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On Your Bookshelf - What Are We Reading?

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On Your Bookshelf —
What Are We Reading?

By Joanne Schmidt (Emerson College Library)

Books recently read by library staff, booksellers and publishers. Titles to be included in future columns can be sent to Joanne Schmidt at the Emerson College Library; 148 Beacon Street; Boston, MA 02116, or, via Internet to “ecl_jms@fio.org”.

The private bookcases of the Emerson College Library staff are filled with books for holiday reading. Paul Twist, the most voracious reader I know, divides his shelves into two categories: fiction and non-fiction. By the time you read this he’ll probably have finished these non-fiction titles: Winchell: Gossip, Power, & the Culture of Celebrity by Neal Gabler (Knopf, 1994) and As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s by Karal A. Marling (Harvard University Press, 1994). The new compilation of Pauline Kael’s film reviews is also on his reading list. Paul’s list of “good new fiction” includes: The City Below by James Carroll (Houghton Mifflin, 1994); Bird Ariaz by Howard Norman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994); In the Lake of the Woods by Tim O’Brien (Houghton Mifflin, 1994); Open Secrets by Alice Munro (Knopf, 1994).


Mickey Zemon, Emerson’s Library Director, may be able to read some of these during semester break: Sunday’s Child by Ingmar Bergman (Arcade, 1994); Train Go Sorry: Inside a School for the Deaf (Houghton-Mifflin, 1994); Joseph Papp by Helen Epstein (Little, Brown, 1994); The Shipping News by E. Annie Proulx (Wheeler, 1994); Novemberfest by Theodore Weesner (Knopf, 1994); The Language Instinct by Steven Pinker (Morrow, 1994); Please Stand By: The Prehistory of Television by Michael Ritchie (Overlook Press, 1994).

The staff of the Burlington Public Library, in Burlington, MA, always gives great advice when asked for recommendations. They haven’t steered me wrong yet.

Debra Hines referred me to Bone People by Keri Hulme (Louisiana State University Press, 1985). Debra is also currently reading: Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters’ First 100 Years by Sarah Louise and Annie Elizabeth Delaney (Kodansha International, 1993); True North: A Memoir by Jill Ker Conway (Knopf, 1994); and the medical thriller, The Edge by Mark Olshaker (Crown, 1994).

Cara Thissell, who works in the Children’s Room, suggested The True Story of the Three Little Pigs which was written by Jon Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith (Viking Kestrel, 1989). The wolf’s version of this classic tale is worth checking out. Cara, and many of her coworkers, are reading The Primrose Way, a young adult novel by Jackie French Koller (Gulliver Books, 1992).

Brita Flemming recently finished Sanctuary by Faye Kellerman (Morrow, 1994). It’s one of the Peter Decker/Rina Lazarus mysteries. She liked it so much she’s ready to read more fiction by Faye Kellerman and her husband, Jonathan Kellerman.

The Burlington Public Library staff also turned me on to Barbara Kingsolver. Like Liz, I’m a new fan. Animal Dreams (Harper and Row, 1990) and Pigs in Heaven (HarperCollins, 1993) are on my night stand. Also waiting for my holiday break when I hope to be able to read are: Interview With the Vampire by Anne Rice (Ballantine Books, 1977), Disclosure by Michael Crichton (Knopf, 1994) and In the Name of the Father by Gerry Conlon (Plume, 1993). I didn’t get to read them when first published, but there’s something about the way movies get advertised that makes me want to read these!

In Search of Used Bookshops
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Hibberd’s

I will end this all too brief review of some of the used bookshops of Philadelphia with a look at what was once the crowning glory of bookselling in the City of Brotherly Love — Sessler’s. A March, 1974 article in Publishers Weekly titled “Philadelphia: A Thriving Book World All Its Own” called Sessler’s a store “as well known for its services as it is for what one bibliophile calls the top lady bookman in the country, Mabel Zahn.” Sad to say, Sessler’s is no more — but their old location on Walnut Street, just four blocks from the Convention Center, now houses Hibberd’s Books. Their yellow page ad says, “Hibberd’s Books — owners and staff formerly of Sessler’s.” Established in 1986, Hibberd’s holds about 25,000 volumes, mostly used, rare and remainder books. They also carry a very small selection of new books. For the most part, Hibberd’s specializes in the humanities, with a good size collection of books on literature and the arts.

Shop Information: Hibberd’s Books, 1310 Walnut Street. Hours: 10:00 am — 6:00 pm Monday — Saturday, 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm Sunday. Telephone: (215) 546-8811.

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