



Christopher Marnach

Independent Press Report

December 2011

Seven Stories Press

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Fact Sheet

Website: www.sevenstories.com

Contact Info:

Address: Seven Stories Press
140 Watts Street
New York, NY 10013

Email: publicity@sevenstories.com

Founded: 1995

Founder: Dan Simon

Focus: Seven Stories publishes literary fiction and non-fiction that focuses on social justice, human rights, radical activism, alternative health, women's health, and popular culture.

Description of Press: Seven Stories Press is best known for its books on politics, human rights, and social and economic justice, but publishes numerous literary works, including debut novels and National Book Award–winning poetry collections, as well as prose and poetry translations. In keeping with their tradition of championing First Amendment rights, they publish an annual compilation of censored news stories by Project Censored, including the Top 25 Censored News Stories of the year.

Distribution: Random House Publisher Services

Activity: An average of six works of fiction are published annually (eight are due out in 2012), along with numerous works of nonfiction.

Submission: Seven Stories Press does not currently accept any unsolicited full manuscripts, but they do accept query letters and sample chapters. Send no more than a cover letter and two sample chapters, along with a 44-cent SASE or postcard for reply. They do not accept electronic submissions, so all submissions should be mailed to:

Acquisitions
Seven Stories Press,
140 Watts Street
New York, NY 10013

Recent Publication and Authors:

Tea of Ulaanbaatar by Christopher Howard, 2011

Buzz Aldrin, What Happened to You in All the Confusion? by Johan Harstad, 2011

Why I Chose Seven Stories Press

I began my search for an independent press in the most convenient and least expensive place--my own bookshelves. These were books I had read or wanted to read, so it stood to reason that the presses that published them would be presses that would be worth looking into. After finding four or five books from indie presses, I looked up each press on the internet, and what I found out about Seven Stories Press made me choose them.

Much of what Seven Stories publishes is political--the late Howard Zinn was not only one of their published authors, he was also on the Seven Stories Advisory Board. This board also featured the late Kurt Vonnegut, and currently features Peter Sellers and Russell Banks. According to Seven Stories web site "...perhaps no other small independent house in America has consistently attracted so many important voices away from corporate publishing. We believe publishers have a special responsibility to defend free speech and human rights wherever we can. On several notable occasions, Seven Stories has stepped in to publish—on First Amendment grounds—important books that were being refused the right to publish for political reasons.”

Literary fiction with a decidedly political bent fell out of favor for a long time in America, and is just now experiencing a renaissance. Nearly all of the fiction that Seven Stories publishes has that political, unabashedly left-wing twist. Much of the fiction that I write is political, so having a fairly large, well-known, but independent press dedicated to what I want to write is comforting indeed.

Keepers of the Word

By Dan Simon, founder of Seven Stories Press

(Originally published in the December 25, 2000 edition of The Nation.)

O Marvel, that one can give to another what one does not possess. O Miracle of our empty hands. --George Bernanos, Diary of a Country Priest

The integrity of book publishing in the past half-century often relied on the outsized personalities at the helms of the independent houses. The very diminutiveness of their operations helped empower these small businessmen and -women to place the imagination first and shape their companies around literature, social issues and ideas. The "profit incentive" among them had more to do with survival and pleasure than money making. When they survived and--more rarely--made money, it was with a sense of surprise, even embarrassment, which endeared them to their authors, since it was clearly not what they were in business for. They were talent magnets, because the publishing life is colorful and the work meaningful. Perhaps most important, the best among them sought out and encouraged the humanity and intelligence in those around them--writers, editors, salespeople. That humanism is a rare quality but a necessary one for publishers.

To read more, see <http://www.thenation.com/article/keepers-word>

Book Review

Haymarket by Martin Duberman

A few years ago I was milling about Prairie Lights, the independent bookstore in my former hometown of Iowa City, and happened upon *Haymarket*, by Martin Duberman. Being a reader and would-be writer of historical fiction, and also an avowed leftist, I purchased the book. I had at the time only a cursory, History 101 knowledge of the events surrounding the Haymarket Affair, so I thought this would be a prime opportunity to learn more about one of the gravest incidents of injustice in American history, and what more pleasurable way of doing so than with a novel? The book sat on my shelf until I moved here to Chicago, and I'm glad that it did--the plight of the Chicago transplants Albert and Lucy Parsons had much more resonance when I could traverse the streets they walked down, and with the current economic turmoil, the ever widening gap between rich and poor, the Occupy movement that has sprung up to protest it, and the police brutality that has followed, the book is an eerie parallel to our own times.

Haymarket follows real-life revolutionaries Albert and Lucy Parsons from their meeting in Texas to Albert's execution for the murder, or the incitement to murder, of police officer Mathias Degan, who was killed when a bomb from an unknown assailant was thrown at policemen during a labor rally in Haymarket. The beginning of the book is its weakest section--the dialogue between Albert and Lucy in their courtship phase is flat and clichéd at best, in some instances groan-worthy, complete with contracted words meant to signify a Texas drawl. Thankfully, the Parsons move to Chicago (they must move from Texas because of laws against mixed-race marriages--Lucy is part Mexican and Native American, and perhaps part African, though she will never admit it.), and quickly begin speaking normally. It is in Chicago that the story truly begins.

The novel is divided into eight sections, and varies in style between straight third-person narration, letters between Albert and Lucy, and Albert's journal, all of which are fictional. Duberman, a Distinguished Professor of History at the City College of New York, does an exceptional job relating the lives of the Parsons and their friends, co-revolutionaries, and enemies. The novel is rich in historical detail, not only of the

conditions of the working men and women of the time and of the various organizations that tried to organize them, but also of the growing use of electricity, the changes in typesetting, the introduction of “germ theory” into medicine, and women’s fashions of the day, to name a few. Some of these asides do feel a bit like a lecture and slow the pacing of the story, but they also help to paint a vivid and rounded portrait of the time and place. Duberman makes sure, excessively at times, that we know exactly what kinds of conditions people of the 1870’s and 1880’s live in, and how those conditions were largely based on class. All of these details, as well as the evocations of the strikes, the marches, the police brutality and bombing itself, are rendered authoritatively and vividly. What Duberman lacks in certain aspects of novelistic style, he more than makes up for with a vast and fascinating knowledge of the time and the people who lived it, especially Albert and Lucy Parsons.

Haymarket is, after all, their story. The portrayal of real individuals in fiction is a difficult feat, and with the exception of the dialogue in the beginning, Duberman has done an excellent job of showing the reader who Albert and Lucy Parsons were, and their passion not only for the rights of the worker and the destruction of the capitalist system, but also for each other. As the novel reaches its inevitable and tragic conclusion, the writing soars--what had been clichéd and corny becomes bitter and heartbreaking. On the morning of Albert’s execution, Lucy and their two children, and her friend Lizzie, go to see him one last time, but the jail is surrounded by policemen who won’t let them through. After desperately trying multiple time to get past, Lucy, Lizzie, and the children are “...taken ‘inside,’ Lizzie locked in one cell, Lucy and the children in another. All four were stripped to the skin and searched, even the children, who screeched in terror. The search completed, the heavy doors of the cell clanged shut and they were left, without light, water, or food, to sit and wait.” While they are locked in the cell, Albert is hanged.

Duberman does what an accomplished writer of historical fiction must: he makes us feel the human tragedy of this blight of justice in our history. For anyone looking for not only a thorough and fascinating history lesson, and also a doomed and tragic love story, this book is highly recommended.