



# BOOKMARK



## *Fiction and Nonfiction News from Janet Litherland*

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### REVIEWS

#### Potpourri

Since the last newsletter, I've turned another year older. And that brings me to something I saw on the Internet: "The biggest lie I tell myself is that I don't need to write it down; I'll remember it." Yes, I can certainly relate to that! Something else from the Net: "I went to a book store and asked for directions to the self-help section. The clerk refused to tell me, saying it would defeat the purpose."

Speaking of books (that's what this newsletter is about, after all), I've begun weeding out my personal collection again. "Weeding" is the right term for it; the books on my shelves multiply like weeds! Last week I donated 72 books to charity, and I'm not half done with the job. I keep saying that I'll only keep my favorites, but I have too many favorites! So painful.

Recently, I went to Colquitt, Georgia, to see "Swamp Gravy," a delightful theater production. In its 20th year, this is Georgia's official folk-life play, featuring local stories, 60-80 volunteer actors, and original music. Where does it get its name? Swamp Gravy is a stew made from "fish drippings" (grease leftover from frying fish), tomatoes, potatoes, and whatever else is on hand. The theater production, too, is a gathering of all kinds of "stuff"—enchanting!

**Gray Mountain** (John Grisham, 2014). In the last issue, I wrote a rave review of Grisham's *Sycamore Row*. I really liked it. Of *Gray Mountain* I can only say it was interesting (if details of coal mining in Virginia interest you) but definitely not exciting, not one bit. About the ending: For me, it didn't end; it merely stopped.

**The Time Between** (Karen White, 2013). This is a lovely "literary" novel, not the genre I normally choose. However, the author has presented some of my favorite topics—piano music, mystery, and a bit of WWII history—and woven them together with characters to care about. Two sets of sisters, past and present. Two sets of problems. One solution. This is a novel to savor.

**Personal** (Lee Child, 2014). This is Child's 18<sup>th</sup> Jack Reacher novel. I have loved every one of them. Until this one. Child seems to have been trying something different—style, premise, tone—and "different" didn't work for me. Rather than Reacher's going it alone, he is surrounded by people and situations that are confusing and boring, mostly boring. His job is to stop an assassin from attacking world leaders at an upcoming G8 summit. Really?

**The Girl on the Train** (Paula Hawkins, 2015). An intriguing story with twists and turns that kept me turning pages. Rachel takes the same commuter train every day, with a stop that allows her to watch a couple having breakfast on their terrace. They seem an ideal match, something that she longs for in her lonely, troubled life. But one day on the ride home, she sees the woman kissing a *different* man—and the next day the woman disappears. Is Rachel the only person with a clue to the woman's disappearance? If she told the police, would they believe her? She's known to be unreliable. Soon, she finds herself deeply involved, not only in the investigation, but also in the lives of the woman's neighbors, which include Rachel's own ex-husband and his new wife. What kind of mess has she got herself into?

**The Magical Influence of Listening** (compiled by Vanessa Lowry, 2014). Ten authors, all experts in their respective fields, provide insight on the importance of listening to others—not simply passive "hearing," but actual *listening* to what is being said. Author Rebecca Ewing says the most interesting people "put more stock in understanding than in being understood." Dr. Tim Morrison calls it "intentional listening." Ricia L. Maxie says, "Listening builds trust and commitment." Among the ten compelling chapters presented are, "The Mutually Beneficial Gift," "Hear with the Heart, Listen to Understand," and "Don't Sell me, Listen." Listening and responding (with more than a nod or an uh-huh) is crucial to establishing good relationships. This book offers a variety of ways to do exactly that.

**Janet Litherland's books are available at:**  
Amazon.com  
and other online stores.

## ODDS AND ENDS

FICTION AND NONFICTION NEWS  
FROM JANET LITHERLAND



*I love to hear from my  
readers!*

Send me an e-mail:  
janet@janetlitherland.com

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WWW.JANETLITHERLAND.COM

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Something I found interesting: A Scotsman, Thomas Urquhart, born in 1611, was a writer fluent in French, Italian and Spanish. He was revered for his excellent language translations, particularly the novels of Francois Rabelais. However, in his own work, he invented words as he wrote, making much of his writing unintelligible to the reading public. At age 30, his first book was published, a collection of short poems. Urquhart was a Royalist who fought on the losing side against Oliver Cromwell in the 1651 Battle of Worcester. He was taken prisoner and held in the Tower of London. There, he was given considerable freedom and began writing genealogy—his own. He claimed to have traced his ancestors all the way back to Adam and Eve, (I have my doubts.) and that among his ancestors was the woman who found baby Moses in the bulrushes. (I *really* have my doubts!) Excellent translator, eccentric author, and a very peculiar man!

It seems that King William IV of Great Britain didn't like authors. He is quoted by Philip Ziegler in *King William IV* (1971): "I know no person so perfectly disagreeable and even dangerous as an author." Ouch!

"The beauty of doing nothing is that it teaches you to clear your mind and relax. ... Just like your body, your mind needs an occasional break from its hectic routine. When you allow your mind to take a break, it comes back stronger, sharper, more focused and creative." (Richard Carlson in *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*)

"My coat and I live comfortably together. It has assumed all my wrinkles, does not hurt me anywhere, has molded itself on my deformities, and is complacent to all my movements. I only feel its presence because it keeps me warm. Old coats and old friends are the same thing." (Victor Hugo)

## Language Bugs

Do you know what the "twunnies" are? A TV weather person recently announced that temperatures this winter dipped into the twunnies in record numbers—twunny-nine, twunny-three, and even lower!

Tchotchke. According to the Urban Dictionary, it's "a decorative knick-knack with little or no purpose; whatever you have around the house that a burglar wouldn't steal!" Got a tchotchke or two, anyone?

Paradox. Two physicians. Oops! Sorry. What I meant was—a statement that seems contradictory but may actually be true. For example, Oscar Wilde once said, "Life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about."

Are the words "going viral" beginning to bug you? Everything in the world is going viral these days, including the world itself! I'm bugged!

From our friends in Great Britain: "You don't get owt for nowt." (You don't get anything for nothing.) "He was made redundant." (He was laid off from his job.) "James is doing porridge." (No, he's not eating breakfast; he's serving time in prison!)

**Read back issues of *Bookmark* online at: [www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm](http://www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm)**



**Bookmark**  
Janet's Book News

**Janet's Ratings:** Scaled 1 - 5 ★=OK, ★★★★★=Fantastic!

*From the Cradle* (Louise Voss & Mark Edwards, 2014) ★★★★★

*Missing You* (Harlan Coben, 2014) ★★★★★

*Knock Out* (Catherine Coulter, 2009) ★★★★★

Janet Litherland, author of 10 nonfiction books and eight novels, also is editor emeritus and former owner of Write Choice Services, Inc., a book-development company that aspiring authors can find at: [www.writechoiceservices.com](http://www.writechoiceservices.com).