

Kathleen's Recent Reads—October

Non-Fiction

House Lessons: Renovating a Life by Erica Bauermeister

After returning to Seattle from several years in Italy, Bauermeister and her husband longed to recreate their slower, more deliberate pace of life, and decided to look for a property in the country. They found a house that spoke to them, and in the perfect location. The catch, because of course there was one, was that the house had been inhabited by a hoarder and neglected for years. And the twist, because there is one of those too, means this memoir doesn't go in the direction you think it will. The author's engaging, introspective style (more on her fiction below) as she shares the insights gained by working on a whole-house renovation make for an absorbing, pleasurable read—and you can enjoy the rewards of the reno without doing any of the work.

Fiction

Agent Running in the Field by John le Carre

Long-time spy Nat has been called home to England after a lifetime of service in the field. Assuming he is about to be put out to pasture, he is somewhat surprised to be given an assignment running "The Haven", an out-of-the-way assortment of spies. Nat rebuilds his English life: going to work, reconnecting with his wife, and playing competitive badminton at his club; to his very great surprise, however, the disparate elements of his life do not remain tidily compartmentalized. A complex plot and compelling characters set in the time just after Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. A Book Club Selection.

Wayward by Dana Spiotta

Samantha Raymond, a 50-something suburban mom working part-time for a non-profit, visits an open house, falls in love, and blows up her life. Anyone who has ever felt trapped by their life will be able to relate to Samantha's desire for something different, but when things begin to take an ominous turn after she makes some questionable decisions, sympathy turns into the feeling of helplessly watching a train wreck. Spiotta's excellent writing will carry you right along for the wild ride.

Audiobooks

*available on cloudLibrary

Joy for Beginners by Erica Bauermeister

A group of friends meet to celebrate the recovery of one from cancer. Now that she's well enough, her daughter gives Kate the gift of a whitewater rafting trip; although initially reluctant to do it, Kate agrees on one condition: each of the women sitting around the table must accept a challenge of their own, chosen for them by Kate. We are treated to glimpses of each character's life, dreams and fears as each tackles the challenge set by Kate. Life-affirming and uplifting.

Gray Mountain by John Grisham

Just after the crash of 2008, Samantha Kofer is furloughed from her job in the commercial real estate division of one of New York's largest law firms. The firm offers a deal: take an unpaid internship for a year at a worthy non-profit, keep your benefits, and have a way back in to the job when things get better. Thus Samantha finds herself working for a legal aid society in the hills of Appalachia, drawn in to a David and Goliath fight against the coal mining industry, and with big decisions to make for her future.

The Third Angel by Alice Hoffman

Intertwined stories transport the reader through three generations as we follow the tales of two sisters attracted to the same man in the 90s, a young woman making her way in London during the 60s, and a young girl caught in a tragedy in the 50s. Hoffman excels at exploring the dark sides of love and sibling relationships.

The Sherlockian by Graham Moore

Moving back and forth between a present day murder at a gathering of a Sherlock Holmes Society and the circumstances behind the disappearance of a volume of Arthur Conan Doyle's diary, this book will be especially appealing to ardent Sherlock Holmes fans. But even those not as well-versed in Sherlockiana will enjoy the plot twists as Harold White, the youngest member ever to be invited to join the secretive society, uses his deductive skills to solve both mysteries.