



NEWSLETTER

“TIMING, DEGREE, AND CONVICTION ARE THE THREE WISE MEN IN THIS LIFE.” – R.I. FITZHENRY



Book Review

by Mylène Dressler

Captivity: A Novel by Debbie Lee Wesselmann (John F. Blair, 2008), 291 pages

From behind a glass partition that protects the viewer—and the reader—only so much, the violent behaviors of wounded primates are on vivid display in Debbie Lee Wesselmann’s new novel of abuse and consequence, *Captivity*, set in a fictional South Carolina rehabilitation center for rescued chimpanzees, the former victims of lab studies. As the sanctuary’s director and chief primatologist, Dr. Dana Armstrong is herself the “survivor” of an experiment: she and he brother spent years being raised and filmed with a chimpanzee as part of a language studies project. As an adult she now has charge of Barafu, Mwenzi, Kimbunga and a full cast of aggressive-to-gentle captives, each of whom reveals a clearly defined personality through gestures, vocal displays and—in very rare cases—the use of American Sign Language. Armstrong isn’t interested, however, in teaching her rescues to “speak,” or in introducing them to anything more than they already know about human mores. Yet each chimp is fundamentally incapable of living in the non-human world. Confronted by a group of protestors after the Center has been mysteriously broken into (resulting in severe harm to two escaped chimps), Armstrong is forced to respond with a series of statements she believes to be true: “Africa is a different world from what they know. They were born in captivity and can never be free. You can’t teach another species what you yourself do not know.”

[Continued on reverse.]

From The Newsroom

We want your submissions! Send us a short poem, article, or excerpt from one of your fiction or nonfiction writings. We would also like to feature membership photography of the Southwest. Read below for submission guidelines.

Moab Poets and Writers has finally found a treasurer to fill Tom Savage’s former position. Monette Clark, a long-time board member, has agreed to take on the role. Joan Gough will serve as the Board’s secretary. A new president will be elected at the board’s annual meeting. The Board has also gained a new member, Mylène Dressler. See her book review at left and bio on the reverse.

Newly armed with bookkeeping and tax assistance from the Canyonlands Copy Center, Moab Poets and Writers is ready to kick off a new year of fiscal attention and literary action. As you will see, your dues notice has been mailed out with this newsletter in an effort to cut down on mailing costs.

Our thanks go to Marcy Hafner, MP&W president in 2008, for acting as treasurer. She served double-duty, taking on considerable responsibility, and we owe her our gratitude and praise.



Finally, please know that each Saturday *Word Watchers* meets at the Love Muffin café at 10AM to talk about writing. This is an informal gathering of literary artists that want to meet like-minded souls and chat about the challenges and triumphs of the past week.

–The MP&W Board

Visit: www.moabpoetsandwriters.org

Submissions:

To submit a maximum 300-word prose piece or maximum 40-line poem to the Moab Poets & Writers Newsletter Editor, send an email to:

mcneild@grandschools.org

If your piece is accepted, you will be asked for a digital photo and short bio.



[Continued from front.]

It is the limits of inter- and intra-species comprehension, as well as the puzzle of who would vandalize the Center and attempt to release its wounded denizens, which troubles the surface latitudes of *Captivity*. Its deeper compass lies, however, with trickier questions of rehabilitation and redemption. What, if anything, can be done about the lasting scars left by human betrayal? What might “release” mean for intelligent creatures, whether human or non-human, required to live with the after-effects of untamed human ambition? As powerful, public forces (this novel makes an excellent primer for anyone unfamiliar with the intense divisions that mark primate studies and the sanctuary movement) and private emotions threaten to tear down her dream of a haven for captive survivors, no one, including Dana Armstrong herself, escapes Wesselmann’s critical eye. This is because, as both novelist and thinking primate, Wesselmann is much more interested, it seems, in what any real definition of optimism might be for a long-term inmate. Under what circumstances, she asks, after years of unjust deprivation, can being “let loose” ever be pay-back enough?

Some Online Motivation for Procrastinating Writers

by Ann Gordon



#2: *Are You Ever Really Going to Finish That Novel?* by Kevin Alexander

According to statistics, most Americans are working on a novel. But how many of them will actually finish one? Alexander has created a quiz he believes will reveal if you’ve got what it takes to reach **The End**. Actually, this quiz is mostly tongue-in-cheek, offering aspiring writers a chance to poke fun of their writing lifestyle. In the quiz, you are supposed to circle the multiple-choice answer that best exemplifies how you’d respond to a situation. Here’s a sample question:

7. You're trying to sleep when a great idea hits. What do you do?

A. Hop up and start my writing day right there. Being in bed just makes my mind race, anyway. B. Write it down on the notepad I keep on my nightstand and pray that it'll be legible in the morning. C. Call my mother and dictate the idea so she can write it down. D. Like John Cusack in the movie *Serendipity*, I believe in fate. So if I don't remember it in the morning, then it wasn't meant to be.

Each question contains options A through D; if you select mostly the D options, Alexander writes: “You probably won’t even finish this quiz let alone a book-length work. Go back to sleep.”

See the whole quiz here:

http://www.writersdigest.com/article/Are_You_Ever_Really_Going_to_Finish_That_Novel

Happy Writing!

Calendar

January

Open Mic Cancelled!

January 15: Annual Board Meeting. Your MP&W Board will meet for an afternoon to discuss 2008’s successes, consider your input, and plan out the coming year. Please email our president, Marcy Hafner (marcymoab@yahoo.com), with your comments or suggestions.

February

Open Mic Cancelled!

March

March 27: Final Friday will now be held quarterly, starting in March. Unless another venue is selected, open mics will be held at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center (100 N 100 W), downstairs in the “Patio Room,”

Word Watchers Information:

Saturdays, 10AM, Love Muffin Café. Meet other writers and talk about the writing process.

Open Mic Information:

Bring a treat (or enjoy those provided by MP&W), select one of your pieces of poetry or prose that you would like to read aloud, and join us in this informal setting to celebrate the power of language. Listeners are welcome too.

Visit the MP&W website for more dates & details:

www.moabpoetsandwriters.org

Contributors

Mylène Dressler

is an acclaimed author, visiting faculty member, and the latest addition to the MP&W Board.

Mylène makes her home in Texas and in the canyon country of southern Utah, where she lives with her traveling companions, her husband and a red-and-white border collie.



Ann Gordon's

vocation is technical writing and instructional design, while her avocation is creative writing. If those roles were reversed, she could spend more time in the desert!

