



# Book Reviews, Book Lover Resources, Advice for Writers and Publishers

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## Reviewer's Bookwatch

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### Reviewer's Choice

**Passenger**

**Ronald Damien Malfi**

**Delirium Books**

9781934546048 \$16.95 [www.deliriumbooks.com](http://www.deliriumbooks.com)

**Jennifer Barnes**

## **Reviewer**

**Passenger is a novel carved from one solid block of stone. Malfi the sculptor chips away intently revealing a sharp plane here, a smooth curve there, but doesn't unveil the resulting form until the final pages of the book. The novel's concept is deceptively simple, a man wakes up on a Baltimore city bus with no memory and no ID, only an address written on his hand. This allows for plenty of mystery, suspense and even a few comic moments. The plot and main character can wander in a seemingly aimless manner while the reader avidly searches for clues to the man's identity.**

**Passenger provides plenty of food for thought about how a person's past makes them who they are, how experiences help create identity. The book goes even further and implies that even when a person's past is unknown it still controls their future.**

**The book is written in a sparse, haunting style that resonates through each page and seems to swell to fill the slim volume, like a single note played in a large empty room. As always Malfi is the master of mood, creating a slow-building anxiety that forces your eyes to move faster across the page. It's a risky move to rest the whole book on a few final pages however the end does deliver with a satisfying but tragic revelation. Mysterious, thought-provoking and gritty Malfi's Baltimore is a fascinating place to visit, I'm just glad I don't live there.**

**A Prayer for Owen Meany**

**John Irving**

**Ballantine Books**

**9780345361790 \$7.99**

**Robert Kubicek**

**Reviewer**

**A Prayer for Sensible Morality**

**John Irving's A Prayer for Owen Meany leaves a lot of options open for the would-be critic. Does one focus on the religious aspect? The political? Or should one try to attach meaning to symbols like the totem pole or de-clawed armadillo? Each approach has its pitfalls, potentially leading a critic down a path that would prevent them from examining the full scope of the novel. The authors of the three essays included in this critique of Irving's novel do just that. On their own, the articles give incomplete depictions of Irving's world, but when carefully combined together, the authors help elucidate John Wheelwright's final statement: "O God-please give him [Owen Meany] back! I shall keep asking You" (POM 617).**

**William Pritchard is the most vociferous of the three authors boldly informing the reader of the nature of Irving's novel: "there is absolutely no irony in A Prayer for Owen Meany" (Pritchard 1). Pritchard is convinced that Irving's novel is intended to entertain not instruct, citing the article "Defense of Sentimentality" to support his claim: "Irving has insisted that art has an aesthetic responsibility to be entertaining, that there's nothing wrong with being easy to understand" (Pritchard 2). He offers this quote from the novel as evidence to support his assertion: "THOMAS HARDY MAY BORE YOU BUT HE'S OBVIOUS; HE TELLS YOU EVERYTHING YOU HAVE TO KNOW" (Pritchard 2). Now, Pritchard is not suggesting that Irving is boring, only that, like Hardy, he makes his message tangible.**

**Pritchard takes his claims of simplicity to an extreme though, finishing his article with this whopper: "The narrator's present (1987) musings and grumblings about his life in Canada (where he lived for nearly 20 years), his religious opinions, and his angry criticisms of American political depredations... [seem] feebly laid on...as for the novel's religious message, it doesn't have one" (Pritchard 4). While the text does not have a religious message in the traditional sense, anyone who has read the novel knows that Pritchard must have consumed a large quantity of bleach as a child to dismiss the significance of politics and religion in the book so offhandedly - a fact that I will prove later. Yet, Pritchard's one pertinent observation should receive serious consideration: Irving states everything you need to know explicitly.**

**R. Z. Sheppard, on the other hand, believes that the weight of the novel lies in the political realm and that Owen: "reminds us that, after the nostrums of the Great Communicator, news should really be more than what we did not know yesterday, and are likely to forget tomorrow" (Sheppard 2) - a clever, though circumspect, re-spinning of John Wheelwright's 'misinformed Americans' label. Sheppard feels justified in down-playing the religious aspect of the novel because of this statement by Irving: "I'm moved and impressed by people with a great deal of religious faith... [but] the Christ story impresses me in heroic, not religious, terms" (Sheppard 2), which he believes relegates the Christ-like Meany to the realm of the heroic as well. In addition, Sheppard warns: "the novel invites trespass by symbol hunters. One can easily imagine college sophomores arguing over the meaning of a stuffed armadillo that has had its claws removed, or the significance of Wheelwright's carrying his small friend on his shoulders to slam dunk a basketball" (Sheppard 2) - thank God I am a junior! Here Sheppard indirectly reiterates Pritchard's argument: Irving is obvious. Though his quick dismissal of the religious undertones in a novel that has religious connotations even in the title is rash; a critique with which my next author would undoubtedly agree.**

**Of the three critics, James Hall was the only one to emphasize the importance of religion in the book. Hall makes several strong points which will be included in**

**my line of reasoning in regards to the novel's meaning, but ultimately derives the wrong conclusion from the text:**

**Irving is not writing about religious experiences; he is presenting us with the possibility of finding God in the midst of doubt...Through John Wheelwright, Irving suggests that God will never leave us alone and that God is present in the worst experiences we can imagine...We can't predict the end...and worst of all we can't control it. All we can do is celebrate those 'red-letter days' [Holy Days] which recall how God responds to horrendous events. (Hall 300)**

**Doubt, I will argue, is not a place in which to find God (at least not according to Irving), it is a by-product of the lack sensible morality - a morality that has not been emphasized since the culture's colonial origins.**

**I derive my definition of sensible morality from the interview "Finding John Irving" in which Irving criticizes American culture by saying:**

**we live in a prudish stupid country...Aren't we the only country in the world that could have been offended by that brief millisecond of Janet Jackson's breast?...It's horrendous. Why do so many people care about gay marriages? How do gay Marriages affect those of us who have heterosexual unions? (Weich 8)**

**Irving is saying that because Americans are so concerned with moral transgressions that have no real consequence in their lives or the lives of others, they often lose sight of the real problem. The sentiment can be found echoed in the novel in these words from John Wheelwright "...but the American people reserve their moral condemnation for sexual misconduct. Remember when the country was killing itself in Vietnam, and the folks at home were outraged at the length and cleanliness of the protester's hair?" (POM 323) Moral sensibility, therefore, is expressing concern and passing judgment on issues and events that affect your life and the lives of others in a significant way.**

**I do not wish to appear to judge Hall too harshly for he commits the same sin as his peers while criticizing A Prayer for Owen Meany: he focuses on only one aspect of the novel. All three authors agree the text is simple and straightforward, yet all are foolish enough to believe that Irving included hundreds of pages of political or religious events for the sake of telling a story. The assumption sells Irving's accomplishment short. A Prayer for Owen Meany is about the evolution of American society: from the allusion to the settling of Gravesend, to childhood baseball, to television, to Wheelwright's move to Canada and his obsession with politics, Irving illustrates America's turn from sensible morality to pop culture morality, and in the last line of the novel, cries out for a return to American's former sensibility.**

**The main character, John Wheelwright, is a call back to the religious foundations**

**of Gravesend: "The town where I was born was purchased from an Indian sagamore in 1638 by Rev. John Wheelwright, after whom I was named" (POM 7). The fact that the first settlers in the colonies traveled the Atlantic Ocean in order to escape the corruption of the church in Europe is common knowledge, but the reader watches the founders of America made a moral misstep from the get-go: "As for the settlement of the disputed deed [for the rights to Gravesend], you can be sure the Indians were not the beneficiaries of the resolution of that difference of opinion" (POM 8-9). Thereafter, Rev. Wheelwright would switch churches because he began to "question the authority of certain dogmas" (POM 8). Similarly, narrator John Wheelwright partakes in a switch of 'religions' in the novel as he begins to question the dogmas of contemporary American society.[1]**

**Sheppard is right to assume that objects like the Armadillo are not symbolic. As Pritchard points out, Irving is obvious. On top of that, the author flat out tells the reader the totem pole - the object the de-clawed armadillo represents - is void of any meaning beyond the recurring theme that Americans are misinformed:[2] "Later, there was some...interesting speculation regarding why Watahantowet's totem was an armless man" (POM 8). The passage goes on to list a series of speculations, each more**

**implausible than the one preceding it, giving a distinct impression that the totem is just a totem. However, Sheppard is naive to assume the novel is without symbolism; Irving is careful to depict baseball, television and politics as representatives of a new religion in America - one that diverts rather than inspires sensible morality.**

**The first of the new religions presented is baseball; the great American pastime, which represents mass culture. Interestingly, baseball kills Tabitha, the character James Hall refers to as the "Virgin Mary" (Hall 300). The idea seems outlandish at first, but if you consider Tabitha's attributes, his claims appear almost reasonable. First off, she has a son without a father: "I was little Johnny Wheelwright, father unknown" (POM 9); she is described as having a 'tranquil, modest nature' (POM 13); and she gave birth to John in her mother's house which resembles an inn: "Grandmother's house was often mistaken for the Gravesend Inn by travelers" (POM 16). The fit is by no means perfect as the identity of John Wheelwright's father is revealed later in the novel and Mary gave birth in manger not an inn, but if Hall's assertion is to be believed, then perhaps Tabitha's death is symbolic of mass culture dealing a death blow to morality.**

**The theme is carried on more convincingly as Hall examines the effects of television in the death of Harriet Wheelwright:**

**It is Irving's voice that conveys his conviction without God a society perishes. He has a particular distaste for television (when something is particularly deplorable it is MADE FOR TELEVISION)...He gives us a chilling image of the final**

**moments in the life of John's grandmother...When her son-in-law comes to visit her he finds her dead, 'propped up in her hospital bed; she appeared to have fallen asleep with the TV on and with the remote-control device held in her hand in such a way that the channels kept changing...her cold thumb had simply attached itself to the button that restlessly roamed the channels for something good.' (Hall 300)**

**While I think sensible morality should be substituted for the word God in Hall's statement, he makes a good observation. The discovery of the deceased Harriet Wheelwright is one of the saddest moments in the book. Once a proud, respected member of the community, Harriet is slowly isolated from society as she becomes increasingly dependant upon TV: "One day, not even you will want to watch television with me," she said to Owen. "One day," she said to me [John Wheelwright], "you'll come to visit me and I won't even know who you are" (POM 443). Harriet's prediction proves too: she dies watching TV alone in the elderly home she so desperately wanted to avoid.**

**As Hall suggests, Harriet's restless channel surfing is symbolic of the novel's theme: society is looking for truth and guidance in the wrong place, and because of this folly, society never finds that "something good" they are searching for. To reinforce the analogy, Irving has Harriet lose her ability to remember the past: "Grandmother's memory began to elude her near the end" (POM 18). A similar description is used to describe society: "Americans are not great historians" John Wheelwright declares on page seven of the novel. Sadly Harriet Wheelwright, who turned from the book to television, had become one of them.**

**The last of the new religions is presented to the reader via John Wheelwright. He is addicted to politics, a crutch that replaces religion in his everyday life: "Katherine told me today that I should make an effort not to read any newspapers... Katherine wants only the best for me; I know she is right...I'm ashamed to tell Katherine how many Sunday services I've skipped" (POM 451-452). And, like all of the new religions in the novel, it claims the life of someone John loves - Owen Meany.**

**In James Hall's article, he points out that Christmas is used as a benchmark for the escalating conflict in Vietnam: "Christmas is a recurring motif in the story. Irving records the increase in the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam at each Christmas celebration" (Hall 300). The politics of war make their appearance on American soil personified as Dick: "'Come on in' [Dick] said, stepping back into his room, where - no doubt - he dreamed without cease of butchering the Viet Cong" (POM 598). Dick, who has been forgotten and neglected by American society, still manages to absorb pop-culture morality:**

**The "tribe" as he'd [Major Rawls] called the family, did not live (as he'd said) in a trailer park, but in a one-story tract house with turquoise aluminum siding...the**

house was identical to all the others in what I suppose would be called a low-income housing development. ...And since the houses were nearly all constructed of cheap, uninsulated materials - and the residents could not afford or did not chose to trouble themselves with air conditioning - the neighborhood (even in the evening) teemed with outdoor activities of the kind that are usually conducted indoors...By marvel of a long extension cord, a TV was placed in a prime position on the dry, brown lawn; a circle of men were watching a baseball game, of course (POM 595-596)

The passage has all three evils of society. A family is living in poverty on American soil as the government wages an expensive war in Vietnam. The "tribe" lacks simple luxuries like air conditioning, but they still own a TV, and by God, they are watching baseball on it.

Irving shows society at its worst in this passage, and Dick is a by-product of it. He has been brainwashed by the media to believe that the Vietnamese are monsters: "THERE IS SUCH A STUPID 'GET EVEN' MENTALITY [in this country] - THERE IS SUCH A SADISTIC ANGER" (POM 602). The mentality Owen Meany mentions inspires Dick to throw a grenade into a bathroom of young Vietnamese refugees at the end of the novel: "Think fast - Mister Fuckin' Intelligence Man!" (POM 612) The immaculately conceived boy (POM 540), the baby Jesus in the Christmas play (POM 164), the young man who lived his life according to a dream with unwavering faith (POM 416), the character whose all caps dialogue, Irving admits, was modeled after Jesus' red-letter utterances in the New Testament (Sheppard2), the novel's namesake who was undoubtedly fashioned to resemble Jesus, just another victim to the 'new religions.' Upon Owen's death, the reader watches John Wheelwright's moral light fade from this world, and witnesses the narrator, in his later life, become obsessed with the same 'religion' that killed his best friend.

John Irving has said on many occasions that he is not John Wheelwright, and I am inclined to believe him. John Wheelwright is meant to represent the typical American struggling through life as he or she attempts to find a purpose. As Owen suggests in the first pages of the novel: "the book [Wall's History of Gravesend] was FULL OF WHEELWRIGHTS" (POM 13). The History of Gravesend is really the history of America, and Irving's story is the tale of the evolution of that society from the John Wheelwrights who founded Gravesend under the guise of religion to the John Wheelwrights who worship politics.[3]

The book's theme is further elucidated through the words of Thomas Hardy: "NOTHING BEARS OUT IN PRACTICE WHAT IT PROMISES INCIPIENTLY" (POM 519), and the reader sees this sentiment in the 'new religions' which promise that they will give their devotees a purpose, but in reality, cause isolation and apathy. The unreliability of these promises creates the doubt that runs rampant in the novel, and is reflected by an American society that is more concerned with

appearance of its protestors than the sins of its government on a global level: "Remember when the country was killing itself in Vietnam, and the folks at home were outraged at the length and cleanliness of the protestors' hair?" (POM 323) Organized religion is offered as a light in the novel, but in truth not even religion can come through in its promises (recall the Indian deed negotiated by Rev. John Wheelwright). Irving shows that only the characters who are able to follow what they believe with unwavering certainty are able to manifest good in world - most notably Owen Meany[4] and Pastor Merrill.[5]

In spite of this, the realm of religion offers the best route to the moral strength the John Wheelwright's of the world need. If one uses this statement by Owen as an analogy: "NO THEY [the Catholics] REALY DO THIS SORT OF THING BEST - THEY HAVE THE PROPER SOLEMNITY, THE PROPER SORT OF RITUALS, AND THE PROPER PACING...I DIDN'T SAY ANYONE DID IT 'WELL'...I SAID CATHOLICS DID IT BETTER" (POM 594). One can almost hear Irving hint that while religion may not inspire sensible morality 'well,' it achieves its end better than the new religions of American society. Readers should not, however, walk away from the novel thinking Irving was attempting to convert them, for while Irving is "moved and impressed by people with a great deal of religious faith," he states, "the Christ story impresses me in heroic, not religious, terms" (Sheppard 2). Owen Meany is not meant to be Christ in the novel, he is supposed to be a hero of morality; he is supposed to be the foil to the America described in this passage:

**IS THIS COUNTRY JUST SO HUGE THAT IT NEEDS TO OVERSIMPLIFY EVERYTHING? ...**

**...LOOK AT WHAT WE CALL 'RELIGION': TURN ON ANY TELEVISION ON SUNDAY MORNING! SEE THE CHOIRS OF THE POOR AND UNEDUCATED - AND THESE TERRIBLE PREACHERS, SELLING OLD JESUS-STORIES LIKE JUNK FOOD. SOON THERE'LL BE AN EVANGELIST IN THE WHITE HOUSE; SOON THERE'LL BE A CARDINAL ON THE SUPREME COURT. ONE DAY THERE WILL COME AN EPIDEMIC - I'LL BET ON SOME HUMDINGER OF A SEXUAL DISEASE. AND WHAT WILL OUR PEERLESS LEADERS, OUR HEADS OF CHURCH AND STATE...WHAT WILL THEY SAY TO US? HOW WILL THEY HELP US? YOU CAN BE SURE THEY WON'T CURE US - BUT HOW WILL THEY COMFORT US? JUST TURN ON THE TV - AND HERE'S WHAT OUR PEERLESS LEADERS, OUR HEADS OF CHURCH AND STATE WILL SAY: THEY'LL SAY, 'I TOLD YOU SO!' THEY'LL SAY, 'THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR FUCKING AROUND - I TOLD YOU NOT TO DO IT UNTIL YOU GOT MARRIED.' DOESN'T ANYONE SEE WHAT THESE SIMPLETONS ARE UP TO? THESE SELF-RIGHTEOUS FANATICS ARE NOT 'RELIGIOUS' - THEIR HOMEY WISDOM IS NOT 'MORALITY.'**

**THAT IS WHERE THIS COUNTRY IS HEADED - IT IS HEADED TOWARD OVERSIMPLIFICATION. YOU WANT TO SEE A PRESIDENT OF THE FUTURE? TURN ON ANY TELEVISION ON ANY SUNDAY MORNING - FIND ONE OF THOSE**



**HOLY ROLLERS: THAT'S HIM, THAT'S THE NEW MISTER PRESIDENT! AND DO YOU WANT TO SEE THE FUTURE OF ALL THOSE KIDS THAT ARE GOING TO FALL INTO THE CRACKS OF THIS GREAT, BIG, SLOPPY SOCIETY OF OURS? I JUST MET HIM; HE'S A TALL SKINNY, FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY NAMED 'DICK.' HE'S PRETTY SCARY. WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM IS NOT UNLIKE WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE TV EVANGELIST - OUR FUTURE PRESIDENT. WHAT'S WRONG WITH BOTH OF THEM IS THAT THEY'RE SO SURE THEY'RE RIGHT! THAT'S PRETTY SCARY - THE FUTURE, I THINK, IS PRETTY SCARY" (POM 602-603).**

**I would break this quote down for you, but as Pritchard mentioned at the outset, Irving is obvious. I will say this though: at the end of the novel when John Wheelwright is praying for God to return Owen to him, John is really asking for a restoration of the moral guidance he had when his friend was alive; and through his narrator, Irving, afraid of the future, is asking society for a restoration of sensibility to American morality.**

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**[1] The paragraph should be setup to show how Irving depicts the sensible morality of early America. The fact of the matter is Irving fails to do so explicitly, and as a result, I am unable to offer concrete proof. I suggest that one assumes that each negative of the present has deviated from a virtue of the past (books to television for instance), and that even though the America of the past was corrupt too, it was more apt to instill the sensible morality that creates heroic figures like Owen Meany.**

**[2] Owen's death is supposed to remind us of the totem pole, though. I believe Irving did this in an attempt to call back to the establishment of Gravesend and the moral relativism inherent in American culture since its conception.**

**Unfortunately, I do not have the necessary space to explore this issue in my paper.**

**[3] John Wheelwright (narrator) is atypical in society for he is aware of pop-culture morality. He represents contemporary Americans in that he too is searching for a purpose.**

**[4] "Owen Meany was awarded the so-called Soldier's Medal: 'For heroism that involves the voluntary risk of life under conditions other than those of conflict with an opposing armed force'" (POM 615).**

**[5] "I heard from Dan that he's a whale of a preacher, and that there's not a trace of the slight stutter that once marred his speech" (POM 571).**

**Dying in a Winter Wonderland**

**Tony Burton, editor**

**Wolfmont Press**

**238 Park Dr. NE, Resaca, GA 30735**

**9781603640053 \$11.95**

**Marlene Pyle**

**Reviewer**

**Normally, I don't urge readers to buy a certain book, but this one is more than just a great collection of crime stories. For the third year, its publisher, Wolfmont Press, will donate the proceeds to Toys for Tots, a charity that distributes Christmas gifts to needy children.**

**Toys for Tots has helped make the holiday season brighter for kids since 1947, and your contribution will keep the tradition alive for years to come.**

**The anthology includes suspense-filled short stories from thirteen talented writers, each with a winter holiday theme. Some of the stories are very funny, some more serious, but they are all fun to read. One of the tales, "Taking her Medicine" was written by Calhoun's own Tony Burton, an award winning author and the creative writing instructor at Harris Arts Center.**

**The book is available now and can be ordered online at [www.wolfmont.com](http://www.wolfmont.com) or email Mr. Burton at [tony@wolfmont.com](mailto:tony@wolfmont.com). "Dying in a Winter Wonderland" would make a perfect stocking stuffer for the mystery reader in your life, or pick one up for yourself as an early gift. Everyone needs to take a break during the hectic holiday season. Light the fireplace, settle into your favorite chair, make a cup of hot cocoa and relax with these action- packed stories of murder and mayhem. You'll enjoy it and you'll be helping underprivileged kids have a happier holiday. What could be better than that?**

## **Imaginary Lines**

**Linton Robinson and Ana Maria Corona**

**Adoro Books**

**Southern California**

**9780972134996 \$14.95 adorobooks.com**

**Max Carrillo**

**Reviewer**

**Book display page and cover art are at <http://adorobooks.com/booklines.php>**

**I specialize in reviewing what I call "gringo lit": a genre in which writers from a country I learned to love in spite of itself--the United States of America--deal with the country that is my birth mother--The United States of Mexico. One thing you learn is that foreigners are often capable of greater insight into the labyrinth of Mexico than we are ourselves; just as Mexican writers bring an outsider perspective that many Americans find enlightening.**

**IMAGINARY LINES is probably the best book I have encountered that does both of those perspectives at once: California journalist Linton Robinson and Tijuana writer Ana Maria Corona collaborating on a collection of stories and essays that turn the frontera between the two countries into a magic mirror of nationality, culture, race, sex... and cuisine. And it does this without attempting to do so: as Pulitzer nominee Luis Urrea (a member of the Latino Literature Hall of Fame who has written for many of the publications these pieces originally appeared in) puts it in his review: "This is not an immigration book, nor would I call it a border book. But it is a well-guided journey into an interzone." It speaks of those lines that separate and unite us through sketches of people... and the occasional plate of food.**

**The chapters here are of two different types. The long ones are interview-based explorations of sub-cultures: Tijuana gamblers (including those who gamble with the lives of gamecocks and even their own), Mexican gigolos, girls who come to work as maids illegally in California. Don't think for a minute that what these people say is anything like what you've read in other "border" or "immigrant" books: every word is a revelation of new outlook and connections.**

**The other pieces are shorter, and tend to revolve around Mexican cooking and scenes from Ms. Corona's childhood in Guadalajara. These are luminous essays, reaching out from humble fare like corn, chile peppers, and mole sauce to apprehend Mexican culture, the conquest of the Americas (or was it vice-versa?), and a flickering universe hung between religion, faith, superstition, rumor, and being what you eat. "Eat" in the larger sense, as best shown in the "Faith, Aphrodisiacs, and Freeze-Dried Blood" segment. Among the many questions and ambushes in these "food pieces": chiles conquer the world in the same way that**

women ultimately conquer men, the fact that goats are common in Mexican food and society, but practically nonexistent in the United States, shows a great deal about both cultures, that men go to whorehouses to get away from women.

My favorite line in the book comes from that FreezeDried Faith chapter:

"Life, health and sanity are all circles of light surrounded by endless darkness. Perhaps it is in the twilight between the two that the nature of both become more clear to us. If we're going to have faith, we might as well have blind faith: if we're going to be realists, we might as well be a magical realists."

Ms. Corona has a finely-tuned eye for borders and boundaries of sexuality, as well. A touching picture of her life emerges from between the lines as she stirs that element into the salsa she serves up to us. As in this line from a piece that goes worldwide on the hot bite of chiles:

"Chile" is a term very frequently applied to the masculine member. Chiludo means having a big "chile"; therefore "well hung". The chile is strong, it "bites". In Spanish, capsicum is not "hot": we would say a chile is picante or picoso. The word pica is an aggressive verb that describes the bite of ant or the sting of a bee, or the sauce of sarcastic, biting, picaresco humor. It also has the same sense of English words like "pick" and "peck", as well as the beak of a bird.

In that sense it is yet another term men apply to their sexual member, a term I readily understand; there was a period in my life when my image of male sexuality was very much like that kind of "picking"; a sharp, devastating piercing and carrying away. "Pico" meant to me the deadly beaks of rapine birds. I understood it by watching the garzas, white egrets that hunted in the marshes, wading in with emotionless eyes to watch for the chance to stab that stiff length of death into whatever careless fish swam by."

No attempt is made to sort out Ms. Corona's contributions from Mr. Robinson's, a blending further blurred by the use of first person narratives for interviewees. I assume it's deliberate because it's so much in keeping with the rest of the book.

This is a work that should impress readers quite apart from the usual "gringo lit" fans: it appeals at once to NPR-listener sensibilities, feminists who don't mind seeing third world women saying things outside the usual canon, lovers of gentle humor, food freaks who will drool over the descriptions of dining and painstaking food preparation, and any reader who loves well-written, incisive essays that start from unusual places...then transcend them.

George Green's, *The Lion Who Couldn't Roar*  
George Green and Amy J. Brooke  
Illustrated by Shiyin-Sean Luo

**Visikid Books**

**1350 E Flamingo Rd, Suite #50, Las Vegas, NV 89119**

**9781933156149 \$16.99**

**Peggy Tibbetts, Reviewer**

**www.peggytibbetts.net**

**Lenny and Chad are young lions and best friends. One day Chad challenges Lenny to see who can roar the loudest. Lenny is horrified to discover that he can't roar. So he hides out in shame, knowing he can never be King of the Jungle without being able to roar.**

**An ad on a Bilboa tree sends Lenny in search of a wise monkey. He hopes the monkey will help him find his roar. Along the way he makes plenty of new friends in the jungle and discovers something he never knew he had.**

**Green and Brooke's engaging lyrical verse tells a heart-warming story that brings to mind Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Books. Lenny the lion's quest shows readers how actions speak louder than roars.**

**The Disney-esque illustrations in "George Green's, The Lion Who Couldn't Roar" will delight fans of "The Lion King". The exquisite details and vivid color in Luo's drawings bring the lovable characters to life, making this book a treasure for readers young and old.**

**Blind Savior, False Prophet**

**Joseph DeMarco**

**AuthorHouse**

**1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403**

**9781434391261 \$14.49 1-888-519-5121**

**Tyler Tradere**

**Reviewer**

**The False Prophet of Fennimore Place is back, taking on the oneness of religion in this obscure, but loveable book. The story starts off after the death of The False Prophet, when a drugged out ex-student of his is attempting to find a lost manuscript she believes he buried on an island in the Caribbean. Siann (which is the named of the drugged out ex-student) is in the middle of a ice (crystal methamphetamine) bender. She has stolen a car and is heading toward Florida. She has pieced together this belief about a lost manuscript from a series of dreams she has had and a faded green notebook that she stole from Joe Kaye (The False Prophet of Fennimore Place) back when she was in seventh grade.**

**The second story is presented as the manuscript Siann finds which is entitled**

**Blind Savior.** The manuscript **Blind Savior** is about a schizophrenic homeless man named **Felix King** who believes himself to be the reincarnation of **Abraham Lincoln, Krishna, Jesus, Lao Tzu, Buddha, and Mohammed**. Most of **Felix's** beliefs about reincarnation stem from a series of religious recurring dreams that he has had.

**Felix** has **NO FATHER**, and his mother has died. **Felix** is apprehensive to tell anyone about his dreams, but finally confides in two of his friends in high school. Needless to say, no one believes him. He is abandoned by friends and family, spends some time in institutions and is finally spit out by society. When **Felix** has his last dream, he believes he is **Abraham** staring at the smoking crater that was once **Sodom and Gomorrah**.

Now with the help of a strange writer named **Rysby Lenin** (who claims to be the reincarnation of **John Lennon**), **Felix** must try to solve the mystery of his religious recurring dreams.

**A Passion for God: The Spiritual Journey of A. W. Tozer**

**Lyle Dorsett**

**Moody Publishers**

**820 N. LaSalle Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60610**

**9780802481337 \$14.99**

**Paul R. Waibel**

**Reviewer**

An elderly Christian gentleman once told me that if he could have only one book other than the Bible, it would be **The Knowledge of the Holy** by **A. W. Tozer**. **The Knowledge of the Holy** and **The Pursuit of God**, also by **A. W. Tozer**, are two of the best loved Christian books of the twentieth century. Their author, **Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963)**, is remembered as a modern-day Christian mystic, and, apart from its founder, the best known pastor in the history of the Christian and **Missionary Alliance**.

This latest biography of **A. W. Tozer**, **A Passion for God: The Spiritual Journey of A. W. Tozer**, is the latest in a series of short, informative biographies of influential evangelical Christians by **Lyle Dorsett**, Professor of Evangelism at the **Beeson Divinity School of Samford University**. **Dorsett's** goal is to provide a biography of **Tozer** that portrays him as a real human being, one who was far from perfect but saved by **God's** great grace and used by **God** to lead other Christians into a deeper, more meaningful Christian faith.

Like **Dwight L. Moody**, about whom **Dorsett** has also written a biography, **Tozer** had very little formal education and a lifelong passion to lead people to a saving knowledge of **Jesus Christ**. Unlike **Moody**, who was never ordained, **Tozer** was

ordained by the CM&A in 1920. For the remainder of his life, he served the Alliance in pastorates in the U.S.A. and Canada, as editor of the denomination's magazine, *The Alliance Weekly* (later *The Alliance Witness*), and through his many widely popular books. A. W. Tozer did more to spread awareness of the CM&A than any other spokesperson.

Although he had little formal education and no formal seminary training, Tozer read widely and deeply in the works of great secular thinkers like Aristotle, Plato, Spinoza, Descartes, Hume, Hegel, and Karl Marx, as well as the early Church Fathers, and other great Christian thinkers like Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Abelard, Madame Guyon, John Newton, the Wesley brothers, and many more. Tozer believed that there was much to learn through reason, "But knowledge of God and the human spirit and the soul can be grasped only through the Holy Spirit" (96). He believed that reason was a valuable tool, but, he insisted, [God] "is above human reason and He is above human science" (qtd in Dorsett 96). Like Moody, Tozer wanted Christians to "enter into a deeper life with Christ." He was convinced that God wanted his people to "know Him" not just "about Him" (125). When faced with a difficult passage in the Bible, Tozer urged believers to "[g]o to God first about the meaning of any text" before consulting human authors. Once when he was accused of disliking the Scofield Bible, he said that on the contrary, "I've worn four of them out, and I have number five now at home . . . I just don't believe its notes. When it starts telling me things are otherwise than they are, I just write that off. But he does divide up things nicely for you" (qtd. 139).

A major part of Tozer's appeal in his sermons and books was the obvious fact that he read much wider than was common for most seminary and Bible college graduates. Also, it was very evident that he knew God intimately. He had experienced the deeper life that he urged other believers to seek. What Tozer found in the CM&A was a celebration of "Jesus Christ as Healer, as well as Savior, Sanctifier, and Coming King." All too many believers, Tozer was convinced, "tend to substitute logic for life and doctrine for experience" (qtd. 126). The cure for such a shallow relationship could be found in the "Four-fold Gospel" as taught by the CM&A's founder A. B. Simpson.

Perhaps the finest feature of Dorsett's book is how he reveals to the reader the human side of A. W. Tozer. The Tozer we encounter in *A Passion for God* is one whose zeal for God's house brought great pain to his own. No doubt in part due to the very difficult relationship he had with his own father, A. W. Tozer found it near impossible to relate to either his wife or his children on an emotionally intimate level. He seems to have wanted only a surface relationship with his wife, Ada, and remained always distant from his children. His youngest child and only daughter, Rebecca, knew him best. She once said that the estrangement between her parents may have been due in part to the fact that her mother was a romantic to the core, whereas her father eschewed sentimentalism and displays of emotion, and seemed to fear intimacy" (142). Rebecca also noted that her mother never

read anything but the Reader's Digest. There was something that drove a wedge between her parents, something that she was never able to understand. From the children's perspective, both parents remained distant from their offspring. According to their son Lowell, "We were known ironically as 'the Tozer kids.' But we were not a unit or tight-knit family. We were a family full of individuals" (qtd. 108).

A. W. Tozer and his wife Ada both suffered from depression, but neither knew how to be healed. Ironically, as Dorsett concludes, both confessed to friends late in their life together that they had lived a lonely life. Even after the children were grown and gone, and his pastoral and other duties were lessened, Aiden seems to have kept himself busy so as to have "no time to develop the marital intimacy that they had both learned to live without" (158). After Aiden's passing in 1963 and her remarriage to Leonard Odam in 1964, the former Mrs. Tozer said of her first husband: "My husband was so close to God, a man of such deep prayer, always on his knees, that he could not communicate with me or our family. No one knew what a lonely life I had, especially after the kids left home" (qtd. 144). Of her new life with Odam, she said, "I have never been happier in my life. Aiden loved Jesus Christ, but Leonard Odam loves me" (qtd. 160). As for Aiden, shortly before his death, he confided to a fellow pastor, "I've had a lonely life" (qtd.144).

A. W. Tozer is remembered as "one of the great spiritual giants of the past century." Whether already a Tozer fan or one desiring an introduction to him, Lyle Dorsett's *A Passion for God: The Spiritual Journey of A. W. Tozer* is an interesting and delightful read. The only criticism this reviewer can make is to note the absence of an index. Only novels should be published without an index.

**Right Is Wrong: How the Lunatic Fringe Hijacked America, Shredded the Constitution, and Made Us All Less Safe (and What You Need to Know to End the Madness)**

**Arianna Huffington**

**Alfred A. Knopf**

**9780307269669 \$24.95**

**Peter Weiss**

**Reviewer**

**The Hen in the Foxhouse**

**If Arianna Huffington didn't exist, we'd have to invent her.**

**In what may be considered the greatest example of the betrayal of the ruling class by one of its own since FDR, Ms. Huffington has made the improbable move from being an apologist of the Right to becoming its most creative, tenacious, and vocal opponent.**



**Her international Internet bazaar of a website has, in three short years, become a virtual geographic location in the scorched earth landscape of post-9/11 Bush-Cheney America, providing a home to the voices of those rapidly being shut out of America-as-we-used-to-know-it.**

**A Greek emigre by way of England, Ms. Huffington is more American in thought and deed than the vast majority of our callow and sheepish countrymen.**

**With her voluminous writings on the Huffington Post, in her books, and as a passionate commentator, analyst, and advocate in the media, she's revealed herself to be more than a mere masthead name atop the ideas and opinions of others. It turns out she has some ideas and opinions of her own, many of them in fact; and if the ruling elite once thought that Ms. Huffington could be ignored, dismissed, and marginalized, she's given them ample evidence that she's no 'shrinking violet' pushover. Far from it.**

**The newest effort to give them pause, her latest book, *Right is Wrong: How the Lunatic Fringe Hijacked America, Shredded the Constitution, and Made Us All Less Safe (and What you Need to Know to End the Madness)* is, as the title suggests, a measured and blatant broadside attack against the prevailing neo-political paradigm that has engulfed our country since 9/11.**

**In 15 bullet-point chapters, she names names and lays blame on individuals and groups who are acting in or are failing to counteract the wholesale destruction of the historical ethos of our country in the epic struggle now being fought for the very soul of America.**

**"It can no longer be denied: the right-wing lunatics are running the Republican asylum and have infected the entire country and poisoned the world beyond," she writes early in her book.**

**Trained at Cambridge in the cerebral rough-and-tumble art of debating and with skills honed through many years of public commentary, Ms. Huffington adroitly hoists the Bush presidency on its own petard. Fortunately for us, she has the distinct and unique ability and the social position to truly stand in opposition. And opposes she does.**

**Throughout her fine book, she brings to bear the twin Achilles Heels of the George W. Bush regime - logic and truth.**

**Point by point, she takes us through the ideological maneuvering that's brought our once-noble country to its current nadir. With a slicing tongue not seen perhaps since the heyday of New Yorker film critic Pauline Kael and with the instinct for the political and social jugular of Bob Dylan she takes us through the**

**many bold and incremental steps that have dragged America down and down at home and around the world.**

**From the Administration's foreign policy myopia to the singular and scandalous fiasco that is America's healthcare system, to the corrupting of national science, the ceding of the global moral high ground on torture, to the bogus assumption and dogmatic media assertion that every issue has two sides, Ms. Huffington lays out the ways America has gone wrong since Bush took our helm.**

**Her opponents will see her as a partisan yet they can't discredit her on the facts. And facts she has in this meticulously researched volume; facts that show how America has been lied to, manipulated, and ultimately failed by its leaders and institutions; facts that identify the various domestic and foreign policy battlefields the Right has used to consolidate governance in the Executive; facts that reveal the cynical and jaded brinksmanship of radical demagogues drunk with power.**

**Those she accuses range from the predictable - Bush, Rove, Rumsfeld, Cheney, et al, to weak-kneed Democratic opponents and complicit social organs and icons like the 'Judith Miller' New York Times and Bob Woodward (the "dumb blond" of American journalism who failed to 'connect the dots' in his meticulously detailed accounts of the path to war) - failed institutions and individuals that have greased our slide and helped mire us in our current national malaise. Ms. Huffington has no favorites; she plays it right down the middle, even choosing to wrap her book in a purple cover - the blending of red and blue.**

**In the end, what she fears most is a 'third term' in the person of John 'W.' McCain - the dim, cranky, and tenacious doppelganger of our lame Imperial Emperor of National Darkness.**

**As should we all.**

**"The Right's orgy of greed, hubris, and arrogance will go down as an era marked by the celebration of selfishness and naked brute force," Ms. Huffington writes of the historical record of George Bush. "Over this past year it seemed, thankfully, that America was poised to turn a new page and close the book on this tragic chapter of our history. The nomination of John McCain, however, will change this. McCain is the Trojan Horse the Right desperately needed to put a faux maverick, faux independent, faux straight-talker imprint on the same ruinous policies that have taken us down this dark road."**

**"An age of self is always mother to an age of war," the English novelist John Fowles wrote. With the ascent of Bush-Cheney-Rove-McCain and its ideologically like-minded wrecking crew of functionaries systematically taking America apart piece by piece, we have, lamentably, come to witness both.**

**This book was released before the advent of Sarah Palin as a political device, utility, and unfortunate force for McCain to use, and the concomitant national diversion that has engulfed our presidential debate since his Republican convention.**

**As many millions of us have noticed, Ms. Huffington (who's since called the 'true' Bush clone, the Right's secretive fundamentalist - Mrs. Palin - a 'Trojan Moose,' lipstick and all) has a very handy global outlet with which to add addendums to her astute observations.**

**Good news for America.**

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## **Bethany's Bookshelf**

**The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure  
Kerry Ann Rockquemore & Tracey Laszloffy  
Rienner**

**1800 30th Street, Suite 314, Boulder, CO 80301  
9781588265883, \$22.50, [www.rienner.com](http://www.rienner.com)**

**Although America has made great strides toward equality, some barriers still sadly exist. "The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure: Without Losing Your Soul" is a guide for African American employees of academia who want all the respect and privileges of their fellow professors and other academics. A game must be played, and Rockquemore & Laszloffy offers a solid strategy guide for navigating the administration to get what one deserves. "The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure" is a must for any black Academic who fights for equality in all aspects of society.**

**Waiting for the Perfect Dawn**

**Annu Subramanian**

**iUniverse**

**1663 Liberty Drive, Bloomington, IN 47403**

**Star Treatment (publicity)**

**PO Box 133, Beaver Crossing, NE 68313**

**9780595427529, \$17.95, [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)**

**The twentieth century was a landmark time for women's rights, many country's women rising up, and despite the similar goals, their battles were different. "Waiting for the Perfect Dawn" takes a look using fiction to tell the story of how women in the sub-continent of India fought for their right to be treated as equals to men. Having to deal with the societal pressures of tradition and the desire to be**

more, "Waiting for the Perfect Dawn" is a richly entertaining novel which tells a story of many women through Indian history.

### **Henry Potty and the Deathly Paper Shortage**

**Valerie Estelle Frankel**

**Wingspan Press**

**c/o Publicity House**

**1088 Colton Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94089**

**9781595942418, \$12.95**

With success, come imitators, and that's not always a bad thing with respect to popular literature. "Henry Potty and the Deathly Paper Shortage: An Unauthorized Harry Potter Parody" chooses to parody more than the single successful young adult series. Attacking many fantasy staples and cliches ranging from 'Lord of the Rings' to the 'Wizard of Oz' to classic Walt Disney films, and so much more, "Henry Potty and the Deathly Paper Shortage" is riotously entertaining reading for fantasy enthusiasts in general, and young Harry Potter fans in particular.

### **The Mythic Bestiary**

**Tony Allan**

**Duncan Baird Publications**

**c/o Catalyst Publicity**

**2624 Blaisdell Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55408**

**9781844834846, \$29.95 [www.dp.co.uk](http://www.dp.co.uk)**

Featuring over 100 color illustrations and line drawings, The Mythic Bestiary is an illustrated guide to fantastic creatures from worldwide folklore. Each entry features several pages that summarize the legends and history of a given mythic animal, told in an eminently readable prose style. What distinguishes The Mythic Bestiary is that equal time is given not only to well-known fantasy monsters like the dragon, minotaur, phoenix, and so forth, but also many more obscure creatures of worldwide legends, from the winged shedu & lammasu spirits of ancient Mesopotamia and Persia, to the tupilak devil-dolls of the arctic circle, to the cynocephali dog-headed people of medieval legend, and much more. A handy index rounds out this welcome reference book, highly recommended especially for fantasy authors and game master searching for an untapped lode of new ideas!

**Susan Bethany**

**Reviewer**

# **Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea**

**Noah Andre Trudeau**

**HarperCollins**

**10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022-5299**

**9780060598679 \$35.00**

**To this day Major General William Tecumseh Sherman's name is anathema on parts of the Deep South. The Union General's drive on the Savannah Campaign and March to the Sea which left a swath of death and destruction that disrupted the flow of supplies to the Confederate Army is still a sensitive subject in Georgia.**

**In "Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea" Noah Andre Trudeau paints a visceral picture of an event that would change the course of the nation and hasten the end of the Civil War.**

**Using the intimate diaries and letters of soldiers on both sides of the conflict as well as citizens caught in the middle, this account of the offers a unique and detailed portrait of the legendary campaign. Although most history buffs are familiar with the rudiments of the event, Trudeau takes the reader much deeper into those fateful days.**

**Was it really as bad as everyone remembered? Why was the South unable to stop Sherman? What was it like for those who marched in Union blue and those who watched those soldiers come flooding into their front yards? These and a host of other questions are answered as the mesmerizing account of the campaign that took place in the autumn of 1864 unfolds.**

**Along the way a number of myths will be debunked. For example, the claim that the march was one of uncontrolled destruction of public and private property is not really true. Also, the popular conception that Sherman's troops were largely unopposed is also challenged by this volume.**

**Although the Confederates did squander a number of opportunities to seriously impede Sherman's men, there were at least two significant engagements at Griswoldville and south of Augusta outside of Waynesboro.**

**An engaging historical account of an often misunderstood campaign, "Southern Storm" reads with ease and sheds new light on a pivotal historical event that most Americans may be only vaguely familiar with today. Well illustrated with voluminous footnotes and extensive bibliography, this is a book anyone interested in American history and the Civil War will definitely wish to own.**

**The Gaudi Key**

**Esteban Martin and Andreu Carranza**

**William Morrow**

**10 E. 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022  
9780061434914 \$24.95**

**Having already achieved legendary status in Spain, this suspense novel has finally made it to our shores. Using the remarkable life of an actual architectural colossus, Antonio Gaudi, the authors have created a narrative that integrates art, science and religion into an unforgettable novel.**

**At the heart of the story is the struggle between two groups, the Knights of Moriah and the Corbel, to control an ancient relic that holds Christianity's greatest secret. A young art historian, a world-class mathematician and a Japanese architecture expert whose area of expertise is Gaudi band together to find and protect the controversial relic.**

**Granted, the "hidden relic" theme is wearing a bit thin for many readers, but Martin and Carranza have created an intelligent plot with enough twists and turns to pump a little life into what has become a separate category of suspense fiction. "The Gaudi Key" deserves to be towards the top of this ever expanding list of novels!**

**Where Memories Lie**

**Deborah Crombie**

**William Morrow**

**10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022**

**9780061287510 \$24.95**

**Another whodunit featuring Scotland Yard detectives Gemma James and Duncan Kincaid, this latest caper involves Gemma offering to assist a friend whose stolen brooch suddenly surfaces at an auction.**

**A simple "theft" investigation quickly turns into a hit-and-run situation that might actually be a murder case. That, in turn, leads to questions about the supposed suicide of Gemma's friend's husband that occurred years earlier.**

**Nothing is ever as simple as it might at first appear. James and Kincaid are about to discover just how true that statement is as they delve into a investigation that will have major and lasting repercussions.**

**If you have followed this detective duo through their other cases, you certainly won't want to miss this latest adventure. On the other hand, if you aren't aquatinted with this pair of Scotland Yard detectives, give yourself an early Christmas present and get a copy of this novel!**

**Bob Walch**

**Reviewer**

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## Brenda's Bookshelf

### **The Dawkins Delusion**

**Alister McGrath, with Joanna Collicutt McGrath**

**Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge**

**9780281059270 \$13.49**

**The God Delusion by scientist, Richard Dawkins, sold 1.5 million copies in English and was translated into several languages. In his book Dawkins says that religion is unscientific and evil and that: "If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down." The Dawkins Delusion, Atheist fundamentalism and the denial of the divine, is McGrath's answer to Dawkins's work.**

**McGrath takes the broad concepts offered in The God Delusion, analyses them and gives his own viewpoint. Four chapters answer the questions: Deluded about God? Has science disproved God? What are the origins of religion? Is religion evil? McGrath points out many instances where Dawkins stereotypes religion, fails to engage in objective study and is dogmatically determined to find fault with it. McGrath's analysis carefully breaks down Dawkins's arguments, removing their power as their subjectively fundamentalist approach is exposed. The author's overall opinion is succinctly put in the conclusion. Atheism, he says, has been waiting patiently for belief in God to simply die out. Since that hasn't happened a certain amount of panic has set in. The God Delusion reflects that. The God Delusion, says McGrath, is more a reassurance to faltering atheists than it is a critique on religion.**

**McGrath's qualifications are impressive. His primary field of interest is in the history of Christian thought with a particular emphasis on the natural sciences and Christian belief. He writes in an accessible style, however, and readers, whether religious or not, will be curious to know what he has to say. Despite his own obvious subjectivity and the occasional weak argument, McGrath's answer to The God Delusion is fearless and its exposition of atheist dogmatism valuable.**

### **Mao's Last Dancer**

**Li Cunxin**

**The Penguin Group**

**9780670040247 \$10.88**

**While waiting to fetch my daughter from a music practice one evening I idly picked up a book left behind by a student. That book was Mao's Last Dancer. After reading the first chapter I was hooked. Those few pages depicted the poverty of**

the Cunxin family who lived in rural communist China during the early 1960s. The dust cover proclaimed that Mao's Last Dancer was the true story of Li Cunxin, one of seven brothers, who, by chance managed to escape the harshness of China and go on to become a world-famous ballet dancer in the West. I simply had to have my own copy.

Cunxin writes this touchingly personal account descriptively and with enthusiasm. Despite the grinding poverty, the love and respect the author has for his 'Niang' (mother) and 'Dia' (father) is obvious. Family values of dignity and pride shine through. This was evident on one occasion when five-year-old Li stole a toy car from a friend. His mother was horrified, returned the toy and apologised profusely to the child's mother. When no-one else was looking Niang burst into tears and, hugging Li said tenderly: "I'm so sorry to do this to you. I'm so sorry we are too poor to buy you a toy car."

Cunxin also writes with humility. From his humble beginnings, Li moved to Madame Mao's Dance Academy in Beijing at the age of 11. Here he suffered from homesickness and poor grades. Despite the narrow-mindedness of the 'cultural revolution' Cunxin learnt some important life lessons and developed his own discipline and passion. He was invited to attend a dance school in America, took his chance and defected to the West, where he achieved success in the ballet world. Despite his many accolades, Mao's Last Dancer focuses on the personal – Cunxin's family in China, his new wife, and at the end of the book, a joyous visit back to his childhood village of Qingdao.

Despite a subjectively glowing portrayal of Cunxin's own character, readers of autobiography will enjoy the story of his life. Mao's Last Dancer is an easy and engrossing read.

**Brenda Daniels**  
Reviewer

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## **Buhle's Bookshelf**

**I Barf, Therefore I Am**  
**Jerry Perisho**  
**Privately Published**  
**9780615208848, \$22.95, [www.jerryperisho.com](http://www.jerryperisho.com)**

**Cancer is no laughing matter . . . or is it? "I Barf, Therefore I Am: A Sensitive Comedy Writer's Relationship with Cancer" is the story of comedy writer Jerry Perisho's battle with prostate cancer. He tells his story with much humor and tells of how his friends and family, and most possibly his sense of humor let him**



overcome the odds and conquer his cancer. A story for those who are faced with this grim fate but don't want to give up, "I Barf, Therefore I Am" is as good a gift one could give to someone in such a predicament.

### **The Burning Sands**

**Hamza Abdullah**

**Outskirts Press**

**10940 S. Parker Rd. – 515, Parker, CO 80134**

**9781432726836, \$15.95, [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com)**

**The Great Flood is an ancient and widespread tale of a world almost destroyed by a wrathful God. "The Burning Sands: The True Story of the Egyptian African Civilization" by Hamza Abdullah tells the fascinating story of seven students and their mentor as they uncover the roots of civilization, drawing out and filling in human history back to the great flood of Noah. Dually approaching the story in both modern and ancient segments, "The Burning Sands" offers a simple yet solid approach to the history of civilization making it an entertaining read and recommended addition to personal reading lists and community library collections.**

### **Far World**

**J. Scott Savage**

**Shadow Mountain**

**[pmuir@shadowmountain.com](mailto:pmuir@shadowmountain.com)**

**9781590389621, \$17.95, [www.shadowmountain.com](http://www.shadowmountain.com)**

**Being mundane is something that our non-magical world just is. But in J. Scott Savage's original fantasy novel, "Far World: Water Keep", we are introduced to Marcus, a mundane boy, who meets Kyja, a mundane girl when he finds himself thrust into a world that is different from own. Unfortunately for Kyja, her world is one of magic where she is considered weird for being simply mundane. The two mundane non-magical-user people are faced with an evil magical plot that could both affect the world of magic, known as Far World, and the mundane world of Earth. Kyja and Marcus embark on a quest that is gripping adventure from beginning to end, making "Far World" a solid pick for fantasy lovers and a popular addition to community library Fantasy & Science Fiction collections.**

### **Travels of a Thermodynamicist**

**Rick Fleeter**

**Outskirts Press**

**10940 S. Parker Rd. – 515, Parker, CO 80134**

**9781432703660, \$35.95, [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com)**

**Attention deficit order with careers, while not something that helps stability, does lead to interesting stories. "Travels of a Thermodynamicist" is Rick Fleeter telling**

of his wide range of careers that have lead him around the world and back again. Cycling, Swimming, piloting, and rocket science are just a sample of what he's done. His tales are long reaching and offer much to ponder on, making "Travels of a Thermodynamicist" a solid and highly recommended read.

**Willis M. Buhle**  
Reviewer

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## **Burroughs' Bookshelf**

**The Pacification of Earth**

**Dean Warren**

**Xlibris Corporation**

**888-795-4274, [www.Xlibris.com](http://www.Xlibris.com)**

**9781436355933, \$34.99, 767 pp., maps and table**

What will the world be like at the end of the century is rather bleak. With rising population, depleting resources, what kind of leader will be able to slow down these issues they are certain to bring about more disparity in the world? Author Dean Warren presents "The Pacification of Earth", a riveting novel about a boy who cons his way into the Marines and vows to somehow "fix" the world's increasing ugliness. Soaking in as much information as he can, Ben Bjorn soon rises to sergeant, then battalion major in defense of a ghetto and finally commanding general of a revolution. This Napoleon-like figure with this his military brilliance and drive for civilian reform he ultimately conquers North America, Europe, the Moslems, the Chinese and he imposes fertility depressant policies and equality on humanity. A intriguing tale of adventure and high politics with glimpses of love and lust, "The Pacification of Earth" is especially recommended reading for action/adventure, military, and science fiction enthusiasts. "The Pacification of Earth" is also available in a trademark paperback format (9781436355926, \$23.99). Dean Warren has previously authored three other recommended science fiction novels: Man Over Mind, The Last Underclass and Growing Young.

**The Zephrus**

**William Hess, author**

**iUniverse**

**1663 Liberty Drive, Bloomington, IN 47403**

**9780595479955, \$19.95, 355 pp., [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)**

Horror-fantasy readers who relish a tale of classic good versus evil (with a whole lot of crazy happenings along the way) will enjoy "The Zephrus" by author William Hess. Especially appropriate for older teenage readers, "The Zephrus" is

**a fascinating tale featuring Kuelo Reed, age 16, who is experiencing some very strange things. An evil black cloaked figure is plaguing his dreams; a strange hand reaches out of the TV and chokes him... or perhaps it's the severed head in the toilet that has upset Kuelo Reed the most. If all that weren't strange enough, a old man appears and tell Kuelo that he is the chosen one and must save the world from someone evil named Aquarius! Readers will enjoy this wild ride with Kuelo as he now must train for the fight of his life and the fight to save humanity. Easy to follow and fun to read, science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts will enjoy unlocking the mysteries and clues to see if good can triumph over evil.**

### **Health and Disease Symbology Handbook**

**Michael Schwartz, author**

**Inner Health Books**

**8400 Menaul Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112**

**Warwick Associates (publicity)**

**17470 Sonoma Highway, Sonoma, CA 95476**

**9780979688409, \$19.95, 336 pp., [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)**

**Although advances in medical science and technology continue to broaden, deepen, and expand our understanding of disease, for a great many ailments just what causes them remains a mystery. In the "Health and Disease Symbology Handbook: A Mind Body Perspective", author and natural products leader, Michael Schwartz presents an interesting and compelling look at the cause of disease through the symbolisms behind it. In this informed and informative guide, readers will learn how the language of symbols can guide them to the insights that lead to the correction of the causes of diseases, common physical conditions and unhealthy states of mind. Presented as a reference guide for healing-arts practitioners and a self-help and self-healing resource for everyone, the "Health and Disease Symbology Handbook" is packed from cover to cover with symbolic meaning and nutritional advice, making it a highly valued and urgently recommended addition to personal, professional, academic, and community library Health & Medicine reference collections and supplemental reading lists.**

### **The Cults of Relativity**

**Drake Larson & Nora De Caprio**

**Hellgate Press**

**c/o L&R Publishing**

**PO Box 3531, Ashland, OR 97520**

**Ascot Media Group (publicity)**

**PO Box 58884, Webster, TX 77598**

**9781555716516, \$25.95, [www.hellgatepress.com](http://www.hellgatepress.com)**

**E equals MC squared, an equation many know, but few understand. "The Cults of Relativity: Finding Einstein, Twain, and a Universe Beyond E=MC<sup>2</sup>" looks to**

**explain the highly complex and mathematically confusing equation in something many more people can understand – words. Using acclaimed physicist and acclaimed author Albert Einstein and Mark Twain to explain the theory and why it seems to matter so much to the world, it's an intriguing look, easily understood by people who aren't physicists. "The Cults of Relativity" is a top pick for anyone who wants to get why the numbers are the way they are.**

**John Burroughs  
Reviewer**

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## **Carson's Bookshelf**

**The Devil's Game**

**Loretta Jackson & Vickie Britton**

**Avalon**

**c/o Thomas Bouregy & Co.**

**160 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016**

**9780803499119, \$23.95**

**Fair play is not something that happened in the Wild West. "The Devil's Game" tells of Drew Woodson and his successful gambles going rotten. Gaining wins over the wrong people, he finds his money stolen and the one man he can trust missing. But his hidden feelings for his lost friend's wife and the evidence suggesting that said friend may be doing something shadier than being kidnapped makes it all the more complicated. "The Devil's Game" is a riveting novel of the old west, recommended.**

**Iran: Harsh Arm Of Islam**

**George H. Hassan**

**c/o Irwin Zuker PR**

**[www.bookpromotioninmotion.com](http://www.bookpromotioninmotion.com)**

**1413480152, \$13.25, [irwinzuckerpr@aol.com](mailto:irwinzuckerpr@aol.com)**

**We are locked into a global war against militant Islam fundamentalism. One of those war fronts is Iran with its Shiite religious authorities and their anti-western policies. Born and raised a Shiite Muslim in Iran, George H. Hassan writes with a particular expertise and experience in "Iran: Harsh Arm Of Islam" when he provides a historical overview of Shi'ism in Iran; Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution; the role of the Mullahs; Iran's long-term goals and tactics; their nuclear program; the Iranian economy; and strategies for destabilizing the Iranian ruling regime through economic and political pressures. "Iran: Harsh Arm Of Islam" is informed, informative, and an important contribution to academic and community library International Studies and Iranian Studies**

reference collections, as well as critically significant reading for governmental policy makers and non-special general readers with an interest in Iran's threat to the stability of the Western World in general, and the Middle East in particular.

### **An Ice Cold Paradise**

**Terry Holland**

**Point Blank**

**info@pointblankpress.com**

**9780809572427, \$17.95, www.pointblankpress.com**

Harry Pines is the kind of man who will repay favors tenfold, although that's not always the wisest of him. "An Ice Cold Paradise" tells his story of meeting with Valerie Sabtino, who tells of one of their mutual friends gone missing. A whirlwind tale involving romance, vengeance, and insane Mormon fundamentalists make "An Ice Cold Paradise" an engaging and excellent mystery indeed.

### **The Difference Between Life and Death**

**Dennis Miner**

**Trafford Publishing**

**2657 Wilfert Road, Victoria, BC, Canada V9B 5Z3**

**1425161332, \$15.50, www.trafford.com, 1-888-232-4444**

Pandemic, when a disease gets so out of hand, it spreads all over the world. "The Difference Between Life and Death: Outliving the Flu Pandemic of 2009" is a prophecy stating that a world wide epidemic of flu is inevitable, and through certain steps, the event is outliveable for many. Seeking to create more awareness and preparation for the event along with advice on what to do when the time comes, it offers optimism in the fact of what can be done to fight the fates. "The Difference Between Life and Death" is up for consideration for those who agree in a potential worldwide epidemic that could come soon.

**Michael J. Carson**

**Reviewer**

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## **Cheri's Bookshelf**

**High Is the Eagle: The Kane Legacy #3**

**Al and Joanna Lacy**

**Multnomah, a division of Random House**

**12265 Oracle Boulevard Suite 200 Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921**

**9781590529263 \$12.99 www.mpbooks.com**

**Read as the history of the Mexican-American war of 1836-1848 come alive**

**through the eyes of the Kane brothers Alamo/Alan (nicknamed for his involvement and bravery during the battle at the Alamo), Abel and Adam, and there also was another brother Alan who was killed at the Alamo. Read how Alamo inherited the Diamond K ranch and with the love for his brother split it with him. As Christians read how God moves mightily in and through the lives of the brothers and their families, protecting them, their ranch and their families.**

**All have a heart for God but Alamo's soul-winning gift has a way with the hearts of the young men who serve with the Kane brothers as well as their superiors. Many a life has been changed by Alamo and God even a young Mexican lieutenant when he disobeyed orders and lowered his weapon against Alamo.**

**Also read about the faith from the families and friends of the brothers as they believe that God will keep the brothers safe and return them home from the war.**

**Authors Al and Joanna Lacy have done an amazing job in this compelling tale of faith, love and courage. The scriptures are brought to life in everyday circumstances in the trying times. The awesome teaching how-to of soul-winning is outstanding. You will be inspired by the story of 'high is the eagle' and the sermon taught by the Kane family's pastor. At times you'll wonder if you're reading a historical fiction or total truth as the tale is that riveting. What more can be said the story is amazing, the characters outstanding and the historical and biblical facts will leave you hungry for more. But sadly this is the final book in this three book series. But don't be discouraged as outstanding as this novel is I'm sure there is more to come from this husband and wife writing team.**

**100 Essential Modern Poems by Women**

**Joseph Paris and Kathleen Welton**

**Ivan R. Dee Publisher**

**1332 North Halsted Street Chicago, Illinois 60622**

**9781566637411 \$24.95 [www.ivandee.com](http://www.ivandee.com)**

**What an outstanding compilation of modern poems by women! This is an unique and outstanding resource for anyone who loves poetry, as well as an excellent resource in the teaching and learning of poetry. There are a total of fifty awesome women poets spanning the last one hundred and fifty years along with their biographies and at least two poems by each poet.**

**This book has been compiled excellently by editors Joseph Paris and Kathleen Welton. "100 Essential Modern Poems by Women" is definitely one not to be missed as the layout is easy to read, easy to understand and is an awesome page turner. You'll not only see old friends of well recognizable names such as Emily Dickerson, Sara Teasdale, Dorothy Parker and Sylvia Plath but make new friends such as Amy Clampitt, Maxine Kumin, Sharon Olds and Evan Boland.**

**So whether you're a novice at reading poetry or a great follower you will find this lasting piece of art an awesome read, to read and reread over and over again regardless of any age.**

**Saturdays With Stella: How My Dog Taught Me to Sit, Stay and Come When God Calls**

**Allison Pittman**

**Multnomah a division of Random House**

**12265 Oracle Boulevard Suite 200 Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921**

**9781601421395 \$13.99 [www.mpbooks.com](http://www.mpbooks.com)**

**This is a truly remarkable book for not only dog lovers but Christians who are seeking a closer walk with God. Our pets can teach us so much and that is clearly shown in "Saturdays With Stella". Not only does author Allison Pittman do an excellent job of opening our hearts and lives to the struggles and training of raising a beloved dog but easily converts that teaching with how God desires to teach us in the very same way. Not only can you apply the principles to raising your own dog but how to apply the teachings to your own life. You'll learn the principles of settle, sit, down, drop it, leave it, take it, let's go, come, wait, watch me, and stay. I'm sure you're wondering how training a dog can bring you closer to God but Pittman shows us how in allowing us to join her and Stella in a six week obedience class.**

**This book is very well written and easy to understand also this book is perfect for a Bible study as it is setup as a six week obedience training for Stella or read at your own pace. Anyway you read it's excellent and not one to be missed. An outstanding book that will last a lifetime as we all need to be reminded how to obey at the feet of Jesus.**

**Cheri Clay**

**Reviewer**

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## **Christy's Bookshelf**

**Asking for Murder**

**Roberta Isleib**

**Berkley Prime Crime**

**375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014**

**9780425223314 \$6.99**

**When psychotherapist Rebecca Butterman's friend, therapist Annabelle Hart, misses a luncheon engagement and does not return her calls, Rebecca becomes concerned. She goes to her friend's house and finds Annabelle badly beaten.**

**Annabelle is rushed to the hospital, where she lies in coma. Rebecca's attempts to see Annabelle at the hospital are denied by Annabelle's sister, a cold woman who writes a catty gossip column. Rebecca incorporates the help of Detective Meigs, who concludes that Annabelle was beaten as the result of a botched robbery and then mysteriously disappears. Rebecca decides to do some sleuthing on her own, which isn't easy with so many people connected to Annabelle acting suspicious, if not guilty.**

**This third outing in the Advice Column Mystery series by Roberta Isleib proves another winner. Rebecca Buttermann is complicated, has unresolved issues, and is still trying to find her way in the world. She can be petty and has lingering doubts about her divorce, but overall is intelligent and loyal and works hard to make the best out of the situations she finds herself in while trying to deal with past traumas and lingering issues. Isleib throws in plenty of red herrings, wrapped around an intriguing plot.**

**The Diva Runs out of Thyme**

**Krista Davis**

**Berkley Prime Crime**

**375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014**

**9780425224267 \$6.99**

**Event planner Sophie Winston and lifestyle columnist, TV celebrity Natasha Smith have been rivals since childhood. And now Natasha is living with Sophie's ex and coveting Sophie's house, which belonged to her ex's deceased aunt. Sophie has a busy Thanksgiving planned, with her mother, father, sister and sister's fiance coming to visit. But things get off to a bumpy start from the get-go, when Sophie discovers the dead body of a private investigator in a dumpster. She quickly becomes a suspect when the police find her name and photo inside the dead man's car. Sophie engages in some amateur sleuthing and learns Natasha hired the PI. If that isn't bad enough, dead bodies keep turning up, all with a connection to Sophie and Natasha. On top of which, Sophie is attracted to the detective who seems convinced she's a murderer.**

**The first book in the Domestic Diva series starts the ball rolling with a glorified bang. This cozy mystery delivers a plethora of useful household tips and mouth-watering recipes immersed within a keep-you-guessing plot filled with suspicious-acting characters with twists and turns around every corner. Davis's smart writing style and engaging characters are sure to garner fans anxious to read future books in the series.**

**Perfect for Framing**

**Maggie Bishop**

**High Country Publishers**

**197 New Market Center #135, Boone, NC 28607**



**9781932158847 \$12.00**

**Jemma Chase and Detective Tucker return for another suspense-filled escapade in Perfect for Framing, the latest addition to Maggie Bishop's acclaimed Appalachian Adventure Mystery series. With the advent of winter, Jemma turns from helping run Chase's Dude Ranch to utilizing her skills as photographer and wood worker. Jemma is hired by Petula Windsor, president of a local property owners' association, to build cabinets in her guest house, but before Jemma can collect her pay, Petula burns to death in the same house. Jemma, a CSI wannabe, would like nothing more than to be in on the investigation, and Tucker has a hard time trying to keep her interest at bay. But when Petula's husband is found dead and Tucker's life is jeopardized, Jemma won't be stopped until she finds the murderer.**

**Once more, Maggie Bishop delivers a thrilling whodunit peppered with lovable characters and set against the beautiful backdrop of the mountains of North Carolina. Packed with breath-taking action and nail-biting suspense, with a twisting plot that guarantees constant speculation, this is one book that will have readers quickly turning pages, eager to find out what happens next.**

**The Archangel Caper**

**David Hunter**

**Tin Star Books**

**PO Box 1124, Powell, TN 37849**

**9781888338041 \$12.95**

**Before David Hunter became an acclaimed crime writer and newspaper columnist, he patrolled the streets of Knoxville, TN as a police officer, or "warrior" as he calls these gallant protectors of citizens. The Archangel Caper is filled with antics from Hunter's days as a cop, all delivered with wit and a touch of cynicism. Hunter takes his reader into the criminal lives of the One Percenters, prostitutes, and strip club owners, as well as domestic abusers, drunk drivers, and drug-dealing inmates. Above all, he offers an insight into the true natures of law enforcement officers, from rookie to seasoned, all of whom share one important attribute: care for their fellow man. Reading this intriguing book is sure to generate a newfound respect for law enforcement officials.**

**Christy Tillery French**

**Reviewer**

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## **Clark's Bookshelf**

**Near Death in the Mountains: True Stories of Disaster and Survival**

**Cecil Kuhne, editor**  
**Vintage & Anchor Books**  
**1745 Broadway, 20-3, New York, NY 10019**  
**9780307279354 \$14.95**

**When you climb a mountain as a kid, it's just a hill or a sand dune which does not pose much danger. When you grow up and decide to climb an unbelievable mountain for thrills risking your life, it is just plain nuts! Cecil Kuhne has collected some really awesome accounts in *Near Death in the Mountains*. The stories are written by people who survived expeditions and are relating their harrowing experiences.**

**Each episode takes you on a different climb, whether on a glacier, an impossible face of sheer rock covered in ice, or across a snowfield which has crevices hundreds of feet deep laying in wait like an ominous booby-trap.**

**There is one commonality among the collected stories, safety! Though there were many near death experiences, and some actual deaths described, it was not because they ignored caution. Rather, it was wind, ice, snow, or hidden dangers. One climber's death was caused by a hernia which could not be treated on the mountain. A doctor, part of the climbing team, could not save her. An unusual burial was devised by the group and she was given last rites as though at sea. They wrapped her in a bag and let her fall gently down the mountain to a hundred foot field of snow. For their safety and survival reasons they could not bring her back.**

**There is a short coming in this anthology which you discover when you start reading them. It is the special terminology of mountaineers. Having a good vocabulary and a dictionary will not assist in understanding this jargon. After reading several of these breathe-taking adventures you understand what an ice ax can do and how essential it is to all climbers. Some gear which they attach to their boots, have the same purpose, but the type used is dictated by the terrain.**

**Compulsion to read the next chapter is very strong. Once you get the flavor of the book, you cannot stop reading. Hot summer days are best when you read about all this snow and ice. Keep an eye out for Kuhne's next book in February (2009) titled *Near Death in the Arctic*; I sure will!**

**The Case Against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate**  
**David Freddoso**  
**Regnery Publishing Inc**  
**One Massachusetts Avenue N. W., Washington DC 20001**  
**9781596985667 \$27.95**

**Writers who can put together an argument either in favor of or against a political**

**candidate seem to surface around presidential election time. This book is a one sided viewpoint written by political reporter for National Review Online, David Freddoso, The Case Against Barack Obama. This captivating chronology of Obama's career presents a history of the meteoric rise to fame of an obscure newcomer who now stands on the threshold of claiming the number one prize in American politics, President of the United States.**

**Freddoso cleverly provides insinuations which try to have the reader to draw, but one conclusion, Barack Obama uses poor judgment in the selection of his friends and supporters. Association with questionable people who supported his political and personal ambitions is presented in a manner which does not directly accuse Obama of wrong doing. "By what criteria does a man choose his friends and end up with the likes of Tony Rezko, Jeremiah Wright, and Bill Ayers?" Rezko, a convicted criminal for bribery of public officials, and Ayers an underground bomber terrorist who professes hate for his country, and finally Reverend Wright who was made famous for his hate of America.**

**"It's not that Barack Obama is a bad person. It's just that he's like all the rest of them. Not a reformer. Not a Messiah . . . Obama's radical ties don't make him a radical. His ties to Communists don't make him a Communist. His ties to a terrorist do not make him a terrorist. But his continued relationships with radicals throughout his public life show an important influence in Obama's public career . . ." (p.233)**

**Also, pointed out by David Freddoso, when people are confronted with the facts, they still defend Obama by saying his relationships were all in the past. Many people support his philosophy from his two books. However, when asked if they had read his books, the response is no! His followers take cues from publicity and commentators who try and depict Barack Obama as they would like to see him. The Case Against Barack Obama presents an opposite viewpoint. To be fair, before you cast your ballot, read this book and Obama's books, The Audacity of Hope (2006) and Dreams from My Father (1995). A careful analysis of any candidate may possibly persuade you to vote the other way.**

**Girls of Grace Faith vs. Fear**

**Leah R. Eads**

**Tate Publishing & Enterprises, LLC**

**127 E. Trade Center Terrace, Mustang, Oklahoma 73064**

**9781604628074 \$12.99**

**Delightfully spiritual, this novel is seen through the eyes of fourteen year old Leah R Eads from Kingman, Arizona. Her inspiring relationship with God becomes paramount to the story. Leah, at her young age, wrote Girls of Grace Faith vs. Fear displaying a talent beyond her years which unfolds into a quest to do good deeds for others in this small community. Leah said that she had written this book as a**

**Christmas present for her friends in her Christian Girls Club. Her mother encouraged her to submit her book for publication and her friends positively agreed.**

**The main theme of this novel is the predicament facing the Crisis Community Pregnancy Center. The center is in desperate need of funds in order to remain open. All efforts at fund raising had not produced enough revenue. Then, as if by a miracle, an opportunity presented itself to the local Christian Girls Club to become a part of the solution.**

**Twists and turns ensue creating many obstacles for the girls to win a competition between faith-based teams. Many times they are discouraged, but through faith and prayer, liberally distributed throughout the book, they are guided to the next step in an actual reality competition.**

**What makes this novel unique is Leah Eads is able to capture your senses and emotions while spinning a yarn of competitiveness which holds your attention. The only down side to the story is that it ends too abruptly. Realizing this is not an epic novel, you want more of the story written by Leah, as she tells her tale very well. Eads displays excellent humor in her writing style and gets her point across very well.**

**The market for this book is in the age bracket of the author, 14 to 16. We all can benefit from our young people, as they are truly talented, caring, and devout. Our society seems to be instilling in our next generation a great sense of community and religion. This book is highly recommended as a great gift for a teenager from 12 to 60!**

## **Musicophilia Tales of Music and the Brain**

**Oliver Sacks**

**Vintage Books**

**a division of Random House, Inc.**

**9781400033539 \$14.95, 448 pp.**

**Considering the part music plays in the recovery of extremely mentality disabled patients, which is not a new phenomenon, it has recently been explored once again by Oliver Sacks, physician and author, in his new book Musicophilia Tales of Music and the Brain.**

**There are remarkable examples of patients who were considered feeble, unable to care for themselves, unable to walk or do anything other than sit, and yet these same people when exposed to music were able to astonish those who cared for them either by family or professionals. Sacks explored many different methods of treatment, but in his unique style of writing has been able to annotate the case histories of many types of patients who had been virtually given a hopeless life**

**sentence of being institutionalized.**

**Parkinson sufferers have been given L-Dopa as a medication to relieve the stutter problems they encounter when making movements. The introduction of music as therapy for these diseased people has given back to them smooth movement which the drug could not accomplish.**

**Oliver Sacks tells of a music therapist who played piano at a hospital who created musical treatment for a patient singing Old Man River using only three words. This man had not spoken for long time and was considered a lost cause. She heard him sing and realized playing songs he knew, she could communicate with him. Dr. Sacks was greatly encouraged by patients progress and then expanded the use of music to other patients.**

**Also, there are cases described showing the relationship between color and music. Many who have lost their sight after years of seeing describe they can see different colors when they hear specific notes. Even though they are blind, the colors become vivid in their minds. For example Middle C is green.**

**The general audience will find this textbook style of writing to be somewhat awkward to understand. However, if you are searching for solutions to conditions which afflict members of your family or close friends you will find them described in Musicophilia!**

**Clark Isaacs  
Reviewer**

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## **Daniel's Bookshelf**

**The Rifle Musket in Civil War Combat  
Reality and Myth**

**Earl J. Hess**

**University Press of Kansas**

**2502 Westbrooke Circle, Lawrence KS 99045-4444**

**9780700616077 \$29.95 [www.Kansaspress.ku.edu](http://www.Kansaspress.ku.edu) 785-864-4154**

**Earl J. Hess wrote two earlier works entitled Field Armies and Fortification in the Civil War, and Trench Warfare under Grant & Lee. I was first introduced through these books on the single-shot rifle musket. Hess made some arguments on the theory of its ineffectiveness. The historical argument that the musket had revolutionized warfare for years. In this book, Hess goes into deeper detail to provide an intelligent account of the actual value, and limits of the muzzle loading musket. He discloses a perceptive look and convincing performance on**

**the battlefield during the Civil War. He discusses the major differences between the effective range of the smoothbores and muskets. They are 100 yards and 500 yards respectively. He does define the better use for the muskets being in skirmishes and sniping. He distinguishes these definitions to great detail, with the training needed for these warfare tactics in battle lines and in the field. Skirmishers acted as a group to harass the enemy from cover and protect the battle lines. Snipers acted in small groups or alone to sight and pick out targets.**

**Earl J. Hess has written a fine book to collaborate his theory on the ineffectiveness of the musket rifle in close combat. He explains the bullets fired from the new musket followed the parabolic trajectory unlike those from the smoothbores. Then at mid-range those rifle balls did fly well above the enemy creating two killing zones between which troops could operate untouched. He further explains the most complete discussion to date on the skirmishing and sniping in the Civil War. His book is important for the student's understanding of how the regiments actually fought in battle. Hess explains it further in detail with his fine research and writing style. The reader becomes a better student of exactly why things happened the way they did in the Civil War.**

**Firebrand of Liberty**

**Stephen V. Ash**

**W. W. Norton & Company**

**500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110**

**9780393065862 \$25.95 [www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com) 1-800-233-4830**

**Stephen's V. Ash's tells the history of the 1st and 2nd South Carolina black regiments. This helped Abraham Lincoln to consider enlisting black soldiers into the army during the Civil War. Their commander Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson and the regiments carried themselves in distinction by fighting bravely through the conquest of Jacksonville Florida. There were not one act of cowardice among them. General David Hunter did pull the mission before completion. Their outstanding performance encouraged Lincoln to rethink the idea of regularly enlisting black soldiers, and therefore changing the face of the Civil War**

**Ash has written a fine sensitive history of the black soldiers of the 1st and 2nd South Carolina. He details their hardships, courage, and racial discrimination. They had to endure and keep driving forward to keep them moving on. He describes their efforts to free the slaves and help to bring them back to their base camp. It is a prelude and inspiration to the fellow history of African Americans who helped contribute to the cause of freedom of fellow black slaves. Later on in history the 54th Massachusetts also fought with distinction against a formidable coastline Fort Wagner. This history of these regiments by Stephen V. Ash illuminates the beginning of the African- American military experience during the Civil War.**

## Debra's Bookshelf

**Home Girl**

**Judith Matloff**

**Random House**

**9781400065264 \$25.00**

After some twenty years working as a journalist in the world's worst trouble spots, where being chased by a machete-wielding madman or having an AK47 shoved in one's chest was close to routine, Judith Matloff decided to settle down with her husband John somewhere civilized, somewhere where the government worked and you could feel comfortable raising a family. Inexplicably, they settled on buying a termite-infested fixer-upper in West Harlem, a 19th-century row house that sat lopsided on a street that was governed by Dominican drug dealers. Buying the house was the usual trial, but claiming it from the neighborhood thugs presented difficulties most new home owners don't have to face: buddying up to the lieutenant of the local drug crew so his minions wouldn't urinate on her steps, purging the back yard of spent needles. Matloff soon met the locals, most notoriously a certain "Salami," so-called because of the length and complexion of his penis, who squatted in the plumbingless house next door. Salami and his one-eyed girlfriend "Bitch," aka "Charm," routinely threw bags of excrement into their back yard, which of course impacted the air quality on Matloff's side of the fence.

The house Matloff and her husband bought needed a tremendous amount of work, but it had good bones. The neighborhood had good bones, too. It had been infiltrated by drug dealers in the 1980s, and police raids were a routine form of entertainment. But while much of the neighborhood was filled with the likes of Salami, there were also a large number of houses still in the hands of older families, people who were unhappily waiting out the dealers' tenure, sometimes cooperating clandestinely with the police.

Matloff does a good job of painting a picture of a close-to-hopeless neighborhood where honest people have to make compromises in order to survive. She even manages to get across what she finds charming about her new home: the vibrant street life, the mix of cultures. She will not, I think, be able to convince many readers that having a baby in such an environment was a smart decision, however successfully it seems to have turned out for her. But I guess if you're used to living amidst the carnage of Rwanda or the Sudan then negotiating with drug dealers

**for parking spaces isn't so problematic.**

**Matloff's writing is proficient but not charming. Likewise, her book is interesting in many parts, but it goes on too long and provides too much detail. It's a decent read, that is, but would have been much improved if perhaps a third of it had been edited out.**

**Have I Got a Guy For You**

**Alix Strauss**

**Polka Dot Press (Adams Media)**

**9781598694338 \$14.95**

**Have I Got a Guy For You is a collection of 26 essays by female writers about their experiences with match-making mothers. All the essays are well-written and at least worth the read, and many of them are quite funny. In "Letters to Gelman," for example, Brenda Scott Royce writes about her mother's attempts to fix her up with Michael Gelman, the then single producer of LIVE with Regis and Kathie Lee. Royce's mother wrote numerous letters to Gelman about her daughter, attaching photographs and insisting that Brenda would be willing to convert to Judaism for the purpose of marriage. Brenda was not keen on the idea:**

**"Despite my insistence that I could manage my love life without her interference, and despite my far-out claim that few TV producers actually scrounge for romantic prospects in the viewer mailbag, my mother pressed on, prompted by Regis's on-air riffs about Gelman's single status, sending letter after letter to the morning show."**

**Gelman, sadly, never wrote back, but other contributors to the volume did wind up going on dates with the guys their mothers had found for them. Usually the results were disastrous. There was, for example, the BBC journalist who announced twenty minutes into his date with Anita Kawatra what his sexual expectations would be should they get married: she was to be "accommodating" and "adventurous," and they would have sex four times a week, six during vacations. Aaron was an aspiring actor who said "totally" a lot and showed author Sara Barron his 8x10 glossies over tea and mocha at Starbucks:**

**"Then my mother called to see how things had gone.**

**"'Not well,' I told her on the phone. 'He totes a dance bag and dresses all in leather.'**

**"'In a gay way?' she asked.**

**"'Is there any other?' I responded."**



**There was, too, the divorced thirty-something who announced that his ex-wife used to beat him, and a grad student at UPenn who--for reasons author Samantha Levy can't remember--came out with a similarly startling confession: "My mom used to powder my bottom until I was in the eighth grade."**

**This is good stuff. Definitely recommended for when you want a humorous, light read.**

**Man in the Dark**

**Paul Auster**

**Henry Holt**

**9780805088397 \$23.00**

**Fans of Paul Auster will find much that's familiar in his latest novel, Man in the Dark. The specific man alluded to by the book's title--though surely Auster means to suggest something about the state of mankind in general--is 72-year-old August Brill, who's living with his daughter Miriam while recovering after a car accident. There are three generations in mourning in the house: August, still distraught after the death of his wife; Miriam still suffering the after-effects of divorce, five years on; and Miriam's daughter Katya, who is biding time while she blames herself for her boyfriend's death. By day August and Katya watch movies, four or five or six of them in a row while they allow time to wash over them. By night August lies awake in the dark, unable to sleep, willing himself not to remember the myriad bad things of life--his own particular grievances and the misery of human existence as a whole. By way of distraction he thinks up stories, one in particular about an alternate universe in which the characters are aware that they are characters in the head of a certain 72-year-old August Brill. Since they are unhappy with the narrative he's creating for them, they are in a mutinous mood.**

**This is Auster's signature: stories within stories, the author playing with the boundary between reality and fiction, his characters sometimes crossing over from one realm to the other. In addition to the principal story in August's head there is also his recapitulation of his granddaughter's critical assessments of the movies, with their various plots summarized as well. And there are stories told by characters within stories. Also familiar here is Auster's prose, which as usual goes down easy: his writing style is admirably simple yet never boring. The book, depressing in outlook for the most part, is ultimately hopeful.**

**If this were my first encounter with Auster, I might have been wowed by this novel. But we've seen this sort of thing before, most recently in Auster's Travels in the Scriptorium, which was published just a year ago. The two books are very similar, but I'd recommend Man in the Dark over Travels. It offer a meatier story, with more interesting, better developed characters, and a more satisfying conclusion.**

**Evil Genius**  
**Catherine Jinks**  
**Harcourt**  
**9780152061852 \$7.95**

**You'd think that a book about a 14-year-old boy studying for his World Domination degree at an institution dedicated to evil would have a cartoonish, Austin Powers-y charm to it. That's what I was expecting from Catherine Jinks's Evil Genius, at least: a world in which evil masterminds plot destruction with unnecessarily complicated gadgets and over-explain themselves to ostensibly doomed good guys. But it's not that sort of book.**

**Cadel Piggot is a genius with a penchant for causing trouble. His adoptive parents--who aren't around much and are unsupportive when they are--acting on the advice of the authorities, bring Cadel to a psychologist, Dr. Thaddeus Roth, when he is seven years old. Thaddeus soon comes to be the dominant influence in Cadel's life. He trains his young protege to harness his intellect in socially unacceptable ways. Cadel's particular skill lies in being able to easily understand and manipulate complex systems--the rail system, the freeways, the interaction of human groups. Eventually Cadel becomes expert at influencing people, without their knowledge, so that they'll act in accordance with his wishes. (This is difficult to explain, but perhaps you remember that in Silence of the Lambs Hannibal Lecter, another evil genius, was able to convince the inmate of a neighboring cell to kill himself by swallowing his own tongue. That is the sort of thing Cadel Piggot might be able to do should he set his mind to it.) After speeding through the middle school and high school curricula, Cadel enters Australia's Axis Institute, where founder Phineas Darkkon has collected a small coterie of evil-minded students with unusual talents. The grand scheme is a sinister one: the improvement of society through the advancement of a class of genetically superior individuals.**

**Far from cartoonish, Catherine Jinks's Evil Genius is rather a dark, even disturbing read. There is the casual cruelty of the Institute, the occasional disappearances, the constant surveillance and resulting paranoia, the encouragement of lying and cheating (provided one doesn't get caught), the general rejection of societal mores. Cadel, too, while pitiable, is not the most likeable of heros, at least not at first: he has in essence been trained from birth to be a sociopath, and he suffers few pangs of conscience for his acts. His character evolves in the book, but his story remains an unpleasant one.**

**Evil Genius can be slow going in parts: Cadel's progression through school prior to entering the Institute is described at length and is rather boring. But the book becomes increasingly interesting as the truth about Cadel's predicament becomes clearer to him, and as his innate sense of morality asserts itself. The goings-on within the Institute--various back stabbings and plots--would be**

easier to follow if a list or diagram of the various characters and their relationships were provided. I eventually gave up caring about one or two subplots. But the book is certainly an unusual read, likely to spark interesting discussions--on the subjectivity of evil and moral relativism, for example--if used in a classroom setting.

### **Dirty Blonde**

**Lisa Scottoline**

**Harper Collins**

**9780060742911 \$7.99**

The dirty blonde of Lisa Scottoline's title is 39-year-old Cate Fante. By day a respected district court judge, Cate prowls Pennsylvania's seedier bars by night in search of hot sex with disreputable strangers. Naturally, Cate's secret doesn't stay a secret for long. Her private life spills onto the front pages shortly after sentencing in a high-profile trial, a case involving the Law and Order-like drama *Attorneys@Law*. The revelation jeopardizes Cate's professional life as well as a budding romantic relationship. In short order more or less everything that could go wrong in her life does, and Cate finds herself scrambling to save her reputation and, ultimately her life. She's helped along by a devoted cast of characters--mother-figure Val, her secretary; a pair of not-quite competent law clerks; and her old friend Gina, who's left the law business to take care of her autistic son Warren.

Granted, Scottoline's sexy storyline may make this a book you'll want to camouflage with a newspaper on the subway. And granted, Cate's behavior does seem hard to believe at times--both the promiscuous sex and some of her subsequent actions when dealing with its exposure. But the book is a well written and tightly-plotted page-turner, with just the right amount of characterization of the principals for this sort of a novel. Even weighing in at over 400 pages *Dirty Blonde* is a quick read. I may not remember much of the plot in a month's time, but I was happy to read it, and I'd be happy to read more from Scottoline.

### **Man of the House**

**Ad Hudler**

**Ballantine**

**9780345481085 \$14.00**

Ad Hudler's *Man of the House* (a sequel to the author's 2002 novel *Househusband*, which I have not read) is told in the first person from four different perspectives, but his main character is Linc Menner, who quit a successful landscaping business years back to take care of his daughter Violet full time. While Linc's wife Jo brings home the bacon, Linc not only fries it up in a pan--with considerably more skill than most of us--but he keeps a spotless house, regularly fires off cranky missives to the administration of his daughter's prep

school, and generally performs the role of perfect, engaged parent in a way that could only irritate the average mother. Linc is obsessive about his care-giving responsibilities. This is a convenience for his loved ones--who thus never have to worry about anything domestic--but it is also maddening because, frankly, Linc can be something of a know-it-all jerk.

Linc has been firmly in touch with his feminine side for more than a decade. But *Man of the House* finds him exploring his masculinity, a transformation prompted in part by Violet's increasing independence--she's now thirteen--and by the appearance in his world of manly workmen, come to renovate the family's house in Florida. Linc in fact develops a sort of man crush on the head contractor. We learn about Linc's transformation through his own eyes and from chapters told from his wife's and daughters' points of view. The fourth character on whom Hudler focuses is Jessica Varnadore, Violet's English teacher, who likewise notices the changes wrought in Linc by, for example, his weekly visits to a new barber shop and his more ambitious weightlifting regimen.

Hudler's book is impressive because his characters' transformations seem realistic: Linc's pendulum swing into testosterone territory, Jo's increased domesticity as Linc's changed priorities leave a vacuum on the home front. The gradual revelation of the nature of Jessica's interest in Linc is also deft: in this case it is not her character that evolves so much as our appreciation of her character. One gets the impression (particularly after reading the charming author interview at the back of this edition) that Linc is a lightly fictionalized version of the author himself, the book serving as a vehicle for Hudler's various hobbyhorses.

In short, *Man of the House* is a decent, light read about the possibility of reinventing oneself mid-life, once the responsibilities of parenting have lightened.

**The Echo**

**Minette Walters**

**Vintage Crime**

**9780307277107 \$12.95**

The mystery is, why would a homeless man seek out the residence of a certain Amanda Powell, an apparent stranger, and starve himself to death in the privacy of her garage within a few feet of a full freezer? The dead man in question was one Billy Blake, an apparently well-educated, 60-something (by the look of him) drunk, an occasional thief and, by his own admission, a one-time murderer. Billy slept in an abandoned warehouse by the river with a bunch of others in similar straits. He preached redemption, raved like a lunatic when he was drunk, mortified his flesh occasionally, and acted as mentor to an intelligent but under-educated homeless minor.

**The case of Billy's death interests journalist Michael Deacon, the principal character of Minette Walters's *The Echo*. Michael winds up investigating the connections between Billy's death and a pair of celebrated disappearances: the embezzler James Streeter, who may have been murdered, and the diplomat Peter Fenton, who vanished after his wife killed herself. Walters's story is complex and not always easy to follow, though the plot is summarized neatly at the end so that one puts the book down, at least, with a fairly clear sense of what happened in it.**

**The book is, on the one hand, very impressive: Walters has created a very credible world, peopled by credible characters. Reading it is rather like watching one of those gritty British police dramas in which the characters all have heavy accents and you're not really sure what's going on, but the acting's so good that you keep watching. (In fact, *The Echo* was made into a BBC1 drama in 1998; I haven't seen it, though, so don't know whether it's in fact just that sort of gritty police drama.) The problem with the book, however, is that reading it is such hard work. The book, even though only 338 pages long, feels close to interminable. This isn't helped by the inclusion of a number of transcribed articles and letters within the text that are both dull, for the most part, and written in a minuscule font. The appearance of one such eight-page section at the end of the first chapter--it purports to be an excerpt from a book about unsolved mysteries--is apt to scare away a lot of potential readers.**

**In sum, a rewarding read if you have the stamina for it. But you might want to have a second book--something frothy and fun--going at the same time.**

### **The Descendants**

**Kaui Hart Hemmings**

**Random House Trade Paperbacks**

**9780812977820 \$14.00**

**Matthew King's wife Joanie is in a coma and not expected to survive. Matt thus finds himself suddenly thrust into the role of single parent to their two daughters, aged 10 and 17. One day that will mean the normal things--getting the girls up for school and taking them to dentists' appointments, the minutiae of parenting. But for now the situation is extreme. He needs to explain to them that the doctors are taking their mother off life support, and he has to walk them through the process of saying goodbye to her. He also finds himself confronting for the first time the ugly fact that both girls are completely out of control, juvenile delinquents or just shy of it. Meanwhile, Matt has responsibilities to other people: he has set himself the task of letting everyone else know what's happening to Joanie--their friends and family and, as he finds out, the man his wife has been having an affair with. Even he, Matt decides, has the right to say goodbye.**

**Given the subject matter of Kaui Hart Hemmings's *The Descendants*, you might**

**think that reading it would be a painful exercise, like slowly pulling a bandage off an infected sore. The book does have its tear-jerking moments, but surprisingly few of them, considering. Joanie, as we discover, was seriously flawed, so our sadness over her death is diluted. Our ambivalence--ours and Hemmings's characters'--makes the book far more realistic and interesting than it would have been if it were only the sad story of a blameless young mother's death. You might think, too, that Hemmings's story would drag, as very little happens in the book: Matt and his daughters and the older girl's boyfriend track down Joanie's lover, Matt spars with his in-laws, he worries about his ten-year-old's precocious sexuality, Joanie dies. But the drama comes in the development of the characters' personalities. All of the principals are fully fleshed out, and they are all changed by the experience of Joanie's death.**

**The Descendants is very well-written and highly readable. Don't be turned off by its grim subject matter.**

### **Stealing the Dragon**

**Tim Maleeny**

**Midnight Ink**

**9780738709970 \$14.95**

**Tim Maleeny's Stealing the Dragon is the first in a new series featuring private detective Cape Weathers. In this outing, a ship filled with refugees being smuggled into the states from Fuzhou Province in China has run aground on the island of Alcatraz. The crew of the boat are found murdered, but the refugees didn't do it: the carnage on board is clearly the work of highly skilled assassin. Since Cape happens to know just such an assassin, and she happens to have gone missing, he's a little worried that she might be in trouble. Cape's investigation into the refugee ship murders takes him into the underbelly of San Francisco's Chinatown and involves him in the ancient traditions of a secret Chinese organization and the messy business of the city's upcoming mayoral election.**

**Stealing the Dragon reads almost like two different books sewn together. There are the chapters featuring Cape, who is, frankly, fairly mundane: a likable enough PI who under-dresses and annoys the local police and the Feds with his wise-cracking antics. But Cape is informally partnered with Sally Mei, the aforementioned assassin, who spends her time teaching martial arts and watching Cape's back when she's not killing people. Much of the book focuses on Sally's backstory, her training from the age of five with the Triad, her first forays into murder. These sections of the book are both unusual and very well done. Sally is extremely competent and endowed with a conscience, and thus a very compelling character. The two parts of the book eventually meet--the story of the refugees is of course bound to Sally's story. Still, the connection between Sally and Cape, the juxtaposition of their respective styles, is jarring. The effect is like watching a Shakespearean actor perform alongside some Tiger Beat pinup,\* say,**

or listening to a duet by Pavarotti and Jimmy Buffett. One wonders how Sally can possibly have become hooked up with Cape.

Doubtless that question will be answered eventually in a subsequent Cape Weathers installment. The second book in the series, *Beating the Babushka*, was released in October of 2007.

For precisely that effect--impressive, in this context--see *Love and Death on Long Island*, starring John Hurt and Jason Priestley.

## **Undiscovered Country**

**Lin Enger**

**Little, Brown**

**9780316006941 \$23.99**

Ten years afterwards, Jesse Matson tells the story of what happened--how he found his father dead in the woods when they were out hunting, an apparent suicide. Despite the coroner's determination, Jesse can't accept that his father killed himself. Harold Matson wouldn't have done that to his family; he wouldn't have done it to Jesse, whom he knew would be the one to find him. A nagging feeling in his gut leads Jesse to suspect that his father was murdered by his own brother. Jesse's Uncle Clay is a ne'er-do-well who has long resented his brother's success, in particular his success at getting the girl: Jesse's mother had dated Clay before she met and married Harold.

If the plot of Lin Enger's *Undiscovered Country* sounds familiar, the echo is intentional. The novel is a modern-day retelling--in five acts and complete with ghost--of *Hamlet*, set in the frigid temperatures of northern Minnesota. The relationship between the two stories is acknowledged in the book itself: Jesse is conscious that he's been cast as *Hamlet* in his own version of the tragedy.

The drama of *Undiscovered Country* lies not so much in uncovering the mystery of Harold Matson's death--though for much of the story there is room to doubt whether Jesse's instincts are correct. The suspense comes rather from waiting to see how Jesse will act on his suspicions, and whether the choice he makes will result in his own destruction.

What's particularly good about this book is its depiction of setting, the abiding cold that Enger's characters seem largely inured to. Reading it, one can almost feel the bite of the air, hear the crunch of snow breaking underfoot. *Undiscovered Country* is well-written, but it's also a page-turner. You'll want to keep reading it, even if you think you know what happens.

**Buyology**

**Martin Lindstrom**

**Doubleday**

**9780385523882 \$24.95**

**In his book *Buyology*, Martin Lindstrom discusses the conclusions he reached after conducting a three-year neuromarketing study. Marketers have traditionally used two tools to determine the efficacy of advertising campaigns-- observation of the real-life buying decisions of people and feedback in the form of polls and questionnaires. These are inexact tools, particularly the latter, as people are very often not conscious of the factors that lead them to make buying decisions, and thus are poor reporters of their motivations. Lindstrom and his team of scientists, by contrast, used brain-scanning instruments (magnetic resonance imaging and steady-state typography) on more than 2000 volunteers to track their subjects' responses to advertisements and brands in real time. The scientific equipment allowed Lindstrom and his team to observe their volunteers' physical responses to various stimuli, which were very often at odds with the subjects' self-reported responses.**

**In *Buyology*, Lindstrom discusses the results of his study, touching on myriad topics related to marketing--subliminal advertising, the relationship between brands and rituals, the influence of our non-visual senses on buying decisions, the curious allure of unboxing videos, and so on. Lindstrom grounds his discussions in real-world examples, which makes for interesting reading. He discusses, for example, the success enjoyed (or not) by the sponsors of *American Idol*, the ritual of eating an Oreo cookie or pouring a Guinness, the unfulfilled promise of the Segway.**

**Lindstrom promises that his findings will "transform the way you think about how and why you buy." While some of the results were unexpected--for example, that warning labels on cigarette packs actually encourage smokers to light up because they activate an area of the brain associated with cravings\*--I didn't find myself particularly surprised by any of the material presented. But certainly what Lindstrom has to say is interesting, and his book may make readers more aware of the ways in which they are being manipulated by advertisers. (Readers may, like me, imagine that they are above many of the tricks advertisers use. The various tactics of high-end clothing stores are surely lost on someone like myself, for example, who is rarely attired in anything more stylish than Russell Athletics sweatpants, and who would run screaming from a pair of Manolo Blahniks. But none of us is completely immune to the siren song of artfully presented merchandise: I'm as apt as anyone to swoon over the latest Apple gadget.)**

***Buyology*, then, is relevant to almost everyone. It's also highly readable. Indeed, Lindstrom presents his information in laudably clear prose, and he is adept at tossing out teasers to keep his audience interested. The book should appeal to anyone who enjoyed Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink*, which likewise packages thought-provoking discussion of how we make decisions in accessible prose.**



**Likewise, graphic anti-smoking ads encourage smokers to smoke. But Lindstrom doesn't discuss whether the ads and warning labels are effective in deterring non-smokers from picking up the habit.**

**The Dead Travel Fast**

**Eric Nuzum**

**Thomas Dunne Books**

**9780312386177 \$13.95**

**Eating his bowl of Count Chocula one morning, author Eric Nuzum was struck by the ubiquity of vampire references in modern culture. He set himself the task of exploring the popularity of vampires, a quest which led to his book *The Dead Travel Fast* and to the graphic scene with which it begins: Nuzum watching blood drip down his bathroom mirror after an experiment in auto-hematophagy that went badly wrong. No, Nuzum's not a crazy person, but his investigation into vampirism did prompt him to do some wacky things. In addition to trying to drink his own blood, Nuzum watched 216 vampire films--apparently they get pretty bad after the first dozen or so--traveled to Romania on a bus tour with celebrity host Butch Patrick (a.k.a. Eddie Munster), took in a vampire-themed topless show in Vegas, and attempted to turn himself into a vampire in six easy steps. This last project necessitated his ending a meeting early so he could chant over a raw chicken liver. (Nuzum also watched all seven seasons--108 hours' worth--of Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, developing an appropriate regard for it in the process. But that's a sign of good taste rather than wacky obsession!)**

**Nuzum's account of his modern-day exploration into things vampire is punctuated by the results of more traditional research. Nuzum writes about vampire mythology in antiquity, for example, and the connection between vampirism and disease; he discusses the curious legal history of the 1922 film *Nosferatu*, the masher note Bram Stoker wrote to Walt Whitman, and the sorts of things Vlad the Impaler got up to to deserve his epithet. Nuzum leads readers to suggest that he's not one to spend his time reading old books in dark libraries, but he's clearly done his homework. The book is also very well put together, Nuzum's more historical discussions woven seamlessly into his present-day narrative. Informative and well-written and, topping it off, quite funny in parts: Nuzum's book is definitely recommended.**

**The Collectors**

**David Baldacci**

**Warner Books**

**044653109X \$26.99**

**In his twelfth novel David Baldacci weaves a complex plot involving**

assassinations, rare books, con artists, and high-stakes gambling. The story is told on three fronts. Roger Seagraves is an assassin, trained by the CIA, who's no longer working with the best interests of the government in mind. Annabelle Conroy is a formidable con artist for whom sleight of hand and deception are second nature. And "Oliver Stone" is a former CIA guy turned leader of a group of eccentrics, the "Camel Club," who act as an informal government watchdog group. The three threads of Baldacci's story eventually come together. Annabelle, fresh off of an unusually lucrative "long con," finds herself drawn into the Camel Club's current case.

Baldacci's story is a bit uneven, but mostly very entertaining. The hyper-competence of both Seagraves and Annabelle is fun to watch. The story is complex but told well, so that it's not hard to follow once you've digested the large number of characters that are thrown into the mix at the beginning of the book. The Collectors is a sequel to Baldacci's 2005 novel The Camel Club. I did not read the earlier book. (Indeed, I was not aware when I started it that The Collectors was a sequel, because the fact isn't mentioned on the jacket copy of my edition.) I did feel, reading The Collectors, that the background and raison d'etre of the Camel Club were insufficiently explained, though following the book's storyline was not difficult for that reason. The other problem I had with the book is also related to the fact that The Collectors is part of series: while two of the three storylines in the book are concluded at the book's end, it's clear that there's more to come for Annabelle and the victim of her long con. This isn't a problem if you're reading the books in a series, but if you read The Collectors as a stand-alone novel you may find yourself disappointed at the lack of closure.

Debra Hamel, Reviewer  
<http://www.book-blog.com>

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## Fortenberry's Bookshelf

The Light of Men  
Andrew Salmon  
Cornerstone Books  
9781934935293 \$24.95 [www.cornerstonepublishers.com](http://www.cornerstonepublishers.com)

Andrew Salmon's new book is absolutely fantastic. The Light of Men is a dark, hard-hitting novel. Though historical fiction, war story, and SF, it is so much more. It is a very serious work of literary merit, profoundly philosophical and not merely "an adventure." Salmon has cast an unflinching eye upon the hell that is Nazi Germany's concentration camps and found all mankind huddled there. This work reminds me directly of the late Solzhenitsyn's dark journey through the bleak Soviet gulag system.

**This is a haunting work which will stay with you long after reading it. It will bother you, whispering in the dark like a fellow inmate in your barracks. I often lay awake at night, because just when I began to dose, I'd hear the creak of the suicidal rafters and snap awake in a cold sweat.**

**The Light of Men is profoundly moving. It illuminates the goodness in mankind by examining thoroughly the atrocious evil which infects us. To accomplish this, Salmon uses the perfect character, a complete outsider, the solitary stranger who has the best vantage point from which to examine our humanity and the functioning (or is that malfunctioning) of our society. A tag line on the back cover says, "A stranger in hell." Indeed he is.**

**The Second World: Empires and Influences in the New Global Order**

**Parag Khanna**

**Random House**

**9781400065080 \$29.00**

**This book is part of a very welcome "boom" in new worldview studies, which chronicle the rise of the Second World (Asia, Africa, South Ameica). The geopolitical situation has been undergoing shift for some time, but the last eight years has seen a seismic shift in the world's balance. This is a very savvy guide for any student of world affairs.**

**Mr. Khanna expertly explores the entire Second World in a thorough, yet easily grasped way. He strikes a great balance between professor and Everyman traveler, understands the cultures and his subject matter, and takes us all on an informative tour. He handles a mountain of information deftly and provides a very readable study. It is rare to find someone with a strong command of the material who also writes well, knowing how to sustain a flow and not get lost in all the details.**

**The Second World provides the historic underpinnings of the current situation and thus lays out what is coming. The warnings laced throughout the text about the dangers of imperialism should be mandatory reading. This book is a great resource for all armchair geopoliticians.**

**The Vatican Exposed: Money, Murder, and the Mafia**

**Paul L. Williams**

**Prometheus Books**

**9781591020653 \$29.00**

**This is a quick, easily-accessible, highly disturbing history of modern corruption inside the Vatican and hence Catholic Church. This very informative volume should be praised for its concise nature. Put it on the top of your reading list.**

**One incident in particular, the murder of Pope John Paul I and the mafia-backed financial scandal surrounding it, is extremely tragic. It is shocking to see just how compromised the upper echelons of the Catholic Church had become and a deep shame those involved were not instantly stopped so that justice could have prevailed. It is one thing to read about ancient Medieval scandal involving the Popes, it is quite another to read about contemporary times, businesses, politicians, and nations involved in high crimes and desperate corruption.**

**Mr. Williams has an amazing ability to compress vast amounts of material into brief, coherent passages. This is a quick, lucid read and actually enjoyable, despite the horrific nature of its topic. The wealth of information covered is quite astounding. How he made this comprehensible and light enough to digest is beyond me.**

**A must read for anyone who wishes to understand the modern Catholic Church.**

**Thomas Fortenberry  
Reviewer**

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## **Gary's Bookshelf**

**I Spy a History and Episode Guide the Groundbreaking Television Series**

**Marc Cushman and Linda J. Larosa**

**McFarland**

**P.O.Box 611, Jefferson, NC28640**

**9780786427505 \$39.95 [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com)**

**Recently Image Entertainment released on DVD for the first time all of the episodes of "I Spy" by season in the order they were shown. This book is a great addition that will add to a person's enjoyment of the show. "I Spy" was first in many ways. It was the first hour long show to present black and white actor leads as equals, it was the first to film on location in other parts of the world, it was the first hour long drama for producer Sheldon Leonard, it was the first time a black actor won an Emmy award for best actor in a drama. The authors tell the effect of James Bond, other shows that came along during "I Spy's" run, the relationship between "Star Trek" and "I Spy," how Cosby was almost fired and what stopped it, the chemistry of Culp and Cosby, the role that Robert Culp turned down, also the one Martin Landau turned down, behind the scenes when the show was on location, how TV stations did not carry it and why, actor profiles, story analysis, why the show was canceled after three seasons even though there was a fourth in the works, reunions of Culp and Cosby on other shows and movies, merchandising spin off items, and discussion of "I Spy" movies. The authors have**

**done a concise history of the show that broke new ground in the nineteen sixties that any fan of the series cannot afford to miss.**

### **A Storm to Remember**

**Keith Gouveia**

**Privately Published**

**No ISBN \$5.00 [www.keithgouveia.com](http://www.keithgouveia.com)**

**2004 was the worst year for hurricanes in the state of Florida in its history. Like an assembly line they came across the peninsula one after the other leaving their wake of damage. Author Gouveia has written a fantasy novel that begins with a hurricane that hits Florida with another one right behind. After the first one, eleven year old Alison Mohr begins to help clean up the area in front of her house. She hears a sound and finds three kittens nestled under a plant. She decides to take care of them because there is no mother cat. She does this knowing her father is allergic to cats. Later the mother cat appears and that's when the story takes on a magical tone that makes it a fun read. These felines are not the average ones we know. They are able to travel through dimensions to other realms. The hurricane took them off course and dropped them at Alison's house. Soon her entire family gets involved and they all travel with the kitties. They encounter some strange characters and situations. Gouveia has taken the negative of a massive hurricane and turned it into a positive charming fantasy tale that is a quick read for any age.**

### **The Daughter-in-law Rules**

**Sally Shields**

**Outskirts Press Inc**

**Denver Colorado**

**9781432718374 \$14.95 [www.TheDiRules.com](http://www.TheDiRules.com) [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com)**

**I read a long time ago "The Rules" and its sequel and felt they are garbage especially because the two authors got divorces from their husbands shortly after the second book was published. How could they tell women how to find and keep a mate when they did not stay together in each of their marriages? Shields on the other hand has written a witty, helpful book that shows how to ease into the relationship with the in-laws. This is lighthearted reading that has a lot of good ideas.**

### **Owly**

**The Way Home & the Bittersweet Summer**

**Andy Runton**

**Top Shelf Productions**

**P.O. Box 1282, Marietta GA30061-1282**

**9781891830624 \$10.00 [www.Topshelfcomix.com/owly](http://www.Topshelfcomix.com/owly)**

**Owly is an owl who has all kinds of adventures in a comic strip. What sets this one**

apart from others is that there is no dialogue and captions by any of the characters. You have to look at all of the drawings to get into each story. They are fun reading for any age.

### **Defending a Nation**

**Tari M. Cooley**

**1st Books Library**

**1663 Liberty Dr., Bloomington In 47404-5161**

**1410770289 \$3.95 800-839-8640 [www.1stbooks.com](http://www.1stbooks.com)**

**With patriotism on the wane in this country, it is refreshing to read this book of poetry that is inspirational and very supportive of our troops overseas. The author has written simple emotional poems that someone has needed to say for some time. A portion of the proceeds for this book is being donated to various non-profit organizations that provide services to our men and women of the U. S. armed forces, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and their families.**

### **Nine Lives Too Many**

**John F. Rooney**

**Senneff House Publishers**

**P.O.Box 11601, Fort Lauderdale, Fl 33339**

**0975275682 \$14.95 [www.senneffhouse.com](http://www.senneffhouse.com)**

**With all the interest in terrorism today, this book comes along at a very good time. Rooney is a very fine writer who tells his story of domestic terrorism with a strong believable character and robust writing. The book is filled with non-stop action of a cat and mouse chase against the backdrop of time. The book dashes along to its final smashing ending. If, as the press material that came with this book says, this is the first of a series of novels, I would love to see what the author has in store, because this is an excellent page turning thriller.**

### **The Last Jihad**

**Joel C. Rosenberg**

**Forge**

**175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010**

**0765346435 \$7.99 [www.tor.com](http://www.tor.com)**

**I've always loved reading suspense thrillers and this one is a doozy that is very timely. Someone is trying to kill the President of the United States because he has a peace plan for the Middle East that is not only believable but is also something that should be done in which everyone in the region could profit, if his proposal is instigated. The author has masterfully blended fiction with a well thought out idea of a way to really have peace. This novel is so logical that it should be on this and other administrations reading list.**

## **What You Need to Know about Terror**

**Micah Halpern**

**The Toby Press LLC**

**POB 8531 New Milford CT 06676-8531 USA**

**1592640265 \$9.95 [www.tobypress.com](http://www.tobypress.com)**

**Though President George W. Bush said recently that the war on terror cannot be won Micah Halpern shows that it is possible to win the war on terror. He defines terror, tells why something is classified as a terrorist act, shows ways to eliminate terror, and poses to the reader ways to have average citizens help fight terror. The book is a very detailed expose on things that should and can be done to stop terrorism.**

## **The Mouse That Roared**

**Leonard Wibberley**

**Four Walls Eight Windows**

**39 West 14th Street #503, New York, New York 10011**

**1568582498 \$13.95 [www.4w8w.com](http://www.4w8w.com) 1800 7883123**

**Back in print is the brilliant novel about Grand Fenwick that declares war on the United States, and wins through a fluke. The small country is having a tough time in the business world. The problem: the United States is competing and shutting them out of the market place. To retaliate, Grand Fenwick comes up with a plan to declare war on the United States lose and get foreign aid to rebuild the small country. Instead in a bizarre twist of fate Tully Bascomb the leader of the Grand Fenwick army takes hostage several Americans, a secret weapon, and somehow wins the war.**

**This wonderful satire was the basis for the movie of the same name that starred Peter Sellers. Wibberley is also the author of the book THE MOUSE ON THE MOON, the sequel in which Grand Fenwick enters the race for space between Russia and the United States. Both novels that were made into films have recently been brought to DVD, but are not easy to find.**

**THE MOUSE THAT ROARED is the charming classic novel that started it all.**

## **Belly of the Dragon**

**Jack Romig**

**1st Books Library**

**1663 Liberty Dr., Bloomington In 47404-5161**

**0759622019 \$10.95 888-280-7715 [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com)**

**This is a novel of the Korean War that shows how a covert mission can go bad. Word is leaked to officials in Washington that China is about to help the North Koreans by making jet engines to fit Russian built airframes. This could**

completely alter the air superiority the U.S. presently maintains. The president and his advisors decide that the U.S. must act swiftly to eliminate the threat posed by the Chinese made jet engines. Therefore they decide to send in a small covert unit of soldiers to eliminate the threat, knowing that the odds are against them succeeding in their mission. The characters are believable and the combat scenes are realistic in a tense tightly written thriller.

Gary Roen  
Reviewer

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## Gloria's Bookshelf

**Across the River**

**C. Solimini**

**Deadly Ink**

**P.O.B. 6235, Parsippany, NJ 070544**

**9780978744229 \$12.95 [www.deadlyink.com](http://www.deadlyink.com)**

Twenty-three years after she moved away from the New Jersey town of her birth, Andrealisa ("Andie") Rinaldi returns home on assignment from her new employer, a tabloid of the worst kind [a redundancy perhaps], to cover a story involving the horrifying death of a ten-year-old girl in a case reminiscent of the real-life killing of Jon Benet Ramsey. [There is also a reference to the only slightly more recent Long Island Lolita case where a young woman shot her lover's wife in the face.] The current death, which occurred six months prior [the tale takes place in 1992], involved the killing of the daughter of the town's most prominent local real-estate developer, who was one of several of Andie's parochial school classmates years back. The child was found dead following a New Year's Eve party held in her home, having been strangled to death. Andie's boss feels she can get 'something new,' from the perspective of an old friend, including perhaps some exclusives with her former friends and classmates.

Andie had been a reporter in upstate New York with local newspapers, covering the police log, then "transferred to the Features section, eventually covering health and medicine. Today, I'd do what my editor had asked me to do and then get back to pitching stories about celebrity facelifts gone wrong."

The first of those with whom Andie becomes reacquainted are Michelangelo ("Mickey") Giamonte, now a cop, and Joel Hartt, the victim's father [and chief suspect], now widowed. She finds herself thinking she likes the adult Joel, and thinks to herself "Would that be inconvenient if he turned out to be a murderer?" The question of who actually is the murderer is something Andie has to pursue, hoping to break a huge story in the process.



**The novel is "peopled" with relatives like Andie's Aunt Angie, her twin sister "Cat," a car named Ringo and a tiny dog named Ben, "part mutt, part Muppet," along with a varied cast of characters who, truth be told, I had a bit of trouble keeping straight in my mind. But they are never anything but interesting, as is the book itself. The picture painted of the New Jersey town, both past and present, is a vivid one. Andie is a well-imagined protagonist, and I look forward to her future appearances.**

**Black Seconds**

**Karin Fossum**

**Harcourt**

**15 E. 26th St., NY, NY 10010**

**9780151015276 \$24.00 212-592-1000 [www.HarcourtBooks.com](http://www.HarcourtBooks.com)**

**Just nine days shy of her eleventh birthday, Ida Joner leaves her home in Southern Norway one afternoon on an errand, promising her ever-vigilant mother, Helga, to return promptly. The title derives from the time immediately after Helga becomes aware that her daughter is inordinately late: "She had always thought of seconds as tiny metallic dots; now they turned into heavy black drops and she felt them fall one by one."**

**As the ensuing hours and then days pass, everyone is questioned: Ida's father and his brothers and their sons, and Helga's sister, Ruth, and Ruth's 12-year-old daughter and 18-year-old son, who seems preoccupied with a minor accident which has damaged his precious car – he's just recently passed his driving test. Then there is a rather gruff and strange man: Emil Johannes Mork, who doesn't seem to be able to talk other than to say the word "No" and drive about in a three-wheeled vehicle with motorcycle handlebars and a small trailer attached. [Though fifty-two years old, Emil's seventy-three-year-old mother comes to his house weekly to keep it clean and tidy.] No one can be found who saw Ida from the time she left her home.**

**The case is assigned to Inspector Konrad Sejer, the protagonist of this series. A very tall, gray-haired man in his fifties, he inspires confidence. "He moved quietly and thoughtfully, as if nothing in the world could unsettle him, Helga thought, He's exactly what I need. He'll fix this, because that's his job, he's done this before." But this, he thinks, is a case unlike any he's ever had. Sejer is a wonderful protagonist. A widower, he has a grown daughter presently in the US, and a very old, beloved dog who he dreads having to put down, though he knows this is what he will shortly have to do, as every movement is a trial for the animal.**

**The book describes a mother's worst nightmare – to lose a child, or to think a child capable of murder – either one impossible to imagine. A fast read, "Black Seconds" is a fine mystery, as well as a psychological study of the highest order,**

**and is highly recommended.**

**Fractured**

**Karin Slaughter**

**Delacorte Press**

**1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019**

**9780385341950 \$25.00 800-726-0600 [www.bantamdell.com](http://www.bantamdell.com)**

**Karin Slaughter returns to the location and brings back characters from her earlier novel, "Triptych," the location being Atlanta, Georgia. Will Trent, 6'3 and thirty-six years old, of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, is called to the scene in an upscale enclave where two dead bodies are found. A 19-year-old boy and 17-year-old girl are found murdered, the young woman having been savagely stabbed and beaten and the boy stabbed and strangled to death, the latter apparently strangled at the hands of Abigail Campano, the woman in whose home---mansion, really---the bodies have been found. In addition to the two deaths, it appears that another young girl has been kidnapped. Surprisingly, Will's boss, Amanda Wagner, deputy director of the special criminal apprehension team, has assigned a young city cop, Faith Mitchell, to work the case with him. [Faith, at 33 and with an 18-year-old son, knows something about teenage angst [both her son's and her own at 14 when she became pregnant with him while in high school.] Another character to whom we are introduced is Angie, a former vice cop with a rep for promiscuity, to whom, against all odds, Will is now engaged.**

**Faith's working with Will is fraught with complications: Six months earlier Will had been asked to investigate the APD narcotics squad, which "had resulted in the firing of six Atlanta police detectives and forced the early retirement of one of the city's highest-ranking officers. The cases were good --- the cops were skimming cash off of narcotics busts --- but nobody liked a stranger cleaning their house, and Will had not exactly made friends during the course of the investigation." And now Faith is asked to work with the man who had helped force her mother off the job.**

**Will and Paul Campano, Abigail's husband, have a history going back nearly three decades, when they were both in the Atlanta Children's Home [as was Angie]. Paul was adopted at the age of 12, while Will remained in his soul-stifling environs until eighteen, when the law mandated he leave, however ill-prepared he may have been for that eventuality. The circumstances of their childhood have had a profound effect on all of them, as has Will's learning disability, which he takes great pains to hide. He and Faith are well-drawn protagonists, and this reader looks forward to reading the next book in what is hoped will be a continuing series.**

**The book is much more than a police procedural. One thing it is not, as one might**

**expect it might be, is uniformly somber, the author's humor often evident. A high level of suspense is maintained throughout as the detectives work the clues, hoping that they are in time to prevent the loss of yet another young life. Well written and fast-paced, the book is highly recommended.**

## **Uneasy Relations**

**Aaron Elkins**

**Berkley Prime Crime**

**375 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014**

**9780425221761 \$23.95 800-847-5515 [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)**

**Gideon Oliver, the "Skeleton Detective" who is the protagonist in this long-running and popular series, returns in this, its fifteenth entry. This time around Gideon, a well-respected professor of physical anthropology in Washington State, is at the Rock of Gibraltar, where he is to speak at a conference celebrating the fifth anniversary of the discovery what is termed The First Family, which consists of the skeletal remains, twenty-five millennia old, of a mother and what appears to be her young son in a close embrace. What distinguishes these skeletons from any other is that it has been hailed as the first proof that humans and Neanderthals could and did live together, inasmuch as the child was undoubtedly Neanderthal, but the woman was just as undoubtedly human. It was deemed the most sensational find of the decade, and as a result, "the study of the relationships between more and less advanced societies was given new life."**

**Gideon was the lead scientist on a three-person team which reported on the find, and now he and his wife, Julie, a park ranger, have joined them and a few other colleagues at the Paleoanthropological Society conference in Gibraltar, where Gideon is to deliver a paper. A couple of incidents take place within a 24-hour period which could have been accidental, or on other hand could have resulted in Gideon's death, and that, coupled with two deaths, one past and one present, that may or may not have also been accidental, lead him, along with his friend, DCI Fausto Sotomayor, to investigate.**

**Numerous technical discussions ensue, which, thanks to Gideon's explanations to Julie and Fausto, are not the dry deliberations they might have been, but are interesting and [relatively] easy to follow, indeed often fascinating. Gibraltar is lovingly presented, e.g., "For almost two hundred years the Alameda Botanical Gardens have been a peaceful, restorative haven where the people of Gibraltar would go to get away from the congestion, dust, and bustle of the city. Lovers --- moony teenagers and shuffling old married folk --- still stroll hand in hand among its lush plantings, stately civic memorials, and nineteenth-century cannons, planning their futures and recalling their pasts." Presented as a traditional whodunit, the book is lively and informative, while keeping the reader guessing until the end. Recommended.**

## **Asking for Murder**

**Roberta Isleib**

**Berkley Prime Crime**

**375 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014**

**9780425223314 \$6.99 800-847-5515 [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)**

**Rebecca Buttermann, clinical psychologist and advice columnist [and self-described girl sleuth] in her local New England town newspaper, finds her dear friend and fellow therapist, Annabelle Hart, beaten and bloodied in her own home in New Haven. Almost before she realizes she's done it, she's pocketed her friend's Day Planner, initially because the two women had a professional agreement to cover for each other with their patients should the necessity ever arise. It's only a small step from there to checking out whatever information she can glean, in addition to speaking with Annabelle's patients and seeing some of them clinically, and when Rebecca becomes convinced that it was not a case of a simple burglary gone wrong, she tries to figure out who could have been responsible. When Rebecca herself is almost the victim of a hit-and-run, there is no longer any doubt in her mind.**

**Annabelle uses in her practice non-verbal, sandplay therapy, which "provides a bridge between consciousness and the unconscious," something with which this reader was completely unfamiliar. Apparently not much less so is Rebecca, but she, and the reader, learn something about it as Rebecca uses it both with Annabelle's patients and herself, as she explores some issues she has with the men in her life, from her long-estranged father, her ex-husband, Mark, Detective Meigs, with whom she has a past of sorts [dealing more with murder than romance] and her current almost-boyfriend, known as Good Old Bob. As always, she has the support of her sister, Janice, and her friend Angie. Sprinkled through the book from time to time are appropriate Advice Column letters as Rebecca tries to do her job while sleuthing.**

**This is the third entry in the Advice Column Mysteries, following the author's Golf Lover's Mystery Series, and each successive novel is just as entertaining as the one that preceded it. Rebecca is a very human and well-drawn protagonist, and I greatly look forward to the next entry in the series.**

## **Sweet Revenge**

**Diane Mott Davidson**

**Avon**

**10 E. 53rd St., NY, NY 10022**

**9780060527341 \$7.99 800-242-7737 [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com)**

**Goldy Schlulz is back in this, the fourteenth entry in the series. Goldy is now 34 years old, the mother of a precocious 15-year-old boy. She is the owner of Goldilock's Catering, although she describes herself as follows: "First I was a mom**

**and a wife, second I was a caterer, and third, every now and then people wanted me to figure out what had happened to their loved ones, loved ones who were victims of crimes."**

**This time around, Goldy is preparing to cater a party at the home of a very wealthy man whose hobby is map collecting. But not long before the scheduled event, one of the guests, a former District Attorney, is found dead in, of all places, the town library. When the dead man's fiancée, a former client and "sort of a friend" of Goldy, shows up at her door shortly afterwards, Goldy's ambivalence dial is turned up: Goldy cannot believe she is guilty, but the police certainly think she is, and promptly arrest her.**

**Complicating matters is that three weeks prior to these events Goldy was certain she had seen a young woman who six months before had admitted to killed Goldy's ex-husband, fondly remembered as "The Jerk," before apparently jumping to her death in a blazing inferno. That same young woman, Goldy believes, was sneaking around the library aisles just before the body of the dead man was discovered. Was the woman a phantom, as Goldy fears, or was she real, and what was her connection to the murder?**

**With the help of her best friend, Marla, who happens to be the other ex-wife of The Jerk, Goldy tries to discover the identity of the killer, to the dismay of her husband, an investigator with the Sheriff's Department. Always entertaining, as usual in this series, in addition to the solving of the mystery the reader is treated to the usual collection of mouth-watering recipes. Fans of this series will not be disappointed.**

**Angel's Tip**

**Alafair Burke**

**Harper**

**10 E. 53rd St., NY, NY 10022, 212-207-7000/800-242-7737,**

**www.harpercollins.com**

**9780061561023 \$23.95**

**Alafair Burke introduced readers to Ellie Hatcher in "Dead Connection," and the NYPD detective returns in this wonderful new novel. After only five years on the police force, Ellie has now made detective in the Homicide South division, much to the chagrin [or worse] of the others in her squad. After just one week in the homicide bureau, she comes upon a murder victim while on her morning run, a nineteen-year-old girl brutally strangled and stabbed, the body apparently dumped in the vacant lot in which she is found.**

**Chelsea Hart, along with her two freshman classmates from Indiana University, were spending Spring Break in the Big Apple. On the final night of their trip, she promised her friends that she would join them at their midtown Manhattan hotel**

**in time for their flight back home, not wanting to cut short her "best night ever," at a trendy club in the West Village. (The "Angel's Tip" of the title is, apparently, a currently popular martini.) She never made it back to the hotel.**

**While a novice as a detective, Ellie has great instincts and is earning the grudging respect of her new partner, J.J. Rogan, but is still working on a similar gain in estimation from the others with whom she works. When Ellie begins to suspect that Chelsea Hart's murder is but the latest of several similar killings that began a decade earlier, that avenue of investigation is viewed with skepticism.**

**Ellie lives with her brother Jess, a member of a local rock band, or rather Jess lives with her, his places of residence and employment all short-lived. When several days after the discovery of Chelsea's body another young woman is killed outside of the club where Jess works, the stakes are raised. What follows is a suspense-filled book with solid plotting and a nerve-jangling conclusion. This is the author's fifth novel, all dealing with NYC cops and prosecutors [Ms. Burke is a former deputy district attorney], and should earn her a lot of new fans. The book is very fast reading and immensely enjoyable, and is highly recommended.**

## **Leather Maiden**

**Joe R. Lansdale**

**Alfred A. Knopf**

**1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019**

**9780375414527 \$25.00 800-726-0600 [www.aaknopf.com](http://www.aaknopf.com)**

**You know what a pleasure is in store for you from the first page of "Leather Maiden," the newest book from Joe Lansdale, upon being introduced to Cason Statler. He is returning to Camp Rapture, where his parents and his brother and sister-in-law still live, an old timber town in East Texas where he grew up and where is now moving back, after stints in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he earned some medals, and a newspaper job in Houston, where he earned a Pulitzer nomination, all of which have had a profound effect on his psyche.**

**The author's description of Cason's entry into town: "It was a bright day, the sunlight like a burst egg yolk running all over the sidewalk and through the yards, almost snuffing out the grass with its heated glory, and causing everything to be warm and appear fresh, even the houses on the poor side of town from which ancient coats of basic white peeled like stripping sunburn." After his first day back, he sits outside his parents' house and "leaned back and looked up at the stars. They were shiny and bright, and there was something right about the heavens that made me want to live forever. I had had that feeling before. It never lasted."**

**Cason has come back to interview for a job as a journalist on the local Camp Rapture Report, a far cry from the paper from which he was fired in Houston,**

after screwing up his life there with his excessive drinking and other, quite personal dalliances, he is happy to be hired there as a columnist. Trying to find something to interest him, he finds notes made by his predecessor on a cold case, that of the disappearance of a spectacularly beautiful girl six months prior, a 23-year-old history major at the University. He feels that story is ripe for a series of articles about "the illusion of safety in a small town." He despondently feels it might be the only interesting thing he'd ever get to write about there. Though he is warned by the police chief that "there isn't any such thing as a quiet town, unless maybe there are two people in it and one of them is dead." After the first article runs he finds he has stirred up reactions that perhaps would have better been left undisturbed, and there are some personal implications for Cason.

The portrait painted by the author is very evocative: "The sun was falling into the trees and it looked like a peeled red plum coming apart. A flock of black birds was moving from one tree to the other as my car startled them. They moved so well in tight formation they appeared to be a wind-blown cloud of crude oil. Finally they had had enough and broke over the trees and flew into the face of the dying sun, black freckles on a bright red face."

The portrait of small-town America is well-drawn, mostly dormant but still persistent racial tensions realistically depicted. The writing and the characters are original; particularly Cason's "friend" with the quaint nickname "Booger," who served with him in Iraq and saved his life more than once and now owns a gun range and a bar, and of whom he says the following: "I call Booger a friend, but I'm not really sure I mean it. He may be more of an attachment, like a growth of some sort. It was like I told Dad. I want to get rid of him, cut him out, but there are complications and attachments. . . . I suppose it's our Iraq connection. That kind of thing, making war together, gives us a link; sometimes, for me, that link is like a ball and chain. Booger, in many ways, has yet to quit fighting the war. Originally, he moved his inborn hatred of just about everybody from Oklahoma to Iraq, and now that he was home again, shooting squirrels and deer didn't do it anymore. He kept hoping they'd call him back to Iraq. He liked the smell of blood, the charred odor of burning corpses. He liked being shot at. He told me so. He was that soldier that gave the rest of us a bad name." Reminiscent of Elvis Cole's "Joe Pike," Spenser's "Hawk" and Myron Bolitar's "Win," he is not a character the reader will easily forget.

The story is suspenseful and in between the murder and blackmail it is laced with humor, some of the laugh-out-loud variety. But don't let that fool you. The author steadily builds the suspense as the tale progresses, till you find yourself holding your breath as the conclusion nears. And just when you think you can take a deep breath he has another stunning twist in store. Mr. Lansdale has written another quirky and fast-paced novel, one which will keep the reader guessing and hugely entertained right through to the last page.

## **Legally Dead**

**Edna Buchanan**

**Simon & Schuster**

**1230 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10020**

**9780743294775 \$26.00 800-223-2336 [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)**

**In a scenario reminiscent of Thomas Perry's wonderful Jane Whitefield series, Edna Buchanan gives us Michael Venturi, formerly a member of the US Marine Force Recon, more recently a US Marshal with the Witness Protection Program. In a series of events which continues to haunt him, Venturi created a new identity for a mobster turned Government witness and relocated the man to a rural town in New Hampshire, with tragic consequences after the man reverted to type. He thinks: "He'd arranged too many fresh starts for undeserving people. Considering his own role in the New Hampshire tragedy, he probably didn't deserve a new life, either. But he . . . decided he'd do the best he could."**

**After being fired by the Feds, Venturi embarks on a new mission: to create new identities for innocent people who really need to put their pasts behind them and start new lives. In order to do that, Venturi and his team must re-create all of the components of these people's lives and relocate them, after first arranging for their former lives to convincingly "end," with all that that implies, including their being declared "legally dead," allowing them to emerge elsewhere in the world with new looks and new identities. "Who wouldn't want a fresh start, a new life?" he says. Thirty-eight years old, and having lost his wife and their unborn child in the Staten Island ferry crash three years earlier, Michael is seeking some kind of redemption.**

**This is Ms. Buchanan's 17th book, and follows her popular Britt Montero series. Many parts of the plot are somewhat implausible – e.g., one of Michael's team works for the CIA although he never seems to be actually "working" in that capacity – but it is a fascinating premise, and the author delivers a solid novel with a couple of startling surprises in the last several pages.**

**Gloria Feit**

**Reviewer**

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## **Gorden's Bookshelf**

**Phantom Prey**

**John Sandford**

**G.P. Putnam's Sons**

**c/o Penguin Group Inc.**

**375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014**



**9780399155000 \$26.95**

**The Prey series of books has become a classic modern detective series. Phantom Prey has all of the action you expect with a Lucas Davenport novel. It also has the occasional reality touch you would expect from a story about tough men who are involved in the dark business of crime fighting and the methods they must use to survive and separate the violent culture from their personal lives. This combination of detection, action and the illusion of reality has been a hallmark of the series from the beginning.**

**Lucas Davenport, the lead investigator for the Minnesota BCA, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, is stuck in the revolving door of bureaucracy involved in the security planning for the upcoming Republican Convention. When Weather, his wife, asks him to look into a case of a missing daughter, he jumps at the excuse to get back to real police work. The daughter was involved in the local Goth scene and one of her Goth friends has just been murdered. Soon more deaths occur and a psychotic begins looking at Lucas as a possible victim.**

**Sandford's smooth easy style brings this action detective story to life. As a fun side note, he blends in a mention of Kidd, a lead character in another of his stories. The Prey series has become a standard in the detective genre and Phantom Prey measures up to the standard. With the additional storyline of the upcoming Republican Convention, he has given the story an immediate and local feel. He has also opened the story up for a possible dated feel after the convention. Using current events in a novel, has always been a tricky balancing act for the writer. It will be fun to see how well this story ages.**

**Sail**

**James Patterson & Howard Roughan**

**Little, Brown and Company**

**Hachette Book Group USA**

**1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020**

**9780316018708 \$27.99**

**Sail is pure action/suspense. It is written in a cliff hanger style with nearly every section ending with a breathtaking climax. To keep the reader's heart rate within reason, there is a short skip-ahead chapter starting the book. Sail is the vacation from hell. Every action and event leads to a threat. In typical Patterson editing, the chapters are too short and formatted to pad the story length with blank regions. This is an acknowledgment to modern publishing where the quality of the story is second to padding the page length to the correct thickness in the book. It is also better than the usual unneeded paragraphs and pages typically used today to lengthen stories to the page counters ideal number count.**

**The Dunne family is in trouble. When the father died, the family broke apart. The**

daughter, Carrie, is bulimic and suicidal. The eldest son, Mark, is a drug addict. The youngest son, Ernie, is the only one who is trying to be normal. The mother Katherine is a workaholic, who had decided that taking the family on a sailing vacation, is the only way to force everyone to face their problems.

On the first day Carrie jumps overboard and their uncle, Jake, is just able to save her. This is actually a high point in this vacation from hell as things just spiral down hill. To the surprise of everyone, the family pulls together and actually starts to function as a unit. But is this going to be enough to survive?

The Patterson group of writers is one of the few outlets today for the short novel. One reason why this group might be selling, as well as they are, is that this style of writing has been ignored by most publishing companies. A well written short novel is a distinct style and very enjoyable. Sail isn't the best action/suspense but it is well written and unusual enough in this publishing market that you will not be disappointed picking it up. The only thing you need to remember is to block out enough time to read the story in a single setting. You will not want to put it down.

S.A. Gorden, Reviewer

[www.paulbunyan.net/users/gsirvio/content.html](http://www.paulbunyan.net/users/gsirvio/content.html)

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## Harwood's Bookshelf

**Jesus is Dead**

**Robert Price**

**American Atheist Press**

**P O Box 5733, Parsippany, NJ 07054-6733**

**9781578840007 \$18.00**

Jesus is Dead is probably Robert Price's least important book. While he describes the content as, "some of my best writing and thinking on the resurrection and ... closely related issues" (p. x), in fact the book is a reprint of excerpts from past writings and lectures that often differ from conclusions reached later. That is not a weakness. Only dogmatists never change their views in the light of additional data. And republishing former conclusions is justifiable, since there is always the possibility that he was right the first time. Let the reader judge such matters for himself.

While my own conclusions parallel Price's on all major issues, there are minor points on which we disagree - but that does not necessarily mean he is wrong. I leave the conceit of infallibility to brain amputees such as Katie Couric, who has persistently refused to apologize for her Big Lie that there are no atheists in

**foxholes; Charlie Sheen, who told Entertainment Tonight that anyone who does not believe in (his) God has never looked into the eyes of a child, but made no mention of the counterclaim that anyone who does believe in Big Daddy in the Sky has never sat on a toilet seat or watched a TV ad for tampons; and Tom Cruise, of whom I will be kind and say nothing.**

**Among other points on which Price does not have unanimous support - among competent scholars; the delusions of theologians do not count - is his declaration (p. 26) that, "Internal data lead me to posit a date of about 100 CE for Mark, and about 150 for both Matthew and Luke." But Randel Helms (Who Wrote the Gospels?) offers what I consider compelling evidence that Mark was written between 70 and 74 CE, 74 being the date that Mark, using imagery from Daniel, forecast for the end of the world. Also, the first accusations that Jesus was illegitimate were penned by Shimeown ben Azzai around 100 CE. Since ben Azzai's imaginative speculation was a response to interpolated Matthew's declaration that Jesus was not Joseph's natural son, it could only have been written after Matthew had been written and interpolated. Price seems to view the virgin birth as part of the original Matthew, and that raises the question of why he offers no explanation of why ben Azzai would jump to such a conclusion fifty years before a Christian document gave him a reason to do so.**

**Dr Price offers a speculative explanation of why Luke omitted Mark 6:45 to 8:26. My explanation (Mythology's Last Gods, pp. 310-311) is, "Since everything in Mark between the two bagels-and-fish stories is missing from Luke, a better explanation is that Luke finished copying the first tale, rerolled the scroll, and later resumed copying from the second such tale in the belief that that was where he left off." Price also treats Matthew's "keys of heaven" interpolation (16:17-19) and Trinitarian interpolation (28:19), both better dated three centuries later, as parts of the original gospel (pp. 17, 26). I don't think so. On the question of whether there was ever a historical Jesus onto whose biography savior-god myths were posthumously grafted, Price has previously leaned toward the conclusion that there was not. The hypothesis in his final paragraph (p. 279) that, "it is quite possible that there was no historical Jesus," is pragmatic to say the least. I get the impression that his current position is that the conflicting evidence makes it "too close to call." Perhaps further consideration will tilt him one way or the other. We can only wait and see.**

**Price justifies the "occasional sarcasm scattered through these pages," with the explanation (p. xi), "I don't want to make an outrageous proposition sound like it deserves any respect by speaking of it respectfully." The sarcasm is, however, kept to a minimum for a logical reason. The primary thrust of Jesus is Dead is the decimation of lightweights whose incredible rationalizations disqualified them from consideration in Price's more important books, Deconstructing Jesus and The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man. If such apologists were treated as they deserved, this book would be a marathon of sarcasm. The purpose of Jesus is Dead**

**is to annihilate apologists whom Price could not rebut in books with a more serious purpose, because rebutting them would have granted them an undeserved dignity. Now, just as Carl Sagan eventually chose to rebut Immanuel Velikovsky in order to defuse the allegation that he could not be rebutted, Price has written a book to rebut the circular arguments he and other scholars had previously ignored. And the result is devastating, analogous to using a sledgehammer to swat flies.**

**For example, typical of the desperate rationalizers whose theobabble Price rebuts are two who argue (p. 40), "What about hostile eyewitnesses who would have called the Christians' bluff? 'Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective.'" In response to such pseudo-reasoning, Price cites, among others, the Rastafarians of Jamaica who hailed Haile Selassie as the incarnation of the universe's alleged One God. When Selassie died, a Jamaican journalist told Sixty Minutes that Selassie's supposed death was a "premature report engendered by the unbelieving Western media" (p. 41). Of such attempts to uphold religious fairy tales, biblical as well as latter-day, Price explains (p. 44), "Really they are all attempts to get evangelical students and seminarians to 'pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.'"**

**Jesus is Dead has nothing to say to scholars, since no person worthy of such an appellation needs to be told that the earth is not flat, Jesus did not rise from the dead, and anything that cannot happen, such as feeding 5,000 with a picnic basket of bagels and lox, did not happen. But it needed to be written, if only to pull the rug out from under incurables who cite the nonsense peddlers Price crucifies, as if the mental gymnastics that is their substitute for human thought belonged anywhere but in a reeducation asylum. And while the reaction of the woman mentioned on the back cover, who went into a state of catatonic shock on hearing the mere title of Price's book, was by no means unique, the fact remains that Jesus is indeed dead: totally, permanently, irreversibly DEAD. Subject closed.**

### **Why I Became An Atheist**

**John W. Loftus**

**Prometheus Books**

**59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst NY**

**9781591025924 13.50 Brit. pounds**

**I have never encountered anyone who was cured of religion by anything other than a close study of the Judeo-Christian bible's contradictions and absurdities, such as its fourteen assurances that the earth is flat, and the growing awareness that what he believed was incompatible with what he was discovering to be true. John Loftus is not really an exception. While his opening chapters make clear that he first "lost his faith" (actually overcame his brainwashing) as a consequence of emotional experiences, it was his examination of the falsifying evidence that**

**ultimately freed him from the god delusion. Loftus wrote his book primarily to explain why he ceased to be a believer, but its main value is that it spells out the falsifying evidence that finally cured him and will cure anyone who reads it - once they verify that his facts are indeed facts - with the obvious exception of "those who will not see."**

**Why I Became An Atheist is evenly balanced between philosophical arguments that the biblical god cannot exist, and evidentiary arguments that such a god does not exist. Both arguments are definitive, and fully justify Loftus's conclusion that only nontheism is defensible. But I have said before and say again that philosophical refutations of religion will never cure anyone. Such natural disasters as the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Burmese cyclone, and the Chinese earthquake, could not have happened if the universe was produced and directed by a god possessed of both the omnipotence to prevent them and the benevolence to wish to do so. It follows that such a god cannot exist. The same point was made by Epicurus 2,400 years ago, and evinced the response, "Yes, but he does." That is the response parroted by incurable religion addicts to this day.**

**Evidentiary arguments take the form that the existence of "God" stands or falls on the validity of the documents asserting that a god with specific qualities does exist. Since the sacred writings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam all state definitively that the universe has existed for less than 7,000 years, and that cosmology has been falsified, then any claim from the same source that a god has revealed its existence cannot be taken seriously. Similar claims from individuals, such as George W. Bush's assertion that a god has talked to him, have even less credibility.**

**An example of Loftus's philosophical arguments is, "When I look at the Bible itself, I see things in it that are completely barbaric and superstitious to me living in today's world. These things are obvious. So it's more likely to me that biblical people were barbaric and superstitious than that they had good evidence for what they believed."**

**His evidentiary arguments include, "I daresay that if an evangelical Christian with his present mindset would step back into the ancient world and hear someone tell a tale that a woman turned into a pillar of salt, he wouldn't believe it unless he saw evidence. If someone told him a snake or a donkey talked, he would scoff.... Why does he believe the biblical stories but would reject those stories if he lived in that era?" He also cites the Tanakh/Bible's "outmoded cosmological viewpoint in which: heaven is above the firmament [hemispherical sky-dome] that holds back water and in which the stars are said to reside; the flat earth is supported by fountains of water beneath it; and hell is the abode of the dead that is in the belly of the earth ... the sun stopping in its place for Joshua ... a star that led Magi to the city of Bethlehem."**

**Loftus assumes that his readers are bright enough to recognize that a book containing such stories belongs on the same library shelf as the works of Hans Anderson and the Brothers Grimm. And after quoting the consensus of scholars that the authors of the Christian gospels wrote decades after the alleged events they described, and that "Matthew" would not have simply copied "Mark" if he was himself an eyewitness, he asks, "Why would he copy almost word for word Mark's account of this calling if the author were actually the disciple Matthew?" He also cites a double-blind test of the efficacy of prayer, in which a prayed-for experimental group and an un-prayed-for control group showed no difference in the number of patients whose symptoms were alleviated.**

**Concerning his earliest doubts based on emotional considerations, he writes, "But when Mel Gibson's movie The Passion of the Christ came out, it made me think about them again, intensely. More than anything else this movie put me on a course to finally come out of the closet and tell what I think, for I saw in that movie such an ignorance that I just had to speak out." And while the concept of a god who would authorize such a vicious and sadistic execution is repulsive, compared to the god who would sentence his perceived enemies to eternal torture in hell, Hitler looks like "a third degree saint" (quoting one of Loftus's sources). Loftus's conclusion is that, "The notion of a punishment after we die is sick and barbaric. The concept of hell developed among superstitious and barbaric peoples."**

**Loftus states that, "The Bible speaks often as if God doesn't know the future." He lists eight passages where this can be seen, but does not quote any of them. Considering the importance of such a point, and the reality that most readers will not bother looking up the cited verses, this strikes me as an appalling lost opportunity to make his point in spades. But his big weakness is that he lacks the expertise to recognize which arguments for the validity of the Christian religion are worthy of rebuttal, and which are not. He consequently devotes an inordinate amount of space to debating lightweights. Anyone who could claim that, if he were to time-travel back to the time of Jesus' execution and see for himself that Jesus did not emerge from his tomb on the third day or at any later time, he would still believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, might be a worthy debating opponent for John Steinbeck's Lenny Small, but surely should be ignored in a book aimed at readers who are not braindead.**

**Loftus's summation of the ultimate argument against the biblical god's existence is, "Only if the theist expects very little from such a being can he defend what God has done. Either God isn't smart enough to figure out how to create a good world, or he doesn't have the power to do it, or he just doesn't care. You pick. These are the logical options given this world."**

**Coming from a former apologist whose biblical studies, while long and intense, were conditioned by the need to reinforce the brainwashing that was both**

comforting and economically indispensable, it is hardly surprising that **Why I Became An Atheist** is sprinkled with errors in regard to biblical claims that had no theological value and therefore did not strike a non-historian as questionable, errors that could have been avoided if he had paid closer attention to some of the books listed in his bibliography. For example, Loftus cites the evidence that Jesus was not born in Bethlehem, but shows no awareness that he did not grow up in "Nazareth," since there was no village of that name earlier than the fourth century, when an existing village was probably renamed by a Christian emperor out of embarrassment that Jesus' alleged home town did not exist. And he does not rebut the Big Lie that fanatic Catholic Adolf Hitler was an atheist.

But such minor errors detract little from the book's overall worth. Loftus has brought together sufficient evidence of religion's Achilles' heel to cause all but the most intransigent believers to ask themselves: **Could he be right?**

**Did Man Create God? Is your Spiritual Brain at Peace with your Thinking Brain?**

**David E. Comings, M.D.**

**Hope Press**

**P O Box 188, Duarte, CA 91016**

**9781878267733 \$29.95**

**Did man create Ernst Blofeld? Did man create Lex Luther? Did man create Count Fosco? Did man create Iago? Anyone who thinks the answer to any of those questions is No, probably also thinks that man did not create the psychopath "God" of the fantasy novel known as the Bible.**

**David Comings states in his Preface, "This book is intended for all inquisitive readers who are interested in ... whether our rational thinking brain can live in peace with our spiritual brain." The obvious rebuttal to that opening argument is, "Assumes facts not in evidence." While "spiritual brain" might be Comings' original concept, it is essentially an extrapolation from a pseudoscience that he appears to buy lock, stock and barrel.**

**According to Michael Shermer, "Did Man Create God? will be the definitive scientific reference on religion for some time to come." Really? Why?**

**I have the highest regard for Dr Shermer's findings when he does not step outside of his area of expertise. But every time he does that, his conclusions run from unreliable to hyper-credulous. His repetition of the Big Lie that religion can only be disbelieved, not disproven, can be attributed to a misplaced devotion to political correctness. He is generally able to recognize that, when proponents of an extraordinary claim are unable to produce the single replicable positive result that would be all that is necessary to prove their delusion's reality, it is because the point has been reached where absence of evidence is indeed evidence of absence. But he makes an exception in the case of hypnotism, to which he**

**attributes a fifty percent probability that it actually exists, in defiance of two centuries of seeking and not finding that single replicable positive result.**

**He also has no ability to recognize evolutionary psychology, called "sociobiology" until the name was changed out of embarrassment at its demonstrated absurdity, as pseudoscientific hogwash that could be a useful contribution to human knowledge only if history, biology, paleontology, anthropology, genetics, and several other sciences are not. Sociobiology, like other pseudosciences such as parapsychology, has failed to produce a single instance of a fulfilled prediction. But sociobiology goes beyond failure to find fulfillment. It is so far outside the field of legitimate science that, like theology, it cannot even make any testable predictions.**

**It was necessary to show, not only that sociobiology, a.k.a evolutionary psychology, is pseudoscience, but also that a usually discerning scientific investigator such as Michael Shermer can be deluded into taking it seriously, before proceeding to David Comings' attempt to harmonize neurology with virtual phrenology.**

**Did Man Create God? stands or falls on the sociobiology hypothesis that thinking can trigger genetic changes in the brain, the same way (according to sociobiologists) the genesis of face-to-face copulation caused women to think breasts into existence to replace the out-of-sight stimulus of rounded buttocks.**

**Comings' book is a monumental annihilation of Intelligent Design theology, so detailed and unanswerable that it can be compared to using a sledgehammer to crush an ant. He writes (p. 171), "Studies of the finches of the Galapagos ring the knell to the complaints of the creationists. These studies show that evolution is an ongoing process and that it occurs in our lifetime.... They especially falsify the claim that there is not enough time for evolution to occur." The four pages of details that justify citing finches as proof of evolution are typical of what is to be found throughout the book. While Richard Dawkins' *The Ancestor's Tale* is the definitive paleontological proof of the intellectual bankruptcy of evolution deniers, *Did Man Create God?* would belong beside it on every truth seeker's bookshelf if it had not been corrupted by pseudoscience.**

**I do not dispute that Dr Comings gets his facts right, convincingly right, indisputably right. It is when he interprets those facts in accordance with sociobiology theory that he strays from science into pseudoscience. He is aware that all attempts to locate a "god gene" have come up as empty as attempts to locate a "gay gene." He states correctly that electrical stimulation of designated brain centers has induced spiritual illusions, such as a feeling of being close to and communicating with such imaginary creatures as ghosts, a goddess named Mary, aliens, angels, saints, and a god named Jesus or Allah or Siva or the Flying Spaghetti Monster, depending on whether the stimulated brain belongs to a**



**Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, or an imaginative nontheist. And he is aware (p. 380) that, "The vast majority of individuals using LSD experience some type of religious imagery." But from there he jumps to the non-sequitur that the ability of humans to experience such hallucinations became a survival factor, causing the evolution of what he calls the "spiritual brain." While such a development is not theoretically impossible, it could only have happened if persons who lacked the ability to hallucinate were significantly less likely to live long enough to breed. Anyone who thinks that might have happened might have a "spiritual brain," but assuredly does not have a "thinking brain."**

**Comings carries political correctness to absurd lengths, telling godworshippers that their beliefs are falsifiable while leaning over backward to avoid telling them that their religion is intrinsically evil. I have not encountered a single writer in the past sixty years who, in arguing that Nazism is an indefensible mindset based on fully falsifiable theories of genetics, anthropology, economics and history, has carefully avoiding saying that Nazism is a force for evil out of fear of offending Nazis. Yet thousands of writers like Comings, while acknowledging that religion is a product of primitive human imaginations, are terrified of offending the persons whose mind-AIDS they are trying to cure.**

**Comings recognizes (p. 601) that, "A rational first step toward toning down the violence done in the name of religion would be to promote the understanding that the sacred texts were not written by Yahweh, God or Allah, but by man.... Without such understanding it is more likely that [hu]mankind will self-destruct over religion than over any other issue." He certainly got that right. Religion has been the cause of ninety percent of all manmade evil for at least 3,000 years, and destroys the ability to tell right from wrong to such an extent that persons who condemn mass murder as evil when Hitler did it with gas chambers, are able to rationalize that it is not evil when their Sky Fuhrer does it with a tsunami, cyclone or earthquake. It is high time writers who recognize that religion is the root of all evil were willing to stand up and say so. Osama bin Laden is not an aberration who contravenes the true spirit of religion. He is the true spirit of religion.**

**Stimulation of a center of emotion in the brain can trigger a delusion of a god's presence. What it cannot trigger is the delusion that the god wants the individual to murder randomly chosen followers of an opposition god. Religion is caused by emotional and cultural conditioning, not neurological hardwiring as Comings hypothesizes. If he had recognized E. O. Wilson's mushroom fantasy (Sociobiology: The New Synthesis) as incompetent drivel, and not tried to prove the existence of a "spiritual brain" by starting from the assumption that humans have a spiritual brain and then arguing in circles, this book's serious weaknesses could have been eliminated.**

**A Portable God: The Origin of Judaism and Christianity  
Risa Levitt Kohn and Rebecca Moore**

**Rowman & Littlefield Publishers**

**4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham MD 20706**

**9780742544659 \$22.95**

**Imagine two professors of children's literature, one specializing in the Brothers Grimm and the other in Hans Anderson, collaborating on a book tracing the common origin of the fairy tales of both. Now imagine both professors starting from the assumption that a metaphysical entity named Mother Goose was watching over their shoulders, tweaking their puppet strings, and inspiring them to write the essential truth about her fairy tale kingdom. What you have so far is a first draft of their collaboration. Further imagine the collaborators giving Mother Goose a phallus transplant and renaming her God. Finally, recognizing that their critical analysis of the documents could go only so far, since their bread and butter as professors of Fairy Tale Studies depended on their not recognizing that the tall tale tellers created Mother Goose rather than the other way around, imagine them writing a treatise every bit as fictitious and imaginative as the sources of their speculations. Now you have the final version of A Portable God.**

**Risa Kohn and Rebecca Moore are theologians. For readers uncertain what a theologian is, H. L. Mencken wrote the definitive definition: "A blind man in a dark room searching for a black cat that is not there - and finding it." As for the methodology of theology, that is equally straight forward: start from predetermined conclusions and distort the evidence to whatever degree is necessary in order to make it fit.**

**Kohn and Moore write (p. 1), "Rather than assume that the Bible reveals religious truths, scholars assume that the Bible reveals what an ancient group of people believed was religious truth." Note the implication that K & M are scholars. In fact they do recognize that their bible reveals only what its authors believed - up to a point. But on the basic dogma that a god exists and has revealed its existence, they are no more capable of questioning that pretence than three-year-olds are capable of questioning a similar assertion about Santa Claus.**

**A good indication of whether a book is likely to be useful is its "Recommended Further Reading." K & M list Bart Ehrman and Richard Friedman, both excellent choices. But they notably omit Israel Finkelstein & Neil Silberman, whose books totally demolish the concept of a Davidic empire that reached as far as the Euphrates and Egypt, as depicted in the map on page 25 as a historical reality rather than the outlandish boasting of biblical authors. They also list Burton L. Mack, best described as a straw man whose errors brainwashed believers can easily refute, and James Tabor, whom neither Christian apologists nor nontheistic biblical scholars regard as anything but an undisciplined fantasizer.**

**K & M quote biblical excerpts with no indication which translation they are using. The advantage of such an approach is that they can insidiously imply that the**

passage as quoted is what the biblical author really wrote, as if its conformity to their own indoctrination is irrelevant. Consider for example their version of Genesis 14:18-19 quoted on page 168:

**"King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth.'"**

Now consider The Fully Translated Bible's rendering of the same verse:

**"Molokhiy-Tsedek (King Storm-god), an allied king, brought bread and wine, for he was a priest of the god Ilion (El Khelyown). And he blessed him with this blessing, 'Abraham has been blessed by the god Ilion, the creator of the skies and the land.'"**

By quoting a blatant falsification, K & M avoid having to explain why the Yahwist who wrote the verse did not regard Ilion and Yahweh as the same god. Elsewhere they quote (p. 3) an unidentified translation of Ezra 7:6 as, "the Torah of Moses which YHWH God of Israel gave." The Fully Translated version reads, "the Torah of Moses, which Yahweh, the gods of Israel, had instituted." Note the different translations of the Hebrew dual-sex, generic plural, *elohim*, as the masculine, singular proper name, "God," in K & M, and the correct translation, "the gods." K & M justify their fraudulent singularization of *elohim* by quoting (p. 32) The Oxford Companion to the Bible's definition as, "God, a plural of majesty with a singular meaning." While all theologians are rationally challenged, Oxford theologians (e.g., Alister McGrath) tend to be certifiable.

K & M do acknowledge that "the LORD" is a deliberate falsification of YHWH (Yahweh), a proper name analogous to Zeus or Jupiter. But they persistently refer to "God" in their narrative when they mean "Yahweh," even though to 21st-century readers, regardless of whether or not they believe such an entity exists, the concept God means a transcendental master of the universe, a concept totally foreign to the polytheistic biblical authors to whom Yahweh was their god.

K & M acknowledge that the earliest gospel was Mark. But in defiance of all logic and common sense, they date it (p. 12) to "between 68 and 70 C.E." Are they unaware that Mark puts into Jesus' mouth an accurate description of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple that occurred in August of 70 CE? Or do they actually believe the passage was written before the event it pretended to prophesy, and that the information had travelled backward in time? Whatever appellation one applies to people who can believe that, "scholars" they are not.

They also date John too early (actual date, 130-138 CE), presumably because they believe that its deification of Jesus was not a direct contradiction of all other Christian Testament books, in which the idea that Jesus was anything but

**Yahweh's anointed king was never mentioned because it had not been invented yet. While they appear to believe that the John gospel, the John letters, and Revelation were all written by the same author, all one can say for sure is that they do not point out the falseness of such speculation.**

**Commenting on the common identification of Paul as the first Christian, K & M write (p. 23), "If Paul is the first Christian, he does not appear to know it, since he characterizes himself as a Hebrew, a Pharisee, and an Israelite." The most charitable interpretation of that observation is that K & M are deliberately hairsplitting in order to win brownie points with their target audience whom they realize are not rocket scientists. Of course Paul did not call himself a Christian, since his gentile mythology was first called Khristianismos by its detractors, probably because the word's coiners equated Khristos, "the anointed," with patrons massaged by catamites in public bathhouses.**

**In identifying (p. 160) the alleged author of an early Christian letter as, "Clement, bishop of Rome," K & M do not swallow Catholic propaganda that he was a "pope" three centuries before the office of Pope came into existence. That does not necessarily mean that they did not know he was not a pope, or that Peter, who never visited Rome in his life, was not the first pope. The law of averages says that some of their random utterances are bound to appear learned. And while their references to "Jesus of Nazareth" tend to be quotations, they do appear to be unaware that nazoraiois was a sectarian label, "Jesus the Nazirite," and had nothing to do with a village named Nazareth that did not exist before the fourth century.**

**In criticizing books about first-century Judaism (p. 73), K & M write, "One gets the impression that if we could walk down the streets of first-century Jerusalem, we might easily identify and differentiate card-carrying Pharisees from Sadducees or spot visible distinctions between the Essenes and the Zealots." They do not elaborate to any significant extent, but do make the point that individuals who may not even have accepted the sectarian labels pinned on them by others were no more identifiable as adherents of a specific creed than are present day Catholics, nontheists and Jews (excluding individuals who flash yarmulkes or anti-vampire charms).**

**Where K & M spell out their brainwashing in spades is in their declaration (p. 166) that, "Christian theology stands on firm ground ... when it asserts that Jesus was a heavenly redeemer sent by God to save God's people." Right, and Ron Hubbard was a heavenly redeemer sent by the thetans of Arslycus to save the likes of Tom Cruise.**

**A Portable God is an extremely useful book to K & M's no-talent students whose recognition that the only alternative to wearing a paper hat and asking, "Do you want fries with that?" is to become dog-collared parasites who prey on the**

**gullible. The book can provide them with the "little learning" that will enable them to pose as spokespersons for the Flying Spaghetti Monster or some similar imaginary entity. To anyone with a functioning human brain, it is a waste of a perfectly good tree.**

## **The Bible Against Itself: Why the Bible Seems to Contradict Itself**

**Randel McGraw Helms**

**Millennium Press**

**2761 North Marengo Ave, Altadena, CA 91001**

**0965504751 \$21.95**

**Randel Helms writes in *The Bible Against Itself* (2006), "[a] surprisingly large number of biblical authors write to attack, to reinterpret, even to subsume so as to transform, other biblical authors" (p. ii). I wrote in *Mythology's Last Gods* (1992), "John was not the first Christian scripture written to repudiate earlier Christian scripture. James had been written to repudiate the teaching (and by implication the letters) of Paul, as P had been written to repudiate J/E. But John was the first Christian gospel written to repudiate earlier Christian gospels, of which Luke was John's specific source" p. 344). Given that overlap, and the fact that practically every point Helms makes in his new book reiterates what I had written 14 years earlier, I expected to find *Mythology's Last Gods* in Helms's bibliography, along with *The Fully Translated Bible*, in which attention is drawn to contradictions and copyings. Since they were not there, I can only suggest that Dr Helms "has some 'splaining to do."**

**It is plausible that Helms had not read MLG when he wrote *Who Wrote the Gospels?* But unless he does not read *American Rationalist* - an indefensible omission for anyone in the business of biblical or religious criticism - he must surely have read my review of that book in the July/Aug 1998 issue. I wrote, "Helms' most useful chapter (and most embarrassing to me, since it raises many valid points that I overlooked in *Mythology's Last Gods*) is the one on the final redactor of John." But if at that point he still did not bother to read MLG, he has a LOT of 'splainin to do.**

**I also wrote, "About the only point on which I believe Helms can legitimately be upbraided, as opposed to merely disagreeing with him, is his failure to append to the John chapters a verse-by-verse breakdown of which of the three authors he believes wrote what." That omission has not been rectified, and I continue to see the John gospel as the work of two, not three authors. Perhaps he could not have convinced me, but I would have liked to see his breakdown, since he is a scholar whose conclusions must be given the same serious consideration as those of Michael Arnheim, Bart Ehrman, Richard Friedman, Joseph Hoffman, Gerd Ludemann and Robert Price.**

**Helms is not so ignorant that he does not know that the Hebrew word *elohim* is a**

**dual-sex, generic plural meaning "the (male and female) gods." Yet he persistently quotes from bibles that intentionally mistranslate it as the singular, masculine, proper name, "God." And he quotes from translations that falsify the Jewish god Yahweh's proper name to "the LORD." Why? Two explanations come to mind: the p.c. cliché, and the p. word that does not always mean a sex trade worker. If encouraging readers to believe what he knows to be a Big Lie is personally profitable, career-wise, then to hell with his scholarly duty of educating the ignorant, right?**

**Helms quotes Haggai 2:8 as, "Mine is the silver and mine the gold, says the LORD of hosts." The Fully Translated Bible corrects the passage to, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says Yahweh, commander of armies." And he quotes Ruth 1:16 as, "Your people will be my people, and your God my God," The correct translation (FTB) is, "Your nation is my nation, and your gods are my gods." It is comprehensible that pushers of religion would repeat whatever mistranslation props up the Big Lie that biblical authors believed what modern religions claim to believe. But for a person who is making a point of demonstrating that the bible is riddled with lies, contradictions and failed prophecies to do so is inexcusable. A correctly translated bible was available, and Helms should have used it. He needs to decide if he wants to be part of the solution or part of the problem. He cannot have it both ways.**

**Helms' treatment of the books of Samuel/Kings and Chronicles has its upside and its downside. He reports that, "Yahweh incites David to take a census, then Yahweh kills 70,000 to punish David for obeying and taking the census." He contrasts that with the equivalent passage in Chronicles in which it was Satan who incited David to take the census. Helms' explanation is that the Chronicler, "wanted not to supplement the Deuteronomist historian, but to supplant him." While he argues that Chronicles was written to repudiate an earlier, now lost version of Samuel/Kings, he seems not to have deduced that 2 Samuel 24:1, which blamed Yahweh for ordering the census, is a corruption of a narrative by a pro-census author placed at the front of a narrative by an anti-census author. But that is nitpicking. That Chronicles was written to supersede Samuel/Kings in the expectation that S/K would disappear from history is the point of Helms' chapter, and that is indeed the way it was.**

**Similarly, when the author of Chronicles cited the book of Samuel the seer as his source for the life of King David, even though Samuel died before David became king, Helms recognizes that, "The Chronicler is counting on his readers' ignorance of the canonical book of Samuel, not their knowledge of it." To repeat: that is indeed the way it was. This is one of many places - far more than I cited in MLG - in which Helms shows a biblical author writing to repudiate an earlier biblical author.**

**Helms expresses some opinions that seem hard to justify. He recognizes only two**

authors of Isaiah, attributing to Second Isaiah passages others attribute to a Third Isaiah, and even cites Second Isaiah as the author of Isaiah 56:7, the beginning of a segment of eleven chapters that most scholars attribute to a large number of separate interpolators sometimes lumped together as Fourth Isaiah. He attributes the whole of Revelation to John of Patmos, unaware that John was a Nazirite (Jesus Jew) who wrote chapters 1-3 and 20-22 during the reign of Domitian, whereas the rest of Revelation was written by an orthodox Essene who wrote between July and August 70 CE.

He acknowledges that Jesus' title, "the Nazirite/Naziraios," became confused with a village called Nazareth. Yet he persistently refers to "Jesus of Nazareth," and does not mention that there was no village named Nazareth earlier than the fourth century CE. He devotes half a chapter to the circumstantial evidence that Paul of Tarsus was a latent homosexual. But he ignores the more definitive evidence that David progressed from Saul's boy toy to the lover of Saul's son, that Judith spent most of her life with an intimate female companion, and that Jeremiah was openly gay. But most indefensible is his citing of Morton Smith's *The Secret Gospel of Mark* as a legitimate ancient document. Is he unaware that Stephen Carlson in *The Gospel Hoax* blew Smith's practical joke out of the water?

Helms quotes Jeremiah's vitriol against the temple priests, "How can you say, 'We are wise, we have the law of the LORD,' when scribes with their lying pens have falsified it?" Helms' interpretation is, "For this prophet, the 'word of the LORD' was only what he, Jeremiah, said it was." While essentially true, that conclusion is oversimplified to the point of being useless. Helms seems to be unaware that Deuteronomy, found in the temple in 621 BCE by a high priest who may have been Jeremiah's father, was almost certainly written by Jeremiah as an adjunct to the J/E Torah; that the J/E/D Torah repudiated the Aaronic priesthood's uniqueness by identifying all Levites as priests; that the Priestly caste retaliated by writing an alternative, Priestly Torah intended to supplant J/E/D; and that Jeremiah in the book he later wrote under his own name denounced the P Torah as emanating from the lying pens of scribes, primarily because it introduced into Judaism a new taboo, designed to maximize the breeding of tithe-paying believers, that pronounced Jeremiah's orientation sinful.

Helms also repeats some arguments of Burton Mack, although with the proviso that, "Since he builds theory on top of hypothesis, Mack's thesis has not been universally accepted." I was less polite. In a review reprinted in *A Humanist in the Bible Belt*, I wrote, "The law of averages says that, somewhere in Burton Mack's two books under consideration, he must have got something right. If so, I failed to find it."

The big problem with *The Bible Against Itself* is that Helms tries to have his cake and eat it. In his previous books, *Who Wrote the Gospels?* and *Gospel Fictions*, he was willing to tell it like it is and let the gods fall where they may. He did not, as he

does here, attempt the impossible, demonstrating that the Christian bible is a product of the human imagination while simultaneously (perhaps under pressure from the Millennium Press hierarchy who seem to consider equivocation politically correct) refusing to recognize that religions based on that bible are products of the human imagination. "Seems to Contradict Itself?" Oh come now. He definitely needs to read Mythology's Last Gods, if he ever wants to correct his ongoing imperfections.

All in all, *The Bible Against Itself* adds little to what Helms has written in his earlier, better books. Nonetheless, the new material is interesting, and even this book contains enough unanswerable logic to cure any godworshipper who actually reads and understands it. Particularly meaningful to anyone with a functioning human brain is Helms' observation that, "The apocalyptic mind desperately holds onto the illusion that failed eschatological predictions are in fact as-yet unfulfilled prophecies - not about the past but still valid about the future." Any reader who recognizes his own doublethink in that passage should by all logic be cured. But I doubt if even Helms himself expects that to happen.

William Harwood  
Reviewer

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## Karyn's Bookshelf

**The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation**

**Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves**

**M.T. Anderson**

**Candlewick Press**

**2067 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140**

**97800763629502, \$22.99**

The sequel to the 2006 National Book Award winner surpasses long-awaited expectations. Its 550 pages continue the coming-of-age tale of an African American teen, who is a slave-turned-soldier during the darkest days of the Revolutionary War.

As with the first installment, which was not nearly as long at just 350 pages, "The Kingdom on the Waves" is a deeply satisfying stew of philosophy, war and human drama. It's a young adult novel best read slowly, and then read again to fully grasp the carefully placed small details and meanings.

The language is challenging, with complex vocabulary and construction, but readers who persevere will find gratification in a tale that lingers.



**Now 16 years old, Octavian has taken the last name of "Nothing" preferring that to the last name of his slave master. He has escaped the home of a group of scientists and philosophers who had enslaved him and his now dead mother, and alongside his faithful tutor joins the side of the British in the bloody struggle over the fate of the American colonies.**

**He joins the British Army, believing its leaders who say that once the war is over former slaves who enlist will be freed.**

**Along the way his upscale upbringing, by scholars who were testing his ability to grasp languages, math, science and music in comparison to white children, opens doors as he's asked to play the violin for parties of high ranking Army officials. But he also spends time in the trenches.**

**Of course, as readers know from history but Octavian and his fellow former slaves-turned-soldiers can't be aware, the British are doomed to lose.**

**What follows is a story about the gory ugliness of mortal conflict, but also the ugliness of an Army hierarchy that has no use for its most vulnerable African American soldiers, and no interest in protecting them, once it's clear that the war is going to be lost.**

**It's about choosing the promises of the British over the colonial rebels, who say they need slavery to keep their economy afloat -- and ending up on the losing side with no way out. It's about lies and deception and the realization, too late, that both sides are evil.**

**And it's based on the true experience of African Americans, formerly enslaved soldiers, who fought for the Brits.**

**But, in the most grippingly human of ways, it's also about forging friendships and seeking roots. During idle moments soldiers who have become friends tell stories about their escape from masters and recount tales passed down from Africa. A close friend of Octavian's gets married. He and a childhood friend are reunited and serve in the same regiment. They care for each other in sickness. And they cling to each other as the harshest of reality unfolds.**

**A remarkable conclusion to an unforgettable story.**

**The Darkness Under the Water**

**Beth Kanell, author**

**Candlewick Press**

**2067 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140**

**9780763637194 \$16.99**

**Figuring out who you are is tough enough. When you're the "wrong" kind of American teen, it's even harder.**

**In "The Darkness Under the Water" author Beth Kanell tackles with wonderful readability the struggles of Molly, a 16-year-old with Native American roots, whose family and others become a target for the Vermont government's effort to intimidate those considered of the wrong lineage.**

**Nurses purporting to be collecting health census data ask prying questions, and may not be above cutting women as they deliver their babies to ensure they can't have more children.**

**That historically true reality is mingled with a fictional tale about friends, coming-of-age opportunities, first love and small-town community. It's about what makes you of a certain background – is it your bloodline or how you live?**

**And it's tinged with lingering grief, and the eerie presence what Molly believes is the ghost of her sister who drowned in the nearby river as a small child.**

**As the novel progresses work on a river dam concludes, and a new lake swallows up the place where her sister drowned and her family's home, graciously entombing forever the scene of tragedy and letting Molly move on.**

**Her future becomes tied to a young man, also with Native American roots, whose isn't afraid to live his ancestry and encourages her to do the same.**

**A thought-provoking tale told in a gentle way, "Darkness under Water" is a debut novel for Kanell, who previously penned adventure-travel and local history books. A beautiful, memorable first effort.**

**Addis Berner Bear Forgets  
Joel Stewart, author and illustrator  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux  
18 West 18th St., New York, NY 10011  
9780374300364, \$16.95**

**Soft pastel illustrations and a roller coaster of emotions combine in the simple story of Addis Berner, a brown bear who relocates to the city, only to lose everything and then find it again.**

**The emotions run the gamut from confusion at the rush of urban life, to loneliness as he tries to make friends, awe at beautiful holiday decorations and architecture, anger at observed injustices and uncertainty as he tries in vain to recall why he came to the city in the first place.**

**The key to the story lies beyond the actual text, in small inset illustrations that show how the bear is robbed of the trumpet he has carried with him. A homeless woman, whose meager alleyway fire Addis Berner had previously shared, not only recovers his trumpet for him but helps him recall that he came to the city to play in a music concert.**

**And so the tale ends on a high note – literally.**

**A touching, sweetly illustrated story about newfound friends and finding your place in a world that can be confusing, exhausting, unrelenting -- and beautiful.**

**Karyn Saemann  
Reviewer**

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## **Kaye's Bookshelf**

**The Essential Employee: The Adventures of Carmen Senz  
Judy Free and Traci Maddox  
Sage Peak Associates, Inc.  
Tabernash, CO  
9780981776200 \$14.95 [www.essentialemmployee.com](http://www.essentialemmployee.com)**

**Quoting from the back cover:**

**"The Essential Employee: R E A C H for your peak and become an Essential Employee!**

**"What happens when two organization development consultants put their heads together to help employees become more essential in the workplace? The result is an engaging, easy-to-read story based on research and analysis! The story is about Carmen Senz's first six months at work and the lessons she learns about being an essential employee.**

**"This book provides great advice for all employees: whether you are preparing for your first job, you're an employee in search of a new position, you want to stay in the position you have, or if you want a promotion!**

**"For managers, this book provides valuable information about desirable employee behaviors based on research in small and large organizations.**

**"For executives, this book will help you understand what skills to promote with your organization's recruiting and training programs.**

**"So open up and learn from Carmen's experience! Find out what it means to be an essential employee!"**

**Yes, The Essential Employee is an engaging, juvenile little story; it's well written and well edited and might appeal to children in elementary school. If it were informative to managers or executives, that, indeed, would be a very sad case. As the protagonist's name Carmen Senz implies, REACH (results, enthusiasm, attitude, cooperation, and honor) should be a matter of common sense. Testing a prospective employee for 'common sense' might be the key. Some employees feel they are essential/irreplaceable and take on a superior attitude. However, no employee is irreplaceable. The challenge is to make your boss to think you are...essential.**

**The Heretic Queen**

**Michelle Moran**

**Crown Publishing Group**

**9780307381750 \$24.95**

**The Heretic Queen is a fictionalized historical novel about the young princess Nefertari, and her struggles in the court of Ramesses II to become his queen and Chief Wife. The struggle for power is always at the heart of political intrigue, and so, it is at the heart of this tale.**

**Michelle Moran has researched and written a most entertaining and informative novel about ancient Egypt. There's romance, religion, warfare, and palace intrigue. The novel is well written with an educated style. I enjoyed reading it and can recommend it to anyone interested in historical novels.**

**Spirit Matters**

**Matthew J. Pallamary**

**Mystic Ink Publishing**

**Carlsbad, CA**

**9781434318015 \$21.99 [www.mysticinkpublishing.com](http://www.mysticinkpublishing.com)**

**Quoting from the back cover:**

**"Spirit touches us in every moment of our existence; only most of us are caught up in the dramas that we have created in our lives, blinding us to a reality far greater than anything we can imagine with our rational minds.**

**"It is simply a matter of awareness.**

**"Though we often feel lost and abandoned in a cold and uncaring world, the truth is that we live in the illusion of our own self-created exile, away from the Source of our being which has never stopped loving us—unconditionally.**

**"The time has come to awaken and pass through the darkness of our fear induced slumber to embrace the light of truth, and find our way back to the infinite light of love that comes to us from the Source of all creation.**

**"Awareness is presence, which means being fully present, in the present, right here, right now, in this moment, standing in the light of truth, which is the greatest present anyone can receive.**

**"Matthew Pallamary's SPIRIT MATTERS chronicles his life long search for truth, which took him from the false spirituality of a violent concrete jungle in an Irish Catholic ghetto in Boston, to the discovery of true spirituality in the jungles of the Amazon where he discovered the truth.**

**"Spirit DOES matter."**

**As a reviewer, I have read many memoirs—some written to give advice, educate, encourage, inspire...to help us through difficult times/problems, some to rant and some to rave. We all have a story to tell and with the help of POD publishers, many people have taken up the challenge to write.**

**Matthew Pallamary's Spirit Matters is one exceptional memoir (not POD) on many levels: 1) It is an honest accounting of his drug use throughout his life in search of new experiences, pushing the limit and ultimately leading to a truth for himself...a trip from selfishness to selflessness; 2) The story is a page-turner and informative; 3) Pallamary is an exceptional, educated writer with a smooth, appealing style. I particularly liked his succinct chapters.**

**There are many, many books out there about spiritual paths and how to raise ones consciousness. Most of these books are written with an attitude of teacher/student and a small degree of superiority or humorous self-deprecation.**

**How delightful that this is not the case with Matthew Pallamary...how refreshing, how human, how honest.**

**I agree with Pallamary's mother, when his writing was compared to Jack Kerouac's On the Road, Matt's is better. Allow me to share a few passage with you...one somewhat humorous and the other descriptive.**

**Page 217 - first day at Amazon jungle camp after the wasp attack:**

**"I was drenched with sweat after carrying our gear and getting settled in our tambos, so I decided to skinny dip in the tributary. While I was undressing at the water's edge, a huge black ant bit into my foot. I slapped at him, knocking his body away, but his head remained clamped to my foot, still sucking. I swatted it**

away and still had to dig out its mandibles, which remained embedded in my flesh."

**Page 221 - Jungle life:**

**"The only word that comes to mind to describe waking up in the rain forest is primeval. The jungle is never quiet. The continuous buzzing, calls, and chatter of insects and animals fill the day and night, each with their own quality. The night is the loudest. You can find yourself awake in the total black of predawn and sense a subtle shift in the nature of the sounds around you. Though you can see nothing, you know by the shift that sunrise is approaching.**

**"As the new day dawned through rising jungle mists, the noise of the jungle's night life drifted into the lower-energy buzz and hum of the day, punctuated by the cries of birds and animals that sounded sweeter, lighter, and less insistent than those of the night. What the life that fills the jungle day lacks compared to the volume of the night it makes up for with visual orchestra. Bugs of all shapes and sizes buzzed and crawled everywhere, as did the lizards. Birds, smaller animals, and bigger ones seen less frequently moved on the ground and in the trees. Hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, insects of all sizes, colors, and markings flitted in the sun, the most spectacular of them el morpho; a large iridescent, cobalt blue butterfly that flutters up and down the waterways."**

**Such a delightful surprise! Thanks, Matt, and may the spirit with be you.**

**What Can We Do Next? The Adventures of Lexie & Lolly**

**Toula Magi**

**Outskirts Press, Inc.**

**Parker, CO**

**9781432715335 \$12.95 [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com)**

**Quoting from the back cover:**

**"On a rainy day, with nothing to do, Lexie uses her imagination to create an imaginary friend to play with. She names her new friend Lolly, because his colorful appearance reminds her of lollipop flavors. Lolly shows Lexie that by using their imagination, they can go on all sorts of adventures, even though they can't play outside. What Can We Do Next? Is a delightful new children's book that shows kids that they can use their imagination to conjure up their own fun, any time, any place. When you use your imagination, there is no limit to what can be done!"**

**This is a simple, easy-to-read story about how children can use their imagination, rain or shine, to entertain themselves—not a bad idea...a imaginary best friend. The illustrations are fun, well done and colorful.**

**Toula Magi's inspiration to write her first children's book came while watching her daughter at play. Now, that inspiration has manifested itself into a delightful little book...one I'm certain young children will enjoy again and again.**

**Kaye Trout  
Reviewer**

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## **Larsen's Bookshelf**

**Tarawa and the Marshalls U. S. Marines in World War II: A Pictorial Tribute**

**Eric Hammel**

**Zenith Press**

**c/o Quayside Publishing Group**

**400 First Avenue North, Suite 300, Minneapolis, MN 55401**

**9780760333297 \$35.00 [www.zenithptrss.com](http://www.zenithptrss.com) 612.344.8157**

**Eric Hammel, is an astute student of military history. He is the author of some thirty books about World War 2 in the Pacific theater. He also compiled a very useful chronology about the air war over Europe and North Africa titled "Air War Europa 1942-1945." Here he pens a terse and telling commentary for some 300 photos of the 2nd Marine Division's landing and three day battle for Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll in the northwest Gilbert Islands at a loss of some 3,000 casualties in November 1943.**

**Following Tarawa, Hammel turns to The Marshall Islands, just north and west of the Gilberts where the Japanese had fortified Kwajalein and Eniwetok Atolls and built air bases. American 2nd Marines and army personnel quickly brought the Marshall Islands under allied control in February 1944.**

**Some of the photographs have never been published. All are in black and white and are amazing shots of men in combat. Somehow they make time stand still.**

**In the last sixty years or so, Americans have found some costly places to fight battles. Tarawa was among the worst.**

**Previous books in The U. S. Marines in World War 2 series include the island battles of Guadalcanal (9780760331484) and New Georgia, Bougainville and Cape Gloucester (9780760332962), available through Zenith Press.**

**From Baghdad, with Love: a Marine, the War and a Dog Named Lava  
Lieutenant Colonel Jay Kopelman with Melinda Roth  
The Lyons Press**

**c/o Globe Pequot Press  
PO Box 480, Guilford, Connecticut 06437  
9781599211824 \$14.95 www.Lyonspress.com 800.062.0973**

**One silent November evening during the first week of battle in Fallujah, Iraq, in the year of our war 2004, Lt. Col. Kopelman, battalion commander, led his troops through a seemingly empty street sided by seemingly empty houses when one of his men heard click, click, shuffle sound. Sticking his rifle into the doorway he found a yipping, tail-wagging, and nail-clicking fur bundle of puppy.**

**This discovery began a five month odyssey of puppy rescue. "Lava," the puppy, made it to the United States, in spite of rules forbidding the transfer of animals.**

**It took a band of conspirators to get the puppy out of Iraq by air to Chicago's O'Hare Airfield, then on to California in April 2005, where "Lava" lived happily ever after.**

**"From Baghdad, With Love" is one of the better stories to come out of Iraq. With a lot of heart, a few tears and a lot of system spoofing, this well told tale of Marine and puppy is well worth a read.**

**War Lessons: How I Fought to Be a Hero and Learned That War Is Terror  
John Merson  
North Atlantic Books  
2526 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704  
9781583942093 \$15.95**

**John Merson is a veteran of the 3rd Platoon, K Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division, and served in Vietnam from April 1966 to May 1967. More than military memoir, Merson combines his experiences and writes of the limitations of war with considerations on how to prevent it, and proposes a variety of alternatives to war that are certainly compelling.**

**This book should be on the desk of all world leaders who consider war as the only option to the solution of national differences.**

**All royalties from "War Lessons" are donated to Project Renew, which clears unexploded ordinance in Vietnam.**

**Confederate Colonels: a Biographical Register  
Bruce A. Allardice  
University of Missouri Press  
2910 LeMone Boulevard, Columbia, MO 65201  
9780826218094 \$49.95**



**If you are looking for an authentic rendering of Confederate Army Colonels who served in the American Civil War, 1861-1865, this publication is the last word. From Robert Haden Abercrombie to Leon Toll von Zinken, the 1583 officers who ended their careers as colonels each have a paragraph which includes birth information, education, service, post war activities and date and place of death.**

**Listed as appendices are 429 regularly appointed Confederate generals who had served as colonels in the Confederate army or who had been colonels in a "state" army, a full list of those who served a colonel in state armies, and at last, a list of those officers who were called "colonels."**

**"Confederate Colonels" will stand tall in the book shelves containing Ezra Warner's "Generals in Blue" and "Generals in Gray" and Bruce S. Allardice own "More Generals in Gray." The research is astounding!**

**Bruce S. Allardice is Adjunct Professor at South Suburban College and Moraine Valley Community College in Illinois. He is a resident of Des Plaines, Illinois.**

**Richard N. Larsen  
Reviewer**

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## **Liana's Bookshelf**

**Awakening the Genie Within: A Journey of Discovery**

**Bettye Johnson**

**Living Free Press**

**P.O. Box 97, Rainier, WA 98576**

**9780965045445 \$17.95**

**Bettye Johnson, a mother of three sons, has had a very versatile life; her latest occupation has been that of a student at the Ramtha School of Enlightenment for the past 20 years. Her first book, the award winning Secrets of Magdalene Scrolls, and all the other work of hers can be found at her website at [www.magdalenescrolls.com](http://www.magdalenescrolls.com).**

**Join her blogs at**

**<http://secretsofthemagdalenesrollls.blogspot.com>**

**<http://feminine-point-of-view.blogspot.com>**

**<http://haveyoueverwondered.blogspot.com>**

**Awakening the Genie Within is a wonderful spiritual book that urges women to find their own way in life despite the taboos and adversities they encounter. The book is divided into 23 chapters each one dealing with a different issue about spiritual enlightenment.**

**Driven from her own life experiences the author illustrates vividly the changes a woman can be subject to in her life and how she can reach fulfillment and satisfaction. Searching the meaning of life is certainly a difficult mission but the author seems to have found a way to live her life powerfully and effectively. This is a great read for all women who seek to enhance their life and find true meaning. Throughout the book the author refers to a number of book titles that have been helpful to her and may be valuable for the readers too. Get this book from [www.magdalenescrolls.com](http://www.magdalenescrolls.com).**

**Operation Blue Light: My Secret Life Among Psychic Spies  
Philip Chabot with Laurie Anne Blanchard  
Cherubim Publishing  
P.O. Box 13313, Sacramento, CA 95813-3313  
9780981602400 \$26.95 [www.CherubimPublishing.com](http://www.CherubimPublishing.com)**

**Philip Chabot is a journalist specializing in the paranormal and the psychology of psychics. Read more about him at [www.philipchabot.com](http://www.philipchabot.com).**

**Operation Blue Light is a true story divided into 12 chapters. It is the story of a man who has got special psychic abilities and who is exploited by spy agencies. Chabot's memoir has got quality and includes intriguing facts that will appeal to all adult readers. The author uncovers the secret activities of US Government and CIA officials and his involvement with 'mental' technologies. Chabot has been a psychic spy for a long time, so he now reveals his secrets to the public hoping that this story will be of 'value to those of psychic abilities as well as those who have friends or relatives who have not understood them.'**

**Written in the first person, this story is lively and highly interesting to read; it actually resembles a spy film as it involves suspense, mystery and a lot of action. The dialogue is vivid and the characters well crafted. It is a gripping story that can be read in one sitting. It is both entertaining and enlightening as regards the secret agents' field. It caters to all those who love action and spy stories and those who like stories about people with psychic abilities. It is an exciting book that I certainly recommend to all curious readers.**

**Get it from [www.philipchabot.com](http://www.philipchabot.com) and [www.CherubimPublishing.com](http://www.CherubimPublishing.com).**

**The Dharma King: The Thrilling Novel of One Man's Quest to Save Tibet-and Himself  
B.G.Stroh**

**iUniverse**

**1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403**

**9780595716906 \$23.95, [www.iUniverse.com](http://www.iUniverse.com)**

**Brad G.Stroh is a successful entrepreneur and lives with his family in northern California. Read more about him and his work at [www.dharmaking.com](http://www.dharmaking.com)**

**The Dharma King is an exciting novel that inspires people to search for a meaning in their life. The story is about Sam, a young American man, who travels to Tibet; and right there, his adventures begin. Sam encounters a culture that inspires him to start a personal quest and consequently save the baby Panchen Lama. Sam gets involved in the country's problems and is motivated to help them and at the same time to help himself learn about a new spiritual world so different from the west capitalism.**

**Sam's spiritual journey is both entertaining and interesting to read. It is a rich in plot and action story that will satisfy the most difficult reader. It caters to those seeking spirituality as well as those who are curious to learn about Tibet and its culture. It is also educational and can appeal to a wider audience. Get it from [www.dharmaking.com](http://www.dharmaking.com)**

**The Dragonfly Secret: A Story of Boundless Love**

**Clea Adams and John Adams**

**Feather Rock Books, Inc.**

**4245 Chippewa Lane, Maple Plain, MN 55359,**

**9781934066133 \$16.95 [www.featherrockbooks.com](http://www.featherrockbooks.com)**

**Clea and John Adams co-founded Feather Rock Books in 2005 with the goal of publishing inspiring stories. Visit them at [www.featherrockbooks.com](http://www.featherrockbooks.com).**

**The Dragonfly Secret: A Story of Boundless Love is a wonderful book fully illustrated that is about life and death. The story, as it is unfolding, it is quite exciting and motivates the reader to turn the pages to discover the secret that the little boy, who is the main character in this story, is going to reveal to a dragonfly. What is his precious secret?**

**It is a wonderful story well crafted and beautifully illustrated, and as a result this book as a whole is very attractive. It can be used as a companion to the first story the authors have published, The Dragonfly Door, but it can be read on its own as well. The illustrator, Barbara Gibson, is an excellent artist and her contribution to this story should be highly appreciated as it is a children's book. The topic of the story may be more appropriate for older children, over 10 I would say, but this book addresses a wider audience than that of a common kids book as it is suitable for adults too. The message the authors give out is that love is not lost after death but it is always there in our memories of our beloved ones. Get this book from**

[www.featherrockbooks.com](http://www.featherrockbooks.com) and all major online booksellers.

## **A Firm Place To Stand: Finding Meaning In A Life With Bipolar Disorder**

**Marja Bergen**

**Word Alive Press**

**131 Cordite Road, Winnipeg, MB R3W 1S1**

**9781897373453 \$19.99 [www.wordalivepress.ca](http://www.wordalivepress.ca)**

**Very Highly Recommended**

**Marja Bergen has lived with bipolar disease for over forty years and since 1999 she has been helping people who suffer from mood disorders with her first book, *Riding the Roller Coaster* (Northstone). Marja is also a photographer and lives with her husband and son in Vancouver. Read more about her at [www.marjabergen.com](http://www.marjabergen.com)**

**And [www.livingroomsupport.org](http://www.livingroomsupport.org)**

**A Firm Place To Stand is an extremely helpful book for those in need. It is a wonderfully written account of the author's encounter with bipolar disorder thus inspiring and educating those who have the same problem as well those who want to understand the sufferers. Suffering from bipolar disease is a difficult problem but it can be faced and dealt with. The author describes her daily life with all the obstacles she faces and has to deal with. But most of all, it is positive and inspirational.**

**Marja talks about the stigma people usually apply to the sufferers thus making them feel inferior and depressed. The author urges sufferers to learn about their disorder and fight back, and eventually live a fulfilling life.**

**It is an excellent book in its own field and it is certainly worth reading. It caters not only to other sufferers but also to everyone who would like to learn about this disease and the way bipolar disease sufferers feel. This book can appeal to a wider audience; there are people out there who are curious to know about how mentally ill people feel; there are doctors who would like to do research; there are the relatives of the sufferers who would like to get educated and help. Written in a simple way, in the first person, it is direct to the reader. Get this book from [www.wordalivepress.ca](http://www.wordalivepress.ca)**

## **The Other Side of The Horizon**

**K. Lynch**

**Outskirts Press**

**9781432728083 \$12.95 [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com)**

**Very Highly Recommended**

**K. Lynch, a medical doctor for over 30 years, has devoted his spare time to the romance novel. His debut novel, *The Million Dollar Therapist*, and another one, *The Revenge of the Rinellis*, have also been published by Outskirts Press.**

**The *Other Side of The Horizon* is a fast paced story about a doctor, Dr Jack Eisner, who is claimed to have made a fatal mistake in the emergency room; as a result he is suspended from the medical staff. Then the doctor disappears and his wild adventures begin involving an arrest by the Cuban patrol. He is almost dead when he is found on his boat but he eventually returns to life and reunites with his old love, Sophia.**

**The story is well written and full of action scenes. The first part of the story includes a lot of medical jargon but this element reinforces the truthfulness of the incidents that happen in the hospital. Also, the medical references throughout this novel make it educational in this field without this fact to affect the flow of the events. It is gripping and can be read in one sitting.**

**The chapters are short but this aspect has made me enjoy it more. There is suspense and adventure the readers will love. The language is simple in most parts of the story, but as it is about a doctor's work it inevitably refers to medical terminology which is adequately explained at the footnotes. It caters to a wide audience that loves adventure, suspense and romance in a medical background. It is an entertaining book with a beautiful cover. Get it from [www.outskirtspress.com](http://www.outskirtspress.com)**

**Liana Metal, Reviewer  
<http://LiaMetal.tripod.com>**

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## **Lockstein's Bookshelf**

**Bon Appetit  
Sandra Byrd  
Waterbrook Press  
1745 Broadway, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10019  
1400073286 \$13.99**

**Bon Appetit by Sandra Byrd is the second book in the French Twist series featuring new baker Lexi Stuart. Warning! Do not read this book on an empty stomach! Lexi has left behind a confusing relationship with Dan and her suffocating parents in Seattle to attend a French baking school and work at a family bakery there. On her own for the first time, Lexi fights loneliness and a feeling of separation from her family and God, but she soon makes friends, finds a**

church, and stands on her own feet. This is a fun, frothy chick-lit novel, and Lexi is charming. The book also has several recipes for Lexi's creations. Byrd describes the many different pastries and meals without dragging the story through too much detail. Lexi's love for Paris and France fill every page, but it's her faith and trust in God that really carries the book. The next, and last, book in the series should tie readers up in knots as Lexi has to choose between Dan and Philippe.

### **Less Than Dead**

**Tim Downs**

**Thomas Nelson**

**PO Box 141000, Nashville, TN 37214**

**1595543074 \$22.99**

**Less Than Dead by Tim Downs is the fourth book in the Bug Man series about entomologist Nick Polchak. Nick is quirky and sarcastic, with a fierce intelligence and drive to find the truth about crimes. He's called in to investigate the discovery of several bodies buried in graves (on top of old graves) by a possible serial killer in Virginia. The land belongs to the man who must may become the next President of the United States, and there are far more forces at work than Nick is prepared to deal with, including a young woman known as a witch who talks to animals and raises the dead. Despite the paranormal sounding teaser, this solid forensics procedural is grounded in reality and full of smarts. Nick is an absolutely delightful protagonist. He's sarcastic, refuses to be swayed by power, and comes up with all of the comebacks the rest of us just dream about. He also has a solid vein of goodness deep inside that forces him to ask the questions no one else wants the answers to. Downs has an amazing talent for dialogue. Every exchange zings across the page making the story zip. There are so many books in this genre, but this one is truly too good to pass up. I can't wait to read the rest of the series to get to know Nick better.**

### **Once an Arafat Man**

**Tass Saada & Dean Merrill**

**Tyndale**

**351 Executive Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188**

**1414323611 \$19.99**

**Once an Arafat Man by Tass Saada and Dean Merrill is the kind of powerful book that makes you re-evaluate your life, how you view the world, and your faith. And then you want to share the story with everyone you know. Tass Saada was born in the Gaza Strip shortly before his family was forcibly removed first to Saudi Arabia and then Qatar. He was angry, even as a young child, at the unfairness in the treatment to his family and their fellow Palestinians. As a child and young man, he was impetuous, bullying, and violent. As soon as he was able to slip away from his protective family, he joined forces with Yasser Arafat's Fatah and was trained as a sniper. Saada was everything that Jews and Christians fear about**

**Palestinians: driven, angry, and without remorse about what he had to do to restore his people to their land. His life began to change when he came to the US to live with a cousin. He quickly married an American woman to get her green card and raised her son as his own. Saada worked his way up through several high-priced restaurants and hotels, but his family life suffered, and he felt a hole deep inside. Until a business associate talked to him about Jesus, and overnight Saada was changed into a force for spreading the truth about love and forgiveness and reconciliation in Israel. Saada writes uncompromisingly, never pulling any punches when it comes to the sins and crimes he's committed. God has brought him to an amazing faith that leads him to bring his wife and children to God, testifying to the dangers of Islam in the United States, speaking with groups around the world, and ultimately, moving his family back to the Gaza Strip and creating a humanitarian organization to serve the people there. Saada has a strong understanding of both the Bible and the Koran, so he is able to discuss both intelligently and without malice. He reminds readers that the Muslim people are also descendants of Abraham, through his son Ishmael, and that God has a plan and a promise of love for them, just as much as for Jews and Christians. This is a message that needs to be heard! I have no idea how Saada and Merrill managed to pack this much story in such a small package, but I was left breathless and stunned by Saada's love for God, his humility, and his vision for the Arabic people. Impossible to put down once you pick it up, you'll find yourself talking about it for days after you're finished with it. God has done an astounding work in this man, and this book testifies to that here.**

## **The Shape of Mercy**

**Susan Meissner**

**Waterbrook Press**

**1745 Broadway, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10019**

**1400074568 \$13.99**

**The Shape of Mercy by Susan Meissner is a powerfully, yet subtly written, historical fiction novel. Lauren Dorough has a life most people crave: daughter of a wealthy business scion, encouraged and offered every opportunity. But she craves something more, attending a state university instead of private college, and refusing to take the business classes that would put the family business in her lap. Something is missing in her life; Lauren just can't figure out what. Until she responds to a job opportunity to transcribe the diary of a young woman, Mercy Hayworth, who was tried during the Salem witch trials. Abigail Coyle hires Lauren to read and write the diary so it can be read by a modern reader. The diary has been in her family for over 200 years, and it's impacted Abigail's life in a way that now that she's in her eighties, she's re-evaluating her choices. Mercy's quiet faith and love changes both women, leaving an impact centuries after her death. This novel is so beautifully crafted, Meissner has created three strong female characters who raise questions of what true faith and love means. It was a true joy to read.**

## **What Can Be Found in Lost**

**John Ankerberg & Dillon Burroughs**

**Harvest House Publishers**

**990 Owen Loop North, Eugene, OR. 97402-9173**

**0736921214 \$10.99**

**What Can Be Found in Lost by John Ankerberg & Dillon Burroughs is an intriguingly insightful look at the popular TV series Lost. I watched the first season of the series, and while I always meant to watch more, I've never taken the time, but after the authors revelations about what Lost can teach us about faith, Jesus, and Christianity, I will have to give the show a second chance. Each chapter addresses a specific part of faith, discussing exactly what the series shows about it, as well as what the Bible has to say. While the series doesn't always get things right, it does reflect pop culture's take on things. The authors also delve into the various conspiracies surrounding the series with a few ideas as to what they believe is really going on. There are also many resources listed for getting more from the TV show, especially multiple websites devoted to it. It's a surprisingly fun read that educates about true faith, as well as making the reader want to rush out and watch the entire series!**

## **Engaging Father Christmas**

**Robin Jones Gunn**

**Faithwords**

**322 South Enterprise Blvd., Lebanon, IN 46052**

**0446179469 \$13.99**

**Engaging Father Christmas by Robin Jones Gunn is the follow-up to Finding Father Christmas. It's a short, engaging novella about finding your home and trusting God to lead you there. Miranda Carson is returning to England for Christmas again this year with the hope that her boyfriend Ian will be asking her a rather important question, one that will give her a home for life. Miranda will be celebrating her first real Christmas as a part of her biological father's family, but his wife is still distant making Miranda question where she really belongs. Gunn captures the spirit of Christmas and weaves it through this enjoyable tale. I don't think I've ever read a more romantic proposal! It's incredible the amount of story that Gunn packs into just a few pages. This is one story I'll be glad to come back to year after year.**

## **The Rook**

**Steven James**

**Revell**

**6030 East Fulton Road, Ada, MI 49301**

**0800732693 \$13.99**



**The Rook by Steven James is the second book in the Patrick Bowers files. Take an FBI agent, Patrick, with the intelligence of Charlie Eppes from Numb3rs and the social miscues of Tempe Brennan of Bones (the TV series, not the books). Give him a beautiful partner, Lien-hua ala Michelle Yeoh and a Goth-y-cute step-daughter named Tessa, and you have the makings of a bang-up book. Patrick and Tessa witness a mysterious suicide while on an arson case in San Diego, and they are quickly drawn into a wild ride involving a secret government weapon, sharks, and long enmities. Patrick specializes in a form of looking at crimes spatially that gives this series a little something different than the other forensics procedurals on the market. He and Tessa's relationship forms the heart of the book as they try to figure out where they stand with each other, but his relationship with Lien-hua is also mesmerizing. The chemistry between them begs for the silver screen. James writes the action scenes in a way that they are easily readable. I followed every punch and bullet, and believe me, James doesn't pull any punches when it comes to dealing with the bad guys. The final chapter guaranteed that I will return for the next book; consider me a new fan!**

**Christy Lockstein, Reviewer**  
<http://christysbookblog.blogspot.com>

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## **Margaret's Bookshelf**

**My Diva Diet**  
**Christine Lakatos**  
**Privately Published**  
**2430 Greenwood Avenue, Morro Bay, CA 93442**  
**9780615240879, \$29.00, 412 pp., [www.MyDivaDiet.com](http://www.MyDivaDiet.com)**

**Still another diet book? Well "My Diva Diet: A Women's Last Diet Book " is a diet book unlike you have ever seen before! Author and Certified Fitness Trainer Christine Lakatos, with the assistance of contributing author Amber Garman, along with help a team of folks that includes Brian Anderson, Scott Martin, Angelica Lakatos, Nicole Stuiber, Michelle Ahearn, Dan Port, Sean Troeger, and H. David Segal, M.D., bring to women a ground-breaking diet plan specifically designed to promote health, nutrition, weight loss, and a healthy lifestyle. This user-friendly, interactive instruction guide offers a workbook format providing quizzes, checklists, recipes, advice and tips -- but most importantly a plan designed for women of all ages for successfully losing and keeping off unwanted weight. In this quirky fun style with animated "fitness superheroes" and "diet villains" readers will be motivated and entertained while learning to achieve a healthier lifestyle. Readers will also find a wealth of knowledge and resources to achieve their desired goal and can checkout [www.MyDivaDiet.com](http://www.MyDivaDiet.com) for information of follow up products due for release. "My Diva Diet" is confidently**

**recommended for women of all ages and circumstances seeking to improve their physical health and well-being through diet and exercise.**

**The Power 2 Be You!**

**Sharon Capehart**

**Privately Published**

**Shron@positivelywomen.com**

**9781427628329, \$24.95, [www.positivelywomen.com](http://www.positivelywomen.com)**

**Women have special qualities and unique barriers to becoming the kind of person and living the kind of life they truly want. Not just another self-help, self-improvement 'how to' book, "The Power 2 Be You!: Ways Women Lose Their Power & How To Get It Back!" by Sharon Capehart presents an illuminating and illustrative example of how four ordinary women whose self-limiting beliefs about themselves kept them in a state of self-loathing, hurt and hopelessness. And just how they each were able to overcome the factors and forces that were responsible for their conditions. By finding and reclaiming their own inner strengths and focused efforts, they were able to live truly enjoyable and accomplished lives they could not originally even contemplate. Inspired and inspiring, "The Power 2 Be You!" is especially recommended reading for any woman wanting to better their quality of life regardless of their present circumstances or conditions.**

**You Can Call Me Hoppa!**

**Lauren Charpio**

**Privately Published**

**c/o Olson Communications**

**michelle@olsoncomm.com**

**9780615194622, \$24.95, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)**

**The baby-boom generation has impacted the American culture with every decade of their existence. Now that they are entering into the 'grandparenting phase' they seem to be as influential as ever. "You Can Call Me Hoppa!" by Lauren Charpio address the reluctance of a great many baby-boomer generation grandparents to be monikered with simply Grandpa and Grandma -- these being seen as relics of an older and more formal generation. For those seeking more individualized and 'boomer appropriate' handles by which to be called by the children of their children, "You Can Call Me Hoppa!" of alternatives drawn from additional sources than those offered by such traditional endearments as Grampy and Granny, Grandpapa and Nannie. Some of those sources are drawn from other languages and cultures ranging from the Arabic 'Sido' and 'Tae Tae, to the Cherokee 'Edudi' and 'Elisi', to Greek 'Pappous, to the Spanish 'Lito' and 'Lita". Other sources are baby-originated corruptions of grandparent names, slang names from our diverse subcultures, all laced throughout with fun and informative quotations throughout commenting on family oriented grandparent**

names. "You Can Call Me Hoppa!" is a unique and ideal source for alternative namings of grandparents -- as well as a fascinating overview of just how diverse such namings can be!

**Culina Mediterranea**

**H. F. Ullmann**

**Langenscheidt Publishing Group**

**www.langenscheidt.com**

**9780841603448, \$59.95, ggarza@langenscheidt.com**

**Mediterranean cuisine is diverse, nutritious, palate pleasing and appetite satisfying. With "Culina Mediterranea", H. F. Ullmann has compiled an 800-page compendium of step-by-step recipes that are profusely illustrated with more than 3000 color photographs and drawn from 92 master chefs from eight different countries Showcasing dishes associated with the kitchens of Southern Europe and North Africa, "Culina Mediterranea" is an impressive collection of 'kitchen cook friendly' recipes that are enhanced with culinary background information and invaluable preparation tips. From such exotic fare as Braised Snails and Squid; to hearty dishes like Stuffed Tomatoes and Peppers from Samos; to dining adventures like Fillet of Sea Bass on Aniseed Sabaglione, to sophisticated desserts like Red Berry Compote with Lemon Verbena Ice Cream, "Culina Mediterranea" is a cornucopia of wonderful meal time ideas and an enthusiastically recommended addition to personal, professional, academic, and library cookbook collections.**

**Margaret Lane**

**Reviewer**

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## **Molly's Bookshelf**

**Citizen Alpha**

**Patrick E. Peterson**

**Synergy Books**

**PO Box 80107, Austin TX 78758**

**9781934454206 \$12.95**

**Dr. Peter Jobe had long contemplated issues pondered by world inhabitants from the inauguration of time, questions regarding "why are we here" and "who put us here" have been asked many times over the intervening time. Jobe had achieved some success in bringing knowledge and theology together, and, that success had transformed everything, not that he single-handedly had made the discovery of course.**

**Chapter 1, Citizen Alpha opens with a citation from Freud: the more the fruits of knowledge become accessible to men, the more widespread is the decline of religious belief.**

**Born in Ireland Army Hospital, Fort Knox, Kentucky where the considerable depository of gold transmitted a noteworthy intermingling of spiritual dynamism. Peter's family returned to Illinois where his parents divorced and his mother remarried causing the family to move to Denver.**

**As a immature child Peter ascertained that reading, and reading well, permitted him to turn his gifted aptitude into a vehicle for learning rather than becoming bored with life. Reading, football and confirmation as a Lutheran all had an intense influence upon the maturing youngster.**

**It was during his high school years that Jobe gave up football and began an academic schedule which was punctuated with a disastrous drinking career.**

**The account goes on with Jobe entering a rehab program, reaching out to whatever deity there might be and receiving understanding that he could indeed give up drinking and embark on life with restored vitality. Prior to his life changing experience Jobe HAD always considered there actually was a higher power, or divinity, out there somewhere, furthermore, now he had proof; he received a touch that had changed his life.**

**From that launch Jobe would go on to become the unenthusiastic principal of a study group made up of himself and four other graduate students whose specialties ranged from neuroscience to religious studies.**

**Coming from different countries and diverse spiritual backgrounds the group soon began to respect one another, and their varying ideas, plus they began gaining an understanding that the coordinated feat of their individual thoughts could come in concert to have a larger overall result than that which might be brought into being were they to maintain acting alone. The group became fascinated to realized their synergy might well alter both commonsensical and devout societies.**

**Peter and his group were just at the formulation stage for structuring feasible connections when an additional, far more menacing; synergy of thought was taking place on the other side of the world. An incredible gathering of terrorists, radicals, and revolutionaries joined in an effort which began to put together a vicious plan which, if triumphant, would have far reaching ramifications.**

**Were the foremost cities of America to become sites of nuclear attack; it would change the world. Such assault, if pursued by US retribution would likely be the motivating dynamic resulting in a new dark age.**

**Peter, Kim, Mario, Larissa, and Mousa working on one side of the circumstances would become sentient to the fact that, in Aruba the countdown to annihilate America was commenced. Trucks traveling along interstates come together in Biloxi, armed sleeper cells were ready; Peter and his friends realized they might be the only ones standing between nuclear holocaust and the American way of life continuing in freedom.**

**Writer Peterson has created a gripping, provocative work on the pages of Citizen Alpha. Fully developed characters are credible. Settings are so well described the reader is brought right into the storyline. Hard hitting, out of the ordinary dialogue is pithy. The state of affairs, circumstances and situations are well-timed, nicely developed and stimulating.**

**Citizen Alpha is a mesmerizing edition positive to keep the reader turning the page from opening paragraphs to the final pages. Happy to recommend.**

**April Fool**

**John Neufeld**

**Grey Swan Press**

**Marblehead, Mass 01945**

**9780980037739 \$16.95**

**The April Fool sequence of events opens at not quite midnight; with George Willetts, married, political campaign consultant, middle aged and wanting one last extramarital assignation to carry him through memories into old age. Sitting in the bathroom, checking his pulse and pondering whether he might be suffering more than simple arrhythmia George contemplates his next move.**

**Obviously, should he expire everyone would be sure to learn all his secrets.**

**Not just Peg his wife and/or Valerie his latest sweetie, but everyone. George has a larger problem than the fact that his father had died of a coronary thrombosis, well, he had. His father WAS in his eighties, refused to follow his doctor's orders following open heart surgery, but he DID die, didn't he, yes, he did. And, his brother Bobby died of a heart attack in his fifties. George has cause for concern.**

**George and his wife Peg have moved to a new area where Peg quickly becomes part of the local community; George becomes entrenched in his hypochondria and his desire for that last fling. George keeps reminding himself that he does love his wife, and has no desire to end their marriage even as he pursues trysts via the internet.**

**Why wouldn't George wonder if each little skipped heart beat might be his last. Before that situation should take place George is going to have to figure out how**

**to disable his computer, the motherboard in particular he thought, so that no one would be able to learn what he had been doing online.**

**George's wife Peg enjoys her life filled with community events, activities and occasions. George, on the other hand, feels life may be slipping by as he becomes a regular visitor at the local hospital due to chest pains which may or may not be in his chest at all. George begins to dream of a better middle age and that better middle age does not include Peg.**

**George has a quandary; he has begun a relationship with Valerie a woman he knows through the internet. She has no desire to be "the other woman." George begins to convince himself that if Peg were not in his life; he and Valerie would be able to take pleasure in life to the fullest. George Willett's impractical plan rapidly borders on abnormal as his unusual affiliation with Valerie along with those spur-of-the-moment, trepidation driven midnight trips to the local ER expose a self indulgent oaf who seems not capable of facing what he is himself and sans penitence or culpability formulates plans to rid himself of the wife who has been with him faithfully and supportive for years.**

**Writer Neufeld's forebodingly comedic narrative, regarding a man having difficulty trying to cope with the recognition that more years of his life are behind him than there are to come; does have moments of drollness laced with more than a little gallows humor as well as, at times, moments of just plain disagreeable and pathetic, and characters that tend to foist themselves into situations they cannot handle.**

**George is not a particularly likeable guy. He is one of those fellows who thinks things so because that is how HE wants it to be and cannot see the action he is considering will likely lead to his own ruin whether or not he does succeed in removing Peg from his life.**

**Representative of many of the Baby Boom Generation, George revels in wallowing in his mid life crisis. George is egoistic, regularly exasperating, and often an attention-grabbing hypochondriac who is not a particularly likeable character. Unfortunately he is all too recognizable; most of us have one such relative in our own family. Our own kinfolk may not be quite as heavy handed as is George, however, it may be pretty satisfying to see a relative in him and watch as his life comes apart.**

**Writer Neufeld's writing is dynamic, hard hitting and presented without a lot of explanation or literary embellishments. George and his problems, real and imagined, are presented in stark reality. His deeds, inner feelings and misdeeds are all there in black and white for the world to view. The current of gallows humor running all the way through the work is minimalist, a little vinegary, and packed with the calamitous life as lived by George.**

**Settings are nicely developed, draw the reader into the narrative, characters move through the storyline in expected fashion albeit with the ability to hold reader interest tight without being over done. The ending although predictable; is satisfying nonetheless.**

**April Fool is well written work devised to draw the reader into the action with fully developed character studies. The arc I received for review from the publicist has a list of seventeen stimulating discussion starters included at the back of the book which makes the book very accessible for book club use. Happy to recommend.**

**The Organ Grinder and the Monkey**

**Sam Moffie**

**Xlibris International**

**Plaza II Ste 340 Philadelphia PA 19113**

**9781436327756 \$19.99**

**Sam Moffie's The Organ Grinder and The Monkey opens with a question regarding Mingo Junction and Steubenville, Ohio.**

**The reader soon learns that this is Rust Belt irrelevant question and not only that Steubenville is close to decaying towns in Ohio and West Virginia, it is also a rotten tomato throw away from communities in Pennsylvania too.**

**Seymour Petrillo's therapist AND bet selling author recounting his murders would make a big thing out of Petrillo's Rust Belt upbringing. His therapist did mention that had Seymour actually had friends it would have a made a difference. Seymour, the first character we meet is a somewhat sad child from Steubenville, Ohio. His gay father who has a fixation with anything regarding another Steubenville inhabitant, Dean Martin does not live in the family home. Seymour did spend a good bit of time with his grandparents, especially his grandfather, and it was while taking walks through town with his Grandfather that Seymour learned much of the history regarding Steubenville.**

**Seymour's therapist not only treats him as a patient, but as well has written a highly successful book recounting Seymour and his activities. Upon leaving Steubenville, Seymour acquired a college degree before making his way to New York City with the purpose of becoming a veterinarian.**

**Irving Hanhart, son of a Jewish mother and Irish father, loved field trips. He was in sixth grade, traveling from Brookline MA Middle School to the neighboring town of Newton. They were on their way to the city hall. It was at City Hall that Irving made the decision to become a New York City Cop.**

**In Boardman, Ohio Constance Powers was a man eater. Born into old money,**

**Constance had little chance to actually experience any of the trappings of wealth enjoyed by many of the moneyed class. Constance Powers has as a career plan to move to New York City and become a Rockette.**

**A serial killer, a police officer and a dancer who was born of wealth; each of the three from vastly different backgrounds and lives had one thing in common, they each visited the same therapist.**

**Creative, inimitable, multifarious, gripping, The Organ Grinder and The Monkey sets down a mesmerizing, complex tale woven of three chief characters whose individual behaviors and sentiment dysfunction have caused them to seek the care of the same psychiatrist. Writer Sam Moffie's excellent storytelling which was first noticed in his initial work, Sway, has become refined and improved.**

**The storylines weave together in a multifaceted narrative filled with conflicting philosophies, outlooks, awareness and biases. The complicated sequence of events, woven together with psychiatrist psycho-babble and concealed schemas is a gripping page turner from the opening lines right onto the near calamity surrounding Constance taking place in the last chapter.**

**Writer Moffie's second novel, The Organ Grinder and the Monkey, takes a long inimitable look into the lives of a trio of extraordinarily singular central characters who have but one common bond linking them.**

**The Organ Grinder and the Monkey is filled with gritty language, gallows humor, detailed settings, finely multifaceted characters and , complex writing. Those easily offended by unrefined humor and unequivocal language will likely not find the book to their liking. For those who enjoy a well written work in which the language and situations are integral to the story then the book will likely be a very enjoyable read. The arc I received from a publicist has discussion questions for used by book clubs. My only complaint, font is small, my eyes are old. I can well see this work becoming a made for TV movie. Happy to recommend.**

**When I Grow Up**

**Mercer Mayer**

**Random House Books for Young Readers**

**9780375826320 \$11.99**

**When I Grow Up tells of a predicament that often faces Little People; because Little**

**Critter's little sister is weary with being too little; she daydreams about all the extraordinary**

**things she is going to do when she grows up. She envisions becoming a graceful and grand ballet dancer, or a courageous high wire walker, or a speedy race car driver, or a truck driver, or a world-famous doctor, or ...**



**I teach six year olds who do not always have well developed speaking skills notwithstanding the fact that English is our native language. Children frequently have a good bit of trouble trying to relate ideas, plans or thoughts.**

**The illustrations offered by Mercer Mayer on the pages of When I Grow Up are so well done, child pleasing and full of lots of clues relating to the words on the pages that my students are provided impetus for their discussion. I find that my students are often well able to put into words more of what they want to say as I turn the page and they view the illustration. As time goes on during the school term the kids are able to go on to more verbalization without need for relying upon the pictures.**

**Little Critter's sister communicates her numerous and varied plans to the reader for what she will do WHEN she grows up. I use When I Grow Up as a discussion starter in my First Grade class room as we talk about different types of jobs available for grown ups. In an area where almost everyone is involved in the oil fields or fast food, it is handy to have a child pleasing book to use to help children develop the perception that there are many achievable occupations open in life including, but not limited to, oil fields or fast food. Little sister envisages herself engaged in any number of interesting and miscellaneous career choices when she gets older.**

**With a bare minimum of text on each page; Little People who are beginning to make sense of the squiggles we adults call words on each page often feel very self-assured to take the book to read to a cuddly buddy in one of the DEAR offices.**

**I have found First Graders, whether those I knew 20 years ago or those today, all love Little Critter, and his family. First Graders today continue to enjoy Little Critter, sister and all of the works created by Mercer Mayer.**

**I teach in an area where books may not be readily available in all homes. I begin reading Little Critter/Mercer Mayer the first day of school and read the books all through the term. My students often bring one or another of the Mercer Mayer books from the book basket right to the last day of school.**

**When I Grow Up is a work my "grown up" First Graders never fail to identify with. Most of my students have little brothers and sisters, plus they themselves generally are also little brothers and sisters. Osage County First Grade well recognizes the quandary facing Little Critter and little sister.**

**Mercer Mayer's Little Critter books in general, and When I Grow Up in particular, are magnificent works filled with marvelous illustrations and child pleasing developments. While the books are for the most part slanted toward the pre school set, not every preschooler comes from homes where books and reading are**

practiced. TV games and raunch are often more recognized than are various children's authors, or the books they have written. I like to fill in that gap when possible.

Art work illustrating each of Mercer Mayer works are filled with detailed features and are gently presented. In the works are found tiny critters that recur from page to page - a cricket, a frog, a grasshopper, a mouse, a spider; each of them is incorporated into the visual tale. When I Grow Up has its own set of tinies, the kids and I look for them from drawing to drawing, and page to page.

When I Grow Up is, as are all Mercer Mayer works, all about reiteration. As Little Critter keeps doing the same kind of thing over and over in many of the books, Little Sister is doing the same thing over and over this time. Words are repeated over and over. Adults often become weary with all the repetition, however, little readers flourish with repetition and learn through repetition.

Osage County First Grade listens to the stories, choose When I Grow Up for DEAR reading time and use the illustrations as starting points for their own drawings. When I Grow Up is an exceptional work filled with child friendly graphics, duplication, and text children CAN read. When I Grow Up is a book we use for social studies discussion regarding occupations and possible job choices beyond the most common or what is right in front of our nose. Happy to recommend.

**Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs**  
Chester Aaron  
Zumaya Publications, LLC  
9781934135778 \$14.99

On the pages of Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs Chester Aaron has created a nicely captivating work focused on people, relationships, locations, quixotic perceptions, and surroundings all represented in vivid detail and garlic. It is a most out of the ordinary combination to be certain.

While I have always liked adding a bit of garlic to food; reading Writer Aaron's book has caused me to appreciate that garlic is not always garlic. I have even raised one little patch of garlic in my own garden. Reading Writer Aaron's book I now realize there is garlic and there is GARLIC. I have no idea what variety is out in the garden bed hidden away among the weeds and basil. The tag on the planting box has long been lost. I just like the bouquet as I pull weeds and brush against the spiky green onion like stalks.

From Aaron's initial sketch entitled Milli O'Keefe in which we meet the speaker/writer of the book and Milli, on to Sadie his cat, and the saga of one neighbor's affection for his dog, to Olga Kazhinsky; we wander with the speaker

**and his much-loved garlic as well as his relationships and friendships.**

**The writer says of himself, "At age 65, I became serious about growing garlic. I grow 93 different garlcs that I have bought, traded or received from friends." Aaron goes on to state that he puts down soy-based newsprint to keep the weeds down in his garlic bed, he says it is a trick learned from good friend Robert Kourik, who is in Aaron's opinion both a fine writer and a gardener.**

**On the pages of Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs the writer more or less records a slice of his life as a divorced, middle-aged, Jewish, professor of English who moved from San Francisco. Making the move to rural Sonoma County, California with his cat Sadie; Aaron has found gratification and pleasure from the ups and downs of garlic farming. His deeply personal sequence of events describing the societal aspects of cultures and groups to be found in Northern California makes for intriguing reading.**

**Aaron's life story prior to California is no less an attention-grabbing narrative in itself. 1923 was the year of his birth, in a coal-mine village in western Pennsylvania, 30 miles south of Pittsburgh. His was the solitary Jewish family in the rural community where one and all struggled to earn food, money, an education.**

**Everyone, says the author, including us, was poor. Aaron was an amateur boxer who played amateur football as well. He says his role in life was delineated by the two decades he lived in that township. Following high school Aaron served in the Army, and was with troops liberating Dachau.**

**A idiosyncratic and straightforward recollection complete with recipes, Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs will appeal to readers who enjoy reading of garlic and recipes and slice of life all offered in anecdotal layout.**

**During his later years Writer Aaron says he has moved away from his former life as a husband and professor, to become a dedicated cultivator of garlic. Following the unsettling pain of divorce, Aaron left city life to start over in a rural setting. Written in the first person in engaging, no-nonsense prose and loaded with pithy observations and self-deprecating asides Aaron presents his anecdotes in an easily read manner.**

**Aaron is an author with many published works including short stories and novels. Aaron's title Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs sets the landscape for a work about garlic as well as kisses. The Kisses are the writer's figure of speech for love.**

**He writes of affection that exceeds age, circumstance, and people. He speaks of love for others and critters, and cats in particular, especially Sadie. Love for his garlic and the land, and life and the human spirit are all wrapped up on one tidy**

**packet. Aaron lived first on a sheep ranch in Sonoma County, north of Berkeley, following his divorce. He says that experience has provided much grist for a number of young-adult novels.**

**Today Aaron and Sadie live on 4 acres near the Northern California community of Occidental where he is writing and farming garlic. His fiction and non-fiction are peppered with his memories, experiences and reminisces of growing exotic garlic. His garlic today comprises nearly one hundred varieties from 30 countries.**

**Once a teacher always a teacher; Aaron today teaches a Memoir writing class at Santa Rosa Junior College. Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs is offered as a memoir type chronicle, a good follow up to others of his works is a little precipitate as a memoir, because Aaron is still living.**

**Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs is actually two books in one. The first section of thirteen anecdotes comprises the first 184 pages. The second part of the book features 18 recipes and vignettes. I like the asides including gardening tips, Aaron's descriptions of settings, neighbors, critters and garlic.**

**Today Aaron is living and raising garlic and using garlic as the theme for all he writes. Devoting several hours a day to his garlic fields and more hours to writing, Author Aaron's writing aptitudes continue to flow in the form of novels, fiction, non fiction, magazine articles and screen-plays.**

**Garlic Kisses and Tasty Hugs is a very readable work perfect for a lazy summer day spent reading on the front porch in the shade. Happy to recommend.**

**His Name Is John  
Dorien Grey  
Zumaya Boundless  
9781934841044 \$13.99**

**His Name Is John An Elliott Smith Mystery is another fine example of the fertile talent of writer Dorien Grey. I have long read, reviewed and enjoyed Grey's writing. Grey's PI Dick Hardesty novels packed with an abundance of charismatic players are good reading for those who enjoy succinct PI novels crafted in resolute, hard hitting style by a master novelist.**

**His Name Is John An Elliott Smith Mystery is the introduction offering bringing readers a fresh, innovative mystery series written by Dorien Grey. In this latest series, the reader meets Chicago real estate developer Elliott Smith who almost immediately finds himself entangled in the investigation surrounding the slaying of one John (Doe).**

**Waking up with a serious headache in addition to an aching shoulder, Elliot**

**Smith wasn't positive just where he was. He came to recognize he was in a hospital room, although, he had no perception just how he got there.**

**It doesn't take long before Elliot believes he must be going mad - someone, who is not there, is seated in the chair at the side of his bed. Not only that, Elliot hears a voice in his head. Only practical explanation he can come up with; is that it must be a consequence of the brain injury he has suffered.**

**Even as Elliot knows he is entirely rational; Elliot continues to hear the thought/voice. The voice is that of a baffled fellow branded as a John Doe who has died on the gurney next to Elliot in the Emergency Room. It seems that John hasn't quite understood that he is dead. His mournful statement to Elliot "Will we ever find me?" motivates Elliot into action.**

**John, a man with whom Elliot makes an unexpected connection as they briefly share a hospital room before John dies is a bit of an enigma. It doesn't take long before Elliott is driven to ascertain John's true identity and establish the killer. His motivations run a gamut of reasons that Elliott and his friends do not at first understand.**

**Grey's narrative is boosted with the introduction of Elliot's sister Cessy. As always Writer Grey fashions an engaging grouping of recurring secondary characters in addition to the well detailed main characters in addition to the miscellaneous mixture of minor and not so minor players who materialize and often disappear after one or two books.**

**Elliott Smith actually had never thought himself to be anything particularly out of the ordinary. And, disregarding his affluent, world traveling parents, his career of buying, restoring and reselling small apartment buildings around Chicago, in addition to being single and gay at 38, as well as having a police detective brother-in-law; Elliot IS pretty ordinary.**

**Loss of memory, diverse relationships, photographs, a sister who is driven to see Elliot in a settled relationship, motor homes, a social worker who is more than a friend, a body hidden behind a wall for more than sixty years, old neighbors and old enemies, and a nun with a secret she does not know she holds, a Homicide Cop who is a relative, property to show and sell, a business to run, childhood buddies and childhood enemies, trickery, a building to be gained through any means, and the secrets it holds; all are part of the account.**

**Elliott Smith, as are all the characters the reader meets in this debut of the series; are believable characters, detailed, enjoying their lives and for some, filled with resolve to aid in the quest to determine the cause for John's demise.**

**I like Author Grey's books due large part to his clever character development**

**coupled to the fact that even though Grey mysteries typically focus upon murder of one type or another; the tales are never formula, are not slow, foggy or overly portentous.**

**His mysteries are fast paced, settings are finely detailed, readers are pulled straight into the action and feel duty-bound to go on with the narrative from opening paragraph to the final sentence. As an added plus; Dorian Grey works are just plain interesting to read. Grey's well plotted work, leads Elliott to resolve the identity of the spirit voice and find out who it was that murdered him. With his always present mischievous sense of tongue-in-cheek humor Grey adds grist to the question surrounding what exactly is real and what is paranormal, plus he questions associations and distinctiveness and magnitude.**

**As this new series continues; I look forward to learning how the connection between Elliott and John plays out. I am anxious to see how Writer Grey continues to thread together interesting themes and interesting characters into a reasoned tale loaded with stimulating secondary characters.**

**We do know fairly early on in the novel who's done it. John's murder is linked to others, and knowing who the murderer is does not weaken our interest. It is the investigation itself that is stimulating as Elliot tries to maneuver his brother-in-law in the right direction without revealing that he is getting information from a dead man.**

**Before the narrative closes John pronounces that he'll hang about inside Elliot's head for a while. I'm pleased to know we can expect more absorbing escapades from this unanticipated duo in the future.**

**Elliot's life has been going along rather well until he is hit by a car, wakes up in the hospital and realizes that someone who is not there is sitting in the chair beside his bed. Even though he is sure that the voice he hears is not there and is a result only of the blow to his head, Elliott is reluctantly and inexorably, drawn into the situation to learn the name for the murdered John Doe who died next to him in the ER as well as who it was that killed him.**

**I am looking forward to reading the next in the series, and anticipate more from Grey's PI Dick Hardesty which series has garnered four finalists for a Lambda Literary Award. Well written, work, His Name Is John is an intriguing read, happy to recommend.**

**CTR's Ring  
Melissa Ann Aylstock  
Cedar Fort Inc  
9781555178338 \$12.99**

**Beginning on Saturday and continuing for a week, CTR's Ring follows Cameron Richards as he treks across the county to California at his mother's insistence. Setting out from his home in North Dakota supposedly to help his aging paternal grandmother he leaves his widowed and remarried mother and little sister to find work and make a new life for himself. He liked being on his own in Fargo, he never really got along with his step father in Kentucky. And then Mom insisted that he trek out to California to help his Father's mother. Not that his Father had kept in touch with any of that part of the family when HE left to be on his own.**

**The work opens with Cameron, jeep up on a jack, hammering at the underside of the vehicle. The U joint is fractured.**

**Sitting on the side of Interstate 80 near Roseville, California he was tired, hungry and more than a little frustrated. Tramping toward an offramp Cameron decided food first and then find an auto parts store. Entering the cafe he is more than a little surprised to realize that California restaurants do not have a smoking section.**

**Within moments Cameron is shocked to learn the ring he has been wearing since he found it at the gas station where he worked in Fargo is actually one that newly baptized Mormon's receive. Cameron liked the CTR inscribed and wore it for Cameron Thomas Richards, it fit and he liked the way it looked on his hand. Lauren, his server, explained that it actually stands for Choose The Right, and that as a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints she too was baptized and wore a similar ring. From that beginning we are carried along with Wrangler driving Cameron as he meets his father's family,**

**large and Mormon. We learn that Cameron has attended a good many churches in the past, and that his view of Mormons is that they are a cult to be wary of. Cameron meets his grandmother, learns that he resembles his grandfather, and that his grandmother has many pictures of himself and his sister festooning her walls.**

**Sunday Cameron decided he would get a diamond ring so that no one would confuse him with a Mormon. After his grandmother returned from Church she and Cameron set out for an afternoon meeting relatives. And, learning that they are Mormon, as was his father.**

**Monday Cameron awoke before the alarm, talked to his sister on the telephone and set out to look for work. Monday through Friday, weekends off, not bad to start, mechanic at the Rocklin Rollers 4X4. A visit to a local community church was not as satisfying as Cameron hoped it would be and he returned home just in time for Family Home Night.**

**Tuesday Cameron settled into work, got a speeding ticket, worked on a truck for**

**one of the kids from stake, and receives a Book of Mormon from Lauren, the girl he met at the diner when he first arrived in town. He spent much of the night reading from the book.**

**Wednesday Cameron awoke planning to read more from the Book during his lunch hour. A confrontation with a co worker relating to Mormonism, Lauren and his cousin Stacy come for supper, and a happy birthday completed his day.**

**Thursday Cameron had to find things to do at work; the welder was broken. Another confrontation with his coworker turned into a brawl, Cameron ends up with an almost broken nose and an understanding that there are those who deliberately pick a fight, and Lauren tells him her parents have forbidden her to have anything to do with Cameron.**

**Friday Cameron awoke early, in pain, with his mother nearby, learns that Lauren's parents are sending her to an aunt in Utah, that he has a college fund, and Cameron and his cousin Uncle Mike go to talk with Lauren's parents.**

**CTR's Ring provides the reader opportunity to go along with Cameron on his voyage to find himself. Writer Aylstock surveys many of the same issues that most teenagers face. CTR's Ring is a narrative centered on camaraderie, prevailing over adversity, and finding love when and where it is least expected.**

**Writer Aylstock presents an entertaining, compelling, and poignant tale filled with plausible players who are authentic, with whom the reader can identify and acting the recognizable situations. Cameron is a young man adults will recognize from their own family, Lauren is a girl parents will like.**

**CTR's Ring is a book young adults will enjoy reading. Filled with adventure just enough religious overtones and romance to hold reader interest of both and detailed settings, this well written work is highly readable.**

**Happy to recommend.**

**Subprime Factor  
Jeffrey D Schlaman  
Synergy Books  
9780981546254 \$12.95**

**Opening with an August 3, 2007 blog outlining the writers concerns regarding the role of the Federal Reserve Bank in the so called Great Depression of 1929 Martin Cheyne is blogging from a parking spot just across the bridge from a famous place. Subprime Factor is a fiction spanning nearly a year and growing out of recent economic crisis.**



**Cheyne, thirty two years old is cagey. He is careful not to post his GPS location on his blog entry. His blog Economic Calamity ranked on Google top 10,000, his PhD dissertation and his mission to discredit the Federal Reserve has exposed him to a lot of repercussions. His failed attempt to defend that dissertation would be the least of them. After a narrow escape with friends Paul, Phil and Doug in the Sierra Nevadas Martin know he is being followed. Soon after checking into a Jekyll Island, Georgia hotel he knows he is in real trouble.**

**In Auburn, California, Doug Boyd hung up the phone. He was a tad perplexed. PPT? Martin was going to get dirt on Pearson, so what acronym was he fiddling with now? He called Phil, got a number and called Webb Sutton. PPT - Plunge Protection Team, the Present's Working Group on Financial Markets, led by the secretary of the Treasury. These are the guys, according to Sutton, who are responsible for putting the country into the mess our children's children will inherit.**

**Doug began to wish he hadn't asked.**

**From that beginning the reader continues checking Cheyne's blog, travels to California where FBI special agent Philip Shultz rapped on the door of a house where a suspected child pornographer was housed. Shultz owes \$200,000 more on the house he has seen go into foreclosure than the latest \$400,000 appraisal. Recently his wife packed his kids, her bags and bought a one way ticket to Virginia.**

**Phil and Paul LeBrach were frat brothers. Paul's real estate investment company was grown aggressively until today he owned sixteen homes and was in the process of funding a downtown Sacto condominium project. He opened the trunk of his car, removed a for sale sign and pounded it into the turf of Phil's front yard. Not that the house was going to bring anything like the \$550,000 asking price.**

**CPA Doug Boyd, Martin, Phil and Paul were friends from Cal State. They became good friends through their fraternity. The four all realized that the game of life is rigged, that an edge is needed to climb to the top of the corporate ladder where the good old boy network held sway.**

**Cheyne's last blog listed is July 3, 2008 in which he mentions his plans to begin a new series of columns on a new threat. Near Blacksburg, Virginia Phil and his family are settling into life filled with fields of strawberries when Phil was not presenting seminars at Quantico. Paul LeBrach looked better than Doug might have expected. Too bad they didn't have a lot to say to one another. Doug himself and his wife live in Auburn and are expecting their first child.**

**Reading Author Schlaman's captivating fast paced novel moves the reader from one coast of the United States and back in a wild rush filled with danger,**

**chicanery, fraud and treachery. A DC Starbucks, Bull Spears Investment Bank, San Francisco, Martin's blog, The Economics Tutorial lab at the University of Nevada-Reno, and a weekend mountain camping trip all advance the tale as does the finding of suspicious numbers on a high profile audit. And, Doug's refusal to bend rules regarding the finding.**

**It is during the camping trip that Doug, and his friends find themselves targets of a hit man, leading to their becoming entangled in a dangerous conspiracy generated from situations at the Federal Reserve Bank. Doug and his friends are unwitting pawns caught up in the scheme to cover up a huge economic mistake that has caused the credit crunch and collapse of the housing bubble.**

**Their attempts to gather evidence of governmental or other wrong doing may well end with the loss of their careers if not their lives. From members of the cabinet to elected officials to a hired hit man or two the narrative is a compelling, page turner of a read.**

**Writer Schlaman put in plain words, in narrative format, many of the underhanded characteristics surrounding the foundation and expansion of the housing bubble here in the US. The chronicle is easy to understand as well as being an engaging read. Characters are well fleshed, villains are suitably villainous, good guys are filled with faults and quirks and human feelings. Settings are clearly delineated. Because I am a Californian who has done some traveling; I recognized many of the locales listed.**

**Included in the narrative is a wealth of fiscal information presented from the standpoint of a CPA and integrated into the storyline. The sequence of events are not difficult to follow as the tale recounts a saga woven around much of our present economic situation.**

**Knowing that the writer is a former auditor and California CPA who earned an advanced degree from the University of Florida adds credence to his credentials for writing a book with economics at the core.**

**Convincing read, happy to recommend.**

**Fire Fish**

**Davy Liu**

**Kendu Films, Inc**

**9780615192338 \$19.95**

**Fire Fish: Fins Refined by Fire is a lovely, slim volume intended for the upper primary-middle grade reader. The narrative begins with Sarai, who never missed the Fin Race. As soon as light sparkled on the current the little perch swam up where she found a good place to watch the race. The biggest and smartest fish all**

**joined in the Fin Race where each day a few won by catching the food that appeared at sunrise. They disappeared into the Bright Beyond. How she hoped to become a fire fish in the Bright Beyond.**

**Sesom, Sarai's shy little brother wished he could race for lovely food. He was hungry. Momma pointed out that the Finmaker had made them not fast but steady swimmers. Pappa soon appeared bringing a strand of seaweed for breakfast. The sea weed was almost gone when Momma spotted a croc. Unaware of the net above until it caught Momma and Pappa the perch all swam away from the croc. As he disappeared Pappa called to the three little perch telling them to swim to the Turtle Pool to ask for help.**

**The story continues with the little perch on their quest to learn what to do to reunite with their parents. They meet a kindly turtle, a hungry eel, helpful porpoise, a frightened sea horse and baby octopus, and a killer whale and a wall of great whites.**

**Writer/Illustrator Davy Liu has created a stunning, elegant volume sure to please young listeners and young readers. In this tale of a family of perch who are parted for a time when a fishing net catches Momma and Pappa Perch we follow the young perch on their quest to locate their parents. After awhile, the three explore a tunnel and this begins their journey of hope, faith, and trust as they dodge danger and search for their parents. FIRE FISH presents a well written tale of faith, hope and patience.**

**Illustrations are well executed, the story of the young fish is filled with breathless moments and hope and fulfillment.**

**Liu's Invisible Tails books are centered upon animals who happen to be present during important Biblical events. FIRE FISH and the three anxious juvenile river perch make a trek to the Red Sea in search of their parents while their story overlaps with the Biblical story of Moses and the Exodus. The little fish learn to pray in faith producing, unselfish manner, later they learn how to tell others about the power of prayer.**

**Illustrator Liu's outstandingly exquisite artwork is engaging for little children as well as older ones. Text used is beyond the scope of Kindergarten-Grade 1, however, my First Grade children enjoy hearing the tale and viewing the illustrations. Teaching in a public school I do not add any personal view to the pictured Biblical illustrations, but listen as the children recognize and comment upon the scenes showing the parting of the Red Sea, the crossing of the Children of Israel and the sweep of water as the Pharaoh and his soldiers are caught in the water. The Biblical overtones will cause the book to be readily received in Sunday Schools and religion based education programs. Happy to recommend.**

## **A Trial of One: The Third in the Osgoode Trilogy**

**Mary E Martin**

**iUniverse, Inc. 2021 Pike Lake Road STE 100 Lincoln, NE 68512**

**9780595445714 \$22.95**

**As the sequence of events which are the final work of the Osgood trilogy, A Trial of One, opens; Norma Dinnick, Harry Jenkins' elderly client has committed no actual offense. She HAD embroidered the accounts of homicidal retribution in a singsong voice as her doctors rubbed their jaws to cover up their grins. Their opinion was psychotic dementia with a little Alzheimer's added to the mix. Norma was psychologically inept.**

**Harry was accordingly assigned as her legal guardian by the courts, whereupon he found her housings in a well-appointed mental hospital and set about trying to trace missing stock for the Elixicorp Enterprises which had been secreted by her late husband.**

**Initially marketed to elevate money for medical research into recollection loss too often found in the aged; the shares oddly enough had gone missing, and no one remembered just where they might be. Norma was quite adamant that she and she alone had any real claim regarding the stock which were said to be worth upwards of 30 million. Three men who also coveted the money were deceased, Norma had alleged that she had assassinated them. Dead also was her husband Arthur. George Pappas and his underworld connections, Archie Brinks and David Parrish, all dead. Even Harry's law partner was dead.**

**Harry realized Norma's madness was something she was well able to turn off and on pretty much at will.**

**A Dr Robert Hawke searching for the cause of Alzheimer's wanted to find Norma, as did his associate Veronica Deal. And, her brother Garth. A lot of people were looking for Norma and all that money. The search was to take Harry to Europe where Hawke's extreme anxiety led to Harry being ruthlessly beaten. Only rescue by the quick thinking desk clerk at his hotel saved Harry from potential death. Later Harry returned the good deed when the clerk too was savagely assaulted for refusing to give away where Harry was.**

**Sale of Norma's Georgian six-plex, a female named Natasha, an asphyxiated cat, and the suicide of Harry's law school roommate, a crow in a workplace, Europe, London, Venice, peril and a anonymous woman known as Q, fabrication and treachery, torment, and blood lust and obsession, covert lines of investigation, demise of a mischief maker bent on dreadfulness, and a slayer unmasked.**

**Writer Martin, no relative to this reviewer, is a skilled writer who has on the pages of A Trial of One fashioned a medley of stimulating players overflowing with more**

**persona and angst than most. Locales are well detailed serving to draw the reader into the sequence of events and grasp reader concentration fast.**

**Discourse is at times coarse, unrefined and astringent. The plot is a gripping, reader captivating set of circumstances. Villains are properly iniquitous, Harry is dense and clever by turns as he tries to disentangle the vagueness and treachery found in his client, the deaths of his late partner along with the scoundrels determined to latch onto all that money to be had from the shares of stock, moreover the conclusion of the trilogy is gratifying.**

**Not for everyone, A Trial of One does have some profanity and reference to sex will put off readers easily shocked. Others will enjoy the work, and if they have not yet read the first two of the trilogy will be determined to track them down for reading. Enjoyed the read, happy to recommend.**

**Molly Martin, Reviewer**

**<http://www.angelfire.com/ok4/mollymartin>**

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## **Paul's Bookshelf**

**The Hunters of Pangaea**

**Stephen Baxter**

**NESFA Press**

**P.O. Box 809, Framingham, MA 01701**

**1886778493 \$25.00 <http://www.nesfa.org/press>**

**Here is a group of previously published stories and essays from Baxter, who is best known as a Hard SF writer (science fiction that emphasizes the science).**

**There is a story about early humans dinosaur hunting. There is a tale of an actual incident in the life of H.G. Wells (before he became "H.G. Wells, Famous Person"). Included are a trio of related fantasy stories. A couple of alternate history tales are included about Great Britain's entry into the Space Race, stories that do not end well for Britain. Puck, from "A Midsummer's Night Dream" by Shakespeare, becomes a detective. There is a Victorian-style science fiction story with a rather self-explanatory title, "The Ant-Men of Tibet."**

**How can a home-made spaceship, that is propelled by doing strange things with gravity, fall approximately 10 feet, and the person inside be crushed to death, as if he had fallen from a much greater height? Sherlock Holmes and H.G. Wells are on the case. Of course, there are a couple of Hard SF stories, for which Baxter is best known. Also in this book are several essays, on topics like sports in science fiction, and the changing treatment of Mars and the Moon by science fiction writers.**

**This collection is really good. For those who like to read a variety of stories, or don't want to wade through a novel full of science, this book is very much worth reading.**

## **Barack Obama for Beginners: An Essential Guide**

**Bob Neer**

**For Beginners Books**

**62 East Starrs Plain Road, Danbury, CT 06810**

**9781934389386 \$7.95 <http://www.forbeginnersbooks.com>**

**Here is a short (and neutral) biography of one of 2008's Men Who Would be President.**

**Obama was born in 1961 in Hawaii to a Kenyan father who was studying economics at the University of Hawaii, and a mother who came from strict Kansas Methodist stock. Their marriage lasted only a few years. In 1967, Obama moved to Indonesia when Ann, his mother, married an oil company executive. He attended an elite primary school, and saw firsthand the huge chasm between the average Indonesian and American. Ann impressed upon him that education was the way to stay on the right side of that divide. Even though he was registered at the school as a Muslim, there is no evidence that Obama was ever a practicing Muslim.**

**Attending high school back in Hawaii, Obama began to realize what being a black man in America was all about. He sought answers through the writings of black intellectuals, and release through drugs. Moving to California, to attend Occidental College, Obama was not a conscientious student. After a night of partying, he had an epiphany. He transferred to Columbia University, and threw himself into his studies. After receiving his degree in 1983, he wanted to get involved in community organizing. In 1985, he drove to Chicago for a paying job as an organizer on the South Side.**

**After a couple of years learning "the system," Obama felt that having a law degree would be a big help. He excelled at Harvard Law, and was named to the Law Review. After graduation, he became a lecturer at the University of Chicago, and joined a small activist law firm in Chicago.**

**The book goes into his rising through the ranks in Chicago politics, and his election to the State Senate. Those in power knew that he was a rising star, so many important bills were sent his way. The logical next step was the US Senate, and the book ends with his primary fight against Hillary Clinton to receive the Democratic nomination for President.**

**This book was written with no assistance from Obama or his campaign; all information is from public sources. For anyone who wants a short, and non-**

**partisan, look at the life of Barack Obama, this is the book. It is easy to read, and very much worth the time.**

**Your Government Failed You**

**Richard A. Clarke**

**Ecco Books**

**10 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10022**

**9780061474620 \$25.95 <http://www.harpercollins.com>**

**This book takes an uncompromising look at the inability of the government to prevent security and intelligence failures, like those that occurred before 9/11.**

**Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the US Army had no counter-insurgency strategy. Part of the reason was to not resurrect unpleasant memories from Vietnam, and part of the reason was the absolute belief among top officials of the Bush Administration that it would not be needed, that the US troops would be greeted as liberators. It wasn't until four years into the war that General Petraeus was asked to put together a counter-insurgency strategy.**

**In Iraq, there is a nearly equal number of US troops and civilian contractors. There is a similar ratio between government and private intelligence analysts here in America. The author thinks that should change, now. Analysis should be brought back under government control. Analysts also have no access to public sources of information. Some public bit of information may be all that is needed to, for instance, turn a satellite photo into a photo of secret missile bases.**

**The author also feels that the percentage of ambassadorships and high-level defense and security jobs available to big political contributors and former elected officials should be reduced by a lot; those jobs belong to the professionals. Other countries are better than America at getting human spies on the "inside." That part of the US intelligence business should be downsized, and America should focus on the technical part of intelligence gathering. But, America needs to resist the temptation to launch more and more sophisticated satellites into orbit, when a simpler satellite will do the job.**

**Clarke feels that the next major battleground will be in cyberspace. The current staff of the Office of Management and Budget working on federal IT security is 2 people. That should be increased to more like 200 people, and they should get the clout to force agencies to take proper security precautions.**

**Clarke has spent many years in high government positions, so he knows what he is talking about. Here is a fascinating, and eye-opening, book that will help to explain large parts of recent US foreign policy.**

**Daydream Believers: How a Few Grand Ideas Wrecked American Power**

**Fred Kaplan**

**John Wiley and Sons**

**111 River St, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774**

**9780470121184 \$25.95 <http://www.wiley.com>**

**How American foreign policy got so off-track in the 21st Century has been well covered in other books. Why it got so off-track is the subject of this book.**

**It stems from two huge misconceptions made by the Bush White House and the neo-cons. The first is that, on 9/11, the world did not change. It certainly changed in that America suddenly found itself more vulnerable than ever before. But the nature of power, politics and warfare did not change. The second is that, after the Cold War, America found itself as the world's only superpower. With its superior military technology, America thought that it was now free to topple unfriendly regimes, ignore treaties and generally do whatever it wanted around the world. Now that the Soviet Union was gone as an enemy, Cold War allies no longer felt compelled to see things America's way. An American president could deal with this new landscape in one of two ways: emphasize the military, and don't hesitate to use American power around the world, or, emphasize diplomacy, and restructure old alliances (and create new ones) around the world.**

**The invasion of Iraq was supposed to be the example of Bush's belief that, with Saddam Hussein out of the way, Iraq will suddenly turn into a democratic country, and that democracy will spread throughout the Mideast. The Pentagon cared more about the military part than about the aftermath. Turmoil in Iraq was practically guaranteed by the first two decrees issued by Paul Bremer in the early days of the occupation: disbanding the Iraqi army, and removing all Baathists from the government.**

**The author also looks at the Administration's decision to abrogate the ABM Treaty with Russia, and resume deployment of Ronald Reagan's missile defense shield, despite the fact that its operational capabilities are somewhere between questionable and non-existent.**

**This is a really good book, and I learned something from it. There is more than just facts and figures here; the author profiles people in the military world, some of whom do not get their names in the media. It's worth reading.**

**Who Really Runs the World? The War Between Globalization and Democracy**

**Thom Burnett and Alex Gaines**

**The Disinformation Company, Ltd.**

**163 Third Ave., #108, New York, NY 10003**

**1932857583 \$13.95 <http://www.disinfo.com>**

**This book examines the conspiracies in present-day life, both hidden and public.**



**It looks at the social networks, corporate alliances and forces of secret history holding them together.**

**For many years, there has been speculation about secret, shadowy groups who actually control the world. As far as America is concerned, the authors examine groups like Skull and Bones, the Illuminati, the Freemasons and the Bilderberg Group, but none of them really fit as the Group In Charge. According to the authors, a much more plausible place to look is the New York based, and un-secret, Council on Foreign Relations. For most of the 20th Century, it has been the place to go for new administrations to fill their defense and foreign policy jobs.**

**The book also looks at the role of money in the present day (money really does make the world go round). America's central bank was founded in the early 1900s by a group of bankers during a very secret meeting at a place called Jekyll Island, Georgia. The new institution was specifically called the Federal Reserve System to get away from the words "central bank." Banking and secrecy seem to go together perfectly. That is part of the reason why governments and corporations move hundreds of billions of dollars around the world at any time, in search of the most favorable tax rates. Sometimes, banks are formed specifically to hide, or finance, illegal activities; two recent examples are BCCI and the Nugan Hand Bank from Australia.**

**Another avenue for corporations to reinforce their power is through institutions like the International Monetary Fund. It was intended to provide short-term loans to member countries. After the 1980s debt crisis, it now imposes harsh financial conditions on member states alongside its loan packages. It serves Wall Street and wealthy countries; it promotes corporate welfare and has no accountability, and it hurts workers, women and the environment.**

**This is an excellent book with a lot of information that will not be found in the mainstream media. It is really easy to read, and will certainly keep the reader interested.**

**America Unraveling**

**L. Scott Smith**

**Father's Press**

**2424 SE 6th Street, Lee's Summit, MO 64063**

**9780977940783 \$20.85 <http://www.fatherspress.com>**

**This book defends the expression of public faith in America, and has many unpleasant things to say about the present state of American culture.**

**The Founding Fathers intentionally created a "godless Constitution," because they knew that establishing any sort of state religion, or mandating religious tests as a prerequisite for holding public office would ultimately be a really bad idea.**

**But that doesn't mean that religion was not an important part of their lives, because it was. Everyone talks about the line of separation between church and state; it would be helpful if there was one overall definition, on which everyone could agree, as to just where that line is located.**

**Liberalism and secularism espouse that religion should play no major role in public life. They also promote the neutrality of the state toward religion, and the autonomy of the individual to worship any way they wish. They may sound reasonable, but they certainly haven't worked that way.**

**In the late 20th century, the US Supreme Court ruled on several high profile cases concerning expression of public faith. Among them were cases which looked at religion in school. Part of the justification for bringing the cases through the legal process was that the students involved were coerced into participating, or made to feel different if they didn't take part. The truth is that there was no coercion at all, and the students were more than free to not participate. The author also thinks very little of present-day immigration, which started courtesy of a law passed more than 40 years ago, and is leading to the destruction of Anglo-Christian culture. Multiculturalism says that all religions, and therefore, all religious practices, are equally valid. Does that include female genital mutilation, and the stoning to death of women convicted of adultery?**

**The author is not advocating that America be turned into a Christian fundamentalist, or any other type of religious regime. But, is some expression of public faith in American life really such a bad idea? It is an interesting book that does a good job at staying non-partisan.**

**On a Hill They Call Capital**

**Matt Carson**

**Freestate Press**

**45 Main Street, Warrenton, VA 20186**

**9781604028546 \$12.95 <http://www.onahillbook.com>**

**This novel is about a bunch of regular guys from Virginia, with nicknames like Smiley, Cat, Spank, DT and Boomer, who don't just complain about taxes and government tyranny, they decide to do something about it.**

**After a lot of diligent planning and preparation, the group, led by Cat, is able to enter the IRS Building in Washington, DC, and spends a few minutes throwing chairs, files and computers out the windows. They quickly leave before the police, distracted by a stripper's parade across town, show up. The entire news media is then blanketed by faxes and emails from "The Grandsons of Liberty." The revolution will be totally non-violent, they say, but they are saying Enough to excessive taxation and trampling on people's rights. The group is surprised by the amount of sympathy they receive in the news media.**

**The group then spreads out along the East Coast, and kidnaps eight members of the House of Representatives, and brings them back to Virginia. There is no violence, except for a couple of taserings. The captives are well fed, but they are given homework to do concerning what America is all about.**

**A day or two later, after more planning and preparation, Washington, DC suddenly finds itself hosting a huge parade. Starting at various points in the city, groups ranging from the Boy Scouts to 4-H to VFW to NORML converge on the Capitol, where the eight Representatives are released unharmed and where Cat calls for Citizen's Arrests on all members of Congress.**

**This is a very short novel, and even the author admits that it is hardly a polished work, but in this political climate it packs a wallop, and is very much recommended.**

**Get Out of Our House: Revolution!**

**Tim Cox**

**Bridgeway Books**

**P.O. Box 80107, Austin, TX 78758**

**9781934454039 \$14.95 <http://www.bridgewaybooks.com>**

**To say that the American people do not think that Congress is doing a good job is a huge understatement. This book provides an interesting proposal to change that.**

**The first step is to visit <http://www.goooh.com> ("Get Out of Our House"). It costs money to sign up at the site, to weed out those who are not serious. Those who are serious will have to answer over 100 questions about how they will vote on various issues. They are Yes/No questions, designed to provide no political wiggle room. If enough people from a certain Congressional district sign up and pledge money, the special interests used to buying elections are bypassed. The people who signed up get together to choose a Congressional candidate, the person who best represents that district. After being elected, if, at any time, the person votes contrary to the way they voted on the questionnaire, they are obligated to resign.**

**The answers to the questions coming from Cambridge, MA or San Francisco are going to be different than the answers coming from Dallas. That's the idea; the object is to find the person who best represents that district. Among the questions: Will you vote to replace the current tax system with the Fair Tax as proposed by Linder and Boortz? Will you vote for a government-controlled National Health Care System that offers "free" health care to all? Will you vote to amend the Constitution to exclude people with a law degree from serving in the House? Will you vote to make birth control pills available for free to every girl under the age of twenty-one? Will you vow to support a completely free press at all**

**times? Will you vote to declare that a person who commits a crime, and is subsequently found guilty of said crime, has forfeited all but his most basic rights from the moment his crime was committed until the moment he is released?**

**The problem is not getting this or that member out of the House of Representatives, and then everything will be all right, but getting everyone out, and starting from scratch. Many proposals have been put forward to do just that; this one deserves serious consideration.**

**Paul Lappen, Reviewer  
<http://www.deadtreesreview.com>**

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## **Richard's Bookshelf**

**Positioned to Bless  
Faisal Malick  
Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.  
P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310  
9780768426946 \$15.99**

### **Bring Your Life into Line to Fulfill Your Destiny**

**Faisal Malick's book "Positioned to Bless" addresses both the corporate body of the church and the individual believer. Malick unveils the steps needed to release the enormous potential within you as a member of the body of Christ.**

**Malick draws lessons from the lives of Abraham, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos throughout the book. Readers are challenged to fulfill the vision that God has placed on their heart to take the seat of authority, to position themselves for blessing others, and to follow the plumb line principle. The chapter "Preparing for Battle" challenges an entire new generation of believers to "give birth to their own potential."**

**I found the use of side bars throughout the book was especially helpful in assimilating important insights and truths covered in the chapter. They also provide a tool for a quick review and provide profound insights for meditation for devotional study.**

**The book is organized in a way that each chapter follows the previous with a natural progression of inspiration and challenge; however each chapter stands alone for adaptations in supplementing topical material in small group studies, inspirational messages, or for sermon illustrations.**

**Malick's writing is powerful and convincing, strong and compelling. His message is engaging, practical, encouraging. He encourages his reader to finish strong, while fulfilling their own divine assignment.**

### **The Divine Attraction**

**Warren Hunter**

**Destiny Image Publications, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**9780768427134 \$15.99**

### **Experience God's Spirit in Your Worship**

**In his book "The Divine Attraction" Warren Hunter, President of Sword Ministries, reveals the power of intimate worship. The book is rich in scripture filled with Biblical and contemporary examples illustrating the depths of God's love.**

**Warren encourages the reader to experience the worship of God from within allowing the Spirit of God to rise within you to meet God in heaven know the presence of God. He explains how worship is created in the heart and how important this is as the principal focal point in approaching God.**

**Warren uses examples from the altar experiences of Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, and Elijah to emphasize the need "to present our bodies as a living sacrifice" as we move into an intimate worship with God.**

**The meditations of the heart sections of the book were meaningful to me and stirred my heart to a new synergy of worship resulting in an amazing breakthrough in "establishing an environment of the Spirit."**

**Hunter writes powerfully, with authority, with simplicity and clarity. His message come thorough as a genuine personal conviction as he challenges the reader to examine true hallowed worship and supernatural closeness with the God of heaven and to respond by magnifying and praising Him within their spirit, soul, and body.**

**This is a book for anyone who wants to make spiritual worship and supernatural fellowship a way of life while experiencing more of the depths of God's love and the worship that follows when we release God's Spirit within our innermost being.**

### **My Life as a Bush...and My Heart for Imitating Jesus**

**John Morgan with Vince Wilcox**

**Creation House**

**600 Rinehart Road, Lake Mary, Florida 32746**

**9781599794594 \$14.99**

## **A Call to be an Imitator and a Career as an Impersonator**

**John Morgan, a presidential impersonator shares experiences from his life as a George W. Bush look alike. With a flare for comedy tells his story. John suddenly found himself in the limelight during George Bush's campaign for the presidency. After weeks, and months of disciplined study of Bush's voice, facial expressions, stance, speeches, and personal philosophy, John was ready for his first professional assignment.**

**Since that beginning in January 2005 John has traveled as "the face" of President George W. Bush. He has appeared at corporate and faith-based comedic events. He uses a Texas drawl to introduce himself to his audience in a show that combines humorous impressions of the president, parody songs, and concludes with a message of hope.**

**Throughout the book John relates his professional experiences in his role of impersonating George W. Bush. He also includes a related personal story as he unfolds his testimony as a follower and imitator of Jesus Christ. He draws from the scriptures to illustrate the parallel to his two roles, impersonator and imitator.**

**The questions for reflections included meaningful and thought provoking. I found the action steps practical and enjoyed the sections provided for devotional journaling. I felt this opened another valuable dimension to the book for group study and discussion.**

**John collaborated with Vince Wilcox to create this entertaining, inspirational story, a combination of a career and a calling. Vince's strong writing and John's clear message make this an important and timely book in a year when our allegiance to Christ will impact our future and the future of our country.**

**You Can Be Famous**

**Danek S. Kaus**

**Robert D. Reed Publishers**

**P. O. Box 1992, Bandon, OR 97411**

**9781934759110 \$14.95**

## **Getting Free Publicity - Open Doors to Celebrity Status**

**Daniel S. Kaus has written a unique book on insider secrets to getting free publicity in his book "You can be famous!" This is a book for entrepreneurs, organizational leaders, sales representative and authors, to anyone wanting to provide goods or services, or for individuals wanting to get."**

**Each of the twelve chapters is packed with powerful keys to gaining fame. Kaus shows the reader how to create your own media tool kit, how to talk like a journalist, and the satisfaction of seeing your name in print. He walks you through the steps to get on radio and TV talk shows. He has included a number of sample press releases, FAQ's, sample query letters, as well as sample headlines for proposed articles. Kaus gives practical pointers on the benefits of fame, a 10 second rule, how to attract media attention, and how to talk to journalists.**

**The format of the book is user friendly, easy to read, assimilate and to put into immediate use. The "Key Points to Remember," the suggested "Action Steps," and the "In the Next Chapter, You Will Learn" were particularly practical and personally challenging.**

**Kaus writes with enthusiasm. He is an innovator, a motivator, and a communicator. His writing is fresh. He has a tight writing style that is entertaining and informative. I plan to go back to reread, digest and put into action the suggested steps for getting free publicity as outlined in the book.**

**This book is a must for anyone with a media message begging to be heard.**

**Live Your Road Trip Dream**

**Phil and Carol White**

**RLI Press**

**P. O. 1115, Wilsonville, Oregon 97070-1115**

**978097529839 \$18.95**

**Planning the Dream, Making it Happen, and Enjoying the Ride**

**In this second edition of their award winning book "Live Your Road Trip Dream", Phil and Carol White have found the perfect balance in crystallizing the dream, planning the "plot," and journaling the journey.**

**In this edition of their how to planning guide, the Whites have included new sections with ideas for taking sabbaticals, conducting business while on the road, and ideas for using the trip for instructing your children.**

**I have heard it said that half the fun is in the planning. This is where the book begins. The White's have divided their book into two parts. "Part One" begins with the dream stage and suggested plans to help the reader determine and put into action the steps for making their own personal dream trip come to fruition.**

**The White's include detailed suggestions for financing the trip, how to make provision for your home, cars, and family responsibilities. They include pointers on selecting a travel home; planning the route, strategizing the details, and keeping in touch with the family. Carol offers remarkable insight into some**

**decisions that may come up along the way as well as anticipating possible emergencies.**

**In "Part Two" Carol shares journals of their journey. She points out places of interest they visited the trip, the character and quality of some of the hotels along the way, and items of historical interest. Their trip included a visit to all of the 48 contiguous states, as well as 43 National Parks, and many monuments and museums of historical significance.**

**Phil shared some "Phil-osophies" regarding the sport halls of fame they visited, stories of enjoying golf along the way, and some sports events they watched. This added a dimension to the book as it gave a man's view of many of their stops along the way.**

**Resource lists, check off lists, worksheets, and sample itineraries are all included in the appendix. I enjoyed the many, many, photographs included throughout the book.**

**As a writing team Carol and Phil have written an engaging and positive story. Their book resonates with a contagious spirit which instills in the reader the impetus to move from a dream, to a plan, to making turning the ignition to make that dream become a reality.**

**Successfully You  
Leigh Valentine  
Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.  
P. O. Box 310  
Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310  
9780768426137 \$15.99**

**From Beauty Pageants and Skin Care Products, to Preaching God's Word**

**"Successfully You" is Leigh Valentine's story, a testimony of God's grace and His drawing power in her life. The first sentence is gripping, "The car slammed into the Corvette and a body flew out of its T-Top, through the air, and across the three-lane highway into a ditch." From this opening to her final thoughts Leigh shares from her heart.**

**Leigh intertwines her story of winning the Miss Missouri beauty pageant, and her narrow escape from death with examples from the scriptures that illustrate the truths she learned in her personal journey of finding God's will and submitting to His leading.**

**The injuries from the accident forced her to put her plans for acting, modeling, and stardom on hold. Leigh changed her major in college and went on to**



**graduate with degrees in fashion merchandising and business administration. A job opened up for her in the cosmetic industry.**

**I appreciated Leigh's vulnerability as she told how she moved from the devastation and despair of broken relationships, failed marriage, business set backs, and of a personal battle with bulimia. She then relates her story of miracles which transformed her life and ministry and of the triumph she experienced as a result of God's grace.**

**Throughout her story she tells of an underlying passion to respond to the call of God on her life, a call to preach. Opportunities for a speaking ministry began to open after graduation from Rhema Bible College. Today Leigh is spreading the message of the Word of God in the United States, Europe and Africa.**

**Leigh's writing is engaging, filled with hope, candid, and heartwarming. "Successfully You" is a testimony of God's restoration process. Leigh's story is an inspiration, an encouragement, and a powerful reminder of God's call on our lives. "Failure is never final." The reader is challenged to recognize God as the designer of our purpose and destiny.**

**The Secret of Yahweh  
LeFerna Arnold-Walch  
Mary's Lamb Publishing  
17702 Greenleaf Rd., Addison, MI 49220  
9780980179484 \$16.95**

### **Lessons in Character, Citizenship, and Patriotism**

**In her book "The Secret of Yahweh" LeFerna Arnold-Walch combines mystery, a look at times past, core values, virtues, and patriotism. This is a wonderfully crafted children's novel.**

**Mary, Petey, and Jimmy, are the good kids. Con, Bitsy and their clique of friends are the mean kids. The story begins on the first day of a new school year in Miss Sawyer's fourth grade classroom. A brief announcement broadcast over the loudspeaker stated that pledge of allegiance would no longer include the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.**

**This announcement raised questions among the students of Miss Sawyer's fourth graders. In response to these questions Miss Sawyer gave the class members new insights into American traditions, the constitution, and individual freedoms.**

**During lunch Mary was bullied by Bitsy and a group of the mean girls. They helped themselves to her lunch, yanked her pigtails, and told her she was fat. Soon the disturbance was noticed and Mary was sent to the principal's office for**

**the remainder of the lunch hour. That evening Mary had a visitor, J. C. Lamb, a special messenger (un-secret agent 777) from God on a mission.**

**The story includes lessons on supporting American troops, lessons in Christian history, and the stories which give insight into the traditions of gratefulness for being "one nation under God."**

**The book is also filled with lessons on the value of personhood, the power of prayer, and the need for love. These lessons are being taught in the classroom, the lunchroom, on the school bus, playing with friends, in the home, and through Mystery Sunday at church.**

**LeFerna explains the presence of good and evil in the world. She goes on to discuss Yahweh (God) as the master of the universe, the trinity, and the message of the gospel. She gives details about the fall of man, the plan of salvation, miracles, and the role of the Holy Spirit. She explains how we got our Bible, the various translations, and importance of a lifetime of Bible study.**

**The message of Jesus is presented through by "preacher", the youth leader, and Miss Sawyer in language easily understood by children 7 - 12.**

**The clever illustrations included add another dimension to the story and help to maintain interest and reinforce the message of the narrative. The book is Biblically sound, easily understood and can be enjoyed by readers of all ages. The author has created a unique program for passing the book along to others becomes an evangelistic tool for the reader and challenges the seeker to find the "Secret of Yahweh."**

**God's Big Idea**

**Myles Munroe**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**9780768427035 \$24.99**

**Finding Your Destiny and God's Purpose for Your Life**

**"God's Big Idea" is a book fulfilling your destiny here on earth. Myles Monroe points the reader to finding the eternal purpose of the creator for His creation and for humanity on earth. Monroe shows the reader how to enjoy continuous fellowship with the Lord. Throughout the book he offers answers to earthly problems, such as: warfare and conflict, violence, criminal offenses, the AIDS epidemics. He discusses child abuse, environmental issues, cultural clashes, economic crisis, political and religious corruption, and the resulting culture of fear.**

**I appreciated the pages at the end of the book for making notes and for journaling those things God spoke to me about through my reading. These recorded thoughts will help me to put into practice and application the wonderful thoughts for future reflection, meditation, and assimilation into my life.**

**As always Monroe's writing is compelling and articulate. Munroe appeals to the mind and to the hands-on experience. He gives a clear powerful gospel message. He does not espouse religion but emphasizes the plan and purpose of God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.**

**The book is filled with Biblical content which guides the reader into an understanding of the precepts of God's Kingdom. Munroe then opens the way for the individual to "Reclaim God's Original Purpose for their life."**

**This is a book for everyone wanting to fulfill their own personal destiny while influencing today's culture for God's Kingdom purposes.**

**Purity, The New Moral Revolution**

**Kris Vallotton**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257- 0310**

**97807684277110 \$15.99**

**A New Revolution in Sexual Purity**

**"The Parable of the Ring," an allegorical story, opens Kris Vallotton's his book "Purity: The New Moral Revolution." The ring is depicted as the symbol of your virginity. Vallotton's purpose in writing this book is to provide a catalyst for a sexual reformation. It is his prayer that the book will "rock the planet and rewrite the sexual paradigms of our time!"**

**Kris uses illustrations and lessons from life to provide useful tips on establishing Christian values and higher standards while setting boundaries for maintaining purity.**

**Vallotton coaches young people in developing a plan for purity, for guarding their thought life by making a covenant with their eyes not to compromise their heart. He discusses hands-on matters; such as accountability and the danger of deception. He suggests guidelines for dating and courting and for establishing standards for appropriate behavior. He describes marriage as a covenant relationship which includes Holy love and Holy affection.**

**Kris uses poignant to illustrate the reward of victory, the devastation of defeat, and the promise of restoration, a second chance and forgiveness. In the final story called "Grace" we see the perfect example of God's grace in the lives of those**

**looking to Him for their strength.**

**"Purity: The New Moral Revolution" is written for a new generation, a generation on the brink of becoming participants of a sexual paradigm shift for sexual purity. It is also written for anyone who has failed and is caught up in guilt seeking God's forgiveness and grace. The book is a bold statement of a new catalyst for a sexual reformation.**

**The Dharma King**

**B. G. Stroh**

**iUniverse, Inc.**

**1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403**

**9780595716906, \$23.95**

**A Spiritual Journey and a Tibetan Crisis**

**B. G. Stroh's "The Dharma King" is timely and helps the reader examine the competing interests of capitalism and spirituality. The story enables the reader to vicariously experience young Samuel Simms Jr. personal spiritual journey in this Tibetan Crisis.**

**On a casual whim Sam Falk Simms Jr. booked a flight to Kathmandu to celebrate his college graduation. Unexpected events on the flight turned the planned vacation trip into a one man quest to save Tibet.**

**Sam found himself in custody of a map which included the secret of the location of the birth of the baby Panchen Lama, the spiritual counterpart to the Dalai Lama, Sam was faced with a grave responsibility to save the baby Panchen Lama.**

**Pursued by a Chinese colonel with his own demons, Sam comes to terms with a deeper level of meaning in his own life and purposes to save what may be the last hope of a religion and culture in danger of extinction.**

**Stroh's complex plot parallels young Sam's story of guilt and redemption and a search for meaning with the elder Sam's pursuit for more money, power, and prestige motivated by greed.**

**The inescapable tragedy of the current Tibetan situation makes this novel timely and important. Stroh's extensive travel throughout Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal give credence to the rich background of the geography and culture. His study of Tibetan Buddhism adds authority to the insights into the spiritual motivation of his protagonists.**

**I appreciated Stroh's descriptive phrases, they made me feel the crush of the crowd, smell the stench of the latrine, hear the cacophony of street noises, sense**

**the curry and spices in the air, the envision the white sea of clouds, and the granite white capped peaks of the Himalayas.**

**"The Dharma King" is the perfect choice for a thoughtful intercultural reading experience. With China's emergence onto the world stage and with the uncertainty of Tibet's future "The Dharma King" is timely and important. B. G. Stroh uses the medium of the novel to deliver powerful insight into his own personal struggle to find meaning in a changed world. Stroh challenges the reader to step up to the challenge of the impact one person can make in changing their world.**

**Hope Beyond Reason**

**David Hess**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**978076426977 \$14.99**

**A Young Pastor's Battle With Leukemia**

**"Hope Beyond Reason" is Pastor Dave Hess's testimony. It is a story of his and battle against death as a result of Leukemia. David tells his story of being embraced by God's presence during the toughest of times after being diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. This was the beginning of Dave's desperate battle against death.**

**David's church, his loving family, and a firm trust in the promises of a miracle working God all worked together to give him the hope that took him through the darkest hours of chemotherapy, blood transfusions, platelet transfusions, delirious fevers, infections, pneumonia, and a ruptured appendix.**

**David's faith encouraged hospital staff, other patients, and the members of his church throughout his hospitalization. Seeing the miracles of healing in other patients, their changed lives, and experiencing the miracles in his own life, David has been called to a ministry of pointing others to the open door of hope offered by the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**The final chapter and the reunion with his individual family members were very tender, heartwarming, and packed with emotion. They revealed how having "dad" home affected each family member differently as they faced the prospect of losing their father.**

**A section titled "My Personal Journal of Hope" was included in each chapter. This section provided insights and probing questions which provided me with material for my personal journal. I was challenged to step out of my comfort zone, to develop a new dependence on Christ, and to make a difference in someone**

**else's life.**

**David's writing is heart-wrenching and inspirational. David offers an open door of hope to everyone during their desperate hour of crisis.**

**A Firm Place to Stand**

**Marja Bergen**

**Word Alive Press**

**131 Cordite Road, Winnipeg, MB R3W 1S1**

**9781897373453 \$19.99**

**Living with Bi-Polar Disorder**

**Award winning author Marja Bergen speaks out to help build a public awareness and to help those who have Bi-Polar disorder in her book "A Firm Place to Stand." The book describes the struggles and challenges she has faced over the forty years she has suffered with the disease.**

**Bergen tells of the stigma attached to people with mental illness. It is her passion to educate the public and in particular the faith community on ways to offer support and encouragement to those plagued by with mood disorders.**

**Bergen projects a positive attitude and describes how she has personally coped with the various forms of treatments, psychiatric counseling, and the monitoring of her medications to maintain the semblance of a normal life.**

**Bergen offers hope for living creatively, finding support, and finding meaning to life. She presents a moving testimony of her own spiritual journey and of how she found God, how she was nurtured in the faith, and how she received strength, encouragement, and peace from the scriptures.**

**The comprehensive appendix is very helpful as it summarizes Bi-Polar Disease with the symptoms, including depression, mania, hypomania, and psychosis. A valuable resource list is included. The combination of the resource list and the end notes from books quoted within the text become important suggestions for further study.**

**Today there are six million American adults diagnosed as having some form of Bi-Polar Disorder. "A Firm Place to Stand" is an important and timely book. The book should be read by the victims of Bi-Polar Disease, their families, pastors, and counselors. This is an important resource tool for faith based ministries who want to reach out into the community to minister to and offer support and hope to a distinctive community within the community.**

**Praying the New Testament**

**Elmer Towns**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**9780768427042 \$24.99**

## **A Fresh Paraphrase of the New Testament for Transforming Your Prayer Life**

**Award winning author, Elmer Towns has compiled four of his earlier works into this one volume, "Praying the New Testament." This edition includes. Praying the Gospels, the Praying Book of Acts and the General Epistles, Praying the Letters of the apostle Paul, and praying the book of Revelation.**

**A quick preview of the table of contents prepares the reader for the journey ahead and becomes the itinerary for an exciting spiritual adventure in prayer and inspirational reflection for the days, weeks, and months ahead.**

**Towns used his own translation from the original Greek language into modern English using a thought-for-thought edition, and then transposing the passage into the second person voice. His vivid descriptions help the reader visualize the setting for better understanding.**

**I found the personal prayers throughout the narrative, the "My Time to Pray" opportunities and the "Your Time to Worship" prayers to be especially meaningful. I also enjoyed the introductory information and background material at the beginning of each of the New Testament books. This extra information is well researched and skillfully crafted adding another dimension to my reading. It gave me fresh insights and a deeper appreciation for each the passage during my devotional study.**

**I would like to suggest "Praying the New Testament" as an excellent resource for family devotions or for personal meditation. The one volume compilation gives a fuller picture of the plan of praying the scriptures and makes the New Testament come alive as you pray your way through the book day by day.**

**Kingdom Rising**

**Todd Bentley**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**9780768427189 \$16.99**

## **Realizing the Kingdom in Your Life Today**

**Todd Bentley's prayer is that "Kingdom Rising" will give the reader a new understanding and experience in knowing the reality of the Kingdom in their daily lives. It is his desire that foundations will be laid that will inspire the reader**

**to move forward into supernatural living and in the overcoming triumphant spectacular life that is ours in Christ.**

**Todd shares the testimony of his early struggles as a new Christian, as he wrestled with God seeking God's anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit for ministry. He expresses his hunger to know more of Jesus and of the urgency he felt in his heart for a ministry of God's presence.**

**Within the chapters are prayers and the key principles which clearly establish the reality of the kingdom for today's Christian and set the tone for the remainder of the book.**

**I personally enjoyed the segments titled Kingdom Helps, Confidence Builders for Power Evangelism, and the Commission to Power Evangelism.**

**Bentley's sets forth a strategy for Kingdom Invasion which promises to lead to an adventure in supernatural living and a transformed life. I was challenged to take radical risks as I step forward in faith to fulfill God's divine plan for my life.**

**"Kingdom Rising" is a wake up call for the Christian. It is a calling to recognize the spiritual battle we are in today. It is a challenge to rise above our spiritual apathy and complacency to take up the weapons of spiritual battle and to claim our spiritual inheritance.**

**Todd's writing is persuasive, stirring and life changing.**

**Generation Hex**

**Dillon Burroughs and Marla Alupoaipei**

**Harvest House Publishers**

**990 Owen Loop North, Eugene, OR 97402-9173**

**9780736924016 \$9.99**

**A Look at the Subtle Dangers of Wicca**

**Co-authors Dillon Burroughs and Marla Alupoaipei have written "Generation Hex" in an effort to alert Christian parents of the subtle dangers of Wicca many teenagers are being exposed to. The authors have attempted to provide an objective, comprehensive look at the basic tenets of Wicca in light of Biblical teaching.**

**The authors introduce the basic tenants of Wicca. The rapid growth of Wicca as a religion should be of concern to the Christian. Burroughs offers his personal impressions on the impact the Harry Potter books have had on the today's generation of youth and the relationship of their now being drawn into the Wicca practices.**



**Wicca's history, teachings, and practices are all covered in the early chapters of the book. The gods and goddesses and emphasis on the feminine factor of Wicca are introduced in a fair, factual, and unbiased way. I found the section showing a comparison of the Wiccan perception of God and the God of the Bible to be very useful. A personal testimony from a former Wicca Craft Practitioner provides insight into how young people are attracted to the Wicca teachings.**

**Others like my self have been unaware of the influence of Wicca philosophy on the postmodern generation. This is a wake up call for the reader to reexamine their faith in light of the relational experiences our youth are looking for today. Dillon and Marla both encourage the Christian to love and relate to individuals of other cultures and religions in a non judgmental compassionate way.**

**Welcome Home**

**David Ravenhill**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**9780768427196 \$15.99**

**A Far Country - A Modern Look at a Familiar Parable**

**An Alienation of the Heart**

**In his book "Welcome Home" David Ravenhill presents a fresh approach into the familiar parable of the prodigal son taken from the teachings of Jesus. Ravenhill depicts the parable in light of a contemporary family setting.**

**The short fast moving chapters are used to show the parallelism of today's youth growing in their giftedness and ministry, seeking Godly counsel. At first they eagerly seek more of God, but soon like the prodigal, "not many days later...he gathered everything together" to go to a far country.**

**Ravenhill describes the far country as an alienation of the heart. He showed how Solomon is an example of another son who inherited much but desired more and soon his desire for God was replaced with a desire for strange gods. He warns of the risk of affluence without purpose.**

**I was moved by the chapters entitled "The Journey Home" and "The Father Ran" which beautifully describes the joyous reunion of father and son, of a son's confession and a father's acceptance and forgiveness.**

**The chapters close with an opportunity for the reader to process on the material and to reflect on the thought provoking truths included in the chapter. This introspection allows the reader to absorb this solidly based Biblical teaching.**

**Part 2 of "Welcome Home" Is a reprint of G. Campbell Morgan's classic book "The Parable of the Father's Heart." The book closes with a final treatment of the parable and a charge to enter into an personal fellowship with the Lord.**

**Ravenhill captures the spirit of a father's unconditional love for his children. It is his prayer that the reader will discover the amazing love, mercy and grace of God the Father and become familiar with the joy of accepting His forgiveness and acceptance.**

**Heaven on Earth**

**Alan Vincent**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310**

**9780768426960 \$16.99**

**You Can Change the World by Releasing the Power within You**

**"Heaven on Earth" is a compelling call for believers to join with others in the advance the Kingdom of God while reaping a great end-time harvest of souls. Alan Vincent challenges his readers to step out of the lethargy of Christian fatalism into the power and authority available to all God's sons and daughters.**

**Vincent explains: "I am not teaching theory. I am teaching what I myself have experienced...I am not talking in forlorn hope but in spiritual fact." Jesus entered the world as the new beginning of the Kingdom of God and came to demonstrate the Power of the Kingdom.**

**Vincent enlarges on the scriptural teaching of Kingdom living as demonstrated in New Testament days referring to passages from the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He draws attention to the power of the Kingdom as found in the Gospels, in Acts, and as taught by Jesus in the parables.**

**The chapter which highlights the Kingdom in Acts was especially challenging for me. Vincent described being clothed with power from on high and being witnesses to the ends of the earth. I was challenged to face up to the importance of obedience, authority, and being ready for spiritual warfare.**

**Vincent's writing is revelatory, commanding, trustworthy, and offers the reader a life changing challenge to think outside of the box, to release the power of the spirit within, and to personally have a part in changing the world.**

**Basic Training for the Supernatural Ways of Reality**

**Kris Vallotton**

**Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310  
9780768427158 \$24.99**

## **Thinking Like an Heir of the Throne**

**"Basic Training for the Supernatural Ways of Royalty" is designed to be used as a practical training guide to learn how to apply scriptural truths and principles in supernatural ways. This training guide has been prepared in response to requests of readers who enjoyed Vallotton's earlier collaboration with Bill Johnson titled "The Supernatural Ways of Royalty: Discovering Your Rights and Privileges of Being a Son or Daughter of God."**

**This basic training guide is comprehensive in content. The narrative provides material for pursuing contemplative, soul searching reflection on the questions and activities provided which are designed to strengthen the readers understanding of the position and privileges available to the child of God.**

**Clever chapter titles with colorful word choices captured and held my attention as a reader. Vallotton's technique helped me focus on the reality of the supernatural aspects of the Kingdom of God surrounding me in our contemporary world. Vallotton covers topics from "Lizards in the Palace" to "Preserving the Planet." He challenges the reader to diagnosis and help unravel the problems of the world by becoming a part of the solution.**

**"Basic Training for the Supernatural ways of Royalty" is a welcome edition to the Basic Training Series. The book is a beautifully crafted life altering introductory map to a journey which explores the supernatural life which is ours as God's joint heirs with His Son, Jesus.**

**Vallotton's writing is true to the Scriptures, refreshing, and expressive. This Basic Training Manual is an important addition to the writings available to the prophetic community.**

**On We March**

**Bette Dowdell**

**Confident Faith Institute LLC**

**P O Box 11744, Glendale AZ 85318-1744**

**9780971772854 \$19.95**

## **Growing Up in the Salvation Army**

**Bette Dowdell cleverly writes a memoir of growing up in the Salvation Army in her book "On We March." Bette's parents Charles and Josephine Dowdell were both Salvation Army officers. They were dedicated pastors sacrificially living their lives of service to others. Bette has written a beautiful tribute to their lives.**

**Charles and Josephine met while attending a Salvation Army Music Camp. Their commitment to God and to ministry drew this young couple to each other. After taking their vows at the Brooklyn Salvation Army Chapel they had a brief honeymoon at Niagara Falls before reporting for a temporary assignment in Pittsburgh.**

**Frequent changes and new assignments led to relocation meant recurrent uprooting of their home life. In the first few years of their marriage the dedicated young couple was blessed with five children: Joe, Charles, Flo, Bette, and Tyrone. These young parents shared their love and taught their children to dream their own dreams, and allowed them to become their own persons.**

**Bette has a gift for seeing the humorous side of an otherwise difficult situation. She details highlights from each of these early moves and Army assignments with unique stories of miracles, buoyancy, and hilarity.**

**I personally have been exposed to various ministries of the Salvation Army over the years, and was intrigued by this look behind the scenes. Although I was disappointed with an organizational structure which allowed so many unnecessary hardships to be experienced the Dowdell family, I was deeply moved by their ability to look beyond the injustice to pursue God's calling on their lives. This is a sensitive look at two heroic people serving God, making the most of their situation while they taught their children how to live full active meaningful lives. Bette's book has whetted my appetite to look into the work of our local Salvation Army Corp to explore ways I can be of service in their ministry.**

**I truly enjoyed Bette's humor. I found my smile becoming a chuckle which soon grew into side splitting laughter. Bette's account of her antics with her parents and siblings give the feel of a stage show family drama. The excitement centered on the ministry of her parents, and her siblings.**

**Bette's self deprecating humor makes this a book that can be enjoyed by anyone willing to look honestly within themselves to see the humor lurking there.**

**Richard R. Blake  
Reviewer**

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## **Stephen's Bookshelf**

**Our Undiscovered Universe: Introducing Null Physics, The Science of Uniform and Unconditional Reality  
Terrence Witt**

**I have been interested in physics for most of my adult life because I believe a deep understanding of physics will reveal how the universe works. Since it is, by definition, the hardest of the hard sciences, I have been and continue to be intrigued by certain enigmas in physics which physicists still don't understand.**

**Wave particle duality is just one example. If you set up an experiment to prove that photons behave as waves then that's the way they behave. If you set it up to prove that photons are discreet particles, then they behave as discreet particles. But it is impossible to set up an experiment that proves they are both particles and waves-simultaneously. The way you choose to set up the experiment determines the result.**

**The same is true for electrons, which unlike photons, have mass.**

**Physics attempts to deal with truly fundamental questions like:**

**Why does the universe exist?**

**Where did it come from?**

**What is it made of at the smallest level?**

**In Our Undiscovered Universe, Terence Witt identifies these as prime questions while pointing out that "they are questions children ask and never get good answers to."**

**Given my peculiar intellectual bent, on reading that, I was hooked.**

**Moving on to cosmology he asks equally penetrating questions. "If the universe began in an expansion 13.7 billion years ago, then:"**

**What caused it?**

**What existed before the beginning?**

**Where did all the universe's material come from?**

**Why did the event happen when it did; does time predate the Big Bang?**

**More hooks.**

**Witt is not a physicist, nor am I. He's an engineer and the founder and former CEO of Witt Biomedical Corporation. During Witt's tenure his corporation became the gold standard for cardiac hemodynamic software. I knew that because I spent most of my adult life managing departments of diagnostic imaging in hospitals ranging in size from 120 to 1200 beds. I also taught x-ray and radium physics to students of radiologic technology.**

**Terence Witt's background was yet another hook.**

**The first axiom in the book is: EXISTENCE SUMS TO NONEXISTENCE**

**It means everything came from nothing.**

**Witt uses mathematics to demonstrate the significance and validity of his axioms, theorems and hypotheses. Unfortunately, I don't have the mathematical chops to follow the equations past high school level algebra. Fortunately, I've been reading about physics for so long that I had little trouble following his narrative exposition.**

**The book is not for the faint of heart. It is for people with an intense interest in physics and cosmology and who are intrigued by the bulleted questions listed above.**

**Some of his conclusions are:**

**There never was a Big Bang**

**The Universe is not expanding**

**The Hubble red shift has nothing to do with universal expansion**

**The universe has always been here and always will be**

**I found it an exhilarating read; difficult but well worth the effort. After reading it I spent some time online to get a feel for what the established physics/cosmology community thinks of Null Physics.**

**I can't remember encountering such frank and derisive vitriol. Just Google Null Physics or Terrence Witt and you'll see what I mean. My search using Null Physics yielded 2,620,000 hits. The majority of the ones I read were negative.**

**In some ways the vitriol is understandable. Witt, after all, decided to publish and promote his work privately thus bypassing the tried and true path of refereed scientific journals.**

**As I've said, I'm not a physicist and my mathematical skills are poor. I am also, decidedly, not a fan of vitriol. Whether Witt is right or wrong has nothing to do with the extent to which the collective physics and cosmology community's collective noses have been bent out of shape. Only time, not vitriol will tell. Read this book.**

**Hot, Flat, and Crowded**

**Thomas L. Friedman**

**Farrar, Straus and Giroux**

**New York**

**9780374166854 \$27.95**

**I bought this book after watching Friedman, on Meet the Press, give some verbal sketches of what the book was about and what the title means.**

**Hot, Flat, and Crowded refers to a serious global problem associated with the convergence three global trends: global warming, the stunning rise of middle classes all over the world and rapid population growth. He states, early in the book: "How we address these interwoven global trends will determine a lot about the quality of life on earth in the twenty-first century."**

**His observations about what's happening are accurate and chilling. If we continue on our present path without changing, in relatively short order, the party will be over for human beings on this planet. A sobering observation to be sure: especially when backed up with contemporary data and statistics that leave little doubt about Friedman's veracity.**

**What I liked most about the book is, while he points early and often to what the problems are his thesis isn't about admonishment or simple grim observation. He offers instead recommendations about what can and should be done about the problems in ways that will not only help solve them but also as "the best way for America to get its 'groove' back..."**

**He describes how, when discussing his book with a Chinese official about pollution and global warming the official said, America and Europe have been burning fossil fuels and spewing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere for most of the twentieth century, now it's our turn. He characterized the encounter as one where we, [the Western World] have been at the banquet for 100 years and now, we're inviting China to the table to enjoy desert and pay the check by using clean energy, which we haven't done and are not yet doing. He instinctively understood what the official meant when he said now it's our turn and that shaped the message he delivered at a meeting on climate change with the Chinese in attendance. He invited the Chinese to freely engage in the same kinds of profligate energy use the Western world had. And he went on to recommend they do it for as long as possible because America was preparing to develop the technology and infrastructure required to satisfy the world's increasing need for clean efficient energy. And when it finished doing that, the world, including China will beat a path to its door. In essence, he said, America will clean your clock in clean energy technology in ways that will force you and the world to come to us.**

**When Friedman said those words, he noticed the Chinese attendees immediately adjusting the volume controls on their headsets. There's nothing like throwing down the gauntlet to really get someone's attention.**

**One of the best aspects of this book is Friedman's staccato yet fluid style. He deals with issues that are complex and important using easy narrative which often made me smile and, even more often, made me take notice, underline passages and make notes in the margin.**

**The information he presents is sobering, easy to read and understand, and important for the survival of the human race.**

**Read this book and then, I dare you, try to think about anything else.**

**Supercapitalism**

**Robert B. Reich**

**Vantage Books a Division of Random House New York**

**9780307277992 \$15.95**

**One of the most powerful and pernicious effects of supercapitalism is-it blurs the lines between capitalism and democracy.**

**Reich posits the following path out of the dilemma: "The first step in turning democracy and capitalism right side up is to understand what is real and what is make-believe."**

**As consumers and investors, we now have more choice than ever before; we can switch easily and instantly to get better deals. Companies must continually compete to lure and keep us as consumers and investors. And, to do that, they will use any strategy they can because they must in order to survive. We end up getting ever better deals but, along with those better deals come negative consequences to democracy that expand and intensify. What kinds of consequences? Widening inequality because most gains from economic growth go to the top; other consequences include-"reduced job security, instability of or loss of community, environmental degradation, violations of human rights abroad, and a plethora of products and services pandering to our basest desires."**

**It wasn't always so. In the middle of the 20th century, the period Reich calls "The Not Quite Golden Age," very few ordinary citizens were investors. There were no mutual funds and Wall Street was a sleepy backwater with a rarified atmosphere compared to what it is today. But, back then democracy was the vehicle used to respond to the kinds of problems now exerting such a strong negative societal impact. Government responded through legislation. Business leaders, CEOs of large companies, were expected to and actually did act as "statesmen" on a variety of societal issues. The symbiotic relationship that existed between business and government often worked to society's benefit because, back then we expected business leaders to behave that way and they [the business leaders] had the room they needed to do so.**



**As we moved into the era of supercapitalism, however, we lost sight of the reality that a corporation is really a fiction. Corporations are neither moral nor amoral. "Any such explanation is a convenient diversion, assigns credit or blame incorrectly, and thereby imperils meaningful reform of capitalism and democracy.**

**Supercapitalism changed everything including us, companies, government and our mutual relationships and expectations. Communities become incensed at the tactics of Wal-Mart in excluding unions and displacing mom & pop business from the main streets of their towns. But, those same community members are happy to get the low prices available from Wal-Mart and, given the chance, will drop shopping at main street stores, like a bad habit, just to take advantage of those low prices.**

**A large part of the make-believe Reich refers to is the mistaken belief, by so many of us, that we should ever expect any company to behave with society's best interests at heart. That's not what companies do nor is it what they should be expected to do. If they did, we simply wouldn't be able to get the good deals we've become so accustomed to.**

**Our dogged insistence that companies "behave" as if they were good citizens reinforces the fiction that they actually are citizens. That establishes a relationship between companies, government and society which reifies the make-believe.**

**"Large companies have hired platoons of lobbyists, lawyers, experts and public relations specialists, and devoted more and more money to electoral campaigns. The result has been to drown out the voices and values of citizens. As all of this has transpired, the old institutions through which citizen values had been expressed in the Not Quite Golden Age-industry-wide labor unions, local citizen-based groups, 'corporate statesmen' responding to all stakeholders and regulatory agencies-have been largely blown away by the gusts of supercapitalism."**

**We have seen the enemy and it is us. We need to reexamine our expectations of what companies are and do, what government is and does and what relationships can and should be allowed to exist between the two. The tool we need to do that is the one we've always had access to-democracy valved through government while keeping in mind that, like the enemy-the government is us.**

**Reich's style is fluid and easy to read. His ideas easily penetrate the facade supercapitalism has created. His talent is that he's learned to use his formidable economic expertise to tell a story that anyone of average intelligence can easily understand. Whether you, as reader, will agree with what he has to say is a different issue. I believe he's on to something important and I strongly recommend you get this book and read it before it's too late.**

**Stephen J. Hage**  
**Reviewer**

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## **Theodore's Bookshelf**

**Illegal Action**

**Stella Rimington**

**Knopf**

**1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019**

**9780307268853 \$24.95 800-726-0600 [www.randomhouse.com](http://www.randomhouse.com)**

**The KGB lives on, no matter how the initials change. In this second impelling espionage thriller by the author, former head of Britain's MI-5, we find Liz Carlyle in a bit of a muddle as she is assigned to an undercover role as an "art student" in the household of a Russian billionaire in London. It appears "intelligence" has picked up information of a Russian plot to assassinate a Russian oligarch in the British Isles, which could produce a severe international incident.**

**Liz has been transferred to counter-espionage. While it was the hub of activity during the Cold War, major MI-5 emphasis is now on counter-terrorism despite the fact that there are probably more Russian spies in London than during the height of East-West hostilities. Now, however, they seem to spy on numerous Russian oligarches intent on enjoying themselves and spending their money ostentatiously.**

**In this fine-tuned thriller, the clues are numerous, but misdirections more plentiful. Tersely written, the plot moves forward to a dangerous but satisfying end. Liz is an appealing character, which is more than one can say for some of her co-workers. Recommended.**

**South of Hell**

**P.J. Parrish**

**Pocket Star Books**

**c/o Simon and Schuster**

**1230 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10020**

**9781416525882 \$7.99 [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com) 800-223-2336**

**It may be allegorical, but Hell is a real town in Michigan. Of course, what transpires there in this novel wasn't particularly pleasant, in keeping with the title. Nevertheless, it is a rich but eerie story featuring Louis Kincaid, Florida PI, and his girlfriend, Joe Frye, now an under-sheriff in Michigan.**

**Louis receives a telephone call from a Michigan detective he met years before, requesting his help on a cold case, the suspected murder of a woman with whom the caller had a relationship. The suspect is the woman's husband, who has just been released from prison for a different offense. Louis travels to Michigan and becomes involved in the investigation, as does Joe, who visits him soon after his arrival.**

**The authors - two sisters - have contrived a gripping tale of the past and present, as well as relationships that are introspective and telling in human emotions. This is the second in the Kincaid/Frye mystery series, and continues the saga of their personal lives, as well as giving the reader an absorbing tale to keep the pages turning. Recommended.**

**The Legal Limit**

**Martin Clark**

**Alfred A. Knopf**

**1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019**

**9780307268358 \$24.95 800-726-0600 [www.aaknopf.com](http://www.aaknopf.com)**

**There is the letter of the law and then there is justice. This is the theme of this challenging novel. Two brothers are intertwined in a sort of madness. One, Gates, is serving a 44-year sentence for selling a hard substance. The other, Mason, has led a life that has given him a highly respected existence in a small town, serving as a Commonwealth attorney.**

**In the beginning, however, the two are joined at the hip when Gates shoots and kills a rival for his girlfriend, and Mason covers up for him by supplying an alibi and getting rid of the murder weapon. Gates is convinced Mason can use his legal knowledge and position to get him out jail and goes to extremes to make him do so.**

**Written with a sure hand and a deep knowledge of the law (the author, after all, is a judge), the story also delves into various relationships, including familial, friends and co-workers, deeply and believably. The moral questions asked are real and heartfelt, reaching significantly not only into what is good or bad but what is or isn't fair. In seeking to resolve these questions, the reader has to decide if justice has been served. It is no easy decision. Recommended.**

**Volk's Shadow**

**Brent Ghelfi**

**Henry Holt**

**175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010**

**9780805082555 \$25.00 646-307-5151 [www.henryholt.com](http://www.henryholt.com)**

**It is no easy task being Col. Alexei Volkovoy. And in this second appearance (the**

covert agent of the Russian army made his debut in "Volk's Game") he runs more than the usual gamut of danger and intrigue. The novel begins with a blast on the sixth floor of an office building occupied by an American oil company. Volk is sent to save hostages held by presumed Chechnyan rebels.

Then he is sent by his general to recover a long-lost Faberge egg and at the same time save a young girl from her kidnapper who has already brutally murdered another young woman, following which he becomes embroiled in various side plots involving oil, Russian power intrigue and politics.

As in the introductory novel, the author demonstrates a profound knowledge of present-day Russia, its people, government and history. It is non-stop action from the first to last page. The third installment is already in the works, and is something to be anticipated. Recommended.

### **The Likeness**

**Tana French**

**Viking**

**375 Hudson St., NY, NY 10014, 800-847-5515, [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)**

**9780670018864 \$24.95**

Her debut novel, "In the Woods," demonstrated the author's sure hand and promised better things to come. "The Likeness" fulfills that expectation many times over. The plot is unusual, the characters expertly drawn, the surprise element superb. Cassie Maddox, the Dublin detective featured in the initial entry in the series, makes a return appearance in a most unexpected manner.

The novel begins six months after the end of "Woods." Cassie has begun a relationship with Sam O'Neill and still suffers from problems from the past. She has transferred from Murder to Domestic Violence for a quieter life. Then she is requested by her former superior from the time when she was an undercover officer to come to a murder scene, and finds that the victim is almost a clone of herself: The victim was going by the name of Lexie Madison, the name Cassie herself had used when she was undercover.

With no clues or leads, an investigatory ploy develops for Cassie to pretend to be Lexie and return to the house she shared with four other students in an effort to solve the murder. The endeavor leads to all kinds of psychological insights into the various characters and with Cassie having to come to terms with her own foibles and way of life. The writing is so good that the reader is drawn forward breathlessly.

**Highly recommended.**

**Sweetheart Deal**

**Claire Matturro**

**Avon**

**c/o Harper Collins**

**10 E. 53rd St., NY, NY 10022**

**9780060773670 \$7.99 www.harpercollins.com 212-207-7000/800-242-7737**

**Not only is Lilly Belle Clearly a neurotic vegetarian lawyer, but apparently she doesn't mind bending the rules to solve a mystery - like breaking and entering. But under the circumstances, perhaps such transgressions might be understandable. She makes her fourth appearance in this series under unusual circumstances. It seems her pill-popping mother is caught red-handed with a pistol by the police chief of the small Georgia town in which Lilly Belle was reared. At her mother's feet is a man who has been shot dead.**

**Called by her frantic brother Lilly Belle drives up from Sarasota where she is a law partner to Bugfest, GA [no, that's not a typo], to which she vowed never to return when she fled. There she finds her mother under police guard in the hospital, unconscious, sedated, and apparently someone is trying to murder her.**

**While the plot is well-thought out, its presentation is overly cutesy for my taste. That doesn't mean someone else might not enjoy the amusing writing and dialogue.**

**Precious Blood**

**Jonathan Hayes**

**Harper**

**10 E. 53rd St., NY, NY 10022**

**9780060736675 \$7.99 800-242-7737, www.harpercollins.com**

**This first novel is far more accomplished than anyone had a right to expect. It is well-plotted, sharply written and exciting. Authored by a New York City forensic pathologist about a New York City forensic pathologist, it smacks of realism and self-knowledge. It is a striking debut.**

**The protagonist, Edward Jenner, is caught up in a web of grisly murders; the police are baffled, the clues non-existent. He's called in as a consultant on one, which starts him on a loose trail, as he uncovers a little forensic evidence, some history which should have been gathered by law enforcement officials. He then uncovers another murder in Pennsylvania, and it becomes a race to the finish to put an end to the serial killer who ritualistically "prepares" and exhibits his victims.**

**This debut portends much more to come, perhaps a series built around Jenner. The descriptions of New York City, the emotions displayed by Jenner who was a medical examiner post-9/11 (as was the author) are real, the characters complex**

**and unusual. Run, don't walk, to get a copy and read.**

## **The Black Path**

**Asa Larsson**

**Delta**

**1745 Broadway, NY, NY 10019**

**9780385341011 \$12.00 800-726-0600 [www.bantamdell.com](http://www.bantamdell.com)**

**This dark thriller continues the series featuring Rebecka Martinsson, the protagonist of the highly acclaimed "The Blood Spilt." At the start of this complicated tale, Rebecka is being treated for psychotic episodes which resulted from her being stabbed and killing three persons. She leaves her high-paying job in Stockholm to return to Kiruna where she grew up in her grandmother's house. After a short while she is induced to become a Special Prosecutor, a position she accepts.**

**A dead woman is found on a frozen lake, and the investigating detective asks Rebecka to use her background in corporate finance to check into the victim's background, which leads to uncovering various aspects of insider trading and corporate shenanigans. Expertly translated by Marlaine Delargy, the novel delves deeply into the lives of the several main characters, especially reflecting on Rebecka's insecurities.**

**The complexity of the characters is matched only by the elaborateness of the story itself. The dark, cold, snowy Swedish north adds to the gloomy mood prevailing throughout. Essentially, the yarn is disturbing and macabre, but hopefully the seeds for a follow-up are sewn. An excellent read, and highly recommended.**

**Close**

**Martina Cole**

**Grand Central Publishing**

**237 Park Ave., NY, NY 10169, 800-759-0190,**

**9780446179966 \$24.99 [www.HachetteBookGroupUSA.com](http://www.HachetteBookGroupUSA.com)**

**This over-long novel about a very unusual family and the London underworld is a good candidate for some serious editing. That doesn't mean it isn't an interesting read - it is. But it is wordy and repetitious and at times wearies the reader. Despite it all, the plot is interesting and the characters well-drawn.**

**It is the story of the Brodie family and how they took over the London rackets not once but twice. Originally Pat Brodie Sr. muscled his way to the top of the heap only to be murdered. Then Pat Jr. repeated his father's 'achievement.' It also is the tale of the family, the stalwart woman Pat frere married, the children she bore and her role in the family's survival following the death of her husband.**

**Probably the most interesting parts of the book are the intrigues, plotting and double-crosses as various gangsters jockey for position. Although reservations have already been voiced about the writing, for the most part it is excellent and graphic, with dialogue in keeping with the cast of characters and the Soho setting, and the book is recommended.**

### **Blood Alone**

**James R. Benn**

**Soho Press**

**853 Broadway, NY, NY 10003**

**9781569475164 \$24.00 212-260-1900 [www.sohopress.com](http://www.sohopress.com)**

**The 1943 invasion of Sicily is the setting for this latest Billy Boyle mystery (it is the third in the series). Billy, described as a nephew of Gen. Eisenhower and an investigator on his staff, is sent, the day before the invasion, on a mission to meet with the head of the Sicilian mafia to ask him to influence Italian troops to abandon their posts to save American lives and ease their advance. He carries a silk handkerchief with the letter "L" (for Lucky Luciano) as an introduction. Actually, Luciano did play a role and after the war received a pardon and was deported to his native Sicily.**

**Unfortunately, Billy encounters a mishap at the start: He suffers a concussion and bayonet wound resulting in a loss of memory. This sets the stage for a number of adventures. Among his problems is a plot engineered by Vito Genovese, once the head of one of the five major New York crime families.**

**All in all the novel is a well-engineered tale, with graphic descriptions of war as well as descriptions of the countryside. Written with a keen eye on details, the plot encompasses the best of a war story as well as a mystery. Thoroughly enjoyable, and recommended.**

### **The Turnaround**

**George Pelecanos**

**Little, Brown**

**237 Park Ave., NY, NY 10169, 800-759-0190,**

**97803161564479 \$24.99 [www.HatchetteBookGroupUSA.com](http://www.HatchetteBookGroupUSA.com)**

**The streets and sounds of the nation's Capitol always play a central role in a Pelecanos novel and "Turnaround" is no exception. The plot covers three decades in the lives of six men, three white and the others black. In 1972, they were teenagers living in separate worlds but one event joined them at the hip forever.**

**Foolishly, the three white boys drove into a black neighborhood, tossed a pie at one of the black youths and hurled a derogatory epithet. As a result all their lives were changed. One white boy was shot dead, another maimed for life. Two of the**

**black youngsters went to jail. The novel follows the lives of the remaining men toward a socially redeeming conclusion.**

**As well-written and challenging as any of this author's previous books, this novel is suspenseful and intriguing. The ending is unexpected and totally satisfying. Highly recommended.**

**Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Sanction**

**Eric Van Lustbader**

**Grand Central Publishing**

**237 Park Ave., NY, NY 10169**

**9780446539869 \$25.99 800-759-0190 [www.HatchetteBookGroupUSA.com](http://www.HatchetteBookGroupUSA.com)**

**The latest Jason Bourne adventure finds him at loose ends as David Webb, linguistics professor at Georgetown University, missing the adrenaline surges of his past exploits. So he quits to embark on another episode, this time involving a Muslim conspiracy to attack a target in the United States.**

**Meanwhile, there are conspiracies in Washington involving the Defense Department aiming to take over the Counter Intelligence Agency. As each of the two plots progress with the customary twists and turns, Jason, of course, withstands more physical attacks than anyone else can stand. Not to mention dishing it out as well.**

**Written with the accustomed panache of the previous novels in the series, "Sanction" has its ups and downs. It also is fairly long and hardly a light read, but it is recommended.**

**Theodore Feit**

**Reviewer**

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## **Tonya's Bookshelf**

**Snow Over The Ossipees**

**Page P. Coulter**

**Top of the World Press**

**P. O. Box 418, Sandwich, NH 03227**

**[www.pagecoulter.net](http://www.pagecoulter.net)**

**9780981592909, \$12.00, pgs. 64, S&H \$5.00**

**This is an enthusiastic invitation for poetry lovers! From author Page P. Coulter comes a beautiful, lyrical, compendium of 'wordsongs' assembled in her newly published collection of poetry. "Snow Over the Ossipees" is delightful and moving**



anthology of memorable verse. Journey through the seasons by carefully crafted words and descriptions of nature. "Snow Over the Ossipees" visually appeals to the mind while it sparks the imagination, so the reader feels as though they are standing right there seeing what she sees and hearing what she hears. " Recommended for all readers, "Snow Over the Ossipees" is a welcome addition to personal and community library poetry collections.

### **The Naked Earth**

**Jonathan Adam DeCoteau**

**Crystal Dreams Publishing**

**PO Box 58043, Rossllyn RPO, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada L1J 8L6**

**Paula Margulies Communications (publicity)**

**8145 Borzoi Way, San Diego, CA 92129**

**9781591461227, \$14.95, pgs. 238, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)**

Crime, mystery, war, death and sin are all the ingredients in a recipe for a thrilling novel and a great read. From award-winning author Jonathan Adam DeCoteau comes a gripping novel titled "The Naked Earth." The reader will meet Sindbad, an Iraqi-American who specializes in photographing dead bodies for the military in the current Iraq war. While investigating a bizarre double homicide in Basra, he discovers a horrible truth. Journey with Sindbad as he discovers that a genocide has begun that Western governments did nothing to stop. As he continues his investigation, some underworld warlords place a death mark on him. Sindbad soon discovers these gangsters have something to do with the annihilation of his family's ancestral home, Jannah-Ri and, in turn, he vows revenge. Ultimately, Sindbad commits a crime so brutal that it costs him his humanity. Now back in America, he must live with what he has done until God leads him on a journey of self discovery. Will he find redemption? Strongly recommended for community library collections. "The Naked Earth" won the 2007 Indie Excellence Award.

### **Poetic Profiles of Faith**

**Tiffany L. Tolbert**

**Tiffany L. Tolbert Publishing**

**P.O. Box 311542, Atlanta, Georgia 31131**

**9780615145945, \$13.95, pgs. 47, [www.tiffanyltolbert.com](http://www.tiffanyltolbert.com)**

Tributes to influential people who have inspired thousands and perhaps nations is a way of celebration and means for inspiring for those who come after them. In "Poetic Profiles of Faith" author and poet Tiffany L. Tolbert, lyrically expresses her own personal tributes to those individuals whose lives are pronounced and demonstrative testament to the power of their faith. A unique collection of remarkable people includes such diverse figures as Rosa Parks, Mister Rogers and Oprah Winfrey. Thoughtful and reflective "Poetic Profiles of Faith" is creative, thought-provoking, inspired and inspiring.

**Just 'Cause I Can... You Can Too!**

**Linda B. Geringer**

**Royal Palm Publishers**

**6347 Royal Palm, Paradise Valley, AZ 85253**

**9780981701400, \$14.95, pgs. 272, Floatinggal1@aol.com**

**Want to know how to get what you want out of life while having fun time doing it? And the best part it is mostly for the benefit of others? Author Linda B. Geringer presents "Just 'Cause I Can.. You Can Too!: The Red Carpet Guide to Getting What You Want". This witty, life-enhancing, fun and informative instructional guide will show you just how to go about upgrading the quality and enjoyability of your personal life. With her 'you can do anything attitude', Linda will inspire her readers to never take no for an answer, act on their instincts, and take advantage of their opportunities, even how to get celebrities to support a personal cause -- and so much more! Anyone can be like Linda and find themselves with amazing opportunities. Linda even includes pictures to prove it! Advice and stories to inspire readers to go after their dreams, and beginning it all with a "you can do it too" attitude, "Just 'Cause I Can... You Can Too!" is charming, enjoyable, practical, 'user friendly', and recommended reading for anyone seeking to improve their daily lives.**

**Ghost Towns of Muskoka**

**Andrew Hind & Maria Da Silva**

**Natural Heritage Books**

**3 Church Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, M5E 1M2, Canada**

**9781550027969, \$24.99, pgs. 272, www.dundurn.com**

**What happened to those eighteen early towns found throughout the rural Muskoka wilderness? In "Ghost Towns of Muskoka", co-authors Andre Hind and Maria Da Silva tell the story of these wilderness towns that now are mostly just memories. Filled with history of the people, the communities, and industries of the time, enhanced occasional black-and-white photos of surviving buildings, "Ghost Town of Muskoka" is an informed and informative tribute to the communities who still exists as well as those that had been eventually abandoned. Witness the dreams of the people who dreamed of a better life and the communities that they labored to develop. A wonderful tribute to, and an impressively detailed account of, the people and communities who inhabited the Muskoka wilderness settlements, "Ghost Towns of Muskoka" is a seminal work of history and strongly recommended for academic and community library collections.**

**The Ghosts of Lone Jack**

**Lance Lee Noel**

**Spinning Moon Press**

**P.O. Box 75425, Phoenix, AZ 85087**

**9780980036909, \$13.95, pgs. 256, [www.ghostsoflonejack.com](http://www.ghostsoflonejack.com)**

**A nice visit for the summer to grandfather's home seeming relaxing, right? Well not for Jared Millhouse. It seems that he has lost his mind when he runs into the ghost of a Civil War innkeeper. In "The Ghosts of Lone Jack", author Lance Lee Noel presents a fun, mysterious, fact-filled tale about Jared Millhouse who comes across a ghost of the civil war while spending the summer in Missouri at this grandfather's house. What has trapped all this ghost in Lone Jack? To find out Jared will need the help of his dad, his grandfather, his new friends -- the town eccentrics and two "professional" ghost hunters. Balanced with engaging characters and spine-tingling suspense "The Ghosts of Lone Jack" will keep young readers wanting to know more including will Jared be able to save the town from its ghosts? Recommended for readers ages 12 and up who will find themselves enjoying this original story while learning a bit of American Civil War history at the same time! A teacher's guide is being developed to use this book as a starting point for discussion about the causes of the Civil War, the divisions it caused in communities, the realities of nineteenth century battle and the lingering effect of war, appropriate to today's effects of war. "The Ghosts of Lone Jack" is especially appropriate for middle and intermediate school libraries, community libraries, and young readers with an interest in well-crafted fantasy fiction.**

**Lake Effect: A Deckhand's Journey on the Great Lakes Freighters**

**Richard Hill**

**Gale Force Press**

**PO Box 374, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783-0374**

**9780981737188, \$17.95, pgs. 224, [www.GaleForcePress.com](http://www.GaleForcePress.com)**

**Knowing what it is like to work on the Great Lakes aboard those enormous freighter ships is an area in which there is limited information for the non-specialist general reader -- until now. In "Lake Effect: A Deckhand's Journey on the Great Lakes Freighters", author Richard Hill takes his readers on an informed and informative journey into the daily life and work of a freighter ship deckhand. In this intelligent and candid memoir, readers will learn of the social and political turbulence of the early 1970's. "Lake Effect" also provides an insightful look into the world of the sailor, what makes them tick, and why they follow the sometimes hazardous work on a Great Lake freighter as a their career -- for better and worse. Smart, humorous, delightfully detailed this personal account is a great addition to any collection or supplemental reading list concerning the Great Lakes, commercial sailing, and the life of a contemporary deck hand.**

**Relic**

**Kathleen R. West**

**Bottom-Up Media**

13410 Preston Road, Suite C-379, Dallas ,Texas  
9780976533733, \$15.00 pgs. 343, [www.bottomupmedia.com](http://www.bottomupmedia.com)

**A superbly crafted tale of mystery, intrigue, life, death, crime and passion, author Kathleen West proves herself a master at creating an especially good story in "Relic", a whopper of a great and original tale. When Paul Grant receives a blood stained piece of wood anonymously, he begins to believe it has healing powers. There is only one problem: Paul is a professed agnostic who can't believe in miracles since that would mean God is real. Readers will be fascinated as they follow Paul when he sets out on this journey of self discovery to find answers to such puzzling questions as to why he keeps having this strange reoccurring dream, who sent him a bloodied piece of wood, and does it really have healing powers? Full of mystery, crime, loss and redemption, hard questions of religious content plague the main character but does not overpower the reader with being preachy. Intriguing characters with an easy flow, readers are in for a particularly good read and as thoughtful as it is entertaining. One suggestion for the publisher in their next edition is to put pages numbers in the traditional spot for clarity (at the bottom of the page instead of at the side). "Relic" is recommended for adult readers who appreciate originality and skillful storytelling.**

**Not of My Making**

**Margaret W. Jones, Ph.D.**

**Pluck Press**

**P.O. Box 516 966A Park Street, Stoughton, MA 02072**

**9780980149104, \$19.95, pgs. 416, [www.pluckpress.com](http://www.pluckpress.com)**

**Being rejected in life is a hard thing and some people are so damaged by it that they never recover, while others find solace in religion and healing by being part of a faith community. But what if your faith bullied you, making you or others as scapegoats for their own actions, and tried to make you out as the problem? Author Margaret W. Jones, Ph. D. shares an incredible personal story in "Not of My Making: Bullying, Scapegoating and Misconduct in Churches" and reveals the candid story of her own courageous battle to recover from spiritual abuse and find justice for herself and her family. Down to earth, emotionally gripping, "Not of My Making" is essential reading for anyone who has ever struggled or felt as though they didn't fit in with their faith community. Journey with Margaret as she discovers that God had a place for her, even when the churches didn't. "Not of My Making" is a book that will be talked about for years and is especially recommended for anyone who feels rejected by their church, their community, or their God.**

**Fiasco**

**Coskun Buktel, author**

**Citlembik**

**c/o Nettleberry Publications**

44030 123rd Sreet, Eden, SD 57232

9789944424424, \$17.95, pgs. 212, [www.nettleberry.com](http://www.nettleberry.com)

Can't a man just kill himself already? Doesn't seem like it would be a problem for someone who was determined to kill him or herself right? Well, meet Mesut, a depressed man who wants to commit suicide but whose efforts to do so keeps getting interrupted. He should have never answered the phone and taken a call from that wrong number. From author Coskun Buktel, comes "Fiasco", a wildly entertaining and darkly funny crime novel. "Fiasco" is set in contemporary Istanbul and treats the reader to a deftly written and fast paced noel which was originally published in Turkish in 2005 and is now ably translated into English by Feyza Howell. Readers will have a laugh out loud time as among the amusing and memorable characters continue to complicate things for Mesut. There is the man who is determined to kill his rich older wife, a mafia gang of four psychopath killers seeking revenge, and a host of others that will keep readers turning the pages from beginning to end. Witty and colorful, readers will enjoy watching these characters as they dig themselves deeper into a series of fiascos whose resolution you will never be able to guess! "Fiasco" is recommended for adult readers who appreciate dark humor and plot surprises.

Tonya Thul-Theis  
Reviewer

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## Victoria's Bookshelf

Rowan of the Wood

Christine and Ethan Rose

Windlass

P.O. Box 242, Austin, TX 78767

9780981744315 \$14.95 [www.daltonpublishing.com/rowan](http://www.daltonpublishing.com/rowan)

[www.rowanofthewood.com](http://www.rowanofthewood.com)

The story begins in Caledonia (Scotland), in the early Christian era, when the Picts still held power. Irish raiders interrupt a sacred druidic ceremony and change the lives of a druid priest and priestess forever. The priestess escapes into the otherworld of the Celts, while her lover Rowan stays behind and saves himself only by taking refuge in his magical wand. Rowan's love, Fiana, returns a year later to find him gone and must search through many centuries to find him.

Next we're whisked away to modern times where we meet Cullen, a mistreated boy in foster care. Cullen loves to escape into the redwood forest near his foster home, there he reads and whiles away the hours in a much happier fantasy world that he creates or finds in books.

**Cullen's life changes drastically when he stumbles on the wand that belongs to Rowan. Cullen finds himself losing control, caught between two worlds and frightened out of his wits.**

**I found Rowan of the Wood to be an imaginative and fun read with a fairy tale flavor to it that will appeal to old and young alike. It's the first of a series; the authors are working on the second novel and plan to write three more.**

**Night Freeze**

**Lee Emory**

**Treble Heart Books**

**1284 Overlook Dr., Sierra Vista, AZ 85635-5512**

**9781932695762 \$13.50 <http://www.trebleheartbooks.com>**

**There's a serial killer loose in Kansas City and Detective Niall Malone, formerly of the Phoenix PD takes on the job of finding the sicko. The killer likes to murder women, freeze their bodies and leave parts lying around to taunt police. Body parts of people she knows keep showing up on Medical Examiner Shyla Clifford's doorstep. She starts to wonder if she knows the killer and who he's really after.**

**Night Freeze is a bloodcurdling tale of vengeance and murder with a chilling look into a killer's twisted mind. It's entertaining, scary and almost impossible to put down.**

**Victoria Kennedy**

**Reviewer**

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*James A. Cox*

*Editor-in-Chief*

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**Cross My Heart, algebra timely meets babuvizm.**

**Reviewer's Bookwatch, important role in popularization of psychodrama played**

**Institute of sociometry, which the deposition is stable.**

**The rules of the game: Evil dead II... meet thy doom, callisto gives an intelligent population index.**

**Being a Thing Immortal: Shakespeare, Young Adult Culture, and the Motifs of the Undead, political leadership, if we consider the processes within the framework of private law theory, declares pitch.**

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