

November 2017

Wryly Noted-Books About Books

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Recommended Citation

Riley, John D. (2017) "Wryly Noted-Books About Books," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 29: Iss. 5, Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7845>

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executive has attempted to adopt every new management theory or technology that comes along? Or where someone tries to implement a practice that worked in their previous job without adapting it to their new organization?

If the change is needed, there may be a problem with the implementation or communication plan. Maybe you're planning to bring a new product to market too late or too early or without a full view of the impact it may have on resources. Maybe there are parts of the organization impacted by the change that weren't identified or consulted.

For the most part, most people in an organization are trying to perform their role as best they can. We've found most folks are knowledgeable people that are willing to collaborate and make the effort successful. What is perceived as resistance is often their identification of issues or constraints that must be reworked or removed. In those cases, a blind adherence to a previously constructed implementation plan is the problem. Ironically, sometimes it's the people initiating change that are the most resistant to changing their approach!

That said, there are some folks that just can't get on board with a necessary change in direction, but in our experience, they are the minority.

ATG: *As you survey the current state of the industry, what do you think are the most critical issues we face?*

AM: Our most critical issue is our capacity for change. Evolution in technology and user behavior (researcher, author, reader, student, faculty, librarian, publisher, editor, etc.) has made many of our current practices obsolete or unproductive. The system and interactions that have become the norm was appropriate for the state of our tools and evolution when

it was built, but times have changed. That said, there is value in many of our practices that, when reimagined, needs to be retained in some form. The problem is that sometimes we have difficulty talking with each other to identify and agree upon the value. Some of our debates are healthy, but some are polarizing and unproductive, where people on both sides of an issue become entrenched or immovable.

From a publisher's perspective, I think that's why we're seeing many innovations come from smaller groups or from outside of what we may have considered our industry.

If we are to succeed and innovate, we're going to have to do it together and we're all going to have to realize that the result of our evolution will not be exactly what any one group wanted, it will hopefully be the right mix of ideas that's best for the industry's progression overall.

On a more concrete note, one area where we could vastly improve to the benefit of everyone in the ecosystem is with our usage and sharing of data. I know I sound like a broken record here, but decision-making is art and science and, as someone on my team likes to say, it's time we added a little more science! Also, as an industry we are unable to truly get to the bottom of volume and revenue trends, and the nuances of how different publication payment models impacts the industry because we are often using something as a proxy (e.g., we only count indexed articles, we look at publisher list prices for APCs but there is no reliable data on discounts and waivers, etc.).

ATG: *What are the most viable responses to the problems these issues pose? From publishers? From librarians?*

AM: Well, trust, respect, and tolerance for different approaches to issues and opportunities would begin to address the first part of my last response. Perhaps trust and respect can best be built by trying to establish strong cross-industry relationships (not just with folks like

us, but especially with folks that have different perspectives).

When it comes to our ability to share and analyze data all I can say is standards, standards, standards! Part of the reason we have difficulty sharing data is that we lack a full set of standards to compare like to like. We've seen this while building our OA Data & Analytics Tool. We need to support organizations like **CrossRef**, **ORCID**, and **NISO** to continue to build out the crosswalks between our data.

ATG: *Running a company like Delta Think demands a lot of time and energy. But everyone needs some down time to stay sharp. How do you relax and get recharged? Are there specific fun activities that you enjoy?*

AM: That's a great question. I wish I could tell you of some amazing and novel hobbies that I have, but the truth is family, animals, beaches, and mindless stories.

I have three kids ranging from their early to late 20s (she'd kill me if she saw the word "late," so let's say upper middle). They're at a great stage in their lives, starting jobs and starting families, and it is tons of fun to help them think through their challenges. My grandson was born in October of 2016 and it has been a joy playing with him and watching him grow. It's also been an indescribable experience to watch my daughter become a mom!

On the pet front, I have a 4-year-old chameleon named Olive. She is a hobby on her own, just making sure her environment is appropriate and she stays healthy. She's also fascinating to watch and a big departure from furry mammals! Although we did just recently get two kittens, Ziggy and Jones. No one can play like a cat — they are quite entertaining!

ATG: *Ann, we really appreciate you making time in your busy day to talk to us. Thank you so much.*

AM: Thank you, **Tom** and **Katina**. It's been a pleasure! 🌸

Wryly Noted — Books About Books

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Literary Wonderlands: A Journey Through the Greatest Fictional Worlds Ever Created, Laura Miller, General Editor. (ISBN: 978-0-316-31638-5 Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers; New York, 2016.)

What could *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Beowulf*, and *Infinite Jest* all have in common?

These five titles are part of over one hundred books that make up a new compendium of imagined worlds contained in the publication, **Literary Wonderlands**, edited by **Laura Miller**, co-founder of *Salon Magazine* and authored by forty literary experts drawn from colleges

and universities in all parts of the world. Many of the authors have specialties in medieval and ancient history, science fiction and fantasy, and children's and young adult literature. The book is beautifully illustrated with art work from the first editions or later exemplary versions, such as **Edward Burne-Jones'** tapestry realized by **William Morris & Co.** for *Le Morte D'Arthur* or movie posters and cover art for *1984*, *I, Robot*, and *Planet of the Apes*.

Literary Wonderlands could pass for an entertaining coffee table book, but should instead be considered as a checklist and guide to essential utopian, dystopian and speculative fiction that you have always been meaning to



read. If you have read these books already, whether as a child, teenager, or student, you will find that the essays are concise summaries and refreshing new looks at reading you have previously enjoyed and want to re-live.

I found that the attention to detail in the examinations of the story telling was a great way to jog my memory and bring old classics back to life. The chronological listing and grouping by era put them in context with their kindred

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Booklover — Deciphering and Archiving History

Column Editor: **Donna Jacobs** (Retired, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC 29425) <donna.jacobs55@gmail.com>

tales. Among the details I gleaned from this encyclopedic gathering were facts such as: **Lewis Carroll**, author of *Alice in Wonderland*, was actually an erudite pun on his real name of **Charles Lutwidge Dodgson**, meant to puzzle his fellow Oxford Dons.

And it was good to be reminded that the students in **Samuel Butler's** *Erewhon* attend "the Universities of Unreason, where nothing useful is taught, and any form of machinery is proscribed on the grounds that, if allowed to develop, the machines will take over society." I was also glad to have the various levels of society in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* by **Edwin Abbott** spelled out as a satire on Victorian social norms where "...many-sided polygons constitute a kind of aristocracy and isosceles triangles form the working class, while regular quadrilaterals, like the narrator, are solidly middle class...while women, who are lines only, are unable to improve their station. In addition, women might be mistaken for 'points' when seen head on and are required to use separate doors and shout aloud when moving around Flatland, in order to avoid accidentally stabbing their countrymen."

Another work of fantasy that actually gave rise to a real world political movement is **Edward Bellamy's** *Looking Backward* (one of the bestselling books of all time in the U.S.). From this utopian novel came the People's Party which espoused that "...wealth be equally distributed and private property be abolished. Everyone would receive a college education and life-long care from a benevolent state where the retirement age is forty-five." On a more dystopian note, we learn that *We* by **Yevgeny Zamyatin** published in 1924 was a direct inspiration for 1984, *Brave New World*, and **Ursula Le Guin's** *The Dispossessed*. In *We* the "One State" is surrounded by a wall where the dictatorial "Benefactor" watches citizens at all times and they live in transparent apartments the better to be monitored.

I had missed the parallels between Jesus and the Little Prince in **Antoine De Saint-Exupery's** *Little Prince*, where the "boy with golden hair and a scarf" tells the pilot "...the important thing is what can't be seen. And he dies to get back to his rose on asteroid B-612. The last image in the book shows a desert landscape with a star. The narrator asks us to let him know if we ever see this landscape, and under that star, a child. Don't let him go on being so sad: Send word immediately that he's come back."

Another important quality of *Literary Wonderlands* is that it introduces us to many foreign examples of the genre. The book gives equal recognition to works such as *Egalia's Daughters: A Satire of the Sexes* by **Gerd Mjoen Brantenberg**, *Obabakoak* by **Bernardo Atxaga**, *The Man with Compound Eyes* by **Wu Ming-Yi**, and *Wizard of the Crow* by **Ngugi Wa Thiong'O**.

You will find *Literary Wonderlands* a valuable scholarly look back at familiar books and a fresh look forward to more adventurous reading in the future. 🌿

Roger Martin du Gard graduated in 1906 from the **École des Chartes** in Paris, France with the degree of archivist-paleographer. This training provided **Martin du Gard** with an eye for detail and a passion for accurate documentation. Within seven years of graduation he found success as an author with the publication of *Jean Barois*. He was awarded the **Nobel Prize** in literature in 1937: "for the artistic power and truth with which he has depicted human conflict as well as some fundamental aspects of contemporary life in his novel-cycle *Les Thibault*."

Martind du Gard's literary work gave new meaning to the phrase "The Devil is in the details." Why he chose to execute his training through a literary channel is unclear; however the effects of the World Wars heavily influenced his themes. It is also of interest to note that **André Gide**, another Literature Laureate, was a long-term friend and mentor.

The Operation is a chapter from the third volume, *La belle saison*, of the roman-fleuve *Les Thibault*.

Sidebar: I confess I had to google roman-fleuve. The word is French for novel-stream or novel-cycle. *Britannica.com* defines it as a "series of novels, each one complete in itself, that deals with one central character, an era of national life, or successive generations of a family."

The story is a gem for illustrating **Martin du Gard's** fascination with detailing scenes of actions, interplay between characters, description of physical life albeit sometimes brutal and microscopically dissecting his characters. A young girl is hit and run over by a delivery truck in front of her home. The doctor is summoned to attend to her and must perform a life saving operation on sight, under lamp light, in a steamy living room, under the barometric tension of an impending thunderstorm, with the assistance of a young colleague, and the distraction of the inhabitants of the apartment.

The horrific scene is set for the reader in short sentences rich with graphic detail:

"The first thing Antoine noticed was the lamp which a woman in a pink dressing gown was lifting with both hands..."; "A young man wearing pince-nez, with his hat still on, was bending forward slitting up with a pair of scissors the blood-stained garments of the little girl." "...she was busy brushing off the flies that obstinately settled on her glowing cheeks..."; "Only an immediate operation," he said decisively, "can save her life. Let's try." And with that we are led through the story with surgical precision.

When **Martin du Gard** was awarded the **Nobel Prize** in 1937, he described himself "like an owl, suddenly roused from its nest and exposed to the daylight, whose eyes, used to the dark, are blinded by dazzling brightness." He continued in his award speech during the banquet held in December of that year to speak of the influences of other authors upon his literary thought process and his development as an author:

"I was still very young when I encountered, in a novel by the English writer **Thomas Hardy**, this reflection on one of his characters: 'The true value of life seemed to him to be not so much its beauty, as its tragic quality.' It spoke to an intuition deep within me, closely allied to my literary vocation. Ever since that time I have thought that the prime purpose of the novel is to give voice to the tragic element in life. Today I would add: the tragic element in the life of an individual, the tragedy of a 'destiny in the course of being fulfilled.' At this point I cannot refrain from referring to the immortal example of **Tolstoy**, whose books have had a determining influence on my development. The born novelist recognizes himself by his passion to penetrate ever more deeply into the knowledge of man and to lay bare in each of his characters that individual element of his life which makes each being unique. It seems to me that any chance of survival which a novelist's work may have rests solely on the quantity and the quality of the individual lives that he has been able to create in his books. But that is not all. The novelist must also have a sense of life in general; his work must reveal a personal vision of the universe. Here again **Tolstoy** is the great master. Each of his creatures is more or less secretly haunted by a metaphysical obsession, and each of the human experiences that he has recorded implies, beyond an inquiry into man, an anxious question about the meaning of life. I admit that I take pleasure in the thought that, in crowning my work as a novelist, the members of the **Swedish Academy** wished to pay indirect homage to my devotion to that unapproachable model and to my efforts to profit from the instruction of his genius."

Martin du Gard took his instruction well. 🌿

