



OCTOBER NEWSLETTER
2015-2016 NUMBER 2

Editor: Shirley Baugher
Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org

President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*

October is the month when FAW honors its sustaining clubs:

- Flossmoor Book Club,
- Ogden Dunes Book Club,
- Renaissance Art Club and
- The Woman's Reading Club of Riverside.

These clubs give us an anchor in the wider Chicago area and also provide us with a source of new members. In addition, the sustaining clubs have given generously over the years to our Patrons' Fund.

Members of these clubs, in turn, can attend our meetings as guests, even without being individual members of FAW.

It was thanks to The Woman's Reading Club of Riverside that I became acquainted with Friends of American Writers. I had attended some of the awards luncheons at the Union League Club with fellow members, but it wasn't until one of them suggested that I join the awards committee that I became a member of FAW. Corinne Morrissey was the chair of the adult committee at that time, and I remember how impressed I was with her and the other members of the committee, who didn't just comment on books but evaluated them on the basis



of their lasting value. And, sure, there were arguments about which book was best or which author had the most promise, but that was

part of the fun.

When I was elected chair of the awards committee in 2009, I felt very honored, not just because it's an important position, but because I was following in the footsteps of Lorraine Smith, a fellow Reading Club member who had once held the job herself and was someone I very much admired. Being chair of an awards committee is a challenge, as our current chairs, Marti Daniel, Tammie Bob and Freyda Libman, know, but it's also a stimulating and exciting job that puts you in touch with new writers you would probably never have heard of otherwise.

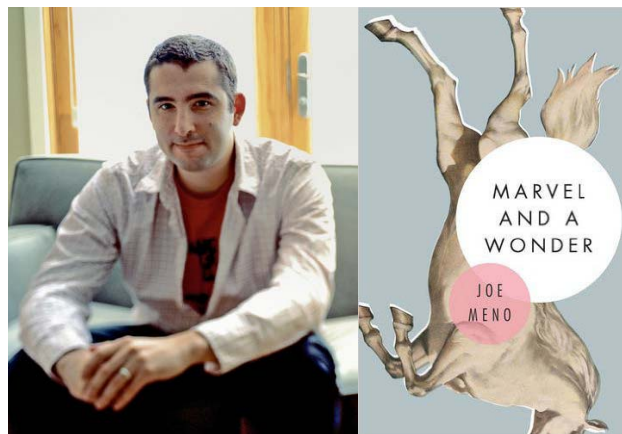
I am very grateful to Nancy Chalupka who escorted me to my first FAW meetings and to the early members of The Woman's Reading Club of Riverside who decided that they wanted their club to be a part of Friends of American Writers.

So if you belong to a book club, talk to your members about becoming a sustaining member of FAW. Club membership costs no more than an individual membership—just \$45—and it will open up a host of new opportunities for your members. ■

OCTOBER PROGRAM

FAW Welcomes Joe Meno

By TAMMIE BOB



FAW's October program features acclaimed Chicago author Joe Meno. As a happy coincidence, his ninth book, *Marvel and a Wonder*, was published a few weeks ago. Mary Miller, reviewing the book in the NYTimes Book Review, wrote, "Meno knows how to make you love his characters, want what they want. But don't think he's going to let things turn out well for them. Marvels and wonders aren't worth the trouble. Fortunately, this book is."

Meno published his first novel, *Tender as Hellfire*, when he was 24 and still a student in Columbia College Chicago's fiction writing department. He's been publishing ever since, in magazines like *Tri-Quarterly*, *McSweeney's*, *Other Voices*, and *Chicago Magazine*. The multi-talented Joe Meno is also a playwright, a cartoonist, and musician. His prizes and accolades include the Nelson Algren Award (for short fiction), the Society of Midland Authors Award, a Pushcart Prize, and a New York

Continued ▶

Times Book Review Editor's Choice. He is a professor at Columbia College's Creative Writing Department.

There is great variety in the plots and characters of Meno's novels, mostly set in Chicago. *Hairstyles of the Damned* follows a Catholic schoolboy growing up punk on the South Side in the 90's and examines conformism, class and race issues, and teenage angst in a series of riotous events. *Office Girl* is a tribute to a pair of rudderless former art school students working terrible office jobs. In *The Boy Detective Fails*, the title character, now thirty, grapples with mysteries of adult life. The latest book *Marvel and a Wonder*, which I look forward to reading, is described in Kevin Nance's Chicago Tribune review: "a Korean War vet named Jim Falls and his grandson, Quentin, find their lives transformed by the appearance

of a beautiful racehorse — only to have it stolen by two meth dealers who pass it along to a violent criminal named Rick West... A locked-and-loaded Jim heads out with Quentin across the Midwest and upper South in hot pursuit, culminating in a blaze of gunplay fit for fit for any good noir yarn, not to mention Tombstone." Meno's writing is always detailed and nuanced; his characters are modern people trying to figure out what they want, and how to get it, stumbling along their journey.

Joe Meno will be reading from his work and discussing writing and contemporary literature. He is a charming and engaging speaker, and has been called "a Chicago Treasure" by the *Reader*. There will be a book-seller and signing as well. Don't miss this wonderful Fall program. ■■



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the October 14, 2015 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 11. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please contact only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Pat Adelberg (847-588-0911).

Starting with the October meeting, standing reservations will carry over. If you have not already done so, simply indicate to Lorraine or Pat that you wish to have a standing reservation. They will note the request, and you will automatically be reserved for subsequent luncheons.

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place. The cost of the luncheon is \$40 payable by cash or check to FAW in the front lobby on the day of the luncheon. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations

not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

Parking is available at the parking lot at 100 E. Bellevue Place.

New Members

We are pleased to announce that the following members have recently joined The Friends of American Writers:

Marge Barrett • Laurie Drew • Katie Egan, Mary Lou Einikis • Jane Foster, Jane Gruner • Ida Hagman • Margaret Haywood • Colleen Kadlec • Nora Kashube • Mary Ann Kerrigan • Jackie McLean • Helene Madsen • Diane R. Miller • Pamela Ratchford • Patricia Ronanv • Alice Sandberg • Alceann Steen • Barb Stegmiller • Janet Stevens • Sheila Wiselman

We are delighted that you have joined us and know that you will find membership in the group a pleasant and rewarding experience. If you have recently become a member of FAW and I did not include your name, please let me know shirleyba@rcn.com We would like to acknowledge your membership.

Literary Awards Committee

Tammie Bob, Co-Chair of the Literary Awards Committee, announced that the Committee would meet on September 16 at the Fortnightly Club. The Committee now has eight confirmed members. As of September 9, 2015, ten books have been received for review. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Tammie Bob, Bobtam410@gmail.com

Young People's Literary Awards

The Young People's Literary Awards, chaired by Marti Daniel also met on September 16. To date, seventeen new books have been submitted to this group, which recently welcomed two new members. If you would like to join the group, please contact Marti Daniel, mcmdaniel@mac.com

Many thanks to Yearbook editor **Pat Adelberg**. Pat did a masterful job of compiling data and arranging for the document to be printed. It is an invaluable resource to all of us.

Note from Membership Chair Sandie Weiss

Ladies, it's time for us to spread the great news about the best kept secret on the Gold Coast. Of course, it's our fantastic organization The Friends of American Writers. Where else can

women (and men) meet to discuss good writing, meet new friends, and enjoy a delicious lunch. If you know of someone who would like to join, please contact Sandie Weiss, 161 E. Chicago Ave. #35G, Chicago, IL 60611. Email redheadsandie@yahoo.com

Foundation Fund Scholarship

Next month, in November, FAW will present a scholarship to a promising young writer from the M.F.A. program at National Louis University. This scholarship is made possible by our Foundation (see page 9 of your

yearbook), which has been using the interest from investments to provide scholarships since 1999. If you would like to contribute to this worthy cause, contact Corene Anderson, the current chair of the Foundation.



FEATURE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS: RUTH RENDELL

HERE is a memorable line in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* spoken by Linda about her husband, the play's central character Willy Loman. She says, "He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be paid to such a person." This past summer, we lost a literary legend: Ruth Rendell, the British grand dame of intricately plotted mystery novels, and I believe attention must be paid.



Ruth Rendell: 1930-2015

Ruth Rendell was not your ordinary whodunit author. Her novels combined psychological insight, social conscience, and, of course, a requisite amount of white-knuckle terror. Critics unanimously declared her a very talented writer. Like her friend, P.D. James, who died in 2014, she transformed the genre and turned what had become a formulaic literary style into a kind of crime novel that examined the world around her with a critical eye. She died in London on May 2, 2015 at the age of 85.

A Prolific Writer and More

During her long career, Ms. Rendell wrote more than 60 books (she gave birth to a book about every nine months,) most featuring her famous sleuth Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford. Her works have been translated into more than 20 languages, and her sales worldwide have been estimated at more than 60 million dollars. Envious earnings for an author in any genre. She won three Edgar awards from the Mystery Writers of America, as well as four Gold Daggers and a Diamond Dagger from England's Crime Writers' Association.

A Most Accomplished Woman

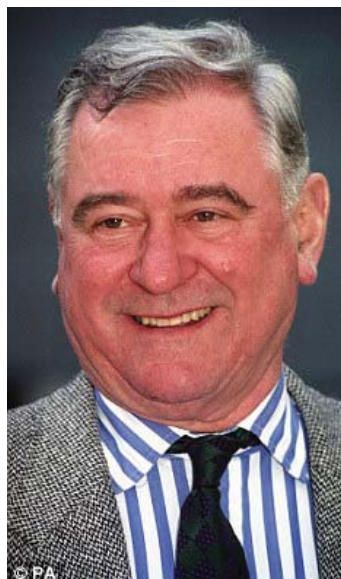
Ruth Rendell did not confine her considerable talents to writing. More formally known as Baroness Rendell of Babergh, she was a Labour Party member in Britain's House of Lords and was made a life

peer by that body in 1997. She was an active campaigner against female genital mutilation, which was practiced in the UK. Asked in an interview why it was done Rendell replied, "To make a woman attractive to men seems a ridiculous answer, but in parts of Africa and among African immigrants to the UK, a man will not marry a woman unless she has been mutilated. Midwives in the UK have reported being asked by the husband of a woman who had just given birth to restitch her vagina and also to mutilate a new baby daughter. Although restitching is forbidden by [British] law, mothers of girls living in the UK are sometimes pressured by family members to have their daughters mutilated either here or abroad. In some

cases, British girls who have escaped the practice when they were children have been forced by their future husbands and family members to undergo FGM on marriage. Until recently, no records were kept of the numbers of women who arrived at a hospital with evidence that FGM had been carried out on their genitalia. This has now changed."

Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford

While Rendell contributed to many worthwhile charities, it was her skillful and intelligent writing that brought her to, and kept her in, the world's attention.



◀ George Baker as chief Inspector Reginald Wexford

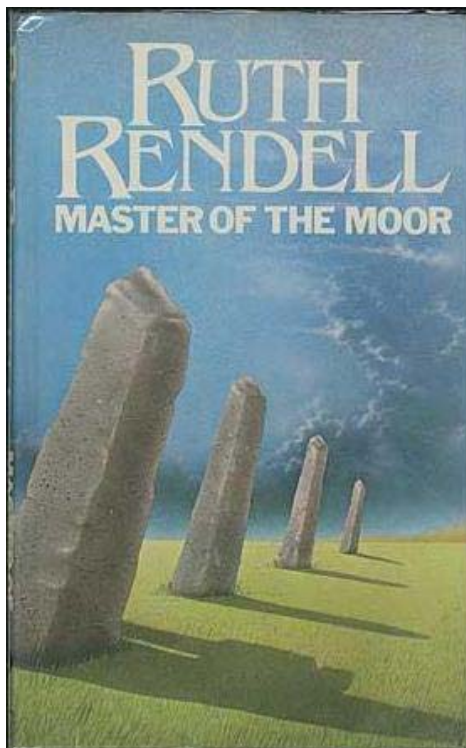
Continued ▶



▲ Inspector Wexford (George Baker) and wife Dora (Louie Ramsey)

Agatha Christie created Poirot. P. D. James' protagonist was Chief Investigator Adam Dalgliesh of New Scotland Yard. Ruth Rendell gave us Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford. Wexford appeared in her very first novel, *From Doon with Death*, published in 1964, and he was the central figure in most of her books after that. Played by popular actor George Baker, Wexford became a familiar figure on British television. Baker had initially been approached by Ian Fleming to play debonair agent 007 (James Bond), but had to refuse because of his commitment to a rival studio. He spent decades in tv miniseries on British television. Among his memorable roles was that of Tiberius in *I Claudius*. But he found his greatest success, and became a national institution well into his fifties, as Ruth Rendell's Inspector Reginald Wexford. In 1994, he married Louie Ramsey, who played Wexford's screen wife, Dora.

Chief Inspector Wexford is an intelligent, sensitive man. Rendell called him her alter ego. "I'm not so much creating a character as putting myself on the page as a man," she said. She described him as big and rather ugly. He has a placid wife, Dora, and two daughters, Sheila and Sylvia. "Women love him," said Rendell. "He seems to exude a particular sexual attraction which has something to do with an air of security and reliability and absolute safety. I know, because women are always writing to me about it. They think that with such a man they would be safe forever. They probably wouldn't, of course. But that's how they feel about him."



Although lady writers of detective fiction are often assumed to be in love with their heroes, Rendell firmly denied this relationship with Wexford. "I don't have the joyous relationship with the Chief Inspector that people assume," she said. I always say that he should be in love with me—look what I've done for him."

Ruth Rendell wrote several stand-alone novels, whose leading characters usually lived on the edges of society. Notable among these was a psychological thriller, *Live Flesh*, a melodrama that examines how several lives are changed by a single gunshot. Spanish director Pedro Almodovar brought the novel to the screen in 1977, giving it a more political interpretation and featuring up and coming actors Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem.

Because she wanted to do more than simply create puzzles revolving around who killed whom and why, Ms. Rendell filled her novels with relevant social issues: racism in the English countryside, domestic violence, and arranged marriages among immigrants. At first, she was afraid her readers would not like to see their favorite mystery writer dealing with such serious matters. She need not have worried. They both accepted and supported her interests.

In 1986, Rendell decided to assume another writing name, Barbara Vine, even while she continued to write as Ruth Rendell. One of her pseudonymous novels was *A Dark-Adapted Eye*, the story of a family with secrets set during World War II. The novel was so different from her other work she thought she needed a nom de plume. Reviewing the book, *The Guardian* wrote that Ms. Rendell saw Barbara Vine as a bit more serious, more searching, and more analytical than her actual persona.

A Style of Her Own

Unlike many of today's detective story-writers, Ruth Rendell did not fill her books with gratuitous violence. She knew how to create terror and suspense without it, although in her 1982 novel *Master of the Moor*, she proved that she could write violence with the best of them. In *Moor*, someone is brutally killing young blonde women on the moors near Hilderbridge. All evidence points the reader to the central character Stephen Walby, 30--an obviously disturbed man who stumbles on the first body, a young blonde woman, whose face has been badly disfigured and her hair shaven. Stephen, who is puritanical, impotent, and obsessed with the moor, believes he was deserted a long time ago by a blonde mother, thus giving him

a grudge against blondes and making him the perfect suspect. After another corpse surfaces he finds himself under suspicion from the local police. He then discovers that his wife, a blonde, has been having an affair, and tragedy ensues.

Lyn, the unfaithful wife

Rendell makes us wonder, “Is Stephen himself the schizoid killer, or is there more than one psycho wandering around the moor?” She further complicates things by having Stephen kill his blonde, unfaithful wife Lyn and try to pass off the murder as one of the moor killings. . . until Lyn then turns up alive! How can this be? Rendell uses an old, implausible plot twist to explain Lyn’s survival. And the denouement--when Stephen comes face to face with the killer in his cave hideout--will surprise no reader

who has been paying attention. Like many of Rendell’s books, *Master of the Moor* was made into a successful tv miniseries starring award-winning actor Colin Firth.

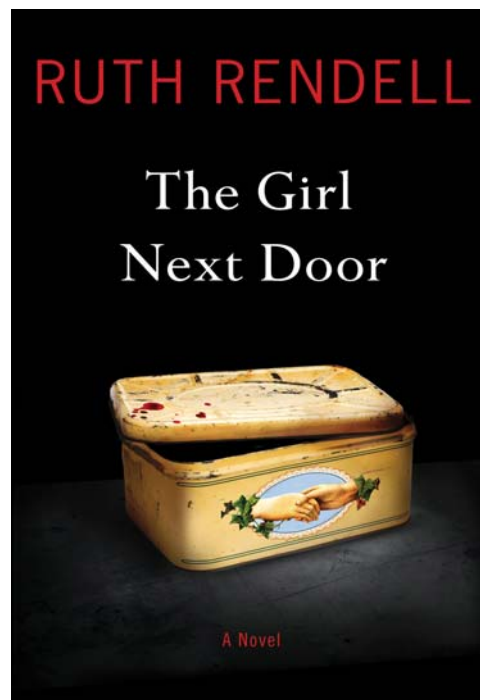


▲ Master of the Moor

The Girl Next Door

Rendell’s latest mystery novel *The Girl Next Door*, is not really a whodunit. We know who did it from the beginning. John Winwood, a cold, calculating man, discovers his wife is being unfaithful and kills her and her lover, James. Inexplicably, he cuts off their hands, puts them in a biscuit tin, and hides them in a tunnel beneath an unfinished house where he and his friends often played. He burns up their bodies in the summerhouse in his backyard. He then sends his young son Michael to live with a relative the boy has never seen and does not contact him again. Since there is no trace of the victims, and no reason to connect them to each other, everyone assumes each has gone off and died, separately and mysteriously.

Flash forward 60 years. Winwood is still alive at 99 and living in an expensive nursing home. The story has changed from one about



his uncle, who used to take them into the tunnels and who mysteriously disappeared. When digging occurs in the tunnels in connection with a construction project, the box with the hands is discovered, and, as Sherlock Holmes would say, “The game is afoot.”

The Girl Next Door turns out to be much more than a work of detective fiction. It is a story about growing old and the effects of aging on the lives of the characters. It is about revenge and reconnection, and about being very careful what you wish for. All in all, it is good Rendell and a good read.

A Farewell to Charms

The literary world will miss Ruth Rendell. Stephen King, a master of mystery and suspense, said of her, “No one surpasses Ruth Rendell when it comes to stories of obsession, instability, and malignant coincidence.” She brought sophistication and depth to the traditional English mystery. She was faithful to the traditions of the genre while paying attention to modern life and contemporary tastes. If you haven’t read any of her work, you might want to start. She will make your reading life richer. ■

The Reading Corner

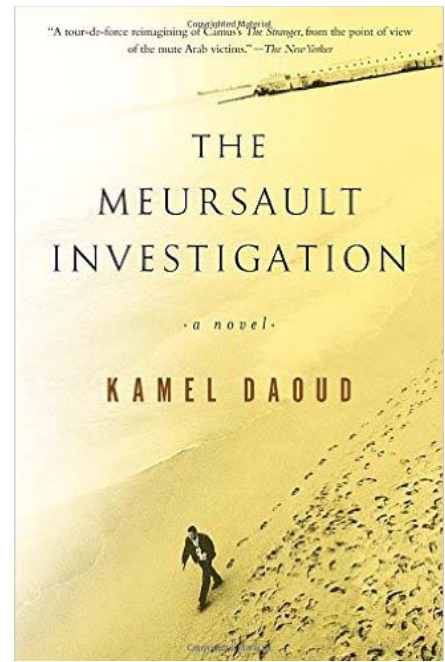
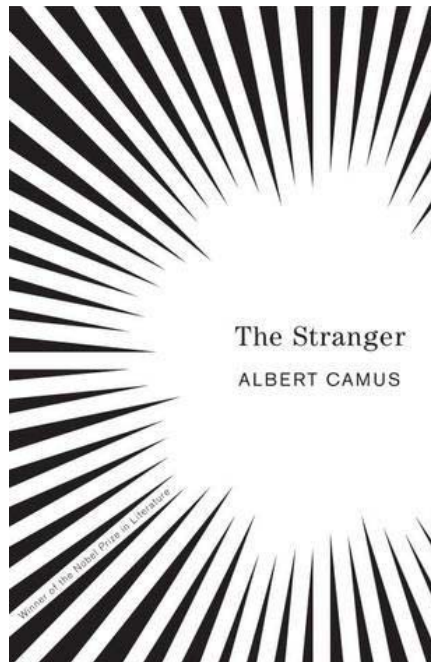
Review by NORMAN BAUGHER

The Stranger
Albert Camus

First published in French in 1946
Translated by Matthew Ward 1988

The Meursault Investigation
Kamel Daoud

Published in French in Algeria in 2013
Translated, 2015, by John Cullen



When Shirley first learned about *The Meursault Investigation* in a NYT review, she thought it sounded interesting, and via the magic of Amazon, the book found its way to our home a couple of days later, just as I was ready for a new book. I had read *The Stranger* many years before, perhaps in the 60's, and saw the movie in 1967. The most vivid of my memories were the beach scenes plus some fragments of the funeral and court scenes. But most of the content of the book and movie had dissipated.

Reading *The Meursault Investigation*, aroused my curiosity and inspired me to re-read *The Stranger*. It, too, soon appeared on our front porch. And I was off on another literary odyssey.

Observations on Translations

We read books written by foreign language authors through the veil of translators. One of the most widely read French novels of the twentieth century, *The Stranger* has been translated several times over the years. Each translator has treated the all-important first line differently. I say all-important because one translator said of it, "No sentence in French literature is better known than the

opening sentence of *The Stranger*. In 1946, Gilbert Stuart translated Camus' first line, *Aujourd'hui, maman est morte, est morte*, as "Mother died today." Matthew Ward, translator of the 1988 edition for this review, wrote it a little differently. *Aujourd'hui maman est morte*, becomes "Maman died today." Ryan Bloom, writing in *The New Yorker* in 2012, opined that a better translation would be: "Today, Maman died." Why all this quibbling over one word in one line? According to Bloom, "... the distinction is important because that word not only affects our perception of Meursault's relationship to his mother, it sets the tone for the whole novel."

The line's most recent translation comes from Sandra Smith. Hers reads "My mother died today." She also translates the French title, *L'Étranger*, as *The Outsider*, because, as she wrote:

In French, *étranger* can be translated as "outsider," "stranger" or "foreigner." Our protagonist, Meursault, is all three; and the concept of an outsider encapsulates all these possible meanings: Meursault is a stranger to himself, an outsider to society, and a foreigner because he is a Frenchman in Algeria."

Connections

The Meursault Investigation, written by Kamel Daoud, was translated by John Cullen, also from French. Its first line is, "Mama's still alive today,"—a twist on Camus' first sentence. About halfway through the book, Harun, the narrator, tells us that Meursault, who was the narrator in *The Stranger*, had shot and killed an unnamed "Arab" on a beach in Algiers. Daoud, through Harun, reveals that the name of the murdered Arab is Musa (Moses), a detail that Camus' Meursault found no reason to reveal, because to him, the Arab was of no importance. To Harun (Aaron) the name was all-important because the murdered Arab was his elder brother. Harun, prodded by his mother and his own deeply felt loss, needs to have the name of the victim revealed because he believed that not naming him denies the personhood of Musa and devalues all Arabs. Spurred on by his mother, Harun decides to investigate Musa's murder. The mother is a powerful background presence in the book. She so idolized Musa, her first son, she nearly renders Harun, the second son, a non-person; even dressing him in Musa's old clothes which are far too large for him.

The Stranger


The Stranger, which took place during French colonial times, is a simple story, told in a cold, matter-of-fact straightforward style. Its narrator is Meursault, a Frenchman who, sometime after the death of his mother, shoots and kills an Arab in an avoidable incident that takes place in Algiers. Prior to the shooting, which occurs about halfway through the book, Meursault leads an uneventful life. He is a taciturn man who lives only in the present, observes the physical world around him as it is without emotional attachment or a connection between his observations and himself. He is curious without wonderment. He doesn't conjecture. This is expressed in the beginning line, "Maman died today". Because of his nature he does not have the wherewithal to fabricate or elaborate on what took place. He admits to killing the Arab and is tried. The trial centers on what the prosecutor, defense attorney, judge, and jury believe to be Meursault's lack of remorse over his mother's death and his atheism rather than the killing.

The Meursault Investigation

The Meursault Investigation is more intangled and told with great emotion. Harun, the narrator, is a seventy-year-old broken-hearted, angry, outcast. Sitting in an Oran bar, he tells the story of the murder of his brother, a crime which he did not witness that had occurred when he was just a seven-year-old child; and of his quest to understand the incident. Harun had few resources with which to conduct his investigation: a short newspaper account and eventually the book, *The Stranger*. There were no witnesses to the incident, and only the initials of the victim were noted in the newspaper article. Meriem, a woman from Constantine who was preparing a thesis on the murdered Arab found Harun and his mother through her research. She brought *The Stranger* to Harun's attention and strengthen his resolve to solve the case. Interestingly, Meriem was Harun's only female influence other than his mother. Meursault also had only one significant female attachment in addition to his mother.

In Harun's story, which rambles over several days, Harun himself kills a Frenchman. As in *The Stranger*, the killing takes place halfway through the book and is not connected to the killing of the "Arab". Just as the death of the Arab didn't count for much in French Colonial Algiers, the death of the Frenchman was not significant in the first days after the War of Liberation.

Although there are many parallels between the two books, they are very different. They are products of their time, nationalities and philosophical underpinnings; and both lead to their inevitable conclusions. After reading both I find the dispassionate *Stranger* more to my taste. Harun describes Meursault's writing as "like precious stones, jewels cut with utmost precision," but I'm sure many others will prefer the fervor of *The Meursault Investigation*. I strongly recommend both to you.

Luchino Visconti filmed *The Stranger* in 1967, and starred Marcello Mastroianni as the narrator. A feature film of *The Meursault Investigation* is slated for 2017. 

Missoula Jon Krakauer

Reviewed by ROBERTA GATES

Missoula examines the problem of rape on college campuses. Focusing on the University of Montana in Missoula, Krakauer looks at some of the female students who accused UM men of raping them. Some of these men were members of fraternities who hosted parties for newly arrived freshman girls, while others were members of the much-loved football team, or Grizzlies as they are called.

Because of changing mores and the fact that drinking was often involved, these cases were problematic—so problematic that the district attorney (a woman) seldom followed up on them. In fact, women who went to the police seeking help often found


themselves answering questions like "Do you have a boyfriend?"—the implication being that the woman presenting the charges must be trying to cover up a fling she didn't want her boyfriend to know about.

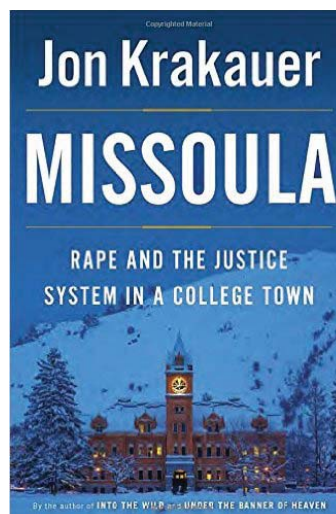
Anyone approaching the police after being mugged or assaulted on the street would be believed, but a victim of rape is all too often regarded with skepticism.

And even when a case did go to trial, the woman charging her assailant was often put on trial herself. In addition,

university football coaches and fans fought back, defending any Grizzly who was charged, no matter how damning the evidence.

In general, only a handful of university officials stood up for these women, but their verdicts were not legal ones, and the only punishment they could administer was expulsion.

This is a very thought-provoking book that takes a serious and detailed look at what is a disturbing trend, not just on college campuses but throughout our culture. 





SHIRLEY BAUGHER
1710 N. Crilly Court
Chicago, IL 60614

Afterglow

*I'd like the memory of me
To be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow
Of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo
Whispering softly down the ways,
Of happy times
And bright sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve
To dry before the sun
Of happy memories that I leave behind
When life is done.*



In Memoriam

Angie Higginson, FAW past president, past Literary Awards Chairman, past Treasurer, Foundation Fund Trustee and a loyal FAW supporter died last spring. She was a member for 49 years and served on committees and the Board for over 40 years. A lifetime reader, Angie had a passion for superior writing and took pride knowing that Jane

Smiley and Toni Morrison won FAW prizes while she served on the literary committee.

Angie, a savvy business woman before marriage, helped manage the Foundation Fund. She was a stickler for rules and knew the FAW Bylaws inside out. Until her health declined these past few years, she regularly attended meetings