RAPID REVIEWS 2014
Book reviews by Amy Howlett, Ernie Drown, and Selene Colburn, given May 20, 2014 at the Vermont Library Conference
St Michael’s College, Colchester, VT

EDUCATION


HISTORY & LIVES

Hustvedt, Siri. The Blazing World. Simon & Schuster, 2014. $26.00 978-1476747231. This fictitious, literary equivalent of a biopic examines the complex mysteries of a female artist who, her career blunted by misogyny, staged an elaborate hoax in response. SC


McCann, Colum. Transatlantic. Random House, 2013. $27 978-1-4000-6959-0. Paper, 5/14, 978-0812981926. Lyrical novellas of travelers who crossed the ocean: the first flight from Newfoundland to Ireland; Frederick Douglass in Dublin; George Mitchell, making peace. AH
Offill, Jenny. *Dept. of Speculation*. Knopf, 2014. $22.95. 978-0385350815. Quick, sad, gorgeous, funny, observant, singular novel that retraces well-worn tropes of marriage, children, adultery, and a writer’s stalled second book, as if they were all brand new. SC***


Wilson, Robert. *Mathew Brady: Portraits of a Nation*. Bloomsbury, 2013. $28. 978-1-62040-203-0. Interesting study of the great photographer’s life and times, and his contributions to history and art. ED


**CURRENT EVENTS**

Barber, Benjamin R. *If Mayors Ruled the World*. Yale University Press, 2014. $22. Paper only. 978-0300209327. Barber posits that in the face of federal inaction on major world challenges such as climate change and inequality, the more nimble and accessible structures of municipal governments offer hope for real change. SC


Lee, Chang-Rae. *On Such a Full Sea*. Riverhead, 2014. $28. 978-1594486104. Paper, 12/14. 978-1594632891. Fan leaves B-Mor in search of her lover in a strange dystopian world where the storytellers are always we. AH
Lewis, Penelope. *The Secret World of Sleep: the Surprising Science of the Mind at Rest.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. $27. 978-0-230-10759-5. Scientists have learned a lot about the importance of sleep and its role in healthy functioning. ED


**A SENSE OF PLACE**


Ricker, Andy. *Pok Pok: Food and Stories from the Streets, Homes and Roadside Restaurants of Thailand*. Ten Speed Press, 2013. $35. 978-1607742883. Part travelogue and part cookbook, this gorgeous book will appeal to both adventurous home chefs and drive-by lovers of southeast Asian food. SC

JUST FOR FUN

Faulks, Sebastian. *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*. St. Martin’s Press, 2013. $25.99. 978-1250047595. Faulks gets it just right in this homage to comic genius P.G. Wodehouse: visiting the delightful language and ridiculous scrapes with enough of a twist to assure us that the author would never allow himself to be genuinely confused with the master. SC


Koerner, Brendan I. *The Skies Belong to Us: Love and Terror in the Golden Age of Hijacking*. Crown, 2013. $26. 978-0307886101. In this sprawling true story from the late 1960’s, lovers Roger Holder and Cathy Kerkow successfully pull off one of the most spectacular hijackings in American history. SC


*** indicates the two top books for each reviewer.

AH  Amy Howlett, Library Development Consultant, Vermont Department of Libraries  
ED  Ernie Drown, Director of Music, the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College  
SC  Selene Colburn, Assistant Library Professor, University of Vermont

For an electronic copy of the list, contact Amy.Howlett AT state.vt.us. The reviewers are delighted to have the list recycled as a news article, bookmarks, or other local Vermont vehicle.

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