

ECLECTIC READERS GROUP
DECEMBER 19, 2009
POTPOURRI



248.4 Barr, Nevada
BARR **SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT HAT BY HAT: A SKEPTIC'S PATH TO RELIGION**

“I re-read Barr’s collection of short (and very short) reflections on various aspects of a Christian life: forgiveness, sin, judgment, evil, faith, humility, flipflops, and hats, among other things. They were very personal, very thoughtful, and often very moving. I'm glad I didn't read her book before Ephron's, though, because I probably wouldn't have finished Ephron's” - Ruth

J F Barry, Dave and Ridley Pearson
BARRY,D **PETER AND THE SWORD OF MERCY**

“I am really hooked on this series, which is a set of 'prequels' to J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan. This is the fourth in the series, and follows the same pattern as the one before it: Lord Ombra is still after some 'starstuff,' and there's a new bunch of bad guys on Neverland, and this time Wendy, daughter to Molly, helps to save the starstuff and her parents, with help from a reluctant Tinkerbell, a couple of grown-up 'Lost Boys,' and Peter Pan himself. The first book in the series came about because Pearson's daughter asked some 'Why?' questions about the Peter Pan story, and Pearson couldn't find any answers, so he and Barry are writing these books to provide answers. Works for me” - Ruth



945.31 Berendt, John
BERE **THE CITY OF FALLING ANGELS**

“ I loved his first book, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, which was about Savannah and a sensational murder investigation and trial. The City of Falling Angels is about the city of Venice (Italy, that is). I really enjoyed his writing style. He introduces us to very interesting people and situations. His sense of place is outstanding” - Robin





M Brown, Dan
 BROWN, D **THE LOST SYMBOL: A NOVEL**

“... the latest in his series featuring the academic symbolologist, Robert Langdon. I enjoyed this book as much as the other two: *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels & Demons*. It is full of mystical and arcane knowledge, lots about the order of Masons, secret codes, etc. Robert is tricked into coming to Washington DC to give a talk on symbols. He carries a box that has been entrusted to him by an old friend and mentor, a 33rd degree Mason. The CIA gets involved due to national security—the character of the CIA chief is one of the highlights of the book. It is very suspenseful; the 509 pages fly by” - Robin

“The joy of a Dan Brown novel comes as much from the intellectual exercise as the thrilling plot twists and turns. In addition to the secrets of Freemasonry, Brown delves into noetic science which tries to reconcile modern science with ancient mysticism. Katherine Solomon, the sister of Langdon's mentor Peter, is a scientist working in this area, and her work is also targeted by the diabolical and almost superhuman villain Mal'akh. While I had some background about the Freemasons, I didn't know how deeply Masonic ideas and symbols were enshrined in our nation's capital, so this was new to me and great fun to follow and decipher. If you're a Dan Brown fan, don't miss this one!” - Linda

F Eggers, Dave
 EGGE **A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF STAGGERING GENIUS**

“Not claiming to be an autobiography, since not everything is verbatim, it is in fact autobiography enough for me to call it that. (At the end of the book are about 50 pages of what really happened in various situations ...) Dave Eggers was in college when his mother and father both die of cancer within 5 weeks of each other. He takes on the job of raising his younger brother with his older sister helping out. They both move to Berkeley and live a life which any young adult without supervision would like to live, but the act of being in charge of his young brother, makes Dave want to be a good example... I believe this book is a catharsis for the author, and I believe he even says in the addendum, that it worked. Dave has written the most self-conscious and self revealing book I've ever read. He is constantly second guessing the reader and trying to make up for his possible transgressions. In fact, aside from the strange addendum, he has a preface where he suggests who would want to read which chapters and apologizes if you have already read more than you would have liked to. Did I like the book? Yes, but I doubt that it's for everyone. It was named one of the New York Times 10 best books of the year for 2000” - Karen M.

814.54 Ephron, Nora
 EPHR **I FEEL BAD ABOUT MY NECK AND OTHER THOUGHTS ON BEING A WOMAN**



“The best thing about it was the title, it turned out. It was a collection of short essays about: her neck, her apartment, cabbage strudel [!], personal maintenance [TMI], glasses, aging, death, and other subjects. I didn't expect profundity, but I thought I would get something a little more thoughtful. These were highly personalized, a little quirky, and way lightweight. Which I probably should have anticipated. Consider the source” - Ruth

F Koontz, Dean
KOONTZ **ODD HOURS**

“Although this is my least favorite Koontz so far, it was still good enough that I read it easily in 2 getting well days. Odd is a young man (a series character) with the ability to see ghosts and the unfortunate (sometimes) ability to be drawn to trouble which he is the one to fix. He's very clever and witty, even when up against a wall (with a gun to his head or a knife to his chest) And he can figure out how to get out of all kinds of situations which I would give up on. Supernatural happenings are abundant in this book, but my most memorable moment is when he talks one of his regular ghost friends (Frank Sinatra) into a self-righteous rage in an effort to get him to use telekinesis and throw furniture around the room at the bad guys. Of course all works out in the end, and the ride has plenty of fun moments” - Karen M.



F Lipton, Leslie
LIPTON,L **UNWELL**

“This is another book not called an autobiography, but taken from the author's experience of anorexia and bulimia. She knows what she's talking about because she is a recovered anorectic, and she's also a good storyteller. I found the book a real page turner. The central character, a high school sophomore, feels that her friends are moving on and growing up and she's not part of it. She starts to focus on her body being too fat to be liked and decides to do something about it. The weakest part of the book is how quickly this progresses to full blown anorexia without us really seeing how it happened. But the book more than makes up for it's early weakness by giving us such a clear picture of why the disease is so pervasive once it hits and how helpless those around the anorectic can feel. We meet other girls with the same problem and see what their personal lives are like so that we have a better understanding of how a person gets into this syndrome. It's a book of tragedy and triumph throughout and a plain old good read” - Karen M.

F Phillips, Christi
PHILLIPS **THE DEVLIN DIARY**

“Set in Cambridge, England, the book switches back and forth between present and past. Hannah Devlin, a female physician during the reign of Charles II, who treats his mistresses for ‘the clap’ using her father’s secret regimen. Claire Donovan, an American historian on a temporary fellowship at Cambridge, finds Hannah’s diaries. Mysteries and murders are solved in both eras—and of course are interconnected. The academic intrigue and politics was particularly interesting in light of my work at the faculty association! I really enjoyed this one” - Teresa

M PBK Saylor, Steven
S **A MURDER ON THE APPIAN WAY**

“A Gordianus the Finder mystery set in Ancient Rome at the time just preceding Pompey’s dictatorship. Gordianus is hired to find out who murdered a prominent Plebian leader on the Appian Way. Gordianus and his son Eco go to investigate, get kidnapped, escape and eventually save the day, as usual. The time period is well-drawn. A good diversion, but not as compelling as others in the series” - Teresa



299.932 Smoley, Richard

SMOL **FORBIDDEN FAITH: THE Gnostic LEGACY FROM THE GOSPELS
TO THE DA VINCI CODE**

“A fairly scholarly history of Gnosticism and other unorthodox Christian movements, like Manicheanism and the Cathar heresy. Though there isn’t a clear line of descent from the ancient Gnostics to the modern day, it’s clear that similar ways of thinking have popped up in many areas of Europe over the centuries. Very interesting, if not a fast read. It gave me a lot to think about. The last chapter deals with Gnostic-like themes in modern culture, such as the popular movie, *The Matrix* and the works of Dan Brown. An excellent book, I think” - Linda

M Swanson, Denise

SWANSON **MURDER OF A BOTOXED BLONDE**

“When an oh-so exotic health spa is opened in Skye’s rural town, the owner asks Skye to spend several days at the spa as a ‘guest’ in order to investigate some acts of vandalism. When a high profile guest is found murdered, Skye finds herself with another mystery to solve. Entangling and strangling relationships between Skye and her family and friends along with a hilarious depiction of the dangers of health spas make this a light, ‘low calorie’ read” - Karen G.



Disclaimer: All books reviewed herein were checked out of the library or purchased by the reviewer. None were provided free of charge for the purpose of an endorsement.