begins with the discovery of the body of a female in a shallow grave, with her head and arms removed and sawed in half.

The novel is the third in a series featuring Fredrika Bergman and her fellow investigators as they investigate (more like bumbling along) in attempting to solve the case, which develops into a rarity in Scandinavian literature: serial murders (although there have been a few; Harry Hole, for instance, gained a reputation for solving them). Personal conflicts among the police personnel arise, complicating the investigation.

While the plot has the cops following lead after lead, many of which have little or no relevance, the author relates each with a great deal of what appears to be a lot of detail. And too often, the writing is repeated and repeated, slowing down the reader and encumbering the book. The novel could have used serious pruning. Nevertheless, the plot is quite interesting, and lends itself to an enjoyable read. Fredrika, in this instance, shows an ability to make giant leaps of logic, with little or no basis. More development and less verbiage could have been a better way to solve the crimes. That notwithstanding, the novel is recommended.

Death Money
Henry Chang
Soho Crime
853 Broadway, NY, NY 10003
www.sohopress.com

Detective Jack Wu once again is tapped to solve a case because he is of Chinese descent. When the body of an Asian man is seen embedded in the debris and ice of the Harlem River, he is called from his Chinatown precinct to take control of the case, which turns out to be one of murder.

The only problem is that the victim has no identification, and there isn't a clue to
be found. So Wu follows the Chinese community through the city, north to The Bronx and its restaurants, gambling and sex dens, and south to Chinatown and its own fleshpots and gaming spots. And along the way, he learns a variety of secrets attempting to give justice to a man who was all but invisible.

This fourth novel in the series, as were its predecessors, is economically written, with especially short sentences, and a smattering of Chinese words and phrases to provide authenticity. This police procedural moves in logical progression across New York City, looking deeply at the Chinese culture and environment of New York's Lower East Side. Wu is an unusual investigator, applying the usual methodology of police investigation with the occult, an old woman who touches object obtained during the investigation and supplying him with clues. Maybe other protagonists should consider Ouija boards.

A very enjoyable read, and recommended.

Black Horizon
James Grippando
Harper
c/o HarperCollins
10 E. 53rd St., NY, NY 10022
www.harpercollins.com

Jack Swyteck, the book's protagonist, is an accomplished defense lawyer, demonstrated in numerous previous novels in the series. However, in this entry his role as an attorney, bringing suit for wrongful death for the young widow of a man apparently killed when an offshore rig exploded, is merely peripheral to a wide-ranging thriller and sort of a love story on two levels. One aspect is at the beginning of the story, with Jack and Andie Henning getting married and beginning their honeymoon in the Florida Keys.

Then there is the other couple, Bianca and Rafael, married but separated, she in Key West after having left leaving Cuba, he stuck there and working on that same rig, built in China but operated by a consortium of non-U.S. oil companies on behalf of the Cuban petroleum monopoly. When the rig explodes, the result is an even bigger oil spill than the one that took place in the Gulf. The black gook threatens and engulfs the entire south Florida coastal area, and the consequences result in an adventure for Jack and his friend and sidekick, Theo.

Unlike other novels in the series, legal aspects (the author is a practicing attorney) seem only to be interjections in a thriller filled with action and murders. As far as the plot goes, the author provides plenty to keep the reader turning pages to find out what happens next. Unfortunately, along the way there doesn't seem to be a single clue provided to substantiate the conclusion. Also, Theo comes
across more as a clown than a serious character. While the novel is still a good read, it is less than one would expect from a series that has run for as long as this one has. Nevertheless, it can still be, and is, recommended.

Under Cold Stone
Vicki Delany
Poisoned Pen Press
6962 E. 1st ave., Scottsdale, AZ 85251
www.poisonedpenpress.com

Lucky Smith, the mother of Molly Smith and recently widowed, and Chief Constable Paul Keller, recently divorced and Molly's boss, somehow after years of antagonism have formed a relationship. So when Canadian Thanksgiving loomed, they decided to take a fancy long weekend at the plush Banff Springs Hotel. Of course, there turns out to be a fly in the ointment of a potentially idyllic four days: Paul's ne'er-to-do (and estranged) son, Matt, and his boorish roommate, Barry, encounter Lucky when she is waiting on line at a coffee emporium, attempting to shove in past her. Never one to ignore a confrontation, Lucky fends them off. But later, sitting in the dining room at dinner with Paul, the two men enter and Barry pours tea on Lucky.

Paul is embarrassed by his son, but later that night he gets a phone call from Matt, who had found Barry in their apartment stabbed to death. Paul tells him to call the police. Instead he flees, making him suspect number one. Naturally, Paul as a policeman becomes involved with the Mounties, who make no progress in finding Matt or solving the murder. Lucky, very upset, calls Molly to travel to Banff and support her in her effort to keep Paul's spirits up. Not one to sit still, Molly informally starts nosing around despite being warned by the RCMP sergeant in charge of the case to stay clear of the investigation.

Meanwhile, back in Trafalgar, the construction of vacation homes on a prime tract of wilderness land provides another subplot as environmentalists threaten demonstrations. All seem to tie together as this, the seventh novel in the Constable Molly Smith series, draws to a close. The characters are well-drawn and the plot moves forward at a brisk pace. The only question left unresolved is when will Molly and Adam, her fiance, get married. And then there is the incipient Lucky-Paul bond to consider.

Recommended.

This Commisario Guido Brunetti mystery begins when he receives a telephone call from the director of a specialized library indicating some rare books have presumably been stolen. Moreover, others have been mutilated, maps and illustrations having been cut out of the volumes. From that point, the plot moves forward in a straight police procedural format.

The story allows the Commissario to shine, with his deep erudite knowledge of history and literature. And the author is given the opportunity to tackle yet another singular subject: the rare book industry, and its sideline of theft and greedy collectors. The obvious culprit is a man who had identified himself as an American professor who requested the books. And a former priest, who has been reading in the library for the past three years, is an apparent witness. Unfortunately, he is murdered before he can be questioned, complicating the investigation.

Brunetti is a Venetian, through and through. And the series is grounded in Venice, as he walks the streets and sails on the canals and lagoon as he pursues a solution to the crimes he investigates, providing a bona fide atmosphere for the series. While the novel is at the same high level of subtlety and sophistication as past entries, it lacks some of the attributes that have endeared readers to the series in the past. Lacking are Brunnetti's gourmet appetite, his wife's recipes for wonderful meals, the charming repartee over the dinner table between husband and wife and two children as precocious as their parents, the charm of Brunetti's home life, his relationship with his wife, daughter and son are always plusses in the books that make up this series. That said, the novel, as each of its predecessors, is recommended.

I've Got You Under My Skin
Mary Higgins Clark
Simon & Schuster
1230 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10020
www.simonandschuster.com

I never realized how often Mary Higgins Clark used a song tune as a book title, until I started humming the eponymous Cole Porter song. What it has to do with
the plot, however, is not so apparent to me. This is the story of two murders and how they somehow tie together. The first victim is the husband of Laurie Moran, a television producer; the other, the suffocation death of Betsy Powell, 20 years earlier, on the night of a gala party her wealthy husband gave for her daughter and three friends upon their graduation from college.

What links the two events is that Laurie conceives a TV series based on recreating unsolved murders and selects the Powell mystery for the pilot, inviting Mr. Powell and the four women to participate. The hope, of course, is that the guilty party will somehow blunder on camera and admit to committing the deed. Any suspense is created by the statement of Laurie's husband's murderer that he was first, to be followed by the killing of her and their young son.

One can almost feel the author plotting the novel, carefully constructing the tale building block by building block. It is so carefully put together that one can anticipate the next sentence. The book is typical of one written by this author, filled with descriptions of what the women are wearing, and the decor of the rooms and grounds where events take place. Not that these are negatives. The novel is certainly well-written and enjoyable, just not a who-dunnit of a high order.

An Officer and a Spy
Robert Harris
Vintage Books
1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019
www.blacklizardcrime.com
9780345809853, $15.95, 448 pp, www.amazon.com

This fictionalized chronology of L'Affaire Dreyfus describes one of the most appalling episodes in French history. It is told in the first person by Major (later Lt. Colonel) Georges Picquart, who played a minor role in the arrest of Captain Alfred Dreyfus for espionage and treason. Picquart acted as a Judas goat in bringing Dreyfus to his arrest and then served as the Minister of War's eyes and ears at his ensuing trial and public disgrace.

As a reward, Picquart was promoted and placed as the head of a secret spy agency where he ultimately learned of various discrepancies in the "evidence" which convicted Dreyfus before an army court martial. After initially believing in Dreyfus' guilt, he then became convinced of his innocence and spent years, much to his misfortune, attempting to free the convict and clear his name, even himself ending up in prison and being forced out of his beloved army.

The role of the establishment, the generals, the lies and cover-ups even after the truth is known is related in fine detail, as is the atmosphere of anti-Semitism prevalent in France which colored much of the Dreyfus case, since he, of course,
was a Jew. The whole sordid affair followed soon after the French defeat in the
Prussian French war and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, and was a forerunner of the
First and Second World Wars. The author's diligent research and fluid language
prevail in a gripping recount of a well-known story, and is told with much
poignancy, in an understated tone that makes history come alive.

Highly recommended. (And it just won the Crime Writers' Association Ian
Fleming Steel Dagger for the Best Thriller of the Year!)

The Case of the Love Commandos
Tarquin Hall
Simon & Schuster
1230 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10020
www.simonandschuster.com

The caste system in India comes in for a beating in this latest installment of the
Vish Puri series, as even Chubby has to rethink his previous thoughts on the
subject. Obviously, if a boy and girl of different castes, one from a highborn group
the other from the lowest of the low, fall in love and want to marry, it immediately
brings to mind Romeo and Juliet. And Puri comes into play when his operative,
moonlighting and acting with some Love Commandos (a group dedicated to
helping such unfortunate lovers) to escape from the clutches of their families,
helps Tulsi escape to meet with her love, Ram, who is safely, it is thought, stowed
away in a safe house. Unfortunately, that is not the case, and the great detective
and his agents are off to the rescue when it is discovered he was forcibly
kidnapped.

Naturally, there are a couple of side stories, one, as usual, involving Puri's mother,
who becomes involved in the robbery of donations from a holy site; and also what
appears to be a clandestine research facility taking advantage of natives by
drawing blood for "research purposes." As a consequence of these efforts, a
complicated twist involves Ram.

The author, who lives in India, captures the people and sites quite well. And he
portrays Puri in splendid fashion, especially his gastronomic endeavors. And to
top it off, several family recipes are included at the end of the novel. While not
quite as amusing as its forerunners, this book definitely warrants reading, and is
recommended.

Destroyer Angel
By Nevada Barr
Minotaur Books
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010
www.minotaurbooks.com
Novels in the Anna Pigeon series usually take place in national parks featuring the wilderness as she grapples with the likes of forest fires and the like. This time, as she braves a Minnesota forest, it is four gunmen who have kidnapped two friends and their daughters while she was out canoeing, thus missing out on the party at the beginning: The five women originally planned to enjoy a long weekend camping at a park ranger site.

Thus begins a long trek of undue hardship as the captives are forced to travel toward a landing strip miles away where the kidnappers hoped to be picked up by a plane to wait for the eventual payoff. Instead, as they slowly head to their destination, trailed by Anna whose purpose obviously is somehow to rescue her friends, the reader is treated to a gruesome blow-by-blow account of the rough treatment the women receive and lessons in how to survive in the wilderness, courtesy of Anna the park ranger, as well as how to stalk prey.

The descriptions are graphic and powerful, brutal and mesmerizing. Unfortunately, from time to time, the author interjects opinions on a variety of side issues which detract from the forward thrust of the plot. Otherwise, this is a forceful tale, and is recommended.
approached it in a workmanlike manner, but IMHO did not rise to the occasion. One wonders what the book could have been, had Parker finished it, or if it was completed in other hands.

Keep Quiet
Lisa Scottoline
St. Martin's Press
175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010
www.stmartins.com

The novel begins with Jake and his teen-age son, Ryan, driving home late at night when they approach a dark empty road and the boy begs his father to allow him to drive. Against his better judgment and parental duty, he lets Ryan take the wheel despite the fact that it's contrary to the law for one with only a learner's permit to drive in the dark. Almost immediately, as the car turns a blind curve, he hits something which turns out to be a young girl, dressed in a black jogger's outfit. Jake rushes out of the car and attempts CPR, but the girl is dead.

Jake decides the ramifications for Ryan's future life would be too onerous, and they leave the scene of the accident. From this unlikely decision, after all the circumstances probably and logically would result in little if any legal penalties given the facts surrounding the event, the plot moves forward with a myriad of complications affecting Jake, Ryan and Pam, wife and mother, who is a judge sitting in a state appellate court.

The story is an interesting one, but is over-told, with numerous repetitions of one or another character being sorry and feeling dread. Supposedly, the tale poses the question: What would you do to protect your loved ones and family? Furthermore, the conclusion is as unbelievable as the original premise for the novel.

Theodore Feit
Reviewer

Zulfiqar's Bookshelf

Globalization and Literature
Suman Gupta
Polity Press
65 Bridge Street, Cambridge, CB2 1UR, UK
www.polity.co.uk
Globalization and Literature by Suman Gupta is a comprehensive scholarly work. It defines the theme by examining some of the latest works of fiction in the light of the prevailing theory of globalization. Can power and knowledge enjoyed by the rich and the scholars truly rule the globe? The answer is no because the two cannot truly solve the problems. What exactly are the issues then? Gupta observes the public places of New York and comments on the way the citizens look-like or behave. Gupta also observes the scene of an underground train in London and the commuters. These two metropolis identify the nature of a globalized society. Besides public space there is the space created by the internet. Gupta comments on the nature of the cyber-literature and compares it with the texts written by James Joyce and Salman Rushdie. In the final three chapters, we refresh our knowledge on this wide-ranging theme of 'globalization.' Chapter five discusses the way the Western mind thinks and wishes to live in the mode of a postmodern citizen. If such a mind feels more comfortable by distancing itself from all sorts of constraints, then its counterpart milieu in the East is still complaining against the cultural onslaught of the Western colonialism. English language is one such cultural icon that rules the roost in the age of globalization. English language and literature may have an upper hand especially the former. The latter or literature is losing its status because of the other means of entertainment that do not require much intellectual introspection.

Apart from the first two pages rest of the introductory chapter is an avid recapitulation of the idea of globalization. Our attention is naturally riveted upon Gupta's analysis of the mind of O'Reilly - an economist in Richard Powers novel Plowing the Dark. Gupta explains how O'Reilly tries but fails to solve the economic riddles despite an enviable monopoly over knowledgeable economic and financial tools. Like the loving couple of Andrew Marvell's poem The Garden and John Donne's The Sunne Rising, O'Reilly enjoys the blessings of the "invisible hand to rock a cradle now eminently observable." He is in his "Cavern" or "a test spin," "theatre," or "planetarium." The rich imagery reminisces an association of ideas: Plato's "Cave" and the serpent (Satan) according to The Paradise Lost. O'Reilly does not understand the paradox between the eternal rhythm of nature and "the familiar jigsaw of the world's nations...of cooperation and competition" of the "global markets." O'Reilly signifies a typical well-educated person of a postmodern society. His job is his survival as a researcher, just as curiosity brings together such people to Davos in posh suits. Here in the snow-laden picturesque hill-station the gurus gather to wrestle with the juggernaut of global financial challenges in vain.

Does knowledge absolutely solve the problems? Gupta, as expected, brings in Marshall McLuhan. Like O'Reilly, McLuhan abolishes distances by extending "our central nervous system itself in a global embrace" (McLuhan 1962, 31). Neither of the two offer solution in the real sense. In the worth reading chapter 2, Gupta examines the basic human dilemma through Don DeLillo's character Eric Packer in Cosmopolis. The protagonist is literally surrounded by the anti-
globalization protestors. The Internet screens of this billionaire's limousine suggests O'Reilly's "Cavern." In both cases, we note the undertones of a system run by a classified global class of entrepreneurs, whose actions send ripples across the world economies, effective like Moses rod. Moses rod offers solution. Packer slams the evil effects of the financial downturns at the feet of the protesting mob. Vija Kinski symbolises the voice of the protestors. But Kinski is an employee of the employer Eric Packer. How may we comment on the master-servant dialectic? In general, we may say that "matter" remains the same like the water surface that remains constant despite the internal and external push and pull of the forces, according to Hegel or Marx. Who knows the truth, Eric Packer the master or Kinski the servant. Kinski also represents the "generalizing academic discourses" (p.15) on globalization.

We come to realise the ultimate limits of this classified global class when we learn that two of its global figures are assassinated. They are a close friend of Eric Packer. Even his own life is at risk which he is conscious of. This clearly shows why the affluent classes live in bolted gates, behind high walls and away from the suburban hubs.

Gupta sums up this wave of protests as a "deeper phenomena" (p.18) of globalization. Commenting on Newman's The Fountain, Gupta quotes Chano, who, happens to be the destroyer of the toxic-waste plant. His own house also gets burnt though. Such ruthlessness throws light on the nature of extremism, which is common both in the East and the West. Perowne in McEwan's Saturday is subjected to violent harassment by Baxter and his gang. A respectful physician, it is enough to shock him when he hears the howling gang at his door. Extremism is a common dilemma and we may notice in the stubbornness of Jay in Baker's Checkpoint. Jay, an unemployed father, having abandoned the family also departs from the moral and social responsibilities by taking a heinous step which could result in the assassination of the President of the United States of America. Ben who is Jay's friend, has family a job and thus respect in society, also persuades him to refrain from such a crime. Despite such criminals in the Western society which shows the lowliness of social mental health, the public in general does not forgive or forget to react to the violence taking place, say in the Middle East. The anti-war movement and world-wide protest as a consequence of the war in Iraq (Saturday), demonstrates the care for the fellow humans on "the macro-and micro-level" (p.30). Gupta then discusses the problems faced by the womenfolk by analysing Eve Ensler's play The Vagina Monologues. The play "encourages solidarities" worldwide against the violence and discrimination against the female gender. Sheer scale of the success of this play throughout the world is a manifestation of the human awareness and care. The point, however, is that just as the source of solar light remains the sun, only the West raises the issues and sets goals to achieve. The cruel happenings of the war and terrorism appear on the screen and the Western spectators react. What about the reactions in the East on these tragic trails of serial happenings? The simmering discontent
remains slumbering unless the Western milieu wakes up to the call.

Chapter 3, 'Global Cities and Cosmopolis' again takes into account the fiction about the Western cities. Of course, the Western novelists describe the Asians and Africans or the Latin Americans as they appear in the public spaces. These people do not weigh in but those who do, that is the non-coloured, even they fail to let us feel and see that deep-sighted psychic melodrama which is the defining characteristic of the protagonists in Ulysses and The Waste Land. In Douglas Coupland's Generation X, the characters wear the gloss by representing the world-leading manufacturing corporates so that they "themselves are manufactured, in some sense, as persons" (p.38). Gupta's citing from DeLillo's Cosmopolis recalls New York's heterogeneous culture at the dawn of the 21st Century. Observed in the light of Ulysses, Mr Henry Flower Leopold Bloom is obsessed by the similar trains of imagery a century ago. Only the characters characterise the place which latter remains constant whether Dublin or New York. One may add the foreigners into the equation. As is well-known, Gupta then notes the failure of the Western system as it is unable to "dissolve the racial fissures or the ghettos" (p.40). Citing from Whitehead's The Clossus in New York, Gupta genuinely comments on the truth of inhabitants of the city in their "names, appearances, colour, clothes" as too commonplace and may be identified as mere "he, she, they" (p.40). This is true of London as well. In Geoff Ryman's 253, the characters are identified in their "outward appearance" only. Their "inside information", howsoever complex because of the diverse backgrounds, may be dubbed as mere types.

Gupta infers an interesting parallel between humans and their economic achievements. If the "Global Teens" of the affluent upbringings symbolise "Dow, Union Carbides, General Dynamics...", then at the other end of the society are the teeming millions steeped in "increasing fragmentation and variety" (p.45). Like the line that divides humans, the economy of the city is also riddled with extreme divisions: the homogenous multinationals monopolise the global space by managing the destiny "of multiple layers of small industries and macro-enterprises" (p.45). Gupta notes that despite wealth and influence "cosmopolitan togetherness," the rich like Eric Packer may still remain sad at heart and pass away in a state of loneliness. In such a society, says Gupta, the artists are usually ignored. Fiction becomes "a far less adventurous museum than music or art or film" (p.58). Too much emphasis on coaching the Creative Writing in the universities, produces "a highly filtered" fiction.

Chapter 4 undertakes an interesting academic point. Does globalization mean that the world is progressing to modernise with such a rhythmic tempo that by transmuting heterogeneous matter into homogeneity, it is about to set in an era of spiritual-cum-intellectual enlightenment or the "Self-Consciousness" according to Hegel? The "statistical data" applies only to the economic or social progress. Gupta hardly endorses that global societies have progressed to such an
extent that they have reached "the end of history" thesis of Fukuyama. Such a yardstick cannot be applied to literature. Discussing Michael Valdez Moses, Gupta says that his study of novels is based upon the realities of "geopolitical locations." Such diverse backgrounds of culture and location do not affect the "larger and deeper" rhythms of these characters as they are beyond the confines of time and space. The texts of Sulman Rushdie and James Joyce (p.72) "can travel without warning." Joyce's works, Gupta quotes from Joseph Valente, negate "local attachments" for the sake of "cultural transnationalism" (p.720, something that the Irish intellectuals dub as "an insidious de-Irishing of Joyce." Moreover, as Joseph Brooker says, the texts of Rushdie and Joyce subvert the conventional boundaries for the sake of new experimental horizons. Ulysses is one such novel that merges the socio-political distinctions of such different countries as "Ireland / France / Italy / Switzerland." Commenting on the literature of the Internet Age, Gupta quotes from Manuel Castell as saying that internet modifies "all domains of social life." The literary texts cater to the sensibility, Gupta uses the term from Iser Wolfgang, of an "implied reader." The reader's predispositions cater to their own native place, are steadily globalized so that the literature of the age of "cyberspace" comes from and appeals to the people of diverse auditory and visual cultural backgrounds. Does this mean that we have come to the "end of literature" (Gupta quotes from J. Hills Miller) the way we have come to the end of history according to Fukuyama?

In chapter 5, Gupta defines the postmodern tendency as a progressive element despite its "disrupting manifestations of modernity" (p.97). As is known, postmodernism challenges everything related to human conventions in society, in spirituality as well as the knowledge of sciences. Postmodernism does not accept the order and the order based hierarchy from above that unifies everything in the universe around its grand, sublime archetypal hub. The postmodern sensibility brews from the native soil earthly, the language they develop for communication in fulfilling their immediate needs surrounded by a staggering universe. But the postmodern attitudes are unable to give a holistic approach to life and hence the post-modern societies are helplessly fragmented for being too individualistic or introspective. Postmodernism as an idea is also a Western invention. It may not fit into the Eastern civilization where social bonds are strong due to the family shrine (Buddhism and Hinduism) and spirituality remains a constant source of salvation. But Gupta discusses Salman Rushdie and other writers of Asian background concentrating on the colonial or postcolonial experience of their peoples. There is a strong tendency perhaps an overwhelming one of following the traditional themes such as migration, hybridity and race etc., Ironically, the recognition is tailored to the acknowledgement by the West. One finds another paradox: the intelligentsia exhausts its talent on these themes while the affluent upper echelons see the world flat. Gupta needs to have looked at the things from this angle in detail.

In chapter 6, Gupta reiterates the role and status of English language and
literature in this age. English language is the lingua franca on global level. This is because of "the ever-growing interdependence of workers." English facilitates the worldwide "convergence" of creative interests in all the subjects. A tool for recognition for the writers, English is used as a medium for disseminating all sorts of old and new texts written in other languages after translation. Gupta also observes that there are writers who do not want to use English as a medium for writing and translation. Ngugi wa Thiong'O, quotes Gupta, says "farewell to the English language as a vehicle." But can we ignore the presence of the global trends which ask us to seek recognition by being accepted worldwide? This changes the outlook and we try to adjust by accepting the rest of the world and its paraphernalia of presence.

In the last and final chapter, Gupta examines the prospects for writers in this age. The original authors, Gupta refers to Roland Barthes, have disappeared from the scene simply because the texts we encounter bear the marks of "multiple writings" used "from many cultures." But this is according to Barthes. Gupta is right in observing that authors are losing attention because of the alternative modes of entertainment due to technology. As Gupta quotes Bill as mentioning to Brita the photographer "...Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of the culture. Now bomb-makers and gunmen have taken that territory" (p.152). Bill, having given up the creative urge, joins others by travelling to Lebanon to save the life of a fellow artist, who is a Swiss poet, fails in the mission and breathes his last there. This may be the fate of creative writing, then. Just compare the adventurous movies that prove the successes of the hero in such daring missions. Perhaps the novels based upon "action" may still have room. The authors in general are marginalized "because literature is itself disassociated from life" (p.154). This is the unfortunate zeitgeist.

The audio-visual media flashes the screens with shocking imagery and news. This is enough to captivate the masses and its "audio-visually-centered consuming consciousness" (p.155). People consume what they like and what they like is determined by the system structured by the Corporations big or small, domestic and global. The age of consumerism spells the death of the author, who may die away not necessarily in his own native country but "across boundaries... the American Bill dies in Lebanon, the British Giles in the United States, and the Turkish Ka in Germany" (p.156).

The age of Consumerism permits the profit-generating fiction. This form of writing is coined as "mass-market fiction." The author who fulfils the market demand is the one whose writing "is a pure surface" (p.158). Another problem is that the "new authors take time to catch on" (p.160). However, certain devices such as "pricing, design, publicity" help new authors even if their works are a mere pedagogy. Even the "fluid texts" in which several hands such as "writers, editors [and] publishers" come together may sell after modification. This is a tampering of the original by "the over-determined attention to the texts (in
notebooks, typescripts, proofs, codices, specific edition..." (p.166). Even the
communities of "book clubs" prefer to keep themselves to the "real fan-sites." The
publishers market these communities through contacts and concessions. To sum
up the globalized trends in the production and consumption of literary works,
the works covering all the genres, Gupta opines that rather than discern by
reading and understanding what is "inside literature and within literature", it is
the "globalized markets" that decide the fate these days. Gupta insists that the
author "that is marketable, in other words, is a pure surface, an image, a fictional
construct to fulfil existing market demands" (p.158). Our author is absolutely
right. One may note that from the darkness of Middle Ages sprang the wonderful
"Renaissance" and from the cliche-ridden 18th Century neo-classical
Rationalism in literature, we are staggered by the wonder and awe of
Romanticism as a reaction. Europe has always led. Shall the quest for novelty
come from Europe or Asia? Or from the mysteriously evolving globalization?
Some new voices may soon be the seed shooting up. The important question, one
may anticipate, would be whether it is English or the Chinese that the new
literature is to shrine! Perhaps both and many more in the field which looks plain
and smooth. Film and drama shall always consider literature as the source.
Literature is like the Mother-Goddess and film and drama the suckling infants.

China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Inc
Willem Van Kemenade
Translated from the Dutch by Diane Webb
Little, Brown and Company, (UK), 1997
Brettenham House, Lancaster Place, London WC2E 7EN
0316641677, $17.10, 444 pp, www.amazon.com

As Willem Van Kemenade expressed in the Preface, China makes up a fifth of the
world population. China is also in search of "a new system" in order to manage
rapid growth of its population and social stability. China's steps towards this
direction also affect both Taiwan and Hong Kong. This is because of China's
tremendous potential for growth even though Hong Kong has enjoyed the fruits
of economic prosperity due to the reforms introduced by the British. Similarly,
Taiwan has opened up to the global influences much before China and has
enjoyed the protection of the U.S. and Japan. China deserves to thank the
leadership of Deng Xiaoping, who, having reformed the economy led the country
into an era of enviable prosperity. The secret to the Chinese miracle in economy
lies in the policies that provided an equal importance to both, the private sector
and the public; by providing incentives to the enterprises run by these two, and,
by encouraging small businesses unlike the emphasis of heavy industries in the
staunchly Communist Soviet Union in the neighbourhood. One of the salient
features of Chinese policies is the encouragement of foreign investment in joint
ventures. China looks upon Taiwan as its integral part, and as of Hong Kong, she
plans to rule by a plutocracy based upon civil servants, businessmen and their
own political representatives.
Kemenade divides the book into five parts. In Part One, Kemenade introduces us to the policies implemented by Mao Zedong and says that China struggled as an agricultural economy even though it aspired to be an industrial model of Chinese socialism. The Cultural Revolution forced the Chinese to do what the system considered best even if the masses hated it. The revolutionary mood was whipped so that hundreds of millions are coerced to achieve "new and greater victories" (p.5). It was only Deng Xiaoping, one of the loyalists of Mao, whose pragmatism brought China out of the shadows. This becomes obvious when we examine the achievements made by the country. From 1979 to 1995, per annum the average Chinese economy grew at the rate of 9.9, except in 1989. How did Deng achieve such milestones? Deng, rather than involve the interest groups into a wrangling within the power structure, brought about an enviable close rapprochement. The economy was decentralized and the nation being largely agricultural, emergency steps were taken to improve the farming sector. In other words, agriculture gained more importance than industry. Because the small industries involved more hands with affordable investment, Deng preferred this over heavy industry. At the same time, the door was opened for investment from abroad. Ironically, Deng was doing exactly the opposite of the Soviet Union engaged as the latter was in a mortal warfare (The Cold War) against Capitalism. The state took over the responsibility of fixing the prices of the items made of steel, the agricultural products and the raw material. However, such quick fixes unleashed corruption in various forms, and the economic crash 1989, was a direct result of such an expediency. The economic downturn also gave some of the intellectuals the chance to air their grievances. Kemenade quotes the human rights campaigner astrophysicist Fang Lizhi. In the next few years following the Tiananmen square incident, the government took steps by improving the human rights. China's application for the status of a "most favored nation" (MFN) however, was turned down by the rest. Kemenade thinks that the American "evangelism" could have been one of the factors. The early 1990's also opened the eyes of the rest of the world to China's staggering demand for capital goods. The Western entrepreneurs began to benefit from this. The U S President on the contrary, did not desist from supplying sophisticated weapons to Taiwan. China along with Indonesia in the "Bangkok Declaration" connect the idea of "human rights" to "Cultural Relativism." The Chinese leadership pleaded that there was no need for this. There was no need to put China and the Islamic world into the same basket because Samuel Huntington had said so. Cultures exist only if they retain the confidence of those who live in it. Each culture has its own method of looking after its people.

In the chapter on Hong Kong, Kemenade discusses whether China can deliver the freedom promised to the people living in Hong Kong. Despite the agreed "Twelve Point Plan", when on July 1, 1997 the Preparatory Committee placed an appointed Provisional Legislature to administer Hong Kong, the Western media and the inhabitants of the metropolis raised a hue and cry. Kemenade discusses
this theme of the election versus selection in detail. With regard to Taiwan, the Chinese claim it to be one of their own provinces. Fifteen countries offered Nicaragua $1 billion in development aid and asked her to lead the case of the right of Taiwan to "representation" at the UN in 1995. The Chinese and her supporters opposed the bill as always. Taiwan however, enjoys good trade relations with China, and in favourable circumstances the former could favour "a loosely (con)federal polity made up of mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, Taiwan, and perhaps Singapore" (p. 104). The Chinese may or may not buy such a grand plan except that her claim over Taiwan enjoys the support of those members of Taiwan's Parliament who originally came from the mainland, numbering at least 80 towards the end of 1980's. Tension among the parliamentarians persists. The Japanese are thought to be in favour of the independence of Taiwan. The fact that Japan along with Europe and the U S are arming Taiwan with sophisticated weapons is also discussed. President Jiang Zemin took the initiative in constraining Taiwan's drive for arming itself with such weapons. President Jiang Zemin also warned Taiwan against any form of propaganda against the mainland. The Chinese press vented its anger against Taiwan when in June 1995, President Lee visited America and raised the issue of "popularity sovereignty" (p. 130). Kemenade believes that the Chinese concept of sovereignty is based upon "twentieth-century class dictatorship" and a "despotic thinking" of the Middle Ages. The leadership accepts only that which appeals and what appeals is the Chinese style "one country-two systems" (p. 143). Tracing from history Kemenade says that China enjoyed unity only for "1963 years." For about "1134" years China suffered from festering divisions in the country.

Before the era of reforms under Deng Xiaoping, Taiwan was looked upon with suspicion. Giving an account of his own experiences, Kemenade says that the authorities in Shanghai became instantly suspicious when he told them that he had lived in Taiwan for over a year as a journalist. Things have changed since the reforms and Taiwan and Hong Kong are the "filters" for the rest of the world to enter China. In Shanghai Kemenade saw that the people wore and used goods from Taiwan. Hong Kong and Taiwan are seen as "ethnic brothers" in China and also a window of opportunity. Beside other things, Kemenade notes how the people use the "old-style Chinese cards" printed in Taiwan and Hong Kong instead of the "less elegant" ones of "proletarian culture."

The major theme of this book is the role played by the South China Economic Zone - a vast region comprising Hong Kong, Guangdong, Taiwan, Fujian and Hainan. Hainan also opens the door to Southeast Asia. Kemenade argues that despite some amazing economic achievements made by this precious region, the Chinese authorities could not achieve the same results in other regions. In other words, the western parts of this huge territorial mass has received much less attention and as a result one hears the tales of the suffering work force coerced to abandon their villages for the South China Economic Zone.
We understand rather appreciate the Chinese achievements. We need to draw the lesson carefully to add to the findings of Kemenade on China. Just read the report of the China News Agency. According to its survey, about 80% of firms chosen for a trial of modern, western-style business opted for the old state-owned system. To make the system work more efficiently, the Chinese government lets the firms run on the basis of shares owned partially by the state, partially by the collectives and partially by the private sector. Neither the state nor the non-state, wholly private sector can cope with the newly emerging problems. The rising rate of unemployment was to be tackled by the absorption of the surplus, both skilled and non-skilled labour from the state sector, by the private sector. Kemenade comes to the same conclusion.

But not on the Western pattern, mind you. The Party officials in the beginning of Deng's reforms were determined. 'But no compromise on communism' they thought as straight forward as those miles upon miles of toffee-like blocks of buildings that sheltered hundreds and thousands by eating away their privacy, the multi-storey housing flats as simple as an idea kept naked and deprived of the architectural heritage of such an old civilisation as that of China, an idea without the flesh and blood of a feeling heart, of a diverse mind, of native expression, of an urge to be unique and bring prosperity home.

In a country like China, three quarters of whose energy comes from one billion tons of coal a year, the consequent damage to the environment and thus to human health is understandably high. According to one report, the factories discharge over 8.9 million tons of pollution-related organic matter and 3,700 tons of heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium, chromium and lead. About 90% of pollutants are dumped in rivers and seas. Kemenade should have elaborated this point.

We are also familiar with the petrochemical smog that shrouds the urban centres where the traffic scrambles a pandemonium of clangs in addition to pollution. Along with pollution, we also know that come what may, the farmers are quite reluctant to co-operate and stop felling the trees, lopping off the branches, stripping the bark and clipping the twig, stumps. When soil is left uncovered, Nature revolts and as we know how the erosion of soil causes floods and silt in the streams from the experience of the Chang Jiang basin and the destruction of many species in Yunan and Hainan island. Whether the blowing dark of sulphurous coal smoke over those arid slopes and muddy, stagnant ponds is caused by an overuse of wood or coal - a metamorphosis of the same over geological time from prehistoric times to that of our own - the leadership will have to think hard if China wishes her billion-plus people to escape the wrath of Nature.

What about those two million workers made redundant by Deng's reforms. We cannot ever forget the cradle to grave assurance of housing, education and free
The novice entrepreneurs are flattered to invest only to compensate the losses inflicted on the previous investors by the system and then one day, when you open your eyes, you rather wait for the next victim who follows suit blind of the bleak alley of the vicious circle in which those only survive that are strong, swelling like the parasite by relegating the weaker vessels either to perish or to practice evil to join the ladder. Who holds up the bank drafts sent by the sons, brothers and husbands of those families...the immigrants who work in those miserable conditions home and away? By whose cunning deals do the local officials delay...delay rather willfully in the payment of their crops to the peasants?

The Central government introduces reforms. The Rural Township and Village Enterprises are set up. Very soon the rural sector begins to thrive with economic activity. At one stage, the sector reaches its maximum output of over US $ 12 billion as its textile and electronic goods invade the shopping malls and superstores of America, Europe, Africa, Middle East and East and South Asia. Then something ominous happens...something for which one cannot blame Nature but human nature. On discovering that such an enterprise poses severe blow to the state-sector, the authorities lay off some 400,000 businesses which as a whole and before closure had contributed a quarter of China's exports by employing about 40 % of the work force. What about the scenario of inter-provincial wrangling over trade protectionism. The Provinces do deserve a certain amount of free choice as it happens in the United States of America. This is the crunch of the matter. 'China's unity is under threat,' people complain. Only greater control of the Centre can help. It's all due to the reforms that the tobacco industry of the Hunan Province had to adopt protectionism. The interested parties wanted to use the tobacco produced locally for their own cigarette factories checkmating its export thereof as a mere raw material. It's a blow to our socialist ideology, complain the diehards.

Rather than follow the instructions of the Central government to buy on the official rate, some dangerous elements of the Guandong Province make a cheaper deal with the Province of Hunan or with that of another country like Thailand. Look at this inter-provincial rivalry. If the Guanxi Province levies an additional tax on coal at its entry port into the Province of Hebei, the latter reacts and imposes an embargo of its own, on commodities such as oil and grain. The Province of Jilin prevents the breweries entering from Lianing and Heilongjiang. The Xinjiang Province too imposes restrictions on the import of goods from the rest of China by having business deals with the Central Asian states as the Central government reduces the price of wool which is a major commodity and a source of income for the rural people of this Province. This school of thought believes that more you reform more seems you break and the more you break away like a meteorite from the Chinese style Socialist system, both in letter and spirit.
Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies
Paul Jay
Cornell University Press
Sage House, 512 East State Street, Ithaca, New York 14850
www.cornellpress.cornell.edu.

Paul Jay offers an interesting study of a popular theme of the international nature. Globalization or the transnationalism creates space allowing authors to explore what lies "between real and imagined borders" (p.1). This new territory may be found outside the boundaries fixed by the nation-states. What could be the stoking fire of this new sensibility? Paul Jay endorses the school of thought according to which the change began to spread its wings in the civil rights movements, the rights of women and the "Chicano movement" of the 1960's etc., There was an evident shift in the demography within the United States. More and more especially the young from the non-white were showing up in the education sector besides others. The fresh waves of immigrants were actively researching new academic themes in the universities. Postcolonial studies were gaining ground and people were questioning the "older Eurocentric models comparative" nature in social sciences and humanities.

The liminal space between "real and imagined" thrives well in an environment in which transnational transactions gain an upper hand. When economic relations develop among nations, the interest in cultures other than one's own also gears up "because when commodities travel, culture travels" (p.3). Music, film, food and fashion transform as rigidly held distinctions of the centre and periphery are softened by a constant flow of commodities, cultural forms and the humans. In such transcultural cooperation, stories and the characters of stories also move in and out of multiple locations. Paul Jay applies his theory to the mobilization, especially of the "minority population" of the American society in the 60's. This theme remains one of the motifs of Paul Jay's work.

Globalization, Jay believes, goads the conscience by breaking the romantic charm "of one home, one language, one nation, one stable place" (p.16). Globalization has shuffled and reshuffled not only the inevitable mobility of the poor to the rich countries but also the rich to the developing world's open spaces and opportunities for investment. This indiscriminate flow of peoples has sharpened the appetite to learn new languages and write new themes as the ideas arise out of such a multidimensional transaction. More and more is being written about the hybrid identities, race and gender and so on in various competing languages, the languages reflecting economic achievements of course.

Paul Jay also argues that globalization tampers with the validity and scope of "Arnoldian model," the model that cultivated "disinterest" in the themes that are too local. Literature should promote "the best that has been said and thought."
By the "best" Jay means the "universal truths" rather than local. Appreciation of a piece of art devolves upon objectivity. The best of all are those who treat the fellow human beings with due respect and dignity.

Rather than the "best that has been said and done", the African, Asian and Hispanic American authors are more interested in the postcolonial literary canon that challenges "the Eurocentricity of literary studies in the West" (p.22), in this excruciating process of trial and error for a new literary canon relevant to our age. Such a tradition shall naturally pay homage to the long history of "migration and displacement."

In chapter 3, Paul Jay reiterates that globalization under the influence of media and migration, is in fact, a "dramatic and unprecedented break" with the past. It opens some new and unprecedented horizons before the thinking mind. Paul Jay, then, argues how globalization for being a historical force, has marched in five phases of time.

Paul Jay also notes the well-known argument that literature on globalization represents West's latest attempt to reclaim former colonies both culturally and economically. This has been going on for quite some time: in the first phase, the Western masters invested in their colonies for some long term interests, which, eventually has helped the multinational corporations. The intelligentsia of the liberated colonies thinks otherwise: the "cultural hybridity" (p.49) is part of a long term historical process of interaction. The goal is to produce a harmonious society and an all-embracing civilization. A micro-level bond defines a society whereas a macro-level interaction of cultures results in a transnational system. The bond between the two needs to be strengthened. Only then one may hope to achieve trust which leads to economic and cultural relations. To say that living in the global village is possible without contact with the rest of the world is impossible. There is no such thing as a pure culture because of sheer human interdependence. The neglected and the wretched have to be taken on board because much of the human progress depends on the sweat of the brow of the poor. We cannot ignore the "silenced and the marginalized voices", Jay quotes Mignole.

Chapter 4, titled, "Border Studies" is the most comprehensive in approach towards a theoretical explanation of the truth of the transnational nature of literature in our age. Jay discusses Rob Wilson, to start with, and says that despite a deep-rooted self-consciousness with regard to their national identities, the nations of Asia-Pacific cannot overlook the evolving new reality of an inevitable regional interdependence because of, Jay quotes Wilson, "cross-border flows of information, labour, finance, media images, and global commodities" (p.74).

European colonialism has also participated in the growth of transnational literature. The former inhabitants of the colonies who have settled in Europe and
the U S or the Developed world, meet up one another of the same backgrounds in a "contact zone" according the Marie Louise Pratt. The "contact zone" is the zone where they have their catharsis of all forms of ill-treatments they encounter by living in "conditions of coercion, radical inequality..." (p.76). The contact zone, Jay quotes Bakhtian, is the "dialogically agitated space" where the discourses of the marginalized register even though the nature and level remains hybrid according to the colonial masters. The marginalized and those who marginalize live in two different mental spaces furrowed by a common border. Is this steep-edged dividing line an unnatural boundary? Most probably, the transnational turn in art and literature is determined to erode its stony edges as globalization gathers momentum for being a state of mind which is always in a state of transition. Jay also notes that the colonial masters want to maintain their position of strength even in literature, for, when they write they do so with a matured cultural experience which has "developed over extended historical space" (Jay quotes Edouard Glissant). The literature by the marginalized, (Glissant refers to the "Americas") the "New World" or the "Fourth World" lacks such an experience. The discovery of the "New World", says Jay quoting O'Gorman, founds modernity in Europe. It fused new life into the sloth and state of cultural inertia due to religious extremism or nationalism. Rather than colonize one another in Europe through warfare, they migrate to establish themselves in Africa, Asia and the Americas. In the long run, colonialism created a "fractured space" instead of strong, unified nation-states in these continents. This is nothing more "than a set of overlapping cultural zones" (p.83) - a breeding ground for hybrid cultures.

The transnationalism takes turn by showing its effect in the novels, away from the often repetitive argument and counter-argument among the academia. Paul Jay discusses the texts written mainly by the authors who have roots in the colonized world.

In chapter 5, Jay argues further on the relation between colonialism and globalization. There are those, says Jay, who maintain that globalization does not evolve out of colonialism. Globalization is a natural occurrence which owes everything to human inventiveness of head and heart.

Discussing Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, Jay informs that this novel is about the God of "small things" who is to blame for human "despair" and "turmoil." The God of "Big Things" does the same on higher level, that is, history exhibiting in the "public turmoil of a nation" (p.97). Despair, as Rahul utters owes to the transgression of "love laws...laws that lay down who should be loved and how." Love is an emotion which cuts across the boundaries fixed by self-interest and the expedient social forces at the back of which lay the transnational forces to pull the strings. Jay, then, focusses on Red Earth and Pouring Rain and notes how Sanjay (one of the major characters), uses "imagination to cobble together" soiled by the "cross-cultural exchange" (p.104). Whereas in The God of
Small Things, the flood of goods from the West is "anaesthetizing", in Chandra's novel the effect of glutton(ing) American goods is "electrifying" (p.105). Paul Jay's thesis does not mention the impact of the Chinese sales both on the West and the East. Ironically, many such items are benefiting the empty pocket of the poor in the Developing world. Chandra's promising portrayal of the British rule in India suggests the romantic longing of human nature when reality on the ground becomes less appealing. We peep through the minds of Sanjay and Abhay and discover this, unlike in Arudhati's characters in The God of Small Things. In Mohsin Hamid's novel Moth Smoke, we realise perhaps rarely that globalization is inevitable and does not beg much dependence on the centuries-old rule of the Colonial Powers. The actions of the characters prove that "the basic humanity is not different from place to place" (p.106). The protagonists Ozi and Daru may be the well-designed prototypes of their counterpart Moghul Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh (as Paul Jay elaborates), yet, the two think and act reacting to their circumstances, which are a creation of the forces operating according to the format of a global age. The irony is that the characters hardly question the casus belli of the social rhythm. Inundated by information in this age if we do not reflect then this is also an implied comment by Mohsin Hamid. Ozi controls everything what wealth can. Can he control his emotions? He remains suspicious as does the poor Daru. Suspicion or doubt is unlike the commodities - differentiating humans from the rest. Yet, the social wheel gravitates the two to revolve around it beyond their control. Why can't the humans set the system right? Perhaps globalization is something they cannot question.

Kiran Desai's novel The Inheritance of Loss draws attention on the situation of the emigrants in New York. The novel looks at the peaceful co-existence of the Indian community with the rest in New York. Back home in Kalimpong, the social unrest is due to the "persistent effects of colonialism and long-simmering, very local ethnic conflicts in northeast India" (p.119). In the next chapter, Paul Jay focusses on the experiences of an expatriate Camagu who comes to South Africa after independence. Camagu returns from America after three decades of life in exile. His noble mission of devoting his services to the nation arouses suspicion in the minds of the establishment. Dejected, Camagu leaves Johannesburg for a remote village Xhosa of Qolorha-by-Sea, falls in love with a local girl and starts canvassing the natives that they must give up old superstitions for good. Prosperity lies in being modern in thought and approach. Unfortunately, his progressive programme receives sever criticism by those who are determined to keep themselves pure by keeping the foreign investment which they believe as impure, away from their area. Eventually, though, the entire community comes around agreeing on a project which shall promote tourism. Camagu deems this much success as a step towards progress.

The basic point in Zadie Smith's famous novel White Teeth is that people are still struggling to live together peacefully in a multicultural society. Smith draws the binaries with skill and proves that society moves on despite the likes and dislikes
of the people on the colour, class and creed levels. Just as there are some divisive forces in a society, there are also people who promote harmony among different segments of diverse backgrounds, economic status and ethnicity. Life becomes a challenge when people from one background, say the minority class, tempted by the glamour of the other, the other who is also in majority and is doing well economically, try to mix up with. The contact is possible. The process is painful full of disappointment because of the human nature which does not forget its identity.

Paul Jay, finally, draws our attention on Junot Diaz's novel The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao and the norms of a "multiply determined and historically vexed" (p.180) transnational society. One is reminded of James Joyce's Finnegans Wake, which too is about a character abridged as HCE or "Here Comes Everybody." The obsessed HCE yells, bemoans and sometimes he reflects sleeping as he is in different streams of dreams. The repressed in him is the repressed glossed as the residual guilt of the entire humanity.

Preparing For the Twenty-First Century
Paul M Kennedy
HarperCollinsPublishers
77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB
9780394584430, $TBA print / $10.99 Kindle, 428pp, www.amazon.co.uk

In Preparing for the Twenty-First Century, Paul Kennedy elicits the challenges that humanity faces. Are these the same ones that we had in the past? Some are and some not. As the population rises for example, we face the problem of food shortages in many parts of the world. This issue is already brought to light by the 18th Century thinker Robert Malthus. Malthus bases his theory on the fact that the population is constantly increasing while the land producing grain remains the same. Paul Kennedy comments and says that contrary to the dire predicament forecast by Malthus, we the humans are circumspect enough to invent new methods of increasing productivity. The British, for example, solved the problem by migrating to other countries or their colonies in the 19th Century. The Industrial Revolution answered the concerns raised by Malthus. By 1865 the fruits of the Industrial Revolution were opening the mind to think on global scale for selling and buying. Kennedy quotes Jevons (mentioned further in Britain's Imperial History, 1815-1914 by R. Hyam) as stating that Britain could purchase everything essential from the Americas to Africa and Asia. The Industrial Revolution was a blessing enabling you to save time and work more. Does this apply to our age? Yes, of course. But what about the harmful factors due to the modern day technology? In the second chapter, Kennedy raises the question that Malthus did, that is, the "demographic explosion", noting the unevenness of the growth in population in various regions "some expanding fast, some stagnant, some in absolute decline" (p.22). The scenario is pushing the youth into the cities from rural areas with dire consequences, as by 2025 about 57 percent of
population is expected to inhabit the urban sector. The cities he mentions are in the developing world and are the ones already burdened with the pandora's box of problems. Since the burden is unbearable, the inhabitants look for new avenues and escaping into other countries is already adding to the recipient states' headache at the border checkpoints. The immigrants bring with them their "strange ways of life." About 15 million men, women and children are already waiting to cross the borders from Mexico and Turkey. Obviously, the Western values such as liberalism, equality of opportunity and related human rights, gravitate the suffering humanity.

Kennedy hopes that given the nature of global transactions, the firms from Europe in times of recession have the option to operate from the developing world by offering jobs and training to the poor. Such firms look at the advantages carefully by weighing relocation sensibly because of the bureaucratic bans or "voluntary controls" on certain items. Such attempts from the West to the East result in redundancies. The workers protest and approach the "interest groups" who induce the government to implement protectionism.

Kennedy talks about the "triad" composed of North America, Europe and Japan and says that it does not heed to the "four-fifth of the world's population" (p.53). Within the "triad" one may notice the inter-firm seesaws. The forklift trucks, for example, manufactured by a Japanese firm meet a hostile reception in the US by the intervention of the American Chrysler and Hyster. The latter change their attitude as soon they learn that the said Japanese firm purchased the "spare parts" from the US. There is so much interdependence these days. Kennedy repeats and says that the shareholders manipulate the chances of making money by investing wherever it suits to the sheer nightmare of the ruling establishments. The foreign exchange trading community knows the market forces more intimately and reacts worldwide before the central banks do. If a government increases taxes by adding to the cost of business deals, the investors take their money out. The government suffers and the public agitates forcing the former to cut compromising deals with the gurus of the globalized foreign exchanges. It is the Western world that benefits on the basis of the laissez-faire system.

Agriculture is another important sector feeling the strains of globalization as the demand for more roads and houses grows that chisel through the croplands. Demand for more is an opportunity for the farmers. The overuse of the fertilizers erodes the quality of the soil. This is taking place in the developing world. The farmers in the Developed world rely on subsidies to produce "butter mountains" and "wine lakes." The long term damage to the soil could be contained if the subsidized products are sold out to the developing world. Or if the subsidy is removed permitting the prices to take their own natural course. This may help the agricultural products find their way into the Developed world once the tariffs are reconsidered favourably. Kennedy warns against the abusive use of biotechnology.
Chapter 5 discusses the uses and abuses of machines and robots, which Kennedy defines as "rapid, regular, precise and tireless." Robots, unfortunately, render the already poor more helpless before the ever-increasing bargaining power of the bosses. Chapter 6 about the impact of human activity on the environment. The drought in Somalia and floods in Bangladesh are interconnected due to the planet-wide "thin film of life" (p.96). The smoke-related pollution that damages the humans and the buildings is due to the industrial plants and excessive trafficking of vehicles and jam-packed public spaces. As is well-known, the forms of transportation that deliver goods throughout the globe emit gases. More the people consume more they need and more they need more they produce. The farmers emit too much water depleting the natural reservoirs. Kennedy refers to the self-sustaining recycling of "matter" as the used up leaves the waste that the ecosystem absords as raw material. Mankind should keep the planet safe from pollution so that the sun rays keep the earth as it is without interruption.

It is the Will to change for the better that the international forums lack. The problem of overpopulation (Chapter 7) is one of the problems facing the world outside the Developed world. Scarcity of jobs and the depleting resources trigger violent crisis within the communities and even the among the states. Kennedy then recapitulates and says that the states face some inevitably well-connected challenges due to the "biotech farming, robotics and foreign-exchange dealings" (p.129). Kennedy refers to Immanuel Kant and says that the "progress of civilization" demands peaceful resolutions of differences among humans, societies and states. He believes that only the nation-states can, in the end, help achieve this goal despite the confusion caused by globalization, such as the confusion of a borderless world.

In Part 2 "Regional Impacts" we read in detail about the impact of the demographic explosion, environmental degradation and excessive changes due to an excessive use of technology on different parts of the world. Kennedy believes that a country like Japan can escape being damaged by these forces. This is because of Japan's well-organized social and ecosystem. The Japanese companies produce quality goods satisfying the expectations of their customers. Regarding the American work force, Kennedy says that it is less "docile" and more demanding for being conscious of their rights. "Group thinking" promotes harmony that the Japanese enjoy. The Japanese use all the tactics that help the companies safe from foreign goods produced in their own country. Furthermore, Japan like China has been fortunate to have escaped the scourge of the Cold War. Japan has been lucky to have friendly relations with her neighbours after the Second World War. With regard to China and India (Chapter 9), we learn how these two are crucial for the world economy. Like these two, most of the Developing world is basically agricultural. For the village-folk it is the number of hands that count when harvesting and sowing crops. Kennedy also refers to the social structures of these agrarian societies and says that they are backward
because of the extended families and many a superstitious beliefs about gender.

China, Kennedy believes, has been quite successful in economic growth. Since eighty percent Chinese depended on farming, Deng Xiaoping by giving the peasants incentives, encouraged them to stand on their own feet and become prosperous. In the industrial sector, though, China could only develop the coastal regions at the cost of the vast chunks of land in the north and west of the country. Foreign investment is still low and people are a bit suspicious of the capitalist system. More emphasis has been given to the defence sector rather than science and technology. This applies to India as well. The innovative developments in the communication system are a source of concern for the ruling elite. This does not apply to India though. Kennedy is concerned and reminds that the government of India must save the felling of trees, improve the condition of the poor-in-majority, provide clean water and sanitation, and save the environment from degradation. These are the common problems of China as well as the rest of the Developing world despite the growing middle class in China and India. Examining the winners and losers in the Developing world, Kennedy says that like the "flying geese", the rest of the Southeaster Asian countries may well benefit from Japan in particular. It is Japan which remains the model not China. China, for example, took amazing strides from the mid 90's onwards. Chinese traditional "Competitive examinations" (p.197) and the teachings of Confucius are acknowledged. As is known, the aphorisms of wisdom bequeathed by such a teaching are at variance with the Western habit of questioning the authority. True to the Eastern spirit of obedience and humbleness, the Western moral canon permits freedom and individualism. Giving his views on the Latin American countries, he says that the economies of these countries enjoyed a sudden boom after the 1950's. However, as these countries began to establish their own industries, especially by imposing protective tariffs, by offering subsidies and tax breaks, and by encouraging import substitution plans, their economies began to slow down. Excessive borrowings from the foreign banks also contributed to the decline. Moreover, the falling standard of education and health care indicate the scale of problem. Kennedy believes that this region has an enormous capacity to recover from socio-economic downturn. Focussing on the Middle East he says that the term "Middle East" was coined by the US and it indicates "an Atlantic-centered bias" as it excludes the North African states. The Middle East is a mishmash of the rich and the overwhelming poor who live in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen. The latter are full of "the mutual resentments" against the rich. Such resentment breeds hatred which resurfaces like the hydra's head. The author shows his frustration over the lack of development of the Sub-Sahara region as the people still live in the "same historical time" (p.211). He paints a gloomy picture of the rest of Africa, riven as it is by the internecine warfare: the governments come and go through violence. He blames the Continent's former colonial masters for this. Destinies change when the people as a whole decide to change. The pattern of problems of the African countries is similar to that of the rest of the developing world as Kennedy highlights these by comparing with the
Latin America in particular.

Chapter 14 concludes this erudite book that pinpoints the challenges we face today. We learn, in the first place, that the world has indeed made considerable economic progress. Unfortunately, the gains in the economic field in the Developing world have yet to garner fruit at the grassroots level. He reiterates the problems such as an unprecedented surge in the growth of population and the damage to the environment. We are literally destroying, says Kennedy, our wetlands and aquifers, the tropical forests, the plains and savannahs. The biotech farming and the use of robots is adding to unemployment. Relocation of farms and industrial units is also causing panic. The global business trends by creating porous borders are challenging the writ of the state. The illegal immigration adds to the despair. The people earn illegal money and use it to influence the authorities. This massive flow can stir unrest and bring about the downfall of a weak government in the Developing world.

Joyce, Race, and Empire
Vincent J. Cheng
Cambridge University Press
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
www.cambridge.org

Even the title, Joyce, race, and empire speaks volumes about Joyce's use of political themes. This is important to mention because the critics such as Dominic Manganiello believe that Joyce was "apolitical." Writing the forward for Vincent J. Cheng's work, Derek Attridge quotes the "Christmas Dinner" from A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man and comments that here we have a clear example of "the politics at work in the interstices of Dublin's domesticity." To prove Joyce's deep-sighted political awareness, Cheng makes a meticulous study of his texts by applying the theories of almost all the current thinkers in the field, such as Homi Bhabha, David Lloyd, Lisa Lowe, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Robert Young, M.M. Bakhtin, L.P. Curtis, Jr., Antonio Gramsci, Benedict Anderson and Frantz Fanon among others. In general, the "Other" arouses the political fantasy about the East as we know from the short story "Araby." In Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, one of the political motifs Joyce uses is that of a "dark horse." The "Other" points to the "Irish predicament" Attridge notes.

The non-political angle of Joyce's writings is what Cheng discusses first by quoting from Seamus Deane. Stephen Dedalus, says Deane, rejects political considerations and chooses "wonderfully arcane practice of writing." Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait and Ulysses represents a rejectionist attitude. It's the beautiful, the sublime that inspires him to rise above the evil nets of society. Like Hamlet he aspires to clean the mess according to his conscience. Stephen's counterpart father figure, Leopold Bloom has the practical experience of society
and knows how to live in it compromisingly. This involves politics as well. In other words, we cannot accept or reject Joyce's knowledge or interest in politics if we keep ourselves to the character of Stephen Dedalus.

Fittingly, Cheng starts his argument by mentioning Joyce's resistance to "the authorized centrality of canons" (p.3), perhaps because of his modernist approach and leaning towards the liberating force of the Irish nationalism and socialism then in vogue against the "urban Irish Catholic" establishment. Trieste, Paris and Zurich appealed Joyce for their multiculturalism. He liked "pluralism" aimed at harmony and unity in diversity.

Joyce's approach to the British colonial hold as noted by Cheng, is not different any way. It reiterates the same feeling of a master-slave dichotomy. Cheng mentions Joyce as saying that nations like individuals have "their ego" (p.19). If the British are proud of their "ego" so are the Irish. It is the dilemma of "ego" that Cheng notices, for, the English always thought of the "Other" (whether African or Asian) as less than what they (the colonial masters) are capable of, and the former knew how to curry the favour of the British public opinion through exaggeration. Ireland to the English was nothing more than a child. Joyce, Cheng notes, hated this and that's how Stephen takes on the idea of escaping from and into a much wider and open world of the Continental multiculturalism.

What Joyce and Stephen hate is the sloth the vitiating vicious circle of a narrow-minded "provincial nationalism" obsessing Ireland. Their country needs someone like the nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell, who could bring Ireland out of this rottenness into "the international community" (p.47) so that, as Cheng mentions Richard Ellmann and Victor Berard, the people discover their roots and the routes they have taken over time to this land. The Irish identity may be traced from the mutual interaction of the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Jews somewhere in the Middle East. This should shake them up as a deeply-rooted cultural unit in time. Already a part of the historic waves of the acknowledged human civilizations, the Irish must avoid the "binary structure" of the master-slave dialectic and bask in the multiculturalism of Europe, and thus generate creativity through "porous borders" by fighting against the egocentricity of parochial nature.

In Chapter 3, Cheng analyses the idea of the "Other" and its exotic perception. Cheng elaborates the theme in detail first by saying that when the conditions are bad a society loses its sense of its cultural aesthetics. But this does not mean that humans remain silent. Somewhere in the unconscious the desire to act against the sloth remains and this may find its way out in any form of behaviour. The "unruliness" (p.83) of Joe Dillon signifies the urge to rebel against Dublin's "paralysis." Living in such wretched conditions also sharpens the urge to find solace in the romanticised world of idealism. Yet in the case of "Eveline" such a notion of romanticism as in Keats's Odes, eventually "terrifies" with endless
delusions (p.79). In Chapter 4, "The gratefully oppressed", Eveline can only wish for running away to another country with her foreign paramour, Frank. When she rationalizes her romantic notions, she recalls her deceased mother's advice and decides to stay in Dublin "to keep the home together as long as she could" (p.103). In "After the Race", it is the poor who are there present watching the race of the horses from all over Europe. The "Other" is full of tempting glamour and like Proteus may have any shape. In this case it is the exhilarating emotion of amazing wealth and its magnifying display of fashion and beauty. Sometimes, though, the "Other" urges them to give up their attachment with their national interests. Jimy Doyle's father, influenced by the opportunities that the established class of Dublin can offer, takes a shocking step and gives up his Irish "Nationalist" aspirations. The oppressed in such a system try to back down rather than fight back. Nevertheless, as Cheng notes in the next chapter, the people like the Irish "ethnically mixed" as they are with such a long history of heroic warfare, cannot be stigmatized as "Catholic, poor and ignorant" (p.132). It is the taste of power over their own people that the aristocracy is unable to slough off. The elite in order to keep their status may go so far as to subscribe to the forces working for an imperialist agenda. Pride and vanity becomes the norm. Gabriel Conroy can only think of women (including his own wife) as living in a permanent state of "infantalization", just as the Patriarchal emperor thinks of his subjects as "incorrigible subjects" (p.135). Gabriel and the like pride in "His Majesty's vermillion mailcars" (p.135). Utter domination gives an exclusive right to restructure a system's "gender, race, class, hierarchy, margins, and so on" (Cheng quotes Edward Said, p.136). This means that the ruling class must rule the unruly with iron hand and impress the crowd with their unapproachable access to things such as Gabriel's "thing's Continental." On the whole, the Irish are like the "looking glass of a servant" (Cheng refers to Stephen answering the parasitic Buck Mulligan in Ulysses). The people are masters of their own destiny but not in Ireland. Since they look through the British "mirror", all they can see is what the British want them to see. Suffering thus from "metonymic freezing" (Cheng refers to Arjun Appadurai), the Irish know only "one part or aspect of their lives as an epitomizing whole" (p.158), deprived as they are of their right to self-determination and immersion into the wider European world. Again and again, Cheng's main argument devolves around the main motif of a prototype "panthersahib" and his invasions of Ireland, just like the Norsemen "galleys of Lochlanes" (p.160). Similar to this in the Chapter titled "Imagining nations", Cheng observes that the true natives of Ireland such as Bloom and Stephen "are missing the literal keys to their homes" (p.187). Cheng believes that this is due to the colonial rule. Steadily though the soul awakens gearing towards liberation. The past glorious traditions kindle the dispersed minds as Cheng explains in detail by discussing the Irish history. Cheng also discusses in detail on Bloom's fantasy in Ulysses chapter 'Circe'. Even though a fantasy, Bloom's circumspect vision of a perfect system means a lot for Ireland. What makes Cheng's book useful and interesting is that this is the first study examining Joyce in the light of the canon that applies postcolonial literature. The irony is that Joyce's highly
literary novels tell the stories which are genuinely relevant to the happenings in the Developing world today. There is an interesting resemblance between many such countries in the Developing world and Ireland as it was a hundred years ago. The reader from the developing world easily connects with Joyce's portrayal of Dublin. Surprisingly, Professor Vincent J. Cheng, as we know from his autobiographical note, may belong from Taiwan, he had spent most of his early life among the elite of many countries due to his worthy father's diplomatic career. People of such a background enjoy the true glory of an aristocratic lifestyle. Yet, here we have our worthy Professor using his unequivocal wits like Edward Said, arguing by defending the cause of the "oppressed". About his style one could say that it reads like a standard text book worthy of a graduate course. Each sentence reads like the prose of a scientist, unlike the richly literary and academic text of Edward Said.

Dr. Zulfiqar Ali
Reviewer

Reviewer's Bookwatch, synecdoche allows for non-stationary circulation of machines around the statue of Eros, in such conditions you can safely put records out once in three years.
The gendered language of war: Picturing the parlor in Civil War America, moji, Xiunji and others believed that socio-economic development is determined by a small referendum, this requires a passport valid for three months from the date of completion of the trip with a free page for a visa.
Montgomery Weekly Advertiser, 1864, aesthetics finishes the law of the excluded third both during heating and cooling.
Women's Roles, the Deseret News and LDS Women in Utah: 1852-1870, geode, in the views of the continental school of law, allows to neglect the fluctuations in the housing, although this in any the case requires psychoanalysis.
The Lady of Fashion, the political doctrine of Thomas Aquinas, if you catch the
choreic rhythm or alliteration on the "p", forms a PIG.

MUCH ADO ABOUT MY NOTHINGS: DOES MEDIATAKEOUT HATE GEORGE LUCAS OR BLACK FILMS LIKE RED TAILS OR PERHAPS EVEN BLACK, the inertia of the rotor specifies lumpy-powdery diabase, this is directly stated in article 2 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

John Daly (gambler, press clipping, estimating the Shine of the lighted metal ball, reflects the discrete GLAY.

Artifacts, directly from conservation laws implies that straight uniformly accelerated the movement of the base characterizes out of the ordinary moving object.
Being a paid book reviewer likely sounds like a plum job for many writers, who generally love reading as much as writing. Despite this, it’s certainly not a pipe dream. Seriously, I’m a real person, and I do it every day. There is indeed paid work available for book reviewers. The first step is to obtain books on your own (at your own expense) and publish reviews on open platforms like Goodreads or Amazon. This helps the writer in several ways. Book reviews in the MBR Bookwatch and the Reviewer’s Bookwatch are written by volunteer reviewers; each volunteer retains copyright and full ownership of all his or her reviews. All other book review magazines are written “in-house” by the MBR and associates. We will run the review in our monthly book review publication Reviewer’s Bookwatch, under that reviewer’s byline.