Readers’ Advisory Interest Group Spring Meeting

3/5/2021, 1pm, virtual via Blackboard

Attending: Meg Faller, Amy Jenkins, Ann Shilling, Bill Stea, Megan Coleman, Lynn Harlan, Crystal Tracy, Krista Register, Ida Zago, Monica McAbee, Bina Pittman, Kim

Amy started off the meeting with introductions and then we moved into Bookchat:

Amy: has been reading through Leigh Bardugo’s back catalogue in reverse order. Started with Ninth House, but enjoyed Six of Crows better. Discussion ensued on her various series and their merits.

Ann: has been reading middle grade books for the afterschool book club. Most recently Level Up by Gene Luen Yang was especially good. Appreciated the imagery of “eating bitterness” as a way of moving on from disappointment.

Bill: Make Russia Great Again by Christopher Buckley, a very funny although possibly controversial political/ current events satire involving the Trump administration and Putin/ Russia. [as a secretarial note, Christopher Buckley’s ouvre is writing satire that invites controversy, such as Thank You for Smoking.]

Bina: The Midnight Library by Matt Haig, found it very meaningful. We discussed potential Content Warnings to bear in mind if offering in Readers’ advisory, as the book deals with suicide and grief and depression.

Crystal: has been reading soft fluffy sweet romances recently. Winter’s Orbit by Evarina Maxwell is a romantic space opera, with interplanetary political intrigue and espionage, a murder investigation, and a very sweet gay romance that starts with an arranged political marriage. Also First Comes Like, the third in Alisha Rai’s Modern Love trilogy. First romance she’s read involving an observant Muslim protagonist. Male protagonist is an Indian celebrity from Bollywood, so related cultural modesty and decency norms apply in their relationship, leading to a sweet slowburn romance without any major drama. (it’s not a low heat romance, though, as discussed later.) Also, anything by P. Djeli Clark, specifically the series with the novella The Haunting of Tram Car 015, set in an alternate history magical steampunk Cairo. Very feminist. Very rich world building. Short and enjoyable read.

Krista: Goodnight Beautiful by Amy Maloy is a mystery/ thriller involving newlyweds, inspired by Stephen King’s Misery.

Ida: Maybe He Just Likes You was a young reader selection for the Black Eyed Susan panel that deals with sexual harassment against school-age girls. If I Never Met You byMhairi (pronounced Very) McFarlane is a closed door/ low heat but highly emotional interracial romance set in the UK. Also, Ida has been working her way through a collection of classic PG Wodehouse books, classic British comedies of manners on which the show Jeeves and Wooster with Hugh Laurie and Stephen Frey was based. Light-hearted fun. Also the children’s picture book The Paper Bag Princess, a classic that everyone who hasn’t yet should read.

Lynn: Calling Invisible Women by Jeanne Ray is a 2012 fiction involving middle age women who have to grapple with waking up invisible one day.
Meg: The Missing American by Kwei Quartey, a mystery set back and forth between Ghana and the United States, involving the scamming of Americans by Ghanians and the investigators trying to stop them, and the American target become witness who goes missing. Part of a series, and Meg’s choice for her mystery book club. Also, the Invincible collection by Robert Kirkman, a comic book super hero series that is the basis for an upcoming animated television series, with a teen superhero with Spiderman like internal struggles. Deacon King Kong by James McBride. And a Gentleman in Moscow by Amore Towles, a really feel-good read set in Moscow, Russia.

Megan C: has a preference for dark, gritty, sad stories, and has been listening to audio books lately. Highly recommends the audio versions of The Secret Lives of Church Ladies, a short story collection by Deesha Phileyaw and The Night Always Comes by Willie Vlautin, a very realistic dark gritty story.

Monica: Mexican Gothic by Silvia Moreno-Garcia is a gross but good horror fiction set in Mexico that will make you go “Eww” but also want to read more by Moreno-Garcia. The City We Became by N. K. Jemisen is speculative fiction about a futuristic time when great cities around the world develop human avatars, with this being set specifically in NYC. And Stacy Abram’s new political thriller fiction, While Justice Sleeps, which is not published yet, but Monica has an advanced readers’ copy.

Kim: Detransition, Baby by Torrey Peters deals with an unexpected pregnancy and the complicated relationships between a trans woman, a cis woman, and a man who has detransitioned from female. An #ownvoices story that rings with authenticity.

Next we discussed our upcoming standalone program, Soothing Reads for Stressful Times, featuring hygge and soothing genres of books to read for relaxation. Lynn, Ida, and Crystal will be presenting books, and Amy will do the introduction, closing, and short intermissions discussing hygge tips for relaxation too. The program is scheduled for April 5 at 2pm. Only 5 people have registered so far, but most of the presenters still need to register, and the program will be offered regardless. Ida is still developing her presentation, and Lynn shared a list of potential relaxing reads in her genre (graphic biographies).

As a side note, Ann would like to have a list of purely hopeful/joyful books to recommend.

The 2021 virtual MLA/DLA conference is coming up on the week of May 3-7. Don’t forget to register if you plan to attend. Our programs will be the Book Buzz, on May 5, 2-4, with presentations from three major publishing houses, and Book Talking into the Void, on May 7, 10:30 – 11:30. Meg is leading Into the Void, based on a program she offered through her library system in Calvert, and will discuss how to offer successful generalized book talks virtually. Part 1 will deal with the technical aspects of taping and presenting a book talk recording, and part two will deal with how to generate engaging and relevant content, and how to make a personal connection without in person feedback.

Our next social event will be another roundtable book discussion like our #BlackAuthorsMatter program in 2020, but focused on disability representation, both visible and “invisible” disability representation. Tentatively scheduled, pending program approval from MLA, for Thursday June 10 at 6pm. To be titled Where Am I? Unsung Disability Representation in Stories. Meg and Amy will be submitting the proposal. Crystal volunteered to maintain a running Google spreadsheet with all the titles shared, to be shared
with all participants at the end of the program. Because this will be a social event that does not offer CEUS, it will be a free event, but you will still need to register. Disability accessibility in Readers’ Advisory is a potential topic for a training next fiscal year, and this program may be a chance to get some ideas and input on the program from participants.

Meg acknowledged Krista’s work, with Suzanne’s help, maintaining the RAIG Instagram account. Krista would prefer to retain sole aesthetic control of the account, but welcomes submissions of your potential photos and post ideas, with the proviso that she may or may not be able to use them.

Monica announced that the poll-winning title for our new RAIG book review column in the Crab is OutRAIGeous Reviews, which is apparently a hit with the Crab staff as well, and thanked Crystal for the suggestion. Monica welcomes submissions of reviews to her, 200-300 words focused less on plot summary and more on Readers’ Advisory, which she will assemble into a column for each new Crab edition. Monica said she will be sharing a short guide with us on how to most effectively write these reviews.

Our next meeting is scheduled for July 2, from 1-3. Following meetings will be held October 1, January 7, and April 1, all from 1-3, and to be held virtually via Blackboard for the foreseeable future.

We concluded business by 2:45pm. See you all next time!