

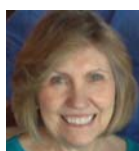


DECEMBER NEWSLETTER
2016-2017 NUMBER 4

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Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org



President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*

I want to begin this month's message with a big thank-you to Shirley Baugher for presiding over our first Readers & Reviewers discussion group on November 9. Thanks to her enthusiasm and good humor, the 12 members who gathered to discuss *A Great Reckoning* by Louise Penny had a great time, discussing everything from the book's theme to which movie

stars ought to be chosen to play the leading roles in a possible movie version of the book.

Future Readers & Reviewers discussions are scheduled for February and April, so watch the FAW newsletter to find out which books we'll be reading next. And if you have any suggestions, please feel free to pass them on to me or one of our board members.

I also want to urge you to attend our holiday tea on December 14, which will feature a lavish array

of savories and sweets as well as a much-anticipated performance by the Sounds of Sweetness, an a cappella choir from nearby Walter Payton College Prep High School. This is always a festive meeting, so consider bringing a guest or two to enjoy the delicacies, the music, and, as always, The Fortnightly's lovely decorations.

It's a busy time of year and we're all a little frazzled during December, but if you can make it, I guarantee that our tea will put you in holiday mood. See you then! ■■

DECEMBER PROGRAM

The Sounds of Sweetness

SHIRLEY BAUGHER

Sounds of Sweetness "SoS" is Payton's all-male a Cappella ensemble. Now entering its 14th season, the group has an extensive repertoire and has produced two CDs. The group includes 32 young men in grades 9 - 12 who possess outstanding vocal abilities, excellent sight reading skills, and a passion for performing. The Sounds of Sweetness enjoys a stellar reputation in the Chicago area and beyond, having performed in the past at the United Center, the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., and on the flight deck of the U.S.S. Intrepid in New York Harbor. They recently sang at the Museum of Science and Industry and will be appearing in various locations during the holiday season, including the Leo Burnett Building and the Lobby of 500 West Monroe. And on December 7, the group will be recording its first-ever holiday CD!

SOS will help us welcome in the holidays by singing a wide variety of numbers, ranging from "The Christmas Song" and "Rudolph" to "Little Saint Nick" by the Beach



Boys, as well as some contemporary a cappella arrangements.

Kathleen Johnston, the director, could not be more enthusiastic about working with this talented group of young men. "I know you will be charmed," she says. "They are truly wonderful." ■■



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the December 14, 2016 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 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).

As is customary for the December meeting, the program will begin at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place and will be followed by a holiday tea. The cost of the tea is \$45 payable by check (preferred) in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. 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.

Literature Awards Committee

TAMMIE BOB, *Chair*

Tammie reported to the Board that committee has received a total of

34 eligible books to date, and they are still arriving at the rate of two to three a day. Needless to say, members of the group are busily reading to keep up. We look forward to their awards' selections.

Young People's Literature Awards Committee

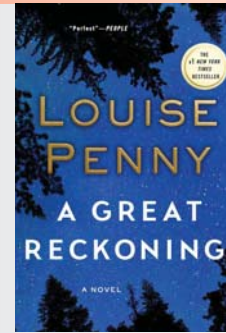
MARTI DANIEL, *Chair*

The Young People's Literature Award Committee's November Book Sale made \$110.00. Member Betty O'Toole was most generous in buying 30 of the unsold books at half price (1\$ each) for a non-profit organization. Our committee will donate the remaining unsold books from 2015 to her to distribute to the non-profit organization.

As the year ends, our committee is busy reading and reviewing many of the 42 submissions. We held our November Committee meeting on November 16.

Congratulations to Louise Penny

Louise Penny, the author of *A Great Reckoning*, our first Readers and Reviewers selection, has written of many well deserved accolades being accorded to her book. The Washington Post named *A Great Reckoning*



one of the Best Mystery Books of 2016. *A Great Reckoning* also made it into the final round of voting in the Goodreads "best book

of 2016" - mystery/thriller category. Penny wrote that she recently visited Hovey, the village outside Quebec on which Three Pines was modeled. It was her first visit back since the death of her husband Michael, and she said, "It went beautifully. Some tears, of course. But lots of laughter. A real celebration. Lise and Del and Michael's caregivers, Kim, Rose and Daniel joined us yesterday for brunch, and to toast Michael. Then, yesterday's rain turned to snow during the night." Just like Three Pines.

In Memoriam

Linda Gustafson's husband, Roger, did not survive his latest hospitalization. He'd been in fragile health for a number of years, and this illness was more than he could bear. He and Linda had been married for 44 years and made the most out of all their time together. ■■



Haddon Sundblom Santa

FEATURE ARTICLE

by Shirley Baugher

SANTA CLAUS HAS COME TO TOWN

Note: the following feature is reprinted from last year's December newsletter. It seems appropriate to make it an annual entry, given the season and the subject.

Mention the name Santa Claus and most of us will envision a rotund figure in a red suit with long white hair and a white beard. That wasn't always the way people saw Santa. As a matter of fact, that image didn't even exist until the 1930s when an artist by the name of Haddon Sundblom, who lived in the Old Town area of Chicago, created him for the Coca Cola Company. Here is how it all began.



Haddon Sundblom

Haddon Sundblom was born in Muskegon, Michigan. His parents came to America from Sweden and settled in Michigan. Though Haddon grew up in Muskegon, he moved to Chicago's Old Town neighborhood to pursue a career as an illustrator. He rented an apartment on Crilly Court, a haven people in the arts. He worked as an apprentice for a design studio before deciding to become a free lance artist—a very wise move. He was to become one of the most successful commercial artists of the twentieth century who, more than any other artist, including Norman Rockwell, redefined the image of the American dream in paintings. Among his iconic images are the "Quaker Oats Man," and "Aunt Jemima."

Santa Claus took a number of forms before he emerged from the brush of Haddon Sundblom. Before Christianity became the main religion of Europe, the Germanic peoples celebrated a midwinter event called Yule. Many of the Yule traditions became part of the modern Christmas experience. During Yule, supernatural occurrences were said to take place, such as the Wild Hunt, a ghostly procession through the sky. The leader of the wild hunt was Odin, a white-bearded figure in a blue cloak who rode an eight-footed gray horse called Sleipnir and brought gifts to people. Odin's appearance might have influenced later concepts of St. Nicholas, although his gray horse was traded for reindeer in North America. Odin himself transformed into



Odin the wanderer

Father Christmas then Santa Claus.

As the years passed, Santa Claus evolved in popular culture into a large, heavysset person. One of the first artists to draw a more modern version of Santa Claus's was Thomas Nast, an American cartoonist of the 19th century. In 1863, Nast drew his idea of Santa Claus for a January 1863 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. He dressed Santa in an American flag and included in the drawing a puppet with the name "Jeff" written on it, reflecting its Civil War context.

Placing Santa Claus at the North Pole may also have been Nast's idea. In December 1866, Nast did a collage of engravings for *Harpers* which he called *Santa Claus and His*

Works. In the collage, he placed Santa in a place he called "Santa Claussville." A color collection of Nast's pictures, published in 1869, had a poem also titled "Santa Claus and His Works" by George P. Webster. Webster popularized the notion that Santa Claus's home was "near the North Pole, in the ice and snow". A boy from Colorado writing to the children's magazine *The Nursery* in late 1874 said, "If we did not live so very far from the North Pole, I should ask Santa Claus to bring me a donkey."

"*Is There a Santa Claus?*" was the title of an editorial appearing in the September 1897 edition of *The New York Sun*. A little girl had written to the newspaper asking if there was a Santa Claus. The paper put her letter in an editorial, which included the famous reply "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus". The response has become part of popular Christmas lore in the United States and Canada.

L. Frank Baum, creator of *The Wizard of Oz*, wrote a children's book in 1902 which he called *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*. Baum had a character in the book called "Neclaus" (Necile's Little One). Neclaus lived in the Laughing Valley of Hohaho with

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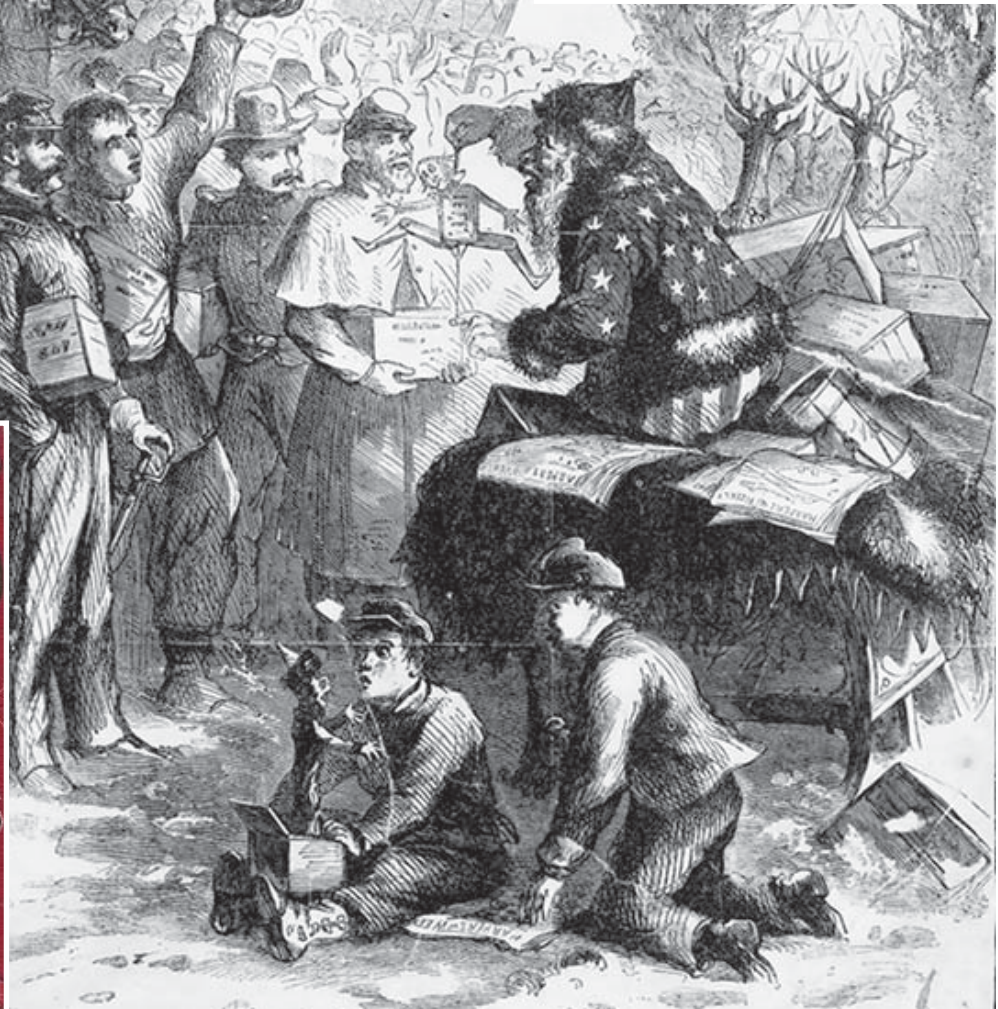
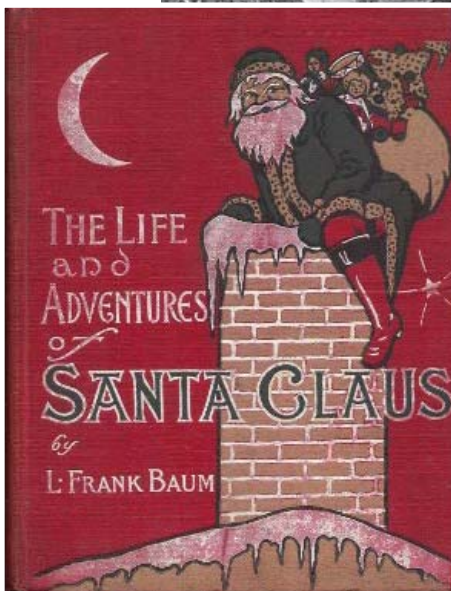
Thomas Nast's Santa Claus addressing the troops during the Civil War



Dear Editor,
I am eight years old
Some of my little friends
say there is no Santa
Claus; Papa says if
you see it in the Sun
it's so." Please tell
me the truth, is there
a Santa Claus?
Virginia O. Gardner
115 W. 95th St.

"Is There a Santa Claus?"

L. Frank Baum, creator of The Wizard of Oz, wrote a children's book in 1902 which he called The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus.



ten reindeer—who could not fly, but who could leap in enormous, flight-like bounds. Baum's book established Santa Claus as a gift-giver. When Ak, Master Woodsman of the World, showed him the misery and poverty of children who lived in the world outside Hohaho, Santa decided he wanted to bring joy into the children's lives. He invented toys as a way to do this.

Which brings us to Haddon Sundblom. In 1931, Coca-Cola approached Sundblom with the idea of creating a Coca-Cola Santa for the holidays. The company did not want the grim characters who had been associated with Santa Claus in past years. They wanted a happy person who would characterize the season and, of course,

make viewers want to enjoy what later became known as the "pause that refreshes."

When Sundblom was searching for an inspiration for his Santa Claus, he thought of Clement Moore's poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas" (written in 1822). You know how it goes, "T'was the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse." Moore went on to describe the toy maker as "chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf." Haddon Sundblom had his inspiration. He changed that elf into a friendly and jolly human. He started out using his friend, Lou Prentice, a retired salesman, as his Santa model. But Lou died suddenly. Instead of finding another model, Haddon Sundb-

lom looked in the mirror and decided to use himself. Since he didn't have a beard, he just painted one on.

For 35 years, Haddon Sundblom painted pictures of Santa. They were used in magazine ads and posters. They now appear in special exhibits around the world. Haddon Sundblom painted his last Santa portrait shortly before his death in 1976. He left behind a well-known, mischievous Santa who raids the fridge, eats cookies and even enjoys a Coke once in a while. ■■



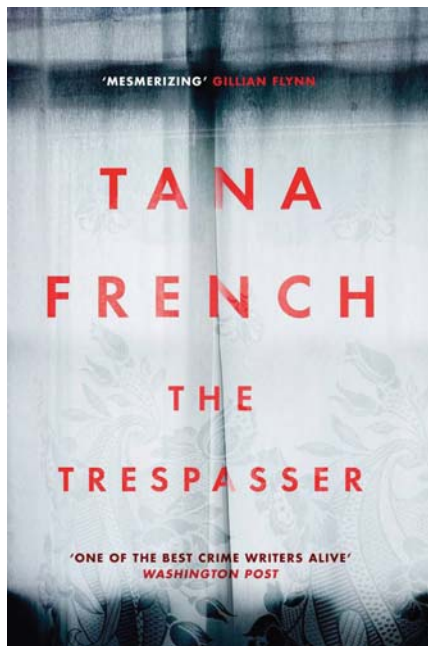
Haddon Sundblom Santa

The Reading Corner

SHIRLEY BAUGHER

The Trespasser Tana French

For the fans of Tana French, and they are legion, a new book about the Dublin Murder Squad is a gift from the gods. Recently I was sitting in a doctor's office reading the book while waiting for Norman to get his broken hand cast. The gentleman sitting across from me asked if it were a new one from French, and I replied that it was. He immediately went into a long explanation of how much he liked the author, and how he had assigned her last book to his senior English class. I assured him that he would like this one equally as well, if not better, and



suggested that he share this one with his class as well.

The Trespasser is first rate French. What begins as a routine “domestic” murder investigation, presumably the reason Antoinette Con-

way and her partner Stephen Moran are assigned the case, turns out to be anything but—and the reason that it falls into Conway's lap is likewise not routine. But that revelation comes late in the book. Conway and Moran are both part of the Dublin Murder Squad. Moran, a fresh-faced, likeable chap, is accepted by the other members of the squad. Conway is not, for a number of reasons. She is the only female on the group, she is black, and she is known for her hot temper and rash behavior. She is tormented mercilessly by the some of the detectives, none of whom will work with her, to the point of their stealing pages from her case files and urinating on the contents of her locker. They want her gone—and they are very close to getting their wish. She has been offered a job with a top notch security firm which she plans to accept once this case is closed.

French plots her story carefully, introducing you to the principals in the case and developing each as events unfold. Long story short, a

Continued ►



SHIRLEY BAUGHER
1710 N. Crilly Court
Chicago, IL 60614

beautiful young woman, Aislinn Murray, is found murdered in her apartment. She died from a blow to the head, caused either by a fall, or a deliberate hit after the fall by a murderer. The table is set for two, and the cooker in which dinner is being prepared has been turned off. Her new boy friend, Rory Fallon, a shy bookshop owner who has been invited to dinner, is the immediate and only suspect. While Antoinette and Stephen are the lead detectives on the case, all the other members of the squad—especially the super cool Breslin and the rumpled McCann, want to pin the murder on Rory—to the point of building a solid case against him. But that case begins to unravel as more is learned about the victim and her would-be assailant. Lucky for the reader, French lets it unravel slowly, and you will be duly surprised when you discover who really did the deed. While the naïve Rory has been casing out Aislinn’s neighborhood for

weeks before the evening of the dinner date (and the murder), it appears he is not the only one. And there are witnesses to attest to the stalking. Throw in the victim’s best friend who is convinced that Aislinn has been undone by a bizarre plot of her own making, and who, under brilliant, but intense questioning, reveals what has been going on in her friend’s life that might have led to her death. *The Trespasser* contains some of the most effective interrogations in recent detective fiction—evocative of those in John Le Carre’s novels, although Antoinette Conway is no George Smiley.

You will come to root for Detectives Conway and Moran, and you will find yourself picking up Irish squad room lingo. The other day, I dropped “fair play to you” into a conversation without realizing I had done it until the person to whom I was speaking gave me a quizzical look. You will also wish that Conway

doesn’t carry through with her plan to leave Murder and take a glitzy private security job wearing custom made suits, flying business class, and guarding celebrities and politicians. Because, you will want her (and Moran) back on another case in the next Dublin Murder Squad series. I won’t reveal whether you will get your wish. I will just say, “fair play” to Detective Conway for getting to the bottom of this one.

About the Author

Tana French

Tana French is the author of *In the Woods*, *The Likeness*, *Faithful Place*, *Broken Harbor*, *The Secret Place*, and *The Trespasser*. Her books have won awards including the Edgar, Anthony, Macavity, and Barry awards, the Los Angeles Times Award for Best Mystery/Thriller, and the Irish Book Award for Crime Fiction. She lives in Dublin with her family. ■■