

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 31



1. ANECDOTES - KATHRYN MOCKLER
2. THE SKULL - JON KLASSEN
3. AN ASTRONOMER IN LOVE - ANTOINE LAURAIN
4. WHAT WE KEEP TO OURSELVES - NANCY YOORYOUN KIM
5. ORPHEUS BUILDS A GIRL - HEATHER PARRY
6. The Most Secret Memory of Men - Mohamed Mbougar Sarr
7. My Work - Olga Ravn
8. HER BODY AMONG ANIMALS - PAOLA FERRANTE
9. Body Works - Dennis Cooley
10. Call Me Hunter - Jim Shockey

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL + HISTORICAL FICTION

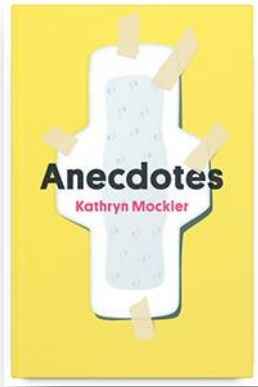
PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

Lindsay Wincherauk

ANECDOTES

KATHRYN MOCKLER



Thought-provoking, darkly hilarious, and emotionally charged...

How did the book make me feel/think?

“Anecdotes” by Kathryn Mockler is laced with unconventional storytelling. This collection of stories has indelibly impacted me, even as Mockler delved into challenging themes.

The first story had me simultaneously laughing and questioning my emotional response, highlighting the book’s ability to engage readers on deeply emotional, occasionally uncomfortable levels, even when tackling difficult subject matter. This juxtaposition of humour and discomfort is a central theme throughout the book, making it a compelling and thought-provoking read.

“Anecdotes” is a literary adventure, taking readers to places of wanton curiosity, underscoring its power to draw readers into its world. “Anecdotes” isn’t afraid to confront issues like sexuality, abuse, abandonment, and the struggle to make sense of a chaotic world.

The story “This Isn’t a Conversation” will leave readers wondering about the survival of the planet in the face of pending destiny, adding an intriguing layer to the book’s exploration of existential themes. It’s a testament to Mockler’s ability to blend laughter and pain to keep readers engaged and reflective.

“Anecdotes” bounces between the absurdities of life and the self-inflicted realities of humanity, painting a vivid picture of the book’s themes and tone.

“Anecdotes” is a thought-provoking, darkly hilarious, and emotionally charged read that challenges readers to confront the complexities of existence.

When I finally stop laughing, I must announce that “Anecdotes” is one of my favourite reads of 2023 and likely beyond, as hopefully, my past finally catches up to the future!

WRITTEN: 10 September 2023

1

THE SKULL

JON KLASSEN



Gripping + Intriguing + Terrifying + Foreboding + Visually Stunning...

How did the book make me feel/think?

Jon Klassen's "The Skull" is a captivating and enigmatic book for children that has a mysterious atmosphere. The story follows a runaway child who becomes friends with a skull that lacks a body, a creepy house situated in the woods, a bottomless pit, and a mafia-style hit, which sets it apart from typical children's tales.

The artwork is visually captivating, adding to the book's appeal for all ages.

Ultimately, what makes a book a favourite can vary significantly from person to person. Some readers enjoy books that defy expectations and take them on unsettling journeys.

How can the terrifying "The Skull" be one of my all-time favourites?

It just is?

Will the skeleton return during the dark cover of night?

Read and find out.

Would you like a cup of tea and a peach?

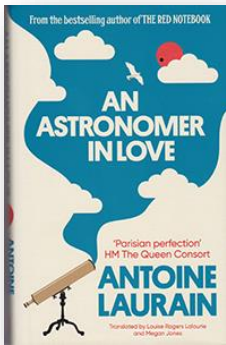
WRITTEN: 12 September 2023

AN ASTRONOMER IN LOVE

ANTOINE LAURAIN

Beauty, love, and magic floating amongst the stars.

How did the book make me feel/think?



Antoine Laurain's "AN ASTRONOMER IN LOVE" is a charmingly heartwarming story about the magic often revolving around us in everyday life. Beauty is often found in the ordinary. And if we rush to judgment, we might miss the comfort of the small moments of love surrounding us, often hidden in plain sight.

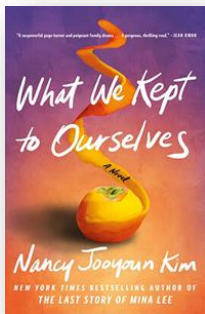
This is the fourth Gallick Book I've had the privilege of reading, and every single one of them has been fantastic!

WRITTEN: 15 September 2023

3

WHAT WE KEEP TO OURSELVES

NANCY YOOPYOUN KIM



Family secrets and the search for identity scorched onto every page.

How did the book make me feel/think?

“What We Kept to Ourselves” by Nancy Yooyoun Kim eloquently highlights the exploration of the American Dream, familial secrets, and the struggles of finding one’s identity in a complex and oft-times unforgiving world.

Kim scorches themes of family secrets onto every page and the search for identity.

I am the product of a dark family secret, being born into societal shame, leaving me with a lifetime of trying to cobble together the missing pieces of who I am. Because of this, “When We Kept to Ourselves” resonated deeply with me and will with anyone who has experienced the weight of a dark family secret. The notion of trying to piece together one’s identity when faced with such secrets is a poignant and relatable struggle for many individuals.

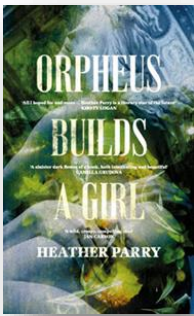
Kim also touches on the reality of a fracturing American Dream and the challenges faced by those seeking a better life in a new land while encountering resistance from those with long-held advantages, speaking to the broader social and cultural context in which the story is set. It underscores the idea that pursuing the American Dream is not always straightforward, and obstacles and prejudices can shape one’s journey.

Kim is a masterful storyteller, who captures the complexities of navigating a new land and ever-changing life realities are a testament to her ability to create impactful narratives that will resonate with readers on a deep level.

WRITTEN: 10 September 2023

ORPHEUS BUILDS A GIRL

HEATHER PARRY



A provocative and unsettling read...

How did the book make me feel/think?

“Orpheus Builds a Girl” by Heather Parry is a deeply disturbing and thought-provoking work of fiction. It challenges readers to question their values and perceptions by exploring morality, sanity, and obsession.

Wilhelm Von Tore, a German doctor, becomes infatuated with Luciana (Luci), a young Cuban girl dying of tuberculosis, and believes he's in love with her. Eventually, Luci dies.

Von Tore displays an intense level of fixation and delusion that can be interpreted as a form of madness. His actions towards Lucianna are deeply unsettling, and the story delves into his mental state and his efforts to revive her, examining themes of mental health and the blurred boundary between love and obsession.

The story delves into complex societal issues, such as misogyny, xenophobia, fascism, and the concept of bodily autonomy. It challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the human condition and the dark aspects of human nature.

“Orpheus Builds a Girl” is a provocative and unsettling read that scratches the themes of love, obsession, mental health, and societal issues. The book will linger in the mind, forcing readers to grapple with its disturbing themes and unsettling main character.

WRITTEN: 11 September 2023

MY WORK
TATA MACK
OLGA RAVN



There is no equality in motherhood.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Olga Ravn's thought-provoking novel, "**My Work**," delves into the intricate and emotional connection between a mother and her child. Through her masterful storytelling and evocative language, Ravn takes readers on a poignant journey, capturing moments of heartache, revelation, and ultimately, acceptance.

The impact of Ravn's words resonated deeply with me, as I vividly recall the first time, I witnessed the passing of my mother in 1987. However, she wasn't my biological mother.

In 2016, thirteen years after discovering the truth of my parentage, I found myself once again confronted with the loss of my mother. For the first time, she acknowledged me as her son. It is frustrating when people dismissively attribute my birth shrouded in secrecy to my birth era, "*It was the times.*"

"**My Work**" invites readers to contemplate the formation of identity and the profound influence our relationships have on shaping who we become. Prepare yourself for an introspective journey as you immerse yourself in the pages of "**My Work**," where Ravn's masterful storytelling will leave you pondering your own understanding of what it means to be a mother.

Motherhood is an unequal experience. When a woman gives birth, the woman she once was fades away, replaced by a new version who navigates each moment with the weight of responsibilities, like constantly wondering if the oven was left on.

Unfortunately, the patriarchal society diminishes this experience whenever a man has the audacity to declare, "We're pregnant." For a man to be seen as heroic, he simply needs to be present, while for a woman, raising a child alters the very core of her being.

I was born in a place where women were sent to rid themselves of unwanted pregnancies, where children either perished during birth, were sold, or given up for adoption. Throughout my entire life, the ghosts of shame lurking in the shadows have haunted me. And who is to blame? Men.

"**My Work**" has provided me with a new perspective on life. If darkness has plagued me throughout my existence, I can only imagine the pain my mother endured, having me as a constant reminder of her perceived failure in the one thing that was solely hers.

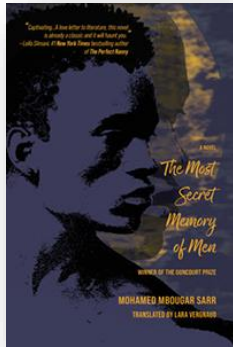
WRITTEN: 22 September 2023

THE MOST SECRET MEMORY OF MEN

MOHAMED MBOUGAR SARR

A powerful exploration of the discrimination faced by marginalized...

How did the book make me feel/think?



“The Most Secret Memory of Men” is a literal masterpiece, a tour de force. Readers are taken on a journey exploring thought-provoking themes such as race, privilege, identity, and the challenges African writers face in a world that resists appreciating their work.

This story delves into the experiences of people who are seen as different in a French society that is primarily white. It is a powerful exploration of marginalized communities’ discrimination and the extreme measures an individual may take to abandon their heritage and blend in.

People with fairer skin receive less literary criticism than African writers, as illustrated in the novel. Even within the arts, the world is never a level playing field. The story blends heavier themes with the concepts of love and the “whitening” of culture.

Within the pages, the concept of the colonization of the mind is a powerful metaphor, suggesting conformity can sometimes be a means of achieving success or recognition. Still, it may also limit individual expression and creativity.

“The Secret Memory of Men” tells a compelling story and offers a lens through which readers can explore important social and cultural issues, sparking meaningful conversations and reflections on these topics. At the very least, readers will become lost in the book’s lyrical prose.

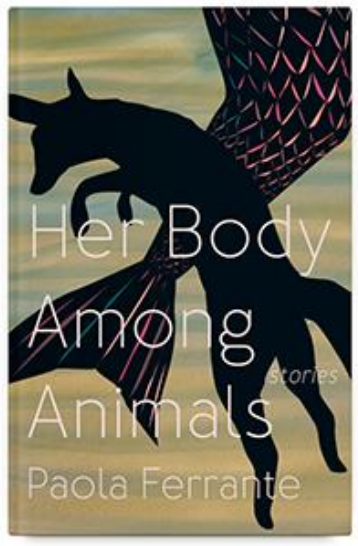
WRITTEN: 11 September 2023

HER BODY AMONG ANIMALS

PAOLA FERRANTE

Haunting, harrowing, mind-bending, current . . .

How did the book make me feel/think?



Paola Ferrante's "Her Body Among Animals" is a genuinely mind-altering literary experience. This work of fiction has the incredible power to evoke deep emotions and provoke contemplation on various aspects of our society and the human condition. Its themes delve into crucial issues such as abuse, toxic masculinity, the unforgiveable inequality of motherhood, gender dynamics, environmental concerns, and the overwhelming sense of helplessness in a rapidly changing world.

Ferrante's storytelling acts as a reflective mirror, allowing readers to examine and confront the realities of our world. It provides a means for exploration and encourages readers to face complex issues head-on.

As I delved into the pages of these harrowing and remarkable stories, a burning desire to break free from the confines of my bubble grew within me. The stories compelled me to confront uncomfortable truths and challenge my own perspectives. They inspired personal growth and, hopefully, serve as a catalyst for individuals to act and advocate for positive change in their communities or even on a global scale.

"Her Body Among Animals," though a work of fiction, serves as a cautionary tale that grapples with the trajectory of humanity. It paints a vivid picture of the urgent need to find the emergency brake to give humanity (possibly) one last chance to change its course.

This is the impact that the book had on me.

WRITTEN: 23 September 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

BODY WORKS

DENNIS COOLEY

Speaking directly to your soul...

How did the book make me feel/think?

I love poetry because it makes my head spin in the personal lyrical journey it is. I love finding the often-breathtaking phraseology found within the craft. As well as the nuanced humour that can feel like the poet is speaking directly to your soul.

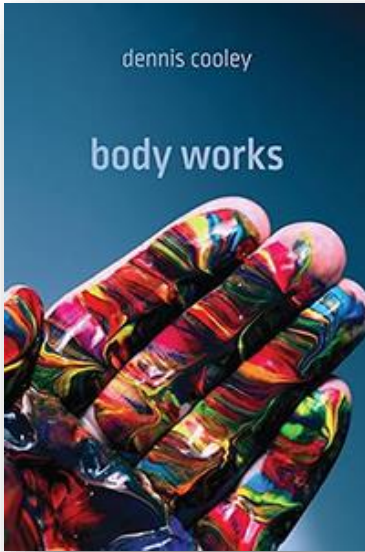
But for the most part, my head spins.

“Body Works” by Dennis Cooley ticks all the categories above. To sum up my feelings on “Body Works” here goes.

My Life by Lindsay Wincherauk

Oh, dear friend, let me lend an ear, *to the story you seek to share and hear.*

Born in shadows, *scratching for light, a journey weaves through darkness and bright.*



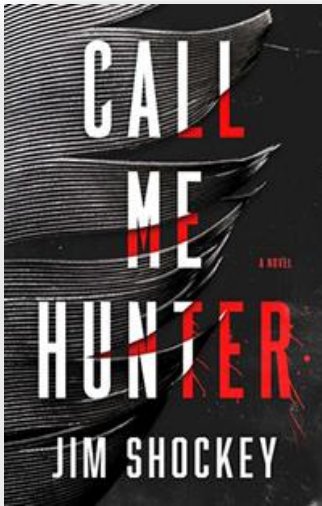
Breathe, run, and play, embracing the thrill, *yet sometimes we stumble and fall down still.*
Sports shape us, teach us to rise once more, *stitched together, stronger than before.*
A slight limp may walk beside you with grace, *a reminder of battles you bravely embrace.*
As you move forward, secrets may unfold, *the light darkens, a mystery to behold.*
Pieces cobbled back together with care, *revealing glimpses of who you are there.*
But why the secrecy, the hidden desire? Questions whisper in your mind's fire.
A health scare comes knocking on your door, *drinks offer solace you can't ignore.*
Another scare arrives with a warning bell, *but fear not, for you'll be stitched up well.*
Better than new, *you shall rise above, a pill caddy filled with strength and love.*
Every day brings healing and light, *with determination, you'll win this fight.*
And if the question lingers in your mind, can you stop taking what fate has assigned?
Remember, dear friend, *it's your choice to make, to embark on a journey of wellness and break.*
So, take a deep breath, stand tall and strong, *know in your heart, you truly belong.*
Stitched together with resilience anew, *embrace each day and let your spirit shine through.*

That's how “Body Works” made me feel.

WRITTEN: 13 September 2023

CALL ME HUNTER

JIM SHOCKEY



Autism, check. Celebrities, check. A monster, check. An indigenous theme, check. An identity theme, check.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I am giving “Call Me Hunter” by Jim Shockey five stars. I have a personal policy of granting every book I read the highest rating because who am I to pass judgment on whether others will enjoy a book or not?

There is one exception to my star-giving rule: books filled with hatred, misogyny, or racism.

The story introduced an autistic character with a unique talent for identifying art at garage sales — and a few unsolved murders. It was overwhelming. The narrative then took another turn, with a monster who paradoxically loved animals but was also a twisted deviant murderer (close to my exception).

As I delved further into the pages of “Call Me Hunter,” my mind began to wander to my worries of the day, and then, Shockey helped me to momentarily escape my worries when “Saskatoon,” graced the pages, the city I grew up in. Yet, my interest in a recognizable location was short-lived.

My mind struggled to keep up.

Suddenly, the autistic man was playing water polo, and movie stars were casually mentioned. They even dined at the first café I visited when I moved to Vancouver, which momentarily captured my attention. But my mind wandered again. An indigenous theme was inserted, leaving me feeling confused.

Nevertheless, I persisted in reading every single word. And then, with only 40 pages remaining, the story took another twist, drawing me in once more.

I read the rest of the book diligently, hoping the mentioned celebrities were faring well in their lives. After this experience, I have decided never to read advanced praise. I found it surprising one of the individuals who provided advanced praise for the book deemed it “astoundingly original” - since “astoundingly” implies surprise.

WRITTEN: 13 September 2023