

A Literary Magazine for the Maternally Inclined
<http://www.literarymama.com>

LITERARY *Mama*

May, 2009

This month, Literary Mamas are reading with their kids, reading to escape, reading to renew, and reading to entertain. This is a round list; there is at least one here to please even the pickiest reader!

Columnist, Rebecca Kaminsky says "I am just about to begin **The Last Olympian** by **Rick Riordan**, the latest in his Percy Jackson series. I think I like these even better than Harry Potter. It's set in a sci-fi but modern world where the Greek gods and goddesses exist, and "half blood" children (offspring of gods and mortals) become heroes with special powers. I began reading aloud to my son; but by the fourth book, I was sneaking in his room after he fell asleep to read on. Tomorrow, he leaves for a three-day field trip and I leave to visit my dad who is sick with lung cancer. We both have a copy of *The Last Olympian* to take with us because we couldn't manage to work out a sharing schedule this week. I'm looking forward to being transported into a world where immortality and magic exists."



Columnist and Columns Editor, Stephanie Hunt, shares, "We've had a string of rainy cold days here in usually steamy Charleston--perfect curl-up-with-a book weather. So while the kids have been studying for finals, I've been digging into **A Fortunate Age** by **Joanna Smith Rakoff**. Set in Brooklyn in the late 90s, it's a page-turning tale of a group of college pals (artsy literary types from Oberlin) finding their way in life and love. Smith Rakoff's rich prose is frisky and fresh--and if I could ever write a sex scene like her second chapter, I'd....well, I'm not sure what I'd do, maybe send it off to Scribner and have them bid and fight over the manuscript just like they did when this one came their way. Terrific summer read. By the way, Smith Rakoff is a literary mama par excellence--going on book tour with her five-month-old daughter Pearl, nursing through Q&As and gracefully mastering the one-handed book signing."



Kristina Riggle, Fiction Co-Editor, says, "I just finished **Confessions of a Prep School Mommy Handler**, a memoir by **Wade Rouse**. Rouse is a gay man whose official job is public relations for prestigious Midwest prep school, only his real job turns out to be handling the demanding rich socialite Mommies (Mean Mommies especially, noted with the shorthand M2) who run the place. Admittedly a composite character, Kitsy Ludington represents Wade's very own Devil in Lilly Pulitzer pink. It's more than just a bitchy, dishy book. Wade struggles with hiding his homosexuality at work while empathizing with the excluded kids in this socially stratified school. Will Wade knuckle under Kitsy yet again, or will he finally say enough is enough? There's genuine tension on this score."



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Reviews Co-Editor and Columnist, Sybil Lockhart recommends **The Mysterious Benedict Society** by **Trenton Lee Stewart**. "My eight-year-old Cleo got this book for her birthday and devoured it in two days. 'WAY better than Harry Potter,' she reported, and I agree. Like Harry Potter, this is a tale of smart kids cooperating to save the world, and it has a male orphan protagonist, but the whole character of this book is much more subtle and emotional. The grown ups are more deeply likable, and the four main characters (two fairly low-key boys and two fairly gregarious girls) have a nerdy quality that puzzle-positive kids everywhere will relate to. Cleo and I are very much looking forward to the sequel."



Alissa McElreath, Columns Editor, writes, "The other day I was browsing at my favorite thrift store and I found a brand new copy of **Augusten Burroughs' Wolf at the Table**. I've wanted to read this for some time, ever since I finished his Burroughs' brother's autobiography, Look Me in the Eye. Wolf at the Table is a painful read (don't do as I did and read most of it one night right before bedtime--you'll find it hard to fall asleep)--not because it's poorly written--just the opposite, in fact. It's so sensitively written, and Burroughs is admirably skilled at recreating experiences through a child's perspective, that I read most of the book wincing and aching for Burroughs' lost childhood, and for the damage wreaked by his mentally unstable, and alcoholic father. For all the bleakness, and the horrors, and the almost unimaginable cruelty Burroughs shares with his readers, the book is, by the end, a wonderful affirmation of the resiliency of human beings."



Caroline Grant, Editor-in-Chief and Columnist, writes, "I'm really enjoying **Andrea Richesin's** new collection, **Because I Love Her: 34 Women Writers Reflect on the Mother-Daughter Bond**. The anthology offers a great range of voices, including beautiful essays by Catherine Newman, Gayle Brandeis, and Anne Marie Feld, but of course the essays I turned to first are by some of our own Literary Mamas. Erika Lutz writes with passion about family politics in 'Beyond The Family Party Face' and Rachel Sarah tries to write her way closer to her mother."



And finally, Literary Reflections Assistant Editor, Christina Speed, shares, "I received **Gift of the Sea** by **Anne Morrow Lindbergh** for my birthday from a dear friend a few months ago. Both military wives, we log our years and raise our families by the water at various bases around the nation. I pulled it last week from my bookshelf and was immediately drawn in by Lindbergh's calming narrative--which seems to mimic the sea itself, ebbing and flowing. As a busy mother and wife, the entire text offered respite and affirmation in my roles, particularly my role as a mother-writer. Lindbergh writes of a woman's need to be alone, as salient fifty years ago as it is today: 'Now, instead of planting our solitude with our own dream blossoms, we choke the space with continuous music, chatter and companionship to which we do not even listen. It is simply there to fill a vacuum. When the noise stops, there is no inner music to take its place. We must re-learn to be alone.'"

