



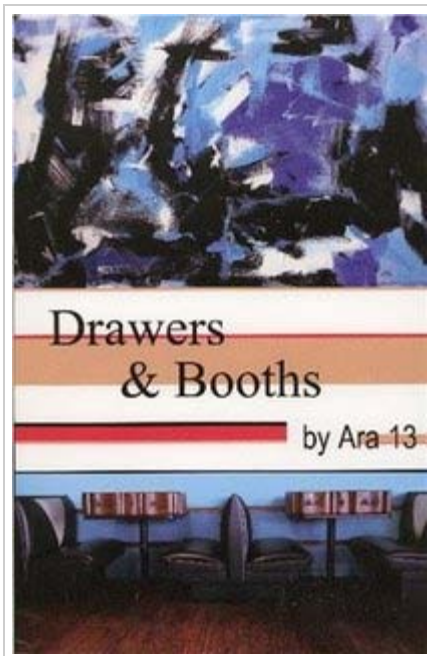
JOY'S BLOG

A MOSTLY BOOKISH BLOG BY JLS HALL

*All that mankind has done, thought, gained or been:
it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of books.* -- Thomas Carlyle

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2009

Review: Drawers & Booths



Written by Ara 13

Published by Covington Moore

Publishing House, 2007, 215 pages

ISBN 978-0-9798636-0-8

I've always loved books and movies in which the main character turns out not to be the main character at all. Or the main plot falls away halfway through to reveal the *real* plot you finish up with. You know, sort of like Michelangelo Antonioni's "L'Avventura" – a work that starts out predictable and then turns into something absolutely unexpected. And that's the feeling I got as I was reading Ara 13's wonderfully funny novel, ***Drawers & Booths***.

But that comparison really isn't fair – ***Drawers & Booths*** is much more fun than an Antonioni film.

With characters popping in and out of the metafictional woodwork (and those nonexistent drawers and booths and all over the place), and plot twists cropping up on nearly every page, the book has just about everything I look for in a novel – humor, interesting characters, entertaining storylines, some real food for thought, and lots of surprises. In fact, the humor, characters, and storylines are *all* surprises.

This is one of those books that's very hard to review without giving away too much of the plot (make that *plots*, plural). A bare bones description runs something like this: The book begins with a Marine Corps corporal (referred to only as "the

ABOUT ME



JOY HALL

Aging flower child

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

LIBRARY THING

MY OTHER BLOGS AND PAGES

[Joy's Doll Talk](#)

[Joysweb](#)

[List of Reading Challenges](#)

[List of Series Books](#)

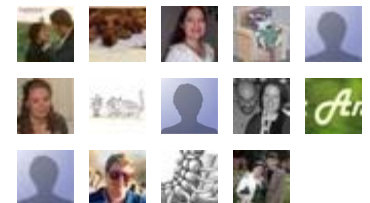
[My WordPress Blog: Just Reviews](#)

[Reading List by Year](#)

[Reading the '90s Personal Challenge](#)

WELCOME. IF YOU'RE READING THIS, WHY NOT LET ME KNOW? (14)

FOLLOW THIS BLOG



14 FOLLOWERS [VIEW ALL](#)

Corporal") on a special assignment as liaison between the U.S. Army and the island nation of Cortinia. But by page 35, it's obvious something is up. There's a shift of focus and a shadowy figure disrupts the military tale and detours us into a new story, with a hard-boiled detective looking for a possible serial killer. Now don't get too comfortable, because within a few pages, everything shifts again and stories keep piling on top of other stories, doubling back and turning and twisting right up to the final page. Characters become aware of their roles in the narrative, question plot developments, quarrel amongst themselves, and even begin to rebel against the author who eventually makes an appearance in his own book.

Of course, the idea of unruly and unmanageable characters in fiction certainly isn't a new one, and self-insertion is a device that's been used by authors all the way from Dante Alighieri to Stephen King. And I imagine most young writers have, at one time or another, played with the idea of putting God on trial in one of their stories – although not often so literally or with such hilarious consequences. I notice that I marked "LOL" in the margin of a page in Chapter Ten – because I was actually laughing out loud (it's when God says he's a little teacup – read the book, you'll understand). I love it when that happens!

Drawers & Booths was recognized as an "Outstanding Book of the Year" in the 2008 Independent Publisher Book Awards, and its author (who legally changed his last name from Hirsch to 13 in 1998) received a bronze medal as a "Storyteller of the Year." Well deserved; although, admittedly, the book isn't going to be everybody's cuppa – some of the language, and the discussion about religion will disturb some readers. And the constant shifting back and forth, and shuffling of storylines can be confusing, and even a little annoying at times – I had absolutely fallen in love with *The Corporal* just before his story reared up, shook itself and turned into something completely different!

I also suspect it's not going to be an easy book to find (the publisher, CovingtonMoore is based in Austin TX). But if you want a good, fast, irreverent, thought-provoking, and just downright funny read – ***Drawers & Booths*** is definitely worth tracking down. And Ara 13 is someone to watch. His new novel, ***Fiction*** (also released by CovingtonMoore) will be coming out in March. Haven't read that one yet, but after being so pleasantly surprised by ***D&B***, I have high hopes.

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 8:00 AM 1 COMMENTS
LABELS: BOOKS, READING, REVIEWS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2009

Books Into Movies Challenge

BLOG ARCHIVE

▼ 2009 (17)

▼ January (17)

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[Books Into Movies Challenge](#)

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[Tuesday Thinkers: Swap This Book](#)

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[Butterfly Award!](#)

[Surfing Saturdays on Sunday](#)

[Booking Through Thursday: The Best?](#)

[Teaser Tuesdays: What's Going On Here?](#)

[Feeling Chunky: The Chunkster Challenge 2009](#)

[Tuesday Thinkers: Authors](#)

[Musing Mondays: Library Books](#)

[Booking Through Thursday: New Year's Resolutions](#)

► 2008 (255)

► 2007 (17)

► 2006 (2)



Here we go again. Yes, I'm a lunatic, have no restraint, no shame, no concept of reality, yada yada yada. But this one really seems like a piece of cake. Hosted by Kathrin of [Cozy Murders.com](#), the [Books Into Movies \(or TV\) Challenge](#) runs throughout 2009, and asks participants to read two or more books that were made into movies or relate to TV shows (or vice versa). And since I'm already going to

be reading a number of film-related books this year, I thought I might as well give myself a little extra motivation by joining up.

For more information about the challenge, or to sign up, please visit the [challenge announcement page](#) and leave a comment with a link to your blog post. Then, just start reading and watching movies – how great is that? And now, a list of possible selections:

- *Affinity*. Sarah Waters
- *The Age of Innocence*. Edith Wharton
- *Atonement*. Ian McEwan
- *Angels and Insects*. A.S. Byatt
- *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Philip K. Dick ("Blade Runner")
- *Dolores Claiborne*. Stephen King
- *Hotel Du Lac*. Anita Brookner
- *The Hours*. Michael Cunningham
- *Northanger Abbey*. Jane Austen
- *Orlando*. Virginia Woolf (this would be a re-read, but I've never seen the film)
- *Solaris*. Stanislaw Lem
- *The Wench Is Dead*. Colin Dexter
- *The Woman In White*. Wilkie Collins
- *Wonder Boys*. Michael Chabon

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 5:35 PM 4 COMMENTS

LABELS: BOOKS, BOOKS INTO MOVIES CHALLENGE, READING, READING CHALLENGES

Booking Through Thursday: Inspiration

This week's [BTT](#) topic:

Since "Inspiration" is (or should be) the theme this week ... what is your reading inspired by?

MY CLASSIC DAMES TEST
RESULT: MYRNA LOY



Score: 21% grit, 29% wit, 29% flair, and 38% class!

RECENT REVIEWS

Ackroyd: Chatterton

Barry: The Lace Reader

Bellairs: House with a Clock in Its Walls

Clark: Mr. White's Confession

Cooper: Greenwich

Cooper: Over Sea, Under Stone

Cooper: The Dark Is Rising

Cooper: The Grey King

Davidson: The Gargoyle

Ferris: Crewel World

Hickman: The Aviary Gate

Hoffman: Practical Magic

Holt: Mrs Malory and Death By Water

James: Complete Ghost Stories

Kurzweil: The Grand Complication

Lovelace: Betsy-Tacy

Perez-Reverte: The Flanders Panel

Pym: Civil To Strangers

Schwarz: So Long at the Fair

Shaffer & Barrows: The Guernsey...Literary Society

Wow, these BTT topics are getting harder and harder to answer in a short, snappy post, aren't they? I don't think I could really say what, specifically, inspires me to read. Reading is such a huge part of my existence – and has been for so many years – that it's almost a bodily function, like breathing or, well . . . you know!

I read because I *want to* and because I *have to*. Reading keeps me sane, and keeps my mind alive. I know there are some perfectly nice people out there who *don't* read, but I don't understand how they get through life. I read for entertainment and for information and for experience. I read to pass the time. I read in order to connect with other readers, and to enter into the world of books and ideas. I read to visit new places and meet new beings, and also to learn about the past. And I read to encounter new thoughts that I might not have thought on my own.

I'm fortunate to have come from a family of readers. My parents and grandparents weren't intellectuals, by any means; but they valued education and reading. We always had books around. As a child, I was read to and encouraged to learn to read on my own at a very early age. Some of my earliest memories involve books – being read to at nap time and bedtime, receiving books as gifts at Christmas and birthdays, spending long afternoons in the children's section at the public library. So you see, it's no accident that I turned into a bookworm.

Well, I don't know that I really answered the question. What inspires *you* to read? And is "inspire" really even the correct term here? I generally associate "inspiration" with creativity, and I'm not sure I think of reading as a creative activity, exactly– although it can *inspire* and lead to creativity. But that's just a quibble, isn't it? So I guess in addition to being a bookworm, I'm a nitpicker, too!

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 7:49 AM 11 COMMENTS
LABELS: [BOOKING THROUGH THURSDAY](#), [BOOKS](#), [MEMES](#), [READING](#)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009

Tuesday Thingers: Swap This Book



This week's topic for the Tuesday Thingers group:

Have you ever used the Swap This Book function which can be found on the main page of any book If so, what do you think about it? If not, are there any

other swap sites you utilize to exchange books once you are done? What do you do with your books if you no longer want them anymore?

OK, to answer the first question – I had never used or even noticed the "Swap This

[Siegel: Love and the Incredibly Old Man](#)
[Sittenfeld: American Wife](#)
[Wolitzer: Summer Reading](#)

LIBRARY THING BOOK BLOGGERS

[BermudaOnion's Weblog](#)
[Boston Bibliophile](#)
[In the Shadow of Mt. TBR](#)
[Jules Jones](#)
[LeesyKnits](#)
[Literary Feline](#)
[Literate Housewife Review](#)
[Rebecca Reads](#)
[She Reads Books](#)

MORE BLOGS I LIKE

[A Garden Carried in the Pocket](#)
[A Guy's Moleskine Notebook](#)
[A Novel Challenge](#)
[Blogging Cat](#)
[Books Please](#)
[Boyett-Brinkley](#)
[Bri Wilcox](#)
[Brinkley's Place](#)
[Late B\(l\)oomer](#)
[Michael's Blog](#)
[Pages Turned](#)
[Smiling Sally](#)
[Stainless Steel Droppings](#)
[Table Talk](#)
[Unfinished Person](#)

OTHER LINKS OF INTEREST

[Alexandria VA Public Library](#)
[Arts & Letters Daily](#)
[Bartleby Books Online](#)

Book" feature – this is the first time I've looked at it. And what do I think about it? I think it looks interesting. To paraphrase Jean Brodie, "*for people who like that sort of thing, that's the sort of thing they like.*"

As I may have said once or twice before on this blog, I have a *really* hard time parting with books. Once they come into my clutches, they're mine for life. Unless, of course, they belong to the public library or someone else has lent them to me. In that case, I do eventually give them back – grudgingly.

Otherwise, I tend to hoard books as though Ray Bradbury's book burners might be knocking at the door. That's probably why I still have that ancient paperback copy of *Helmet for My Pillow* (WWII memoirs by historian Robert Leckie) moldering in storage somewhere – a book I read (for some unfathomable reason) when I was a teenager and just never managed to throw out. And several Harold Robbins novels. I've never even read a Harold Robbins novel, but somehow I managed to acquire these and they've found a home.

So you see, the question of what I do with my books when I don't want them anymore is not one I'm qualified to answer. I *always* want them. I want *all* my books. I want all *your* books, too.

Now, if you asked my husband, he'd have a whole other take on the problem. And, yes, I admit – it's not a good neurosis for someone who lives in a smallish one-bedroom city apartment with limited storage space. Is there anyone out there conducting interventions for book hoarders? If you know of anyone, don't send them my name.

[Bibliomania](#)
[Blogtations](#)
[Booking Through Thursday](#)
[Bookplate Junkie](#)
[Bookworms Carnival](#)
[Corcoran Gallery](#)
[Cozy Mystery List](#)
[Edsitement \(NEH\)](#)
[Google News](#)
[Handbook of Texas](#)
[Here Be Reviews](#)
[Literary Resources - Rutgers University](#)
[Merriam Webster Online](#)
[Michael & Joy's Doll Page](#)
[National Book Foundation](#)
[National Building Museum](#)
[National Gallery of Art](#)
[NEA's Big Read Blog](#)
[NY Times Book Blog](#)
[Phillips Collection](#)
[Project Gutenberg](#)
[Publisher's Weekly](#)
[Resources for History of Books & Printing](#)
[Shelf Awareness](#)
[The Sunday Salon](#)
[U-VA Rare Book School](#)
[Weekly Geeks](#)

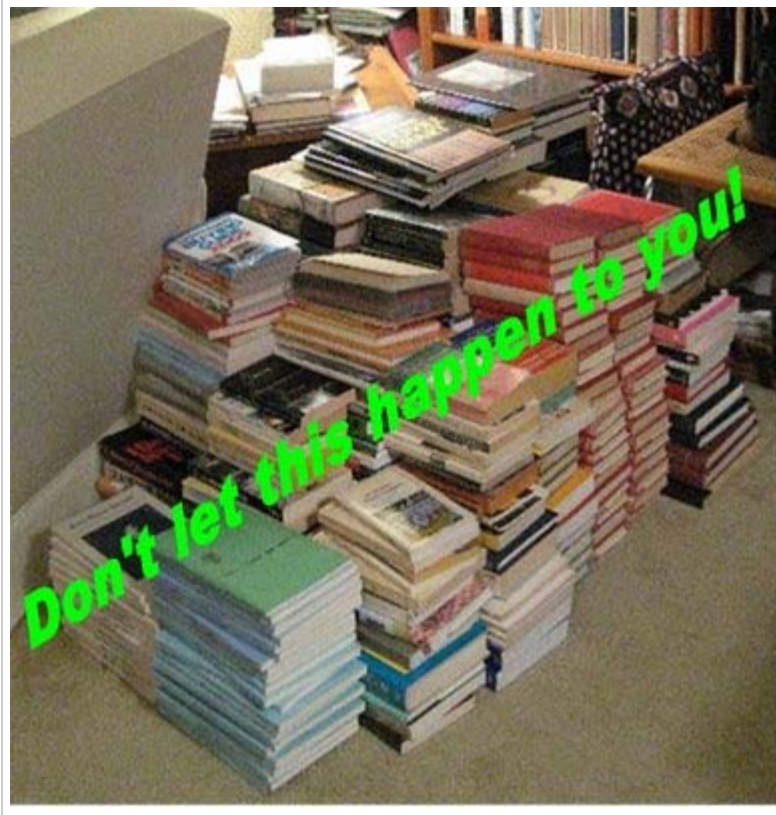
MY TO-BE-READ LIST



People of the Book: A Novel
Geraldine Brooks



Labyrinth
Kate Mosse



[Tuesday Thingers](#) is a weekly meme for LibraryThing users, hosted by [Wendi's Book Corner](#).

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 12:35 AM 10 COMMENTS
 LABELS: BOOKS, LIBRARYTHING, MEMES, READING, TUESDAY THINGERS

MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2009

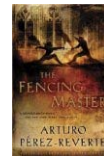
Happy Birthday, Edgar!

Today is the anniversary of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, one of my favorite authors. Also, I guess, the bicentennial. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 19, 1809. And died only forty years later, in 1849, under rather mysterious circumstances – appropriate, I think, for the master of the macabre.

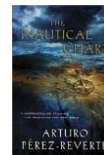
The image here is a photograph of a daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe in 1848, first published 1880.



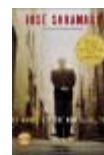
[The Poe Shadow: A Novel](#)
Matthew Pearl



[The Fencing Master](#)
Arturo Perez-Reverte



[The Nautical Chart](#)
Arturo Perez-Reverte



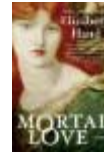
[All the Names](#)
Jose Saramago



[The Double](#)
Jose Saramago, Margaret Jull Costa

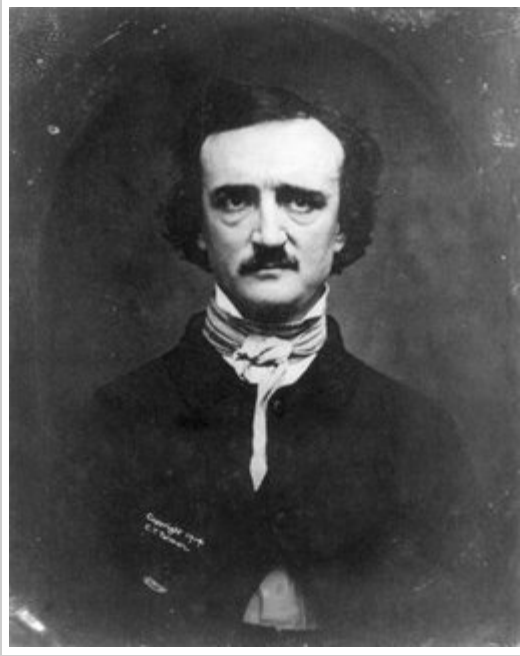


[Our Kind: A Novel in Stories](#)
Kate Walbert



[Mortal Love: A Novel](#)
Elizabeth Hand

[The Gravedigger's Daughter](#)



Taken by W.S. Hartshorn, Providence, Rhode Island, on November 9th, 1848. Photograph taken in 1904 by C.T.

Tatman.

Source: Wikipedia Commons

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 7:28 PM 1 COMMENTS
LABELS: BOOKS, POE, READING

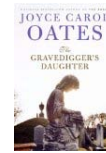
The Sunday Salon: Late Arrival



I know that, technically at least, it's really not Sunday anymore (well, not around here anyway). But it's Sunday somewhere, right? And since I've missed the Salon for the last few weeks, I just wanted to check in briefly – especially since I've actually *done some reading* today (on Sunday, that is).

Even though there were those playoff games to watch (I was kinda hoping Donovan McNabb might get another shot at winning the Big Game, but *c'est la guerre*, I guess). But over the years, I've learned to read while the NFL wars are raging on the TV screen in front of me. At least the Cowboys weren't involved – so M. wasn't jumping up and down and yelling things like "They're pathetic!" and "Romo, you idiot!" Today's session was really peaceful in comparison.

The book I've been immersed in today is Colm Toibin's *The Master*, based on the life of Henry James. In 2004, the book was short-listed for the Booker Prize and was also chosen by the New York Times as one of the ten most notable books of the year. I've had it on my TBR list since it first came out, and I'm really kicking myself



Joyce Carol Oates



The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who...
Megan Marshall



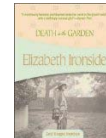
A Case of Curiosities
Allen Kurzweil



The Hazards of Good Breeding: A Novel
Jessica Shattuck



The Conjurer's Bird: A Novel
Martin Davies



Death in the Garden
Elizabeth Ironside



The Mists of Avalon
Marion Zimmer Bradley



Requiem
Graham Joyce

Babel Tower
A.S. Byatt

now, for putting it off for so long. It's a fascinating book about a truly fascinating character. And it's making me want to do some research – I'd like to know just how close Toibin came to James's real persona.

It appears that he must have done an incredible amount of research – but then I'm no James expert. I've always loved the *idea* of reading Henry James more than the actual books themselves. Some of his shorter works are among my favorites – ***Turn of the Screw*** and ***The Aspern Papers***, especially. But I find I lose interest in the longer novels, after a chapter or two. I used to feel guilty about that until one of my college English professors (who was a Medievalist, so I suppose he can be forgiven) said that Henry James was "*all about whether I should have peas or carrots for lunch, and who the hell cares, anyway?*"

Well, it's true that much of James's work is full of the trivialities of day to day life – or at least, life as lived by 19th century aristocrats. But I'm much more tolerant of that kind of writing now than I was when I was a twenty-year-old college student, just beginning to fall in love with English literature. Maybe if I read ***Portrait of a Lady*** today, the exploits and tribulations of Isabel Archer and her various suitors *wouldn't* bore me to tears again.

Right now, however, I'm going to get back to Toibin and his version of the Master. Henry and his brother William are studying law at Harvard and avoiding enlisting in the Union Army. And Henry has just decided that literature *might* be a more interesting study than the law. Right on.

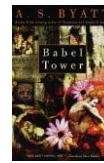
POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 12:01 AM 3 COMMENTS
LABELS: BOOKS, MEMES, READING, SUNDAY SALON

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2009

Premios Dardo Award!

I admit I've been neglecting my blogs lately. Fighting off migraine headaches, and a bout with carpal tunnel syndrome have slowed me down quite a bit during the last couple of weeks. So I have to apologize for not getting this up in a timely fashion.

[NoBSBookReviews](#) has graciously passed on the Premios Dardo Award to my blog. NoBS is one of my favorite blogs – one I read on a regular basis, along



The Inn at Lake Devine
Elinor Lipman



A Way From Home: A Novel
Nancy Clark



Next >>

[Get Your Own Bookshelf](#)



with its companion blog, [I Meme It](#). So I'm very grateful and excited about receiving this honor (many thanks to NoBS!).

The Premios Dardo Award "acknowledges the values that every blogger shows in his or her effort to transmit cultural, ethical, literary, and personal values every day." And the rules of the award are:

- 1) Accept the award, post it on your blog together with the name of the person who has granted the award and his or her blog link.*
- 2) Pass the award to 15 other blogs that are worthy of this acknowledgment. Remember to contact the bloggers to let them know they have been chosen for this award.*

So now I'll be looking around for those other worthy blogs. May take me a while because I like to try to find blogs that haven't already been chosen. Hmmm – yes, that might take *quite* a while, so I may have to make some compromises there. Well, we'll see what emerges!

And, yes, I know - there seems to be some confusion about the actual name of the award. But I'm going with "Premios Dardo" because that seems to be the most popular variation, and that's what my presenter passed on to me. Whatever the wording, it's a very handsome graphic, don't you think?

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 10:25 AM 5 COMMENTS
LABELS: AWARDS, BLOGGING, PREMIOS DARDO AWARD

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009

Booking Through Thursday: Sing! Sing a Song . . .

This week's [BTT](#) topic:

But, enough about books ... Other things have words, too, right? Like ... songs!

If you're anything like me, there are songs that you love because of their lyrics; writers you admire because their songs have depth, meaning, or

just a sheer playfulness that has nothing to do with the tunes.

So, today's question?

What songs ... either specific songs, or songs in general by a specific group or writer ... have words that you love?

Why?

And ... do the tunes that go with the fantastic lyrics live up to them?

You don't have to restrict yourself to modern songsters, either ... anyone who wants to pick Gilbert & Sullivan, for example, is just fine with me.

Lerner & Loewe? Steven Sondheim? Barenaked Ladies? Fountains of Wayne? The Beatles? Anyone at all...

OK, first of all I want to say, just what d'ya mean "*Enough about books*"? How could that ever happen?

But I digress – already!

Wow, hard question. My short answer would probably be "impossible to say." This would take a *lot* of thought. And probably many rewrites. I like so many different kinds of music, and my likes and dislikes change constantly. I'm afraid I haven't kept up with the current music scene – whatever that may be – for many years now. And lately, I seem to prefer music *without* lyrics – classical stuff and jazz.

It would be difficult for me to choose the songs or songwriters I really love – I'd end up with a list several pages long, and nobody wants that to happen! So I'll just say my *favorite* songwriter is the one I'm married to. And probably my favorite among all the tunes he's written over the years is one he called "Dream Weaver" – yes, I know; but this was long before Gary Wright hijacked the title and ran away with it. The lyrics are very personal and meaningful, and always bring back memories of our early days together. And I think that strong emotional response is something we all look for in our favorite music, isn't it?

Well, that and the ability to make us smile. And along those lines, I offer one of my musical guilty pleasures. And, yes, wasn't he young? Oh, and my husband asked that I make it clear I am *not* married to Neil Diamond.

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 11:38 AM 6 COMMENTS
LABELS: BOOKING THROUGH THURSDAY, MUSIC

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2009

Tuesday Thingers: Common Knowledge



This week's questions for the Tuesday Thingers group: *Have you ever looked at the Common Knowledge page, or viewed the history of changes/additions? If you were aware of this section, have you added any information? Do you find this information useful or*

interesting?

Well, this is unusual! A LibraryThing feature I actually knew something about *before* Tuesday Thingers brought it to my attention!

Yes, I've known about Common Knowledge for a while now. In fact, I've even contributed some info myself. Didn't really remember exactly what books were involved, so I went to the History page and searched on my user name, and discovered a whole list of stuff: a few books by Angela Thirkell, a couple of Virago editions, and ***The House with a Clock in Its Walls***, by John Bellairs.

I've browsed around Common Knowledge a few times. Of course, the data is only as reliable as the members who enter it: As far as I know, there's no proof-reading or fact-checking. And apparently anyone can change or edit the info that's already been entered. Lots of possibilities for typos and misreadings, so you have to expect mistakes to creep in, I suppose. So while I do find the information interesting, I'm not sure how useful it really is.

[Tuesday Thingers](#) is a weekly meme for LibraryThing users, hosted by [Wendi's Book Corner](#).

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 4:36 PM 9 COMMENTS
LABELS: BOOKS, LIBRARYTHING, TUESDAY THINGERS

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2009

Butterfly Award!

I've been trying to get this done for about a week now, but my recent bout with the dreaded carpal tunnel syndrome has forced me to cut back quite a bit on blogging. Staci of [Life in the Thumb](#) has given my blog the Butterfly Award, and I'm very grateful and excited about it. And I apologize for taking so long to acknowledge it here.



Now I need to pass the award on to a few other blogs, and I will do that just as soon as I'm able to get back to normal blogging mode (i.e., as soon as I learn how to maneuver on the Internet with this wrist brace immobilizing my right hand).

Thanks very much, Staci! And doesn't that logo look pretty?

POSTED BY JLSHALL AT 4:34 PM 2 COMMENTS
LABELS: AWARDS, BLOGGING

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