

THE READERS EXCHANGE

Ideas and Information for Readers



Dear Friends,

December 2016

NOISY RESTAURANTS Note to *restaurateurs*: There are many of us out here “starving” for *quiet* restaurants. When you get away from this hectic life and away from cell phones to have dinner with friends, the highlight of the evening is the opportunity for convivial conversation. It’s not just about your food. So why do so many restaurants turn up the music, forcing guests to shout to be heard? Or forget about carpeting and other noise abaters? Or locate an active bar near diners? Or all of the above? Answers I’ve heard for these circumstances run the gamut from (1) hyping the atmosphere to attract business and (2) influencing guests to leave early to turn the tables. Whatever the reason for creating an echo chamber, the result of the above for this diner is a negatively impacted experience (even if the food is good) and a vow not to return. You’ve taken away one of the joys of eating out. Keep the good food coming, but, hey, check your noise levels and turn down the volumes – and give us an opportunity for a peaceful, enjoyable evening of dining and conversation.

A MULTI-PURPOSED COACH Coaching is not just about recording wins. It’s about building lives – and character. Those of us who follow professional basketball know of the success of the San Antonio Spurs, who have five NBA titles under their belt, and their coach Gregg Popovich. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article titled “The NBA’s Most Thoughtful Team,” notes that “Pop” is not only a great coach, but imbued with intellectual curiosity and expects his players to be informed, engaged citizens, now a prerequisite for playing for the Spurs. He said that, “If I just had basketball, I’d be bored to death,” and that basketball “doesn’t define me.” When asked why he’s developed this organizational culture of engaged citizens, he responds, “It makes for a fuller life” and “I think it’s sad if a person’s whole self-image and self-worth is based in their job.” Regardless of one’s profession, “Why not do your best to live a more interesting life that includes other people, other cultures, and different worlds.” His curiosity is infectious and the Spurs (1) talk about race and other public issues, (2) during the season they went to see the Broadway show *Hamilton* together, (3) Pop arranged a private screening of *Chi-Raq* by Spike Lee, who joined them for dinner, and (4) when they arrived at training camp the players received copies of the book *Between the World and Me* and previewed the film *The Birth of a Nation*. To all of which I say, “Bravo, Coach Gregg Popovich.”

CIVILITY For civility, a number of words come to mind: *Courtesy, politeness, manners, graciousness, consideration, comity, and respect*, to name a few. Way back when Emily Post ruled, we were taught *manners* – her book was a guide for how to act in polite society, people listened, yet something appears to have gone haywire over the years. Our society seems less mannerly, less civil, than it used to be. I’m sure you’ve observed incivility on a day-to-day basis, certainly from other drivers on the road, or when you are rudely interrupted when expressing a thought, or when your space is invaded by a loud cell phone talker, or when people cut in front of you in line, or when you see a man wearing a hat indoors (a baseball hat sometimes on backwards), or countless other situations. Perhaps it’s a combination of factors: Population growth, a faster, more hectic lifestyle, and a more self-centered citizenry come to mind, but I’m sure there are others. Ego, a sense of entitlement (my rights!), and ignorance also breed uncivil behavior, but above all, people must be sensitive to and care about other people to understand proper behavior. Emily Post put it very well when she said, “*Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.*”

THE HOLIDAY SEASON From mid-November into early January, my sense of nostalgia, gratitude, and life are elevated, thinking of Christmas celebrations of the past with my parents, and grateful for my loving family and life’s many blessings, all mixed in with prayers for the less fortunate, peace throughout the world, and broader acknowledgement of the Henry James Statement “*Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind.*” As we celebrate the holiday season, I’m putting in a pitch for more celebrations in life by adding those smaller ones, but celebrations nevertheless. e.g. dinner with friends, a beautiful sunset, a drive through the country, a good deed for a friend, cheeseburgers, and many more! We wish all members of *The Readers Exchange* community a very Merry Christmas, and best wishes for a happy, healthy New Year.

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Ackerman, Publisher

Subscribers-Only Password:

MANN

Until March 2017 for

www.the-readers-exchange.com

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READING ... BETWEEN THE LINES



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.

NEWS OF THE WORLD
PAULETTE JILES
(2016, 209PP,
WILLIAM MORROW)
10

At 209 pages, this small-sized book qualifies for our “Little Gems” category, and it is a wonderful read. *News of the World* was one of five finalists for the National Book Award for Fiction, combining a wonderful story with exquisite writing. Set in 1870, Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd, age 71 and widowed, travels from town to town in Texas giving live newspaper readings to dime-paying audiences starved for news of the country and the world. He has lived through three wars, fought in two of them, and lives a solitary life on the road. When in Wichita Falls, he is asked to shepherd a 10-year-old girl, an orphan, to relatives in San Antonio, some 400 miles to the south. Some four years ago, Kiowa Indian raiders had killed her parents and sister, and taken Joanna to live with them and raise her as one of the tribe. Reluctant to take on this mission, he ultimately relents and, for a \$50 gold piece, sets out on the journey. She has forgotten about her former life and her memory is limited to her experiences with the Kiowa tribe. She is uncivilized, does not speak English, culturally acts like an Indian and is now, for the second time in her young life, bearing the psychological impact of being separated from her family. The undomesticated Joanna goes along reluctantly on this trek, but, as she and the “Kep-dun” face some dangerous challenges along the way from bandits, Indians, and the elements, a bond begins to develop between Captain Kidd and his charge. Readers will relish the developing relationship between the two, how they cope with their obstacles, and ultimately, the fates of Kidd and Joanna after they arrived at their destination. (SHA)



**THE BRIDGE TO
BRILLIANCE**
**NADIA LOPEZ WITH
REBECCA PALEY**
(2016, 264PP,
VIKING)
9

Nadia Lopez is the founder and Principal of Mott Hall Bridges Academy, a charter, inner city middle school located in the poverty-ridden, dangerous Brownsville section of Brooklyn. *The Bridge to Brilliance*, subtitled “How One Principal in a Tough Community is Inspiring the World,” chronicles the Herculean efforts by Lopez and her cohorts to recruit teachers and students, and establish and operate the school under the extremely difficult circumstances standing in her way. The inclusion of the word “Bridges” in the school’s name stemmed from a prior teaching experience wherein students were taken on an annual walk over the Brooklyn Bridge. Though the kids lived less than a mile from the Bridge, most had never seen it, let alone walk over it. Many were afraid of the Bridge (“will it fall?”) and once on the other side, sat quietly and stared at the water and boats, never having seen anything like it. She found this image so inspiring and heartbreaking that she took pictures and “bridges” became a metaphor for crossing over, for building and achieving a successful life. From the opening of the school in the fall of 2010, Lopez, acting as principal, mentor, mother, and cheerleader for her “scholars,” devoted incredible energy to her school and

her 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to engage them and help them build a life, all of which took a toll on her physical and mental health, and she was at the breaking point. Then on Saturday January 17, 2015 a miracle happened. One of her students appeared on a blog called *Humans of New York* (Brandon Stanton) and said that the most influential person in his life was his principal, Mrs. Lopez, noting that she had each student stand up, one at a time and “told each one of us that we matter.” All of this went viral and later, when Stanton asked what she would like to do for the kids, Lopez said she wanted to take them all on a trip to Harvard. A crowd-funding campaign was launched to raise \$100,000 for three years of trips to Harvard. The \$100,000 was raised in 85 minutes, \$300,000 by the end of the day, and ultimately over \$1.4 million. Just like that, Brownsville, Brooklyn, Mott Hall Bridges, and Nadia Lopez made national and international headlines, and much more followed. *The Bridge to Brilliance* is a wonderful, inspiring story of education in America with multiple take-aways for all of us. (SHA)





BOOK REVIEWS

THE ONE MAN

ANDREW GROSS
(2016, 412PP,
MINOTAUR PRESS)

10

Andrew Gross' novel *The One Man* gets a 10 from this reader for a gripping, heart-pounding story of World War II. In the Spring of 1944, both the Germans and the Allies are in the development phase of atomic weaponry, which could win the war. The U.S. Manhattan Project, headed by Robert Oppenheimer, is closing in, but lacks one vital component in a critical field. The U.S. learns that the world expert in the field of electromagnetic physics, Dr. Alfred Mendl, has been incarcerated in Auschwitz. Led by William "Wild Bill" Donovan, head of the OSS, a near-suicidal plan is hatched to send an operative into Auschwitz, locate Mendl, and bring him out. The man chosen for this mission is a young OSS multilingual intelligence officer, Nathan Blum, who escaped the Krakow ghetto after his family was executed by the Nazis. Blum, eager to do more for the war effort than his desk job as a translator, undergoes intense training for the mission, understanding its importance, the danger, and the slim chance of success. On a flight from England, Blum parachutes to a prearranged drop zone near Auschwitz to rendezvous with Polish Resistance and is successful getting into the camp, starting the clock on the planned 48-hour mission. The story then alternates between scenes from Washington, the horror of Auschwitz and events there involving Blum, Mendl, and a compelling cast of characters. Readers will be captivated by the tension in this story, the plot twists and surprises, as well as the unlikely heroes. In his *Author's Note*, Gross says that his father-in-law was raised in Warsaw, came to the United States in 1939, and never heard from anyone in his family again. Also, much of the story was based on truth. Two escapees from Auschwitz were real and their depiction of the camp was made available to the highest levels of the U.S. government. When looking into his father-in-law's past, he came across the massacres that took place in Luov, Poland, and the university purges there (an act of "self-purification") of thousands of Jewish intellectuals – professors, scientists, and artists who were executed or sent off to the death camps. Gross noted, from that point, it was not a stretch to ask what if one of these thinkers carried some kind of vital knowledge that could change the outcome of the war. Great book that you will not be able to put down. (SHA)

A TORCH KEPT LIT: GREAT LIVES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

WILLIAM F.
BUCKLEY, JR.
EDITED BY
JAMES ROSEN
(2016, 323PP,
CROWN)

9

Not so long ago, Bill Buckley was considered beyond the pale, too politically conservative and too rigidly Catholic to be called an American public intellectual. His first book, *God and Man at Yale* (1951), stamped him a religious crank. Who was Bill Buckley, just 26, to condemn Yale's faculty as too secular and to call out – by name – those he found insufficiently pious? Buckley spent the rest of the century writing and talking himself out of his ideological pigeon hole. He wrote books (on many topics), he edited a magazine (*National Review*), he ran for mayor of NYC (he got 13% of the vote), he appeared on his own television show (*Firing Line*) and he became such an American celebrity that he was a regular guest on *The Johnny Carson Show*. *Fox News* correspondent James Rosen has lovingly curated Buckley's writings to find Buckley's most incisive recollections of famous Americans. Rosen pulled from eulogies, obituaries, and essays, anything by Buckley which took the measure of a famous American. Rosen has modeled the Buckley book on Winston Churchill's ageless *Great Contemporaries*. It is an inspired concept. Churchill and Buckley, both famous in their own right, were entitled to take the measure of others considered famous. The Buckley book has 56 of what I would call "deluxe obituaries" ranging across politics, the arts, family, spies, generals, statesmen, and nemeses. Each profile includes a preface about how Buckley came to know Vladimir Horowitz or Ronald Reagan (two examples that show the breadth of Buckley's friendships). Written by Rosen, the prefaces make for wonderful reading, all of them full of a sly wit. In each deluxe obituary, Buckley takes full measure of his subject, but his criticisms always are laced with a gentle humor. Eleanor Roosevelt worked to do good, you could not deny her that, but so zealously that "she treated all the world as her own personal slum project." Norman Mailer, notorious for his combative friendship with Buckley, was acknowledged "a towering figure in American literary life," yet "almost unique in his search for notoriety and absolutely unrivaled in his co-existence with it." Buckley's wit aside, the book's other delight is its breadth. Buckley knew everybody who was famous in the last half of the 20th century, or it certainly seems that way. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Reagan get the full treatment; people in the arts (and great friends) David Niven and Johnny Carson get the same, as do John Lennon, Jerry Garcia, and William Shawn (longtime editor of *The New Yorker*); special friends like Barry Goldwater and John Kenneth Galbraith get special treatment, as do the super famous like Winston Churchill and Princess Diana; and the very special are remembered brilliantly, his famously graceful wife Pat and also Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The book tells how Jackie and he met, how they became friends, and how they would treat her marriage to Onassis, "strategically prudent," they decided. The book is a great trip through the last half of the 20th century, riding first class with William Buckley. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE LAST DAYS OF NIGHT

GRAHAM MOORE
(2016, 366PP,
RANDOM HOUSE)

8



This novel tells the true story of the titanic struggle between Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse to determine whose technology would power the world. The facts of the no-holds-barred contest between Edison and his direct current (DC) technology and Westinghouse and his alternating current (AC) technology have been well covered in non-fiction works to which the author acknowledges his debt. Moore transforms these bare historical threads into a vivid tapestry by the skillful application of novelistic techniques. Compression, imagination, and pure invention are called into play to service a plot that moves at the speed of a Grisham legal thriller, characters that fill the page, and even a romantic sub-plot. The author's discovery that provided the key to the plot and the organizing principle of the book is the role of a lesser known historical figure – Paul Cravath, the Wall Street lawyer who invented the modern corporate law firm, and whose name is still on the door of the best of them. Edison and Westinghouse first clashed in a patent infringement suit about the electric light bulb, which Edison had invented (although not as early as he claimed) and Westinghouse improved. The claim, which threatened to bankrupt Westinghouse's Pittsburgh-based company and Westinghouse himself, was brought in Edison's home court in New York, where Edison and his investor J.P. Morgan controlled much of the legal talent. To defend this "bet the company" lawsuit, Westinghouse hired Cravath, then an inexperienced 26-year-old law graduate. Cravath is a *Zelig*-like figure who either witnesses or initiates all of the major plot developments, through encounters with Westinghouse, Edison, Morgan, Alexander Graham Bell and Nikola Tesla, and his plotting with opera singer Agnes Huntington, who became the wife of the historic Cravath. To move the plot forward, Cravath flouts ethical strictures and even stoops to breaking and entering. One presumes that at least most of these incidents are fictional, and indeed the author acknowledges some of them to be so in an *Afterword*. However, those who would like to separate fact from fiction encounter the difficulty that some of the book's most preposterous character portraits and events are undeniably historical. The stock character of the abstracted, half-mad, unintelligible scientific genius is Nikola Tesla in life. To highlight the unimaginable danger of AC transmission, as compared to "safe" DC technology, Edison did surreptitiously sponsor a series of demonstrations in which dogs and then larger animals were electrocuted, culminating with an elephant. Well, maybe not culminating with the elephant. Edison's agent also convinced the state of New York to use AC power for the execution of a convicted murderer, thus introducing the electric chair through a horribly botched execution. Many astounding facts, like the main events of the book and its neat conclusion are true to life. For a lawyer who works in the electric utility industry, like this reviewer, the book is catnip. For the general reader, it provides a rare combination of entertainment and instruction. (Contributing Editor Anthony Fitzgerald, Watertown, CT)

JOHN E. PARSONS: AN EMINENT NEW YORKER IN THE GILDED AGE

PAUL DEFOREST HICKS
(2016, 225PP,
PROSPECTA)

Coming from an immigrant family, John E. Parsons rises to become one of the premiere trial lawyers of the late 19th and early 20th century. Not just content to be that, he also counsels wealthy families, generously contributes to those less fortunate, builds hospitals, and helps to transform Rye, New York and Lenox, Massachusetts into refuges for the wealthy and the famous. Paul DeForest Hicks, a retired Managing Partner of J.P. Morgan has written a fascinating biography of Parsons. Hicks, a lawyer, has also written a biography of Georgia's first Chief Justice, Joseph Henry Lumpkin. The picture Hicks paints of Parsons can be best summarized in the single word *rectitude*, which the Oxford dictionary equates with probity, correctness, morality, uprightness, decency, honesty, and so on! We see him in his youth working his way up in the law, marrying well, serving his communities, and developing a national and international reputation. We also see the very beginning of what has become a major issue of our times, the clash between the free enterprise spirit of corporate America and Federal regulation of business. Parsons was the lead lawyer for Harry Havemeyer and the Sugar Trust in a case that went on for years and which made Parsons a much wealthier man. In the courtroom, in Congress, and in the press, Parsons becomes one of the major spokespeople for unrestricted free enterprise. In an essay written in 1961, Alan Greenspan gave a view of the Sherman Act reflecting what Parsons may well have been feeling at his time: "But the very existence of those undefinable statutes and contradictory case law inhibits business men from undertaking what would otherwise be sound productive ventures. No one will ever know what new products, machines, and cost saving mergers failed to come into existence, killed by the Sherman Act before they were born. No one can ever compute the price that all of us have paid for that Act which, by inducing less effective use of capital, has kept our standard of living lower than would have otherwise been possible." The enormous respect in which Parsons is held by fellow lawyers is reflected in Hicks' account of various parties and events held in Parsons' honor. The fees he receives for



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 4.

his work are, by those times, enormous. His life style and his various magnificent homes reflect that success, but he seems not to forget those less fortunate and he is among the early philanthropists. We see him age gracefully, remarry after the death of his first wife, and begin to ride into the sunset. But then an unexpected ending makes us rethink the story and the man. Well written and very interesting for those who like biography, the Gilded Age and the age-old question of government intervention in free enterprise. (Sam Chauncey, New Haven, CT)

THE RISEN
RON RASH
(2016, 253PP,
HARPER COLLINS)
8

The Risen is a well-written novel of suspense set in 1969 in a small rural North Carolina town. Sixteen-year-old Eugene and his older brother Bill are swimming at a secluded location on a hot summer day and meet the sexy, free-spirited Ligela swimming nude nearby. The rebellious Ligela has been banished by her parents from her Florida home to live with her aunt and uncle, in this remote location, hoping for reform. Bill and Eugene are captivated by Ligela (particularly Eugene), as she introduces them to pleasures of the 1960s counter culture movement. Eugene's romance with her, which included securing drugs for her, from their doctor grandfather's stash, is short-lived, a rift develops between the brothers, and Ligela disappeared at the end of the summer. Fast forward 46 years – Bill has succeeded as a first-rate surgeon, Eugene is a reprobate consumed with his booze and self-loathing, and Ligela's youthful face appears on the first page of the local newspaper with news that her remains had been found by the side of the creek swimming hole. This compels Eugene to determine what really happened and pressures his recalcitrant brother to open up about the death of Ligela some 46 years ago. *The Risen* is a well-written, engaging tale of just how the lives of these two brothers and their relationship with each other were altered by the events of one long-ago summer. Ron Rash is an award-winning author and poet, twice the recipient of the O. Henry Prize. (SHA)

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* (Second Edition).

INTRAMURAL means simply “performed within the walls” and has been in use in England since 1848, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*. It has long been used, in both England and America, to designate athletic contests played between teams made up of pupils in the same school or college.

BEDLAM, meaning “noise and confusion,” is a contraction of *Bethlem*, the name of a London lunatic asylum. In the 15th century it was one of the sightseeing spots of London. For a modest fee, people could watch the inmates behind the bars, much as we view animals in the zoo, except that onlookers would tease the poor souls with jeers and taunts.

BELLWETHER has been the designation since Anglo-Saxon times of the *wether* or eunuch sheep which carries a bell around its neck and acts as a leader of the herd.

LIMELIGHT The *lime* in *limelight* has nothing to do with the fruit from which the color lime is derived. Limelight gets its name from calcium oxide, popularly known as lime, quicklime, slaked lime, and so on. Calcium oxide was first isolated in 1808 by Sir Humphry Davy, famed British chemist, who soon demonstrated that it would give off a brilliant white light when heated. The phenomenon inspired Thomas Drummond to devise methods of concentrating and projecting the light for theatrical use. The light, first called the “Drummond light” and later used in lighthouses, gradually became known as *limelight*. It has long since been supplanted by arc and Klieg lights, but a man *in the limelight* still is a person center stage, so to speak, receiving the full intensity of the public spotlight.

DELAWARE was named for Thomas West, Baron De La Warr, a British colonial governor who never even saw the state or the river that bears his name. De La Warr was actually colonial governor of Virginia and visited that colony in 1610. The British claimed that the coast north to what they named the De La War Bay was part of their Virginia colony. The Dutch paid no attention, however, claiming it as theirs because of Hudson's explorations.



BOOK REVIEWS

HOUSE RULES

MIKE LAWSON

(2008, 373PP,
ATLANTIC)

9

House Rules is the third installment in the Joe DeMarco series. There are now 11. This is a good one. It begins with American Muslims mounting terrorist attacks on Washington: The blowing up of the Baltimore Tunnel and the bombing of the White House with a kamikaze plane. U.S. security intercepts the threats. Riding the country's fears, an obscure Senator introduces legislation to impound American Muslims. The bill becomes a media darling, and House Speaker John Mahoney moves to slow its passage. Mahoney is a powerful Speaker, and his power rests on the House rules. No matter how good a bill is, it still must follow House rules. Mahoney needs time to control his legislative process; he needs committee hearings and mark ups, and referral to the floor calendar, all events he schedules. For slowing things down, Mahoney summons his fixer extraordinaire, Joe DeMarco. He is a wonderful Washington type. DeMarco is a lawyer who has never practiced law, his father was a mob hit man (working in Queens) killed in a gun fight, DeMarco has an office in the sub-basement of the Capitol, he works covertly for the Speaker but ostensibly for the House as counsel to the amorphous Office of Congressional Liaison. It is all high-roller Washington sleaze. DeMarco is the Hollywood version of a Washington fixer. A big, brawny guy who looks just like his father (handsome in a dark way with curly hair like Dean Martin's), DeMarco is a law school grad who cannot get a regular job because his name marks him as mobbed up. Mahoney needed a fixer, DeMarco needed a job, and a day does not go by where something bad does not have to be done for something good to happen. *House Rules* is full of savvy action. It is a Washington story about a Speaker trying to slow a rush-to-passage bill and a fixer trying to stay alive while the bill is being slowed. *House Rules* is wonderfully cynical. The whole uproar about the problem of disaffected Muslims is the handiwork of several feuding, non-Muslim groups who want to "help" the government impound Muslims. "Help" translates into contracts, fat ones, and the helpers retain their own fixers too. The *Joe DeMarco Thriller Series* is one of the best up-and-running classic detective series. The format goes back to the great ones: Sam Spade, Lew Archer and Phillip Marlowe, tales of a biggish, tough guy with a heart of gold and a cynical attitude prowling mean streets to stop crime. The formula for success is easy to describe but hard to deliver. The detective has to be a seriously tough guy and a seriously endearing guy. DeMarco is your man. The mean streets have to be realistic, interesting, and famously dangerous. Washington, D.C. is your place. Mike Lawson, the series' creator, has built a set of mean streets in Washington D.C. so convincingly crafted that the reader starts a "new" DeMarco anxious to see what Washington tricks will be played. I have worked in the places Lawson describes (the House of Representatives and several agencies), and Lawson captures them flawlessly. I have seen DeMarco's pitiful office in the sub-basement of the Capitol, there are many tucked away there. I have witnessed, more times than I care to recall, the daily wars between the elite senior civil service and elite political employees. It is a venomous relationship, always present and combustible, and Lawson plays on it to keep DeMarco at risk. The DeMarco series is first rate, a compelling mix of character and environment. I put it up there with Guido Brunetti in Venice and Salvo Montalbano in Sicily. (Contributing Editor William Liley, III, Washington D.C.)

RECESSIONAL

JAMES MICHENER

(1994, 484PP,
RANDOM HOUSE)

Michener has left us with 45 wonderful books including *Hawaii, Alaska, Poland, Texas...* and the beat goes on! *Recessional* is a major departure from Michener's usual bill of fare. It's life in an upscale Florida retirement home. Its disparate group of elderlies may not be physically able to run a marathon, but they clearly have the wits and imagination to live arresting, even exciting lives. It's about this same group heading down the slippery slope, and quite enjoying the ride. It's all about these golden oldies who have found the elixir of a happy life: Having something to look forward to. "Let's do something big," says a gentleman at the dining table. "Like what?" says another. While many suggestions are forthcoming, the current decision is to build an airplane that they can actually fly. This idea is acted upon and completed with a showy flight over the area. We are left wondering what comes next, but the reader knows the plane is just a stepping stone to the endless supply of energy and brain power available. In a paradise like this, as in Eden, there has to be a worm in the apple. The worm here is the frozen yogurt machine which produces the most heavenly desserts, but never enough to satisfy demand. If no complaints, then Eden it cannot be, however close. Michener has worked his usual magic. This time by making mundane lives highly appealing. In checking with *Amazon.com*, this book is available used for one penny. Seventy-five years ago, one penny worth of candy would provide plenty of enjoyment. Not in 75 years can one penny provide the pleasure of reading *Recessional*. (Janet Daggatt, Seattle, WA)



BOOK REVIEWS

A GENTLEMAN IN MOSCOW

ARMOR TOWLES
(2016, 460PP,
VIKING PRESS)

9

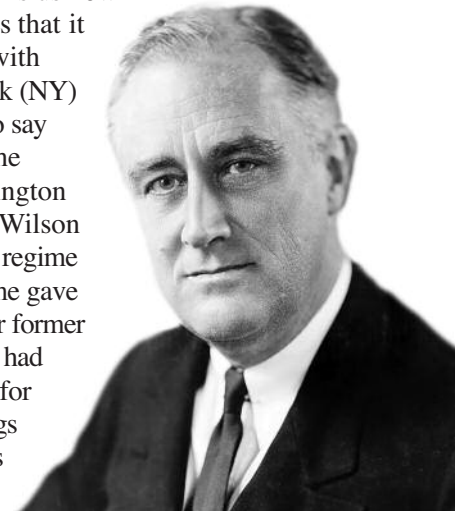
This story is a window on the convulsions that happened in Russia, and principally in Moscow, from the early 1920s up to the mid-1950s. The story revolves around the dignified and aristocratic Count Alexander Rostov who has been sentenced to live out the rest of his days in the Metropol Hotel for some poetry he wrote that was judged by the Bolsheviks to be seditious. For four years, Count Rostov lived in elegant style in a luxury suite of rooms on the fourth floor of the hotel with a view of the Kremlin and Red Square. He was beyond comfortable in such a luxurious place until more stringent measures were taken to set an example for others tempted to write anything negative about the revolution and its leaders. He was summarily dismissed to an attic room on the sixth floor, previously a storage room. His furnishings were taken away, save for a clock and a desk once owned by the Count's father, which he names the Ambassador. With remarkable equanimity, he accepts these new privations and begins to cultivate a friendship with the chef Emile and the maitre'd Andres. As the years roll by, he develops a routine that he follows each day, including a weekly visit to the barbershop in the basement of the hotel. One day he meets Nina, a young girl who turns up at the hotel with her mother and becomes a great addition to the Count's life, leading him on exploratory adventures throughout the hotel, discovering many hidden niches and passageways and, most important, a passkey. We are treated to an extensive selection of meals in one of the hotels, two restaurants, and the civility and manners of all become a part of the story. As time goes by, Alexander finds the need for some income and becomes the head waiter of the main dining room due to his attention to detail and perfect manners. The hotel is a microcosm of the outside world with a fascinating cast of characters giving the reader a glimpse of the upheaval occurring in Russia. This tale of manners, mayhem, and the machinations of everyone just trying to survive in an uncertain and changing world is fascinating and the character of Count Alexander Rostov not soon forgotten. (Contributing Editor Patricia Santa Cruz, Menlo Park, CA)

HIS FINAL BATTLE: THE LAST MONTHS OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

JOSEPH LELYVELD
(2016, 399PP,
KNOPF)

9

Joseph Lelyveld is a distinguished *New York Times* reporter. His book brings no great surprises to the vast scholarly literature on Roosevelt. But the book is so artfully constructed that the reader is constantly surprised with what Franklin Roosevelt says and does. The book spans March 1944 to April 1945 (Roosevelt died April 12, 1945). In March of 1944, feeling exhausted, Roosevelt went to the Bethesda Naval Hospital. It was a life-changing event. FDR acquired his first cardiologist (Dr. Harold Bruenn) and a medical opinion that he had congestive heart failure (the reward for chronic high blood pressure, 240/130, and an enlarged heart). Bruenn told Roosevelt that the situation was so serious that he had but two options: FDR could continue to work in the manner he did and die shortly, the other option was to take rests, minimize stress, and prolong his life. At a minimum, Roosevelt was to interrupt each day's work with a two-hour nap. The book is about Roosevelt's fumbling attempts to follow "option 2" and modulate the ingrained presidential lifestyle of running everything. Lelyveld tells us how Roosevelt cheated the Grim Reaper of 14 months. Lelyveld implies that it could have been more. The book's fourteen months are filled with short stretches where the president vacations – either in Hyde Park (NY) or in Warm Springs (GA) – and his health bounces back. It is fair to say that his health becomes better once Lucy Mercer begins to join the vacations. Lucy Mercer and Franklin had been lovers in Washington (1916-1918), and reportedly had not seen each other since the Wilson Administration. Roosevelt went to lengths to coordinate his health regime with Lucy Mercer's availability. Franklin's doctor-prescribed regime gave him the opportunity to see Lucy, just when Lucy was free to see her former lover (Lucy's long-ailing husband, socialite Winthrop Rutherford, had died on March 19.). Lelyveld's recounting of their meetings make for great reading, especially how Roosevelt planned them. The meetings were many, some of them lengthy, all of them in private. Lelyveld's treats the meetings as historically important, not for the romance



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BOOK REVIEWS

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angle, but for the health angle. Lucy makes Franklin's health better. As Lelyveld tells it, Stalin brought a sudden end to Roosevelt's rehabilitation. Roosevelt wanted a meeting with Stalin, face to face, but Stalin said he could not leave Russia for fear of assassination. On December 27, Roosevelt agreed to meet in Yalta in February. The decision to go to Crimea in the dead of winter ends the book's tension. Lelyveld no longer can sustain any mystery as to how long Franklin Roosevelt will live. Upon hearing of the imminent trip, Dr. Bruenn said that Roosevelt's heart could not withstand such a trip (13, 842 miles). Yalta was a bridge too far for Roosevelt. He departed the meeting precipitously on February 12, but the damage was done just getting there. Roosevelt died exactly two months later. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)

HERO OF THE EMPIRE: THE BOER WAR, A DARING ESCAPE AND THE MAKING OF WINSTON CHURCHILL

CANDACE MILLARD
(2016, 326PP,
DOUBLEDAY)

9

Winston Churchill is among the most-written-about people of all time and, just when you think everything about him has been well worked over, another Churchill book emerges to add to his legendary status. It was the author, Candace Millard, that captured my interest here since she had written the excellent *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey* about T.R.'s dangerous exploration to an uncharted area of the Amazon, and this book promised to be another work of well-researched, well-written narrative nonfiction. *Hero of the Empire* chronicles the young Churchill and his involvement in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa. In his early 20s, the brash and self-assertive Churchill believed it was his destiny to become Prime Minister of England and was convinced that the track to that high office began with battlefield experience and heroism. He arrived in South Africa in 1899 as a correspondent, was captured in an ambush, and taken to prison in Pretoria. Readers will be taken by his bold escape and navigation of some 400 miles east through enemy territory to the Indian Ocean city of Lourenco Marques. He would later enlist, return to South Africa, liberate the men with whom he had been imprisoned, and in the process, become a hero. Churchill would return to England, be elected to Parliament, and later acknowledge that the hard lessons of the Boer War experience were instrumental in molding his character. Millard retells this story in a highly readable, contemporary style, and provides a clear picture of Churchill as a young soldier/ correspondent: Highly ambitious, self-centered, and indomitable. (SHA)



THE MORAL CASE FOR FOSSIL FUELS

ALEX EPSTEIN
(2014, 348PP,
PORTFOLIO/
PENGUIN)

"Climate Change" is an issue very much in the news, every day, everywhere. Our governments, Federal, State, and local all have very expensive plans to deal with climate change, a.k.a. global warming – and we will be asked to pay for it! Our author, Alex Epstein, is an articulate and understandable spokesman for an alternate point of view. He asks a "loaded" question: "Where would humanity be without fossil fuels?" A question I have never heard asked by the CC activists. He makes a case for modern technology and what powers it: Fossil fuels! Mobility, lifestyle, warmth, cooling (ACDC), abundant food, work, and especially "time" to enjoy these blessings. We, the USA, have this now, but most of mankind does not. They *want* it, and they intend to get it! Ergo, India's billions ignore the UN, and China's billions will consider cuts in 35 years? Yes, the USA will, surprise, foot the bill. Who might solve the CC challenges in the future? A civilization driven back 100 years by energy restrictions, or modern well-funded, well-fed economies like the USA, Europe, and Japan! Please, get informed so you can make an intelligent vote, when you are called upon – you will be! Meanwhile, since our problem might be excess CO₂, stop raping the rain forests and plant millions of trees everywhere; they eat CO₂ and cool the earth. (Contributing Editor Stephen Griffith, Los Angeles, CA)



BOOK REVIEWS

**THE WRONG SIDE
OF GOODBYE**
MICHAEL CONNELLY
(2016, 392PP,
LITTLE BROWN)
10

Michael Connelly has written his 29th crime fiction novel. It is his best. He has been at the crime trade for 40 years. His goal has been to write a crime novel as good as Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* (1953). I think he has done it. *The Wrong Side of Goodbye* is very good mystery fiction. Connelly's hero Harry Bosch is an endearing but cantankerous detective, just like Chandler's Philip Marlowe. Connelly's previous novels all featured Bosch's rocky progress through the Los Angeles Police Department. In *The Wrong Side of Goodbye* Bosch has so overdone his cantankerous routine that he has been "early retired." One of the special delights of Bosch case #29 is that he is in "no-man's land," half city cop and half private detective. Gone from LAPD for good, Bosch still needed a badge, a gun, and access to California's databases, without those tools Bosch could not work the crime trade. He became a minor-league cop, a part-timer with the San Fernando Police Department. San Fernando is a three-mile square, incorporated enclave within Los Angeles County. It is heavily Hispanic, middling poor, and it has its own police department. Bosch oversees all "crimes against people" cases. He leveraged his San Fernando part-time status to get a private investigator's license. *The Wrong Side of Goodbye* chronicles Bosch working two cases at once, one public and one private. Working as a San Fernando cop, Bosch tries to catch a serial rapist (the so-called "screen cutter"); and working as a private detective, he searches for the lost heir to an aerospace fortune. The two cases never merge; one is about the downtrodden parts of Los Angeles (with a heavy dose of mental illness and violence), and one is about the super-rich of Pasadena (and the secret lives and debts they have hidden away). The San Fernando case spotlights the race between the screen cutter's lust for young Hispanic women (all of them copycat victims) and Bosch's ability to painstakingly reconstruct the rapist's modus operandi. It is a race between how many women will be raped before Bosch can get the relevant

Continued on page 10.

THE WORDS WE USE... AND MISUSE

Two of my favorite reference books are *The Writer's Art* (1985) and *Fine Print: Reflections on the Writing Art*, both written by James J. Kilpatrick (1920-2010). A long-time political commentator, Kilpatrick was an excellent writer who understood that countless Americans really cared about the English language and the manner in which it was used. In each of the aforementioned books, there is a chapter entitled "My Crotchets and Your Crotchets" in which, with humor, he notes common abuses, style preferences and misunderstandings in writing or in speech, and we have excerpted liberally from these sources over the years. Here are a few more Kilpatrick "crotchets" about proper word selection taken from *Fine Print* (with one noted exception) for your information and enjoyment.

IMPLY/INFER These distinctive and quite different verbs ought not to puzzle writers, but evidently they do. Every commentator on English usage deals at length with the matter. To *infer* is to deduce; to *imply* is to insinuate. In 99 cases out of 100, that is all there is to it

FLAUNT/FLOUT *Flaunt* and *flout* are wholly different words. To *flaunt* is to boast. To *flout* is to scorn. *Flaunt* is rooted in an Old Norse word meaning "to rush around." It means to brandish boldly or ostentatiously, to wave aloft, to display arrogantly. A rich woman flaunts her diamonds; the chairman of a congressional committee flaunts his authority. *Flout* is something else. It means to scorn, to trample underfoot, to treat with contemptuous disregard.

FARTHER/FURTHER Old guidelines still govern the usage. Use *farther* for distance that actually or metaphorically may be measured. Use *further* in matters of degree. Thus, "It is farther from Houston to Chicago than it is from Houston to Charleston." "The candidates will move farther along the campaign trail after Super Tuesday." But, "Upon further examination, the bill appears to be a turkey." "Before we further amend the bill, we should hear additional witnesses."

INGENUOUS/INGENIOUS *Ingenuous* (pronounced in-JEN-YOO-us) is not to be confused with *ingenious*, the more common word, meaning "inventive or resourceful." Though both originate in the same Latin verb, *ingignere* (to produce), *ingenuous* comes directly from the Latin *ingenuus*, which meant "freeborn, noble or frank." In English it has come to mean, "candid, frank, straightforward, or naïve."

AMEND/EMEND Here is a small distinction. I suppose we should preserve it, though I'm not sure quiet why. Except for politicians and proofreaders, nobody greatly cares. To *amend* is to change; to *emend* is to correct. Thus the House may *amend* a bill, adding something to the bill or taking something out. Before it becomes a Public Law, the bill is further *emended*, in order to catch wrong numbering or typographical errors.



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 9.

databases to “talk to him.” The private case is a wholly different matter. Bosch has been hired by Gordon Vance, a dying 85-year-old industrialist who wants Bosch to reconstruct the tycoon’s hazy past and find any heirs left from an illicit romance of 60 years ago. The case is tricky. If Bosch finds any heirs, they inherit the billionaire’s fortune; if Bosch fails, Vance’s assets revert to the parent corporation for liquidation to the companies controlled by the board members. Bosch is to report only to Vance, no matter how much pressure is put on him. Vance tells Bosch the case is made more difficult because not only was his youthful romance illicit, but it was secret too. His lover was an illegal Mexican immigrant, and his parents, at the peak of Pasadena society, were anxious to hide the event (and any “mistakes” related to it). Bosch’s daunting quest is riveting. Going to extraordinary lengths to operate invisibly, Bosch activates information channels where he can find somebody (an illegal immigrant) who technically never existed. And as he proceeds, and as more and more people become “discovered,” Bosch makes them “disappear” once again. It is a great game of shadows chasing shadows. The book’s title is appropriate to the chase, because anyone who gets involved with Bosch might end up on the wrong side of goodbye. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)

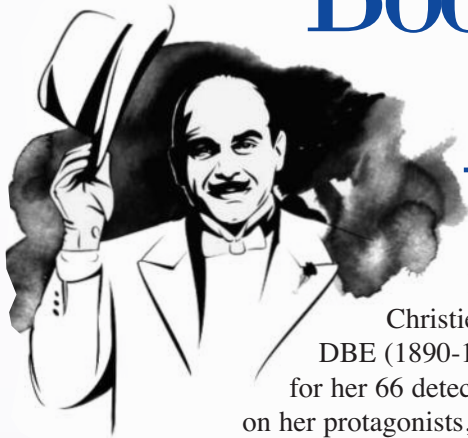
HOME
HARLAN COBEN
(2016, 385PP,
DUTTON)
9

Harlan Coben is a popular crime novelist, who has won Edgar, Shamus, and Anthony awards. He is perhaps best-known for his Myron Bolitar series. *Home* is the 11th of that series and it’s a good one. Myron, a former basketball star, is now a sports agent who also investigates crimes, often in concert with Win (Windsor Horne Lockwood III), his good friend, business associate, and sometime partner in solving crimes. In this book, we learn that 10 years ago, two 6-year-old boys (Patrick and Rhys) from wealthy families were kidnapped, a ransom was paid, and no trace of them ever surfaced. Now an anonymous tip leads Myron to Patrick in London and, fighting off three thugs, is able to bring him home. So now the questions: Where has he been for a decade? What does he remember about the kidnapping and who were they? What can he tell them about Rhys? Getting answers to these questions fuels the action in *Home* as Myron and Win extend their investigation with an assortment of colorful “associates,” e.g. Little Pocahontas, Zorra, and Big Cyndi. Coben delivers in *Home* an excellent read with plot twists, clues that have to be run down, a big run-in with a sleazy London character running a sex trade, dealing with a reticent Patrick and, ultimately, dealing with the boys’ family members, one by one. A great read. (SHA)

SLOW HORSES
MICK HERRON
(2016, 328PP,
JOHN MURRAY)
9

The *Daily Telegraph* hails Mick Herron as “the great spy novelist of our age.” He may not yet be John Le Carre, but he’s getting there, as this contemporary thriller demonstrates. *Slow Horses* is the story of a bunch of misfits put out to pasture by British Intelligence, deemed useless baggage by MI5, thrown out of Regent’s Park headquarters, and exiled to a miserable hovel called Slough House. There they perform mindless tasks and lead a life of unrelieved tedium. The offenses that got them there range from leaving a Top Secret computer disk on the Tube, to having been the assistant to a traitorous former Head of Intelligence, to being tricked by a rival during a security exercise in King’s Cross Station, and causing imaginary death and injury to over 120 people, millions in damage and billions in lost tourist revenue. Good thing it was only a training exercise, but River Cartwright had been set up, banished to Slough House forever, and unlikely to find an opportunity to avenge himself. But then it happens. “It” is a politically motivated kidnapping in which the captive is shown hooded and condemned on a live-feed viewed by millions, with the captors pledging to behead him in 48 hours – also on live TV. Naturally, one supposes this to be a now run-of-the-mill ISIS propaganda play, but when the hood comes off, the captive is a Pakistani and the captors are right-wing British nationalist extremists, bent on an eye-for-an-eye response to the 52 Londoners killed in the infamous July 7 bus-bombing. Once the initial surprise has worn off, one begins to accept the potential reality of the plot: “...we both know the tide’s turning. The decent people in this country are sick to death of being held hostage by mad liberals in Brussels, and the sooner we take control over our own future, our own borders... It will happen... and we both know that.” (Sound familiar?) After establishing that MI5’s Number Two, Diana Taverner, generally known as “Lady Di,” is complicit in the affair and that her Service is compromised and rendered impotent as a result, it falls to the misfits to try to save the day. There is bloodshed, tension and humor and the result is an engrossing, highly enjoyable tale told in a with-it 21st century style that may, indeed, signal Mick Herron’s ascendance to the ranks of the great spy novelists. (Contributing Editor Tom Hudnut, Los Angeles, CA)

Books by Agatha Christie



Dame Agatha
Mary Clarissa
Christie, Lady Mallowan,
DBE (1890-1976) is best known
for her 66 detective novels centered
on her protagonists, Hercule Poirot and

Jane Marple. *The Guinness Book of World Records* recognizes her as the best-selling novelist of all time with sales of some two billion copies. According to her estate, her works are third in the rankings of the world's most widely published book, behind only Shakespeare's works and the Bible. She also wrote *The Mousetrap*, a murder mystery play which has been running continuously in London since 1952, the longest running play in the world. Her novel *And Then There Were None* has sold over 100 million copies, the world's best-selling mystery ever. I was prompted to go back and re-read two of Christie's best after seeing a piece about *Murder on the Orient Express* in the book review section of a Saturday *Wall Street Journal*. Comments on these two are noted below.

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS: A HERCULE POIROT MYSTERY (1934)

Belgian detective Hercule Poirot (who appeared in 33 of Christie's novels) is in Istanbul and receives a telegram to cancel his schedule and return to London. On the second night out, the train is stopped near Vinkovici, Croatia, Poirot hears a cry from the next compartment, and the next morning American Samuel Ratchett is found to have been murdered. Poirot is asked to investigate and begins to sift through the evidence. By piecing together the charred remains of a burned letter, Poirot learns that Ratchett was a fugitive named Lanfranco Sasseti who had escaped justice for the kidnap/murder of a 3-year old American heiress, fleeing with the ransom money. Circumstances make it clear that the murderer is one of the 12 passengers in the car occupied by the victim and the core of the book consists of Poirot's interviews with each of them along with the evaluation of evidence and the results of a thorough search, all coming together with a final group session of the 12. This is a classic Agatha Christie and, since I had forgotten how this all ends, was thoroughly rapt with Poirot's process and just how he puts it all together. The movie of *Murder on the Orient Express* was released in 1974 and the cast featured Albert Finney as

Hercule Poirot and included – get this – Lauren Bacall, Martin Balsam, Ingrid Bergman, Jacqueline Bisset, Sean Connery, Sir John Gielgud, Anthony Perkins, Vanessa Redgrave, and Michael York. I ordered the DVD and enjoyed watching it all over again.

THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD (1926)

As you can imagine, Agatha Christie and her books have received a substantial amount of recognition. In 1955, she was the first recipient of the Mystery Writers of America (MWA) Grand Master Award. In the same year, her *Witness for the Prosecution* received an Edgar Award by MWA for the best play. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was voted the best crime novel ever by 600 fellow writers of the Crime Writers Association on September 15, 2015, coinciding with her 125th birthday. *And Then There Were None* was voted the world's favorite Christie novel followed closely by *Murder on the Orient Express* and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. There are many factors that make the latter so appealing. The setting is the English village of King's Abbot, a village "rich in unmarried ladies and retired military officers," and a place where "our hobbies and recreations can be summed up in the one word, 'gossip.'" There were only two houses of any importance in King's Abbot. One was King's Paddock, left to Mrs. Ferrars by her late husband and the other, Fernly Park, owned by Roger Ackroyd, a congenial, wealthy man nearing age 50. The book is a first person account of a Hercule Poirot mystery narrated by Dr. James Sheppard, the popular village doctor serving the community. Readers will relish Christie's set-up in this story, getting acquainted with the main characters in King's Abbot, including Sheppard's sister Caroline, the gossip queen of the village, and meeting the new neighbor who has just moved in having retired from his profession, a man readers will soon learn is named Hercule Poirot. Roger Ackroyd is murdered near the end of a dinner party he was hosting at Fernly Park, and there are a handful of suspects and a number of clues to work with. Ackroyd's niece, Flora, asks Poirot to lead the investigation and the search for the killer is on. Readers will enjoy the small village setting, 1920s English class distinctions, the workings of Poirot's mind as he works closely with Dr. Sheppard to corral the murderer, and Christie's development of the web of suspects and shifting suspicions, all leading to a unique, surprise conclusion. (SHA)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE SPY WHO COULDN'T SPELL: A DYSLEXIC TRAITOR, AN UNBREAKABLE CODE, AND THE FBI'S HUNT FOR AMERICA'S STOLEN SECRETS

YUDHIJIT
BHATTACHARJEE
(2016, 277PP,
NEW AMERICAN
LIBRARY)

8

In December of 2000, FBI Special Agent Steven Carr at the Washington, D.C. office received a package from the New York office which contained a number of coded letters that had been sent to the Libyan consulate offering to sell top-secret intelligence information for a price. This triggered an intensive search by Carr and his team of encryption experts and intelligence analysts to decode the letters and identify the sender, clearly an employee with a major intelligence agency. Their efforts led them to Brian Patrick Regan, an analyst at the highly secretive National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) and they placed him under surveillance to lend substance to their suspicions. The author reconstructs Regan's background to expose the roots of his treasonous activity, including his dyslexia and inability to spell, a principal factor in identifying him. In August of 2001, believing they had sufficient evidence, they arrested Regan at Dulles Airport preparing to board a flight to Europe to sell his stolen documents, and the task of unraveling his crime was then undertaken by the FBI. The author details Regan's method of acquisition of thousands of pages of highly sensitive intelligence, his hiding of those documents, the highly creative encryptions employed to cover his trail, and the reasons he risked this criminal activity. Readers will be amazed at this real cat-and-mouse espionage tale and the ease with which Regan lifted reams of top secret information, a trailblazer in the digital age. You can skim the explanations of Regan's complex codes, but will be taken in by the story of this failed spy, now serving a life sentence at the U.S. Penitentiary in Lee County, Virginia. (SHA)

BAND OF GIANTS: THE AMATEUR SOLDIERS WHO WON AMERICA'S INDEPENDENCE

JACK KELLY
(2014, 276PP,
PALGRAVE
MACMILLAN)

10

As our national unity is slipping further into rancorous polarization, it is time to revisit what brought us together in the first place. Jack Kelly offers that opportunity in his concise and compelling history of the American Revolution. General by general, militia by militia, battle by battle, from Canada to South Carolina, Kelly guides us to independence. *Band of Giants* is a tribute to those whose limited military skills gradually caught up with their profound commitment to freedom. For the indispensable George Washington, military experience began in 1754 while fighting with the British in the French and Indian War. From the British, Washington learned the importance of discipline and order, but he also realized that they could be vulnerable to irregular forces with imaginative tactics. The young amateurs who gathered around Washington are too numerous to mention in this short review, but the Marquis de Lafayette stands out as the most luminous. He arrived from France at the age 19 – “impossibly youthful” – to offer his life and his fortune for the cause. He instantly captivated Washington and the entire high command with his exuberance, affability, modesty, and irresistible charm. Lafayette quickly demonstrated a singular ability to lead men in battle – “uncommon military talents,” “a rare genius,” “a prodigy for his age.” At first, the patriots suffered defeat in pitched battles against superior strength. They turned to a strategy of defense, with surprise attacks and tactical withdrawal. Finally, when the cause “hung by a thread,” Washington risked everything at Yorktown. With rapid deployment, skilled logistics, devastating artillery, French support, and luck, we became an independent country. Lafayette's return to America in 1824, at the invitation of President James Monroe, is the subject of a poignant last chapter. Lafayette met with former Presidents Adams and Jefferson toward the end of their lives. He then toured each of the then 24 states, where he was always received with awe, wonder, and admiration. Today, when many Americans feel that excessive taxation and regulation – by a remote, powerful, and heavily indebted central government – is threatening our freedom, it is particularly relevant to look back to 1776, when those same circumstances were the cause that ignited the flame of our revolution. (Contributing Editor Hugh Evans, Los Angeles, CA)

UNDERGROUND AIRLINES

BEN H. WINTERS
(2016, 336PP,
MULLHOLLAND
BOOKS)

9+

I confess to being occasionally intrigued by alternative history novels. Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (imagining Nazi-sympathizer Charles Lindbergh becoming president in 1941), Stephen King's masterful 11/22/63 (a modern teacher from Maine goes back to the 60's to stop Oswald from killing Kennedy), and *The Man in the High Castle* (Philip K. Dick's San Francisco story within a story about a subversive book that challenges a timeline where Germany and Japan win World War II), all come to mind. But *Underground Airlines* is more ambitious and uncomfortable because it takes on the possibility that slavery could survive to the present day. Fold back the book cover and a map shows the Carolinas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama as the “hard four” states where slavery, euphemistically known as an institution for “persons bound to labor,” is practiced today on a huge corporate scale with the legal support of the Federal government despite boycotts by many northern states (e.g. Massachusetts' 1927 “Clean Hands” law) and the rebuke of other countries. This historical deviation is due to President-elect Lincoln having been assassinated before he could take office, and



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 12.

because a compromise was made with the South in 1861 to avoid the Civil War, enshrined in an imagined 18th Amendment to the Constitution preserving slavery in all states so inclined. Many southern states, including Georgia as late as 1944, later rejected slavery and Texas effectively seceded following a 1970's war with the U.S. over the issue (in a timeline where the Vietnam war did not happen), yet arrangements with the "hard four" slave states (including Federal safety regulations and Federal support to repatriate escaped slaves) remain to preserve the Union. The narrator known as Victor, code name Dirkson, is an escaped slave captured by the U.S. Marshals Service to be returned to slavery unless he helps track escaped slaves and turn them in to the Feds for shipment back to the South. Victor is a self-acknowledged con-man motivated by self-interest, but with a heart. The "underground railroad" of the mid-19th century in this book meets a modern abolitionist movement where compassionate priests and other northern groups seek to smuggle slaves out of the South and into Canada, using iPhones and modern transportation. Various pop culture and other mainstays of our history (Jesse Owens, Norman Rockwell, Michael Jackson, Lyndon Johnson, e.g.) maintain their important contributions, with an uneasy comfort. The abolitionist groups co-opt Victor and he is sent back into the hard four to retrieve explosive documents that a northern black man (Jackdaw) had compiled in the South and which could derail the alliance between slavery and the Federal government. Victor travels with Martha, a white woman whose black husband has been shanghaied back into corporate slavery, and Victor is ultimately a double agent for both the abolitionists and the U.S. Marshals Service. Ben Winters is a very good writer, and he is white, despite the story he tells describing legal classifications of African-American pigmentation ("172 varieties") that makes a reader squirm. In our time of "Black Lives Matter" and enduring race politics despite a black president and a hope that we should have turned this corner, Winters' new book is at once a highly entertaining thriller and a disturbing social mirror. Winters' narrator writes at one point: "Darkness was rising all about me like black water. Darkness was subsuming me; darkness was me." (Contributing Editor Rob Bunzel, Oakland, CA)



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.

- ORWELLIAN** An adjective describing a situation, idea, or societal condition that George Orwell identified as being destructive to the welfare of a free and open society. (or-WELL-ee-un)
- MALTHUSIAN** Of or relating to T.R. Malthus or to his theory that population tends to increase faster than its means of subsistence and that unless checked by moral restraint or disaster, widespread poverty and degradation inevitably results. (mal-THOO-ze-in)
- PERSPICACITY** Acuteness of perception, discernment, or understanding. Clear-sightedness. (pers-pah-CAH-suh-tee)
- KAFKAESQUE** Relating to or suggestive of Franz Kafka or his writings. Having a nightmarishly complex, bizarre, or illogical quality. (kaf-ka-ESK)
- PRAGMATIC** Dealing or concerned with facts or actual occurrences. Practical. Common sensical. (prag-MAT-ick)
- GNOSTIC** Of, relating to, or possessing intellectual or spiritual knowledge. (NOS-tik)

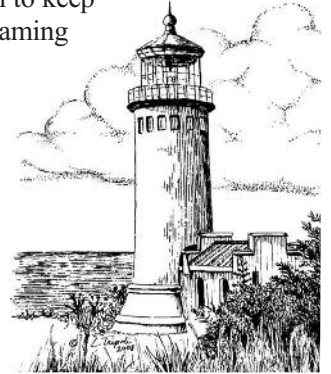


BOOK REVIEWS

THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS

M.L. STEDMAN
(2012, 343PP,
SCRIBNER)
9

The Light Between Oceans was published several years ago, but I missed it and decided to read it with the release of the movie this fall starring Michael Fassbender, Alicia Vikander, and Rachel Weiss. The novel centers on Tom Sherbourne who, after four tough years on the Western Front of World War I, returns to Australia. Seeking peace and comfort after the horrors of the war, he takes a job as a lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, a tiny island several hours off the southwestern coast of Australia. He marries Isabel and their love grows on this lonely outpost, but their plans to create a family are frustrated by two miscarriages and a stillbirth, dissipating their dreams. That changes when a small boat washes ashore with a dead man and a living, tiny baby aboard. The dutiful Tom prepares to report this occurrence but Isabel believes that the baby girl is a gift from God and convinces a principled, reluctant Tom to keep the baby and act as though she delivered the baby (she had been pregnant). Naming her Lucy, the family lives in bliss for the next two years, but on one of their infrequent trips off the island, they learn of the child's mother, who is still praying to have her back. These circumstances solidify a major moral dilemma as Tom is caught between his loving wife, who deeply loves the child and wants to keep her, and his profound urge to do the right thing by returning the child to its mother. Just how these tangled, tragic, and highly emotional circumstances play out for each of the affected characters will have a lasting effect on the reader. *The Light Between Oceans* is a well-rendered tale of right and wrong, love and loss, and a meditation on the ripple effect of life-changing decisions. (SHA)



AVID READER
ROBERT GOTTLIEB
(2016, 337PP,
FSG)
9

Bob Gottlieb has written a wonderful memoir. He had a lot to work with since he is considered the greatest editor of the second half of the 20th century. He was successively editor-in-chief of Simon & Schuster, Alfred Knopf, and *The New Yorker*; and New York City is considered the publishing capital of the world. Simon & Schuster publishes the best-seller blockbusters, Knopf publishes the most influential books, and *The New Yorker* is... well... *The New Yorker*. Bob Gottlieb's memoir is all about being king of the literary city for more than 50 years. The city's literary crowd is not an easy audience, and Bob worked hard to seduce it. He has the "aw shucks," self-deprecating style down pat, his hair is always uncombed, his clothes disheveled, and he never wore a tie in an age when everyone wore a tie. He is funny and kind, and important people fall all over themselves to befriend him. He read Proust and James as a kid and he read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in graduate school (Cambridge), in one month in his spare time. He began reading as a small child and he never stopped. Gottlieb substitutes "the young prodigy" persona for his "young nerd" persona, geeky, Jewish, cannot buy a date and afraid of the countryside. Gottlieb has it down so pat that he ends up running wherever he works; nobody feels threatened by Gottlieb. He is a workaholic, edits beautifully, and always takes a back seat to his colleagues (his writers, too). As an editor, Bob's success depends on getting some very big egos to write drafts and then allow him to edit them. The best of the memoir lies in his tales of how he persuaded the rich and the famous and the brilliant to be edited, to submerge their ego to his. One of Bob's feats of editing was convincing the brilliant Robert Caro to let Bob edit out 300,000 words of Caro's final draft of the Robert Moses biography, *The Power Broker*. (The Knopf-published book still ran to 1,162 pages). The Gottlieb treatment – first befriend and then edit – is best shown by how he prodded two of Hollywood's most famous stars – Lauren Bacall and Katherine Hepburn – to write memoirs for him. Bacall's *By Myself* and Hepburn's *Making of the African Queen* vindicated all the effort Bob put into making film actors successful writers. Bacall wanted her own office, at Knopf and near Bob's. She got it and she came to work every day (she brought her own yellow legal pads). Hepburn wanted Bob to meet her the morning after any day she submitted a chapter. Gottlieb and Hepburn were New York City neighbors, and he walked next door where she received him in her bedroom – she did all her business from her bed, and she did it fast, no idle chatter. What worked with Bacall and Hepburn worked even better with Katherine Graham (of the *Washington Post*) and Bill Clinton. Graham and Clinton started out as difficult clients – both were famous for doing what they wanted when they wanted – but Gottlieb worked tirelessly to change their attitudes. Gottlieb got two famous people to want to be edited and to meet deadlines. Even Clinton went out of his way to please Gottlieb. The "full Gottlieb" produced Graham's *Personal History* and Clinton's *My Life*. Each of the books wrote its own history. Along the way, there were massive sales (in the millions, and not just in English), Kay Graham won a Pulitzer Prize and Bill Clinton won a Grammy for his recording of the audiobook. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE INHERITANCE: A CHARLES LENOX MYSTERY

CHARLES FINCH
(2016, 294PP,
MINOTAUR)

9

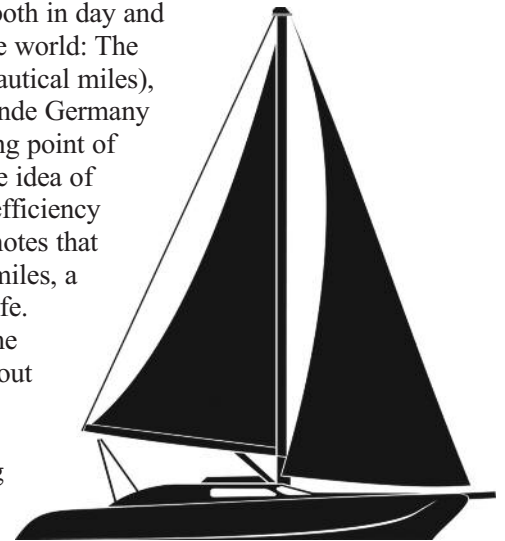
Charles Finch writes silky-smooth mysteries featuring an upper-class detective who solves murders among the aristocracy of Victorian-era London. *The Inheritance* is the tenth episode featuring Charles Lenox, whom Finch has modeled as a sleeker version of his Victorian prototype, the great Sherlock Holmes. *The Inheritance* is written by a man who is a bit of a mystery himself. Born in New York (1980) and educated at Yale, Finch moved on to graduate school at Oxford, where he continued his study of English history. Finch still lives in Oxford. He is listed as one of the 200 most celebrated American expats living in England (such a list is diligently maintained and publicly accessible). If you are a lover of the Holmes' stories, you cannot but marvel at how a Lenox mystery resembles one of Holmes's, except it is more elegant. *The Inheritance begins*, like a Holmes mystery, on a blustery winter evening, a heavy snow just beginning, with detective Charles Lenox sitting before the fire in his book-lined library. Snow gusts rattle the windows as a letter is hand delivered. The letter, written on hotel stationery, is from Gerald Leigh, and it is mysterious. Lenox and Leigh have not been in contact for more than 20 years since the two were classmates at the Harrow School (England's very elite private boarding school). Leigh writes that he is in trouble, that he will visit Lenox shortly, that his life is in danger, and that it all loops back to the mysterious benefactor who put Leigh through Harrow. Thus starts *The Inheritance*. The plot links together the Harrow years, Leigh's 20-year absence, and the threats to his life. In the years since Harrow, Leigh had become a famous botanist in France (then his home), and Lenox had become a famous detective in London. Lenox now has several mysteries on his hands. Leigh goes missing from his London hotel and his speech at the Royal Society of Science. People involved with Leigh's estate begin to get murdered. Solving these mysteries, protecting Leigh, and dealing with new mysteries, Lenox moves in and about the ways of Harrow and the ways of the Royal Society of Science, both encumbered with tradition and secrecy. Lenox is successful as a detective because he is a member of the upper class, he can go where the police cannot; but he walks a narrow path. Amateur detecting is "bad form" for the upper class, who will sanction it only if detecting gives them value. Each of the Lenox mysteries probes the ambivalence between maintaining upper-class status and doing amateur detection. Lenox can never forget that in the eyes of the upper class, detecting is nothing more than police work, and that is what the lower classes do. (Contributing Editor William Lilley, III, Washington D.C.)

KIALOA US-1: DARE TO WIN IN BUSINESS IN SAILING IN LIFE

JIM KILROY
(2012, 437PP,
SEAPOINT BOOKS)

9

Jim Kilroy, well-known in the Los Angeles area for his career as a businessman, philanthropist, and his varied community activities, and internationally for his resounding success as a maxi yacht owner-helmsman-racer in the oceans of the world, passed away in September at the age of 94. I had a chance to visit with him during the Christmas season last year and he gave me a copy of his book *Kialoa US-1: Dare to Win*, an autobiography recalling his life as a real estate developer, his involvement in the community and in public affairs, and, significantly, his career at the top of ocean sailing. His results racing against the world's most competitive yachts and crews were incredible and led to the award of sail number US-1 by U.S. Sailing to the *Kialoas* and their skipper Jim Kilroy. There were five *Kialoas* and *Kialoa II, III, IV, and V* were crowned as world champions both in day and longer races, winning almost all the most challenging races in the world: The Transpacific Yacht Race from Los Angeles to Honolulu (2,225 nautical miles), Transatlantic races including the race from Bermuda to Travemünde Germany on the Baltic Sea (3,534 miles), and many more. A favorite talking point of Jim Kilroy was his "Tenth of a Knot Rule" which centered on the idea of how just a little extra effort, and a little more concentration and efficiency could make such a world of difference in sailing... and life. He notes that one-tenth of a knot of increased speed over 24 hours equals 2.4 miles, a significant competitive edge which leads to wins in sailing and life. Readers will enjoy the maps of race courses, the description of the races and the spectacular photos of the *Kialoas* in action throughout the book, all interspersed with Kilroy's business stories, his involvement with and support of political leaders, his efforts to bring the Olympics to Los Angeles, and more. And those seeking more recognition and better results in life would do well to buy into his "Tenth of a Knot Rule." Jim Kilroy was quite a guy – a real winner. (SHA)





BOOK REVIEWS

A TRUCK FULL OF MONEY: ONE MAN'S QUEST TO RECOVER FROM GREAT SUCCESS

TRACY KIDDER
(2016, 251PP,
RANDOM HOUSE)

8

All of us are drawn to books by authors we've read and enjoyed previously, and that was the case here with Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winner Tracy Kidder. In *A Truck Full of Money*, Kidder chronicles the life of Paul English, a software engineer and entrepreneur who began making waves during the early years of the Internet revolution. Growing up in the Boston area, one of seven children, English was an unmotivated student with an attitude, but turned it around after he discovered the computer science department at the University of Massachusetts, igniting a brilliant career built around computer programming and entrepreneurship, and becoming a giant in the world of software engineering. In describing the early success of English, Kidder chronicles his talents for conceiving innovative computer applications and then picking the right people and inspiring them to make it all happen. He became known as "a Pied Piper" of geeks. English sold his first company for \$33 million and went on later to develop *Kayak.com*, a travel site which was sold for \$1.8 billion. Upon recording these sales, English first thinks about how he can give the money away and then asks "what do we do next?" All of this while suffering from what would later be called a bipolar disorder. Kidder provides readers with a profound description of this complex, unconventional inventor and, in the process draws a portrait of the unique start-up culture in which English thrived. (SHA)

THE FIRE NEXT TIME

JAMES BALDWIN
(1963, 106PP,
THE DIAL PRESS)

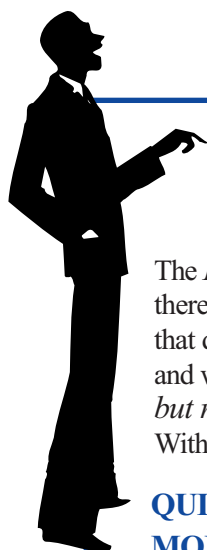
9

In 1963, 100 years after Emancipation, James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* wrote with compassion to his 14-year-old nephew and to Black Muslims led by Elijah Mohammad about how it feels to live in racist America, yet urging them to transcend anger over injustice. "To accept one's past – one's history – is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it." It's 2016 – 50 years later – and 18 contributors to editor Jesmyn Ward's *The Fire This Time* address the specters of race still haunting us, from the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the stalking and killing of Trayvon Martin to police shootings in cities across the country. These eloquent voices respond to the untidy state of race in America today with anger, pain, insight, and humor. Kiese Laymon pays tribute to his exuberant Grandmama, who, "when no one in the world believed I was a beautiful Southern black boy, she believed." Edwidge Danticat tells her daughters that "people might be hostile or even violent to you for reasons that have nothing to do with your beauty, your humor, or your grace, but only your race and the color of your skin." Isabel Wilkerson understands that the advances that culminated in the election of Barack Obama have been "followed by a violent backlash that threatens to erase the gains." With the 2016 election, as the untidy state of race relations threatens to become untidier, Baldwin's words remind us that "we will sacrifice all the beauty of our lives, will imprison ourselves in totems, taboos, crosses, blood sacrifices, steeples, mosques, races, armies, flags, nations, in order to deny the fact of death, which is the only fact we have... One is responsible to life: It is the small beacon in that terrifying darkness from which we come and to which we shall return. One must negotiate this passage as nobly as possible, for the sake of those who are coming after us."

(Contributing Editor Jenny Lawrence New York City, NY)

THE FIRE THIS TIME: A NEW GENERATION SPEAKS ABOUT RACE

EDITED BY
JESMYN WARD
(2016, 226PP,
SCRIBNER)



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 words that are food or food-related that you may be mispronouncing.

QUINOA
MOËT

KEEN-wah.
mo-A, not mo-ET.
(Moët & Chandon).

TOBLERONE
ZAGAT

TOE-bler-own.
zah-GET, not ZAG-et.

GNOCCHI
ALMOND

nyee-OK-ee.
AH-mund. The l is silent.

AU BON PAIN
MOJITO
ESPRESSO

oh-bone-PAN.
moh-HEET-oh.
es-PRESS-oh. There's no x here.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE GENERAL VS. THE PRESIDENT: MACARTHUR AND TRUMAN AT THE BRINK OF NUCLEAR WAR

H.W. BRANDS
(2016, 398PP,
DOUBLEDAY)

9

H.W. Brands, a history professor and two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, centers this excellent book on the showdown between General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) and President Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) during the Korean War. A number of readers will be familiar with the Truman/MacArthur differences, but Brands has crafted a superb piece of journalism and this work will surely represent the definitive chronicle of this epic conflict. In June of 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea and, within two months, had the South Korean forces pinned to the Pusan Perimeter. In September of 1950, MacArthur led a United Nations amphibious landing at Inchon which turned the tide of the war, pushing North Korean troops all the way back to the border of China at the Yalu River.

When some 200,000 Chinese troops crossed the Yalu, despite MacArthur's assurances that this would not happen, the UN forces were overwhelmed, and setting up the major confrontation between Truman and MacArthur. The former, along with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were deeply concerned about containing the war in Korea to avoid triggering a world war, perhaps a nuclear war, with Russia and China. MacArthur, meanwhile, publicly advocated bombing targets in Manchuria, taking the war to the Chinese, and publicly decried the limits placed upon him in fighting the Korean War. This major disagreement, the president wanted to contain the war and MacArthur wanted to expand it, along with a sequence of slights, defiances, and other disagreements led Truman to relieve MacArthur of his duties, triggering a massive public outcry over this unpopular president terminating the revered MacArthur. Brands does a superb job of characterizing Truman and MacArthur, Truman the plain-spoken, "accidental" president, and MacArthur the brilliant strategist with an obsession for self-gratification and contempt for the judgement of his superiors. Brands ends the book with this: "Truman's bold stroke in firing MacArthur ended his own career as surely as it terminated MacArthur's, but it sustained hope that humanity might survive the nuclear age. The courage of Truman's decision had never been in question; six decades later, its wisdom was apparent as well." (SHA)



HEAVEN'S DITCH: GOD, GOLD, AND MURDER ON THE ERIE CANAL

JACK KELLY
(2016, 283PP,
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS)

8

This is really three books in one: The construction of the Erie Canal, the religious revival that seized western New York State in the 1830s, and '40s, the most significant aspect of which was the founding of Mormonism, and an ongoing kidnap/murder that captured the public's attention for decades. As for the building of the canal, it was truly one of the marvels of the modern world, connecting the Great Lakes to the Hudson River and the world beyond. It was a feat of unimaginable daring and danger and countless workers lost their lives in the decade-long process. Coincident with the canal's westward thrust was a religious revival that pitted evangelicals against traditionalists and made fertile ground for Godly adventurers, of whom none was more significant than Joseph Smith of Palmyra, New York. Indeed, the persistence of Smith and his followers in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is the most interesting narrative in *Heaven's Ditch*. The reader follows the Mormon migration west to Nauvoo and Kelly's narrative is very well done. Less interesting to read about, though gripping at the time, is the story of the disappearance of one William Morgan, a man caught up in the religious crossfire of the times between Masons and their opponents. A contest waged primarily through print, this conflict erupted with Morgan's disappearance, presumably at the hands of the vindictive Masons. He was never seen again. The ensuing wave of anti-Mason sentiment cost men their jobs and political careers and provided a colorful backdrop to the ongoing religious tumult that clutched western New York and, indeed much of the country. Kelly's book is a quick read. Each of the stories is interesting in its own right, with the most informative being the part about the Mormons. But the others have their own appeal and the result is a satisfying literary snack – light and easy to digest. (Contributing Editor Thomas Hudnut, Los Angeles, CA)



BOOK REVIEWS

THE FALL GUY

JAMES LASDUN
(2016, 244PP,
NORTON)

8

The term *literary fiction* is used to define those works that have literary merit, that is, “they involve social commentary, or political criticism, or focus on the human condition. It is typically contrasted with popular or commercial fiction, and often focused on themes rather than plot. James Lasdun’s *The Fall Guy*, a taut psychological thriller, fits the bill as a work of literary fiction. Matthew Dannecker, an unemployed chef and struggling with life, has been invited to spend the summer with his wealthy cousin Charlie, and his wife, Chloe, at their beautiful second home in the Catskills. With this he’ll be able to sublet his apartment in New York for some much needed cash and take the opportunity to reorient his life while cooking gourmet dinners for Charlie and Chloe. What begins as a mostly normal arrangement begins to fray around the edges as the difference in wealth and social status becomes more pronounced and some old harmful family dynamics bob to the surface. Matthew is totally taken with the attractive Chloe, and an atmosphere of tension sets in. Matthew keeps his feelings in check out of loyalty to Charlie, but begins to suspect that Chloe is having an affair and starts to follow her for affirmation. Lasdun cleverly escalates the tension as things begin to veer off, turning *The Fall Guy* into a psychological thriller which will catch the reader off guard. (SHA)

...Jane & Friends

By Contributing Editor Jane Ackerman (Studio City, CA)



THE VELVET HOURS (Alyson Richman)

This book is enchanting and, if you have a feel for romance, you are going to love it. This story is about Marthe and she is telling her life story to her granddaughter, Solange. And quite a story it is! Marthe comes from a very simple background in a small town in France but, upon her arrival in Paris, she is quickly appreciated for her beauty and fabulous figure and becomes a courtesan to Charles. He is an extremely wealthy Frenchman and has a wife and a son but keeps Marthe in a lovely apartment. Charles feels the only thing missing is her portrait to hang over the mantle, and he commissions a leading artist of the day to do a painting of her, which is so beautiful that it is the captivating force (along with Marthe) in her home. This takes place in the late 1930s and with Hitler on the rise and with the grave threat of war, Charles gives her a very expensive pearl necklace, and, for added insurance, she also has two-century-old books that are of great, great value. These expensive gifts are featured in this story as it unfolds and reveals the lengths these women have to go to save themselves and their families. You will not want to put this well-written book down, it is just so good!

BLUE (Danielle Steel)

For those of you who are wondering why I am reviewing the book of such a prolific author, “a so out there” type of author, that is exactly the reason why. Her record is phenomenal. Currently the best-selling author alive, and the fourth best-selling author of all time with over 800 million copies sold. What a record! This story begins with Ginny Carter, once a rising star

in TV news, returning home after working on assignment as a political rights activist in Pakistan for four months. She is trying to recover from the death of her husband and son in a traffic accident, and consequently does not care where her assignments take her. Anything to lessen the pain of losing her son and her husband. It is the anniversary of their deaths and on her way home from the airport she is so depressed that she is actually thinking about throwing herself into the East River and committing suicide. As she is about to do this, she hears someone coughing nearby and stops and comes in contact with a young homeless boy, 13-year-old Blue Williams, with the most amazing blue eyes. This is their story and how they together make life meaningful again. This is one book that I heartily recommend and one you will thoroughly enjoy.

THIS WAS A MAN (Jeffrey Archer)

Many years ago, I read *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less*, followed by *Kane and Abel*, and have been a big fan of Jeffrey Archer ever since. *This Was a Man* is the seventh and final book of the Clifton Chronicles. All the books have been international best sellers, and although we hate to see good things end, being the addicting author that Jeffrey Archer is, I think we can assume there will be many more wonderful books ahead. *This Was a Man* is once again centered around the Barrington and the Clifton families and, as it is the final book in the series, all the loose ends are neatly tied up. The complex sequence of events in this story makes it difficult to review, but let’s just say this: Giles Barrington discovers the truth about his wife Karin, Harry



BOOK REVIEWS

ADOLFO KAMINSKY:
A FORGER'S LIFE
SARAH KAMINSKY
(2016, 230PP,
DOPPEL HOUSE
PRESS)

8

When Sarah Kaminsky was 24 and her father was 78, she suggested to him that she write the story of his life as a forger to documents that was so instrumental in saving so many lives beginning with his participation in the Resistance during World War II. In the *Preface* to this book, she notes that when she put away the Dictaphone (which apparently suggested a police investigation to him) and started just taking notes, he opened up and told his fascinating story. As she started writing, she hit a wall and was paralyzed until she realized, to make it work, she had to let him speak and, starting all over again using the first person, he was given a voice. With that, Adolfo Kaminsky, of Russian/Jewish background, told his story as a forger beginning during World War II when he saved his own life and that of his family when they were released from the Drancy concentration camp on their way to Auschwitz. Living in occupied Paris, Kaminsky was recruited by the Jewish underground and soon became the go-to-forger for the Resistance, creating documents that would save the lives of an estimated 14,000 people from certain death. His forging activities, for which he would never accept payment, would continue for 25 years after the end of World War II, to meet a seemingly endless demand for false identity papers from people fleeing persecution and

Continued on page 20.

Clifton begins to write his *magnus opus*, and Emma Clifton completes her 10 years as Chairman of the Bristol Royal Infirmary and gets a call from Margaret Thatcher offering her a job. Sebastian Clifton becomes Chairman of Farthings Bank, and the horrible Lady Virginia once again sees a way to make life miserable for the two families. All of this is written with Archer's smooth way of managing all the twists and turns... what could be better!

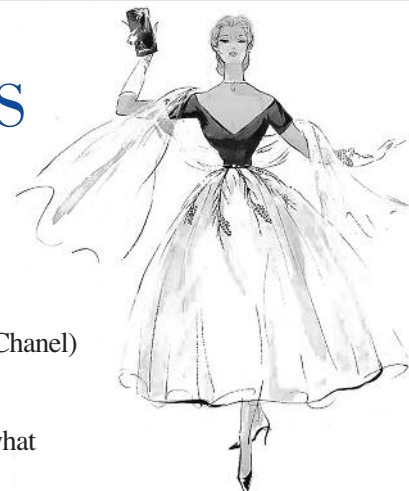
THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10 (Ruth Ware)

The Woman in Cabin 10 is a great book to read on a long flight. It is a mystery adventure that involves a young British travel magazine writer who has been offered the plum assignment to cover the maiden voyage of a luxury cruise ship sailing the North Sea. Our protagonist, Lo Blacklock, arrives at the dock of the ship *Aurora* totally frazzled and sleep deprived. Her apartment was burgled while she was in it and then she was locked in her bedroom while he tossed the rest of the rooms. Lo is determined not to miss this assignment, believing it could be the making of her career. Settled in her suite, Lo is still a nervous

wreck, but she does meet the young woman in the next cabin, which happens to be cabin 10. Lo chats with the young woman, borrows some mascara from her, and they part. At dinner that night, Lo is totally unprepared to meet her fellow travel writers and, to cover her anxiety, she has too many cocktails. Looking forward to a good night's sleep, she finds that she is wide awake and walks out onto her deck, hears a scream and a great splash, and looks over her railing just in time to see a woman sinking beneath the waves. Lo calls the main desk and tells the operator what she has seen, but they tell her she couldn't have seen a woman falling from cabin 10 because it isn't occupied. None of the guests or crew have gone missing. The inference being that Miss Blacklock is hallucinating. Sleep deprived throughout the cruise, and more determined than ever to prove she saw a woman fall from the balcony of cabin 10, Lo promises herself to find out what has been going on. The ship's external communications are not operating. The cruise photographer finds his camera in the ship's jacuzzi. Lo suspects there are people on board that have arranged all the mishaps. This novel has a twisted ending and is a good read. (Betsy Link, Los Angeles, CA)

ABOUT FASHION... ...FROM THE LUMINARIES

- "Walk like you have three men walking behind you." (Oscar de la Renta)
- "When in doubt, wear red." (Bill Blass)
- "Fashions fade, style is eternal." (Yves Saint Laurent)
- "A woman's dress should be like a barbed wire fence: Serving its purpose without obstructing the view." (Sophia Loren)
- "Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and remove one accessory." (Coco Chanel)
- "Your dresses should be tight enough to show you're a woman and loose enough to show you're a lady." (Edith Head)
- "Don't be into trends. Don't make fashion own you, but you decide what you are, what you want to express by the way you dress, and they way to live." (Gianni Versace)





BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 19.

tyranny. He saw these post World War II as a “logical continuation” of what he had done for the Resistance to serve refugees, freedom fighters, and the life “as long as it didn’t go against honor and human values.” When he was not forging, he was a talented professional photographer who has only recently (he’s in his 90s) began exhibiting his photographs, a sampling of which are illustrated at the back of the book. This story of a genius forger who risked his own life to save others is an interesting, engaging read. (SHA)

THE SPY
PAULO COELHO
(2016, 190PP,
KNOPF)
9



Acclaimed Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho has sold over 200 million copies of his books worldwide and is the all-time bestselling Portuguese language author. This little gem will add to those numbers. His novel *The Alchemist* has been translated into 80 languages. In *The Spy*, Coelho brings to life the story of Margaretha Zelle, better known as Mata Hari, who was executed by firing squad in Paris in October 1917 for treason, in all likelihood falsely accused. Coelho gives voice to Mata Hari by devoting the largest segment of this short novel to a fictional letter from her to her defense attorney, M. Clunet, written about her life, her thoughts, her decisions, and her innocence while on death row at the Saint-Lazare prison in Paris. In her brief autobiography, she speaks of her birth and growing up in Holland, her rape at age 16 by a school principal, her early marriage to an abusive Dutch officer while in Indonesia, and her return to Paris, changing her name to Mata Hari, becoming the toast of Paris as a beautiful, exotic dancer, and a courtesan and confidante to the wealthy, powerful men of the day. This letter, written in the days before her execution, was one that touched on many of life’s most important issues, a superb piece of writing by Coelho. The novel concludes with a letter written by her lawyer to her after he learns that her request for a pardon has been denied by the president, in which he explains how and why she has been charged and convicted, a victim of the times and of her own success as an independent woman who challenged current customs. Ironically, her primary accuser, Captain Georges Ladoux, was accused of spying for the Germans and imprisoned. Much later, in 1947, prosecutor André Mornet confided the shallowness of the case against her, saying that “Between us, the evidence we had was so poor that it wouldn’t have been fit to punish a cat.” *The Spy* is an excellent portrait of the legendary Mata Hari by a highly talented writer. (SHA)



Jane Says . . . (to SHA): “What to do? I could go to my adorable office and clear the desk, or could clean closets, or even declutter the house. But no . . . I am going to curl up and read a romance novel!”

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