

**ECLECTIC READERS GROUP  
FEBRUARY 20, 2010  
SHOW BUSINESS**

791.43028 Anger, Kenneth

ANGE **HOLLYWOOD BABYLON**

“Slithers around some old Holly scandals, from Fatty Arbuckle to Mary Astor to Charlie Chaplin to (of course!) Mae West to the death of Marilyn Monroe and Sharon Tate. You should wash your hands after you touch this book. Yuck!” - Ruth



\* Anobile, Richard J.

**WHY A DUCK? VISUAL AND VERBAL GEMS FROM THE MARX BROTHERS MOVIES**

“It's a collection of stills from some of the best of the Marx Brothers movies, captioned with the dialogue from those scenes. The problem is, you have to hear the voices that go with the dialogue; and reading the dialogue, especially Groucho's, makes it go too slowly, oddly enough. You have to hear that voice, zipping through a string of puns and free associations, and you're trying to keep up with them—well, you get the picture (as it were)” - Ruth

J Pbk. Blackwood, Gary L.

Fiction B **THE SHAKESPEARE STEALER**

“First in a trilogy about Widge, an orphan boy from Yorkshire, whose first master, a physician and clergyman who is not above stealing other vicar's sermons, teaches him a form of shorthand called Charactery. At 14, another man buys Widge's apprenticeship and takes him to London where he is ordered to transcribe the play Hamlet. When Widge is caught inside the theater, he claims he wants to be a player and is taken into the troupe. For the first time in his short life, Widge has found friends and a family, and he doesn't want to betray them. This is a terrific historical novel with a sympathetic hero. The period details ring true and the inside look at Shakespeare's world is fascinating. I love the way Blackwood takes Widge from a hapless orphan concerned only with his own survival to a young man struggling with right and wrong” - Linda



J F Blackwood, Gary L.

**BLACKWOOD SHAKESPEARE'S SCRIBE**

“A return of the plague to London forces Widge and the rest of the players on the road where Widge meets a man who may be his father. This sequel is a little slower starting but builds to a good climax as Widge learns to stand up for himself. The ending leaves some loose ends for the third book in the trilogy, Shakespeare's Spy. Recommended to fans of theater and historical novels” - Linda

782.81           Druxman, Michael  
D797m           **THE MUSICAL: FROM BROADWAY TO HOLLYWOOD**  
“Discussions of the musicals themselves. Interesting but not up-to-date” - Karen G.



B                   Farrow, Mia  
FARROW, M   **WHAT FALLS AWAY: A MEMOIR**

“Published in 1997, the memoir is well-written, partly I think because she is a reader. She contracted polio in her childhood and describes that time as ‘I was nine when my childhood ended’. She was married twice, to Frank Sinatra and Andre Previn, plus she had a long term relationship with Woody Allen. There are lots of interesting photographs. She was most proud in her life not of her accomplishments as an actress but as a mother of 14 children, most adopted as ‘hard to place’, a set of twins with Andre Previn and a son with Woody Allen. The title is from a beautiful poem by Theodore Roethke, ‘The Waking’. She really can write” - Robin

782.81           Green, Stanley  
G798W 1980   **WORLD OF MUSICAL COMEDY: THE STORY OF THE AMERICAN  
MUSICAL STAGE AS TOLD THROUGH THE CAREERS OF ITS FOREMOST  
COMPOSERS AND LYRICISTS**

“I started walking on the treadmill while watching musicals on DVD and it’s good medicine for me. (I think there’s an endorphin thing going on here.) So I was interested in getting background on and ideas for musicals to use” - Karen G.

CD               Gruen, Sara  
GRUEN, S      **WATER FOR ELEPHANTS: A NOVEL**



“I picked this up because I wanted to read about the circus. It takes place during the Great Depression of 1929-1933. I liked the part about what America was like then. The audio book is well done by different actors” - Robin

M               Leon, Donna  
LEON, D       **DEATH AT LA FENICE**

“First in the series. Interesting because it’s less boilerplate than the later books, some of which I’ve read. I liked it better and got to really know the main character. There’s an interesting storyline with a conductor going deaf. Well-written, very tight, good characterization. I liked the flavor of Venice”  
- Teresa

F Marston, Edward  
MARS **THE MAD COURTESAN**

“The fifth in Marston's Elizabethan theater series featuring Nicholas Bracewell, book holder of the acting troupe, Lord Westfield's Men. In this book Nicholas must find the murderer of one of the hired men while trying to keep Laurence Firethorn, the troop's premier actor and married man, from making a fool of himself over an aloof lady with a hidden agenda. Another fun read” - Linda

B McMahon, Ed  
MCMAHON **HERE'S JOHNNY! THIRTY YEARS OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE LATE-NIGHT ENTERTAINER**

“This is an okay book, uninspired and a little self-congratulatory on the part of the author, but well-organized, with sections about the animals, the celebrities, the 'civilian' guests (like the lady with the potato chips shaped like animals), Ed McMahon and Doc Severinson, etc. Actually, you could do better by checking out a video of 'Carson's Greatest Moments,' or the like. No book can really do Carson justice” - Ruth



\* Mantle, Larry  
**THIS IS AIR TALK LARRY MANTLE: 20 CONVERSATIONS ON 89.3**

**KPCC**

“Larry Mantle has interviewed guests on Air Talk weekdays since 1985. He feels it's a luxury to get a chance to speak with his guests for an uninterrupted 30 to 60 minutes. When there is little time there is pressure to compress every argument into a simplistic talking point. From here the listener is getting hooked in emotionally, but having no chance for true examination of facts. One could argue that a radio show which is more about the spread of information, isn't show business. I don't think that any media existing today is not show business. I read the entire book because Larry's methods of interview are so fascinating that even if I never heard of the person, I was delighted to really get to know him/her. It's a great book to have around and pick up when you want to meet somebody new” - Karen M.



B Mordden, Ethan  
ZIEGFELD **ZIEGFELD: THE MAN WHO INVENTED SHOW BUSINESS**

“Now, wouldn't you think this one would have been interesting? Several marriages, scantily-clad women, famous old show business names, and so forth? Well, this author managed to dull it all down, from Anna Held onwards. I didn't stay around long enough to see what he did with W. C. Fields and Will Rogers, let alone Fanny Brice. I just gave up” - Ruth

BIOG Starr, Michael Seth

BURR, R **HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: THE SECRET LIFE OF RAYMOND BURR**

“The author is a little smarmy and a little disrespectful to Burr, but he has marshalled his facts and does give (as far as I know) a straightforward accounting of Burr's life. There were interesting things that I had never heard . . . But the writing was pedestrian and I really felt like I didn't care whether Burr was straight or not, to begin with” - Ruth



**Wild Card Recommendation:**

B Gill, Michael Gates

GILL,M **HOW STARBUCKS SAVED MY LIFE: A SON OF PRIVILEGE LEARNS TO LIVE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE**

“The author is the son of Brendan Gill, famous columnist for The New Yorker Magazine. Michael grows up on the West Side of Central Park in NYC, graduates from Yale, has an illustrious career with a well-known advertising agency. He is fired and starts his own business which slides into oblivion during the recession. The book is all about how he learns to work a ‘regular job’, how it changes him as a person and what he learns in the process” - Robin

-----

\* Not in APL system

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.