



"Book Club" Staff Recommendation Night 2014

***The Miracle Thief* by Iris Anthony**

Fiction, Paperback \$17.99

An intriguing book set in the year 911 A.D., *The Miracle Thief* discusses the role of women in the Dark Ages, the role of the Church and the necessity for faith. When powerful men make choices in the book, women are left to accommodate the results as best they can. The story involves a woman too ashamed to be the leader her convent needs, a woman with a deformity that makes her an outcast, and a princess who is being forced to marry for political reasons. Their stories are bound together through a saint's relic that has been stolen. An engaging story, but thought provoking. (Susan)

***About Schmidt* by Louis Begley**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.00

Albert Schmidt is a retired lawyer who misses his recently deceased wife, has an unhealthy diet, is a mild anti-Semite and owns a nice home in the Hamptons. His daughter is a yuppie in all the worst ways. She is about to marry a buttoned-up Jewish lawyer. What emerges is a terrifically poignant study of a man whose flaws become both sinister and sympathetic. *About Schmidt* was written in 1996, but is just now coming to my attention. I'm wondering how I missed this brilliant, subtle and intelligent piece of work. (Michael)

***Those Who Save Us* by Jenna Blum**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.95

This is one of the most touching and tragic books I have ever read. It is WWII and we are in Germany near Buchenwald. Our main character is a young German girl and she is in love. Nazi atrocities may be at the root of the story but this portrayal of a mother and baby daughter is so intimate and personal, you feel as if you are living next door — rooting for them, being scared for them, starving with them. We also watch this young girl as an old woman with her adult daughter. There are many things they do not talk about but clearly no one emerged unscathed from the events that they lived through. You will read this book more than once and your heart will pound. (Jeanie)

***The Shining Girls* by Lauren Beukes**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.00

The Shining Girls mixes elements of the detective thriller with a touch of science fiction. When misogynist-killer Harper Curtis stumbles on a Depression-era house that opens onto other times, he thinks he's found the perfect hideaway from which to hunt "the shining girls", those women who burn with potential in any era. After each murder he vanishes into the night — that is until one of his victims survives, and begins to hunt him back. (Judith)

***Going Home Again* by Dennis Bock**

Fiction, Paperback \$19.99 (Canadian Author)

Two brothers. Two divorces. One amicable, one vicious. Short-listed for the Giller Prize in 2013, Dennis Bock writes about regret, the faded promise of youth, family and marital dynamics, and realizing our limitations while trying to move forward. *Going Home Again* is a beautifully written story that shows how

our choices shape our future, sometimes with tragic results. The characters are flawed, fascinating and oh so very real. (Michael)

***The Sandcastle Girls* by Chris Bohjalian**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.95

This is Bohjalian's fifteenth book. I am sure you may be familiar with some of his earlier offerings: *Midwives*, or *Skeletons at the Feast*. He has always been supremely talented in character-development and has created men and women you do not easily forget. With *The Sandcastle Girls* he has retained his ability to create complex, unforgettable characters but has added a historical event with a personal connection. Bohjalian is Armenian and this book pays homage to his heritage. The horrors of the Armenian genocide, circa 1915, is the background for an intense love story of two people who should have absolutely nothing in common. Historical fiction is one of my favourite genres and this is it at its best: a point in time that you may not know anything about and characters that personalize the events so that we can go beyond the facts and understand the more important human story. (Jeanie)

***The Painted Girls* by Cathy Marie Buchanan**

Fiction, Paperback \$22.99 (Canadian Author)

Inspired by Degas's statuette "Little Dancer Aged Fourteen", *The Painted Girls* is told through the alternating voices of Antoinette and Marie van Goethem (the actual model for "Little Dancer"). After their father dies, the van Goethem family struggles to survive. The dream is to become a ballet star at the Paris Opera and find a wealthy patron. Reality is far more difficult. Paris of the Belle Epoque may have been a time of arts and culture, but for these sisters it was period of poverty, violence and bad choices. (Cynthia)

***The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton**

Fiction, Hardcover \$35.00 (Canadian Author)

Winner of the Booker Prize in 2013, Eleanor Catton's first novel catapults us into the mid nineteenth century gold rush in New Zealand. Walter Moody, an outsider who has come to stake his claim, stumbles upon twelve local men who have met in secret to discuss a series of unexplained events. Something extraordinary is occurring: a wealthy man has vanished, a prostitute has tried to end her life, and an enormous cache of gold has been discovered in the home of a luckless drunk. And that's just the beginning. *The Luminaries* evoked memories of reading Charles Dickens, my favourite author of all time. (Michael)

***Whistling Past the Graveyard* by Susan Crandall**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.99

When you try to forget your troubles, Starla's daddy says, you're "whistling past the graveyard". Grounded during the Fourth of July parade, this precocious nine-year-old runs away from her overly-strict Mammy's house to find her mother, who left for Nashville years ago to become a recording star. On a country backroad, she meets Eula, a black woman traveling alone with a white baby. What results is a road trip like no other through the American Civil Rights Movement. (Judith)

***Annexed* by Sharon Dogar**

Fiction, Paperback \$10.99

This is a bold undertaking. Everyone knows who Anne Frank was. Millions have read her diary, visited the museum, but can they name the other people involved? Peter van Pels's family hid in the annex with the Franks. Peter is mentioned in Anne's diary. Sharon Dogar tells the story of a sixteen-year-old boy struggling to live in tight quarters while coming of age. It is complex, powerful, and as tragic as Anne's story. Read by the Senior Owlets book club. (Cynthia)

The Signature of All Things by Elizabeth Gilbert (2014).

Fiction, Hardcover \$31.00 (Paperback expected in June 2014)

Alma Whittaker (1800-1888) is a bryologist (mosses/lichens). Unconventional, well-educated, multi-lingual, she doesn't travel outside of her little piece of Pennsylvania until she is 50. She is a renaissance woman at a time when women were not accepted in the scientific world, but her articles are well received by her peers and her intricate study of her small world leads her to startling discoveries. (Michelle)

Flora by Gail Godwin

Fiction, Paperback \$18.00

When two authors who I greatly admire and respect, John Irving and Ann Patchett, both recommend Gail Godwin's fourteenth book, it becomes a novel I can't ignore. *Flora* is the story of a ten year old girl who is motherless and virtually fatherless. She is cared for by her mother's cousin, a 22 year old woman who seems to be crying all the time. *Flora*, the caregiver, is fraught with turmoil and is much less 'adult-like' than the much younger Helen. Shortly after WWII ends, a veteran enters their lives and everything changes. The complex heart of a child impacts the lives of so many people, with unintended, yet disastrous results. (Michael)

The Book of Immortality: The Science, Belief and Magic Behind Living Forever by Adam Leith Gollner

Current Affairs, Hardcover \$29.95 (Canadian Author)

This is a work of popular non-fiction that traces the search for immortality from ancient history to present time. Gollner looks at everything; religious beliefs, cults, pseudo-science and academic studies. Some of his findings are hilarious and others quite unsettling, but this book is well worth the read. (Michelle)

The Fault in Our Stars by John Green

Fiction, Paperback \$14.99

Hazel Grace Lancaster was diagnosed with stage IV thyroid cancer at thirteen. Even though a miracle drug has bought her time, she is terminal. Now sixteen, she is old beyond her years, and her obsession is a book titled *An Imperial Affliction* by Peter van Houten. When she meets Augustus Waters in cancer support group, Hazel realizes she is so much more than her disease. The characters are smart, funny, and people you want to know. The premise is simple: dying girl meets boy, but the story is so much more. (Cynthia)

Weaving Threads: Travels on the Silk Road by Nancy M. Hayes

Biography, Paperback \$20.00 (Canadian Author)

In 1965, local Calgary author Nancy Hayes, and her husband Ross, set off in a VW Beetle on the adventure of their lives. They wanted to follow the Silk Road in the footsteps of Marco Polo. They traveled mountain passes and crossed deserts, meeting wonderful people along the way. Eventually war and the Iron Curtain put the adventure on hold for forty years. Nancy's writing is captivating, and Ross's photos and drawings are a wonderful bonus. The author is interested in joining book clubs for their discussion. (Cynthia)

The Boy by Betty Jane Hegerat

Fiction, Paperback \$21.95 (Canadian Author)

In 1959 Robert Raymond Cook was the last man to be executed by the Alberta government. Cook was hanged for the murder of seven people: his father, stepmother, three half-brothers and two half-sisters. The children were three to nine years old. The question of Cook's guilt has always been in debate. In *The Boy*, Betty Jane Hegerat sheds a different kind of light on this horrific crime. Through dogged investigative work and creative genius, she takes readers on a fascinating journey as she re-examines the evidence, interviews key players, and weaves in a parallel fictional tale of a family that shares similarities with the Cooks. Hegerat has deftly created a narrative that is part fact and part fiction that will leave readers

haunted with their own thoughts and questions about this crime and the punishment. Above all though, readers will come away from this story knowing the Cook family, not just as victims and murderer but as real people. (Eileen)

The Hole in the Middle by Kate Hilton

Fiction, Paperback \$19.99 (Canadian Author)

Career, family, expectations - can women really have it all? and if we can, at what cost? Kate Hilton captures the eternal struggle between self and others in a humorous and captivating story. A 40ish woman with a demanding career, two sons, and a husband tries to balance her life, especially difficult when her first romance turns up in her life again. (Susan)

The Memory Child by Steena Holmes

Fiction, Paperback \$17.95 (Canadian Author)

Most are familiar with the concept of postpartum depression. But what if it is more than that? After waiting for twelve years Diane is finally pregnant and her husband is overjoyed. But the timing is not perfect and while Diane is revelling in her new state of motherhood, something is not quite right. A woman's dark past collides head-on with her mysterious present in this surreal and gripping family drama. *The Memory Child* is Calgarian Steena Holmes's third novel. (Michael)

All Woman and Springtime by Brandon W. Jones

Fiction, Paperback \$18.95

The dictatorship of North Korea: ideal socialism, terrorism, sadism. We learn about this world through the eyes of two young orphans, young women working in a clothing factory. They do escape the factory — unknowingly, sadly sold into the sex slave market. The fear and hopelessness are overwhelming, the psychological damage is clearly evident and yet their friendship is the beacon that keeps them alive. This is a serious book; the brutality and brainwashing of the North Koreans is something we should all know about. (Jeanie)

Leonardo and the Last Supper by Ross King

History, Paperback \$23.00 (Canadian Author)

This is not just about Leonardo da Vinci's painting "The Last Supper". This is about the period, the culture, the life that influenced Leonardo and inspired him to create some of the most recognizable works of art. There are fascinating insights into both the life of Leonardo, and the political and religious conflicts that influenced his art. Ross King received the Governor General's Award for this book, and is well known for writing readable history books. (Cynthia)

The Dinner by Herman Koch

Fiction, Paperback \$16.00

This book will make you squirm. It is sparse and it is scary. The topic is contemporary and controversial. Heated discussion is guaranteed. Fifteen-year-old sons, tragedy, parental protection. It is such a lovely evening in this posh uppity restaurant; we are such successful parental role models; do we really need to deal with this? Yes it's a morality shocker, but is it realistic? Where are we today in our civilized intelligent upper crust society families? Do you know these parents? I feel shivery just thinking about this book again. It's one of my must reads. (Jeanie)

Half the Sky by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

Current Affairs, Paperback \$18.95

A powerful and emotionally difficult read, Kristof and WuDunn discuss the plight of women worldwide - how the neglect, abuse, enslavement, and murder of women (from pregnancy to adulthood) occurs everywhere, and how it impacts society. Recent headlines remind us that this is a local issue as well. The authors call this a humanitarian issue, rather than a women's issue. However, the book is a hopeful one as well, as the authors show how helping individual women helps society as a whole. They conclude with

a chapter of ideas that we can all do to help make a difference to women in particular, and society as a whole. (Susan)

***The Thing You Think You Cannot Do* by Gordon Livingston, M.D.**

Personal Growth, Paperback \$16.50

Fear has become a corrosive influence in modern life. Exploited for power by politicians and for money by the media, fear has become embedded in the way we think and act. In *The Thing You Think You Cannot Do*, psychiatrist Gordon Livingston argues that overcoming fear constitutes the most difficult struggle we face today, and that the antidote for fear is courage. In his practice, Livingston has increasingly found himself prescribing virtues such as courage instead of tranquilizers and antidepressants. Drawing on his experiences as a physician, a Vietnam veteran, and his own tragic losses he presents thirty truths. Each truth explains sources of our fears and points the way to becoming more courageous in the face of personal and social fear. While some of the examples are about heroic actions, most have applications readers can relate to and apply to everyday life. (Eileen)

***The Napoleon of Crime: The Life and Times of Adam Worth, Master Thief* by Ben MacIntyre**

Biography, Paperback \$17.00

Adam Worth was the most talented thief of the Victorian era, known as the Napoleon of Crime. He started as a pickpocket, but after faking his own death during the American Civil War, he started robbing banks. His exploits became consistently more daring as he expanded across three continents. He never used violence, looked after his gangster friends, and won the grudging respect of William Pinkerton of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Arthur Conan Doyle modelled Professor James Moriarty after him. (Cynthia)

***Precious Thing* by Colette McBeth**

Fiction, Paperback \$22.99

Rachel and Clara formed an enduring friendship as schoolgirls. Now in their late twenties, their friendship has endured, until one night, one of them disappears and suddenly nothing is as it seems. (Sandy)

***Coming Clean* by Kimberly Rae Miller**

Biography, Hardcover \$29.99 (Paperback expected in May)

A memoir by a young woman whose parents were hoarders. Somehow, she managed to present a "normal" appearance to the world, while hiding the fact that she lived in absolute squalor. How she managed to overcome the psychological damage done to her by her parents and her surroundings makes for riveting reading. (Sandy)

***The Bookstore* by Deborah Meyler**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.99

When Columbia graduate student Esme Garland finds herself pregnant and single, she's determined to keep both her child and her career. Without a green card, she takes an under the table job at her local used book store, The Owl. Filled with delightful characters and customers, *The Bookstore* is a charming epistle to readers and booksellers alike. (Judith)

***Flying Time* by Suzanne North**

Fiction, Paperback \$19.95 (Canadian Author)

Suzanne North's first book in several years is a delight for many reasons. Her sense of humour shines through, yet handles the tricky task of writing in both the present and the past beautifully. *Flying Time* is the story of a senior citizen temporarily residing in a nursing home while recovering from injuries. To pass the time, she takes a memoir writing class, and introduces us to her past as a naive young woman in 1939 Calgary, who goes to work for a Japanese business man. Prejudice, coming of age, history all blend together into a story that will remain with you a long time. (Susan)

Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki

Fiction, Paperback \$17.00 (Canadian Author)

While walking on a beach, Ruth picks up debris from the Japanese tsunami. She finds a copy of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* repurposed as a journal by Nao, a teenager recently returned to Tokyo from California. Ruth becomes obsessed with Nao's diary. She is drawn into Nao's life; the depression of her father, the horrific bullying at school, the strength of her great grandmother, the story of her grand uncle. Like her name, and the title, Nao is a time being. Her time is in the past, but Nao becomes Ruth's present. Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2013. (Cynthia)

One Hundred and Four Horses by Mandy Retzlaff

Biography, Paperback \$19.99

A true story about rescuing horses during the reclamation of land from white Africans by Robert Mugabe. Both the story of the displaced white Africans and the horses they love, it is the story of hope and terror that is quite compelling. (Susan)

The Emperor of Paris by C.S. Richardson

Fiction, Paperback \$19.95 (Canadian Author)

Even though baker Octavio cannot read, he loves stories. Weekly he visits the Fournier bookstall to choose new books. The peculiar green of the bookstall captures the eye of Jacob, the struggling artist. The artist is inspired by the young woman with the disfiguring facial scar. Isabeau, an art restorer at the Louvre, is intrigued by the young man and his father who whisper imagined stories about the museum's paintings. The non-linear storyline intertwines these characters to the serendipitous ending. (Cynthia)

The Other Typist by Suzanne Rindell

Fiction Paperback \$18.00

Hearing confessions is Rose Baker's job. A prudish New York police station stenographer, Rose quickly learns that with the strike of the keys she can seal a man's fate. It's 1923 and times are changing fast. Too fast for Rose. Women smoke, they drink and go to speakeasies. Rose is determined to hang on to her outdated values, but when a glamorous new girl joins the typing pool, Rose falls under her spell and is drawn into a foreign, high-stakes world. As the two women navigate between the sparkling underworld of speakeasies by night and their jobs at the station by day, Rose's fascination with the other typist turns into an obsession from which Rose may never recover. (Eileen)

Paris by Edward Rutherfurd

Fiction, Paperback \$22.00

Fair warning: This novel will make you want to visit Paris again. With the lengthy and complicated history that only certain geographic places have, Paris is a prime topic for one of Rutherfurd's expansive and educational sagas. From the building of the Eiffel Tower in 1880s to the sabotaging of its elevators as Hitler's armies marched in, *Paris* is a layered novel that allows Rutherfurd to show us the City of Light in a way we've not seen before, through the ordinary people and families who shaped it. (Judith)

A Well-Tempered Heart by Jan Philipp Sendker

Fiction, Paperback \$17.95

Sendker's first novel *The Art Of Hearing Heartbeats* was a love story and magical journey through the heart and soul of Burma in the 1950's. Having just begun the sequel I'm pleased to report the second novel lives up to the lofty expectations. Her storytelling is still immensely powerful. Ten years after returning from Burma, Julia is a successful Manhattan lawyer, but a 'voice in her head' launches her into a severe personal crisis. As she begins to question the meaning of her life, we learn about a Burmese woman whose young sons are conscripted as child soldiers. Their lives intersect and we come to know what the most important things in life really are. (Michael)

***Bellman & Black* by Diane Setterfield**

Fiction, Paperback \$24.95

From the author of *The Thirteenth Tale* comes the story of the life of William Bellman. The book follows him from a young age to being the prosperous owner of mill. When tragedy strikes, he turns his sights to a new business venture, an emporium devoted strictly to mourning. Throughout the tale is the mysterious Mr. Black, influencing William in strange ways. (Sandy)

***The Rosie Project* by Graeme Simsion**

Fiction, Paperback \$19.99

Don Tillman is a brilliant yet socially challenged professor of genetics, who has decided it's time he found a wife. And so, in the orderly, evidence-based manner with which Don approaches all things, he designs the Wife Project to find his perfect partner: a sixteen-page, scientifically valid survey to filter out the drinkers, the smokers, the late arrivers. Along comes Rosie. Rosie is a disaster. But somehow... *The Rosie Project* is a wonderfully pleasurable read but with a serious undertone I greatly appreciated. (Michael)

***Raven Stole The Moon* by Garth Stein**

Fiction, Paperback \$18.99

Yes, you will all know Garth Stein from *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, the best ever dog book . This book was written earlier and is nothing like *The Art of Racing in the Rain*. The rich spiritual life of the Tlinglit people of Alaska is explored through a young mother whose son died in a tragic drowning. The characters are authentic and the female protagonist is quite believable. The Legends of the Kushtaka are fascinating. If you want to break into something different or you have an interest in native legends and Alaskan wilderness, this would be a good choice. (Jeanie)

***Resurrection of Mary Mabel McTavish* by Allan Stratton**

Fiction, Paperback \$17.99 (Canadian Author)

It's the 1930s. When seventeen-year-old Mary Mabel tries to commit suicide, she fails and is taken to the London, Ontario hospital. While there, a young boy is brought in, dead, struck by lightning while attending a revival meeting at the fair grounds. Mary Mabel hears her mother's voice and touches the young boy. He is "resurrected" and Mary Mabel's life is never the same again. (Michelle)

***Dance, Gladys, Dance* by Cassie Stocks**

Fiction, Paperback \$19.95 (Canadian Author)

Winner of the Leacock Award for Humour. Frieda has moved back to Winnipeg to re-group after an abortive attempt at being an artist and relationships gone wrong. She rents a room from Mr. H., an older gentleman very involved with the seniors' centre facing foreclosure. She makes the acquaintance of Gladys, ghost of the wife of one of the previous owners of the house. Through this connection, Frieda learns about life, love and second chances. A truly wonderful book. (Sandy)

***Fish Change Direction in Cold Weather* by Pierre Szalowski**

Fiction, Paperback \$19.99 (Canadian Author)

The night before the 1998 ice storm, a young boy learns his parents are separating. Angry at everything, he shouts at the sky to "do something". In the morning he wakes to the ice storm. The street they live on in Montreal loses power on one side, but the other has a seniors' complex with emergency power. The storm and this unique power situation brings the whole neighbourhood together in unexpected ways. (Michelle)

The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt

Fiction, Hardcover \$33.00

Thirteen-year-old Theo Decker suffers a tragic loss and is thrown into a series of events that will shape his character in ways he can't possibly imagine. The heart of the story follows a globe-spanning mystery of a Dutch masterwork that has gone missing. Theo's unlikely possession of the "Goldfinch" will seal his fate. Weighing in at just under 800 pages, *The Goldfinch* is a lengthy tomb that requires some time and space. In an age when everything seems to be speeding up, I find great pleasure in luxuriating in the quiet urgency of a narration that is impossible to resist. (Michael)

The Secret History by Donna Tartt

Fiction, Paperback \$18.00

When Richard Papen arrives at Hampden College he quickly becomes seduced by an elite group of five Greek scholars who at first glance seem worldly, self-assured, and highly approachable. As Richard is drawn into their inner circle he discovers a way of thinking and living that is worlds away from his boring suburban life. But then he begins to see that there is more to his new friends than just their intellectual charm and charismatic ways. Soon Richard discovers a terrifying secret that will bind them all forever and lead them to a place where evil begins to seem ordinary. (Eileen)

The Crooked Maid by Dan Vyleta

Fiction, Paperback \$19.99 (Canadian Author)

Set in war-torn 1948 Vienna, *The Crooked Maid* is an atmospheric, challenging account of people trying to resurrect their lives after the Russian oppressors, who dominated much of the city following the Second World War, begin to depart. It is the crooked maid who mysteriously ties together the unlikely involvement of a thirty-year-old woman, an eighteen-year-old man and a shady Czech national who all become embroiled in a series of crimes. A mesmerizing novel that was my pick to win the 2013 Giller Prize. (Michael)

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