



## Book Club Recommendation Night 2013

*American Dervish* by Ayad Akhtar

Fiction, Paperback \$16.50

First novel by a Muslim American telling a coming-of-age story in pre 9-11 Wisconsin. A young man, who is infatuated with his aunt, orchestrates events that move beyond his control after she falls in love with a Jew. (Mike)

*Proof of Heaven* by Dr. Eben Alexander

Memoir, paperback, \$18.99

This book is guaranteed to stimulate thoughtful discussion. The reporting of Near Death Experiences (NDE) is nothing new, however this report comes from a scientist: a neurosurgeon, who has never before reconciled his ideas of science with beliefs about Heaven or God or the soul. Dr Alexander was in a coma for a week suffering from a rare form of meningitis, his cerebral cortex was completely shut down, he could not have been dreaming. The termination of Life support measures was being discussed by his family and then after 7 days he woke up. He experienced something that he does not have earthly words to describe, overwhelming unconditional love and comfort, beauty beyond words. Whether you are a scientist or a person of faith you will not be able to ignore Dr Alexander's story. (Jeanie)

*The Very Thought Of You* by Rosie Alison

Fiction, Paperback \$17.00

Short-listed for the 2009 Orange Prize. The story of an eight year old girl who is separated from her family just prior to the commencement of World War II. The young girl witnesses, and in a strange way becomes an accomplice to a love affair that impacts the rest of her life. (Mike)

*The Science of Evil: On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty* by Simon Baron-Cohen

Current Affairs, hardcover, \$30.00

What if we could pinpoint the area of the brain that allows evil acts? Simon Baron-Cohen thinks we are closer than ever. He has noted several areas of the brain that form an "empathy loop" and when a part of this loop isn't functioning well, we're much more likely to snap at our children, cut someone off in traffic, or (in extreme cases) engage in the kind of cruelty that is labeled as "evil" and/or "psychotic". (Judith)

*Is That a Fish in Your Ear?: Translation and the Meaning of Everything* by David Bellos

History/Language, paperback, \$19.95

Translation is an invisible art, often going uncredited. Bellos, himself a translator of literary works (French into English), discusses the various kinds of translations, and how the concept has affected history -- for instance, the technological triumph that were the Nuremberg War Trials, leading to the simultaneous translation that is a figure of the United Nations and European Union today. (Judith)

*The Age Of Hope* by David Bergen

Fiction, paperback, \$21.99

Chosen to represent the Western Canadian region in the 2013 edition of CBC's 'Canada Reads', *The Age Of Hope* chronicles fifty years in the life of a woman born near Winnipeg. Bergen, a multiple award-winning author paints an authentic portrait of an ordinary woman striving to become more than society depicts who 'she should be'. (Mike)

*Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown

Psychology, hardcover, \$27.50

Teddy Roosevelt once said, "It is not the critic who counts...the credit goes to the man who is actually in the arena." Dr. Brene Brown uses this quote as inspiration as she demonstrates how the courage to be vulnerable is the key to confidence, innovation, creativity and the ability to weather change. (Judith)

*Wallflower in Bloom* by Claire Cook

Fiction, paperback, \$16.99

Deirdre is personal assistant to her brother, the latest new-age guru. Wanting to do something entirely for herself, using her brother's contacts, she gets herself voted onto *Dancing With the Stars*. This book is funny, provocative, and heart-warming. (Sandy)

*The Lost Prince* by Selden Edwards

Fiction, hardcover, \$17.00 (Paperback due in June 2013)

*The Little Book* introduced us to Weezy Putnam, the young American woman who meets Wheeler Burden in 1897 Vienna. *The Lost Prince* continues her story and that of Arnaud Esterhazy through the early part of the 20th Century. Though a 'companion' book, and thoroughly enjoyable in its own right, it may be confusing if you are not familiar with the background from *The Little Book*. (Michelle)

*The Garden of Evening Mists* by Tan Twang Eng

Fiction, paperback, \$18.50

After a 34 year absence, retired Supreme Court Judge Teoh Yun Ling has returned to Yuguri, a Japanese garden high in the Cameron Highlands of Malaya. She has been diagnosed with progressive aphasia that is robbing her of the ability to communicate. Soon she will be left with only her memories. Her return to the garden is an urgent need to revive those memories, and find answers to the questions that have been with her for so long. Yun Ling is both physically and mentally scarred. She was the sole survivor of a labour camp during the Japanese occupation. Her sister died there. Her sister was an artist who loved the calming beauty of Japanese Gardens. Yun had promised her that she would build such a garden even

though it meant she would have to work with a Japanese; the enigmatic former gardener to the Emperor himself, Aritomo Nakamura. Nominated for the 2012 Man Booker, the writing is sensual, evocative, and at times, jarringly brutal. (Cynthia)

*419* by Will Ferguson

Fiction, paperback, \$20.00

Will Ferguson's *419* won the 2012 Scotiabank Giller Prize, and deservedly so. It is the compelling tale of the attempt by Laura Curtis to track down the Nigerians responsible for defrauding her father in an email scam. Once she reaches Nigeria, we learn the stories of not only Winston, the email man, but also Amina and Nnamdi, who are struggling to survive in a country wounded by multinational oil interests. Nothing is simple in Nigeria. Nor is the novel. (Anne)

*The Feminine Mystique (50th Anniversary Edition)* by Betty Friedan

Current Affairs, hardcover, \$27.50

Friedan's 1963 book on gender equality had a profound impact in its time. While the book drew criticism from many directions, it spoke eloquently to millions of women who understood what Friedan meant by "the problem with no name." Readers in 2013 will likely disagree with at least some of her views. Consider the book as one end of fifty years in the history of gender equality. If you're watching *Mad Men*, or reading Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*, you'll experience some "Aha" moments when you read (or re-read) *The Feminine Mystique*. (Anne)

*The Tale-Teller* by Susan Glickman

Fiction, paperback, \$21.95

Years of impeccable research resulted in a work of historical fiction set in 1730's New France where-in a girl in disguise must conceal her real identity or die. A marvelous story based on the life of an obscure historical figure who challenged the restrictions imposed on outsiders in post-colonial Canada. (Mike)

*The Snow Child* by Eowyn Ivey

Fiction, paperback, \$16.50

In 1920, Jack and Mabel move to Alaska to escape family pressures because they are childless. Amid the hardships of homesteading they take over the care of a half-wild child, the daughter of a Russian trapper and his wife who are both deceased. Weaving together this modern tale and a classic folk story, the author portrays beautifully the hardships and joy of life and love. (Sandy)

*The Hundred Year Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window And Disappeared* by Jonas Jonasson

Fiction, paperback, \$16.99

What do an elephant, a suitcase full of cash, a man named Einstein, a hot-dog-stand operator, a bevy of criminals, and lots of vodka have in common? They are all part of the most wonderfully quirky, eccentric, and hilarious novel that I have ever read. The remarkably gifted explosives expert, Alex Karlsson, impacts the course of world events in an adventure filled life where nothing much matters. Except for his next glass of vodka. (Mike)

*The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce

Fiction, Hardcover \$29.95 (Paperback due in June 2013)

Oh Harold , what have you got yourself into? He is in a sad stale marriage, he has made many, many mistakes in his life. He has not been a courageous man, but maybe, just maybe, he can be. Is it too late? Can you find redemption after all this time through one act of daring and compassion? Harold is a treasure and so are all the people he meets on his journey, the everyday, everyman people who teach him to trust and to try. We are all just people trying to live our lives, more similar than different. (Jeanie)

*Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* by Thomas King

History, hardcover, \$34.95 (paperback due in October 2013)

Thomas King brings his formidable talents as writer, storyteller, humourist, historian, and cultural analyst to his account of the relationship between Whites and Indians in North America. He calls this work an account, not a history, describing it as storytelling that is "fraught with history." The book is thought-provoking and highly readable, with King's trademark ironic humour (e.g., Dead Dog Café). Read it, even if your book club doesn't select it. (Anne)

*The Sweet Girl* by Annabel Lyon

Fiction, paperback, \$21.00

A sequel to *The Golden Mean*, this is the story of Pythias, the "sweet girl" of the title , and daughter of Aristotle. She is well-educated, headstrong and keenly interested in the natural world introduced by her father. As she matures into a young woman, her father withdraws further and further into depression, and then with the death of Alexander the Great, Macedonians are no longer welcome in Athens. Forced to flee, their lives will never be the same. (Michelle)

*The Heart Broke In* by James Meek

Fiction, hardcover, \$32.99 (Paperback due in October 2013)

A modern-day epic featuring a brilliant scientist, an aging rock star, a gene therapist and a 'mad' newspaper baron whose lives intersect under tragic circumstances. Fans of Jonathan Franzen will love Meek's incisive rendering of human failings, in spite of our worthy attempts to behave honourably. Heartbreaking, uplifting and earth-shattering all at the same time. (Mike)

*Top Dog: The Science of Winning and Losing* by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman

Current Affairs, hardcover, \$29.99

The authors, who have won awards for their science writing, explore recent scientific research on competition, stress, winning, and losing, with particular attention to counter-intuitive research findings. Differences in genetics, psychology, and physiology mean that conditions that support optimal performance for one person can undermine someone else's performance. This is not a one-size-fits-all motivational book. Instead, it tackles questions like why continual stress is essential for some people to perform at their best, while others get overwhelmed and perform badly. Science—but very readable science. (Anne)

*Pure* by Andrew Miller

Fiction, paperback, \$15.99

By 1785, the rotting remains of Les Innocents, the oldest church and cemetery in central Paris, had polluted the air, the water and the soil of the surrounding district. The stink permeated the breath of the people living around it, tainting their food as the cemetery eroded into their cellars. The cemetery was so overcrowded that there was not enough oxygen available for decomposition. The King's minister has hired a young engineer from Normandy, Jean-Baptiste Baratte, charging him with the task of relocating the corpses to the Catacombs, and then destroying Les Innocents. Miller's writing brings to life the sordidness of life in Paris on the brink of revolution. (Cynthia)

*Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller

Fiction, paperback, \$18.99

Winner of the 2012 Orange Prize for fiction. This is the story of Achilles narrated by his closest friend, Patroclus. It follows Achilles from his boyhood as a prince of Phythia through his youth and training, and ultimately to his death at Troy. Achilles tale is a tragedy on so many levels, but this novel, written by a classicist, has an easy, free-flowing style that brings the characters and times to life. (Michelle)

*The Last Romanov* by Dora Levy Mossanen

Fiction, paperback, \$16.99

Has anyone done something they regret and then sought redemption? Is the long-lived Darya responsible for the murderous end of the Romanov family? Travelling back and forth in time from 1887 to 1991, a formidable 104 year old woman discovers the last Tsar of Russia may still be alive. Intrigue, romance, violence and a touch of magic lead to a captivating tale of what might have transpired in the Imperial Russia of so many years ago. (Mike)

*The Revisionists* by Thomas Mullen

Fiction, paperback, \$17.50

A literary thriller - part science fiction - part philosophical meditation on free will - and part time travel. Zed is an agent from the not too distant future. His mission on earth is to ensure that each and every cataclysmic event occurs just as it did before. If you could, would you prevent the Holocaust knowing that it would mean destroying a perfect world in the future? Two worlds collide in a spellbinding account of human courage, weakness and the extraordinary willingness to die for a cause. (Mike)

*The Good Mayor* by Andrew Nicholl

Fiction, paperback, \$19.95

Tibo Krovic is the Mayor of Dot situated at the mouth of the Ampersand as it joins the Baltic Sea. For almost 20 years he has been the "good" mayor of Dot. He has championed Dot in its ongoing feud with Umlaut up the river, he has keep its administration running smoothly, he has enjoyed his fishing trips to the island of Dash, just offshore, and for almost 20 years, he has been in love with his Secretary, Mrs. Stopak. (Michelle)

*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien

Fiction (Short Stories), paperback, \$18.95

This is my top pick for this year. We have to admit that war is part of the human condition but to truly understand the experience of war, the human consequences of war this is the book that must be read. Tim O'Brien is a celebrated award winning author and professor of English literature. He is a storyteller with possibly the most important story we need to hear. He was a soldier in the Vietnam War. This is a book of short stories, of the men in his platoon. Truth, memory and fiction come together in searing visual images. This is a book you will never forget and hopefully it can guide us to a better understanding of what we really lose when countries are in conflict and men are at war. (Jeanie)

*Wonder* by R. J. Palacio

Fiction, hardcover, \$17.99

August Pullman was born with an almost unheard of birth defect. He has had over 25 surgeries in his short life. As he says "I won't describe how I look. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse." People stop and stare at him in the street, horrified. They don't see past the physical to the "normal" boy trapped inside. Auggie wants nothing more than to go to a real school, rather than having his mother home-school him. He wants to have real friends rather than his sister. He just wants a chance to be a normal kid. Now, starting Grade 5, he is enrolled in school for the first time. Told from multiple points of view. (Cynthia)

*Dead Man Walking* by Sister Helen Prejean

Memoir, paperback, \$16.00

When Sister Helen agreed to participate in an inmate pen pal program, she didn't know that she would become spiritual advisor to death row inmate Patrick Sonnier, and would be a witness to his execution. It would only be the first such relationship she would accept, even as she reached out to the victims of those she counselled. A vehement argument against the death penalty and a call for prison and justice reform, Sister Helen's story has been adapted into a feature film and an opera. (Judith)

*The Imposter Bride* by Nancy Richler

Fiction, paperback, \$17.99

Moving seamlessly from war-torn Europe to Jewish Montreal in the postwar years, a strange young woman mysteriously abandons her husband and child. Long-listed for the 2012 Giller Prize, *The Imposter Bride* has been translated into seven languages. (Mike)

*For All the Tea in China: How England Stole the World's Favourite Drink and Changed History*, Sarah Rose  
History, paperback, \$18.50

This is a popular history of Robert Fortune's trips to China starting in 1845. In this earliest example of industrial espionage, Fortune steals tea plants, seeds and cuttings, along with the growing and manufacturing knowledge and transports it all to India on behalf of the British East India Company. (Michelle)

*The House I Loved* by Tatiana De Rosnay

Fiction, paperback, \$16.99

From the author of *Sarah's Key* and *A Secret Kept*, De Rosnay's tenth novel is set in Paris, France which is being 'redeveloped' in the 1860's. In the process of fighting against the destruction of her family home, Rose must come to terms with a 'long buried' secret that has shaped her life in so many ways. (Mike)

*The End of Your Life Bookclub* by Will Schwalbe

Memoir, hardcover, \$29.95 (Paperback due in June 2013)

This is a heart-warming book that will reaffirm your faith in families and in books, real books with covers and pages and histories, books that ask to be read. It is a celebration of literature, of kindness and compassion. The gems of wisdom are bountiful so be prepared with your sticky notes and highlighter and...a box of Kleenex. Mary Anne Schwalbe was a remarkable woman that you have the privilege of meeting through her very thoughtful and loving son. You will be passing this along to everyone you know. (Jeanie)

*The Art Forger* by Barbara Shapiro

Fiction, paperback, \$21.99

In early 1990, art valued at more than \$500 million were stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Not a single piece has ever been found. Claire Roth is a young artist who is struggling to establish herself. Although extremely talented, she has been blacklisted, thanks to the deceit of her former professor and lover. She is a pariah in the art world. No gallery will dirty themselves by mounting a show of her works. To support herself, she works as an art copyist for reproductions.com, specializing in recreating pieces by Edgar Degas. Then one day, Aidan Markel, owner of a renowned gallery, makes her an offer she can't refuse. He presents her with a stolen Degas from the Gardner Museum heist, asking her to copy it in exchange for a showing of her own original work. But is it truly the original Degas? (Cynthia)

*Please Look After Mom* by Kyung-Sook Shin

Fiction, paperback, \$19.95

This book is essentially about cultural and generational differences. Can we successfully blend cultures? Can understanding and respect still exist when young lives are eager to assimilate into new surroundings? This is a deeply emotional story of a mother's truly unconditional love. Do children remember the sacrifices? The adult children in this story realize that they don't even really know their mother, her joys, her sorrows. What responsibilities do children have to an aging parent? A book you will not easily forget. (Jeanie)

*Monsieur Monde Vanishes* by Georges Simenon

Fiction, paperback, \$16.95

One day, a middle-aged Monsieur Monde leaves his business at 6:00 pm as usual, walks to his Paris bank, withdraws 350,000 francs and gets on a train to Marseilles. He checks into a non-descript hotel, hears his neighbours' argument through the paper-thin walls, and ends up helping the young woman. Thus his adventures begin. (Michelle)

*Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* by Paul Torday

Fiction, paperback, \$14.99

This is a clever, humorous, and entertaining debut novel about impossibility and belief, told through diary extracts, emails, memos, letters, and interview transcripts. Dr. Alfred Jones, a scientific bureaucrat with the British National Centre for Fishing Excellence, is forced into a bizarre project concerning a sheikh who dreams of bringing together his countrymen by introducing them to the joys of salmon fishing..... in the desert landscape of Yemen. At first reluctant, Dr. Jones is soon caught up in the wonder of the project, and the enthusiasm of the sheikh and his consultant; Harriet Chetwode-Talbot. The three of them are completely unaware that the Prime Minister's PR aide has spotted this project as a positive photo opportunity to counteract the negative press about British involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. (Cynthia)

*Almost A Great Escape* by Tyler Trafford

Biography, paperback, \$19.95

Many of you will have seen the movie 'The Great Escape'. Jens Muller, a Norwegian pilot, was one of the three survivors who escaped from Stalag Luft III, the Nazi prisoner-of-war camp portrayed in the movie starring Steve McQueen. Not long after Alice Tyler passes away, her son, noted local author Tyler Trafford, finds a box of love letters that had been sent to Alice from Jens Muller. Someone has called *Almost A Great Escape* a biographical detective story. It is that and so much more. The writing is magnificent. The story is compelling and spellbinding. Taken together it is simply impossible to refrain from crying – over and over again as you read this captivating, true story of love. (Mike)

*The Golem and the Jinni* by Helene Wecker

Fiction, paperback, \$19.99

A marvelous mix of history and folklore. A golem awakes on a ship bound for America, even as her master dies, leaving her wandering. She becomes a baker. A jinni is released from a flask of oil, after a thousand years of captivity, but is still trapped in human form. He becomes a tinsmith. Against the immigrant struggle of Jews and Arabs in 1890s New York City, the golem and the jinni struggle to find their new places in this New World. (Judith)

*The Age Of Miracles* by Karen Thompson Walker

Fiction, paperback, \$19.95

A first novel of speculative fiction written by an author whose work is being compared to Margaret Atwood's. The world is changing: the days and nights are growing longer. Julia and her family are struggling to maintain a normalcy in a rapidly changing world that is becoming exceedingly abnormal. This end-of-the-world, coming-of-age tale is hard to put down. Think of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* – not just the horror, but the boundless love between father and son. You will find the same kind of love in the *Age Of Miracles*. (Mike)