

SUMMER 2008 READING - BOOKS FOR ADULTS

Emerson's Librarian makes some recommendations

Maps for Lost Lovers by **Nadeem Aslam** has some of the most beautiful descriptive language I have ever read. Set in the Pakistani area of an English city in the late 20th century, this story looks at the problems of trying to fit into a very different culture. Some in the community cling to the life they lived in Pakistan. Others try desperately to fit in with British society. Others are caught somewhere in the middle. The shame a couple brings on their families by living together without marriage brings many of these issues to the boiling point.

The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey by **Candice Millard** is what I am reading at the time of creating this list. I have read only about half of this heavily researched but very readable non-fiction. After losing in his try for a third term as U.S. president, Teddy Roosevelt felt the need for an adventure. He found it in a previously unexplored tributary of the Amazon. White-water rapids, lost canoes, near starvation, native attacks, disease, drowning, and a murder pushed Roosevelt to the brink of suicide. Truth can be more exciting than fiction.

The Speed of Dark by **Elizabeth Moon** is a novel set in the mid to late twenty first century when science can "fix" many things, including autism. The protagonist is a 30 something man who was born too late for the treatment. He uses the special talents that come with his autism to work in a creative and useful job while establishing a social life that works for him. A new treatment promises to cure him and the others in his office. The boss wants them all to undergo the procedure. This is an interesting weighing of the pros and cons of treating conditions like autism—what it means for the person with autism as well as for society.

Barefoot Gen by **Keiji Nakazawa** is a trilogy of graphic novels set in Hiroshima at the time of World War II that follows a family whose father vocally opposes the war. As the reader can predict, life is not easy either before the bomb is dropped or after. This is clearly autobiographical and, as such, offers a unique perspective on war.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History in Four Meals by **Michael Pollan** looks at four different ways of getting dinner for the family—a highly processed Happy Meal, two types of organic foods, and one that the author hunts, gathers, and grows himself. There are times that he rambles on a bit long (different folks seem to find differing parts to be too long so it all has its place), but the end result is a book that will change the way you think about what you put in your mouth.

Set This House in Order by **Matt Ruff** fits in the category of truly odd ideas. It imagines the lives of two different people with Multiple Personality Disorder. The way that at least one of them handles this is by building a house in his mind and relegating all of the personalities to their own roles. While this concept may bother psychologists, those without such constraints should enjoy this fast paced, constantly surprising story.

St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves: Stories by **Karen Russell** is a collection of unusual stories. The title story is told by a girl who was raised by wolves and then sent to a boarding school just for girls like her. The nuns at the school do their best to make the girls "human", offer a new twist on teen angst.

Hide and Seek by **Clare Sambrook** describes every parent's nightmare through the eyes of a child. When two brothers go together on a field trip, nine year old Harry is told to take care of his five year old brother Dan. Harry gets distracted and the adults are incompetent. Dan is left behind at a rest stop. While his parents try and often fail to deal with this tragedy, Harry has to deal with his guilt. This is not a happy book.