

Parkdale Book Club

February 2019 – @ Fatal Grace/Dead Cold

Schedule

Date (10 am on 2nd Saturday)

March 9	<i>The Mother of All Questions</i>	by Rebecca Solnit	-- Beth
April 13	<i>Medicine Walk</i>	by Richard Wagamese	-- Ruth
May 11	<i>A Rhinestone Button</i>	by Gail Anderson-Dargatz	-- Lindsay
June 8	<i>An Unnecessary Woman</i>	by Rabih Alameddine	-- Lynn

Book with two titles

One of the mysteries presented by this 2nd in the Three Pines series by Louise Penny is why some books have two titles?! By whichever title, however, the eight of us were unanimous in liking this book very much. (Sadly we were missing Jean due to a fall resulting in injuries – best wishes for a speedy recovery.) Here are some of our reactions:

- The benefits of audiobooks – hearing pronunciation, etc.
- Which character would you want to be?
- I looked into her history – helps to understand her books
- Her husband died at 82 of Alzheimers – and their dog died yesterday (Feb. 21)
- When Michael died, Penny thought she would not be able to write another book, but then, *Kingdom of the Blind*
- I like her philosophy, her psychology: right living is woven seamlessly into the story
- Love her metaphors – the toques with the pompoms worn off so that people look like candles, with just a single wick at the top of the toque
- I loved the banter – Gabri asking Gamache, “Have you left your wife yet?” Gamache: “have you?”
- People email Penny for directions to the b and b, how to find Three Pines...
- I admire Gamache’s integrity, and the gems of wisdom from him in each book
- Gamache is able to go into the dark places in his own mind, so also into the dark places in others’ minds
- Gamache: we listen; we listen hard; we listen until it hurts
- Penny’s characters are so human, so easy to connect
- Penny makes Jean Guy appealing, even with his egotism
- Ruth’s beer walks
- This was easier to read, having read *Still Life* and being familiar with the characters
- Crie’s life was very cruel – will she show up in a future book?
- What happened in CC’s life after she was taken away from Elle?
- Every character has a story – are these the subsequent books?
- Love ReineMarie
- Ruth Zardo is so wonderful – the power and the knowledge, in the guise of a homeless-looking old woman
- Can you imagine marrying someone for their name?

- Billy Williams, who everyone but Gamache can understand: "Whale oil beef hooked" indeed
- Who was the photographer Sol Petrov sought? It was Clara's portfolio
- Plausible that the case of the homeless woman's death made it straight into cold cases?
- This may not be Penny's best, but it's like looking at a perfect pearl necklace and picking the pearl you like least
- Her books demonstrate the importance of knowing your subject – e.g., she captures the disdain of the French police for Isabel Lacoste's inquiry
- Penny makes a fairy tale for adults, heroes we can count on
- People are missing community, and Penny is creating it – maybe this is part of the magic

See also: Penny sends out a monthly newsletter. Go to <http://www.louispenny.com/newsletters.htm> to subscribe. Her website is wonderful – she is so generous with information.

Next reading

March book is Rebecca Solnit's *The Mother of all Questions*. It's not long, but dense. Intense. Exhilarating. Challenging. Moving.

Overheard: "*An Unnecessary Woman* took me a month to read because I had to look up something on every page!"

Nominations for next year

Ruth suggested we read something from Nancy Huston, maybe *Plainsong* from 1993. Ruth mentioned Huston's *The Tale-Tellers* as well, but it looks like that would be difficult (expensive) to obtain. (although the Calgary Public Library has 2 copies). From Wikipedia: Huston lived in Calgary until age fifteen, at which time her family moved to Wilton, New Hampshire, USA. She studied at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where she was given the opportunity to spend a year of her studies in Paris. Arriving in Paris in 1973, Huston obtained a Master's Degree from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, writing a thesis on swear words under the supervision of Roland Barthes.

Maybe nominated. There is a new novel by Thomas King

Not nominated

Other reading (please send yours)

oh, so close, but no cigar, Dave Butler. *No Place for Wolverines* was interesting in lots of ways -- the discouraging analysis of a proposal for a wilderness-destroying resort and all the pocket-lining and ass-covering at multiple levels of government and public sector was well done. It did make for a bit of talking-heads story; still generally worth it. But the fatal flaw: page 255, the kick-ass protagonist hears a slightly veiled threat against her emotionally fragile mother, from someone whose capacity for violence had been established clearly; protagonist mouths off to person implying threat; page 281, bad guy is seen chatting up protagonist's mother; protagonist mouths off to the messenger. Protagonist's next action? Page 297, protagonist leaves town to go mountain-biking with an old friend. At least she mountain bikes angrily. This sequence is just not plausible, and this failure made such a big hole in the plot that all the next implausible developments just fell in. Still, Canadian setting -- yay!

I'd Rather Be Reading by Anne Bogel: "Ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading!" Rainer Maria Rilke. I like books about books, reading, people who love books and reading, so this book was a satisfying afternoon's companion. I was almost stopped by Chapter 1: Confess your Literary Sins. I have little patience for book-shaming, for reading reframed as a competition. But it was worth persevering. I have three or four more books on hold at the library or in my shopping cart at the bookstore as a result.

The Suspect by Michael Rowbotham: Ahh, that wonderful feeling of reading faster and faster towards the end of a book, wanting to find out what happens. Ahh, that wonderful feeling of finishing a good book and knowing it's the first in a series. A very compelling plot, although I, normally never one to solve the mystery, had suspicions about the bad guys before the outcome was revealed. Now, which one is next?

Hiking With Nietzsche by John J. Kaag: "Yes, a good, smart, accessible introduction to Nietzsche, and also one man focusing on another man who was a misogynist."