

The Declaration of Independents



Novel Animals

by Juliet Waldron

The kind of historical novel that attracts me is, in the best sense, like a reality show. I want to find myself breathing another kind of air, wearing different clothes, and living closer to the weather, to the Earth, and to animals, the way our ancestors did. In the not-so-long-ago time before cars were a common feature of life, people relied on horses. To keep this kind of machine in good order, you had to feed it, water it, and clean up after it. In bad weather, your transportation needed a decent shelter, an extra blanket and feed, and perhaps doctoring. This sort of life made animals, which most of us now see only as house pets or creatures on T.V., a much larger part of daily life.

Inevitably, these trusty servants became part of the emotional and relational landscape. A horse with bad habits like biting or kicking would be as great a concern to the family as an out-of-control teenager. Some people, then as now, were unkind to their kids and to their animals, but most put in the time, the training, the care and the discipline that it takes to get a family—or a horse—pulling in the desired direction.

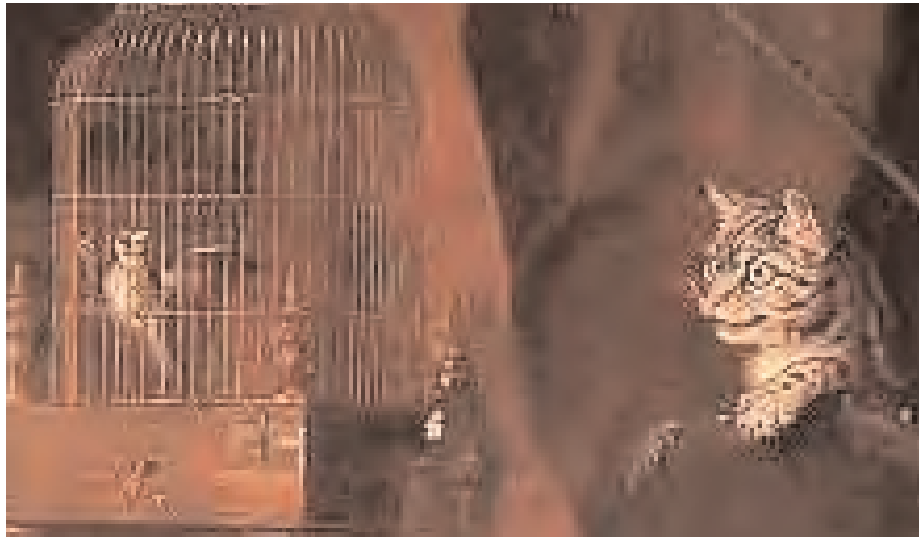
The hero of *Independent Heart*, Jack Carter, is a cavalryman who has had a long relationship with one horse. (You know what I mean—no snickering!) He needs his mount, a bay named Hal, to do what he asks: to stand when instinct tells him to run, to get down and get up on command, to respond to legs or reins in the midst of battle. During a fight, Jack's life depends on Hal. As a result, the horse is a pivotal character; just as such a good horse actually would have been in a real fighting man's life. This noble steed is no mere accessory, he is a necessity for the hero's survival. As a result, his bravery and courage—as well as his need

for food, water, rub-downs and shelter—have a large presence in the story.

Cats and dogs have a long relationship with humans, and they've been present in our homes for thousands of years. Mozart was very fond of animals, and I made sure that in *Mozart's Wife* they were well and realistically represented. The family letters are full of references to a dog named Bimperel, probably some sort of terrier who caught mice in the family apartments. He would also sit at table with them, gently reaching

Mozart had cats, too, and though they are only mentioned in passing in the family letters (usually in tandem with a mouse problem), I believe he paid attention to them. Among his many vaudeville pieces, he wrote music for a story called *Nun, Liebes Weibchen*, about a man who angrily wishes his wife into the body of a cat—and who is quickly sorry when the wish comes true.

The unhappy couple sings a comic duet for man and “pussycat.” The woman's lyrics are “meow, meow, meow, meow, meeee-ow, meee-ow.”



Detail from “The Hogarth Children” by Hogarth, 1742.

out a paw to whatever item he wanted from their plates. After Mozart married Constanze, they had several dogs. The first, Gaukerel, became very attached to Constanze, perhaps because her husband was out of the house working so much the dog rarely saw him. Mozart was used to being the center of attention, so he did not take the dog's defection very well. There is a story that out for a walk with his wife, he pretended to threaten Constanze to see how Gaukerel would react. Mozart was promptly bitten in the ankle by this loyal little girl. The Emperor was also taking the air and witnessed it, and the story soon was all over Vienna.

It seems that Mozart, with his legendary perfect pitch, faithfully reproduced “cat-ese” in the music; for when I play it, my cats unfailingly go to the speakers to listen, cocking their heads and checking the room for the feline interloper. Sometimes they even talk back. ■

Juliet Waldron is the author of *Mozart's Wife*, *Genesee*, and *Independent Heart*. Her main website is www.julietwaldron.com.



Elisha Kent Kane: The First American Explorer

by Dianne K. Salerni

In today's world, it doesn't take much to become a celebrity. A brief marriage to a pop star, or a last name belonging to a hotel empire, seems sufficient cause for celebration. Yet the 21st century is not unique in conferring celebrity status based on personality and chance. In the mid-19th century, one famous but fleeting celebrity—so revered that his funeral procession ranks as the second longest in American history—was a charismatic adventurer named Dr. Kane. This man, for whom a bay in Greenland and a crater on the moon are named, was one of the most beloved personalities of the 19th century, a man who combined the flair of Indiana Jones with the scientific reputation of Jacques Cousteau. Before he died at the premature age of 37, he would lead an expedition to the Arctic Sea, spark a scandal romancing a fellow celebrity, write a national best-seller, and inspire Americans to lead the way in global exploration.

Elisha Kent Kane was a doctor, an explorer, a scientist, a writer, a world traveler, and a military hero. Born into an illustrious Philadelphia family in 1820, Kane nearly didn't make it to adulthood: rheumatic fever almost carried him off in his late teens. Doctors informed him that the resulting infection in the lining of his heart was certain to condemn him to an early grave. Kane's reaction? He threw himself headlong into a life of adventure and romance worthy of a dime novel.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a medical degree, Kane joined a diplomatic expedition to China. Once abroad, he traveled extensively in Asia and Africa. It was in the Philippine Islands that he performed his first feat of derring-do—rappelling down the gaping mouth of a live volcano. Upon his return to the U.S., Kane secured an officer's commission and an assignment in the Mexican-

American War. While on the field Kane helped defeat a Mexican detachment, but afterward found himself facing a court-martial for insubordination. He was undeniably guilty, having fired his gun at his commanding officer, but he had done so to prevent the man from slaughtering enemies who had surrendered. The American military was reluctant to condone Kane's action, but to punish him for an act of honor and mercy would have given them a black eye. When Kane succumbed to



American explorer Elisha Kent Kane.

a bout of his chronic rheumatism, his commanders gratefully sent him home with a medical discharge. He returned to Philadelphia a local hero. Still, it was not his brief military career which made Elisha Kent Kane an icon of national pride—it was his role in Arctic exploration. His first foray into the frozen north was in 1850 when he served as ship's surgeon on the First U.S. Grinnell Expedition, an American venture sponsored by a New York businessman. At this time, world exploration was the domain of the British, with the fledgling Americans mere novices in the field. However, the British reputation for success was

marred by the disappearance of the renowned Sir John Franklin in the Arctic in 1848. The goal of the First Grinnell Expedition was ostensibly to participate in the search for this missing British leader and his men, but the Americans also hoped to make a significant contribution in the Arctic. Particularly, they hoped to find evidence of an ice-free Open Polar Sea, a chimera that 19th century scientists had been chasing for years.

The First Grinnell Expedition didn't find any trace of Franklin or his men, but Kane returned from the trip afire with the exploration bug. Not only did he publish an account of the voyage, he threw himself into the lecture circuit to raise money for the next expedition, which he was destined to command. It was behind the lectern that Kane gathered fame around him like a mantle, attracting crowds with his charismatic personality and enthralling tales of adventure in the north. Americans began to aspire toward scientific progress and global fame—as embodied in the slight-figured frame of young Dr. Kane.

But no celebrity is complete without a romantic scandal, and here Kane was no exception. His Achilles heel turned out to be a young woman who was herself a celebrity: the spirit medium Maggie Fox. Miss Fox burst into the limelight in 1848 with a talent for contacting the dead, manifesting mysterious messages from spirits. Kane was no Spiritualist—in fact he was a nonbeliever—but nevertheless, he fell helplessly in love with the enigmatic Miss Fox and began to court her with an enthusiasm he had heretofore reserved for his career.

Both families opposed the match. The Kanes were horrified that he might actually marry the girl, while the Fox family shrewdly surmised that he would not and sought to protect Maggie from a ruined reputation. Each family would eventually

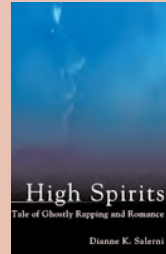
see its fears realized. After Kane's death, Maggie Fox claimed that she had been his common law wife, but the powerful Kane family flexed their extensive muscles to assure that the spirit medium was discredited and bankrupted.

Kane did lead the Second Grinnell Expedition, which vanished into the North on an extended adventure in 1853. There was no alarm when his ship didn't return at the earliest expected date—it was not unusual for a ship to be stuck in the Arctic during the winter—but when the second year passed without word of them, Americans began to fear the worst. While the U.S. government searched its collective pockets for funds to raise a relief expedition, Kane and his men battled starvation, scurvy, and mutiny. Not long after a Scottish expedition proved that Sir Franklin and his crew were all dead, Kane and his men paddled an open rowboat across the Arctic waters and into a Greenland settlement, traversing 1,000 miles to achieve their own rescue. If Kane had been a hero before, he was now a god. Not even the great British Franklin had managed this: to face the worst the Arctic had to offer and still lead his men home safely.

Kane only briefly enjoyed his new-found status. After penning a two-volume narrative of his expedition, entitled *Arctic Explorations*, he embarked on a lecture tour in Europe which was interrupted by another medical crisis. When his failing health alarmed European doctors, he was abruptly shipped off to Cuba in the hopes a tropical climate would provide a cure. Kane suffered a stroke during his trans-Atlantic voyage and died of heart failure shortly after his 37th birthday, plunging the pre-Civil War States into a brief union of mourning. His funeral procession, stretching from Havana to Philadelphia, lasted a month and is second only to that of Abraham Lincoln in U.S. history. His posthumously published book, *Arctic Explorations*, became a national bestseller. More importantly, his example fired the imaginations of a

generation of American explorers who would follow Kane and surpass his own humble accomplishments. Elisha Kent Kane eventually fell into obscurity, his role in the creation of the likes of Peary, Lindbergh, and Armstrong all-too-soon forgotten.

Dianne K. Salerni is an elementary school teacher and the author of High Spirits: A Tale of Ghostly Rapping and Romance, an award-winning historical fiction novel about nineteenth century spiritualism. Learn more about this author and her writing at www.highspiritsbook.com.



Between The Cracks 101

by Kim McDougall

Once upon a time. Four words that evoke memories of princesses and goblins, of fables and fairytales. They have become an archetype, harking back to a time when the word “novel” was synonymous with fantasy. In fact, English literature was forged in the fires of sorcery and unreality. Think *Faerie Queen*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Gulliver's Travels*. Sound familiar? But where would you look for these stories in your local bookstore today? Certainly not in the fantasy section.

Back when *Moby Dick* was published, there were no fantasy and sci-fi, no mystery or romance, only novels.

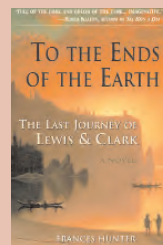
BOOK REVIEW

To The Ends of The Earth

by Frances Hunter

Everyone has heard of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; that daring, two-year long mapping and scientific exploration of the then-newly-acquired Louisiana Territory. It was the challenge of two daring young Army officers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to go and see what Thomas Jefferson had wrought, or at least purchased.

And so they did, to great popular, political and scientific acclaim. But this book is a speculative account of what happened afterwards, an exploration of the mystery surrounding the death of Meriwether Lewis as he was on his way back to Washington to account for his use—or misuse—of government funds. Was he murdered by a vicious and sinister political enemy? Or did the chronically ill man—depressed and self-medicating with alcohol and patent medicines—kill himself? How valuable were his expedition journals, maps and scientific observations on every aspect of what he and his good friend had seen on their journey to the Pacific Coast? How much would a foreign power pay for them?



To the Ends of the Earth is more than a period thriller; it is also a deftly drawn and sympathetic portrait of friendships and relationships, in an age when the political and the personal merged. Central, of course, is the deep friendship of Lewis and Clark. For these men of similar interests and compli-

mentary temperaments, the great expedition had been the professional high point of both their lives, something that they had both longed to do and planned for. There is also the implied but powerful close father-and-son affection between Lewis and Thomas Jefferson, Lewis' political and intellectual patron. Then there is the fraught relationship between Clark and his slave, York, who accompanied the two explorers into the west. York is torn between loyalty and affection toward Clark and his growing dissatisfaction at being merely property. And then there is Clark's marriage to the pretty and feisty Julia and her growing sense of independence.

The narrative is a web of relationships, but the force that drives the plot is the malign character of James Wilkinson. Wilkinson—a political general and military incompetent—is known to have been entangled in all kinds of traitorous self-serving plots during the early days of the American republic—including the one which entangled Aaron Burr. Historically, Wilkinson seems to have been as corrupt and slippery an operator as he is painted here; as such he makes almost too satisfactory a villain, cheerfully taking money from a foreign power and planting malicious gossip about people who have crossed him politically.

A gripping and accomplished read, *To the Ends of the Earth* is well-researched and unflinching in its portrayal of a time when the United States was still new and uncertain—and yet blessed with the services and devotion of men like Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The book was awarded a silver medal in the historical/military fiction category of 2007's Independent Publisher Book Awards.

- review by Celia Hayes

BOOK REVIEW

Second Chance

by Joy Collins

"Why can't a woman be more like a man?!" Lamented Professor Higgins, in *My Fair Lady*. The poor professor – as with many men, even those who have happily married – was completely baffled by the opposite sex.

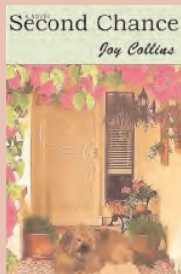
Paul and Sara Weber have been happily married for nearly twenty years. They moved halfway across the country from Paul's first wife, Mona, enjoy successful personal and professional lives, and have a pleasant home together. Yet Paul is completely baffled by the women in his life, and is unaware that he is in the middle of a potential love triangle.

When Paul's daughter comes to live with them and attend college, Paul's ex-wife expertly uses their daughter as a wedge, constantly extracting concessions and seeking an advantage. The fact that Paul yields on every front, rather than risk alienating his daughter, invariably reduces Sara to exasperation and fury and sets her and Paul at each other's throats.

Sara, herself the child of a divorced couple, begins to suspect that Mona is trying to reconcile with Paul at her expense. Paul does not even see Mona's actions as what they truly are: a form of aggression. Most men would miss it, too. Male aggression is as obvious as a fist in the face or a naval broadside from a battle ship. Female aggression is delicate malice over the tea table, the veiled look, the needle-sharp comment. It's on a frequency above male hearing, like a dog-whistle; Paul is genuinely unaware of it, but Sara is bitterly conscious of every one of Mona's stratagems.

And therein hangs the tale and the battle for Sara and Paul's marriage. *Second Chance* deals even-handedly with the scars of separation and divorce, and in the various responses which characters have to it; some of them healthy and realistic, and some of them deeply warped, but in a way that anyone who has been through the divorce wars can recognize. Tightly plotted and with crisply written dialogue, *Second Chance* is a luminously sympathetic look at marriages lost and found, and almost lost but found again.

- review by Celia Hayes



Alexander Pope did not worry about cross-genres when he composed *The Rape of a Lock*. Robert Louis Stevenson was not catering to horror fans when he wrote *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

When did literature become a slave to labels? Who else but marketing managers profit from categorizing literature? Certainly not the consumer. Fantasy buffs head straight for those specific shelves, but how many great fantasy stories are missed because they are classified as "literary" instead?

Likewise, how many readers who might disdain genre fiction also unknowingly abstain from quality literature? In the new big-box publishing industry, many great writers fall through the marketing cracks simply because their writing falls through the genre cracks.

As a reader I'm all for an errant knight epic or a sexy vampire thriller, but the books that stick with me, the stories that I find myself reliving on sleepless nights, are those that break barriers. As a writer, I strive to avoid stereotypes by writing a great story first and worrying about classifying it later. Unfortunately, writing in the gaps has its drawbacks too. I once sent a short story, "Lunch Was Not Enough--," to two different editors, receiving polite rejections from both. One claimed my story was fantasy and his magazine did not publish this genre. The other noted that the story was not fantasy and he only published such. Both had read the exact same story.

I get excited about stories that push the boundaries of current labels, fiction that creates new labels. My favorite authors accomplish this feat. Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is the best fantasy novel that I have ever read, but don't look for it in the fantasy section of your bookstore. Likewise, Guy Gavriel Kay's fantasy novel *Tigana* has little magic, no elves, nor space ships or anything otherworldly. Still, it is a rip-roaring epic that delights in thwarting the reader's expectations. James Morrow's *The Last Witchfinder* is a historical novel and its narrator is a book. Yes,

a book; Sir Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principals of Natural Philosophy*, to be precise. Despite Morrow's earlier works receiving great acclaim in the sci-fi/fantasy world, I found this new novel in the literature section of my local bookstore.

I believe there is an audience for fantasy fiction that is both meaningful and fun, no matter what genre—or genres—are involved. I strive to emulate these genre-bending qualities in my own fiction: Between the Cracks Fiction at www.kimmc-dougall.com.

Kim McDougall is a Canadian-born writer, photographer and fiber artist. She also writes young adult fiction under the name Kim Chatel, including her most recent novella, *The Stone Beach*.



An Impromptu Poem

by Barry Yelton

Light has faded, the shadows stretch
across the leaf strewn yard
and across that hill yonder the Blue Ridge
rises, giants of old, their haze
creating an impressionist
covering for the crags and the blue spruce
dressing them like brides of the morning.

And I turn to my screen and try
to tell you, dear friend,
that life resides in the dew of that moment
when the heart is open to the beauty
the world lavishes on us between acts of
savage fury
and life is lived in the margins amid the
folds of the mind
on an afternoon when sunlight washes
the leaves and the crows lumber
across the sky and you breathe
the precious air and cling tightly
to almighty hope.

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