

# Mary Baldwin College Alumnae/i Book Club

April 2008

What we are reading in  
2008:

May 1: *Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson

June 5: *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert

July 3: *Daughter of Destiny: An Autobiography* by Benazir Bhutto

Aug 7: *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follet

Sept 4: *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

Oct 2: *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt

Nov 6: *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon

Dec 4: *The Next Thing on My List* by Jill Smolinski

## Our Books Picks!!

Here they are! Our books for the rest of the year. Now we did pick 4-5 months into 2009 but for now I am only going to announce the ones we are reading for the rest of 2008. This way if we stumble across a book that we want to read early 2009 we can add it with no confusion.

May:

**Devil in the White City** by Erik Larson (True Crime)

Two men, each handsome and unusually adept at his chosen work, embodied an element of the great dynamic that characterized America's rush toward the twentieth century. The architect was Daniel Hudson Burnham, the fair's brilliant director of works and the builder of many of the country's most important structures, including the Flatiron Building in New York and Union Station in Washington, D.C. The murderer was Henry H. Holmes, a young doctor who, in a malign parody of the White City, built his "World's Fair Hotel" just west of the fairgrounds—a torture palace complete with dissection table, gas chamber, and 3,000-degree crematorium. Burnham overcame tremendous obstacles and tragedies as he organized the talents of Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles McKim, Louis Sullivan, and others to transform swampy Jackson Park into the White City, while Holmes used the attraction of the great fair and his own satanic charms to lure scores of young women to their deaths. What makes the story all the more chilling is that Holmes really lived, walking the grounds of that dream city by the lake.

June:

**Eat, Pray, Love** by Elizabeth Gilbert (Women's Studies)

Oddly but aptly titled, *Eat, Pray, Love* is an experience to be savored: This spiritual memoir brims with humor, grace, and scorching honesty. After a messy divorce and other personal missteps, Elizabeth Gilbert confronts the "twin goons" of depression and loneliness by traveling to three countries that she intuited had something she was seeking. First, in Italy, she seeks to master the art of pleasure by indulging her senses. Then, in an Indian ashram, she learns the rigors and liberation of mind-exalting hours of meditation. Her final destination is Bali, where she achieves a precarious, yet precious equilibrium. Gilbert's original voice and unforced wit lend an unpretentious air to her expansive spiritual journey.

July:

**Daughter of Destiny: An Autobiography** by Benazir Bhutto

In the poignant opening chapter, she describes the brutal murder in 1977 of her father, Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, by General Zia ul-Haq. Under Zia's 11-year military dictatorship, propped up by the CIA and the Reagan administration, the author was kept under house arrest, then imprisoned for years in a cell, where guards encouraged her to commit suicide. She writes lovingly of her brother Shah Nawaz, whose highly suspicious death may have been a CIA murder, she speculates. She is evasive or reticent on sundry personal matters, such as her arranged marriage in 1987. Reading Bhutto's reminiscences about prison, schooling at Harvard and Oxford and her valuable work during her political exile, the reader grows impatient to learn more about what she intends to do for Pakistan, but the book ends on the eve of her triumphant election in late 1988.

We are on the MBC website!!  
[www.mbc.edu/alumnae](http://www.mbc.edu/alumnae)

Join us online!!  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MBCAlumBookClub>

If you are in the Richmond, VA area we would love for you to join us! All meeting times are 7pm and last approximately 1 hour.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Theresa Cash Lewis '99 at [pinkferrets@gmail.com](mailto:pinkferrets@gmail.com) or the Alumnae/i office at 1-800-763-7359.

August:

**The Pillars of the Earth** by Ken Follett (Fiction)

The Pillars of the Earth sweeps through four decades of 12th Century England drawing the listener into the raw, flamboyant middle ages. It is a shining saga of good and evil, treachery and intrigue, violence and beauty. Not-so-noble knights, righteous heroes, valiant heroines and both virtuous and immoral men of God highlight this story. They manipulate, and are in turn manipulated by, the political turmoil and unrest between the reigns of Henry I and Henry II.

September:

**The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak (Historical Fiction)

Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking new novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.

October:

**Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**

by John Berendt

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil takes two narrative strands--each worthy of its own book--and weaves them together to make a single fascinating tale. The first is author John Berendt's loving depiction of the characters and rascals that prowled Savannah in the eight years it was his home-away-from-home. "Eccentrics thrive in Savannah," he writes, and proves the point by introducing Luther Diggers, a thwarted inventor who just might be plotting to poison the town's water supply; Joe Odom, a jovial jackleg lawyer and squatter nonpareil; and, most memorably, the Lady Chablis, whom you really should meet for yourself. Then, on May 2, 1981, the book's second story line commences, when Jim Williams, a wealthy antique dealer and Savannah's host with the most, kills his "friend" Danny Hansford. (If those quotes make you suspect something, you should.) Was it self-defense, as Williams claimed—or murder? The book sketches four separate trials, during which the dark side of this genteel party town is well and truly plumbed.

November:

**The Shadow of the Wind** by Carlos Ruiz Zafon (Fiction)

Barcelona, 1945—A great world city lies shrouded in secrets after the war, and a boy mourning the loss of his mother finds solace in his love for an extraordinary book called *The Shadow of the Wind*, by an author named Julian Carax. When the boy searches for Carax's other books, it begins to dawn on him, to his horror, that someone has been systematically destroying every copy of every book the man has ever written. Soon the boy realizes that *The Shadow of the Wind* is as dangerous to own as it is impossible to forget, for the mystery of its author's identity holds the key to an epic story of murder, madness, and doomed love that someone will go to any lengths to keep secret.

December:

**The Next Thing on My List: A Novel**

By Jill Smolinski

Meet June Parker. She works for L.A. Rideshare, adores her rent-stabilized apartment in Santa Monica, and struggles with losing a few pesky pounds. But June's life is about to change. After a dark turn of events involving Weight Watchers, a chili recipe, and a car accident in which her passenger, Marissa, dies, June finds herself in possession of a list Marissa has written, "20 Things to Do By My 25th Birthday." Even though they barely knew each other, June is compelled by both guilt and a desire to set things right and finish the list for Marissa.

The tasks before her range from inspiring (Run a 5K), to daring (Go braless), to near-impossible (Change someone's life), and as June races to achieve each goal before the deadline, she learns more about her own life than she ever bargained for.