

BOOKMARK



Fiction and Nonfiction News from Janet Litherland

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More Literary Notes

In the last issue I discussed two **literary novels** and mentioned that, generally, I'm not a big fan of them. One reader asked me why. It's because I prefer plot-driven fiction, a *story* that consumes my attention. Literary novels more often concentrate on characterization, beautiful words and perfectly turned-out sentences. Recently, I rented a "literary" movie, the new release of Jack Nicholson's (1975) *The Passenger* on DVD. It was beautiful to watch, but I never knew what was happening and when it was over, I had no idea what I'd just seen. Exactly my "take" on literary novels. That doesn't mean that those who prefer literary novels are crazy or snobbish, nor does it mean I'm stupid for not appreciating them. There are all kinds of people who like all kinds of books; and, fortunately, there are zillions of books to choose from!

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Did you know that J.K. Rowling's first *Harry Potter* book was rejected 10 times before finally being published? **Did you know** that John Grisham's first novel, *A Time to Kill*, was rejected by 16 agents and 12 publishers?

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Back issues of *Bookmark* can be seen at: www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm

All of Janet's books are available at:

Amazon.com
BarnesAndNoble.com
BooksAMillion.com

The Ghosts

"The Ghosts" are many writers who have written many books. They are ghost-writers—"ghosts" for short. Generally, they are very good writers who make a lot of money floating behind someone else's name. Ronald Reagan did not write his autobiography, *An American Life*. He is the author (it is his material), but a ghost—later identified as film writer Robert Lindsey—wrote the book. Many celebrities and public figures use ghosts to write their personal stories and how-to books, because they have neither the time nor the expertise to do it themselves. In the past, ghosts were a well-kept secret. Now, however, it is becoming more common for authors of nonfiction to acknowledge their ghosts with an "as told to" or "written with" designation.

In current fiction, ghosts are writing books for popular authors, alive and dead. Some call this "collaboration," not ghostwriting, because the books are based on characters/concepts created by the original authors. Robert Ludlum, author of the hugely successful "Bourne" series (*The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*), died in 2001. Since his death, 11 books have been published bearing his name. *The Ambler Warning* (2005) carries this disclaimer: "Since his death, the Estate of Robert Ludlum has worked with a carefully selected author and editor to prepare and edit this work for publication." No credit is given to the ghost. That ghost concocted a good story; even so, I found myself flipping chunks of pages without reading them. It didn't "feel" like Ludlum. Because it *wasn't* Ludlum. V.C. Andrews died in 1986. As with Ludlum, her estate hired an unnamed ghost to continue writing her books.

Tom Clancy is very much alive; however, four separate series of novels—written by other authors—are currently being published with his name in huge letters over the titles. This is called "branding." It sells books. To be fair, Clancy does acknowledge his writers. So does James Patterson (*Judge & Jury* by James Patterson and Andrew Gross; *Beach Road* by James Patterson and Peter deJonge; etc.). I have read several of such "collaborations" and, though they do resemble the style of the original authors, in my opinion they don't ring true. These days, I'm more inclined to choose authors who write (or have written) their own books.

Book-Signing Events

Since the last newsletter, my novel, *Vanished*, was the object of a very successful book-signing at The Bookshelf in Thomasville, Georgia—a great little store, which was named "Georgia's Best Small Bookshop" by *Georgia Journal* (1997). There was a lot of foot traffic that day, and the event was a sell-out. Another event, a signing/discussion of *Vanished* is planned for later this year at the Thomas County Public Library. Details in the next issue of *Bookmark*.

FICTION AND NONFICTION NEWS FROM
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I love to hear from my readers!

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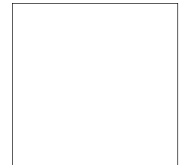
The Beginning

I am often asked, “How did you get started as a writer?” Actually, I didn’t plan to be a writer. My university degree is in music, and I started as a professional actor/singer/dancer based in New York City. I was fortunate to work in many musical productions and to cross the Arctic Circle as a performer for the U.S.O. When I left that life to marry and raise a family, I directed productions for church and community groups, writing many of the shows myself. There’s a saying among writing teachers: “Write what you know.” That’s what I did. I knew music and theater. In 1977 (Yes, that was a long time ago!) the actors in a production I had written encouraged me to “get it published.” Again, I was fortunate. That publication happened quickly, followed by more and more scripts for a variety of drama publishers. Then one day I was asked by a publisher to write what I did *not* know—and that’s when the fun began. Over the next 20 years I wrote 10 nonfiction books (on a variety of *assigned* topics) for Meriwether Publishing Ltd., a very satisfying relationship. Along the way, I also wrote magazine articles and romance fiction. By 1999 I was burned out on nonfiction books and began working on *Discovery In Time*, my first “mainstream” novel. That book was published in 2003, *Chain of Deception* in 2005, and *Vanished* in 2007. I’m a grandmother now, and I’m perfectly happy turning out a novel every couple of years. So, how did I become a writer? By writing about what I already knew—and then about what I had yet to learn.

Janet Litherland is the former owner of Write-Choice Services, Inc., a book-development company, which aspiring authors can find at

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Janet’s Book News