



The Château

Paul Goldberg

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The acclaimed author of *The Yid* takes us behind the scenes of a Florida condo board election, delivering a wild spin on Miami Beach, petty crime, Jewish identity, and life in Trump's America.

It is January 2017 and Bill has hit rock bottom. Yesterday, he was a successful science reporter at *The Washington Post*. Today, fired from his job, with exactly \$1,219.37 in his checking account, he learns that his college roommate, a plastic surgeon known far and wide as the “Butt God of Miami Beach,” has fallen to his death under salacious circumstances. With nothing to lose, Bill heads for Florida, ready to begin his own investigation—a last ditch attempt to revive his career. There’s just one catch: Bill’s father, Melsor.

Melsor Yakovlevich Katzenelenbogen (so-named in tribute to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and the October Revolution)—poet, literary scholar, political dissident, small-time-crook—is angling for control of the condo board at the Chateau Sedan Neuve, a crumbling high-rise populated mostly by Russian Jewish immigrants. The current board is filled with fraudsters, and Melsor will use any means necessary to win the election. And who better to help him—through legal and illegal means—than his estranged son?

Featuring a colorful cast of characters, *The Chateau* injects the crime novel genre with surprising idiosyncrasy, subverting it with dark comic farce in a setting that becomes a microcosm of Trump’s America.

The Château Details

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From Reader Review *The Château* for online ebook

Nick says

This is a book you grab for the cover. The description inside pulls you in even further. Journalist, Will Katzenelenbogen down on his luck investigates the death of his college roommate, The Butt God of Miami Beach. What follows isn't a thrilling mystery, filled with twists and turns, and unexpected answers. Instead, Will faces off with his estranged father, Melsor, who struggles for justice amidst a crooked Chateau BOD. Fully engulfed in the conflict, Will finds himself dealing with the seedy and old BOD of the Chateau.

Disappointment set in when I finally realized the Butt God was not the center of attention here. His demise is unveiled, and it leaves much to be desired, but Will says it best himself, "The truth doesn't fucking matter - not anymore." What Chateau lacks in Butt God, it makes up for in reflection. Picking up this book, we all had expectations of solving what happened to the Butt God. We instead spent 350-pages in an upscale retirement home.

#1 Rule: Don't judge a book by its cover.

Onceinablue moon says

This book started off a rollicking good time, every sentence jam packed with crazy, the kind of book you can't miss one word, it was a five star hit for sure! And now a little backdrop, I have been coming up short all this week with my reading, I usually start a book at 4am when I awake in the still dark mornings, mind fresh and eager to fill my head with a multitude of topics. Then my day starts, I didn't have this audio so listened to another while doing chores during the day, by the time I nestled back down to read in the late afternoon I seem to have lost the mornings rosie glow. This is the third book this week it's happened to, I think I am juggling to many books at once, what started out fabulous now felt tedious, so much crazy, so much banter, so much Russian! Rather than savoring I began slogging and finally skimming to the end. Is it me, or the books??? Most likely I am just exhausted, dehydrated and not capable of stringing coherent thoughts and plots! There is no way this is an average three star book, I found it very good in the unpredictability department, but I just couldn't give it the five stars I felt when fresh as a daisy in the dawns early light!

Fran says

William Katzenelenbogen, investigative reporter, has been fired by the Washington Post. At fifty-two years old, he is being replaced by untested "new hires" who will now cover political ideologues and patterns of crime. Unlikely to scoop up a high paying job, cash strapped Bill needs a journalistic opportunity. Bill's former college roommate, Zbignew (Zbig) Wronski, arguably the "Butt God of Miami Beach", a posterior designer who reshapes "butts" has fallen to his death from the forty-third floor of the Grand Dux Hotel in Hollywood, Florida. Deemed an accident by the police, the case is closed. Bill wants to understand the circumstances surrounding Zbig's death and travels to Florida. Perhaps he can write a book hypothesizing the cause of Zbig's demise.

The Katzenelenbogen family are Russian transplants. Coming to America from Moscow in 1978, Bill's

father Melsor was a poet, a refusenik and a recognized troublemaker. Melsor sets up a non-extant fleet of ambulettes. Although not convicted of a crime, son Bill, outraged by his father's betrayal of the public trust, has not seen him for twelve years, but now, needs free accommodations in Florida and knocks on Melsor's door.

Melsor lives in the Chateau Sedan Neuve, "condo living" for the wealthiest 2% to 3%. Ethnically, the population of the condo dwellers is half Jewish and half Russian. Bill has made a timely entrance into Melsor's life. He is witness to the crumbling edifice. The building structure is moldy, the lobby flooded and the furniture is water stained. The condo is in flux, a constant state of construction where improvements are never completed. What's worse is that the Board of Directors is planning a \$19 million special assessment to be imposed on the Chateau's 360 unit owners, guaranteed to force out those unable to foot their portion of the price tag. Melsor is determined to run for the BOD to end corruption, kickbacks, and break the cycle of build, demolish and rebuild.

In a darkly comic manner, the BOD election parallels the weeks leading up to the inauguration of Donald Trump. "The Chateau" by Paul Goldberg describes honesty and integrity, off shore deals and politically corrupt alliances.

Thank you Macmillan-Picador and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "The Chateau".

Annie says

First published on my blog: Nonstop Reader.

What a strange book! Author Paul Goldberg's second novel follows up his successful debut *The Yid* with a blackly comedic exploration of the surreality of life in post-election-Trump America. William (nee Ilya) Katzenelenbogen has lost his job as an investigative reporter at age 51, his college friend the so-called "Butt God of Miami Beach" aka Zbignew (a cosmetic surgeon), has fallen to his death, so he decides to revisit the scene of Zbig's demise with the vague idea of turning his experiences into a saleable book/movie/source of income.

Since his finances are in the crapper along with his professional life (he doesn't even have the cash to cover his upcoming rent), he plans to stay with his father and stepmother. He's been estranged from his father for years, ever since his father's trial for fraud against the government for a scheme involving a non-existent ambulette service.

Bill/Ilya gets sucked into one farcical situation after another when he gets involved in his father's revenge and takeover scheme with his (the father's) condo board of directors. Bill stretches his horizons to unlawful entry and a pile of other felonies in a largely vodka fueled attempt to support and reign in his father to some degree.

The entire book is a sort of morality play. The writing is stellar, but I'm not nearly as hip or cool as the target audience. I am very sure it will play well to young urban professionals, especially ones who are more familiar with the stereotypes than am I.

There were several points in the book that surprised an uncomfortable bark of laughter out of me. I also enjoyed the way the author handled the non-English dialogue. It was comfortable and seamless to read. I also

admire the heck out of the author's ability to do the necessary mental gymnastics to write characters who are philosophically diametrically opposed to one another. Bill's interactions with his father are brilliantly written (and full of pathos(?)).

Bottom line, not a comfortable read for me, but extremely well written and powerful. Dark, dark, sarcastic humor. Also worth a note, this book is extremely current. Not precisely sure how well it'll play 10 years from now. A lot of the humor involves the surreal and frenetic current news cycle and living in the USA. If you feel like you've fallen into an alternate dimension every time you turn on the news, this book will tick a lot of boxes.

Due out 13th February, 2018 from Macmillan's Picador imprint.
Four stars for the writing

Disclosure: I received an ARC at no cost from the author/publisher.

Vivian says

This cover is great. Every time I see it on my library website, I'm tempted. Sorta. Condos are the worst form of property ownership--please, shackle me to my neighbors and throw me overboard. *shiver* And the rest of the blurb is equally parts intriguing and revolting.

But that cover. *sigh*

Zachary Houle says

With the world now into the second year of the Donald Trump administration, books about the orange-haired one have begun appearing. You've probably already heard of the white-hot non-fiction bestseller *Fire and Fury*. You can now add a novel to the mix: Paul Goldberg's *The Château*. This isn't a book about Trump, per se, but it is set in the lead-up to his inauguration in January 2017. As such, the characters all reference him, and the novel keeps the reader mindful of Trump's shenanigans in the background.

The book deals with a disgraced Washington Post reporter, fired for insubordination. Bill Katzenelenbogen, as he is known, is pretty much drinking himself into a stupor when he finds out that a college roommate of his, a plastic surgeon known for his exclusivity on working on women's buttocks, has fallen to his death in his Florida office building. Smelling a story that he might be able to transform into a sensational book, Bill K. heads off to the Sunshine State to do some poking around. However, when he arrives, he finds himself immersed with his shady father's dealings with an even shadier condo board. Eventually, that's pretty much all that Bill K. finds himself getting deeper and deeper involved with, almost forgetting about the real reason why he's down there in the process, as the clock counts down to Trump's coronation.

Read the rest here: https://medium.com/@zachary_houle/a-r...

Gordon Kaplan says

It is January 2017, and Bill has hit rock bottom. Yesterday, he was William M. Katzenelenbogen, successful science reporter at The Washington Post, with years of experience and industry awards; however, things have taken a turn. Fired from his job, aimless, with exactly \$1,219.37 in his checking account, he learns that his college roommate, a plastic surgeon known far and wide as the “Butt God of Miami Beach,” has fallen to his death under salacious circumstances. With nothing to lose, Bill boards a flight for Florida's Gold Coast, ready to begin his own investigation – a last-ditch attempt to revive his career.

There's just one catch: Bill's father, Melsor.

Melsor Yakovlevich Katzenelenbogen – poet, literary scholar, political dissident, small-time crook – is angling for control of the condo board at the Château Sedan Neuve, a crumbling high-rise in Hollywood, Florida. The current board is filled with fraudsters in cahoots with contractors and levying “special assessments” on residents, and Melsor will use any means necessary to win the board election. Who better to help him – through means both legal and illegal – than his estranged son?

The Château guarantees that you will never look at crime, condo boards, kleptocracy, vodka, or Florida the same way again.

(Description, edited, is taken from the inner flap of the hardcover book jacket.)

This book for a good part of it induced a meh attitude. It's probably because the book is infused with much black humor, and one has to be in the proper mood when reading.

I still liked it enough to whiz through it in less than three days and will read Goldberg's next book. (I read his first novel, *The Yid*, last year when it came out.) While it might not be five-star worthy, I'm giving it four stars. I guess I'm an easy grader.

Be forewarned: If you like Donald Trump and the ideals for which he stands, you probably shouldn't read this book.

Matthew says

I'm typically not one to predict the future but I can't imagine *The Chateau*, Paul Goldberg's weird, wild and whimsical second novel, working any better at any time other than the here and now. It is a novel about many things, most of which is our current, fractured state as a nation. God help us if *The Chateau* remains relevant even a few years from now.

At least we'd have something to fall back on should that be the case. Above all *The Chateau* is an uproarious satire of the dissolution of the American Dream in the wake of Trump's election, and the paranoia and idiosyncrasies that came with it. It's also about the mysterious death of the “Butt God of Miami Beach”. But only kinda.

Bill Katzenelenbogen, once a prominent writer for the Washington Post, has been dismissed for insubordination. He's near broke and without a pot to piss in. What's more, he learns that his college

roommate – the above-mentioned “Butt God” himself, née plastic surgeon Zbig Wronski – has fallen to his death from the balcony of his South Beach condo. Bill is saddened by the news yet also encouraged that this could be the break his sullied career needs. And so he travels to Florida to investigate his friend’s passing with hopes to write about a book about it.

Seems simple enough, right? The journey Bill embarks on proves to be anything but, thanks mostly to his scam artist, Trump-supporting (and -reading) father, Melsor, a man he hasn’t spoken with in “ten, maybe twelve” years. Bill being broke he turns to his father – also a Miami resident – for lodging during his investigation, as well as to extend a pseudo-olive branch. The lodging he receives but the branch comes in the form of yet another one of Melsor’s scams, this time involving the very chateau the novel shares its name with.

What follows is nothing short of madness. Goldberg is a remarkably perceptive, laugh out loud hysterical wordsmith whose talents are on full display here. His observations are profoundly on the nose (sometimes too much), and the dialogue betwixt characters is real, witty, genuine. Is *The Chateau* at times over the top? Oh yes, very much so. But it wouldn’t have been nearly as entertaining had it not been.

That said it’s also the novel’s greatest flaw. When Goldberg gets focused on a particular subject he tends to go full-bore – specifically politics, religion and, of all things, architecture & design – with hardly any signs of dialing things back. It’s a boom or bust mentality, and for the most part it booms. But what booms most of all is the novel’s timing. As aforementioned *The Chateau* is very much a novel for today, for better or worse. As broken as society may currently appear at least we can take solace in knowing it inspires great, thought-provoking work.

The Chateau is proof positive.

Lisa Zeidner says

Ripped-out-of-the-headlines novels often fail. Not this one. *THE CHATEAU* appears to have been written in a kind of happy heat amid Trump's presidential run and Russian scandals. Like a slaphappy, tipsy anthropologist, Goldberg penetrates the community of Russian emigres in Florida who supported the man they call Donal'd Tramp. Their own infighting, and crimes, echo the country's, as they argue over control of a condo board and the building's graft-infested construction projects. Goldberg himself is a Russian transplant, well-versed in the language and culture, and in fact the inspiration for this satire is clearly Gogol--that blend of sharp-eyed contemporary observation and downright absurdism. Goldberg's hero, Bill (nee Ilya), is a frumpy, drunk Everyman right out of Gogol: fired from his reporter job at the Washington Post, he finds himself down and out in his father's condo, dealing not only with his nutty, narcissistic father, but with Russian prostitutes, hiding Nazis (who may also be Jewish?), and little old ladies who may or may not be terrorists. Extremely sharp, extremely of-the-moment, and extremely funny!

Lynne says

A humorous story with many reminders of my grandparents. Also, visiting Florida and references to our current political situation are sprinkled in.

Cristina says

Set during the inauguration of Donald Trump, this novel tackles political and social tensions from the perspective of immigrants on either side. Overall, a fun read: satirical and subversive with heavy doses of despondence and brutal realism. I really enjoyed the tidbits of Russian literature and poetry and vocabulary words sprinkled throughout the text.

Lou Breault says

Awful. Awful awful awful. Honestly I could barely finish. What is Russian for "I hated it"?

Bandit says

My first thought upon finishing this book was how do I review it? It's such a difficult book to review. Goldberg sticks to the write what you know maxim judging by his fictional award winning debut *Yid*, which actually sounds way more interesting than this one, born in Moscow, moving to the US at 14, the man has an authentically bifurcated perspective and this is definitely a story that requires such an approach not just of its author, but also of its audience. This novel is very much a bilingual experience, literally and figuratively, which might be viewed either as one of its main draws or (in my case) or one of its main (exhaustive) detractions. The plot has to do with a suddenly fired 52 year old journalist who goes to Florida with the intent to investigate his friend's death and ends up embroiled in his lunatic of a father's plan to overthrow his condo board. Theoretically this is political conflict of Trump's election played out in a microcosm of a luxury condo building. Practically it's something of a farce, something of a satire, something of a father/son drama. Melsor, the father, is a fascinating character, once a proletarian freedom fighter, now an ardent Trump supporter, an idealist turned conman turned saboteur, too psychologically scarred by one culture to properly belong to another, he is a man who values his convictions about his relationship with his only son. Personally I've always been fascinated by how someone can immigrate from a totalitarian strongman regime and later crave it, so here's an interesting take on that mentality. That mindset's juxtaposition to one of the 4 decade thoroughly Americanized son would have created enough drama, possibly making for a more compelling read, but the tedious machinations and internecine politics of the condo building situation were considerably less compelling and Goldberg's insistence of doing the book in both languages (some writings are recreated in original in Cyrillic alphabet and all relevant dialogue is done in both languages, original in Latin alphabet spelled out phonetically) is just user unfriendly. What's the goal here? Is the book aimed mainly at a narrow bilingual audience, because even if you can read both, it's tedious and not at all necessary. If you can't...than it's just puffing up the book with word count. Seems weirdly gratuitous or something. The narration was quite good though, pleasantly humorous, it's like the book tried to engage you in spite of itself. Maybe *Yid* would have been a more agreeable read. This one was interesting enough, particularly for a refreshingly honest look into an eastern European immigrant experience in the modern America. And I imagine going with English only version would cut the reading time significantly. Unless you're trying to expand your linguistic prospects. Thanks Netgalley.

Jean Cole says

This one left me wondering what to think.

The beginning tells the story of Ben K (trust me, that's easier than spelling out his last name), who is a disgraced former reporter with the Washington Post. That right there is enough to hook me, because as a life-long DC suburb resident, I'm always drawn to stories set in and around our nation's capital.

Ben's best friend from college has recently plunged to his death from the balcony of an atrium hotel in Miami, and since he is recently unemployed, Ben decides to travel to Miami to try to discover what caused his friend to commit suicide. Here's where the story takes a hard left turn.

Ben is from a family of Russian Jews who escaped from Communist Russia. He is -- well not exactly estranged -- but has a difficult relationship with his elderly father, Melsor, who lives in a large, aging condo building (The Chateau) in Miami. Naturally Ben goes to see his father, and the craziness begins. The Chateau is drenched in a culture of corruption, power struggles, payoffs, and angry old women who beat total strangers about the head and neck with little to no provocation,

There is a dark humor permeating this novel, even as the tragic history of the residents also permeates. The drama of the struggle for power in this building completely overshadows the question of why Bill's friend fell to his death. So what I thought was going to be possible crime investigation with ties to Washington DC turned out to be a dark comedy set in Miami. That's one reason I'm a little perplexed. Another is how the story lines are wrapped up.

So, it's an entertaining story that kept my interest, but in the end ... I'm not sure what to think.

Janet says

I received a DIGITAL Advance Reader Copy of this book from #NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. From the publisher -

The acclaimed author of *The Yid* takes us behind the scenes of a Florida condo board election, delivering a wild spin on Miami Beach, petty crime, Jewish identity, and life in Trump's America.

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This book was equal hilarity and what-the-effness due to its current setting of Life in Trump America. I found that the book was hard to follow at times as it jumped all over the place and I kept losing track of the plot and who certain characters were.. Funny as heck at times, its satirization of the Russian-Jewish community was also biting and caustic when it needed to be. Definitely a good book for a book club that likes to argue into the wee hours of the morning!!

