



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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Call me remiss, but I had never read Herman Melville's most well known book until now. 'Moby Dick' is deservedly a classic, full of historic whaling lore (Melville actually served years on a whaler, something I did not know) and high seas action. Ishmael, the sole survivor of the ill fated Pequod's voyage in pursuit of Moby Dick, narrates the tale of Captain Ahab's obsession with the great white whale who took off his leg years before. The book picks up real narrative steam as the ship circles the globe and the crew's stories are told. Melville tells a tale rich in symbolism and allegory that really is a must read.

'Nine Dragons' by Michael Connelly is the latest outing of Det. Harry Bosch. Harry spends most of the book in Hong Kong, although the action starts with the murder of a liquor store owner in LA. Connelly does a great job of integrating the sights and sounds of a new city with the tense search for a kidnapped child. As always there are nifty twists and turns, not an easy accomplishment in such a long running series. Bosch is one of my favorite fictional detectives – imperfect, brave, and smart.

'That Old Cape Magic' by Richard Russo is Griffin's story. Despite having reached his fifties struggling with the ghosts of his parents and his failing career and marriage, there are real moments of tenderness and humor in this novel. Russo is both a master of dialogue and the send up of academic life, and he has ample opportunity to put these talents to use. I don't want to give too much away about this thoroughly enjoyable read, check it out and laugh and grimace along with Griffin and his family as they sort through three generations' best efforts at finding happiness. The wedding scenes are priceless.

We have early copies of two books that will not be published in the USA until next year. 'The Complaints' by Ian Rankin introduces Malcolm Fox, who works for the Scottish version of Internal Affairs called the Complaints. Those of us mourning the retirement of Inspector Rebus can take heart, as "Foxy" is a complicated man facing down a mass of corruption with the help of a small team. Murder and double crossings are the rule.

'The Redeemer' by Jo Nesbo is the fourth in the series starring Harry Hole – the Oslo policeman who we met in 'Redbreast'. This series is exciting, well written and atmospheric. Norway never seems so cold and forbidding as it does in Nesbo's noir takes on the underbelly



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of Oslo society. Harry is a flawed but dogged policeman who uses his wits and experience to solve mysteries whose answers are not at all obvious.

We have lots of new cookbooks just in time for the holidays. Lucinda Scala Quinn's 'Mad Hungry, Feeding Men and Boys' is the urban version of 'The Pioneer Woman Cooks, Recipes from an Accidental Country Girl' by Ree Drummond. 'Pioneer Woman' is both a cookbook and window into Oklahoma ranch life. This book began life as a blog and is full of excellent "how to" photographs. The author's sincere love of the land, the work they do, and the challenge of keeping a large family fed are the themes that unite the yummy recipes. Scala Quinn will be familiar to anyone who watches 'Everyday Food'. She also has a refreshingly no nonsense approach to producing great, nutritious food for men, boys and the rest of the family. Nigella Lawson has published a coffee table sized book called 'Nigella's Christmas' which is beautiful and guaranteed to get you in the mood to cook up a storm.

'Family Album' is Penelope Lively's new book. Her restrained examination of a large English family is well written but not one of her best as far as plotting. The six siblings who make up the family have grown up with their parents and an au pair at Allersmeade, a large Victorian house. Their mother Allison has poured her heart and soul into creating the "perfect" family life, with somewhat predictable, bittersweet results. As the adult children look back and secrets are revealed, they confront the reality versus illusion of their family's history.

The winning novel about a large English family is AS Byatt's 'The Children's Book'. She is a beautiful fluid writer and this family saga is steeped in the history of the Victorian era through WWI. It's full of fascinating details about the art and philosophy of rapidly changing times and characters you care about deeply.

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