



Sunriver Books & Music

November Newsletter

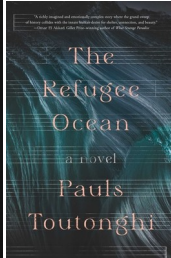
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It's history, you don't erase it, you learn from it!
By Mark Skeen.



Photo by K.B. Dixon



Saturday November 11 at 5 PM Pauls Toutonghi presents ***The Refugee Ocean***. Please register to attend this free event by emailing sunriver-books@sunriverbooks.com There will be refreshments and drawings for prizes.

Set-in two-time frames bound together by music; this compelling story presents vivid characters whose lives are touched by cataclysmic events. In 2014 Naim Rahil lives in Aleppo Syria, a city at war with itself, where each sound must be examined for danger. Naim is a young man with a future, through his musical talent he plans to study and have a career. In the seconds of the explosion, the blast robs him of that hope. With a mangled hand, he can no longer anticipate a brilliant life as a musical prodigy.

Surviving in a refugee camp, he is wracked by anger, despair, and worry. What is to become of him? Where will he go now? Toutonghi captures so perfectly the feelings a young man goes through when his future is snatched from him by violence, when he suffers unimaginable loss, when he is relegated to life in a camp. Anger and despair are reasonable emotions in those circumstances. Now all his hopes are pinned on getting out, on being sent to a country where explosions are not a possibility of daily life.

Naim is one of the fortunate refugees, he is sent to the US. But our streets are not paved of gold, and it is hard to adjust to a country with such different ways and attitudes. Making ends meet, learning the ways of this vast and different country is hard.

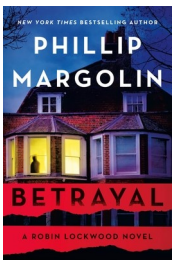
In 1948 Marguerite Toutonghi is expected to acquiesce in being the currency that saves her family from financial ruin through the good match arranged by her father. The man she is expected to marry has conservative beliefs requiring a wife to relinquish aspirations of her own and who has no love of music. This is abhorrent to her! Music is her life's passion, she is talented, young, and passionate, marriage to him would crush her. Marguerite's dream is to leave her home in Beirut Lebanon to study at

the Conservatoire de Paris, a goal that her father will not permit. He needs this union between his daughter, and the rather boring man with money and connections.

Marguerite chaffs at being used to finance her family with the sale of her body and soul. One night, at a dance, she meets a young Cuban man who understands her love of music, is interested in her thoughts, and is not intimidated by a woman having opinions. After a family betrayal, Marguerite throws caution to the wind, and boards a ship to Cuba.

I admired Marguerite and enjoyed reading about her. Naim made me think about the horrible damage war and violence cause to the human soul. The characters are likable and resilient. And yet, here we are still, a world at war in many places. Toutonghi writes of serious events in the lives of his characters, but he does so in a way that is uplifting, and entertaining.

Staff Recommendations. New Release.



Betrayal by Phil Margolin is the next in the New York Times Bestselling Robin Lockwood series set in Portland Oregon. Phil Margolin was a successful defense attorney, arguing death penalty cases. His series is written with a knowledge of the law and what it is like to argue cases when the stakes are high.

Robin Lockwood financed her law degree from Yale by fighting MMA bouts. She was a popular fighter, her fans singing out Rockin Robin when she approached the ring. Doing well, enjoying the sport, and wondering how far she could rise through the ranks, she takes a risk against her manager's advice. A big fight is going down in Las Vegas and Mandy Kerrigan's opponent has withdrawn. Kerrigan is, according to her manager, out of Robin's league. He proves to be correct when Kerrigan, a ferocious opponent, knocks her out. This is the fight that ends Robin's career in the ring. She stayed in law school and became a crackerjack defense attorney.

Kerrigan's career started a downhill spiral and she is not looking good when she appears in Portland for a bout. Knowing she wasn't doing great, Kerrigan turned to drugs, that were supposed to be undetectable, to give her an edge. The drugs failed in both areas, didn't give her an edge and were definitely detectable. Furious with the dealer, Ryan Finch, she tracks him down and assaults him in a bar, plenty of witnesses.

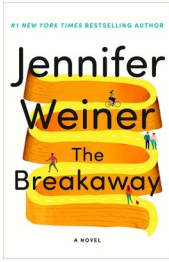
Ryan's father, Nathan Finch is a chemist, Ryan is pushing the designer drugs his father created. Not long after the altercation with Kerrigan, the whole Finch family is murdered in their home backing onto Forest Park. Kerrigan is arrested for the murder and turns to her former opponent, Robin Lockwood for help.

There is no shortage of people not fond of the Finch family. Margaret Finch was an attorney representing Mob interests, a potentially risky line of work. But no one else set themselves up quite as publicly as Kerrigan, fighting with one of the victims shortly before the murder.

Margolin has lots of twists and turns in this death penalty case that will keep you on the edge of your seat!

Staff Recommendations.

New Releases.

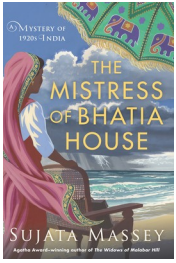


The Breakaway by Jennifer Weiner is a feel-good story that is fun to read!

Abby Stern is thirty-three years old and has made peace with not fitting the female idea pushed by advertisers, Hollywood, and society in general. Abby is a big girl, but she is strong and fit. She lives in Philadelphia, enjoys movies, good food, and time spent with friends. Most of all she loves riding her bike, when her friend, Lizzie, needs someone to lead a bike tour, Abby is a natural choice. The route will go from New York City to Upstate New York to Canada to Niagara Falls and back, much of the trip along the Empire State Trail.

Abby's boyfriend, a nice guy she has known since her teen years, is pushing to take their relationship to the next level, Mark wants them to move in together. Abby would like a little breathing space before taking such a momentous step. Unbeknownst to Abby, one of the riders signed up for the trip is Sebastian, they have a history.

If you want to read a fun romcom, this is it! If you would like to read about a bike trip with interesting people who get into all sorts of situations, this is it! If you want to read a book that says women should not be judged by the ideal of feminine beauty defined by advertising and Hollywood, this is definitely the right book!

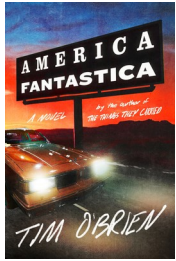


The Mistress of Bhatia House by Sujata Massey is the latest in the popular Perveen Mistry series.

Sunanda's action is by any definition heroic. When a child catches fire, she throws herself upon him to smother the flame, thus suffering painful burns herself. Attorney Perveen Mistry is present at the lavish fundraiser where the accident takes place, she is delivering a donation from her sister-in-law who has just had her first child. Perveen and her sister-in-law have been friends since they were young girls, but recently their relationship has been strained.

A few days later Sunanda is arrested, accused of a crime by a man who seems to have disappeared. Although Sunanda, as a servant, does not have the funds for Perveen's fee, she cannot let the woman languish, with her wounds, in jail so she takes the case pro-bono.

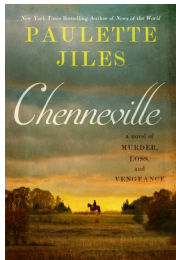
This excellent and entertaining series shows how women fared in the 1920's in India. It is especially relevant considering black robed men, aided by a handmaiden, just stripped women of rights over their bodies that had been settled for half a century right here in the USA.



America Fantastica by Tim O'Brian. It has been far too long since O'Brian's last book, but the wait was worth it. ***America Fantastica*** is a brilliant romp across the continent.

Bud Halverson's life hasn't turned out as he expected, from being a journalist to managing a JC Penny store, the trajectory seems off kilter. He feels the urge to shake things up. So, after packing a bag the night before, he gets up from his Saturday Kiwanis Club brunch, excuses himself, then strolls across the street to the Community National Bank, armed with a 38 revolver, where he robs the bank and takes Angie Banks, the teller, hostage. In pursuit are, of course, a variety of unlikely characters. And away we go! As a hostage, Angie has a lot of opinions.

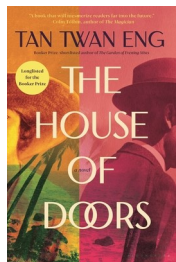
Packed with pathos and humor, this should be on your must read list!



Chenneville by Paulette Jiles is her latest historic fiction.

John Chenneville is a kind man, but war and senseless tragedy can change a person, give them different life goals. John was a Union soldier in the Civil War, injured in battle, it takes him a while to reach home. But his homecoming is not joyous. He was close with his sister; he arrives home to discover she has been slaughtered along with her whole family. At that moment, John's life transforms, his sole mission, his reason for going on, is to find and kill her murderer, A.J. Dodd. He will not be deterred by U.S. Marshall Giddens, or anyone else who tries to dissuade him from seeking revenge.

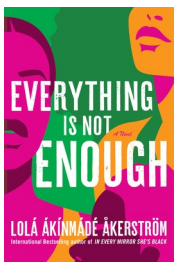
The killer is a slippery fellow, difficult to find, but John is determined. Nonetheless, despite his laser focus on killing a man, John Chenneville is a good man to spend time with and the story a satisfying read.



The House of Doors by Tan Wan Eng is historic fiction using Somerset Maugham as a character.

In 1921 Somerset Maugham visited Penang in Malaysia with his secretary Gerald Haxton. Eng builds a world of fiction around this visit and includes a real murder in the mix. Somerset Maugham was not only a phenomenally talented author, he was also a fascinating person who traveled the world, probably spied for the Brits, definitely lived a life by his own compass, not the rules of the day. Fascinating man.

In Eng's story, Maugham stays with Lesley and Robert Hamlyn, who live in Cassowary House right on the beach with a lush garden. Robert and Maugham were pals in their youth, roomed together, but haven't seen each other in years. Robert's service in WWI left him with scarred lungs, the Malaysian climate is finishing the job of doing him in, unless he moves to a drier environment. It is a move Lesley opposes, she is rooted to Malaysia and was involved for a bit with a Chinese revolutionary leader, something she doesn't want exposed.



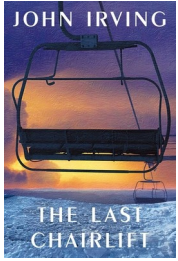
Altogether an entertaining read; a bit of murder, a scandal, an exotic local, and one of the greatest authors, Somerset Maugham, to boot!

Everything is not Enough by Lola Akinmade Akerstrom is the story of three women trying to live meaningful lives.

Kemi Adeyemi is on the fast track to corporate success, and enjoying a satisfying relationship with Tobias Wikstrom. That is until she makes a false step that changes everything. Brittany-Rae von Lundin was a flight attendant, now she is the mother of a small daughter, Maya, whom she adores and wife to Jonny, a man with some serious secrets. Jonny is fabulously wealthy, old money, from a family who don't much care for his choice of brides. Yasmin is on the verge of success as a make-up artist, but her history and that of her lover Yagiz Celik may prove challenging. Their lives will intersect. A fascinating story of three women navigating the shoals of life, searching for a path to safety and fulfillment.

Staff Recommendations.

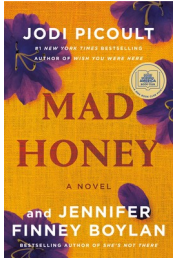
Now available in paperback.



The Last Chairlift by John Irving is a story for booklovers! I loved all the references to books! Like all John Irving books, it is a true pleasure to read.

The Last Chairlift is also a story for skiers, just in time for ski season, The whole clan is skiing crazy, except for Adam, who loves books more the flying down mountains and refuses to excel at the family sport.

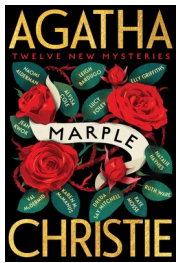
One of the many things Adam doesn't know is the identity of his father. Rachel Brewster, his mother, went off to a ski competition in Aspen Colorado hoping to place in the Slalom Championships, she came home pregnant. Rachel comes from a family of skiers, bursting with athletic prowess. But Rachel is diminutive, not able to get up the speed needed to become a champion. Instead, she has Adam and settles into life as a ski instructor. To say that the family is quirky, would be an understatement. Adam rebels by failing to do well on the snow, born into a family of dedicated skiers, he is the odd duck. Traversing from 1941 to current day, a lot of territory is covered. Often quite funny, but with some hard things to say about the important aspects of life and what lies in the past. It is a treasure!



Mad Honey by Jodi Picoult, Jenifer Boylan Finny Boylan.

Olivia took her baby, left Boston in the rearview mirror and returned to her small hometown, Adams, New Hampshire, when her husband turned out to be less Prince Charming and more thug. She made a life for herself and her child, running the family bee keeping business and watching her little boy grow into a handsome, bright teen. Senior year he fell hard for a newcomer, Lily, a young woman so alive and full of possibility she sparkled. Lily's Dad didn't excel in the parent department either. He didn't want her to be herself, he wanted something entirely different and was willing to try forcing her into that mold. Ava, Lily's mom, is a ranger with the National Forest Service. She took Lily and moved far away from the man who wouldn't love his child for who she was, not for who he wanted her to be.

Life seems sweet to both families. Until tragedy strikes, Lily is dead and Asher is accused of her murder.



Agatha Christie's Marple: Twelve New Mysteries. Agatha Christie thought women of a certain age were too often dismissed, almost invisible. Too true. She created Miss Marple, an observant elderly woman living in an English Village who with her keen wit and understanding of human nature solves crimes. She was a hit. For readers of cozy mysteries, good puzzle not too much blood, these were stories to enjoy over a good cup of tea, content in the certainty that Miss Marple would get it right in the end.

Twelve modern authors have a go at giving Miss Marple a few new mysteries to solve. Some of their efforts are more spot on than others, but there are some gems. If you like cozy mysteries set in England, this could be just the ticket.

Here are a few from the collection that I thought did a grand job with Miss Marple.

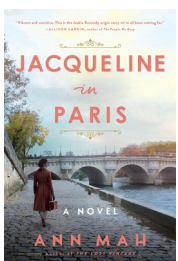
Lucy Foley penned ***Evil in Small Places*** sending Miss Marple to visit Prudence at Fairweather House in a small village. She was keen to view the colorful display of Japanese Maples at Honnington Manor and Prudence lived conveniently in the area. There is a sort of revel going on in the village, young men dressed in masks, carrying torches, making noise, that sort of thing. Of course, there is a murder. A newcomer to the community who had made quite a few enemies. Foley is fair with clues and it is an interesting take on dark side of village life.

Val McDermid does an excellent job with ***The Second Murder At The Vicarage***. The Vicar, Mr. Clement, is startled to find the body of his former serving woman, Mary, murdered in his kitchen. Only a short while prior another member of the community had died of eating poisoned mushrooms. The story is told through the Vicar's perspective as Miss Marple skillfully steers him through the investigation to the proper conclusion.

Ellie Griffith's ***Murder at Villa Rosa*** is absolutely delightful! It is set at a resort in Southern Italy with a clever cast of characters and is great fun to read.

Ruth Ware's ***Miss Marple's Christmas*** involves Raymond, Miss Marple's nephew, and his wife, Joan as they all spend the holiday with Miss Marple's friends, the Bantrys.

And there are more! Twelve total.



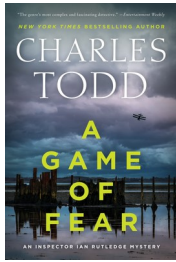
Jacqueline in Paris by Ann Mah.

Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis was one of the most admired women of the last century. The tragic widow of a fallen president, assassinated right next to her as his motorcade went through Dallas. Wife of the Greek tycoon Onassis. Independent single woman, and editor at a major publishing house, doing good work in a field she loved. Fashion icon. She was all of these things. But before all of that, before the fame, she was a young woman in Paris in 1949. Twenty years old, taking a year in the City of Light, expected to marry well (that was the norm at the time, prop up the family finances with a good match).

In Paris she finds a world still reeling from WWII, where there are jazz clubs, theater, great food, a city with both beauty and devastation. This is a love letter to Paris and a remembrance of the young woman who became Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis and enchanted the world.

November 2023 Book Clubs

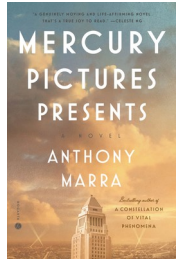
Book Clubs are a great way to meet other readers in the community. In November night falls early, leaving evening as a perfect time to settle in with a good book. Book Clubs meet on Mondays, everyone is welcome. To attend a discussion, email sunriverbooks@sunriverbooks.com



November 6 at 6 PM via Zoom and November 13 at 4:30 in person ***A Game of Fear*** by Charles Todd will be the subject of the Mystery Book Club discussion.

Ian Rutledge came back from the war changed, as did many men. His job as a Scotland Yard detective keeps him rooted. In the spring of 1921 Ian is sent to Walmer, a small coastal village where during the war an air field was built adjacent to the local mansion (a former Abbey). Lady Benton, a widow, lives alone in the sprawling building. During the day, a series of women help her run the place as a bit of an attraction, in order to stay afloat. But come nighttime, she is by herself in all those rooms. On a recent night, standing at her window she witnessed a murder. To make matters worse, the murderer was a dead man, a flyboy who died in a tragic accident during the war. Mrs. Benton is upset. Quite understandable.

Ian is sent to sort out if anything is really going on, as the murderer might be a ghost and the victim disappeared.



November 20 at 6 PM via Zoom and November 27 at 4:30 in person ***Mercury Pictures Presents*** by Anthony Marra is the subject of the Fiction Book Club discussion.

Mercury Pictures Presents by Anthony Marra has strong characters facing difficult times. While it is often very funny, it is also a compelling examination of the cost of war, how we react to it as a society, and the dark days around Hollywood blacklisting. The scenes shift from Italy to Hollywood to the Utah desert. Anthony Marra's writing is luminous. He can take a difficult episode from history and create a story that you will not want to stop reading until the last page.

Maria Lagana and her mother, Annunziata, fled their home in Rome to start over in Los Angeles. Leaving behind her father, Giuseppe, and bearing the guilty secret of the role she played in his arrest. There is no future for them in Mussolini's Italy.

Maria's childhood memories are filled with Sundays at the movies with her father, so it is a natural that as a young woman she goes to work in Hollywood. Artie Feldman, head of Mercury studio along with his twin brother Ned, gives her a chance to prove herself and she does not let him down. By the time WWII has started, Maria is doing most of the work of a full producer without the salary given the boys, or the title by their names. The love of her life is Eddie Lu, a handsome Chinese American, an actor with an impressive repertoire of the classics that he cannot use, always typecast as the Asian in films, roles are few and far between.

All is not going swimmingly at Mercury Pictures. Money is tight, the brothers are feuding, and Artie has been called to testify to a Congressional committee. Maria presents a façade of calm competence to the world, but she has a secret, something she cannot forgive herself. She has avoided facing the past for a long time now. A visitor from Italy who knows things about her father will shake up that wall she has built to keep the skeletons locked firmly in her closet.

Anthony Marra's ***Constellation of Vital Phenomena*** was an amazing story of the cost of war and the resilience of people resisting oppression when Russia invaded Chechnya. In ***Mercury Pictures Presents*** he tells a rousing story of the resilience of a young woman, the bigotry and corruption prevalent in the land, and the magic of Hollywood. Strong characters make this story glow!

Upcoming Book Club Dates for Monday Evenings

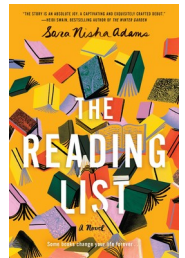
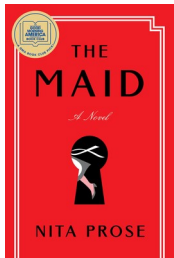
Everyone is welcome, Meetings are held in person at 4:30 & via Zoom at 6 PM on Mondays.

December

December ***The Maid*** by Nita Prose Mystery Book Club

December ***The Reading List*** by Sara Nisha Adams Fiction Book Club

Comment on book clubs, look up future book clubs, or find more information at Sunriverbooks.com



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