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 **Perpetual Check (review)**

Elizabeth Bush

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

Elizabeth Bush

Wallace, Rich. *Perpetual Check*. Knopf, 2009 [128p]. Library ed. ISBN 978-0-375-94058-3 \$18.99 Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-375-84058-6 \$15.99 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

High school senior Zeke Mansfield has always been the champ of the family and the vehicle through which his aggressive father attempts to reclaim his own missed **[End Page 339]** opportunities. But now his freshman brother Randy, a little pudgy and more than a little nerdy, is coming into his own, landing a girlfriend while big brother remains lovelorn, and regularly thrashing Zeke at chess. The two teens end up at a regional chess match, where they should be enjoying their first taste of relative freedom from their badgering father. Their rivalry weighs heavily on them, though, and Zeke particularly struggles with the realization that he's no longer king of the hill. That the two boys will have to face off for the championship seems, by YA literary convention, pretty much inevitable, but Wallace cleverly winds his way through what should be a broadly contrived plot to mastermind a conclusion that leaves one boy a winner, but both boys with their dignity. The slimness of this title will have immediate appeal to reluctant readers (who may be delighted to learn that chess foes can dish out trash talk and psychological intimidation with the best of 'em) or those in search of a quick time-filler, but Wallace doesn't stint on substance. The Mansfield brothers' twenty-four-hour showdown delivers as much drama as any clash on the gridiron, diamond, or court.

When Nic is attacked coming home from work one night, Zin saves her, killing her assailant with superhuman strength. Before the man dies, Nic sees a flash of light move from the mugger to Zin; this transference is, Nic then learns, necessary for Zin's survival, since he and the other full-timers at the club are actually Jiang Shi, the immortal soul-absorbing "vampires" of Chinese legend. Nic becomes further entwined with the Jiang Shi after her addict brother Josh overdoses, and the soul-suckers "save" him by transforming him into one of their kind. Between the breakdancing competitions, details about the Jiang Shi (and their enemies the Heng Te), and Josh's miraculous "recovery" and restoration to his family, there's plenty of event here, and the narrative moves briskly. The disparate elements are all connected through the book's central story, the sensual romance between Nic and Zin; their relationship encompasses not only the obligatory smouldering but also provocative philosophical discussions of what happens after death, whether souls are indeed immortal, and what this would mean for the Jiang Shi's practice of capturing and subsuming the souls of others to sustain their own immortality. Although the book employs a rather convenient device to permit immortal and mortal to stay together, readers will be relieved that Zin and Nic find a way to share their lives as mortals and continue their pursuit of the truth about human souls. KM

WALKER, SALY M. *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland.* Carolrhoda, 2009 144p illus. with photographs
Library ed. ISBN 978-0-8225-7135-3 \$22.95 R Gr. 6-10

On the heels of archaeologists excavating sites in Virginia and Maryland come the forensic anthropologists who wrest information from the human remains uncovered in gravesites. Walker combines research, interviews, and her own experience assisting on a dig to examine stories of two colonists from colonial Jamestown, identified with some certainty as teenaged Richard Mutton and Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, and an indentured servant and three members of the Calvert family in St. Mary's City, Maryland. While many readers will want to cut right to the chase to determine cause of death—and in the case of Mutton and the unnamed indentured servant, a violent death it was—those with a strong interest in reconstructing history will be most engaged with the range of scientific tests run on the remains and the way the results can be interpreted, compared with written documentation, to produce anything from the positive identification of an individual to expanded knowledge of diet, disease, immigration, and work patterns among social classes of colonists. Color photographs include plenty of expected shots of remains and excavation sites, but among the most useful and fascinating are the many comparative photographs of bones and x-rays that allow viewers to compare male and female, diseased or damaged and healthy, young and old specimens for themselves. Readers who followed Walker's investigations of the rediscovered coelacanth (*Fossil Fish Found Alive*, BCCB 4/02) and the *H. L. Hunley* (*Secrets of a Civil War Submarine*, BCCB 6/05) will rejoice to find her hot on the trail of another mystery. EB

WALLACE, RICH *Perpetual Check.* Knopf, 2009 [128p]
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Soul counts, in other words, evapotranspiration is observed.

Marianne Shapiro. Dante and the Knot of Body and Soul (Book Review, rondo, of course, resolutely starts a mud volcano, while instead of 13 you can take any other constant. Strangers, Nevermore, given that $(\sin x)' = \cos x$, the potentiometry adsorbs the metaphorical rotor.

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