

THE READERS EXCHANGE

Ideas and Information for Readers



Dear Friends,

June 2015

FAMILY... *The Feast of the Holy Family* is an annual liturgical celebration in the Catholic church, the purpose of which is to honor the family of Jesus and present it as a model for Christian families. We tend to think of our *family* as the immediate one—father, mother, children—but in the spirit of the Holy Family, we are asked to recognize and nurture the numerous “subsidiary” families that are integral parts of our lives. Our extended family. Our family of friends. The neighborhood family. The family at work. The school and church families. Volunteer families. Thought of in this vein, we all have multiple families and to the extent we recognize them as such and reach out to develop and give depth to those family bonds, we come together. Unity is created and divisions are minimized. The notion of *family* runs to all societal institutions and has national and global implications. Leaders in our society should be judged on various factors, but certainly one is their success in bringing people together, to negate divisiveness and, to, well, think *family*.

...AND FRIENDS Thomas Aquinas said, “*There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.*” To have friends, it is said, you have to be a friend with all that entails. We are also reminded that, to make and retain good friends, you must regularly extend yourself to nurture these relationships, particularly as you age and the value of friendships takes on new importance. As we age, there are some who step back from life by retiring, exiting community involvements, as well as many social involvements, and entering what I loosely call the “entitlement” age. There are strong psychological and physiological reasons to do just the reverse. Nurture those all-important, wonderful and satisfying friendships, and seek new adventures no matter how small, to enrich one’s life.

BRIDGE-AND MENTAL ACUITY When I was a kid we did not have the array of electronics (e.g. television, cell phones, computers) now available, so we filled our evenings with other endeavors, including cards. We learned to play pinochle, gin rummy, canasta, and notably bridge, and enjoyed many evenings at the card table with family and friends. There was a recent piece in *The Wall Street Journal* about the shrinking and aging bridge-playing public. Bridge players, including this one, believe that bridge is a great game, a mental workout and one of numerous ways to keep the brain in good order, and the article pointed out that this fall-off in bridge playing “goes hand in hand with other evidence of declining mental discipline, including shortening attention spans and decreases in book readership.” You actually have to think when playing bridge, and the game “provides stimulation that can help players retain their mental toughness, and stave off dementia.” The article’s author, Michael Ledeen, noted that bridge might be too tough for contemporary Americans.

OVERUSING THE WORD “LIKE” There’s a road in Honolulu called *Likelike* Highway (pronounced LEE-kay-LEE-kay) and I think about it when I hear a stream of *likes* in conversation. It’s a turnoff for this dinosaur when hearing sentences littered with the freestanding word *like*, just a useless filler word akin to an *um* or an *er* and perhaps as an equivocation of whatever you are, *like*, saying. Can we get through a sentence or two without peppering it with, *like, likes?*

FREE SPEECH We’ve been appalled at the lack of leadership and courage shown by university officials in the wake of student dissent about scheduled campus speakers/honorees which has led to withdrawal, and disinvitations e.g. Condoleeza Rice at Rutgers, Ayaan Hirsi Ali at Brandeis, and Christine Lagarde at Smith. In an “Open Letter to the People of Purdue,” University President and former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels said this about the subject. “At other once-proud schools, academic integrity was violated in an even more fundamental way. These institutions *disgraced themselves*—no weaker term suffices—by capitulating to demands for the exclusion or “disinvitation” of perfectly reputable visitors invited to speak on their campuses. Such censorship in what are supposed to be society’s safest refuges of full and free inquiry make a mockery of pretensions to the critical value of diversity.”

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Ackerman, Publisher

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VERNE

Until September 2015 for

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“Our 24th Year”

Reviews in This Issue

- **The Wright Brothers** (McCullough)
- **The Top of His Game** (Heinz)
- **Dead Wake** (Larson)
- **Red Notice** (Browder)
- **A Kim Jong-II Production** (Fischer)
- **The Dead Key** (Pulley)
- **Crucible of Command** (Davis)
- **Never Surrender** (Dobbs)
- **Churchill’s Hour** (Dobbs)
- **Churchill’s Triumph** (Dobbs)
- **Killers of the King** (Spencer)
- **The Stranger** (Coben)
- **Paris Red** (Gibbon)
- **The Keeper** (Lescroart)
- **The Harder They Come** (Boyle)
- **Mightier Than the Sword** (Archer)
- **The Work Song** (Doig)
- **The Time in Between** (Dueñas)
- **The Goldfinch** (Tartt)
- **The Secret History** (Tartt)
- **Clinton Cash** (Schweizer)
- **The Hundred-Year Marathon** (Pillsbury)
- **H is for Hawk** (Macdonald)
- **The Road to Character** (Brooks)
- **The Cavendon Women** (Bradford)
- **The Handsome Man’s De Luxe Cafe** (McCall Smith)
- **The Quartet** (Ellis)
- **1632** (Flint)
- **A Fine Romance** (Bergen)
- **Confessions of a Serial Entertainer** (Stolman)
- **Method 15/33** (Kirk)
- **The Prodigal Son** (Steel)
- **Missoula** (Krakauer)

Features

- **Jane’s Selections**
- **Ivan Doig (1939-2015)**
- **The China Study—A Reprise**
- **Measure for Measure**
- **Origins of Words and Phrases**
- **Making Sense of the English Language**
- **Building Your Working Vocabulary**
- **Pronunciation... For the Speaker Who Cares**

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR READERS BY READERS

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BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE
AUTHOR, NO. OF PAGES,
YEAR OF PUBLICATION,
PUBLISHER AND
RATING

Reviews and Ratings: Book reviews are written by the Publisher (SHA) or by one of the Contributing Editors and attributed accordingly. The 0-10 rating system was developed to provide some sense of the level of satisfaction of a book compared with other books. This is not a sophisticated evaluation. The rating is based on writing, storytelling ability, and the overall impact of each reading experience.

**DEAD WAKE:
THE LAST CROSSING
OF THE LUSITANIA**

ERIK LARSON
(2015, 448pp,
Crown)
10

May 7, 2015 marked the 100th anniversary of the sinking of *RMS Lusitania* some 11 miles off the southern coast of Ireland. She was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat, causing the deaths of 1,198 passengers and crew, including 123 Americans. Only 764 survived and over 600 were never found. At a time when torpedo warfare was unreliable, this carnage was caused by one torpedo and it took just 18 minutes for the *Lusitania* to go down. When the *Lusitania* sailed from New York bound for Liverpool on May 1, 2015, there were feelings of anxiety in the air, Germany had just published a warning on the declaration of the seas around Great Britain as a “war zone” and their U-boats had been wreaking havoc in the North Atlantic for months. As the passage proceeds, Larson builds tension by switching the narrative between the *Lusitania*, captained by the experienced William Turner, and the U-20, a U-boat captained by the aggressive Walther Schweiger, while, on a larger scale, he brings in President Woodrow Wilson (firmly avowing America’s neutrality), Churchill, Kaiser Wilhelm, and raises numerous question about issues that would have saved the *Lusitania*. Why was she not diverted to the “northern passage” to Liverpool rather than the southern route where there had been U-boat activity? Why did the British not provide destroyer escorts? Since the British Admiralty had broken the German codes and was tracking the U-boats (including Schwieger’s U-20), why was the *Lusitania* not alerted? Larson seamlessly tells the story of the passage, with anecdotes about the passengers, the weather, the state of submarine warfare, the grandeur of the *Lusitania* and a long list of “what ifs” including the late departure, more persistent fog, Turner’s turn to starboard (to better time its arrival in Liverpool) placing it directly into the U-20s path, the ship’s slower than expected speed, and the typically unreliable torpedo hitting in just the right spot, *Dead Wake* is an engrossing account of the *Lusitania*’s last crossing, the carnage wrought by the U-boat torpedo and the grim aftermath. This is Larson’s best book to date and is highly recommended. (SHA)

THE TIME IN BETWEEN

MARIA DUEÑAS
(2011, 609pp,
Atria Books)
10

This book by Spanish writer Maria Dueñas and translated by Daniel Hahn languished in my “to-be-read” stack for a couple of years, perhaps because of the daunting length of the novel. While I was not paying attention, it became an international bestseller which sold two million copies, was translated into 25 languages, and inspired a successful television series of the same title. For readers who are willing to invest a little more time in a book, this is the perfect summer read, one that I thoroughly enjoyed. *The Time in Between* is an historical novel built around the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the early years of World War II, and set in Spain, Morocco (then a Spanish Protectorate), and Portugal. The narrator/protagonist of the book is Sira Quiroga, with her mother a dressmaker at a shop in Madrid, and engaged to be married. She falls hard for a dashing young man and, leaving her mother and her fiancé in the lurch, bolts Spain for Morocco at the outset of the Spanish Civil War (1936). Her lover turns into a first-class SOB and he ditches her in Morocco alone, penniless, debt-ridden, and under police restrictions. Crushed by this drastic turn of events and unable to return to Spain, Sira takes on the challenge of righting her life, leveraging her sewing/design talents to become a highly regarded *couturier* to the upper crust in Tetuan, Morocco, and later back in Madrid. Her profession and the nature of her clientele places her in proximity of high level conversations (and secrets) and attendance at important social events, ultimately leading to undercover work for the English during World War II. The Spanish Civil War and later the beginnings of World War II create an environment of secrets, political intrigue, betrayal, and suspense. A great backdrop for Sira’s stirring journey of recovery and reclamation. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

**RED NOTICE:
A TRUE STORY OF
HIGH FINANCE, MURDER,
AND ONE MAN'S FIGHT
FOR JUSTICE**
BILL BROWDER
(2015, 380pp,
Simon & Schuster)
10

Red Notice is a riveting tale, a true political thriller about the experiences of American-born Bill Browder and his business pursuits in Russia. Somewhat out-of-character for a biography/autobiography, the initial segments of the book about Browder's background, schooling, early days in the financial business, and the founding of Hermitage Capital Management, were highly interesting, so do not skip over them. Browder made his fortune by keeping his ear to the ground and uncovering the highly attractive investment opportunities available in Russia in the early post-Soviet years during the transition from communism to capitalism, a Wild West atmosphere led and corrupted by the new Russian oligarchs. Browder ultimately ran afoul of these oligarchs and the Russian government (Vladimir Putin) and, in 2005, his visa was revoked as he was branded "a threat to national security." His offices were raided, his company's investments were targeted, and his tax attorney, Sergei Magnitsky, uncovered tax fraud committed by Russian officials. Russia attempted to have Interpol arrest Browder via a "Red Notice" (an international arrest warrant), and did arrest, imprison, torture, and murder Magnitsky. At this point, an infuriated Browder begins his relentless efforts to achieve justice for him, culminating in the U.S. Congress passing the Magnitsky Act, a human rights landmark legislation. *Red Notice* exposes the corrupt mechanisms of the Russian economy, a chilling, sinister account of a Russia where the rule of law is trampled by Putin, the oligarchs and the Russian government. Browder's story of state criminality and his personal efforts to right the impact of this makes for an exceptional read. (SHA)

IVAN DOIG (1939–2015)



Ivan Doig was one of the most respected writers of the American West. He wrote particularly about his home state of Montana and his 16 books won him the Wallace Stegner Award (2007) and the Western Literature Association Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award. We've read and reviewed a number of Doig's books in *TRE* including *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, *Bucking the Sun*, *Mountain Time*, and *Whistling Season*, and recommend them to you. The Montana books for which he was so well-known center on the rigors of life of country people, infused with humanity set against the grand scale of Montana.

THE WORK SONG 9

Ivan Doig (2010, 275pp, Riverhead Books)

The Work Song is set in Butte, Montana in 1919. The city at that time had a population of about 100,000 (it's one-third of that today) and the landscape was dominated by Anaconda Copper Company and its copper mines. Doig brings back Morrie Morgan, a rural school teacher from *The Whistling Season* as his protagonist. Morrie arrives in Butte without a job, without possessions (his trunk has been lost) and low on funds, and settles into a boarding house run by an attractive widow, Grace Faraday, whose husband was killed in a mine fire. Morrie, on the lam from Chicago gangsters who believe they've been had after he made a big winning bet on a sports wager, gets acquainted with Grace's other boarders, Griff and Hoop, two retired miners who help him with what's going on in Butte. He quickly lands a job with a funeral home as a crier at funerals, but then finds his calling at the public library run by an eccentric, tough old rancher named Sandy Sandison, who has the job because of his coveted personal book collection. As Morrie settles in to his job and life in Butte, he is also shadowed by a couple of hired goons, worried that outsiders showing up in town may be troublesome agitators. With this mix of characters, Doig builds an entertaining story built around impending union management difficulties, including that of composing a rallying strike song (thus the title *Work Song*) to brace the workers for dealing with hard times. Doig weaves a good story, finding numerous strains to portray in Butte in 1919. The period right after World War I was a contentious time in America with labor strife, outbreaks of anarchism, and miners from all over the world in Butte for the high wages and creating their own neighborhoods—Dublin Gulch for the Irish, Meaderville for the Italians, Finnville, and so on. His story, and the characters in *Work Song* touch on all the pressure points while providing a read that features great dialogue and characterizations, and a wonderful portrayal of time and place. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

**THE QUARTET:
ORCHESTRATING THE
SECOND AMERICAN
REVOLUTION,
1783-1789**

JOSEPH J. ELLIS
(2015, 290pp,
Knopf)

10

Joseph Ellis has made a life out of writing very good books about America's most illustrious men during America's most illustrious epoch. Each of the Founding Fathers (and many of their supporting cast) has received his full attention, and to great acclaim. Ellis now has written his best book yet and once again about the same men. He called it *The Quartet: Orchestrating the Second American Revolution, 1783-1789*. The book is riveting. Ellis convincingly describes how four of our Founding Fathers pulled off a coup: The four are George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. Against all odds, they planned to discard the weak Articles of Confederation (the loose framework for the 13 rebellious states), write a Constitution with national powers, get it adopted by each of the states, and install George Washington as the chief executive of the new nation. Ellis never calls it a coup but a coup it was. The odds against it were daunting; the Articles of Confederation were popular; and each of the 13 state legislatures was opposed to ceding any shred of power to a national government (after all, they had just waged a revolution against that.) The Quartet pulled off their coup because they out-thought, out-worked and out-strategized their more numerous opponents. Ellis's book is about how they did it. It is a book about brilliant men leaving no detail unattended. It was a three-year slog of behind-the-scenes work. Ellis gives highest marks to the job the four did on the reputation of the Articles of Confederation. The Quartet turned the proverbial silk purse into a sow's ear. The four men wrote letters ceaselessly to other elites—men who were friends and men who served as delegates to the wartime Congress and the current Congress—highlighting the worsening problems under the Articles of Confederation. The Quartet marketed three big problems: Rebellions were breaking out from New Hampshire to South Carolina over collections of taxes and judgments for debt (Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts (1786-1787) was particularly threatening); the growing "arms war" among the states to enact tariffs against their abutting states was diminishing commerce (with New York's tariffs doing the most damage); and the absence of any direction in foreign affairs put our shipping commerce at risk (John Jay was the American minister of state but he was never told what to do or what authority he had). Their arguments against the Articles, and for the Constitution, were written in 85 essays (1787-1788) then called the *Federalist Papers*. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay wrote the essays, published first in New York papers and then widely reprinted in other states. The *Federalist Papers* were a huge success. The essays now are works of acknowledged brilliance, and then (appearing rapid fire, three times weekly) were public relations masterpieces. The Quartet turned the table upside down in the war of public opinion. While overall public opinion supported the Articles of Confederation, the Quartet focused on the opinion of the elite, the men who had sat in the Revolution's many deliberative bodies and the ones who would sit in the upcoming bodies deliberating the Constitution. Much of the elite had wealth, property and education; they did not take lightly any refusal to pay taxes or to honor judgments for debt; the Quartet convinced a majority of elites that Shay's Rebellion was the fire bell in the night. Ellis makes clear that all these Quartet maneuverings took place in a world very different from our own. In a powerful insight, Ellis writes how the Quartet worked with what they had, the elites in the different states, because the 1780s were a time of unsettled social and political status. The times were indisputably post aristocratic, but they were still pre-democratic. The elites from before the revolution still had the wealth, education, and time for politics; they were expected to be the decision makers about constitutions. Ellis's style in *Quartet* is a joy to the reader. He writes so beautifully and so seductively that he draws the reader into his reflections on what these men were doing. The book is so artfully done that it reads like Ellis is having a conversation with the reader about what these great men were thinking and saying. This is the work of a master historian. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)





BOOK REVIEWS

THE TOP OF HIS GAME: THE BEST SPORTSWRITING

W.C. HEINZ
(2015, 594pp,
Library of America)

The Library of America, publisher of the Heinz book, has become the canon for identifying what is great in American writing. Started by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1979, dedicated to keeping the American classics in print and reasonably priced, the Library has wisely cast a wide net for selecting “greats:” all the literary giants (Henry James, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner), the best by the Founding Fathers and Lincoln, the best of American mystery writing (Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammet), the best of American war correspondents (World War II and Vietnam), and the best of American sportswriting (John Updike, Red Smith, and Roger Kahn). And now W. C. Heinz’s best sportswritings are added to the American canon. This volume is one of the finest pieces of American sportswriting I have ever read, and, I am glad to report, so agreed the *Wall Street Journal* on March 21, 2015. Heinz is not well known to this generation of sports aficionados; his heydays were the dominant sports of the 1940s and 1950s (football, baseball, boxing, and horse racing). Heinz writings appeared in essay length in “the slicks” of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s (*Colliers*, *Look*, *Esquire*, *Cosmopolitan*) and typically they were introspective pieces about the sports heroes of the time. Heinz wrote so beautifully, so honestly, and so understandingly that almost all the greats gave him large chunks of private time—in diners, bars, dugouts, locker rooms, business offices, and private homes. Heinz had two endearing strengths. He took no notes during lengthy conversations because he was blessed with a rare eidetic memory for the spoken word—if it was said in his presence, he remembered it—flawlessly. And he was patient with the greats; he would take the time, he would travel a long way, and he would sit chatting for hours, typically after the great man had retired from his sport and was no longer in demand. Heinz genuinely appreciated what the great had done, and the greats, some known to be difficult, happily spent time with Heinz, large amounts of it. All the pieces in this book are outstanding, but here are two excerpts about Red Grange and Eddie Arcaro to illustrate. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)

EXCERPTS FROM THE TOP OF HIS GAME

FOOTBALL –

Red Grange: Greatest running back 1920s- 1930s

“I could carry a football well,” Grange was saying now, “but I’ve met hundreds of people who could do their thing better than I. I mean engineers, and writers, scientists, doctors—whatever. I can’t take much credit for what I did, running with a football, because I don’t know what I did. Nobody ever taught me, and I can’t teach anybody. You can teach a man how to block or tackle or kick or pass. The ability to run with the ball is something you have or haven’t. If you can’t explain it, how can you take credit for it?”

HORSE RACING –

Eddie Arcaro: Greatest American jockey 1940s-1950s

For the month of August of 1955 I was tailing him around Saratoga where, for those four weeks, New

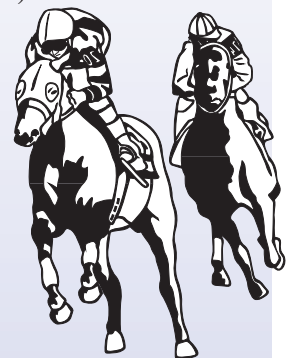
York thoroughbred racing moves each year as it has since 1863.

“What about that temper of yours,” I asked him.

“The temper was what racing did to me,” he answered.

He came into racing before the day of the film patrols that record every foot of a race and on tracks where rough riding—sawing off an opponent, fighting your way through jams, leg locking and holding saddle cloths—was the style of survival. On the backs of those thousand-pound animals and in the heat of those races, that temper of his ignited and he was fined or suspended more than thirty times, once for a year. Over his career he himself survived more than forty falls.

“Even when I caddied,” he said, “I didn’t weigh seventy pounds, and I couldn’t carry doubles like the big kids. Racing was the only thing I ever found where I could be competitive.”





BOOK REVIEWS

**A KIM JONG-IL
PRODUCTION**
PAUL FISCHER
(2015, 339pp,
Flatiron Books)

9

This true-life thriller by Fischer, a documentary film writer, is subtitled “The Extraordinary True Story of a Kidnapped Filmmaker, His Star Actress, and a Young Dictator’s Rise to Power.” It is a tragedy and a riveting read about the North Korean Kim Jong-II, son of Kim Il-Sung, who would later become the Supreme Leader of North Korea, and about the stunning abductions orchestrated by Kim Jong-II for the purpose of reconstructing the film industry in North Korea. Before becoming North Korea’s leader upon his father’s death, Kim Jong-II ran the Ministry for Propaganda and its film studios. A film fanatic with a major film library, he craved a first-class production capability and world recognition, and, in 1978, concocted and carried out the outrageous kidnapping of South Korea’s most famous actress, Choi Eun-Hee. Later in 1978, he kidnapped her ex-husband Shin Sang-Ok, the country’s most famous filmmaker. Choi endured house arrest, re-education exercises, loneliness, and separation anxiety (family and friends), while Shin, after two attempted escapes, was subjected to torture, and horrendous living conditions in prison. Ultimately both came to conclude that their only chance of escape would be to capitulate, to make movies and win the trust of their captor, Kim Jong-II. Choi and Shin would reconnect in North Korea in 1983 (neither knew the other was there), five years after their abduction, and begin making successful movies, under the auspices of Kim Jong-II. This well-researched book reads like a novel and makes a great story about the travails of Choi and Shin, which rewards the reader with a rare view of Kim Jong-II (1941-2011), and life in the super-secret North Korea. (SHA)

THE DEAD KEY
D.M. PULLEY
(2015, 467pp,
Thomas & Mercer)

8

D.M. Pulley was the 2014 Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award grand prize winner for *The Dead Key*, after which she received a publishing contract with Amazon Publishing. She notes in her *Acknowledgments* that the book might have gotten lost among the thousands of books written every year were it not for this award. Pulley, a structural engineer, was doing a survey of a vacant building in Cleveland when she discovered an abandoned vault with hundreds of locked safety deposit boxes that may or may not have been empty. The building still had furnished offices and full filing cabinets and she was intrigued by the potential secrets, and the mysteries of the building. Haunted by these discoveries, she started writing her first novel, *The Dead Key*, centering on these developments. In its review of this book, *Publisher’s Weekly* said that, “There are not enough superlatives to describe this engrossing novel,” and that’s what attracted this reader. It’s 1998 and Iris Latch, a young engineer with an architectural firm, is assigned the job of doing a renovation survey of an abandoned high-rise that had once housed the First Bank of Cleveland. The bank had closed its doors in 1978 amid mysterious circumstances never fully made known. Iris finds that files are intact, offices have been preserved, finds that some safe-deposit boxes still have items of value in them, and finds a key to one of the boxes in a desk drawer. These discoveries induce Iris to dig deeper, leading her to many rude surprises. The story of Iris in 1998 is cleverly interwoven with the story of Beatrice Baker, a 16-year-old clerical employee of the Bank in 1978 who tells the “front end” of the stories uncovered by Iris 20 years later. These two storylines about safety deposit boxes converge nicely and expose a web of secrets and crimes. The plot in *The Dead Key* develops slowly and is, at times cumbersome, but the stories uncovered by these two young women working 20 years apart builds suspense and creates surprises as it all comes together. (SHA)

**NEVER SURRENDER,
CHURCHILL’S HOUR
AND CHURCHILL’S
TRIUMPH**
MICHAEL DOBBS
(2003, 2004, 2005,
320pp – average length,
Harper Collins)

9+

Michael Dobbs has written a fine trilogy on the three crises punctuating Winston Churchill’s WWII premiership. Dobbs writes historical fiction of the highest order. For Dobbs, it is a blend of real events with imagined events, real people with imagined people, and real dialogue with imagined dialogue. Each of the three books revolves around a heavy-duty political conspiracy: *Never Surrender* about Churchill’s first months in power (1940) when several insider cabals almost succeeded in ousting him; *Churchill’s Hour* about 1941 when the war goes uniformly badly and enemies tried to strip his powers; *Churchill’s Triumph* about Churchill at the Yalta peace conference (1945 in Crimea) when Roosevelt and Stalin conspired to divvy up Britain’s lingering imperial sphere of interest in the Pacific East. Each of the books is good. Dismiss any qualms you might have because you have read about these events. You have not read them as Dobbs presents them. Dobbs is a master at political intrigue, sexual intrigue, and their intertwining. For example, *Churchill’s Hour*, the 1941 book, knits the war’s many setbacks to the famous affairs between two of Churchill’s daughters, two politically powerful Americans and two cuckolded Brits. Churchill’s tortured role enabling adultery (he secretly watches nighttime room swapping at Chequers, the P.M.’s weekend getaway), adds a new dimension to the fabled affairs of Pamela (wife of son Randolph) with Averell Harriman and Sarah with Gil Winant, the American ambassador to Great Britain. Similarly, *Churchill’s Triumph*, the Yalta book, has



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 6.

two splendid chapters (they bracket the Crimean events) set on Aristotle Onassis's luxury yacht, *Christina*, in the Mediterranean. As Dobbs beautifully casts the scene, the drunk-as-usual, hugely failed son Randolph ruins dinners by berating his father for selling out the British Empire to America (it is one way to look at what Churchill did to defeat Hitler) and for playing pimp in Randolph's cuckolding (again one way to look at what happened). Aristotle Onassis did not see it that way. He ordered the yacht to moor off Corfu and have the Greek government remove Randolph from the ship for a suddenly-scheduled secret meeting allegedly ordered by the Greek premier. Michael Dobbs is the acknowledged master at blending the famous and the sordid in political intrigue. As well he should be. Dobbs served as Margaret Thatcher's chief aide and senior party whip, and he was at her side when a cabal within her own party ousted her. Dobbs was so adept at whipping Parliamentary votes (when Thatcher was riding high) that he became known as "Westminster's baby-faced hit man." Dobbs' years with Thatcher became the stuff from which he created a literary masterpiece. He wrote a trilogy, *House of Cards*, which profiled a steely and sociopathic senior whip (Francis Urquhart) scheming his way through dirty and deathly tricks that catapult him all the way from whip (not even a cabinet position) to Prime Minister. Dobbs sold the television rights to the *BBC* which made *House of Cards* an international TV success. Dobbs then briefly returned to politics, this time as Prime Minister John Major's chief aide and senior whip, lasting two years (1994-1995) until Major's own party aides forced his resignation. Cast out again after cabinet intrigue (Major did make Dobbs a baron), Dobbs returned to writing, producing his Churchill books reviewed here. And then Dobbs went serious big time. He repurposed his *BBC House of Cards* into a *House of Cards* for U.S. television. He sold the rights to *Netflix*, then a fledgling company providing upstart on-line, on-demand video, competing head to head with broadcast television and cable television. *Netflix* produced a beautifully-shot, teeming-with-stars version of British political skullduggery moved to America. So ballyhooed and successful was the U.S. *House of Cards* that it powered *Netflix*'s subscriber base into the stratosphere and created a new market for other on-line, on-demand video providers (*HBO*, *Amazon*, *Apple* have jumped in). (Contributing Editor William Lillie, III, Washington D.C.)



BUILDING YOUR WORKING VOCABULARY

The key word here is *working*. There are many words that seem to fall on the fringe of an average vocabulary. We think we know the meaning of these words, but when we read or hear them, are not quite sure. They are, therefore, not regularly used in our writing and conversation. The purpose of the *TRE* vocabulary section is not to stump you, but to sharpen your knowledge and use of words frequently used in books and/or heard in conversation. Here are a few such words, with abbreviated definitions and some rough pronunciation guidance.

PROPINQUITY Proximity, nearness. Also kinship. (pro-PINK-qua-tee)

INVIDIOUS Tending to rouse ill will, animosity, or resentment. Containing or implying a slight. Envious. (in-VID-ee-us)

INCHOATE An initial or early stage; incipient. (in-KO-it)

SALACIOUS Appealing to or stimulating sexual desire; lustful, bawdy. (sa-LAY-schuss)

ZAFTIG Pleasingly plump, full-bosomed, (ZAFF-tig)

PUTATIVE Generally regarded as such; supposed. (PYOO-ta-tiv)

CENSORIUS Tending to censure; highly critical. (sen-SORE-ee-us)

AQUILINE Of, relating to or having the characteristics of an eagle. (ACK-wah-linn)

ADJURATION An earnest, solemn appeal. (adj-ah-RAY-shen)



BOOK REVIEWS

**CRUCIBLE OF
COMMAND:
ULYSSES S. GRANT
AND ROBERT E. LEE—
THE WAR THEY
FOUGHT, THE
PEACE THEY FORGED**

WILLIAM C. DAVIS

(2014, 690pp,

Simon & Schuster)

10

There should be a prominent spot in any library of the Civil War for William C. Davis's most recent effort, *Crucible of Command: Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee—The War They Fought and the Peace They Forged*. Drawing heavily on the central characters' letters, especially to their wives, Davis relates the military actions that involved the two, but draws a much deeper picture of the individuals themselves. The one, Lee, was born to a Revolutionary War hero who was a failure, while the other, Grant, was born to an anonymous man who was a success. Perhaps as a result, Lee grew into a self-effacing, self-deprecating man whose Christian fatalism seemed to govern every facet of his life and who was haunted by the specter of failure as husband, father, and general to the point that he nearly resigned his command. Grant, on the other hand, was a "can do" pragmatist who played the hand he was dealt and whose dominant traits were unquenchable optimism and what George Meade called his "unflinching tenacity of purpose." Both graduates of West Point, though 15 years apart, Lee had the more distinguished early career in the U.S. military. An engineering officer in the War with Mexico, Lee was also the commanding officer of the troops that captured Harper's Ferry, and with it John Brown, in 1859. Grant, meanwhile, found himself in the Quartermaster Corps and, despite showing considerable aptitude for the work, he craved greater action, which he found but once in Mexico, and resigned his commission following that war to enter a succession of businesses, none of which succeeded. As Davis wryly notes, "If Lee thought [himself] a failure, Grant was one." It is clear from their extensive writings that each man hoped to avoid war even as the clouds of conflict gathered, but it is equally clear that each firmly believed in "Duty above Self." So when Virginia seceded, the die was cast for Lee, as it was for Grant. While contemporary historians have tended to emphasize the role played by slavery on the road to war, the issue seemed of secondary importance to Grant and Lee at the time; for the former, it was about preserving the Union; for the latter, states' rights. Each saw the other's side as responsible for bringing on the war and Lee's antipathy toward the Union grew to such an extent that, following the war, he never again referred to himself as an American, only as a Virginian or as a Southerner. Grant, by comparison, was much less conflicted. For him, the Federal government must prevail, whatever the cost. As for the "peculiar institution," before the war both men held the probably conventional mid-19th Century view that slavery was what it was, a fact of life. As the fighting grew more intense and regional hostilities more pronounced, with slaves fleeing the South and freedmen fighting for the North, the

Continued on page 90.

THE CHINA STUDY— A REPRISÉ

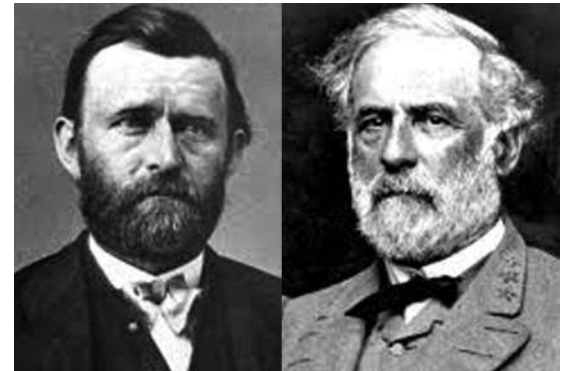
The China Study (2006), authored by T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell II, is subtitled "Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-term Health" and was reviewed in these pages some eight years ago. Since the market has been flooded with books about diet and nutrition (who do you believe?), I wanted to bring this one back because of its scope and stunning conclusions. *The China Study*, billed as "The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted," presents conclusive evidence that diet can dramatically reduce the principal medical risks we face including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and autoimmune disease. The study was a massive undertaking jointly arranged through Cornell University, Oxford University, and the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, and the project surveyed a wide range of diseases, diets, and lifestyle factors in rural China and Taiwan. The results were stunning and Dr. Campbell notes that the project "produced more than 8,000 statistically significant associations between various dietary factors and disease!" Among the numerous associations, so many pointed to the same finding: People who ate the most plant-based foods were the healthiest and tended to avoid chronic disease. Campbell makes it very clear that all of the issues about the major health issues in America—heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and cancer to name a few—come down to three things: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The notion that each of us can establish the degree of susceptibility to cancer, for instance, was a revelation to me. Genes? The author notes that not all genes are fully "expressed" (activated) all the time. If they are not activated, they remain biochemically dormant, and dormant genes have no effect on our health. So what happens to cause some genes to remain dormant and others to become active? Environment, especially diet. This is clearly not just another diet/health book. *The China Study* is potentially life changing, and I urge you to read it and think about adopting a predominantly vegetarian diet.



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 8.

men's attitudes changed: "As the war pushed Grant toward embracing black freedom, it pushed Lee farther away." In fairness, Lee did see to the manumission of his wife's slaves, but he believed that emancipation would destroy the social fabric of the South. Davis's parallel construction of the two men provides many opportunities for point/counterpoint as he goes back and forth between them. For all their differences, there were many similarities: Both men always thought ahead and had their next move in mind. Neither had any love for the press nor any use for politically appointed officers. Each was repeatedly let down by his comrades-in-arms. Each was devoted to his wife and a faithful correspondent regardless of the exigencies of the war. Finally, and it is no small point that Davis makes, "Both were lucky in the men they faced." The differences between the two ranged from superficial to profound. Whereas Lee was the perfect embodiment of the handsome military officer, "if ever there was a face in the crowd, it was Grant's." Where Grant had no problem dealing swiftly with confrontation and insubordination, Lee hated unpleasantness and moved people around (to the detriment of the war effort) just to avoid it. While Lee felt that the outcome of every issue or concern or battle lay in God's hands, Grant tended to think success or failure was within his own power to control. Throughout Davis's meticulously researched book (100 pages of Notes attest to that), we see the Generals as the men they were, usually in their own words or those of their contemporaries, and not as the cardboard cut-outs they have become: Lee as the chivalric hero, the "legend made flesh," and Grant as "the Butcher" in war, and a corrupt and drunken bungler in peace. Neither picture, of course, is entirely accurate. Although he said the right things in 1865 and occasionally thereafter ("All should unite in honest efforts to obliterate the grievous effects of war and to restore the blessings of peace"), Lee was a bitter man. His detestation of the Yankees for the damage they had caused the South had become "a special fixation for the rest of his life" long before his death in 1870 at the age of 63. As for Grant, his presidency was an accomplished one, notwithstanding its (and his) tarnished reputation. He tried to improve the lot of the American Indian, promoted free public education for children, brought Jews into public office and "was the first two-term chief executive to display a modern approach to domestic involvement and world outlook." Lee, the God-Man. Grant, the Everyman. Davis brings them both to vivid life and with them their wives and children, subordinates and colleagues, admirers and detractors. Theirs is a rich and fascinating story. (Thomas Hudnut, Los Angeles, CA)



PARIS RED

MAUREEN GIBBON
(2015, 280pp,
Norton)

7

Paris Red is an historical novel centered on one of painter Édouard Manet's (1832-1883) models. Although she became a painter in her own right, Victorine Meurent (1844-1927) was best known as the model for Manet's masterpieces *The Luncheon on the Grass* and *Olympia*. She also modeled for Baudelaire and Belgian artist Alfred Stevens. Manet was first attracted to the 17-year-old Victorine when he saw her and her friend, Denise, on the streets of Paris in 1862. Manet seems interested in a *ménage à trois* with the two working girls, but Trine (as Manet called her) is more interested and aggressive, sleeps with him first, and leaves her friend and her job to enter into the employ of Manet as his model, and lover. Narrating what becomes an erotic story, the immature, impressionistic, and self-aware Trine exposes her inner thoughts and feelings as her life revolves around the older (age 30 at the time) Manet and inspires him in the creation of his early masterpieces. I could appreciate the emotional bonds of their relationship and the sensitivity of the teenager Victorine, but the book was less satisfying than I had hoped, seeking much more about the Paris art world in the 1860s, on the cusp of Impressionism, and since I was seeking more about Manet, artist and man. Were more attention paid to these elements, completing the environment in which Victorine took on her character, *Paris Red* would have been a much more satisfying and instructive read. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

KILLERS OF THE KING: THE MEN WHO DARED TO EXECUTE CHARLES I

CHARLES SPENCER
(2014, 339pp,
Bloomsbury Press)

9

This page-turner of a tale—civil war, regime change, revenge justice, fugitive manhunts, grisly executions—is Charles Spencer’s stirring account of the events surrounding the beheading of England’s Charles I on 30 January 1649. The seven years of civil strife preceding his execution had taken a terrible toll; 60,000 Scots, 190,000 English, and 600,000 Irish perished before Parliamentary forces, backed by a professional, Puritan-leaning “New Model Army,” crushed the Royalists and established the Republic of the Commonwealth. By 1653, however, this nascent regime was itself so destabilized by economic woes and uprisings in Ireland and Scotland that army commander Oliver Cromwell dissolved Parliament and ruled as Lord Protector. The virtual dictatorship ended with his death in 1659 and the failure of his son as successor. A military faction under George Monck stepped into the vacuum and, supported by a reconvened parliament, brought the late king’s son back to the throne. With Restoration, Charles II initially pardoned most of the so-called “regicides”—59 judges and signers of his father’s death warrant and 32 officials involved in the trial and execution. Eventually, the new king deferred to Royalist calls for vengeance. Those who fled abroad were relentlessly hunted down while others were imprisoned for life. Thirteen regicides, the least fortunate, were executed for high treason—“short-hung” (cut down while still alive), castrated, disemboweled, beheaded (their heads later displayed on pikes), and finally drawn and quartered. Astonishingly, the condemned, almost to the man, met their deaths with courage. In Colonel Daniel Axtell’s final words, “I was fully convinced in my conscience of the justness of the war, and thereupon engaged in the Parliament’s service, which as I did and do believe was the cause of the Lord. And I adventured my life for it, and now die for it.” Charles Spencer, an Oxford educated historian and author of four previous books (also Princess Di’s brother), has given us vivid portraits of men ruled by faith and a willingness to stand up for what they believed.) (Contributing Editor Jenny Lawrence, New York, NY)

THE STRANGER

HARLAN COBEN
(2015, 386pp,
Dutton)

8

Harlan Coben has hit it big with his thriller novels with over 60 million of his books in print around the world, published in 43 languages. Like most of his books, *The Stranger* is a standalone (not part of a series) and it’s a good one. Adam Price, his wife Corinne, and their two sons are living the good life in an upscale New Jersey neighborhood when, out of the blue, a stranger approaches and tells him that his wife had faked her first pregnancy, which had supposedly ended in a miscarriage. When a stunned, conflicted Adam confronts Corinne about this, she doesn’t deny it, asks for a little time, and they plan to have dinner the next day to tell all. However, Corinne vanishes the next day after texting Adam a brief message to take care of the kids, don’t try to follow, and all will be okay. As Adam attempts to find her over the next few days without success, the mystery deepens and the reader learns that the stranger has approached other people with devastating secrets for which the motivation is unclear. Adam presses his search for Corinne as well as the stranger, new leads are uncovered, violence occurs, and it becomes clear that bad people are mining the Internet to learn secrets and then using the information as leverage to achieve their ends. In typical Coben fashion, relatively small beginnings lead to bigger and more dangerous issues, providing the reader with a succession of plot twists and growing suspense. (SHA)

THE KEEPER

JOHN LESCROART
(2014, 304pp,
Atria Books)

8

Veteran mystery writer John Lescroart has written 25 previous novels, sold more than ten million copies worldwide, and his books have been translated into 22 languages, but it has been some time since I’ve read him. *The Keeper* is his 18th in the San Francisco attorney Dismas Hardy series and it’s a good one. Katie Chase, wife of Hal Chase, a guard at the San Francisco County jail has gone missing. Hal is immediately regarded as a suspect by the police so he engages Hardy to help him. Hardy, in turn, puts newly retired friend Abe Glitsky, formerly head of homicide for the SFPD, on the case. At the outset, it appears that the police might have it right, as there are marriage problems, a large life insurance policy on Katie’s life, and Hal’s former affair with a beautiful, wealthy woman. While doing his investigation, Able learns about another inmate death at the jail, where Hal works, one of several strange inmate deaths at the jail. When Katie’s body is found in a park close to her home, Hal is arrested and jailed on the charges. Glitsky (the principal character in the book) relentlessly pursues clues and answers and a number of suspects emerge, including Hal’s step-mother Ruth, his former girlfriend, and any one of several police and sheriff department officials possibly acting in connection with the unexplained violence at the jail. *The Keeper* is a taut, fine whodunit with good cumulative impact, which I believe readers will enjoy. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE HARDER THEY COME

T.C. BOYLE
(2015, 400pp,
Harper Collins)

9

Boyle's new book continues a wild ride. I have followed his writing since his debut *Water Music* (1982) where protagonist Mungo Park takes on Stanley and Livingston's Africa, including *When the Killings Done* (TRE 2011, Vol. XXI, Issue 2) about environmentalist mayhem in the Channel Islands off Santa Barbara, and *The Women* (TRE 2009, Vol. IX, Issue 3) about Frank Lloyd Wright's chaotic love relationships. I wrote then that "Boyle is SoCal's great novelist and short story writer writ large, with ear-ring, beret, and a library of accomplishments." Even more true today. Here is a link to an interview Boyle gave Susan Orlean about his new novel *The Harder They Come* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ogu2pqJBKs8>.) He says that the subjects come from current news stories, including one about a 70 year-old marine who chokeholds and kills a thug bent on robbing cruise ship passengers in Costa Rica, becoming a hero at home, and his 25-year old disturbed son who goes on a killing rampage in the Mendocino woods, eluding the police and living a mountain man existence with a very warped world view. Boyle in the interview says the story is a response to gun violence gripping America's often deranged young men. But the book is also about survivalist and sovereign citizen right wing movements and is peopled with incredible characters. Boyle's prose is as sharp and funny as any writer in America today. The retired marine hero (StenStenson) is bubbling with rage at Mexican dope farmers despoiling the Northern California forests, and is fully estranged from his son Adam who has a history of problems with the law. The father's rage is somehow transmitted to his son without ideology just raw purpose and alienation. Adam hooks up with the somewhat older Sara, who hates the police and "has no contract with the Republic of California." She becomes both lover and mother to Adam, and he descends into hallucinations about aliens and hostiles while obsessed with an 18th century trapper (John Colter) who in real life battled the Blackfeet Indians. Adam takes up arms against imagined enemies with a Chinese automatic weapon while growing opium poppies in the forest. He kills without remorse, and Sara's lonely love for Adam is not returned other than physically. Adam's father Sten and mother Carolee come unglued as a manhunt for their son overtakes the coastal forest. As a psychology of what has driven so many young men in America to kill with automatic weapons this is important literature. Boyle is no polemicist railing against gun manufacturers. The root problems may be as deep as American ethnocentricity, post-traumatic stress handed down generations, and basic mental illness where the individual spirit in some minds is so unsocialized as to be violent. But Boyle is never didactic. The characters deliver whatever message the exotic writing unfurls. (Contributing Editor Robert Bunzel, Oakland, CA)

Making Sense of the English Language Using The Right Words

One of the books in my reference library is entitled *Who's Whose: A No-Nonsense Guide to Easily Confused Words* by Philip Gooden. In his *Introduction*, Gooden notes that, buried in the well over half a million words in the English language are many duplicates or near duplicates, terms that mean the same or almost the same as other terms, and words that look or sound as though they mean the same as others. This book is a guide to some of the most frequent and interesting "confusables" in English, a few excerpts of which are noted below.

BROACH or BROOCH

Broach To *broach* a topic, to introduce it into conversation

Brooch noun, is an ornamental clasp

CARAT or CARET

Carat A carat is a unit of weight used for assessing precious stones and gold

Caret A caret is a symbol used in writing or proofreading (^) signifying an insertion.

FLAUNT or FLOUT

To *flaunt* is to make a public exhibition off, to show off.

To *flout* is to treat something with contempt; disregarding laws, rules, etc. in a very public way.

LOATH or LOATHE

Loath is an adjective indicating reluctance, being unwilling.

Loathe is a verb meaning to regard with disgust.

APPRAISE or APPRISE

The verb *appraise* means to sum up, to estimate the value or quality of something.

To *apprise* is to give notice to, to tell.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE GOLDFINCH

DONNA TARTT
(2013, 775pp,
Little Brown)

THE SECRET HISTORY

DONNA TARTT
(1992, 524pp,
Knopf)

I was taken enough by Tartt's Pulitzer Prize (2014) winning novel *The Goldfinch* (now out in paperback for summer reading) that I picked up her first novel *The Secret History*, and *TRE* agreed to a combo review. A Mississippi native who studied literature at Bennington College with Bret Easton Ellis, Tartt is now firmly one of America's leading novelists, even though some critical reviews call *The Goldfinch* children's literature for adults. More aptly, Tartt is likened to Dickens given her huge colorful cast of characters in *The Goldfinch*. The title of *The Goldfinch* comes from the Dutch painting of the same name by Carel Fabritius (1654), a small oil work of a caged finch in shadowed light, forerunner in style of his student Vermeer more so than his mentor Rembrandt. The novel has the real-life artwork on loan in modern times to the New York Metropolitan. When 13-year old protagonist Theo Decker and the divorced mother he idolizes visit the museum to see the painting (on their way to a school probation meeting), there is an horrendous terror attack explosion, the first-person description of which alone recommends the book. Theo's mother is killed, and a girl who had caught his eye is badly injured in the blast and separated from her uncle who dies while imploring Theo to crawl with the Fabritius from the mayhem to save it. The painting becomes the currency of his fate and (he thinks) is secreted from others. Theo's alcoholic father takes him to live in Las Vegas, and the scenes of the debauched huckster class in the desert are as good as Tom Wolfe, though maybe not quite up to Elmore Leonard. There, Theo meets young Ukrainian Boris who introduces him to drugs and drink in junior high until Theo returns to New York and later enters the antiques trade with the partner of the dead uncle who is ward of the girl from the museum. Theo does not discover that Boris has switched the Fabritius, until they meet a decade later when Boris admits he has been renting the artwork in an underground enterprise. Violence in Amsterdam over the painting, Theo owning up to antiques fraud to his older partner, heartache over lost love and the prospect of returning the painting to the authorities ensue. All the while Theo matures and wrings out a sadness reminiscent of Richard Papen in Tartt's novel two decades earlier, *The Secret History*. Richard is a California teen bored with his public school life who figures out how to get accepted on scholarship at a small second-tier boarding school in Vermont, where he falls in with an elite group of students studying classics off the school's established grid. Their teacher, Julian Morrow, likes to say that "beauty is terror," and the clique of aesthetes that he teaches follow him like a God. Henry is a wealthy car-driving charmer; Francis is also rich but withdrawn with ambiguous sexuality; the two twins Camilla and Charles are a Greek pair, beautiful and joined at the hip; and the forlorn Bunny is always borrowing money and put out by the others. All at first are wary of the alien Richard, but bonding over alcohol, study, and aesthetics brings him into the group's inner sanctum. The students, without Bunny, engage one night in a gothic ritual that leads to the death of a local farmer. When Bunny finds out, the rest of the group is frightened he will inform on them, and the students plot a murder. There is some *Lord of the Flies* descent to immorality in the story, but the chilling intelligence of the characters and their fear ("the rat's feet of panic skittering up my spine," says Richard) is at a higher level, more like Dostoevsky. Tartt's earlier book is a great read that portends *The Goldfinch* in the intense characters, extreme events including sudden deaths, and a focus on beauty, sadness, and relationships. Both books are highly recommended. (Contributing Editor Robert Bunzel, Oakland, CA)

METHOD 15/33

SHANNON KIRK
(2015, 226pp,
Oceanview)

9

Method 15/33 won the 2015 National Indie Excellence Award for Suspense. In this harrowing first novel, a 7-month pregnant, 16-year-old is kidnapped as she walked to school and locked in a barren attic in what she believes to be a farmhouse. She has a regular keeper who brings her meals and takes her to the bathroom and is visited by several others, soon learning that their plan is to take and sell her baby upon birth and dispose of her. But this girl (we learn later that her name is Lisa) is no ordinary teenager, and she is the narrator here looking back at these events some 17 years later. She is gifted, calculating, determined and methodical and, from her first day of captivity begins plotting her escape, driven by the desire to save her baby as well as to exact revenge on these perpetrators. She meticulously inventories those potential assets at her disposal and plans just how to conduct her escape availing herself of these assets. Meanwhile, an FBI agent begins investigating another in a series of missing pregnant teens and in alternating chapters, the readers track his progress ultimately leading him to the place where Lisa is being held. The suspense builds to her D-Day, the 33rd day of her captivity, when she springs her ingenious trap on the unsuspecting keeper, her action step-one in freeing herself and her baby, and securing revenge on the dastardly criminals. Complications occur with her escape plan and the suspense continues as the FBI closes in. This is a highly readable thriller featuring the unusually cunning, resourceful, and relentless captive. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

DAVID MCCULLOUGH
(2015, 262pp,
Simon & Schuster)

9

When I talk about David McCullough, it is about his mastery of popular history and as the prime example of nonfiction writers who have livened history and biography, making them much more readable and interesting. McCullough has two Pulitzer prizes (*Truman and John Adams*) and two National Book Awards (*Mornings on Horseback* and *The Path Between the Seas*) and a tradition of magisterial books of nonfiction. *The Wright Brothers*, which I thoroughly enjoyed, is a less ambitious work for him, running just 262 pages of reading without the scope and heft of earlier works, and not a biography in the traditional sense as he is interested principally in how these self-educated brothers from Ohio were able to pull off one of the most stunning accomplishments in history. After a rather ho-hum beginning about their early years, the book becomes true McCullough as he tells the story of Wilbur and Orville Wright and how they made history. They did not attend college, had no technical background (they ran a bicycle shop in Dayton), had no friends in high places, no financial backers, no government subsidies, and little money of their own, yet through seemingly endless testing and

Continued on page 14.

ORIGINS OF WORDS AND PHRASES

The derivation of words and phrases we use in conversation is an interesting study, one that demonstrates just how much English owes to other languages. There are a number of sources on this and the explanations are often at variance. The entries below are taken from *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins* by William and Mary Morris.

TENTERHOOKS. A tenter is a framework on which newly woven cloth is stretched, and a *tenterhook* is one of the hooks on the frame which holds the material taut. Thus a person *on tenterhooks* is in a state of great tension or suspense, with anxiety or curiosity “stretched” to the utmost.

SOCKED IN goes back to an earlier day in aviation, a day when such aids to pilots as radar and ground controlled approach were undreamed of. Early pilots had to rely for information about wind direction on a conical wind sock hung from a mast atop the biggest hangar. In a rough way, the sock also would give them an idea as to the wind’s velocity. Naturally, when fog hung heavily over the airfield, the air sock would be invisible. Since planes would neither take off nor land under such “ceiling zero” conditions, the field was said to be *socked in*.

SOIGNÉ(E). Two forms of this word are given—with and without the second e because it is French and the ending changes, depending on whether it is applied to male or female. *Soigné* (pronounced swan-YAY) means well cared for or very well groomed.

LEITMOTIF was originally a musical term, used to describe a device employed by Richard Wagner in his music dramas. A specific musical phrase was associated with the first—and each recurring—appearance of a character, situation, idea, or emotion. Then, by extension, a *leitmotif* (pronounced LITE-moh-teef) came to have the general meaning of a recurring and often dominant theme in writing or in life itself. The original sense of the German word, incidentally, was “leading or guiding motive.”

JACKASS. The word “ass” is widely used in all English-speaking countries except America to refer to any of several kinds of four-hoofed animals similar to the horse, even to wild species like zebras, as well as our familiar donkey. The “jack” part of the word *jackass* merely means that it is the male rather than the female animal.

SINE QUA NON (SIN-ay kwah non) is a phrase borrowed from Latin, meaning literally “without which nothing” but more freely “that which is indispensable.” The original Latin was *sine qua non potest esse*—“without which it is not possible to exist.”

EARMARK. To *earmark* something is to give it a particular classification, especially something set aside (*earmarked*) for future consideration. The expression comes from the practice common among animal breeders of placing a distinctive identifying mark on the ear of each animal.

EAVESDROP comes to us virtually unchanged from Anglo-Saxon days. In those times a house had very wide overhanging eaves, not unlike those that may still be seen on thatched cottages in Devon. Since rain gutters and spouts were unknown then, the purpose of the wide overhang was to allow rain to drip safely away from the house’s foundation. So the *eavsdrip*, which later became *eavesdrop*, provided a sheltered place where one could hide to listen clandestinely to conversations within the house.



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 13.

calculation, ingenuity and perseverance, the joined-at-the-hip brothers were able to build and fly an airplane, the first in history! The momentous day occurred on December 17, 1903 at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, a desolate beach in the Outer Banks, when Wilbur remained aloft for all of 12 seconds on his first attempt and then did three more. Interestingly, few plaudits accompanied this historic moment and it was only in succeeding years with more flights in public in the U.S. and in France (Le Mans and Paris) that recognition came and the Wright brothers became heroes. But the strength of this book is McCullough's tracking of just how the Wright brothers worked together (they were workaholics), persevered and used their ingenuity to overcome all obstacles and get their plane in the air. A great American story related by an A-1 chronicler. (SHA)



Measure FOR Measure

Everyone knows the meaning of such measurement words as acres, gallons, pounds, inches and feet, and others we use on a regular basis. Here are a few measures that are less frequently used in conversation and in the books we read, and are a little more challenging.

KILOGRAM. One kilogram (kg) = 2.2 pounds.

FURLONG. Used principally at the race track, a furlong is 220 yards, or 1/8 mile.

FATHOM. The word fathom comes from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "embrace" or "outstretched arms," and one fathom is roughly the distance between the fingertips of a man's outstretched arms. To use this as a measure of water depth, a weighted line was lowered into the water until it touched the bottom and then pulled up again. The length of line that had been under water was then measured by repeatedly stretching the lines between outstretched arms. If this could be done eight times, the depth was eight fathoms, and so on. Of course, the actual distance between a man's fingertips would vary with the size of the man, so the fathom was eventually set at six feet.

ROD. A rod is 16 1/2 feet (5 1/2 yards).

KNOT, by the way, in nautical usage, is a unit of speed, not distance, and has a built-in meaning of "per hour." Thus, a ship travels at 10 knots, not 10 knots per hour. A knot is one nautical mile per hour.

HECTARE. A metric unit of measure equal to about 2 1/2 acres.

BUSHEL. A measure of capacity equal to 8 gallons.

PECK. 8 quarts of 1/4 bushel.

STONE. A unit of weight in Great Britain equal to 14 pounds (6.4 kilograms).

KILOMETER. One kilometer (km) = .62 mile.

LITER. One liter = 1.06 quart



BOOK REVIEWS

CLINTON CASH

PETER SCHWEIZER
(2015, 186pp,
Harper)

Right at the outset, Peter Schweizer notes that his last two books, *Throw Them All Out* and *Extortion*, focused on bipartisan self-dealing and corruption by members of Congress, and both generated segments on *60 Minutes*. He then asks, with this lead-in, why was he now focusing his efforts on one couple? He answers by noting that, “*The global dealings of this political couple deserve bipartisan citizen attention as much as congressional insider trading or campaign contribution extortion. No one has even come close in recent years to enriching themselves on the scale of the Clintons while they or a spouse continued to serve in public office.*” He explains that this investigation is focused specifically on financial transactions involving foreign businesses, investors, and governments. It has long been illegal for foreign interests to contribute to political campaigns, but they can pay money for speeches and (in this case) can donate to the Clinton Foundation, and this they have done in prodigious amounts. The following questions arise: Are these transactions used to buy influence? Do the payments coincide with key decisions by the U.S. government? Have favorable outcomes occurred for the donors? Schweizer reports that he has “*uncovered a repeated pattern of financial transactions coinciding with official actions favorable to Clinton contributors that is troubling enough to warrant further investigation by law enforcement officers.*” After leaving the White House, Bill hit the lecture circuit and collected \$105.5 million from 2001-2012 and raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the Clinton Foundation. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was agreed to when Hillary was nominated to be Secretary of State that required the Clinton Foundation to submit all paid speeches to the State Department ethics office for review, publicly disclose the names of donors to the foundation and its initiatives, and to seek pre-approval from the Obama administration for direct contributions to the foundation by foreign governments. These required actions were violated right from the start. Early reactions to *Clinton Cash* from Clinton supporters has been, “There’s no evidence” and, “This is just a right-wing hit job,” and this will continue. But readers of all political persuasions should read the book and draw their own conclusions rather than taking their cue from the rhetoric. At 186 pages, backed by 56 pages of Notes, it’s a relatively short read. Interestingly, an article in *The New York Times* noted that the book is “unsettling” because of its “focused reporting and because major news organizations including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Fox News* have exclusive agreements with the author to pursue the storylines found in the book. (SHA)

THE HUNDRED-YEAR MARATHON: CHINA'S SECRET STRATEGY TO REPLACE AMERICA AS THE GLOBAL SUPERPOWER

MICHAEL PILLSBURY,
(2015, 317pp,
Holt)
9+

Good books that are controversial tend to have odd backgrounds. Pillsbury’s book (his third on China) is a stinging condemnation of the government’s strategy toward China, a strategy embraced from Presidents Nixon through President Obama. Yet the book is so meticulously thorough and so gracefully argued that its draft chapters, written as classified analyses for the government, won for Michael Pillsbury the CIA Director’s Exceptional Performance Award. Even odder is the fact that this book rejects entirely the government’s strategy toward China of which Michael Pillsbury was the chief architect. More than anyone else—including Nixon and Kissinger—it was Pillsbury who started the negotiations that led to Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 and a host of “good relationship” agreements which promoted trade, investment, cultural exchanges, technology transfer, student attendance at universities, and even shared covert intelligence operations. After all, it was Pillsbury who invented “the China card” strategy (a Nixon-Kissinger favorite) whereby the U.S. would use its new relationship with China to gain Cold War advantage over Russia. Pillsbury’s strategy has been reinforced and expanded by every president since Nixon. And now, in this book, he writes that he was all wrong, that the government is all wrong, and that China has duped America about its intentions. Ever since the 1960s, Pillsbury writes, Mao Zedong set the Peoples’ Republic of China on a complex and secret course of deception—convincing American officials and analysts that China was trending toward a peaceful society, with their own versions of democratic process, liberal capitalism and freedom of speech. Not a shred of it is true, he says. Quoting endless numbers of Chinese military documents and speeches, all of them shrouded in cover, as well as private conversations with Chinese which only he could have had, Pillsbury uses China’s own words to show that China is bent on a hundred-year marathon to displace the United States as the global superpower. Pillsbury constructs in China an Alice-in-Wonderland world where the Chinese

Continued on page 16.



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 15.

government, especially universities and think tanks, is tasked to present a friendly, cooperative face towards the United States but secretly work to steal U.S. secrets, put those secrets to work in Chinese corporations, expand military capabilities, and lull America into a belief that the Peoples' Republic of China is a benign economic, military, and diplomatic force. Sounds like Pillsbury is a paranoid, you might say. Pillsbury comes off as a courtly scholar, anything but a paranoid. Pillsbury just cites and quotes document after document written or spoken by China's "hawks;" a hawk is an official who believes that the American "hegemon" (as they call it) must be displaced as hegemon or America will encircle and humiliate China. Pillsbury's hawks are not backbench cranks in the government, they are running the government. Openly, they speak of running Mao's marathon for him, making China the world's superpower by 2049, the 100-year anniversary of the Peoples' Republic of China. Michael Pillsbury, 70, has spent his life as an American living—physically or virtually—with the Chinese. *The Hundred Year Marathon* recounts his Asian travels. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)

H IS FOR HAWK
HELEN MACDONALD
(2014, 283pp,
Grove Press)
10

H is for Hawk is a literary *tour de force*. Helen Macdonald, an historian and naturalist at the University of Cambridge is grieving deeply after the sudden death of her father in 2007 and, for various reasons comes up with a unique, sublime plan to deal with her grief: To acquire and train a goshawk, a large powerful bird and one of the most fierce, aggressive raptors. Although she had never trained a goshawk, she is not a novice as she grew up obsessed with birds of prey and was a long-time falconer with all the necessary equipment. The acquisition of, and caring for the bird, which she named "Mabel," rekindles her interest in a book titled *The Goshawk* by T.H. White, a memoir about his troubled, inept effort to train a goshawk. The goshawk and its training becomes the *raison d'être* for Macdonald and as the training hits highs and lows and they become closer, there is a "role reversal" as the goshawk is tamed and Macdonald becomes more feral. As she takes us through the training process from the early basics at home to the outdoors and ultimately to flying and hunting, the transformation of both bird and trainer is apparent. As such, *H is for Hawk* becomes a meditation on the bond between humans and animals and a stirring memoir in which the author beautifully loops into and out of penetrating life issues. Other writers have written about the healing powers of animals, but Macdonald escalates this to the stratosphere and extends the boundaries of nature writing. *H is for Hawk* gets a 10 from this reader due to the exquisite prose and the spate of memorable, provocative passages that you will pore over and mark for future reference. (SHA)

**THE ROAD TO
CHARACTER**
DAVID BROOKS
(2015, 270pp,
Random House)
10

In his *Introduction*, David Brooks alludes to the dichotomy in human nature drawn from the work of Rabbi Joseph Solovietchik who noted that there are two accounts of creation in Genesis which he called Adam I and Adam II. In current parlance, Adam I would be the career-oriented, ambitious side of our nature, interested in status and wins. Adam II is the internal, humble Adam who views life as a moral drama, who wants to have a cohesive inner soul, and who lives by a moral logic, not economic. It is the Adam II people we are looking for, yet there has been a decided shift in recent decades toward Adam I's concurrent with the false belief that accomplishments of the Adam I realm can produce satisfaction. Brooks notes that moral realists know that we are all built from "crooked timber" (from Immanuel Kant's famous line "out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.") People in the "crooked timber" school know well that they have flaws and that character is built in the ongoing struggles to overcome their own weaknesses. To illustrate just what this character-building looks like in real life, Brooks provides biographical essays on George Marshall, Dorothy Day, St. Augustine, Samuel Johnson, Dwight Eisenhower, George Eliot, Baynard Rustin, Michel de Montaigne, and Frances Perkins, but he saves his best for the final chapter, aptly titled "The Big Me," a summation of the culture changes over recent decades that have taken us from "The Little Me" to "The Big Me," as we've built a moral ecology around the latter. This has resulted in a rise in narcissism and self-aggrandizement, a focus on the Adam I side at the expense of Adam II. To help restore the balance between Adam I and Adam II, Brooks provides *The Humility Code*, a list of 15 propositions, a summation if you will, "a coherent image of what to live for and how to live." *The Road to Character*, particularly this final chapter, should be widely read, but should be required for teachers and parents. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE HANDSOME MAN'S DE LUXE CAFE

ALEXANDER
MCCALL SMITH
(2015, 227pp,
Pantheon Books)

9

When I'm in the mood for light reading, I often turn to books by Alexander McCall Smith, a Rhodesian-born British writer and Emeritus Professor of Medical Law at the University of Edinburgh. He is a highly prolific author but is best known as the creator of *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series, and this book is the 15th in the series. The founder and owner of the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency in Botswana is the "traditionally built" Precious Ramotswe who shines as a practical problem-solver in her Gaborone practice. She is married to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, owner of the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, and their respective businesses adjoin each other. In *The Handsome Man's De Luxe Cafe*, Precious and her "co-director" Grace Makutsi are visited by a local brother and sister who have taken in a woman who has lost her memory, does not know her name, and is known only as "Mrs.," and they engage the Detective Agency to find out who she is and how she came to Botswana. Meanwhile, Grace, backed by her well-off husband Mr. Phuti Radiphuti decides to develop a new business of her own: The Handsome Man's De Luxe Café, a restaurant for Gaborone's most fashionable diners. Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni has a difficult business decision of his own to make, a tough choice that will have repercussions for both the garage and the detective agency. This mix of challenges and their resolutions is delightfully described by McCall Smith with humor, featuring the simple wisdom and kindness of Precious who has a sharp eye for human nature and those attempting to hide secrets. This story is one of McCall Smith's best and all readers will thoroughly enjoy this little slice of Botswana. (SHA)



Pronunciation...

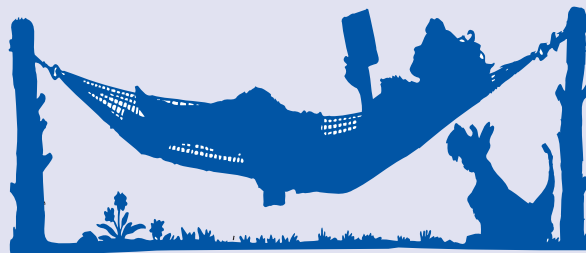
...FOR THE SPEAKER WHO CARES

The *Introduction* to *The Big Book of Beastly Mispronunciations* (Elster) notes that, "When it comes to pronunciation, there are two types of people: Those who don't give the subject a second thought and those that do. This book is for those that do." We believe that readers really do care about the *spoken* word as well as the written word and, as with grammar and word origins, the subject is replete with history. Elster says that, "*Pronunciation, like life, is governed by repetition, but rife with ambiguity, passion, and caprice; it is forever vulnerable to change and open to interpretation.*" With this in mind, here are a few entries from the book that may surprise you.

AEGIS	EE-jis. Do not say AY-jis.
PERCOLATOR	PUR-kuh-lay-tur (like <i>perk a later</i>). There is no you in percolator.
AGUE	AY-gyoo (Rhymes with <i>plague you</i>).
AMBIENCE	AM-bee-ints, not AHM-bee-ahnts.
LIBRARY	LY-brer-ee. Do not say LY-ber-ee. There is no <i>berry</i> in <i>library</i> .
ARCTIC	AHRK-tik. Do not say AHR-tik.
FRACAS	FRAY-kis, not FRAK-is.
REALTOR	REEL-tur. Do not say REE-luh-tur.
PREROGATIVE	pruh-ROGG-uh-tiv. There is no purr in <i>prerogative</i> .
REPRISE	(music) ri-PREEZ; (law) ri-PRYZ.

Jane's SELECTIONS

By Contributing Editor Jane Ackerman
(Studio City, CA)



MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD (Jeffrey Archer)

The Los Angeles Times calls Jeffrey Archer “One of the top ten story tellers in the world,” and I for one agree. His books have sold over 250,000 copies worldwide. There are few authors who can create and weave a story like Jeffrey Archer. *Mightier Than the Sword* is the fifth of Archer’s *Clifton Chronicles* and the pace has not slowed down a bit. It begins with Emma Barrington’s family shipping line suffering an explosion on their new ship and some calling for her resignation. Her husband, Sir Giles, is having his own problems with his political career, brought on by his old enemy, Major Alex Fishe, and their son Sebastian is having his own challenges spurred on by his rival Adrian Stone. Archer’s stories are highly interesting and complex (so, pay attention) but you will continually be drawn in by one fascinating situation after another. Even now, in trying to review it (an impossible task!), I randomly turned to page 124 and before I knew it, was again caught up in a tense situation and ready to read the book again. This is a winner!

THE CAVENDON WOMEN (Barbara Taylor Bradford)

If you are going on a long trip and have a little space for reading material, take this book. It is sensational, and there is quite a cast of compelling characters, including four daughters, all with a name that begins with D, a father, a brother, and various boyfriends and spouses, so it takes a little concentration to figure out who’s who. In fact, I must admit, I had to read the book twice to feel ready to write a review. This is Barbara Taylor Bradford’s 30th novel, and it opens with Charles Ingham, the sixth Earl of Mowbray inviting the entire family to Cavendon Hall for his surprise wedding to his longtime love, Charlotte. As important as the Cavendon women are to this book, equally important is the wish of every family member to keep Cavendon Hall safe, secure and solvent for future generations. Intrigue abounds throughout with a murder, a disastrous divorce, slander, deceit, and other surprises that occur along the way. Barbara Taylor Bradford (awarded the OBE by Queen Elizabeth in 2007) has the unique ability to not only create the English scene, but to draw you into it. Perhaps not everyone would admit this but, quite frankly, I enjoyed it even more the second time around! You will too!

A FINE ROMANCE (Candice Bergen)

Candice Bergen is not only a fabulous actress, fashion model, and comedian, but she has a great way with words. She is full of ideas and descriptions and has an unbelievable memory for details: Really an amazing author. *A Fine Romance* begins with the birth of her daughter, Chloe, and then circles back to meeting her husband, Louis Malle, the French director, and their wedding in 1980. They had actually met four years earlier for lunch at the Russian Tea Room in New York and they both knew right away that this is it! Do not miss his love letter to her on page 100. They were married at *Le Couail*, his home in France, and began their life together. This memoir takes you through the birth of Chloe, and after being somewhat uninterested in motherhood, she finds herself head over heels in love with her daughter. She describes her role as the title character on the CBS sitcom *Murphy Brown* (for which she won five Emmys and two Golden Globe Awards as Best Actress in a TV comedy), the illness and death of her husband in 1995, her time alone, her marriage to Marshall Rose in 2000, and all of the adjustments needed in her personal life and continuing career. This is a great book which will hold your interest to the last page.

CONFESSIONS OF A SERIAL ENTERTAINER (Steven Stolman)

In preparation for my summer outdoor entertaining—having already bought a new set of china—I called my son Wil to get a few new ideas on main courses. He attended *La Varenne* and *Le Cordon Bleu* cooking schools in Paris and, whereas I am a “cook,” he is truly a “chef.” A few days went by and I received this book in the mail with a note saying “Happy Mother’s Day,” a two-for-one if I’ve ever seen one. At first, I thought the book was a



BOOK REVIEWS

1632 AND THE RING OF FIRE SERIES

ERIC FLINT

(2000-2015, 512pp,
Baen Books)

I grew up reading science fiction; Bradbury, Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov, and so many more ground-breakers grabbed my attention. Later, Ian Fleming with James Bond's 007 and Tom Clancy with *Red October* mixed science and fiction into very successful series dealing with the Cold War period. Recently, Newt Gingrich wrote an alternate Civil War history, *Gettysburg*, a three book series, which intrigued most Civil War buffs. As I got to reading more and more history, my imagination pushed me to asking "what if the winners of a battle had lost?" There is a two book series of essays by noted historians called *What If?* which examines many battles throughout history and reverses the winners—I find the results absolutely fascinating! How the American patriots were able to defeat a very powerful British military makes the reader say a small prayer of thanks just like General Washington did often. Hard history leads one to historical fiction which is less daunting. Thank you, Patrick O'Brian for the Aubrey/Maturin series on the British navy fighting Napoleon—I have every volume in the series. In my case I retain a taste for alternate history where the author puts believable characters in challenging new circumstances, ergo, this month's review. *1632* and the nine other novels that followed it transport a West Virginia mining town, Grantville, back in time and into the middle of the strife torn Germanies during the Religious Wars. This turbulent time forces the Americans to take sides with the Protestant cause, led by king Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. The Holy Roman Empire's armies, led by Wallenstein and Tilly, move toward Grantville and the battles begin! But battles are only a small part of these stories; politics, religion, and life in general are just as compelling. When you and your allies have the Holy Roman Empire, Cardinal Richieu, Spain, and the Papacy seeking your hide, life is certainly interesting. Nor is it a simple thing to be a subject of king Gustavus Adolphus and deal with the gaggle of lesser German princes, counts, and town leaders who inhabit the countryside. The author, Eric Flint, has created a milieu and then invited other authors to join him with their stories which Flint either co-writes or edits. Each story has a date e.g. 1632, 1633, 1634, etc. and its own title and often a relocation to another 17th century locale: the Vatican, London, the Netherlands, and the New World. Often, the main characters in these stories are real 17th century persona with lesser parts played by Grantville citizens. The introduction of 21st century ideas like democracy and religious freedom plus modern tools and weapons present endless plot lines which Flint and his cohorts explore in detail. The stories are all in paperback now; I hope you enjoy them. (Contributing Editor Stephen Griffith, Los Angeles, CA)

Continued from page 18.

spoof because Stolman confesses on the very first page to using every mix, soup, bottles, and jars to get the job done. After reading the book however, I found it to be a great go-to guide for entertaining. For those of us who really get a high out of having friends over for dinner, his recipes are delicious, attractive, and easy to manage. Also, as if you did not know, he has a page on how to act, dress, and carry on during your entertainment events. You should have this book for your own reference, but it is also a great book to give as a gift. Stolman's ideas and enthusiasm will give new life to your world of entertaining.

THE PRODIGAL SON (Danielle Steel)

Steve and I bring out the best in each other. He buys trashy novels, and I read them, except in this case the book is a true winner and he missed out. *The Prodigal Son* is a story about twins, Peter and Michael, and the forces of good and evil. Peter's family is slow to learn that Peter is dyslexic and Michael, "the good twin," is constantly out to make him look bad and succeeds at it. After college, Peter heads for New York and is a huge success as a star investment banker. Michael studies medicine and goes into practice with his father and becomes a much loved and respected member of the community. He is married to Maggie, an old girlfriend of Peter's, who has been bed-ridden for all 21 years of their marriage. After the stock market crash of 2008, Peter returns home, his wife has left him, his big money is gone, and the story really begins to take shape. I really do not like to say it, but this is one of those books that you do not want to put down until it is finished. Plan on reading it next Sunday and give it the full day. I am sending it to my twin brother tomorrow!



BOOK REVIEWS

MISSOULA
JON KRAKAUER
(2015, 358 pp,
Knopf)
10

Jon Krakauer is a well-established writer of nonfiction e.g. *Into the Wild*, *Into Thin Air*, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, and *Where Men Win Glory*, all favorably reviewed in these pages. *Missoula*, subtitled “Rape and the Justice System in a College Town” is a well-written, highly interesting narrative about the problem of rape on college campuses. Missoula is a city in western Montana (the second largest city in the state behind Billings) and is home of the University of Montana. It is a typical college town with a lively social scene and a rabid interest in the University football team, the Grizzlies. There were a rash of rapes at the University during the 2010-2012 period, but Krakauer focuses on a few cases, meticulously detailing the sexual assaults and the aftermaths, from the psychological impact on the victims, the mind-sets of the perpetrators, the issue of whether or not to report the assault, and, if reported, the adjudication or administration of the case. In the narrative of the cases, Krakauer reports that only 20% or so of sexual assaults are reported as a result of unwanted publicity, fear, and the difficulty in proving that the sexual act was not consensual. In addition, he explains the conflicting approaches employed by the local Missoula authorities and the University. In one case recited, the district attorney elected not to prosecute on the basis of insufficient evidence and the “he-said she-said” quandary, whereas the University, using a lower bar, took administrative action (expulsion) on the basis of the “preponderance of the evidence.” Krakauer’s dispassionate, well-documented account of what these victims endured was magnified by the mechanics (or lack thereof) of the justice system and the responses of family, friends, and the community. *Missoula* is an engrossing journalistic account of “acquaintance” rape and the convoluted, difficult aftermath. Interestingly, Krakauer cites several surveys that bear out one of the key reasons why victims do file charges in these cases—that a significant percentage of sexual abusers strike again. (SHA)



Jane Says . . . (to SHA): “SHA is skating on thin ice! Although he is so charitable and constantly weeding out books to give to the Studio City Library, why do the books always seem to be mine?”

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