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REVIEW: Thirteen Moons

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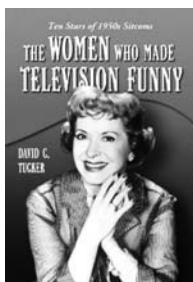
States of America during the U.S. Civil War, by following the wartime adventures of one raider, the CSS Shenandoah. *Sea of Gray* describes the mission of the Shenandoah, its role in the naval front of the war, and its eventual search for a safe port upon the end of hostilities. In a manner reminiscent of Blackbeard or Henry Morgan, the mercenary ship Shenandoah was charged by the CSA to seek out Union merchant ships and destroy/plunder them. Upon learning that the war had ended and that his crew would be considered pirates by the Union (a hangable offense), the captain of the Shenandoah circumnavigated the globe in search of a safe port where he might surrender. During its tenure as a privateer, the Shenandoah looted and sank 34 ships before surrendering to the British in November of 1865, over six months after the conclusion of the war. Meticulously researched and documented, and written in an easy-to-read style, *Sea of Gray* serves as an excellent resource that explores this interesting chapter in the Civil War. The book contains several pages of photographs, an extensive bibliography, and other useful supplemental material. Recommended for public libraries, high school media centers, and academic libraries. Suitable for advanced high school students, undergraduates, and graduate students. ►►

— Reviewed by **Elizabeth White**
University of Georgia Libraries

The Women Who Made Television Funny: Ten Stars of 1950s Sitcoms

by David C. Tucker (McFarland & Co., 2007; ISBN 978-0786429004, \$35.00).

"Duck and cover." "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" "I will go to Korea." Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. The Kinsey Reports. If you lived during the decade when these topics were in the news and your family owned a TV, then you will probably have a Lucy and Ethel flashback when you hear the phrase "Speed it up a little!" (Remember the candy factory episode?) Impressively researched and written with obvious affection for its subject, David C. Tucker's book is filled with interesting details and anecdotes about some of the women who were instrumental in creating the TV sitcoms of the 50s. The 10 women featured in Tucker's book include Gracie Allen ("The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show"), Eve Arden ("Our Miss Brooks" and "The Eve Arden Show"), Lucille Ball ("I Love Lucy"), Spring Byington ("December Bride"), Joan Davis ("I Married Joan"), Anne Jeffreys ("Topper"



and "Love That Jill"), Donna Reed ("The Donna Reed Show"), Ann Sothern ("Private Secretary" and "The Ann Sothern Show"), Gale Storm ("My Little Margie" and "The Gale Storm Show: Oh! Susanna"), and Betty White ("Life with Elizabeth" and "Date with the Angels"). Each illustrated chapter traces the career of one star and places her in the context of the development of TV as an entertainment medium. This last point is significant, because as Tucker points out, TV was in its infancy and topics viewed as the least bit controversial were taboo. Imagine if, like the alien Thermians in "Galaxy Quest", all you knew about United States culture in the '50s came from the television sitcoms. You would know nothing of the Cold War jitters that had school children diving under their desks, the Korean War, the national fear of Communism, the national shame of racism. Most of all, you would wonder how in the world these earthlings procreate, since males and females don't even mention S-E-X, let alone sleep in the same beds. Yet despite the constraints of censorship and the social mores of the '50s, these women made sitcoms if not exactly an art form, at least an artful and humorous rendering of somewhat idyllic, white middle-class culture. "Unable to fall back on strong language, racial or sexual epithets, or shock value," as Tucker points out, "the shows of the 1950s entertained us because of the gifts of the actors, writers, and producers who created them..." And in all cases, the women who starred in these shows were much savvier than the ditsy female characters that some of them played. Lucy Ricardo longed for a role in show business whereas Lucille Ball was vice-president of the successful production company she founded with her husband. Author David C. Tucker is a freelance writer and public library administrator in DeKalb County, Georgia. His book is recommended for all public and academic libraries. ►►

— Reviewed by **William A. Richards**
Georgia College & State University

FICTION

Thirteen Moons by Charles Frazier
(Random House, 2006; ISBN 0-3755-0932-1, \$26.95).

Thirteen Moons is a fictional biography inspired by the life of William Holland Thomas of protagonist Will Cooper. As Charles Frazier states in the Author's Notes, Will Cooper "is not William Holland Thomas, though they

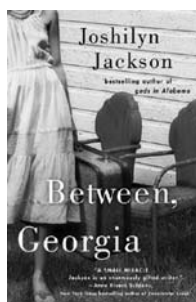


do share some DNA." The second of Frazier's novels set primarily in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, the book is about the property acquisition of the Eastern Branch of the Cherokee Nation; the story of the land of the Cherokees; and, like Frazier's previous bestseller *Cold Mountain*, in part the story of the love of a man for a woman. John Calhoun and Andrew Jackson, along with other Washington, D.C. politicians, political operators, and post-Civil War U.S. government officials, attempt to resolve the Cherokee problem; other less upright characters, such as the men who knife Cooper at the opulent Warm Springs Hotel, appear as well. In contrast, Frazier creates deeper characterizations of the Cherokees, the high-born landowner Featherstone and Cooper's adoptive Cherokee father Bear. Charley, who may also "share some DNA" with the famous Cherokee warrior Tsali, is also drawn in depth. Cooper loves Claire, who appears in episodes from beginning to end; her passion for Cooper is balanced by her relationship with Featherstone. Cooper's passion for the land of the Cherokees is played out over eight decades of the annual cycle of 13 moons. Cooper/Holland Thomas bargains for the land, buys it, and ultimately saves the land for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. Charles Frazier uses Cooper's passions for good food, good drink, and a good horse as motivation to take the character off on many extended travels. Frazier adds a short bibliography of Cherokee resources. This novel is recommended for any library that includes fine historical fiction. ►►

— Reviewed by **Tim Wojcik**
Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School

Between, Georgia by Joshilyn Jackson (Warner Books, 2006; ISBN 0-446-52442-5, \$22.99).

Between, Georgia is stuck geographically between Athens and Atlanta, Georgia. Similarly, Nonny Jane is stuck genealogically between the Crabtrees who gave birth to her and the Fretts who claimed her. There is not much distance between Athens and Atlanta; one seems to run into the other. Neither is there is much difference between the oral histories of the Crabtrees and the Fretts. Fourth cousin counts only when the need presents itself. Likewise, men do not count much in this story. In fact, only one man, Henry, seems to aspire to giving or receiving respect. The plot examines the two

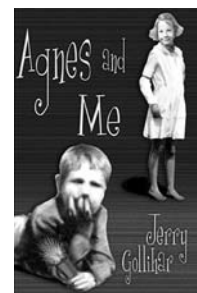


hierarchies that make up the ninety or so inhabitants of *Between*: those who own everything and those who own nothing. Author Joshilyn Jackson is clearly Nonny Jane. Nonny gives voice to the characters, sets the action, and determines the story's progression. The town's family matriarchs are definitely in charge, and their actions invoke and mandate the actions and behaviors of all the characters. Their banter reveals that within each lies a facsimile of the other, each as capable as the other of beauty and ugliness in body and soul. No one knows how the feud began, but everyone knows what fueled it; and, once begun, there was no undoing. There may be a lull in the feud; but, then... that is only a prediction. Jackson opens the story with Nonny Jane's harsh, raw entry into the world. She introduces us to those who walk the streets of *Between, Georgia*: the blind, the romantic, the criminal, the neurotic, the drunk. It is a global group all nested together into one literary museum where the past mingles with the present. ►►

— Reviewed by **Verely Sue Dotson**
Greene County High School

Agnes and Me by Jerry Gollihar (PublishAmerica, 2004; ISBN 1-4137-2478-7, \$19.95).

Agnes and Me recounts a year in the life of Payne Conley and his family, from around August 1949 to August 1950, focusing on his and his sister Agnes's adventures growing up. Payne is six, and, as he puts it, he can not move without seeming to get into trouble. Agnes is a couple of years older than Payne. Their other siblings are already grown and married with children of their own, some the same age as Payne. Anyone who grew up during the '40s or '50s, or who had siblings to fuss with and follow around, will enjoy this walk down memory lane. While not everyone has had adventures rescuing a kitten from an outhouse, shooting a cousin between the eyes with a BB gun, missing a full year of school due to ignorance of the workings of a flush toilet, or killing the family rooster, just the memories this book triggered had me laughing and cheering for Payne. *Agnes and Me* is a fun read and gives the reader an insight into a different time. Recommended for any fiction collection. ►►



— Reviewed by **Lee Ann Cline**
Dalton State College