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REVIEW: Reading Faulkner: Introductions to the First Thirteen Novels

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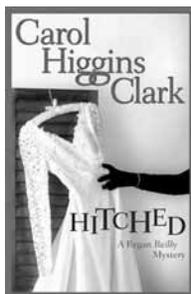
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simultaneously organizing a tournament for the PGA golf tour (her employer) and planning her extravagant wedding to pro golfer Peyton Ellers. Kara is haunted by the loss of her mother to cancer when Kara was nine, as well as by the abrupt and dramatic departure of her childhood sweetheart Jack when she was 14. Then Kara meets Maeve Mahoney, a nursing home resident she is visiting to fulfill a service requirement for membership in the local ladies' society. Maeve's tales of long-ago love and loss in her Irish homeland resonate with Kara and lead her to reexamine her life and her plans. Romance fans may enjoy this lightweight offering, although the characterizations are so thin that it is difficult for the reader to fully engage in the conflict and invest in the story's outcome. Even moments that are intended to be soaked in sentiment and drama come across as somewhat flat and detached. The device of overlaying Maeve's reminiscence onto Kara's life is awkward and does little to enrich the story. The happy ending arrives as expected but lacks the warmth and depth to truly satisfy. An optional purchase for medium to larger public libraries.

— Reviewed by **Sarah Trowbridge**
Fayette County Public Library

Hitched by Carol Higgins Clark
(Scribner, 2006; ISBN 0-7432-8942-0, \$24.00).

Detective Regan Reilly is days away from marriage to NYPD detective Jack "no relation" Reilly when the studio burglary of New York wedding-dress designers Alfred and Charisse sends Regan's plans (and those of four other brides) into a tailspin. When not aiding Regan in pursuit of the dress thieves, Jack tracks "The Drip," a serial bank robber so named because of his penchant for rainy-day heists. *Hitched* is the 10th novel in Clark's Regan Reilly mystery series. (The fifth installment, *Deck the Halls* (2000), was co-written by Carol Higgins Clark's mother, mystery novelist Mary Higgins Clark.) Though "The Drip" remains masked until near novel's end, the dress thieves (and their motives) are revealed in the fourth chapter; thereafter, the story alternates between the casework of detectives Regan and Jack and the misadventures of dress thieves Marco and Francis (who flee first to Atlantic City, then Las Vegas). Various side plots include a secretive romance, a conning couple's ruse, and the strange, abruptly resolved abduction of one of the brides. While the story is at times entertaining, readers expecting depth (or real suspense) will be disappointed. Characters are drawn from familiar stereotypes—the tireless detective, the bumbling thief, the histrionic bridezilla, the eccentric

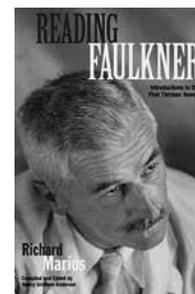


recluse. The plotting weaves together through a number of coincidences, and it seems that everyone in the story's world listens to the same radio station, watches the same television show, visits the same nightclub, and follows every detail of the press's apparent round-the-clock coverage of the April brides and their stolen dresses. Aside from anxious brides-to-be, *Hitched* might best suit readers in search of fast-paced, comedic, PG-rated, potato-chip fare: None of the characters use foul language, violence is limited to a few bumps and bruises, and all evil-doers get their comeuppance in the end. Recommended for public libraries seeking beach reads or light mystery for their adult collections.

— Reviewed by **Christina Hodgens**
Conyers-Rockdale Library System

NON-FICTION

Reading Faulkner: Introductions to the First Thirteen Novels content by Richard Marius, compiled and edited by Nancy Grisham Anderson (The University of Tennessee Press, 2006; ISBN 1-57233-449-5, \$15.95).

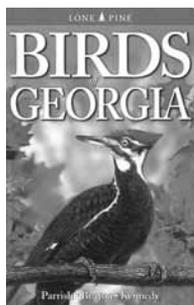


The deep affection that he held for the works of William Faulkner is evident on every page of this book collecting the undergraduate lectures of the late Dr. Richard Marius. Transcribed by Nancy Grisham Anderson, *Reading Faulkner* is casual and conversational in tone and geared as it is toward first- or second-year non-English-major college students, it is much more accessible to the average library patron than most other works of literary criticism. Dr. Marius covers Faulkner in depth, but not so deeply as to scare away anyone who might want to know more about William Faulkner but doesn't want to go to graduate school to do so. The subtitle, *Introductions to the First Thirteen Novels*, is somewhat misleading as the lectures do not cover just the early works of the Mississippi Nobel Laureate. The first 13 novels include *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom! Absalom!*, generally considered Faulkner's best works and the apex of his career. Throughout, Dr. Marius touches upon the common threads that the books share, notably those that distinguish these works as Southern literature. Frequently, Dr. Marius discusses the importance of the oral storytelling tradition in the American South and the effect that this has on the style of Faulkner: long, flowing sentences nearly free of punctuation, alliterative passages with a use of unusual words ("the curbedge's channelbrim"); the reader can almost hear the stories being recited aloud rather than written. Marius also

makes the point that Faulkner, before international recognition brought about by his receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature, was not just a Southern writer, indeed “merely a regional writer of some interest,” as Dr. Marius describes the view of Faulkner held at the time, but was also very much a member of the Lost Generation of American writers, with all their hallmarks: a deep spiritual wounding brought on by the horrors of World War I, a recognition of the worthlessness of the values held by previous generations, i.e., chivalry. While Dr. Marius never quite comes out clearly with the word “existentialism,” he does mention the effect that T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* had on Faulkner and that Faulkner thought Hemingway’s style lacked “courage,” although he did admire his fellow American’s work. A serious reader of Faulkner will find much to like about *Reading Faulkner: the First Thirteen Novels*, and the book would be put to good use in most academic libraries, but public libraries, especially those outside of the South, might find that they already have something on the shelf by Harold Bloom that can do what this book does, and possibly do it better.

— Reviewed by **John McConnell**
Hall County Library System

Birds of Georgia by Dr. John W. Parrish, Jr., Giff Beaton, and Gregory Kennedy, with contributions from Chris Fisher and Andy Bezener (Lone Pine Publishing, 2006; ISBN 10-976-8200-05-7; \$21.95).



The striking cover of this 383-page trade paperback encourages the curious amateur or experienced professional birdwatcher to investigate further. Once inside, the contents offer the reader many more surprises. The beautifully detailed color illustrations on glossy pages often show the bird species at rest or in flight, as well as visual differences (such as color and size) between the male and female birds. The color coding on many levels and the cross-references within the Reference Guide, the Top Birding Sites, and the Species Accounts are a definite help to the novice birdwatcher like myself. The introduction, interesting and quite readable, provides key information for effectively using the information within and provides an overview of birding as a hobby. The introduction also highlights the Top 50 Birding Sites in Georgia, with a state map and an expanded write-up for 15 of the sites. A typical Species Account includes the common and scientific name of each bird, large bold illustrations, an overview of the species, identification characteristics, size, status, habitat, nesting, feeding, voice, similar species and best sites for viewing. I have found the voice information to be particularly helpful to

me during my backyard adventures. The authors have impressive credentials and share their extensive knowledge with obvious enthusiasm. They encourage the reader to participate in birding activities such as joining organizations and clubs, landscaping for conservation and to attract wildlife, and setting up bird feeders and nesting houses to invite birds to visit and stay. Helpful websites are listed. This comprehensive publication engages the reader on many levels and is a worthwhile addition to the two other popular birding books in our public library’s collection (*Georgia Bird Watching*, Thompson, 2004 and *Birds of Georgia Field Guide*, Tekiela, 2002). Easy to follow and a delightful reference, this book is a terrific mid-priced gift for a nature lover and a “must have” for any academic or public library collection.

— Reviewed by **Ruth Hayden**
Smyrna Public Library

The Untold Story of Shiloh: The Battle and the Battlefield by Timothy B. Smith (University of Tennessee Press, 2006; ISBN 1-57233-466-5, \$34.00).



On April 6-7, 1862, Shiloh, Tennessee, was the site of the largest and bloodiest Civil War battle up to then. More than 65,000 Union troops under General Ulysses S. Grant fought it out against 45,000 Confederate soldiers under General Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard. At the battle’s end, 24,000 were dead, wounded, captured or missing. Smith is a staff member at the Shiloh National Military Park; this is his second book on Shiloh and it is not about the battle. In an introduction and 10 short chapters, Smith views aspects and issues that emerged from the two-day clash. It is about memory, the force of personality, reconciliation and changing views of historians. Chapter 1 sets the stage with a concise overview of changing historiography of the battle. The second chapter attempts to demolish the 10 “greatest myths of Shiloh,” starting with the one that the Union forces were surprised by the Confederate army (they weren’t). One of the myths—that the Union Navy played only a minor role in the battle—is also dealt with in a separate chapter. Smith shows how Navy gunboats on the Tennessee River protected the arrival of Union troops in a hundred transports and brought fire to bear on Rebel positions at critical moments. Chapter 7 reviews the period of reconciliation in the late 19th-early 20th centuries when a forest of commemorative statuary rose on the restored battlefield, and contrasts it with the rekindled “Lost Cause” mentality of our time. The book reads well, helped by appropriate historic photos, but badly needs a good map