

Mary Baldwin College Alumnae/i Book Club

August 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

Summer Reading!!

Summer is almost over but there is still time to get those last few books off of your summer reading list. Need one or two more recommendations? Here you go!

For the General Reader:

Vivaldi's Virgins by Barbara Quick

Barbara Quick recreates 18th-century Venice at the height of its splendor and decadence. This story of longing and intrigue unfolds through the eyes of fourteen-year-old Anna Maria dal Violin, one of the elite musicians cloistered in the foundling home where Antonio Vivaldi—known as the Red Priest of Venice—is maestro and composer. Abandoned at the Ospedale della Pietè as an infant, Anna Maria is determined to find out who she is and where she came from. Her quest takes her beyond the cloister walls into the complex tapestry of Venetian society, from the impoverished alleyways of the Jewish Ghetto, to a masked ball in the company of a king; from the passionate communal life of adolescent girls competing for their maestro's favor, to the larger-than-life world of music and spectacle that kept the citizens of a dying republic in thrall.

The Godmother by Carrie Adams

Nothing scares Tessa more than the idea that she'll never have children of her own. She has four godchildren and knows that she'll be a great mother if only she had the chance. Heartwarming, funny, and genuine, *The Godmother* speaks to anyone who has wondered about the next step and reminds us that "happily ever after" is just the beginning of the story.

For the Richmond, VA natives:

The Best of Friends by Sara James and Ginger Mauney

Sara James and Ginger Mauney have been friends for a long time. Their careers have sent the Richmond, Virginia, natives to far-flung corners of the globe—James is an NBC Dateline anchor who has covered war in Nicaragua and plunged to the gravesite of the Titanic, and Mauney is a National Geographic wildlife filmmaker who raised her young son in the wilds of Namibia among baboon troops and elephant herds. Though they lead seemingly opposite lives, there is much they share: an attraction to life on the razor's edge, a weakness for men with foreign passports and accents, and their thirty-year friendship. In their heartfelt memoir, Sara and Ginger alternately narrate their journeys as they muse on the big questions of how to heal a broken heart, how to realize your dreams without compromising yourself, and how to tame ambition to make room for love and family. In the *Eat, Pray, Love* spirit of travel and self-discovery, *The Best of Friends* is Sara and Ginger's story, but it is also the story of many women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, who with the help of friends, dare to reinvent their lives just when it seems that everything is falling apart.

For the Mystery Readers:

Takeover by Lisa Black

A murder. A bank robbery gone wrong. A cop held hostage. It all comes together with a totally unexpected twist. In the tradition of novels by Kathy Reichs and Jeffery Deaver—and a touch of *CSI*—*Takeover* is a stunning thriller that introduces sharp and gutsy Cleveland forensic investigator Theresa MacLean.

For the True Crime Readers:

For the Thrill of It: Leopold, Loeb, and the Murder That Shocked Chicago by Simon Baatz
It was a crime that shocked the nation. On May 21, 1924, Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb killed a fourteen-year-old boy on the South Side of Chicago and dumped his body in a ditch, solely to experience the sensation of murdering another human being. What followed after they were caught became one of the epic cases of the century. Set against the backdrop of the Jazz Age, *For the Thrill of It* draws the reader into a lost world of speakeasies and flappers, of gangsters and gin parties, and a lawless city on the edge.

www.bookchatter.com and Harper Collins Publishers *Scene of the Crime* newsletter

We are on the MBC website!!
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 or the Alumnae/i office at 1-800-763-7359.



Your Guide to the Classics: *Don Quixote*

Don Quixote is a middle-aged gentleman from the region of La Mancha in central Spain. Obsessed with the chivalrous ideals touted in books he has read, he decides to take up his lance and sword to defend the helpless and destroy the wicked. After a first failed adventure, he sets out on a second one with a somewhat befuddled laborer named Sancho Panza, whom he has persuaded to accompany him as his faithful squire. In return for Sancho's services, Don Quixote promises to make Sancho the wealthy governor of an isle. On his horse, Rocinante, a barn nag well past his prime, Don Quixote rides the roads of Spain in search of glory and grand adventure. He gives up food, shelter, and comfort, all in the name of a peasant woman, Dulcinea del Toboso, whom he envisions as a princess.

On his second expedition, Don Quixote becomes more of a bandit than a savior, stealing from and hurting baffled and justifiably angry citizens while acting out against what he perceives as threats to his knighthood or to the world. Don Quixote abandons a boy, leaving him in the hands of an evil farmer simply because the farmer swears an oath that he will not harm the boy. He steals a barber's basin that he believes to be the mythic Mambrino's helmet, and he becomes convinced of the healing powers of the Balsam of Fierbras, an elixir that makes him so ill that, by comparison, he later feels healed. Sancho stands by Don Quixote, often bearing the brunt of the punishments that arise from Don Quixote's behavior.

The story of Don Quixote's deeds includes the stories of those he meets on his journey. Don Quixote witnesses the funeral of a student who dies as a result of his love for a disdainful lady turned shepherdess. He frees a wicked and devious galley slave, Gines de Pasamonte, and unwittingly reunites two bereaved couples, Cardenio and Lucinda, and Ferdinand and Dorothea. Torn apart by Ferdinand's treachery, the four lovers finally come together at an inn where Don Quixote sleeps, dreaming that he is battling a giant.

Along the way, the simple Sancho plays the straight man to Don Quixote, trying his best to correct his master's outlandish fantasies. Two of Don Quixote's friends, the priest and the barber, come to drag him home. Believing that he is under the force of an enchantment, he accompanies them, thus ending his second expedition and the First Part of the novel.

The Second Part of the novel begins with a passionate invective against a phony sequel of Don Quixote that was published in the interim between Cervantes's two parts. Everywhere Don Quixote goes, his reputation—gleaned by others from both the real and the false versions of the story—precedes him.

As the two embark on their journey, Sancho lies to Don Quixote, telling him that an evil enchanter has transformed Dulcinea into a peasant girl. Undoing this enchantment, in which even Sancho comes to believe, becomes Don Quixote's chief goal.

Cervantes relates the story of Don Quixote as a history, which he claims he has translated from a manuscript written by a Moor named Cide Hamete Benengeli. Cervantes becomes a party to his own fiction, even allowing Sancho and Don Quixote to modify their own histories and comment negatively upon the false history published in their names.

In the end, the beaten and battered Don Quixote forswears all the chivalric truths he followed so fervently and dies from a fever. With his death, knights-errant become extinct. Benengeli returns at the end of the novel to tell us that illustrating the demise of chivalry was his main purpose in writing the history of Don Quixote.

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