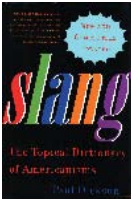


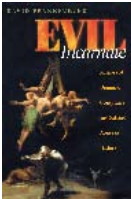
JUST PUBLISHED

**PAUL DICKSON '61**  
*Slang: The Topical Dictionary of Americanisms*  
(Walker and Company, 2006)



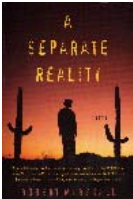
Dickson has completely revised this highly entertaining reference book—first published in 1990—which deals with casual, idiosyncratic, and colloquial language used across the United States. In his introduction, the author points out the important roles that television and the Internet now play in the creation and communication of slang that becomes part of everyday speech. Chapters are devoted to such topics as “Aviation and Space,” “Crime, Punishment, and the Law,” “Mental States,” “The Great Outdoors,” “The Sultry Slang of Sex,” “Washington Speak,” and more. Dickson does not just provide simple definition of words, but also includes helpful and sometimes amusing sidebars that explain how certain terms and phrases fit into the subcultures that generated them. The book is highly recommended for word fanatics.

**DAVID FRANKFURTER '83**  
*Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History*  
(Princeton University Press, 2006)



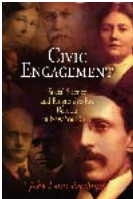
In the 1980s, American media became inundated with stories of widespread panics about Satanic cults. Conspiracy theories arose about groups who were allegedly abusing children in day-care centers, impregnating girls for infant sacrifice, brainwashing adults, and controlling the highest levels of government. Frankfurter, a professor of religious studies and history at the University of New Hampshire, noted how similar these conspiracy theories were to those that pervaded parts of the early Christian world, early modern Europe, and postcolonial Africa. His new study draws upon anthropology, religious history, sociology, and psychoanalytic theory to examine the social and psychological patterns that give rise to the myths of evil conspiracy. The book investigates such diverse subjects as witch-hunting, the origins of demonology, and cannibalism to consider how societies have expanded upon their fears of such atrocities to address a collective anxiety. The author suggests that stories of Satanic atrocities that have occurred throughout history were both inventions of the mind and perennial phenomena, not authentic criminal events.

**ROBERT MARSHALL '82**  
*A Separate Reality*  
(Carroll and Graf, 2006)



This engrossing novel relates the coming-of-age of a creative, lonely 12-year-old growing up in Phoenix, Arizona, in the early 1970s. The son of politically active, liberal Jewish parents, the young man's life begins to change when he meets a female teacher who becomes a mentor, encourages him to write, and introduces him to Zen Buddhism and the works of the Beats and Carlos Castaneda. Marshall captures accurately the awkwardness and yearnings of a sensitive adolescent thwarted in his desire to attain perfection as he confronts family tensions, the death of his beloved grandmother, the belligerence of his schoolmates, and the difficulties of being different.

**JOHN LOUIS RECCHIUTI '79**  
*Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive-Era Reform in New York City*  
(University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)



Recchiuti, a professor of history and director of American studies at Mount Union College in Ohio, tells the history of a vibrant network of young American scholars and social activists who helped transform New York City during the late Gilded Age and Progressive Era (the late 19th and early 20th centuries), when the metropolis was the nation's financial capital, principal immigration hub, and premier arts center. These public intellectuals and members of the city's social science network supported the fight for civil rights, sought solutions to labor problems, established the country's initial settlement houses, and set up the New York School of Philanthropy, the city's first center for social science and social work. Among the progressive reformers covered in the book are Florence Kelley, W.E.B. DuBois, E.R.A. Seligman, Charles Beard, Franz Boaz, Frances Perkins, Samuel Lindsay, Edward Devine, Mary Simkhovitch, and George Edmund Haynes.

—David Low '76

NONFICTION	FERN MARSHALL BRADLEY P'07, <i>Rodale's Vegetable Garden Problem Solver</i> (Rodale Books, 2007)
	RICHARD BEACH '67, DEBORAH APPLEMAN, SUSAN HYND, and JEFFREY WILHELM, <i>Teaching Literature to Adolescents</i> (Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, 2006)
	SAUL HALFON '89, <i>The Cairo Consensus: Demographic Surveys, Women's Empowerment, and Regime Change in Population Policy</i> (Lexington Books, 2006)
	CORINNE KRATZ '75, IVAN KARP, LYNN SZWAJA, and TOMÁS YBARRA-FRAUSTO, COEDITORS, <i>Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations</i> (Duke University Press, 2006)
	RENEE LAEGREID, MALS '94, <i>Riding Pretty: Rodeo Royalty in the American West</i> (University of Nebraska Press, 2006)
	MICHAEL LUCEY '82, <i>Never Say I: Sexuality and the First Person in Collette, Gide, and Proust</i> (Duke University Press, 2007)
	WILLIAM J. MANN, MALS '87, <i>Kate: The Woman Who Was Hepburn</i> (Holt, 2006)
	KATE MARSHALL and DAVID MARSHALL P'08, <i>What I Love About You</i> (Broadway Books, 2006)
	ROBERT RIOUX, MALS '04, <i>Next Stop, Your New Job!</i> (SearchRight Press, 2007)
	JONATHAN L. ROSNER '54, <i>Preparing Witnesses</i> (Thompson/West, 2006)
OF NOTE	RALPH JAMES SAVARESE '86, <i>Reasonable People: A Memoir of Autism and Adoption</i> (Other Press, 2007)
	ROBERT SEGAL '70, EDITOR, <i>The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion</i> (Blackwell Publishing, 2006)
	ANDREA L. SMITH '83, <i>Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France</i> (Indiana University Press, 2006)
	BRUCE BUDNER P'06 and KEVIN BUDNER '06 are contributors to <i>Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision: A Progressive's Handbook</i> (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006) by George Lakoff and the Rockridge Institute.
	BLAKE NELSON '84's new young adult novel <i>Paranoid Park</i> (Viking, 2006) deals with a skateboarding high school kid in Portland, Oregon, who accidentally kills a security guard; the book has been made into a feature film directed by Gus Van Sant ( <i>Good Will Hunting</i> ).

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If you are a Wesleyan graduate, faculty member, or parent with a new publication, please let us know by contacting David Low '76 at [dlow@wesleyan.edu](mailto:dlow@wesleyan.edu) or at Wesleyan magazine, Office of Public Affairs, Wesleyan University/South College, Middletown, CT 06459.

# Other People's Lives

**Suzanne Berne '82** recounts how a visit to Mark Twain's Connecticut home inspired her to write a novel about his daughters and a modern-day dysfunctional family.

**A**bout 15 years ago, I went to Hartford to visit Mark Twain's house as part of a series of articles I was writing on famous authors' homes. Of course, his house was the best of them all, an enormous, elaborate polychrome-brick mansion that looks like a cross between a steamboat and a Swiss chalet. Inside there must be 12 different kinds of wallpaper, and every inch of wood is carved or inlaid, and every room crammed with ornate furniture and objects and contraptions, lending the whole place a kind of busy uproarious opulence that seemed very like Twain's own mind to me. I had the beginnings of a headache by the time we arrived on the second floor and were shown the schoolroom once used by Twain's three daughters, Susy, Clara, and Jean Clemens.

I'd known that Twain had daughters, but I'd never thought much about them until the tour guide began describing their relationship to their father—going into detail about the historical plays they had put on, and how Twain liked to eavesdrop on them; the stories he would make up for them using the bric-a-brac on the fireplace mantel for inspiration; the times he impersonated Santa Claus, and the extravagant presents he gave them; the famous guests he entertained, and sometimes insulted; and how he once threw his shirt out the window because it was missing a button. And while everyone else on the tour was being charmed, I was hunting for aspirin in my purse and thinking how utterly overbearing Twain must have been as a father, and how oppressed the girls must have felt by all that noisy brilliance. If only they could tell their own story, I thought, “the real story” of being Mark Twain's daughters. And that was when I decided that someday I would write a novel about them.

Soon afterward I did some research into the Clemens girls. I read letters, biographies, and memoirs, including passages that the girls had written about their father, which only confirmed my suspicions that the Clemens household had been an uneasy one. It wasn't until about five years ago, though, that I actually started working on

my novel—a novel that instantly ran into difficulties, unfortunately, but for reasons that ultimately became instructive to me, and in fact determined the book I ending up writing.

Certain bedeviling questions kept popping up: for instance, why was I so persuaded that I understood these girls, whose childhoods had occurred almost a century before mine and in very different circumstances? Why did I feel so possessive about them, and about what I had discovered—or thought I'd discovered—concerning their difficulties with their father? Worse: why was it that the more convinced I became that I “knew” Mark Twain's daughters, and must “rescue” them from his shadow, the harder it got for me to write anything interesting about them?

Any freshman taking Introductory Psychology could have seen what was happening, but it took me an embarrassingly long time to realize that I was writing not about Mark Twain's daughters at all, but about my identification with them, and that this identification was what really interested me. That's when I “discovered,” as they say, the real subject of my novel. Which is that our versions of other people's lives are always just that, versions, and those versions will always be more about us than about our subjects, no matter how much research we do. As Twain himself once remarked, “The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice.”

Frankly, when you get right down to it, even your version of your own life is only one version. Everyone who knows you, particularly the people closest to you, have their versions of you, as well. In other words, wherever you go you travel with your twin—there's the person *you* think you are and then there's the person *other* people think you are.

And sometimes those versions come into conflict.

This conflict can become quite murderous when identity collides with history, particularly when siblings battle over whose version of family history is “the real story”—a discord that haunts *The Ghost at the Table* almost from the first page. My novel now has a contemporary setting, with contemporary sisters and a father about whom they have very mixed feelings. The plot takes place during Thanksgiving, a holiday that often highlights the difference between fond wish and glum reality when it comes to families. And you may be interested, or concerned, to know that Mark Twain's daughters still do figure in the narrative, but certainly not in a way I would have predicted that day in Hartford, when I came down with a headache on the second floor of his house.

**Suzanne Berne is the author of two other novels, *A Crime in the Neighborhood* and *A Perfect Arrangement*. She resides outside of Boston with her husband and two daughters.**

## *The Ghost at the Table*

(Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006)

