

1ST BEST READS OF 2010

Compiled by GRIZÉLL AZAR-LUXTON

I always find it fascinating to hear what other people read. And what better occasion than this time of the year when everything thankfully seems to be winding down and one has a bit more time on one's hands to settle down with a good book. We approached a wide variety of people to share their best read/s of 2010 with our readers. Note that the books need not have been published in 2010. Our sample range from editors, CEOs, book selectors through authors and politicians to columnists, and the result - a delight. Share with us what people enjoyed most in 2010 and if, like me, you are an inveterate bibliophile - add those titles that appeal to you to your 'must read list before you die'. I'm sure most of you have one ...

HELEN ZILLE, PREMIER OF THE WESTERN CAPE

#**Why Africa is poor and what Africans can do about it** by Greg Mills (Penguin Books, 2010).

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell (Penguin, 2009).

#**It's our turn to eat: the story of a Kenyan whistleblower** by Michela Wrong (Fourth Estate, 2010).

Architects of poverty by Moeletsi Mbeki (Picador, 2009).

#**The bottom billion: why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it** by Paul Collier (Oxford U.P., 2008).

BRENT WALTERS, HOD, CULTURAL AFFAIRS & SPORT

#**SuperFreakonomics** (Penguin, 2010), is the 'freakquel' to Levitt and Dubner's highly acclaimed **Freakonomics**. The book is a collection of vignettes asking questions which we do not often think about and take for granted. The book challenges conventional wisdom and implores us not to take things at face value, but to question the underlying evidence and assumptions we rely on to reach our conclusions even if such questioning is uncomfortable. To do this they use a combination of qualitative, statistical and economic analyses and have come up with some thought-provoking theories as to why things are the way they are.

Levitt and Dubner conclude that humans will only change their behaviour if the incentive is strong enough. For example, they question

why so many people drive under the influence of alcohol when in the US alone 30% of all accidents are alcohol-related. They conclude that because not many drunk drivers actually get caught and punished, there is no incentive (in this case negative) to change behaviour.

Arguing that the simplest solutions to life's problems are the most effective, the authors cite the example of Dr Ignaz Semmelweis, who, in the mid-19th century, after a statistical analysis of maternal deaths at childbirth, concluded that the single most important factor influencing infections and death rates was the matter of medical staff washing their hands frequently and not transferring germs. This single simple conclusion resulted in the saving of millions of lives and is a major factor in bringing down the maternal death rate from more than 450 per 100 000 births in the 19th century to just nine per 100 000 births in industrialised nations today.

In the period September 2001 to December 2001 the USA experienced a spike of 1000 extra traffic road accident deaths. The question was why? What theories could explain such a phenomenon? Using data and analyses from different sources Dubner and Levitt came to the startling conclusion that the spike in road deaths was an indirect result of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Citing the fact that people stopped flying resulting in increase of road usage - that per mile-driving is more dangerous than flying, that most of the increases in the death rate took place close to the attacks, that psychological studies showed an increase in alcohol abuse and post-traumatic stress after the attacks and that most of the fatalities were the result of drunken and / or reckless driving, they concluded that there was a linkage to the World Trade Centre attacks.

This book is filled with analyses and theories like the one above, ranging from topics like: *Why you want your ER doctor to be a woman*; *Hurray for seatbelts* and *The worst month to have a baby* through to politically unpalatable topics like: *How the Endangered Species Act [actually] endangers species*; *Is global warming all its made out to be*; *The economics of prostitution* and *Why it's unlucky to be born a female in India*, and many more. **SuperFreakonomics** can be read again, again and again.

A must-read for any serious change agent, development specialist and manager.

ERICH BUCHHAUS, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

Writing about your favourite book of the year is at most times daunting as usually many titles spring to mind. After some deliberation I decided to give my top vote to an animal story. Usually I am a bit reluctant to read anything about animals as there is often something rather nasty within, and it can end on a sad note. However, having read **Dewey: the small-town library cat that touched the world** by Vicki Myron (Hodder, 2008), I have now changed my mind. I have discovered that reading animal stories can offer the reader a better opportunity to understand their animal companions and can serve as inspirational literature at the same time.

A similar story is **#Homer's Odyssey** by Gwen Cooper (Bantam, 2010). Here we have a young lady in her mid-twenties (having just broken up with her boyfriend), who, together with her two cats, Scarlett and Vashti, share accommodation with a girlfriend in Miami. Gwen's veterinarian calls with a story about a three-week-old eyeless kitten that had been abandoned. It is love at first sight and she names him Homer after the Greek author of such classic titles as **The Iliad** and **The Odyssey**. She ignores warnings from friends that this cat will be a problem and will never be as playful or independent as other cats. But this kitten (who nobody believed in) quickly grows into a tiny daredevil with a giant-sized heart who eagerly makes friends with every human who crosses his path. Cooper centres her life on caring for Homer and provides a safe home for him. Homer in turn inspires her to take up the challenge to accept a new and better job in New York. A dark moment is when Cooper desperately tries to get home to her three cats in lower Manhattan on 9/11. Her home was just five blocks away from the World Trade Centre.

This memoir tells two stories, one about the energetic and engaging Homer, and one about Cooper's search for a satisfying career and partner. The book recounts a series of life lessons that Homer taught the people who lived with him. He never let his lack of sight impede his joy for life and love for Cooper. What is most touching is how his courageous spirit teaches Cooper and readers that there are no limits to love or ability. Through twelve years, six moves, several boyfriends and a showdown with a burglar, this tender and poignant tale reveals Homer's lessons about love and acceptance - and how he transformed Cooper into the woman she had always wanted to be. This lovely human-feline memoir is sure to warm the hearts of all pet lovers. It certainly did mine.

LINDA NGALEKA, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

I have chosen Nokuzola Mndende's **#African spiritual journey: rites of passage among the Xhosa speaking of South Africa** (Icamagu Institute, 2006), a non-fiction title because it is a book about me, an African Xhosa-speaking child. It is about the misconceptions that I have and other misconceptions which I did not know I have. For example, I always thought that *imbeleko* and *ukuqatywa* mean the same thing. This book is for all the young and old African Xhosa-speaking people and even non-Xhosa-speaking who always wanted to know more about *amasiko*, the

importance of the misconceptions, *intwaso* and the rites of passage. The subject is discussed in general terms and is not specific to a particular clan name. It is more of a detailed step-by-step guide to make us understand more about ourselves and to teach the younger generation about African religion and the rituals involved. When reading this book one senses that the author knows what she is writing about and has done research to substantiate her facts. She differentiates between what is *isiko* (ritual) and what is *isithethe* (tradition/custom). For example, the unveiling of a tombstone is *isithethe* (tradition/custom) and it is not a must while *izila* and *ukubuyisa* are compulsory rituals. Some of the misunderstandings highlighted are the use of brandy when practicing a ritual, *imbeleko* vs *isiko lokuqaba*, *ilobola* vs bride price vs dowry, *igqirha*, et cetera. The author argues that some of the English translations do not provide a true meaning of the African word, for example, ritual is not a true meaning of *isiko*, some of the words are not equivalent to any English word, for example, *lobola*, *umoshwamo*, *umgqabazo*, et cetera.

This is a book that many people will want to read regardless of beliefs. In order to make sound decisions, one needs to be well informed and this book does exactly that.

NEVILLE ADONIS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: SUPPORT SERVICES, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

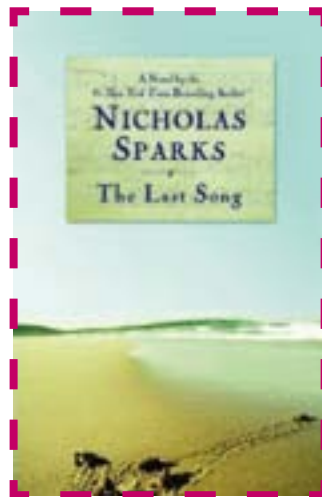
Due to my studies and new position at work, my life is so unusually busy and full nowadays, that I do not find the time to read books, but Nicholas Sparks' **The last song** (Sphere, 2009) was actually really good! I made time to read it after a colleague of mine that knows my taste in reading recommended that I should read this special book. Now I know my weakness lies in tear-jerkers, both in books and films. Having heard the gist of it, I just had to read this book! When I started I could hardly put it down.

It's about a girl who lived with her mom and little brother who was forced to visit her dad for the holidays. She was not very thrilled, because her dad had abandoned them when she was little. She felt hurt and betrayed by her father and wanted nothing to do with him. However, they shared a very special connection as they both loved music, and this is what eventually reunited father and daughter.

A heartwarming story written by the internationally best-selling American novelist, Nicholas Sparks, **The last song** captured me from the very first page. An easy-to-read book with a predictable formula that includes first love, illness and death, differences in social class, romance, family, self-discovery and suspense. It is an emotional story of the love between parent and child and the hurt felt when that love is taken away.

NOJONDE NGQOBA, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

#Men, money and chocolate by Menna van Praag (Hay House, 2009), is an inspirational book in the form of an autobiography. If you like books like **The alchemist** by Paulo Coelho, then you will enjoy this although





it's written more for women. It is a story about Maya, a young woman who feels her life is in a rut and who does not have the courage to follow her dreams. She struggles to find love, as every time she thinks she has found a man, it always ends in disaster. Maya wanted to be a writer but her dreams were shattered when she had to leave her studies behind to look after her dying mother. She finds comfort by eating chocolate croissants, flapjacks and cocoa coffee from her coffee shop and this leaves her over-weight and unhappy. One morning she has a conversation with a stranger at her coffee shop and as a consequence she

later begins a spiritual journey. This stranger is an elderly woman who embarks on 'reading her inner feelings'. Maya is so ashamed of herself that she starts crying. The next day, she closes her coffee shop and risks losing money she does not have in order to finish a book she has been writing for years. It is a moving and heart-warming story. A must read for any woman who wants to find love and lose weight!

PENDY JOERNING, LIBRARY ASSISTANT, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

Mary Ann Shaffer's **The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society** (Bloomsbury, 2008) is sadly the authors' only book but what sheer delight it is. It is written in the form of letters between writer Juliet Ashton in London and one Dawsey Adams who is a member of the club in Guernsey. The club was set up in secret during the German Occupation and it is not long before Juliet begins to hear from other members and she discovers that the society is every bit as extraordinary as its name. Juliet eventually goes to Guernsey to find out more about the founding member, Elizabeth, who fell in love with a German officer; was sent away to a concentration camp and left her only child behind. As a friend of mine said, it may not be the most well-written book, but the characters are wonderful and it certainly gripped me right from the start.

The best day of the week is unpacking all the spanking new books, but made even better if, amongst them, is a gem of a children's book. The modern children's books are all wonderful but every now and then there is one that is truly 'awesome'. I couldn't wait to share **Little Mouse's big book of fears** (Macmillan, 2007) by Emily Gravett with my colleagues, Gerda and Sandi, who, like myself, love them. This is about how to overcome your phobias and I think every adult should read it. The illustrations are wonderful and every single word must be read. And, when you come to the end, start again and really savour it.

SABRINA GOSLING, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

When asked about the book I enjoyed the most this year my immediate response was: **The girl with the dragon tattoo** (Maclehose P., 2008) by Stieg Larsson - the first crime thriller in Larsson's wonderful *Millennium* trilogy. But so much has already been written about it that I don't think there's anything I can add, except to say how thoroughly entertained I

was and to recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone who hasn't yet had the pleasure - although I doubt there are many left who haven't read it.

What I've selected instead are two books, both of which have youthful narrators.

One I'll mention briefly at the end, the other is something I read a couple of weeks ago and haven't been able to get out of my head. It is **#Room**, a powerful and utterly memorable novel by Emma Donoghue (Picador, 2010).

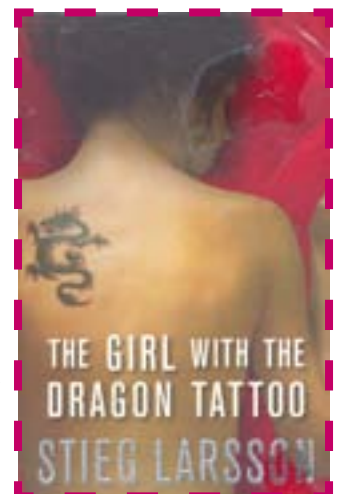
The story opens on the morning of Jack's birthday and I was hooked from the very first lines.

'Today I'm five. I was four last night going to sleep in Wardrobe, but when I wake up in Bed in the dark I'm changed to five, abracadabra.'

The story is told in a present-tense, first-person narrative by Jack. Everything we know, we learn from him - from his perspective, through a child's eyes and perceptions. The book is beautifully written and Jack's voice is funny, original and authentic. *'Jack's voice is one of the pure triumphs of the novel; in him, she has invented a child narrator who is one of the most engaging in years - his voice is so pervasive I could hear him chatting away during the day when I wasn't reading the book.'* Donoghue uses the slow-reveal style to good effect here, gradually allowing the reader to learn more as Jack learns more. He and his mother (Ma) live in an 11-square-foot, soundproof, escape-proof shed with a metal door and no windows, only a skylight. We learn that she was a 19-year-old college student when she was abducted seven years before and has been a prisoner ever since. They have very little but they do have some books and a TV. The abductor (Old Nick) visits every night at nine as Jack sleeps out of sight in the cupboard.

Don't be mistaken. This may sound depressing but it truly isn't. Donoghue is always in control of her subject; she has managed to make the story moving and compelling, but with such a lightness of touch and vivid evocation of a mother's love for her child, that it is never depressing. It is sometimes claustrophobic, even harrowing, but there is always a feeling of hope, and the love between Ma and Jack, which is central to the story, pervades the whole atmosphere of the novel. Room is all that Jack knows - almost everything else is fantasy to him. Somehow, within the confines of this small space, his young mother has managed to make his life happy and his days full. As Jack says: 'We have thousands of things to do every morning...'

This really is a remarkable novel. Donoghue says the case of Elisabeth Fritzl sparked her story. In **Room** she decided to focus less on a woman imprisoned like this and more on the child born into long-term confinement and to explore the problems of bringing up a child within such a restricted environment. With great imagination she describes the daily tedium of living like this - not just for days or weeks, but for years and years. She also looks at the difficulty of re-entry into the ordinary world. For the mother it is freedom, but for the child the outside world is experienced very differently. It may be exciting and filled with opportunity but



it is also loud and strange and overwhelming - far removed from the familiar security of his home, Room.

Emma Donoghue handles her subject with empathy and sensitivity. She has crafted a fine novel here. It, deservedly, has been shortlisted for a number of literary awards. It lost out on the Man Booker but may still win some others. I can strongly recommend **Room**. It is riveting and, I think, best read in one sitting.

The second book that I'll briefly mention here is something I re-read early this year to refresh my memory before starting the sequel. It is the multi-award-winning **#The knife of never letting go** by Patrick Ness (Walker, 2008), the first novel in the *Chaos walking* trilogy. This was his first book for young adults and is an absolute stunner. It also has amazing cross-over appeal. A 13-year-old boy I know was given it and then had to fight off his 40-something mother to finish reading it - after which it was passed around among both his and her friends. This is something not to be missed - do give it a try.

STANLEY JONCK, BOEKKEURDER, PROVINSIALE BIBLIOTEEKDIENS

My gunstelingboek tot nou toe was Deon Meyer se **13 uur** (Human, 2008). Ek het dit só geniet dat dit voel of ek dit net gister klaar gelees het. Maar ek kan nie by een boek bly nie, so die redakteur moet my

maar vergewe . . . Vanjaar (2010) se uitstaande boeke was Mariël Le Roux se **#Die naamlose** (Tafelberg, 2010), (naaswenner in Sanlam se Groot Romanwedstryd 2010) en Anchien Troskie se **#Die besoeker** (Kwela, 2010), met as tema, 'n sekretaresse by 'n spogskool wat dwelms aan rykmanskinders verkoop, en hoe tieners oor dwelmgebruik voel - so skokkend, en tog 'n realiteit. Marion Erskine se **#Donatello en Volksie** (Tafelberg, 2010), móés ek net lees omdat dit Afrikaanse chick-lit uit 'n manlike skrywer se pen is - met hoofkarakters wat in 'n internetkletsamer ontmoet en gesels! Ander gunsteling was Leon

Van Nierop se **#Vuurvreter** (Lapa, 2010), Marietjie Van Rooyen se **#Huis teen die skuinste** en Annelie Botes se **#Duiwelsbrood en ander kort en lang stories** (Lapa, 2010). Wat my dan bring by die drie titels van hierdie jaar wat so 'n kortkoppie bo die ander uitstaan:

#Tabernakel (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Annelie Botes het my tone laat omkrul van plesier. Dis 'Botes-op-haar-beste' in haar meenthuiskompleks in North Riding, Port Elizabeth, waarin sy op 'n heerlike geselstrant rubrieke wat sy aanvanklik vir die koerant aangepak het, chronologies gerangskik het om 'n outobiografiese geheel te vorm. Botes sê hierdie 'kindjie van haar aard na **Broodsonde**'.

Sarah Lotz se **#Tooth and nailed** (Penguin Bks., 2010) was net so lekker. Dit is die Kapenaar, Lotz, se derde boek na **Pompidou posse** en **Exhibit A** en is 'n humoristiese boek wat in die Suid-Afrikaanse regs-wêreld afspeel - meestal in Kaapstad. Die regsadviseur, Georgie Allen en sy Skotse vriend, advokaat Patrick McLennan (oftewel die Poison Dwarf), is vasbeslote om geregtigheid te laat seëvier. Hulle bemoei hulle hier met drie sake: Georgie se broer word aangekla van nalatigheid

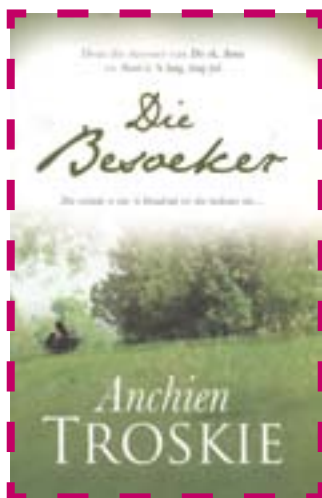
toe 'n kliënt se seun deur 'n hiëna aangeval word tydens 'n wildtoer in Botswana op 'n wildplaas wat hy bestuur. Georgie is outomaties saam in die moeilikheid, want hy het borg gestaan vir sy broer om die besigheid op die been te bring. Dan is daar die saak van 'n promiskueuse professor wat afgepers word, en wat Georgie se geskeide vrou, The Witch, aan hom toevertrou het. En laastens is daar die saak van Suid-Afrika se eerste gay egskeding (met 'n baie manlike Amerikaanse miljoenêr wat deur sy lewensmaat bedrieg word). Die oënskynlik perfekte Shane hanteer die saak onder Georgie se toesig. Shane is net te goed om waar te wees en net mooi die teenoorgestelde van Georgie in baie opsigte - hy gaan getrou na die gimnasium, dra smaakvolle klere, is betrokke by allerhande bewonderenswaardige sake, is altyd in beheer van al sy sake en is boonop aantreklik en suksesvol! Arme Georgie se liefdeslewe is betreurenswaardig en hy raak betrokke by The Witch se beeldskone assistent - sy sal hom afslag as sy dít moet uitvind! En dan is daar Exhibit A, die basterbrak met 'n karakter van sy eie, wat órals saam met Georgie gaan - selfs tydens besigheidsure! Heerlike karakters, interessante sake wat opgelos moet word en 'n boeiende skryfstyl. Ek is amptelik 'n Lotz-aanhanger!

Kop-aan-kop hiermee is Riana Mouton se **#Sporloos** (Lapa, 2010). Mouton is 'n vroulike Suid-Afrikaanse speurromanskrifster en woon tans saam met haar man en twee seuns in Nieu-Seeland. Sy skryf in die tradisie van Ian Rankin, Deon Meyer, Faye Kellerman, Patricia Cornwell en Nancy Taylor Rosenberg. Haar debuut, **Reuk van die dood**, het in 2009 die kortlys van die ATKV Woordveertjies vir spanningsfiksie gehaal. Die hoofkarakter in **Sporloos** is Alex Cloete. Hy is rigtingloos en kwaad vir die lewe as gevolg van al die onreg wat hy moes deurmaak, teleurstellings wat hy beleef het en die armmansbestaan wat hy as gevolg hiervan voer. Sy opvlieënde humeur, aggressiewe houding en gewelddadige lewe toe hy in die weermag was, maak sake ook glad nie makliker nie. Sy geliefde seun, Zander, woon by sy ma, Mercia, ver van hom af. Maar toe Mercia onder verdagte omstandighede sterf, verdwyn Zander spoorloos. Eers dink almal dat hy dood is, maar toe word dit duidelik dat hy ontvoer is en Alex voel rasend en magteloos hieroor - sy seun is vir hom alles in die lewe. Mouton weef 'n spanningslyn wat my nie die boek wou laat neersit nie en haar karakterbeelding is oortuigend. Alex as karakter is iemand met wie ek simpatie het, maar terselfdertyd ook bewonder. Hy tree lojaal en opofferend op teenoor sy geliefdes, word baie menslik uitgebeeld en het die opleiding, voorkoms en verdedigingsvermoëns wat ek hom beny. Sy aangename verrassing aan die einde van die boek kom hom een-honderd persent toe.

THERESA SASS, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

What gripped me in **#The intimate ape: orangutans and the secret life of a vanishing species** (Citadel P., 2010) by Shawn Thompson is how distinct, how different, how almost human orangutans are. Also that some people are so committed to the cause of the orangutans that they choose to live in isolation away from civilisation in a country where they don't understand the language or the culture.

In **The intimate ape**, journalist Shawn Thompson explores the lives of orangutans through the lives of the people who know them best. They are the scientists making discoveries in Borneo and Sumatra, the conservationists fighting to save the orangutans and the rainforest, the zoo keepers caring for orangutans and the volunteers who help to save the lives of these animals.



The author takes us on the journey to the rainforest; to the different camps where people study and take care of animals that were injured by loggers and hunters, orangutans that were captured and kept in confinement, and how they try to rehabilitate these animals. The practical and reasonable thing is to keep the animals in the camps for at least a month before releasing them in the forest, but the author noticed how some scientists get so attached to some animals that they keep them for longer than necessary; for instance, some primatologists and scientists will refer to the orangutans by name and point out that they've adopted 'Princess' and raised her since she was a baby and that the animal assumes that he or she is the actual parent.

Thompson reveals the emotional and intellectual lives of the orangutans. We meet Zurich van Schaik who discovered that orangutans make what appear to be leaf dolls that they take to bed with them, just as a human would. Some of the rainforest local women even breast-feed infants whose parents had been killed by loggers and hunters. Van Schaik also told how one animal came to the rescue of a woman caregiver whom loggers wanted to attack while alone in the forest. In one of the chapters we meet an orangutan that was raised by a sailor and who would always look for cigarettes and alcohol. One scientist taught sign language to one animal and later they could have a two way conversation.

We also read about the primatologist Biruté Galdikas who discovered through her studies how mother orangutans, like human mothers, are indulgent, patient and compassionate. The young will stay with their mother even after a sibling is born. Orangutan females will also adopt young orphans. The scientist tells how orangutans that have been released from the camps will bring injured orangutans to the camps for treatment. The message that she gets across is that humans can't just go and try to make a connection with these animals. They will make the connection when they are ready, and then only on their terms.

There are many comparisons to the ways that humans and orangutans behave, but according to the author the reason why he wrote this book is because the general population does not realise what orangutans are and that they are much closer to extinction than gorillas and chimpanzees. The habitat of orangutans is being destroyed in Borneo and Sumatra by the palm oil plantations, hunters, and by logging for timber. He makes it clear that in order to save orangutans, we will have to save the rainforest.

Learning more about orangutans from experts, scientists, conservationists and their personal views on how to work with these animals was definitely interesting. This book is really worth reading as it gives one a unique insight into the threatened lives of orangutans and adds to our understanding of their world.

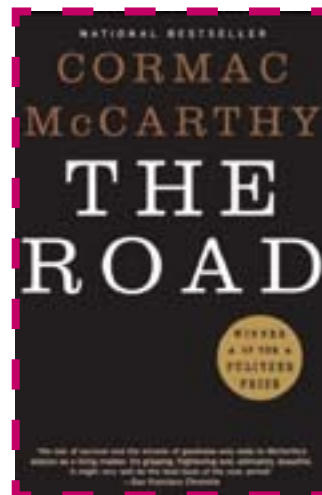
FRANÇOIS YERSTER, ARGIVARIS, MEDIA24

'n Boek is soos 'n kuiergas wat 'n vriend kan word. Veral op die regte tyd. Om 'n uitstaande boek te kies bly dus 'n persoonlike keuse en vanjaar, met permissie, kies ek PG du Plessis se bundel (baie) kort kortverhale **120+ sommer-stories** (Lapa, 2010). Dié stories se onvergeetlike hoofkarakters bied ure se plesier; met die bekendste van die ensemble-trio Koöperasiestories se beswaarde Genis en die oopbek-Pietersejtjies, vir my die beste. Die kroegvlieë van *Hier sit die manne* en die delwers en opdrifels van *Tussen die riewe* het hulle eie bekoring, maar dis dieselfde menslike swakhede wat al dié stories - en ons ook daaraan - saambind.

Skete en sondes, soms uitgelê deur Satan self (op huisbesoek?), suggereer dat ons die Paradys nooit verdien het nie. Gelukkig kan ons nog daarvoor lag. Al is dit meesal net met die voortande.

JACO JACOBS, UITGAWER, KINDER- EN JEUGBOEKE, LAPA UITGAWERS

Daar is talle boeke op my moet-lees-lysie waarby ek nog nie uitgekom het nie, sommige daarvan tot my groot skande. Vanjaar het ek darem (benewens al die ander boeke wat ek gelees het) twee van daardie moet-lees-boeke op my persoonlike lysie aangeskaf, en albei het my groot plesier verskaf. Een van die beste boeke wat ek vanjaar gelees het, is **The road** (Picador, 2006) van Cormac McCarthy. Die eenvoudige, gestroopte vertelstyl is een van die redes waarom hierdie apokaliptiese storie jou soos die spreekwoordelike vuishou in die maag tref. My idee van 'n goeie boek is een wat jou ná die lees daarvan so effens anders na die wêreld laat kyk. **The road** laat 'n mens met baie vrae oor menswees en die grense tussen goed en kwaad.



Nog 'n boek wat heerlik met jou kop smokkel en jou 'n bietjie uit jou gemaksone pluk, is Haruki Murakami se **Kafka on the Shore** (Vintage, 2005). Dis 'n wonderlik vreemde fantasieverhaal wat jou as leser oorpompel, insluk en ietwat duiselig aan die ander kant uitspoeg.

JACOLETTE KLOPPERS, BY-REDAKTEUR, DIE BURGER

Hier is 'n paar van my gunsteling Afrikaanse boeke vir 2010: **#Pérsomi: kind van die brakrant** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Irma Joubert; **#Die mooiste sprokies van Grimm** (Human, 2010), vertaal deur Marita van der Vyver, geïllustreer deur Piet Grobler; **Dis koue kos, skat** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Marita van der Vyver; **#Brouhaha** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Eben Venter; **#Die naamlose** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Mariël le Roux; **#Vier seisoene kind** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Wilna Adriaanse; **#Witboy in Afrika** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Deon Maas; en **#Sestig dae in Suid-Soedan** (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Franz Kemp.

TON VOSLOO, VOORSITTER, NASPERS

Ton Vosloo het laat weet die lekkerste boek wat hy vanjaar gelees het is die heerlike riller-speurverhaal deur Chris Karsten met die titel **#Abel se ontwaking** (Human, 2010). Chris, ervare joernalis, kom na vore as topklas spanningskrywer wat jou vasgenaël hou. Hy is vinnig besig om Deon Meyer in te haal.

'n Boek wat jou hard in die ribbes tref, is **#'n Vrou gaan dokter toe** deur Ray Kluun (Tafelberg, 2010), uit Hollands vertaal deur Francois Smith. Die vinniglewende karakter se lewe word tot stilstand geruk toe sy vrou met slegte nuus van die dokter kom. Dit jaag die frenetiese tempo op, maar ruk die leser aan die hart hoe 'n lewe meedoënloos doodgewurg word.

Dis aangrypnd.

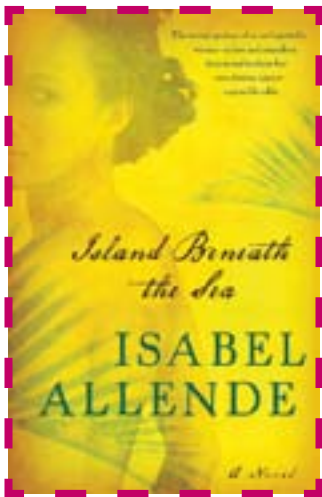
YVONNE BEYERS, NASIONALE REDAKTEUR, BY

Roberto Bolaño se **Last evening on earth* (Harvill Secker, 2007) is al vir 'n rukkie op die rak, maar ek het dit vanjaar eers gelees. Sy stories oor randfigure, mindere skrywers, vergete siele en, soos Danie Marais dit sou stel, skaduboksers het my geraak op maniere wat ek nie eens noodwendig begryp nie. Ek is skoon verlief op die boek.

DR RIJANA SCHEEPERS, SKRYWER, DOSENT

Ek het gelees Isabel Allende se *#Island beneath the sea* (Fourth Estate, 2010). Hierdie bespreking is 'n verwerking van 'n resensie wat ek vir *Die Burger* gelewer het.

Sedert haar merkwaardige debuut, *House of the spirits* (Corgi, 1993), het Allende 'n groot aantal publikasies gelewer: kortverhale, kosverhale, outobiografiese romans, jeugliteratuur, en - myns insiens haar forté - historiese romans. Sy word wêreldwyd bekroon vir haar werk, maar ook striemend gekritiseer, onder meer deur Harold Bloom, Gabriel Marquez en Roberto Bolaño. Dié formidabele menere se beswaar is onder meer dat Allende 'n 'skryfmasjien' is, dat haar styl herinner aan 'n bloedlose sterwende, dat al haar skryfwerk maar salig vergeet kan word. Mmm . . . ek wonder wíe op aarde die geeste en die groenhariges van *House of the spirits* kan vergeet? En nie verniet nie word sy vergelyk met einste Marquez as beoefenaar van



die magiese realisme.

Allende se nuutste roman, *Island beneath the sea* (Fourth Estate, 2010) (oorspronklik *La Isla Bajo el Mar*) is, tot my groot vreugde, weer 'n historiese roman. En wat 'n allemagtige verhaal is dit nie! Dit is 'n kompleks-verweefde intrige met 'n magdom karakters, ook histories herkenbare karakters, wat hoofsaaklik in twee tyd-ruimtes ontvou. Die eerste deel, vanaf 1770 tot 1793, speel af op die Franse kolonie Saint-Domingue (die geteisterde Haïti) en vertel die verhaal van die suikerplantasies, die soet goud van die agtiende eeu, en hoe die land en die slawe deur die Franse landhere geëksploteer is. Dit is 'n meedoënlose ontbloting van die onmenslikheid van slawerny, toe 'n lewe minder werd was as 'n bord kos, toe slawe óf doodgeslaan, óf doodgewerk, óf doodgemartel is. Dit is 'n tydperk toe 'n vrou nie in beheer was van haar eie liggaam nie, maar afhanklik van die guns van 'n man: haar eie man, 'n minnaar, 'n familielid of 'n baas.

Die tweede gedeelte van die roman verskuif na Louisiana, en spesifiek New Orleans, vanaf 1793-1810, ná die suksesvolle slawe-opstand wat geleë het tot Haïti se onafhanklikheid, en die ontruiming van duisende mense na Amerika.

Sentraal binne hierdie ruimtes is die leefwêreld van die slawemeisie Zarité, of Tété, wat as dogtertjie deur die plantasie-eienaar Toulouse Valmorain as 'n slavin gekoop word vir sy bruid, die wonderlike, waansinnige Eugenia. Zarité word gou meer as net 'n bossiekop-slavin, sy word Valmorain se minnares. Hierdie verbintenis, en die kinders wat uit hul gedwonge nagtelike samesyn gebore word, gee aanleiding tot 'n komplekse verhouding van sensualiteit en haat, lojaliteit en bowe-

al, intrige. Want Tété is nie net 'n slavin nie, sy is ook sjamaan, rebel, en uiteindelik, 'n vrygestelde vrou. Ek het soms getwyfel of sy werklik die hoofkarakter is, omdat Allende die leefwêreld van vele karakters uitbeeld: almal ewe boeiend maar relatief kortstondig. Dit is 'n tegniek wat my herinner aan Dan Sleigh se *Eilande*; die leser word vir 'n kort wyle gefassineerd besig gehou met een karakter se lewe en dan word hy/sy plotseling gelos, die individu en sy klein belange word opgeneem deur die lewe, die groter konteks van die geskiedenis. Só, byvoorbeeld, word 'n deurslaggewende gebeurtenis, Tété se verkrachting, nooit beskryf nie; die leser lei dit slegs af as jy kennis neem van haar kind wat gebore word. Dit is egter Tété se stem wat deurgaans deur die roman soos 'n inkantasie gehoor word. Sy is die enigste ek-verteller - 'n helder, persoonlike stem tussen al die murmelinge, wat in haar stryd vir persoonlike vryheid 'n grootse stuk geskiedenis van 'n land en sy mense vertel.

'n Boek wat my groot plesier verskaf het, is André le Roux se *#Kan ek maar aan jou selluliet vat?: Hoe mans se koppe werk (indien wel)* (Tafelberg, 2010).

Dit is 'n gids oor menslike liefdesverhoudings en die wetenskaplike ontluistering van mites (48 in totaal) wat deur die jare ontstaan het oor die verhouding tussen man en vrou. Soos, byvoorbeeld, dat alle mans van groot borste hou. Verkeerd! Mans hou van borste, of dit nou groot of klein, oud of jonk is. Punt.

Wat die boek 'n treffer maak, is nie noodwendig omdat die wetenskaplike feite en die jongste navorsingresultate in plek is nie, maar omdat Le Roux se aanslag so eerlik, toeganklik en menslik-realisties is. Hy beskryf nie goed wat in 'Amerika' of 'Europa' gebeur nie, hy skryf oor my huis en sy dinge, of daardie huis in Smalstraat 23, Ventersdorp, of in Kareeslot, Oranjezicht. En dit alles gaan gepaard met hope, hope (Afrikaanse) humor: G'n mens wat dié boek lees, gaan onder die diep en swaar indruk wees dat hy iets 'leer' nie, hy (en sy) gaan lees omdat dit 'n leesavontuur is wat verskeie genre's omsluit: drama uit die boonste rakke mét die bonus van vonkelende dialoog; 'n lewensverhaal met 'n voortrefflike spanningslyn en die gepaardgaande intriges; poësie met stil en innige oomblikke.

'n Voorsmakie van die humoristiese aanslag: Die skrywer beskryf dít wat gebeur met 'n man as die middeljarekrisis hom tref: 'Hy begin dink: Is die vrou met wie ek getroud is nog dieselfde een op wie ek verlief geraak het? Sommige kenners meen dis juis een van die dinge wat aanleiding gee tot 'n man se middeljarekrisis. Hy moet nou iemand gaan soek wat nog vrugbaar is om sy gene rond te strooi . . . en dan gaan spring hy op die buurvrou, Lientjie van Loeriesfontein, se matras. Met haar tussenin.' (p. 234.)

In hierdie gids word direk en sonder doekies omdraai gepraat oor seks, selluliet en skei. Ook oor woede, ontrou en die waarde van humor in die huwelik. Ook oor die vyftien onmisbare dinge wat jy jou kind moet leer.

As jy nié plesier uit *Kan ek maar aan jou selluliet vat?* kry nie, dan ly jy beslis aan KMS of KVS (Knorrige-Man/Vrou-Sindroom). Gaan lees hoofstuk 45 om te kyk hoe jy daarvan ontslae kan raak.

SU BIRCH, CEO, WINES OF SOUTH AFRICA

All of Peter Carey's books are a delight to read so I am always excited when a new one is published, like *#Parrot and Olivier in America* (Faber, 2010). This book contrasts the life of a sheltered French nobleman, Olivier, with Parrot, the hardened English adventurer who

travel together to America in the late 1700s. The novel may have been inspired by Alexis de Tocqueville's travels through America, and it is full of insights into politics, love, life and destiny written with wry humour.

Andrea Levy's novel, **The long song** (Headline, 2010) is set in Jamaica and is the story of the slaves who worked in the plantations and what happened when slavery was abolished. It is a riveting tale of one woman's survival and triumph and one to inspire all women today.

The lacuna (Faber, 2009) by Barbara Kingsolver moves between the tempestuous lives of the Mexican artists Frieda Kahlo and Diego Rivera, and America in the 1950s when the McCarthy witch-hunts were raging. It is a gripping, sad story.

I had read one of the books in *The regeneration* trilogy by Pat Barker, **The ghost road** (Viking, 1995) many moons ago, and was very pleased to find the set in a second-hand bookshop. These are stories about the horror of the First World War and the traumas suffered by the men who fought in it. They are beautifully written and make you understand the folly of war, the stupidity of the class system, but also how gentle, caring people such as the army psychologist can make a difference.

MICHAEL JORDAAN, CEO, FIRST NATIONAL BANK (AND A WINE FARMER)

All the books written by Deon Meyer; ***The big short** by Michael Lewis, (Allen Lane, 2010); **Kommando** (Sederberg Uitg., c2005) by Deneys Reitz; **The story of San Michele** (John Murray, 2004) by Axel Munthe; **Open**, (HarperCollins, 2009) by André Agassi; ***Enough** (Wiley, 2009) by John Bogle; **#Lords of finance** (Windmill Bks., 2010) by Liaquat Ahamed; **Hackers and painters** (O'Reilly Media, 2010) by Paul Graham; and ***On top of the world** (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010) by Ian Morris.

I have also read the majority of the Stieg Larsson books, but my favourite is probably **The big short** given the significance it has in business and innovation.

BRIAN JESS, NEWS EDITOR, CAPE COMMUNITY NEWS-PAPERS

Of the many books that have landed on my desk for review this past year, which has been a good one for South African authors, I have chosen four that I enjoyed for very different reasons. Not because they are the best books but because I found them entertaining, gripping, educational and most readable.

In no particular order is: Mike Nicol's **Killer Country** published by Umuzi, 2010. It is the Glencairn author's second book in the so-called *Revenge* trilogy. The first was **Payback** (Umuzi, 2008) where we first met the two ex-MK operatives Mace Bishop and Pylon Buso, who live in Cape Town and own a VIP security service.

Nicol is anything but politically correct as he exposes the underbelly of contemporary South Africa and he has the uncanny knack of taking the reader into the heart of the action with a few

well-chosen words and staccato phrases. The action never lets up, and

though he told me in an interview he has never read a Mickey Spillane book, his style recalls that of the great American thriller writer, only with a definite South African flavour. The third book is ***Dark heart** (Umuzi, 2011) and I for one can't wait to read it when it is published early next year.

The other book I enjoyed a lot was **Trinity on air** (Ball, 2010) by Johannesburg writer, Fiona Snyckers. It is a sequel to **Trinity rising** (Ball, 2008) and the protagonist is Trinity Luhabe, daughter of a multi-millionaire mining magnate Abel Luhabe. **Trinity rising** was about her life and love at Rhodes University and it was one big social whirl. She managed, barely, to get her BA (what else) and took a gap year. Now she's back home in Sandton working as a waitress in a restaurant. Her life is perfect, almost, but her dream is to become a radio journalist. She gets a job by default, mainly because of the Luhabe connection. She starts on the traffic desk, is promoted to news and lands up in all sorts of scrapes, but in the end it all comes right. It is a light-hearted read but Snyckers has captured the bathos and pathos of Trinity's life just right.

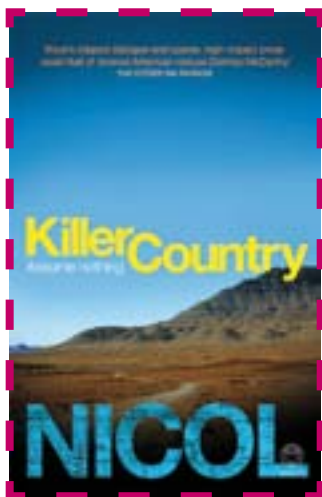
Next on the list is **#Tooth and nailed** (Penguin, 2010) by another Cape Town author, Sarah Lotz. Again it is a sequel to **Exhibit A** (Penguin, 2009), her first book in the series, and there are more to come, judging by the carrot at the end of **Tooth and nailed**. It is about a down and out Cape Town lawyer, Georgie Allan, his scruffy township dog called Exhibit A, and his Scottish sidekick Advocate Patrick McLennan, better known as the Poison Dwarf and the terror of the High Court.

In **Exhibit A**, the pair of them rescue a woman who was raped in a police cell in a remote Karoo town. In **Tooth and nailed**, Georgie's brother Greg, who runs wildlife safaris in Botswana, is in deep trouble after a hyena mauled a client's son and left him blind. Georgie's got a lot to lose as he signed surety for Greg's business. In between Georgie looks for love on the Internet and he and Patrick have to discover why a professor is being blackmailed over a student's apparent suicide. There are all sorts of weird and whacky characters, including Exhibit A who has a personality all his own. Lotz tells her story with lashings of humour and at times you'll laugh out loud, but there is a serious side to her tale. It is biting, satirical comment on our justice system. I really enjoyed it.

The other book on my list is **#Masked raiders** (Zebra Press, 2010), Charles van Onselen's study of Irish banditry in South Africa in 1880-1899. It is an intriguing story of a band of Irish desperados who travelled across Southern Africa, wreaking havoc and mayhem wherever they went, to the extent of pillaging the still burgeoning mining camp of Johannesburg. Although Van Onselen's book reads like a Boy's Own adventure with shoot-outs, and cash-in-transit heists (before the age of the armoured truck), it has echoes of the American wild west; it is as South African as biltong. It is a serious social study on a little-known piece of history. And though it is written by an academic it is not a dry-as-dust tome and will keep you riveted from page one.

WILLEMEN BRUMMER, YERSLAGGEEWER, DIE BURGER

This year I was a fellow of the Aids and the Media Project, run by Wits University and Annova Health, in which I had to write a series of stories on HIV and masculinity. Of all the books and articles I read, **Three-letter plague** (Ball, 2008) by Jonny Steinberg, gave me the most insight and empathy into more traditional communities ravaged by HIV. In this story Steinberg befriends Sizwe, a young local man who runs a spaza shop, who refuses to be tested for Aids despite the existence of a well-run testing and anti-retroviral programme. It is this apparent illogic



that I also battled with. Eventually, like Steinberg, I had to look within myself for the answers. If you are interested in unraveling the anthropological riddles of HIV and why this virus seems to defy scientific knowledge - this is the book you should read.

Etienne van Heerden se jongste meesterstuk, **30 nagte in Amsterdam** (Tafelberg, 2008), is 'n *Ratanga Junction rollercoaster*, wat hom, net soos sy karakter Tante Zan, vervoer het na 'Die Agste Kleur'. Die asemlose, seksver-slaafde Tante Zan is volgens die skrywer André le Roux 'een van die heerlikste karakters wat die Afrikaanse letterkunde soos 'n warrelwind ingewaaai het'. Op die vooraand van 'n epileptiese toeval verdwaal dié tante in haar woorde en dis dan wanneer 'Die Kleur' oor als kom, soos sepia oor 'n foto.

Ná sy anti-roman **Asbesmiddag** (Tafelberg, 2007) wou Van Heerden 'verke aan die voete kry en vir die tegnieke van romanskryf stoom insit'. Naas **Toorberg** (Tafelberg, 1986) is dit na my mening sy beste roman tot nog toe.

The *Millennium* trilogy: **The girl with the dragon tattoo** (Maclehose P., 2008), **The girl who played with fire** (Maclehose P., 2009) and **The girl who kicked the hornet's nest** (Maclehose P., 2009) by Stieg Larsson.

I never thought that I'd read crime fiction, but after page 100 of **The girl with the dragon tattoo** I was hooked, a Larsson addict, unable to devote my time to anything else. If Larsson was still alive, he should have been charged formally for causing his readers severe sleep deprivation.

Helena Gunter se **Op 'n plaas in Afrika** (Human, 2007) is een van die boeke wat my vanjaar die meeste leesgenot verskaf het. Ons almal is vertrouwd met die tradisionele plaasroman in Afrikaans. Gunter wys egter wat onder die afgedopte verf van die ou plaashuise aangaan. Sy skryf dieper as die skynbare idille van lewe op 'n plaas in Afrika. Die skrywer slaag daarin om te suggereer dat onder die oënskynlik normale, gewone familielewe, die onheil immer aanwesig is.

Dis nie verniet dat die bekroonde skrywer Jeanne Goosen skryf: **'Swartskaaip** (Kwela, 2009) deur Odette Schoeman is die eerste Afrikaanse roman wat my aan't huil had' nie. Met hierdie debuutroman besef jy baie gou hier is 'n verhaal van leef en oorleef deur iemand wat nie net weet hoe om 'n storie te vertel nie, maar die storie self geleef het. Ek kon dit nie neersit nie.

RIKI ROOS, BESIGHEIDSBESTUURDER, LESERSKRING

Ray Kluun se **'n Vrou gaan dokter toe** (Tafelberg, 2010).

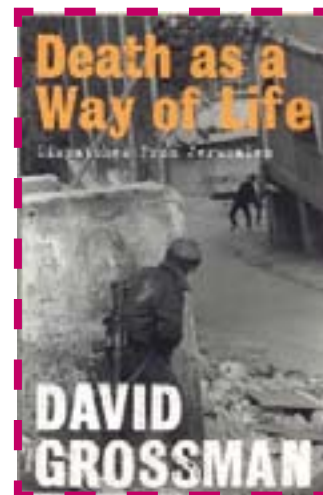
'n Vooraf-waarskuwing is dalk nodig: die boek is 'n vertoonkas vir die verteller se seksuele kapperjolle en die soms erg kru taalgebruik kan aanstoot gee. Hoekom dit dan kies as die boek van 2010 wat my die meeste aangegryp het? Dit is een van die mees onthutsende-erlike vertellings oor die reis wat 'n naasbestaande met 'n terminale kankerpatiënt meemaak. Dis 'n venster op die emosionele rit van ontkenning, woede en selfbejammering asook piëteit, humor en oomblikke van volmaakte, onselfsugtige liefde. Die vertaling is knap gedoen deur Francois Smith.



JOHN SCOTT, COLUMNIST, CAPE TIMES

None of my best reads of 2010 were books published this year. I re-read a lot of my esoteric books, and among those I re-read this year were book 11 in the *Kryon* series channelled by Lee Carroll and entitled ***Lifting the veil** (The Kryon Writings Inc, 2007) (The New Energy Apocalypse), Emmanuel's Book 2, ***The choice for love** (Bantam Bks., 1989), channelled by Pat Rodegast, which is an old favourite and the second in a series of three, and **Answers** (Mother Meera Ashram, 2008), by Mother Meera, an Indian mystic living in Germany where she gives 'darshan', or personal blessings. I enjoyed Shiva Naipaul's ***North of South** (Simon & Schuster, 1979) for the first time, a comic, intimate documentary on his travels through Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia in the late 1970s.

My wife and I travelled through Israel for three weeks in September and while there I bought two books that gave a compelling insight into life both in Israel itself and the West Bank. David Grossman, Israeli born, writes with huge sensitivity of the 10 years beginning in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Agreements and ending with the second year of Intifada. His book is titled **Death as a way of life: dispatches from Jerusalem** (Bloomsbury Publ., 2003). On the other side of the fence or wall, literally, Suad Amiry, Jordanian-born and married to a Palestinian, writes from Ramallah about the tragic absurdities of life there under the comic title ***Sharon and my mother-in-law: Ramallah diaries** (Pantheon, 2005). She makes you want to laugh and cry at the same time. I couldn't have chosen two better books to illustrate the dichotomy of the Middle East dilemma.



PIETER HUGO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: METROPOLE CONTROL AREA, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

Of all the books I have read in 2010 the very first one still stands out as the best. I have read other books that are better written, page turners that keep you awake at night, books that have won prizes, but none of them comes near **The calling of Katie Makanya**, (D. Philip, 1997) by Margaret McCord.

The calling of Katie Makanya has an unassailable advantage over most other books. It is not merely a good book or a wonderful story. It is a good book because it is the wonderful true story of a most remarkable woman. Katie Makanya changes your life and becomes part of your soul. Yes, it is one of those rare books that becomes part of you, part of your frame of reference.

Your obvious question is: 'Who is Katie Makanya?' The obvious answer is that you would never have heard of her if you have not read the book, because Katie was a nobody. But what a nobody! She was born in the Eastern Cape and grew up in Kimberley. As a young woman and a member of a black choir, she went on an extended tour of England,

where she enjoyed tea parties with lords and ladies and met Queen Victoria. She was offered the chance of a solo singing career overseas, but decided to come back home instead. She became a domestic worker in Johannesburg, where she had to keep quiet and act dumb, as it would be unforgivable if the maid acted as if she knew anything about Buckingham Palace or the latest fashion in London. She married a Zulu, shocking her Xhosa family who had a generations-old fear and hatred of Zulus. When the Second Boer War broke out they fled to Durban. Katie began working as a translator for a doctor. And that is where her story really begins ...

Hers is not a story of achievements and fame, but of the way she lived her small life, making an incredible difference to all around her.

JOHANNA DE BEER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: SELECTION AND ACQUISITIONS, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

Zeitoun (H. Hamilton, 2010) by Dave Eggers.

After many years at sea, Syrian-born Abulrahman Zeitoun settled down in America in the 1990s where he married Kathy, a divorced young mother who had already converted to Islam. Now with three daughters, a successful business as a building contractor, and several rental properties in the city in New Orleans, Zeitoun, as he is referred to throughout the novel, is a happy, hard-working and respected man living the American dream. When the first warnings come of the encroaching hurricane, he is loathe to leave the city as he wants to look after his properties and he also begins to feel that God has a plan for him. With the second-hand canoe that he bought on a whim, he rescues people and feeds ravenous dogs in a house nearby. He also stays in daily telephone contact with Kathy who has gone to stay with her family. So it begins to seem that he is fulfilling

a mission and was meant to stay. Then one day he and the men he has befriended in this city that is becoming more and more a disaster zone are rounded up by the authorities and the nightmare begins for both Zeitoun and his family.

Eggers, author of the acclaimed **A heartbreaking work of staggering genius** (Picador, 2001), has produced a riveting readable book - a portrait of an ordinary, yet extraordinary man, and his family and their experience of Hurricane Katrina, and an indictment of post-9/11 America where the war on terror is more important than saving one's countryman. An unforgettable read.

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STEFAN WEHMEYER, ADJUNKDIREKTEUR: STREKE, PROVINSIAL BIBLIOTEEKDIENS

Irma Joubert se **Anderkant Pontenilo** (Tafelberg, 2009).

Ek sal nie my kop op 'n blok sit dat dit die beste boek was wat ek in 2010 gelees het nie, maar dat ek dit geweldig geniet het, is ongetwyfeld. So 'n jaar of twee gelede is 'n vorige boek van haar, **Tussen stasies**

(Lapa, 2007) op RSG voorgelees en dis toe net daar waar ek besluit het om haar boeke te begin lees.

Anderkant Pontenilo speel af in die milieu van die Tweede Wêreldoorlog in Italië, die oorlogsarenes van Noord-Afrika en ook Suid-Afrika. Irma Joubert is 'n voormalige geskiedenisonderwyseres en sy gebruik historiese feite wat sy dan inkleef met die lewenswel en weë van interessante karakters. Haar beskrywings is eenvoudig, maar so lewendig dat dit voel asof jy alles self ervaar. Die boek lees maklik en alhoewel dit nie so spanningsvol is soos 'n Deon Meyer-boek nie, kan jy dit eenvoudig nie neersit nie. **Anderkant Pontenillo** is die eerste in 'n trilogie, die tweede ene **#Pérsomi: kind van die brakrant** (Tafelberg, 2010) het baie onlangs verskyn. Irma Joubert se oma was Sylva Moerdyk (vrou van Gerhard Moerdyk) en sy was 'n politieke redakteur van *Die Transvaler*. Irma het van haar oma se artikels gebruik gemaak om die boek te skryf. Dit dra verder toe tot die outentisiteit van haar boeke. So terloops, dís nou 'n vrou met skrywersgene. Haar ander oma was die skryfster Tienie Holloway en haar seun Jan-Jan is die adjunkdirekteur van *Rapport*.

GRIZÉLL AZAR-LUXTON, EDITOR, CAPE LIBRARIAN

When we planned the *Best read for 2010* I thought when it came to my choice of the best book, I will have a real battle on my hands as I've read some pretty great books this year. However, a month or two ago I tackled **Shantaram** (Little, 2004.), written by Australian Gregory David Roberts.

Having many years ago spent some time in India, the sights, sounds, smells and atmosphere enthralled and 'spoke' to me from the very first words I read and I honestly could not put the approximately 1000 page book consisting of some 350 000 words down. Everything around me took second place and I lived and breathed **Shantaram**. One of the most fascinating experiences for me when reading a book is when an author has the ability to write in such a way that the reader 'hears' the story in the language and accent of the subject. As one reviewer put it, 'This book is panoramic in conception'.

Roberts, a hardened criminal, escaped from prison whilst serving hard time for armed robbery and other transgressions. **Shantaram** is his story. Known as the 'Gentleman bandit', Roberts disappeared into the Bombay slums for many years before he was recaptured and sent back to solitary confinement in Australia. This is an embellished adventurous and daring story of his life and was truly unputdownable for me.

I agree totally with the sentiments described by the same reviewer that 'the best books take us to places we never knew existed. Roberts takes readers on a tour of a dark and lonely place: his soul'.

Note: #Titles on order. *Titles not in stock.

