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Gifting Me: Books

Two very kind people that I hold dear thanked me recently, for a service gladly and freely given, with an on-line gift card. Of course they need not have done that, but that is part of what makes them so special. And, of course, I chose to use the gift to buy books, an eclectic foursome of fiction and nonfiction, spanning real science, science fiction, economics, and wartime experience. In the order that I have read them, they are as follows.

“Parasites: the Inside Story” (2022) was written by Scott L. Gardner, Judy Diamond, and Brenda Lee. All are from the University of Nebraska State Museum. Lead author Gardner is Curator of Parasites in the H.W. Manter Laboratory of Parasitology, as well as a Professor of Biological Sciences. The book is only 189 pages long, even with its numerous illustrations and extensive bibliography. Yet, in its three chapters there is all the information that you probably want about trematodes and other kinds of worms. As an extension of Charles Darwin’s brilliant evolutionary insights, the stories about adaptability of parasites in hosts, more complex often than I realized beforehand, are worth the read.

“The Daughter of Doctor Moreau” (2022) is a science fiction novel by bestselling author Silvia Moreno-Garcia, staged in the 1870s. The story, and its title, have origins in the H.G. Wells novel “The Island of Dr. Moreau.” In Moreno-Garcia’s telling, Moreau is an ex-patriot of France living in a very isolated and jungle-shrouded area in the eastern Yucatan Peninsula. It is not an island except by the cartographic twist of a Mayan word, “peten.” Moreau maintains closely guarded secrets about his lifetime commitment to “construct” new hybrid life in his private laboratory, while having made a deal with the devil to support himself, his daughter Carlota, and a family of hybrids. The story is at once both warm and fanciful and then grim, too, after a while. I could not put it down.

Brooke Harrington, Professor of Sociology at Dartmouth College, spent several years of intensive research and formal training on the way to writing “Capital without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent” (2016). She writes of the origins and evolution of wealth management, client/wealth manager relations, financial and legal innovations used to defend the status quo of wealth, consequential societal inequality and stratification, the complex relationships between clients and nation states, and, finally, implications for policy and future research with observations about wealth management as a profession. This may be an entirely unique account of a mostly secretive piece of our capitalistic society.

The fourth book is “The Island of Extraordinary Captives: A Painter, a Poet, an Heiress, and a Spy in a World War II British Internment Camp” (2022) by Simon Parkin. Parkin is both journalist and author of two other books of non-fiction. In this most recent book, the story takes place in an internment camp on the Isle of Man, where asylum-seeking inmates are kept against the backdrop of war for fear by the British government that amongst them are spies for Nazi Germany. This is not an Auschwitz or Buchenwald, but a “thriving cultural community complete with art exhibitions, lectures, musical

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performances, and poetry readings.” Nevertheless, it is a place of incarceration, and its fullest story has not, apparently, been subject of a book before.

I said this is an eclectic foursome, and so, as you can see, it is, but interesting too. If I have aroused your interest in one or more, ask for a copy, of course, at your local Library.

Charles B. Greenberg,
Board Director, Murrysville Community Library Foundation