



# **My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Places to Browse, Read, and Shop**

*Ronald Rice (Editor) , Leif Parsons (Illustrator)*

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In this enthusiastic, heartfelt, and sometimes humorous ode to bookshops and booksellers, 84 known authors pay tribute to the brick-and-mortar stores they love and often call their second homes. In "My Bookstore" our greatest authors write about the pleasure, guidance, and support that their favorite bookstores and booksellers have given them over the years. The relationship between a writer and his or her local store and staff can last for years or even decades. Often it's the author's local store that supported him during the early days of his career, that continues to introduce and hand-sell her work to new readers, and that serves as the anchor for the community in which he lives and works. "My Bookstore "collects the essays, stories, odes and words of gratitude and praise for stores across the country in 84 pieces written by our most beloved authors. It's a joyful, industry-wide celebration of our bricks-and-mortar stores and a clarion call to readers everywhere at a time when the value and importance of these stores should be shouted from the rooftops. Perfectly charming line drawings by Leif Parsons illustrate each storefront and other distinguishing features of the shops.

Contributing authors and bookstores include:

Fannie Flagg--Page & Palette, Fairhope, AL  
Rick Bragg--Alabama Booksmith, Homewood, AL  
John Grisham--That Bookstore in Blytheville, Blytheville, AR  
Ron Carlson--Changing Hands Bookstore, Tempe, AZ  
Ann Packer--Capitola Book Cafe, Capitola, CA  
Isabel Allende--Book Passage, Corte Madera, CA  
Mahbod Seraji--Kepler's Books, Menlo Park, CA  
Lisa See--Vroman's Bookstore, Pasadena, CA  
Meg Waite Clayton--Books Inc., San Francisco, CA  
Daniel Handler and Lisa Brown--The Booksmith, San Francisco, CA  
Dave Eggers--Green Apple Books, San Francisco, CA  
Pico Iyer--Chaucer's Books, Santa Barbara, CA  
Laurie R. King--Bookshop, Santa Cruz, CA  
Scott Lasser--Explore Booksellers, Aspen, CO  
Stephen White--Tattered Cover Book Store, Denver, CO  
Kate Niles--Maria's Bookshop, Durango, CO  
Ann Haywood Leal--Bank Square Books, Mystic, CT  
Florence and Wendell Minor--The Hickory Stick Bookshop, Washington Depot, CT  
Rick Atkinson--Politics and Prose Bookstore, Washington, DC  
Les Standiford--Books & Books, Coral Gables, FL  
Robert Macomber--The Muse Book Shop, Deland, FL  
David Fulmer--Eagle Eye Book Shop, Decatur, GA  
Abraham Verghese--Prairie Lights, Iowa City, IA  
Charlie Brandt--Chapter One Bookstore, Ketchum, ID  
Luis Alberto Urrea--Anderson's Bookshops, Naperville, IL  
Mike Leonard--The Book Stall Chestnut Court, Winnetka, IL  
Albert Goldbarth--Watermark Books, Wichita, KS

Wendell Berry--Carmichael's Bookstore, Louisville, KY  
Tom Piazza--Octavia Books, New Orleans, LA  
Edith Pearlman--Brookline Booksmith, Brookline, MA  
Mameve Medwed--Porter Square Books, Cambridge, MA  
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.--Harvard Book Store, Cambridge, MA  
Simon Winchester--The Bookloft, Great Barrington, MA  
Nancy Thayer--Mitchell's Book Corner, Nantucket, MA  
Elin Hilderbrand--Nantucket Bookworks, Nantucket, MA  
Jeanne Birdsall--Broadside Bookshop, Northampton, MA  
Martha Ackmann--Odyssey Bookshop, South Hadley, MA  
Ward Just--Bunch of Grapes Bookstore, Vineyard Haven, MA  
Ron Currie, Jr.--Longfellow Books, Portland, ME  
ancy Shaw--Nicola's Books, Ann Arbor, MI  
Katrina Kittle--Saturn Booksellers, Gaylord, MI  
Ann Patchett--Mclean & Eakin Booksellers, Petoskey, MI  
Louise Erdrich--Magers & Quinn Booksellers, Minneapolis, MN  
Peter Geye--Micawber's Books, St. Paul, MN  
Kathleen Finneran--Left Bank Books, St. Louis, MO  
Barry Moser--Lemuria Books, Jackson, MS  
Jack Pendarvis--Square Books, Oxford, MS  
Jill McCorkle--Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, NC  
Carrie Ryan--Park Road Books, Charlotte, NC  
Laurent Dubois--The Regulator Bookshop, Durham, NC  
Lee Smith--Purple Crow Books, Hillsborough, NC  
Angela Davis-Gardner--Quail Ridge Books & Music, Raleigh, NC  
Ron Rash--City Lights Bookstore, Sylva, NC  
Ian Frazier--Watchung Booksellers, Montclair, NJ  
Audrey Vernick--Booktowne, Manasquan, NJ  
Joan Wickersham--The Toadstool Bookshop, Peterborough, NH  
Carmela Ciuraru--Community Bookstore, Brooklyn, NY  
Matt Weiland--Greenlight Bookstore, Brooklyn, NY  
Kate Christensen--WORD, Brooklyn, NY  
Mick Cochrane--Talking Leaves Books, Buffalo, NY  
Caroline Leavitt--McNally Jackson Books, New York, NY  
Arthur Nersesian--St. Mark's Bookshop, New York, NY  
Francine Prose & Pete Hamill--Strand Bookstore, New York, NY  
Jeff Smith--Book Loft German Village, Columbus, OH  
Chuck Palahniuk--Powell's Books, Portland, OR  
Larry Kane--Chester County Book & Music Company, West Chester, PA  
Ann Hood--Island Books, Middletown, RI  
Mindy Friddle--Fiction Addiction, Greenville, SC  
Adam Ross--Parnassus Books, Nashville, TN  
Douglas Brinkley--Book People, Austin, TX  
Terry Tempest Williams--The King's English Book Shop, Salt Lake City, UT  
Howard Frank Mosher--Galaxy Bookshop, Hardwick, VT  
Jon Clinch--Northshire Bookstore, Manchester, VT  
Jonathan Evison--Eagle Harbor Book Co., Bainbridge Island, WA  
Tom Robbins--Village Books, Bellingham, WA  
Timothy Egan--Elliott Bay Book Company, Seattle, WA

Stephanie Kallos--Third Place Books, Lake Forest Park, WA  
Ivan Doig--University Book Store, Seattle, WA  
Lesley Kagen--Next Chapter Bookshop, Mequon, WI  
Liam Callanan--Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee, WI

## **My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Places to Browse, Read, and Shop Details**

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# From Reader Review My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Places to Browse, Read, and Shop for online ebook

## Lynda says

It's not really this book's fault (at least not TOO much) that I didn't like it. It's definitely a mixed bag of different authors (many of whom I've never heard of) writing essays about their favorite independent bookstore (fabulous premise!) and why they love it.

Unfortunately, this is another of those books that shouldn't be read from beginning to end. Instead, this book should be owned (or kept from the library for a long time) and read randomly, opening to a page and leafing until you find the next essay, not unlike how you read a coffee table book. Reading one essay after another (some of them decidedly better and/or more interesting than the others) becomes really tedious.

In fact, since I'm thinking of coffee table books, this really could be a good one - it would need to be larger, have pictures of the bookstores (instead of line drawings of the front of each store at the beginning of each chapter, and the drawings look like they were traced using a photo of the bookstore), and have the essays edited or at least cut into shorter pieces on each page, rather than large blocks of text. (My favorite essays were the ones on the bookstores that I've visited, because I could picture my trips there.)

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## Linda says

Upcoming review in Library Journal (recommended for a starred review)

"A love letter to bookstores." Peter Geye (read his essay on Micawber's) confirms that is exactly what he was doing. Beautiful and varied as leaves on a tree (hey, it's autumn here in Minnesota).

It's not only a great depiction of what role bookstores play in the lives of writers, but a great travel guide as well. Just like Read This! it will bring you in touch with gems that you had not known about before. It's less practical than Read This! (no book lists) but more personal.

Lovely.

"Bookstores, like libraries, are the physical manifestations of the wide world's longest, best, most thrilling conversation." (from the Introduction)

## Library Journal

This is more than just a celebration, more than just a compendium of bookstore kudos. This is like each of your favorite writers (84 of them!) penning a love letter to their favorite bookstore. Names you may recognize include Dave Eggers, Louise Erdrich, Francine Prose, Lisa See, and Simon Winchester. Editor Rice, a publishing professional, has recruited new pieces that illuminate the quirks and many intangibles that make a great bookstore. From the owner who will trek across town to help out at a library signing, to the fierceness with which some owners protect their customers' privacy, to the overall comfort of stepping into a world that you just know is full of compatriots, the beautiful stories in these pages tell of those things that make any neighborhood bookstore great. VERDICT There are other collections that focus on bookstores, such as the recent Read This!: Handpicked Favorites from America's Indie Bookstores, edited by Hans Weyandt, and the short story collection, Shelf Life: Fantastic Stories Celebrating Bookstores, edited by Greg Ketter, but this one is a personal peek into the hearts of the contributing writers as well as into the bookstores they love. Sure to please any bibliophile, even if borrowed from the library!-Linda White, Maplewood, MN

## **Chris says**

I don't know that I've ever left a bookstore because I wanted to. I leave because I should, or need to get somewhere else, or can't carry any more books, or because the police have been summoned, but not because I want to. For me browsing in a bookstore is like standing before the departures board in a major international airport and being able to say, "I can go there, there, there, and there! Oh and there too..."

So *My Bookstore* was written just for me. To read along as writers, both known and unknown to me, wax nostalgic about their favorite bookstores: what they mean to them, why they are important, and how the devoted, knowledgeable booksellers make them destinations, community anchors, home, was bliss.

*My Bookstore* will always have a place on my shelf; to be pulled down before every vacation or if the planets align to serve as a reference as I build my own Bookloft, Quail Ridge Books, or dare I say it - Powell's?

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## **Lesya says**

Serendipity. I was standing on a step inside The Book Loft of German Village in Columbus, Ohio, waiting to go upstairs. There was quite a crowd flowing down the narrow staircase, as if an entire busload of people were leaving all at once. So, while I waited with my mother and sister, I picked up a book from a pile beside the stairs. *My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Places to Browse, Read, and Shop* included a piece by Jeff Smith, creator of the graphic novel *Bones*, about The Book Loft itself. I don't know when I've received so much pleasure from an accidental purchase.

*My Bookstore* is an ode to independent bookstores written by authors who love local bookstores. It may be the bookstore in their neighborhood, the store they grew up with, or the store that first allowed them to read there. In John Grisham's case it's That Bookstore in Blytheville, the Blytheville, Arkansas bookstore that first took a chance on an author selling books out of his trunk. Louise Erdrich tells of Magers & Quinn Booksellers in Minneapolis, where she went on a first date. Lisa See's story of Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena brought tears to my eyes, as she told about her family. Richard Russo wrote an introduction to the book that is a love letter to independent bookstores and the people who run them. Leif Parsons' illustrations of each bookstore celebrate their diversity.

Eighty-four authors write of their love of a bookstore in this wonderful book. Anyone who appreciates authors and local bookstores will admire this collection. These love letters are actually comments about the wonderful people who love books, and share that passion, welcoming everyone into their world of books. The bookstores may be wonderful because of their character, their eccentricity, but they are always welcoming because of the knowledgeable people who own and run the stores.

I've only been to two of the bookstores in this collection, Changing Hands Bookstore in Tempe, Arizona, and The Book Loft of German Village. That's going to change. I can already see a spring road trip to Ann Patchett's Parnassus Books in Nashville. I'd love to spend time in the others as well.

My favorite bookstore isn't in the collection, The Poisoned Pen Bookstore in Scottsdale, Arizona. But, there are authors I know who spoke about bookstores they love. At one time or another, I've hosted Douglas Brinkley, Robert N. Macomber, Les Standiford. And, I've met some of the other authors. My Bookstore became a very personal book, a love letter from people I knew about places they love. This book welcomed me with open arms.

Not everyone will want to read eighty-four essays about bookstores. I appreciated every piece, seeing each of them as an introduction to a world where books are talked about and loved. My Bookstore invites readers to feel at home.

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### **Madelyn says**

I have a love-hate relationship with this book. I love the idea of touting independent bookstores. I love hearing about the interesting booksellers, but got bored with some self-promoting authors who wrote the essays. The book suffered from poor indexing (I want to find what page Powell's City of Books is listed, but unless I know that Chuck Pahluniak wrote the essay, I'm searching through the book willy-nilly.) The book would be much more interesting with photos instead of OR in addition to the pencil drawings of each bookstore. OH PLEASE give me a map, not just the geographical listing of bookstores by states, so I can actually plot out my road trip to visit these stores. And blank pages following each entry would have been a nice addition - a place where you could record your own impressions of the bookstore if you had visited it. That said, my husband and I have been intrigued enough to visit four of the bookstores mentioned, and hope to see many more. We bought a journal to record our visits, and impressions of the stock, clerks, etc. We bought at least one book in each shop and have the bookmark to remember it by. I guess I am receiving more pleasure from the post-reading of the book, than the actual reading. Off to explore another bookstore now,

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### **Tiffany says**

This... This is a love letter to quality bookstore and bookstore owners/employees everywhere. Eighty-one (usually short) essays and one comic detailing authors' love for independent bookstores, bookstore owners, bookstore employees, and books and reading, in general. This book will make you want to go out and buy your own bookstore, or at least find one and apply to work (or live) there. It makes me wish we had a good independent bookstore near me. A good, neighborhood bookstore is at the top of my list of attributes of my dream town: bookstore, coffee shop-type gathering place, restaurant, and everything accessible by walking along small, tree-lined streets. Basically, I want to live in Everwood... or Capeside. You know, nice, comforting towns you see on TV. So when I find that place in real life--that has a friendly bookstore, neighborhood hangout place, and yummy restaurants that I can eat in three or four times a week (with a nice neighborhood grocery to get fresh, tempting food in for the other three or four nights a week)--I'm moving there.

Oh, right. The book. The essays describe--sometimes clumsily, but usually beautifully--bookstores in 35 states, plus D.C. Which means it not only acts as a love letter to bookstores, but it would make a *great* travel

guide. If I were a traveler, I'd buy this book and take it with me on every trip so I could experience first-hand all of the bookstores these writers drool over. And speaking of beautifully describing the bookstores: Leif Parsons' illustrations beautifully depict the bookstores. They're so stunning, they make you feel like you're *right there*, in the store or on the sidewalk, about to enter.

And, of course, you can play the game of "Did anyone write about *my* favorite bookstore?"

Plus, Rick Bragg seems to feel the same way that I've felt for years: What's with cats in so many bookstores?!? As he says, "there are no cats in the Alabama Booksmith in Homewood, Alabama, and that is almost enough, in a literary world lousy with people who think having a damn cat in the stacks or on the counter or lolling in the window is somehow quaint and almost by God *required*, to proclaim it a great bookstore..." Right on!

\*\*\*\*\*

So, you know, if anyone's ever looking for a gift to get me, the hardback edition of this book would be wonderful. (It's one of those books that should always be read just the way this version is. The hardback edition is so beautiful, with deckle-edged paper, vibrant colors on the cover... So wonderful! I think owning it in paperback would almost be a sin.)

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## **Bill says**

this is a really wonderful book...84 authors telling the story of their favorite independant bookstore. it was really uplifting to find out that there are so many independant bookstores, many in relatively small towns, flourishing...when there seems to be so much doom and gloom around the book industry.

what was even better were the stories of how their local bookstore made so much difference to the success of many of these authors, by holding author events and handselling their books to everybody they could. even john grisham had a hard time peddling his first novel, and now that he's world famous, the only bookstores he signs books at are the five that helped him in the beginning.

at first i was kind of miffed that all the stores are in the usa, with none from canada, and then i thought, wait, we hardly have any up here. i live about an hour away from vancouver, supposedly a world class city, with a metropolitan population of close to 3 million, and there is not one really good independant bookstore selling new books. not one!! it's damn pathetic. all we have are chapters, the canadian version of barnes & noble. in this book there is one town of 34,000 people that has 2 flourishing bookstores. so i am pretty well forced to buy most of my books online, whareas if there was a good independant bookstore i would definitely drive there and pay more for my books to support a local business, just like all the customers of all the stores in this book, because they are all having to compete with the dreaded amazon, and their cut-rate prices and free delivery.

there is quite a lot of talk about e-books in this book, and while they are not going to go away, i was just reading the other day that e-book sales are down from the year before, and are only 16% of all book sales, so 84% of book sales are still "real" paper based books, which again is very heartening.

so anyway, if you love books and you're on goodreads, so duh...you should definitely read this book. it will make your day...it sure made mine.



i forgot to mention, most of the articles are 3 or 4 pages long, so you won't even get bored.

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## **Michelle says**

If you bought this book online, you're doing it wrong.

If you're reading this book on a Kindle, you're doing it really, really wrong. I won it from a firstreads giveaway, so I guess I'm doing it half wrong?

*My Bookstore* is a celebration of the bookstores that have survived the crush of Amazon.com by the authors that have sold their books at these stores. Each store has great, knowledgeable staff who love books, inspirational owners, and a great selection. Author Ann Patchett doesn't write about her own bookstore, Parnassus, but another author does for her. I love bookstores, and each of these bookstores sounds amazing, but I'm not entirely sure who the audience for this book is, unless it's going to make a good souvenir when you visit Politics & Prose in DC or The Strand in NY (which got two write-ups). My favorite selection was the author who used an emoticon :-)) and went off on a tangent about computer geeks and the internet for most of his section. I was also amused by the number of authors who called out Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and even the late Borders with distaste for the harm they had done to their local bookstore community, especially the ones who felt the need to comment on how ebooks "feel" wrong (for the record, I love physical media, but that doesn't make it less funny to hear 20 writers bitch about it). Also, a lot of bookstores have cats.

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## **Lorna says**

What a beautiful book. *My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Places to Browse, Read, and Shop* is a delight to read. If you love books and bookstores, this is a book that you want to have with you for a long time as you begin to explore not only bookstores that you love but those that you have always heard about and want to visit. And not only the bookstores but many of your favorite authors tell of the special connection that they have with their favorite bookstores.

One of my favorite parts of the book was the chapter about *Shakespeare and Company* on the Left Bank of Paris that opened just in time for the flood of English-speaking expatriates such as Ernest Hemingway, T.S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald Gertrude Stein and James Joyce. In fact, this is the bookstore that nurtured and edited the first copy of *Ulysses*.

Another wonderful chapter was that about *Lemuria Books* in Jackson, Mississippi that specializes in books "by Southern writers and all things Southern."

And one of my favorite authors, Lisa See, as she talks about her family's history of opening a large antiques store in 1901 where Vroman's Bookstore opened in 1895. This was the bookstore where she has held all of her book launch parties.

And I must end with my favorite bookstore, The Tattered Cover Bookstore in Denver. It is revered by all of us that gather here for the ample nooks to hide in with plenty of overstuffed chairs and old sofas - perfect!

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## Nikki says

I have very mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand, I love reading about other people loving books and building communities around them. It's nice to realize you're not the only person obsessed with reading. On the other hand, this book displayed some of my biggest pet peeves, namely:

1) Authors using their essay to 'casually' mention their own books and what a huge amount of people showed up to *their* readings. They're supposed to discuss independent bookstores, but by going on and on about how the bookstore pushed their book down people's throats and organized great events for them, they're really just patting themselves on the back. Obnoxious. To be clear, for the most part the authors contributing to this book didn't do this, but a significant number of them did.

2) The second pet peeve is a major one. I'm going to apologize in advance for what's probably going to turn into a tirade, but I need to get this off my chest. I am so, *so* sick of people who have this incredibly narrow view of what the 'right' kind of reader is. Independent bookstores are always AMAZING, and their staff is always incredibly knowledgeable and personable, while chain stores are always PURE LIQUID EVIL. Don't even mention Amazon to these people, or they're likely to burst into flame. I don't get it. I understand that people have their own preferences, but WHY do they have to be so insufferably morally superior about it and shame anyone who doesn't confirm to their idea of a 'good' reader. For example, I personally don't enjoy reading e-books, but I don't go around berating other people for reading them. Independent bookstores can be great, but if people want to shop at big chains or -horror of horrors- online, leave them the eff alone. I totally understand that this book is about celebrating independent bookstores, and I totally get that they offer great services, but what I don't get is why praise for this kind of store always seems to involve dissing every other place that sells books. To me it reeks of snobbery that is not acceptable in anyone over the age of, say, 16.

On a more personal note, there's an independent bookstore I used to frequent, but now I absolutely refuse to set foot in there, for 2 reasons: 1) They gloated about the closing down of Border's and B&N stores. I'm sorry, but people who claim to love books should not be GLOATING over the closing down of ANY bookstore. (By the way, this store is in Belgium, where neither chain has ever had a single store, which makes me get this even less.) 2) When asked if they had a popular cookbook in stock, the owner very disdainfully referred to the chain store further down the street. "If you want that kind of book, go there." This was said in a tone of voice just dripping with derision. And just the other day, I overheard the owner of a different independent say he had read 14 books in 2014. FOURTEEN. That immediately disproves this fantasy that people who work at independents are some sort of book gurus, while people who work at chain stores think *Eat, Pray, Love* is a cookbook (that's just on the many snarky anecdotes you can find in this book). And on the other hand, I've encountered some really helpful, friendly and knowledgeable staff at big chains. It's not black and white. Why does it have to be this either/or story? Why can't lovers of independent bookstores just sing their praises without acting like teenagers by dragging other stores through the mud? It annoys me so, so much.

Again, not all the essays in this book were like that. If that had been the case, I probably wouldn't have been able to even finish it. But I always read a good chunk of essays in one go, and then you can definitely see this pattern emerge.

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## **Julia says**

I loved this book on several levels. Many of my favorite authors have written essays included in the book, which gave me insight into their reading and shopping habits. The essays almost inevitably introduced me to the owners and staff of the stores, and confirmed what I had already known: those who own and work in bookstores are extraordinary people, who see and understand the world as I do. Each author's biographical information include titles from their work, so I have also gained many books for my "to read" list. What more could I ask for?

To answer my own question, let me state that I am not a person who would enjoy cruises, especially those that would put me on open water for several days. What I would enjoy would be a bookstore cruise. Put me on a train or a luxury bus in the company of other booklovers, give me a liberal shopping allowance, and send me from bookstore to bookstore, using those in this book as the itinerary. I would expect that the bookstore owner would be so excited to have shoppers by the busload, that they would make arrangements for a wonderful place for us to eat and spend the night. Oh, and a requirement would be the author who wrote about the store in such glowing terms would return once more to meet all of their new friends (thanks to the book) and sign a few titles while they were there.

Until that happens, I will use this book for my own itinerary and bookish bucket list.

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## **Peggy says**

I heard Stephanie Kallos read from her essay and had to have the book. In keeping with her own book-buying habit she signed and dated the place of purchase. As an avid supporter of independent bookstores I was fascinated by the 84 essays. It was like an anthropological study into what makes for the success of one niche business. What emerged was the theme of booksellers engaged in their community who 1) usually hosted the first book launch for the author, and, 2) applied "hand selling" such that a book got noticed. Almost all the essays were a love letter of sorts to their store, but I wish the editor had asked them to have it read less like an argument for independents versus Amazon. I suppose the elephant in the room needed to be named, but not in almost every essay. I did experience bookstore envy...I like my neighborhood bookstore but they've never done that type thinking. They could use an attitude adjustments (perhaps by reading this book) so as to look at what's working for them versus the frustrating trend (FREE TODAY!).

One essay in particular stands out by an author whose works I know I will never have the guts to read. Chuck Palahniuk's piece on Powell's World of Books is great and even when quoting it poorly I got laughs.

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## **Lisa says**

[4.5 stars] I loved this collection of essays by writers about their favorite bookstores. I would rate the essays from 3 to 5 stars, but each of the 84 bookstores and booksellers described gets an enthusiastic 5 stars from me! I read this collection before bedtime for the last couple weeks and it launched me into many happy nights of bookstore dreaming. I wish I could have made it last longer.

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## Erin **\*Proud Book Hoarder\*** says

Book lovers like to flock to bookstores. Bookstores that stand out as that 'something special' and something extra can win permanent places in a reader's heart. I have fond memories of bookstores I've visited that I never got to see again, or who have now gone on to the bookstore-beyond, but they will always stay special to me. Thankfully the ones in my town still exist, waiting to be visited and cooed over all over again.

When reading Pat Conroy's half memoir last year, *My Reading Life*, he praised a bookstore that meant a great deal to him, covering the bookstore owned in several chapters, discussing the people he met in the store, how he helped work in the store and would spend hours hanging out there, how it helps advance careers, and how that bookstore branched out through parties, word of mouth, and how it exists today. That got me thinking of other writer's experiences, which led to me ordering this book.

Each chapter has a drawing of a rendition of a bookstore mentioned by the author.

It opens on a promising note - Be still my heart...the first essay from Martha Ackmann, on The Odyssey Bookshop, brought not only the bookstore to life but its creators. Romeo, who took his tea at 4 and was obsessed with Middlemarch. The bookstore that started on fire, was rebuilt, and started on fire again, to be taken over by a daughter who kept it flourishing. The Phoenix effect. It comes alive in this essay - wish I could visit.

Some of these don't dwell on the charm of a specific bookstore, but instead take their chances to whip out a soapbox. Wendell Berry mentions not one bookstore but emphasizes the full magic of a book cannot be duplicated by reading a story on an impersonal screen. His quote matches my own view here: **"I still own books that have remained alive and dear in my thoughts since I was a boy, and a part of the life of each one is my memory of the bookstore where I bought it and of the bookseller who sold it to me."**

On a funny muse, Rick Bragg starts his essay by saying cats and bookstores go together like Peanut butter and Jelly but that he likes his bookstore withOUT cats, thank you very much! But it all ties in anyway, funny humor describing a favorite no-nonsense bookseller.

I had other notes that I jotted down while I slowly read this, but I can't find them. If I do one day, I'll add to this review, but overall it's a great book that contains interesting essays in it, mixed with some that are generic and impersonal. One or two essays is fine, but reading this many takes time as you can only take in so much at once. It's a good coffee table book to randomly open and browse.

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## Lawyer says

***My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Place to Browse, Read and Shop--The Literary Stalker's Ultimate Reference***

Perhaps you are among the "gently mad," a term coined by Nicholas A. Basbanes, the author of the magnificent book, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*.

Basbanes eloquently offers solace to those among us who suffer from that gentle illness. I take it as a comfort, because at times I am quite sure I have passed beyond the ranks of the merely gently mad. My thanks to my goodreads friend Jeff Keeten for introducing me to the works of Basbanes. An overview of this work is available at <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/79...> .

*A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion of Books, First Ed., First Prtg*

As I have frankly admitted elsewhere, I am a literary stalker. Harmless, of course. I'm a pacifist for the most part.

There are those whose works I must have. The copies of their works must be pristine, neither slanted or cocked. Nothing other than a first printing will do. I must meet the authors of these marvelous works. An impersonally signed edition simply will not do. I am somewhat snobbish in addition to having descended to the covert art of stalking. You may read of my exploits concerning my tracking of Clyde Edgerton here: <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/....>

*The Unsuspecting Clyde Edgerton*

Of course, there are far more subtler methods of obtaining the coveted signed edition--The Book Festival, The Book Tour, The uncertain order from an unfamiliar Bookseller on line, a rather less than comforting gambit. This leads to the oft mis-graded edition, the inscribed, rather than signed edition. I frankly do not care for a volume inscribed "For your birthday Betty, Best Wishes Renowned Author who has no idea in Hell who Betty is and is unlikely to share a slice of cake with said Betty. There is the tried and true method of relying on your goodreads friends to have your editions signed if you get there's signed. This has been the Sullivan/Keeten approach on occasion. But at the end of reasoning through all the methods considered more rational, one must resort to less conventional methods.

The inevitable conclusion is that we and our own beloved authors have only so much time on this earth. Time's winged chariot, and all that unpleasant business.

Then I found the ideal literary stalker's weapon, excuse me--reference source placed in my hands. Bless Ronald Rice, the editor of this especially useful and beautiful little book. It bears such an innocent and gentle appearance, too. Just look at it. Little would one realize that contained within the pages of this literary stalker's manifesto are eighty-four, yes, count them, essays by the poor unsuspecting authors revealing their favorite places to browse, read, and shop. Yes, the actual locations of these businesses are contained in this book. And these bookstores and their owners have a special place in the hearts of these writers. They show up there a lot. Yes, this is the ultimate stake out manual for those in search of the signed edition.

For you, oh fortunate reader, the bookstore of your favorite author could be in your own city. Or in a location within the distance of a brief drive. Or, you could hook up the GPS and set out on the ultimate quest. Eighty-four authors, eighty-four bookstores, eighty-four cities. Confess. You've always believed in the quest for the Holy Grail. Here's your ticket to ride.

Me, I have my eye on Purple Crow Books, Hillsborough, North Carolina. That happens to be the favorite books shop of Lee Smith, on whom I've had a crush since high school when she was a reporter at the Tuscaloosa News. I still consider her a most beautiful woman. And, by the way, Hillsborough happens to be the home of twenty-seven North Carolina authors. Well, I'm headed in that direction on December 21st,

2012. I'm on a quest.

*First you read the essay, then you google the store. Voila!*

*Why, Ms. Smith. Imagine meeting you here! Would you like a cup of tea? We met at Jake's in Homewood.  
Yes, you signed my copy of Fancy Strut*

Oh, I have my first signature. It is Rick Bragg, signature only, on the title page, purchased at his and my favorite bookstore, "The Alabama Booksmith," in Homewood, Alabama. And, it is my bookstore, too. I had my favorite bookseller, Jake Reiss, sign it, too. Consider having your favorite booksellers signing the sections on their marvelous shops. After all, what would we do without them, too?

This is a solid Five Star Reference for great bookstores. Keep this one in your suitcase as you travel. You just never know who you might meet.

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