Compiled by GRIZÉLL AZAR-LUXTON

I always find it fascinating to hear what other people read. And what better occasion than this time of the year when everything thankfully seems to be winding down and one has a bit more time on one’s hands to settle down with a good book. We approached a wide variety of people to share their best reads of 2010 with our readers. Note that the books need not have been published in 2010. Our sample range from editors, CEOs, book selectors through authors and politicians to columnists, and the result - a delight. Share with us what people enjoyed most in 2010 and if, like me, you are an inveterate bibliophile - add those titles that appeal to you to your ‘must read list before you die’. I’m sure most of you have one . . .

Helen Zille, Premier of the Western Cape

3. It’s our turn to eat: the story of a Kenyan whistleblower by Michela Wrong (Fourth Estate, 2010).

Brent Walters, HOD, Cultural Affairs & Sport

1. SuperFreakonomics (Penguin, 2010), is the ‘freakquel’ to Levitt and Dubner’s highly acclaimed Freakonomics. The book is a collection of vignettes asking questions which we do not often think about and take for granted. The book challenges conventional wisdom and implores us not to take things at face value, but to question the underlying evidence and assumptions we rely on to reach our conclusions even if such questioning is uncomfortable. To do this they use a combination of qualitative, statistical and economic analyses and have come up with some thought-provoking theories as to why things are the way they are.

Levitt and Dubner conclude that humans will only change their behaviour if the incentive is strong enough. For example, they question why so many people drive under the influence of alcohol when in the US alone 30% of all accidents are alcohol-related. They conclude that because not many drunk drivers actually get caught and punished, there is no incentive (in this case negative) to change behaviour.

Arguing that the simplest solutions to life’s problems are the most effective, the authors cite the example of Dr Ignaz Semmelweis, who, in the mid-19th century, after a statistical analysis of maternal deaths at childbirth, concluded that the single most important factor influencing infections and death rates was the matter of medical staff washing their hands frequently and not transferring germs. This single simple conclusion resulted in the saving of millions of lives and is a major factor in bringing down the maternal death rate from more than 450 per 100 000 births in the 19th century to just nine per 100 000 births in industrialised nations today.

In the period September 2001 to December 2001 the USA experienced a spike of 1000 extra traffic road accident deaths. The question was why? What theories could explain such a phenomenon? Using data and analyses from different sources Dubner and Levitt came to the startling conclusion that the spike in road deaths was an indirect result of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Citing the fact that people stopped flying resulting in increase of road usage - that per mile-driving is more dangerous than flying, that most of the increases in the death rate took place close to the attacks, that psychological studies showed an increase in alcohol abuse and post-traumatic stress after the attacks and that most of the fatalities were the result of drunken and / or reckless driving, they concluded that there was a linkage to the World Trade Centre attacks.

This book is filled with analyses and theories like the one above, ranging from topics like: Why you want your ER doctor to be a woman; Hurray for seatbelts and The worst month to have a baby through to politically unpalatable topics like: How the Endangered Species Act [actually] endangers species; Is global warming all its made out to be; The economics of prostitution and Why it’s unlucky to be born a female in India, and many more. SuperFreakonomics can be read again, again and again.
A must-read for any serious change agent, development specialist and manager:

**ERICH BUCHHAUS, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE**

Writing about your favourite book of the year is at most times daunting as usually many titles spring to mind. After some deliberation I decided to give my top vote to an animal story. Usually I am a bit reluctant to read anything about animals as there is often something rather nasty within, and it can end on a sad note. However, having read *Dewey: the small-town library cat that touched the world* by Vicki Myron (Hodder, 2008), I have now changed my mind. I have discovered that reading animal stories can offer the reader a better opportunity to understand their animal companions and can serve as inspirational literature at the same time.

A similar story is *Homer's Odyssey* by Gwen Cooper (Bantam, 2010). Here we have a young lady in her mid-twenties (having just broken up with her boyfriend), who, together with her two cats, Scarlett and Vashi, share accommodation with a girlfriend in Miami. Gwen’s veterinarian calls with a story about a three-week-old eyeless kitten that had been abandoned. It is love at first sight and she names him Homer after the Greek author of such classic titles as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. She ignores warnings from friends that this cat will be a problem and will never be as playful or independent as other cats. But this kitten (who nobody believed in) quickly grows into a tiny daredevil and a showdown with a burglar, this tender and poignant tale reveals his joy for life and love for Cooper. What is most touching is how his courageous spirit teaches Cooper and readers that there are no limits to love or ability. Through twelve years, six moves, several boyfriends and a breakup with her boyfriend, who, together with her two cats, Scarlett and Vashi, share accommodation with a girlfriend in Miami. Gwen’s veterinarian calls with a story about a three-week-old eyeless kitten that had been abandoned. It is love at first sight and she names him Homer after the Greek author of such classic titles as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. She ignores warnings from friends that this cat will be a problem and will never be as playful or independent as other cats. But this kitten (who nobody believed in) quickly grows into a tiny daredevil and a showdown with a burglar, this tender and poignant tale reveals his joy for life and love for Cooper. What is most touching is how his courageous spirit teaches Cooper and readers that there are no limits to love or ability. Through twelve years, six moves, several boyfriends and a showdown with a burglar, this tender and poignant tale reveals his joy for life and love for Cooper. What is most touching is how his courageous spirit teaches Cooper and readers that there are no limits to love or ability.

**LINDA NGALEKA, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE**

I have chosen Nokuzzola Mndende’s *African spiritual journey: rites of passage among the Xhosa speaking of South Africa* (Imangu Institute, 2006), a non-fiction title because it is a book about me, an African Xhosa-speaking child. It is about the misconceptions that I have and other misconceptions which I did not know I have. For example, I always thought that *imbeleko* and *ukuqiwuyu* mean the same thing. This book is for all the young and old African Xhosa-speaking people and even non-Xhosa-speaking who always wanted to know more about *amosiko*, the importance of the misconceptions, *intwasa* and the rites of passage. The subject is discussed in general terms and is not specific to a particular clan name. It is more of a detailed step-by-step guide to make us understand more about ourselves and to teach the younger generation about African religion and the rituals involved. When reading this book one senses that the author knows what she is writing about and has done research to substantiate her facts. She differentiates between what is *isiko* (ritual) and what is *izithetha* (tradition/custom). For example, the unveiling of a tombstone is *izithetha* (tradition/custom) and it is not a must while *isiko* and *ukubuyisa* are compulsory rituals. Some of the misunderstandings highlighted are the use of brandy when practicing a ritual, *imbeleko* vs *isiko lokuqaba*, *ilobola* vs bride price vs dowry, *igitha*, et cetera. The author argues that some of the English translations do not provide a true meaning of the African word, for example, ritual is not a true meaning of *isiko*, some of the words are not equivalent to any English word, for example, *lobola*, *umashwama*, *umgqabazo*, et cetera. This is a book that many people will want to read regardless of beliefs.

**NEVILLE ADONIS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: SUPPORT SERVICES, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE**

Due to my studies and new position at work, my life is so unusually busy and full nowadays, that I do not find the time to read books, but Nicholas Sparks’ *The last song* (Sphere, 2009) was actually really good! I made time to read it after a colleague of mine that knows my taste in reading recommended that I should read this special book. Now I know my weakness lies in tear-jerkers, both in books and films. Having heard the gist of it, I just had to read this book! When I started I could hardly put it down.

It’s about a girl who lived with her mom and little brother who was forced to visit her dad for the holidays. She was not very thrilled, because her dad had abandoned them when she was little. She felt hurt and betrayed by her father and wanted nothing to do with him. However, they shared a very special connection as they both loved music, and this is what eventually reunited father and daughter.

A heartwarming story written by the internationally best-selling American novelist, Nicholas Sparks, *The last song* captured me from the very first page. An easy-to-read book with a predictable formula that includes first love, illness and death, differences in social class, romance, family, self-discovery and suspense. It is an emotional story of the love between parent and child and the hurt felt when that love is taken away.

**NOMONDE NGQOBA, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE**

*Men, money and chocolate* by Menna van Praag (Hay House, 2009), is an inspirational book in the form of an autobiography. If you like books like *The alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, then you will enjoy this although
it’s written more for women. It is a story about Maya, a young woman who feels her life is in a rut and who does not have the courage to follow her dreams. She struggles to find love, as every time she thinks she has found a man, it always ends in disaster. Maya wanted to be a writer but her dreams were shattered when she had to leave her studies behind to look after her dying mother. She finds comfort by eating chocolate croissants, flapjacks and cocoa coffee from her coffee shop and this leaves her over-weight and unhappy. One morning she has a conversation with a stranger at her coffee shop and as a consequence she later begins a spiritual journey. This stranger is an elderly woman who embarks on ‘reading her inner feelings’. Maya is so ashamed of herself. The next day, she has a coffee shop and as a consequence she

PENDY GJERNING, LIBRARY ASSISTANT, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

Mary Ann Shaffer’s The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society (Bloomsbury, 2008) is sadly the author’s only book but what sheer delight it is. It is written in the form of letters between writer Juliet Ashton in London and one Dawsey Adams who is a member of the club in Guernsey. The club was set up in secret during the German Occupation and it is not long before Juliet begins to hear from other members and she discovers that the society is every bit as extraordinary as its name. Juliet eventually goes to Guernsey to find out more about the founding member, Elizabeth, who fell in love with a German officer; was sent away to a concentration camp and left her only child behind. As a friend of mine said, it may not be the most well-written book, but the characters are wonderful and it certainly gripped me right from the start.

The best day of the week is unpacking all the spanking new books, but made even better if, amongst them, is a gem of a children’s book. The modern children’s books are all wonderful but every now and then there is one that is truly ‘awesome’. I couldn’t wait to share Little Mouse’s big book of fears (Macmillan, 2007) by Emily Gravett with my colleagues, Gerda and Sandi, who, like myself, love them. This is about how to overcome your phobias and I think every adult should read it. The illustrations are wonderful and every single word must be read. And, when you come to the end, start again and really savour it.

SABRINA GOSLING, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINCIAL LIBRARY SERVICE

When asked about the book I enjoyed the most this year my immediate response was: The girl with the dragon tattoo (Maclehose P., 2008) by Stieg Larsson - the first crime thriller in Larsson’s wonderful Millennium trilogy. But so much has already been written about it that I don’t think there’s anything I can add, except to say how thoroughly entertained I was and to recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone who hasn’t yet read it.

What I’ve selected instead are two books, both of which have youthful narrators.

One I’ll mention briefly at the end, the other is something I read a couple of weeks ago and haven’t been able to get out of my head. It is "Room, a powerful and utterly memorable novel by Emma Donoghue (Picador, 2010).

The story opens on the morning of Jack’s birthday and I was hooked from the very first lines.

‘Today I’m five. I was four last night going to sleep in Wardrobe, but when I wake up in Bed in the dark I’m changed to five, abracadabra.’

The story is told in a present-tense, first-person narrative by Jack. Everything we know, we learn from him – from his perspective, through a child’s eyes and perceptions. The book is beautifully written and Jack’s voice is funny, original and authentic. ‘Jack’s voice is one of the pure triumphs of the novel; in him, she has invented a child narrator who is one of the most engaging in years - his voice is so pervasive I could hear him chatting away during the day when I wasn’t reading the book.’ Donoghue uses the slow-reveal style to good effect here, gradually allowing the reader to learn more as Jack learns more. He and his mother (Ma) live in an 11-square-foot, soundproof, escape-proof shed with a metal door and no windows, only a skylight. We learn that she was a 19-year-old college student when she was abducted seven years before and has been a prisoner ever since. They have very little but they do have some books and a TV. The abductor (Old Nick) visits every night at nine as Jack sleeps out of sight in the cupboard.

Don’t be mistaken. This may sound depressing but it truly isn’t. Donoghue is always in control of her subject; she has managed to make the story moving and compelling, but with such a lightness of touch and vivid evocation of a mother’s love for her child, that it is not depressing. It is sometimes claustrophobic, even harrowing, but there is always a feeling of hope, and the love between Ma and Jack, which is central to the story, pervades the whole atmosphere of the novel. Room is all that Jack knows – almost everything else is fantasy to him. Somehow, within the confines of this small space, his young mother has managed to make his life happy and his days full. As Jack says: ‘We have thousands of things to do every morning . . .’

This really is a remarkable novel. Donoghue says the case of Elisabeth Fritzl sparked her story. In Room she decided to focus less on a woman imprisoned like this and more on the child born into long-term confinement and to explore the problems of bringing up a child within such a restricted environment. With great imagination she describes the daily tedium of living like this - not just for days or weeks, but for years and years. She also looks at the difficulty of re-entry into the ordinary world. For the mother it is freedom, but for the child the outside world is experienced very differently. It may be exciting and filled with opportunity but
it is also loud and strange and overwhelming - far removed from the familiar security of his home, Room.

Emma Donoghue handles her subject with empathy and sensitivity. She has crafted a fine novel here. It, deservedly, has been shortlisted for a number of literary awards. It lost out on the Man Booker but may still win some others. I can strongly recommend Room. It is riveting and, I think, best read in one sitting.

The second book that I’ll briefly mention here is something I re-read early this year to refresh my memory before starting the sequel. It is the multi-award-winning *The knife of never letting go* by Patrick Ness (Walker, 2008), the first novel in the Chaos walking trilogy. This was his first book for young adults and is an absolute stunner. It also has amazing cross-over appeal. A 13-year-old boy I know was given it and then had to fight off his 40-something mother to finish reading it - after which it was passed around among both his and her friends. This is something not to be missed - do give it a try.

**STANLEY JONCK, BOEKKEURDER, PROVINSIALE BIBLIOTEKDiENS**

My gunstelingboek tot nou toe was Deon Meyer se *13 uur* (Human, 2008). Ek het dit sô geniet dat dit voel of ek dit net gister klaar gelees het. Maar ek kan nie by een boek bly nie, so die redakteur moet my maar vergewe . . . Vanjaar (2010) se uitstaande boeke was Mariël Le Roux se *Die naamlose* (Tafelberg, 2010), (naaswenner in Sanlam se Groot Romanwedstryd 2010) en Anchen Troskie se *Die besoeker* (Kwela, 2010), met as tema, ‘n sekeretesse by ’n spogskool wat dwelms aan rykmanskinders verkoop, en hoe tiener oor dwelmsgebruik voel - so skokkend, en tog ‘n realiteit. Marion Erskine se *Donatello en Volkies* (Tafelberg, 2010), môes ek net lees omdat dit Afrikaans chick-lit-like uit is, ’n manlike skrywer se pen is - met hoofkarakters wat in ‘n internetsietykserk wat ontmoot en gesels! Ander gunstelinge was Leon Van Nierop se *Vuurvreter* (Lapa, 2010), Marietjie Van Rooyen se *Huis teen die skuinste* en Annelie Botes se *Duiwelsbrood en ander kort en lang stories* (Lapa, 2010). Wat my dan bring by die drie titels van hierdie jaar wat so ‘n kortkoppie bo die ander uitstaan:

*Tabernakel* (Tafelberg, 2010) deur Annelie Botes het my toe laat omkrul van plezier. Dis *Botes-op-haar-beste* in haar meerthuiskompleks in North Riding, Port Elizabeth, waarin sy op ’n heerlike gestreslentebreukie wat sy aanvanklik vir die koerant aangepak het, chronologies gerangskik het om ‘n autobiografiëse geheel te vorm. Botes sê hierdie *kindjie van haar aard na Broodsonde*.

Sarah Lotz se *Tooth and nailed* (Penguin Bks., 2010) was net so lekker. Dit is die Kapenaar, Lotz, se derde boek na *Pompidou posse en Exhibit A* en is *’n humoristiese boek wat in die Suid-Afrikaanse regs-wêreld afspeel - meestal in Kaapstad*. Die regsadviseur, Georgie Allen en sy Skotse vriend, advokaat Patrick McLennan (oftewel die Poison Dwarf), is vasbeslote om geregtigheid te laat seëvier. Hulle bemoei hulle hier met drie sake: Georgie se broer word aangekla van nalatigheid toe ’n klient se seun deur ’n hiëna aangeval word tydens ’n wildtoer in Botswana op ’n wildplaas wat hy bestuur. Georgie is otomaties saam in die moeilikheid, want hy het borg gestaan vir sy broer om die besigheid op die been te bring. Dan is daar die saak van ’n promiskueuse profesor wat afgepers word, en wat Georgie se geskeide vrou, The Witch, aan hom toevertrou het. En laatsens is daar die saak van Suid-Afrika se eerste gay egskeiding - met ’n baie manlike Amerikaanse miljoenêr wat deur sy lewensmaat beding word. Die oënskynlik perfekte Shane han-teer die saak onder Georgie se toesig. Shane is net te goed om waar te wees en net mooi die teernoorgestelde van Georgie in baie opsigte - hy gaan getrou na die gimnasium, dra smaakvolle klere, is betrokke by allerhande bewondererswaardige sake, is altyd in beheer van al sy sake en is boonop aantreklik en suksesvol! Arme Georgie se liefdeslewe is betreurenswaardig en hy raak betrokke by The Witch se beeldskone assistent - sy sal hom afslag as sy dit moet uitvind! En dan is daar Exhibit A, die basterbrak met *’n karakter van sy eie*, wat drals saam met Georgie gaan - selfs tydens besigheidsure! Heerlike karakters, interessante sake wat opgelos moet word en *’n boeiende skryfstyl*. Ek is amptelik *’n Lotz-aanhanger!*

Kop-aan-kop hiermee is Riana Mouton se *Spoorloos* (Lapa, 2010). Mouton is *’n vroulike Suid-Afrikaanse spurenskrywer* en woon tans saam met haar man en twee seuns in Nieu-Seeland. *Sy skryf in die tradisie van lan Rankin, Deon Meyer, Faye Kellerمان, Patricia Cornwell en Nancy Taylor Rosenberg*. Haar debuut, *Reuk van die dood*, het in 2009 die kortlys van die ATKV Woordevoertjies vir spanningsfiksie ge-haal. Die hoofkarakter in *Spoorloos* is Alex Cloete. Hy is rigtingloos en kwaad vir die lewe as gevolg van al die onreg wat hy moes deur-maak, teleurstellings wat hy beleef het en die armmansbestaan wat hy as gevolg hiervan voer. *Sy opvlieënde humeur; aggressiewe houding en geweldadige lewe toe hy in die weermag was, maak sake ook glad nie makliker nie. Sy geliefde seun, Zander, woon by sy ma, Mercia, ver van hom af. Maar toe Mercia onder verdagte omstandighede sterf, verdwyn Zander spoorloos. Eers dink almal dat hy dood is, maar toe word dit duidelik dat hy ontvoer is en Alex voel rasend en magteloos hieroor - sy seun is vir hom alles in die lewe. Mouton weef *’n spanningslyn wat my nie die boek wou laat neersit nie en haar karakterbeelding is oortuigend. Alex as karakter is iemand met wie ek simpatie het, maar terselfdertyd ook bewonder. Hy tree lojaal en opoff erend op teenoor sy geliefde, word baie menslik uitgebeeld en het die opleiding, voorkoms en verdigingsvermoëns wat ek hom ben. Sy aangename verrassing aan die einde van die boek kom hom een-honderd persent toe.*

**THERESA SASS, BOOK SELECTOR, PROVINSIALE LIBRARY SERVICE**

What greeted me in *The intimate ape: orangutans and the secret life of a vanishing species* (Citadel P, 2010) by Shawn Thompson is how distinct, how different, how almost human orangutans are. Also that some people are so committed to the cause of the orangutans that they choose to live in isolation away from civilization in a country where they don’t understand the language or the culture.

In *The intimate ape*, journalist Shawn Thompson explores the lives of orangutans through the lives of the people who know them best. They are the scientists making discoveries in Borneo and Sumatra, the conservationists fighting to save the orangutans and the rainforest, the zoo keepers caring for orangutans and the volunteers who help to save the lives of these animals.
The author takes us on the journey to the rainforest; to the different camps where people study and take care of animals that were injured by loggers and hunters, orangutans that were captured and kept in confinement, and how they try to rehabilitate these animals. The practical and reasonable thing is to keep the animals in the camps for at least a month before releasing them in the forest, but the author noticed how some scientists get so attached to some animals that they keep them for longer than necessary; for instance, some primatologists and scientists will refer to the orangutans by name and point out that they’ve adopted ‘Princess’ and raised her since she was a baby and that the animal assumes that he or she is the actual parent.

Thompson reveals the emotional and intellectual lives of the orangutans. We meet Zurich van Schaik who discovered that orangutans make what appear to be leaf dolls that they take to bed with them, just as a human would. Some of the rainforest local women even breast-feed infants whose parents had been killed by loggers and hunters. Van Schaik also told how one animal came to the rescue of a woman caregiver whom loggers wanted to attack while alone in the forest. In one of the chapters we meet an orangutan that was raised by a sailor and who would always look for cigarettes and alcohol. One scientist taught sign language to one animal and later they could have a two way conversation.

We also read about the primatologist Biruté Galdikas who discovered through her studies how mother orangutans, like human mothers, are indulgent, patient and compassionate. The young will stay with their mother even after a sibling is born. Orangutan females will also adopt young orphans. The scientist tells how orangutans that have been released from the camps will bring injured orangutans to the camps for treatment. The message that she gets across is that humans can’t just go and try to make a connection with these animals. They will make the connection when they are ready, and then only on their terms.

There are many comparisons to the ways that humans and orangutans behave, but according to the author the reason why he wrote this book is because the general population does not realise what orangutans are and that they are much closer to extinction than gorillas and chimpanzees. The habitat of orangutans is being destroyed in Borneo and Sumatra by the palm oil plantations, hunters, and by logging for timber. He makes it clear that in order to save orangutans, we will have to save the rainforest.

Learning more about orangutans from experts, scientists, conservationists and their personal views on how to work with these animals was definitely interesting. This book is really worth reading as it gives one a unique insight into the threatened lives of orangutans and adds to our understanding of their world.

FRANCOIS VERSTER, ARGYARIS, MEDIA24

‘n Boek is soos ‘n kuiergas wat ‘n vriend kan word. Veral op die regte tyd. Om ‘n uitstaande boek te kies bly dus ‘n persoonlike keuse en vanjaar; met permissie, kies ek PG du Plessis se bundle (baie) kort skrifgewilde 120+ sommer-stories (Lapa, 2010). Dié stories se onvergetelike hoofkarakters bied ure se plesier, met die bekendste van die ensemble-Koopseriestories se beswaarde Genis en die oopbek-Pietersetjies, vir my die beste. Die kroegvlieë van Hier sit die manne en die delwers en opdrifskels van Tussen die nieue het hulle eie bekoring, maar dis dieselfde menslike swakhede wat al dié stories - en ons ook daaraan - saambind.

Skete en sondes, soms uitgelê deur Satan self (op huisbesoek?), suggereer dat ons die Paradys nooit verdien het nie. Gelukkig kan ons nog daaroor lag. Al is dit meesal net met die voortdurende...
**Yvonne Beters, nasionale redakteur, by**

Roberto Bolano se *Last evening on earth* (Harvill Secker, 2007) is al vir ‘n rukkie op die rak, maar ek het dit vanjaar eers gelees. Sy stories oor randfigure, mindere skrywers, vergete siele en, soos Danie Marais dit sou stel, skadubokser het my geraak op maniere wat ek nie eens noodwendig begrip nie. Ek is skoon verliep op die boek.

**Dr Riana Scheepers, skrywer, desent**

Ek het gelees Isabel Allende se *Island beneath the sea* (Fourth Estate, 2010). Hierdie bespreking is ‘n verwerking van *resenies wat ek vir Die Burger gelewer het.

Sedert haar merkwaardige debuut, *House of the spirits* (Corgi, 1993), het Allende ‘n groot aantal publikasies gelever: kortverhale, kosverhale, autobiografiese romans, jeugliteratuur; en - myn insiens haar forté - historiese romans. Sy word wêreldwyd bekroon vir haar werk, maar ook striemend gekriseer; onder meer deur Harold Bloom, Gabriel Marquez en Roberto Bolaño. Die formidabile merene se beswaar is onder meer dat Allende ‘n ‘skryfmagje’ is, dat sy stof herinner aan ‘n bloedloos sterwende, dat al haar skryfwerk saam salig vergeet kan word. Mmm ... ek wonder wie op aarde die geeste en die groenharies van *House of the spirits* kan vergeet? En nie verniet nie word sy vergelyk met einste Marquez as beoefenaar van die magiese realisme.

Allende se nuutste roman, *Island beneath the sea* (Fourth Estate, 2010) (oorspronklik La Isla Bajo el Mar) is, tot my groot vreugde, weer ‘n historiese roman. En wat ‘n allegorische verhaal is dit nie! Dit is ‘n kompleks-verweefde intrigue met ‘n magdom karakters, ook histories herkenbare karakters, wat hoofsaaklik in twee tyd-ruimtes ontvou. Die eerste deel, vanaf 1770 tot 1793, speel af op die Franse kolonie Saint-Domingue (die geteisterde Haïti) en vertel die verhaal van die suikerplantasies, die soet goud van die agtiende eeu, en hoe die lewe, die groote stuk geskiedenis van ’n land en sy mense vertel.

’n Boek wat my groot plezier verskaf het, is André le Roux se *Kar sa toer julle vet wat*? Hoe mans se koppe werk (indien wel) (Tafelberg, 2010).

Dit is ‘n gids oor menslike liefdesverhoudings en die wetenskaplike ontluistering van mites (48 in totaal!) wat deur die jare ontstaan het oor die verhouding tussen man en vrou. Soos, byvoorbeeld, dat alle mans van groot borste hou. Verkeerd! Mans hou van borste, of dit nou groot of klein, oud of jonk is. Punt.

Wat die boek ‘n treffer maak, is nie noodwendig omdat die wetenskaplike feite en die jongste navorsingresultate in plek is nie, maar omdat Le Roux se aanslag so eerlik, toeganklik en menslik-realisties is. Hy beskryf nie goed wat in Amerika of Europa gebeur nie, hy skryf oor my huis en sy dinge, of daardie huis in Smallstreet 23, Ventersdorp, of in Kareeslot, Oranjekruis. Dit en dit alles gaan gepaard met hoop, hope (Afrikaanse) humor. G’n mens wat dié boek lees, gaan onder die diep en swaar indruk wees dat hy iets ‘leer’ nie, hy (en sy) gaan lees omdat dit *neesavontuur* is wat verskie kiere genre’s omsluit: drama uit die booste rake met die bonus van vonkelende dialoog en voetreflikse spanningslyn en die gepaardgaande intriges; poësie met stil en innige oomblikke.

’n Voorsmakie van die humoristiese aanslag: Die skrywer beskryf dit wat gebeur met ‘n man as die middeljarekrise hom tref? Hy begin dek: Is die vrou met wie ek getroud is nog dieselfde een op wie ek verlief geraak het? Sommige kennis meen dié is eeu van die dinge wat aanleiding gee tot ‘n man se middeljarekrise. Hy moet nou iemand gaan soek wat nog vrugbaar is om sy gene rond te strooi en dan gaan spring hy op die buurvrou, Lientjie van Loeriesfontein, se matras. Met haar tussenin.” (p. 234.)

In hierdie gids word direk en sonder doekies omdraai gepraat oor romantiek en Hoe mans se koppe werk (indien wel) (Tafelberg, 2010).

As jy nié plesier uit Kan die boek wat my groot plesier verskaf het, is André le Roux se *Kar sa toer julle vet wat*? Hoe mans se koppe werk (indien wel) (Tafelberg, 2010).

As jy nié plesier uit *Parrot and Olivier in America* (Faber, 2010). Dit is ‘n gids oor menslike liefdesverhoudings en die wetenskaplike ontluistering van mites (48 in totaal!) wat deur die jare ontstaan het oor die verhouding tussen man en vrou. Soos, byvoorbeeld, dat alle mans van groot borste hou. Verkeerd! Mans hou van borste, of dit nou groot of klein, oud of jonk is. Punt.

Wat die boek ‘n treffer maak, is nie noodwendig omdat die wetenskaplike feite en die jongste navorsingresultate in plek is nie, maar omdat Le Roux se aanslag so eerlik, toeganklik en menslik-realisties is. Hy beskryf nie goed wat in Amerika of Europa gebeur nie, hy skryf oor my huis en sy dinge, of daardie huis in Smallstreet 23, Ventersdorp, of in Kareeslot, Oranjekruis. Dit en dit alles gaan gepaard met hoop, hope (Afrikaanse) humor. G’n mens wat dié boek lees, gaan onder die diep en swaar indruk wees dat hy iets ‘leer’ nie, hy (en sy) gaan lees omdat dit *neesavontuur* is wat verskie kiere genre’s omsluit: drama uit die booste rake met die bonus van vonkelende dialoog en voetreflikse spanningslyn en die gepaardgaande intriges; poësie met stil en innige oomblikke.

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In hierdie gids word direk en sonder doekies omdraai gepraat oor seks, slaweliet en skei. Ook oor woede, ontrou en die waarde van humor in die huwelik. Ook oor die vyftien onsbaarde dinge wat jy jou kind moet leer.

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**Su Birch, CEO, Wines of South Africa**

All of Peter Carey’s books are a delight to read so I am always excited when a new one is published, like *Parrot and Olivier in America* (Faber, 2010). This book contrasts the life of a sheltered French nobleman, Olivier; with Parrot, the hardened English adventurier who...
travel together to America in the late 1700s. The novel may have been inspired by Alexis de Tocqueville’s travels through America, and it is full of insights into politics, love, life and destiny written with wry humour.

Andrea Levy’s novel, *The long song* (Headline, 2010) is set in Jamaica and is the story of the slaves who worked in the plantations and what happened when slavery was abolished. It is a riveting tale of one woman’s survival and triumph and one to inspire all women today.

The *lacuna* (Faber, 2009) by Barbara Kingsolver moves between the tempestuous lives of the Mexican artists Frieda Kahlo and Diego Riviera, and America in the 1950s when the McCarthy witch-hunts were raging. It is a gripping, sad story.

I had read one of the books in *The regeneration trilogy* by Pat Barker, *The ghost road* (Viking, 1995) many moons ago, and was very pleased to find the set in a second-hand bookshop. These are stories about the horror of the First World War and the traumas suffered by the men who fought in it. They are beautifully written and make you understand the folly of war, the stupidity of the class system, but also how gentle, caring people such as the army psychologist can make a difference.

**Michael Jordaan, CEO, First National Bank (and a wine farmer)**


I have also read the majority of the Stieg Larsson books, but my favourite is probably *The big short* given the significance it has in business and innovation.

**Brian Joss, News Editor, Cape Community Newspapers**

Of the many books that have landed on my desk for review this past year, which has been a good one for South African authors, I have chosen four that I enjoyed for very different reasons. Not because they are the best books but because I found them entertaining, gripping, educational and most readable.

In no particular order is: Mike Nicol’s *Killer Country* published by Umuzi, 2010. It is the Glencairn author’s second book in the so-called Revenge trilogy. The first was *Payback* (Umuzi, 2008) where we first met the two ex-MK operatives Mace Bishop and Pylon Buso, who live in Cape Town and own a VIP security service.

Nicol is anything but politically correct as he exposes the underbelly of contemporary South Africa and he has the uncanny knack of taking the reader into the heart of the action with a few well-chosen words and staccato phrases. The action never lets up, and though he told me in an interview he has never read a Mickey Spillane book, his style recalls that of the great American thriller writer; only with a definite South African flavour. The third book is *Dark heart* (Umuzi, 2011) and I for one can’t wait to read it when it is published early next year.

The other book I enjoyed a lot was *Trinity on air* (Ball, 2010) by Johannesburg writer; Fiona Snyckers. It is a sequel to *Trinity rising* (Ball, 2008) and the protagonist is Trinity Luhabe, daughter of a multi-millionaire mining magnate Abel Luhabe. *Trinity rising* was about her life and love at Rhodes University and it was one big social whirl. She managed, barely, to get her BA (what else) and took a gap year: Now she’s back home in Sandton working as a waitress in a restaurant. Her life is perfect, almost, but her dream is to become a radio journalist. She gets a job by default, mainly because of the Luhabe connection. She starts on the traffic desk, is promoted to news and lands up in all sorts of scrapes, but in the end it all comes right. It is a light-hearted read but Snyckers has captured the bathos and pathos of Trinity’s life just right.

Next on the list is *Tooth and nailed* (Penguin, 2010) by another Cape Town author; Sarah Lotz. Again it is a sequel to *Exhibit A* (Penguin, 2009), her first book in the series, and there are more to come, judging by the carrot at the end of *Tooth and nailed*. It is about a down and out Cape Town lawyer; Georgie Allan, his scruffy township dog called Exhibit A, and his Scottish sidekick Advocate Patrick McLennan, better known as the Poison Dwarf and the terror of the High Court.

In *Exhibit A*, the pair of them rescue a woman who was raped in a police cell in a remote Karoo town. In *Tooth and nailed*, Georgie’s brother Greg who runs wildlife safaris in Botswana, is in deep trouble after a hyena mauled a client’s son and left him blind. Georgie’s got a lot to lose as he signed surety for Greg’s business. In between Georgie looks for love on the Internet and he and Patrick have to discover why a professor is being blackmailed over a student’s apparent suicide. There are all sorts of weird and whacky characters, including Exhibit A who has a personality all his own. Lotz tells her story with lashings of humour and at times you’ll laugh out loud, but there is a serious side to her tale. It is biting, satirical comment on our justice system. I really enjoyed it.

The other book on my list is *Masked raiders* (Zebra Press, 2010), Charles van Onselen’s study of Irish banditry in South Africa in 1880-1899. It is an intriguing story of a band of Irish desperados who travelled across Southern Africa, wreaking havoc and mayhem wherever they went, to the extent of pillaging the still burgeoning mining camp of Johannesburg. Although Van Onselen’s book reads like a Boy’s Own adventure with shoot-outs, and cash-in-transit heists (before the age of the armoured truck), it has echoes of the American wild west; it is as South African as biltong. It is a serious social study on a little-known piece of history. And though it is written by an academic it is not a dry-as-dust tome and will keep you riveted from page one.

**Willemien Bruummer, Verslaggewer, Die Burger**

This year I was a fellow of the Aids and the Media Project, run by Wits University and Annova Health, in which I had to write a series of stories on HIV and masculinity. Of all the books and articles I read, *Three-letter plague* (Ball, 2008) by Jonny Steinberg, gave me the most insight and empathy into more traditional communities ravaged by HIV. In this story Steinberg befriends Sizwe, a young local man who runs a spaza shop, who refuses to be tested for Aids despite the existence of a well-run testing and anti-retroviral programme. It is this apparent illogic
that I also battled with. Eventually, like Steinberg I had to look within myself for the answers. If you are interested in unraveling the anthropological riddles of HIV and why this virus seems to defy scientific knowledge - this is the book you should read.

Etienne van Heerden se jongste meesterstuk, 30 nagte in Amsterdam (Tafelberg, 2008), is ‘n Ratanga Junction rollercoaster, wat hom, net soos sy karakter Tante Zan, vervoer het na ‘Die Agste Kleur’. Die asemlose, seksverlaaiende Tante Zan is volgens die skrywer André le Roux ‘een van die heerlikste karakters wat die Afrikaanse letterkunde soos ’n warrelwind ingewaai het’. Op die voorraad van ’n epileptiese toeval verdwaal die tante in haar woorde en dis dan wanneer ‘Die Kleur’ oor als kom, soos sepia oor ’n foto.

Haar anti-roman Asbesmiddag (Tafelberg, 2007) wou Van Heerden ‘verkere aan die voete kry en vir die tegnieke van romanskryf stoornis’: Naas Toorberg (Tafelberg, 1986) is dit na my mening sy beste roman tot nog toe.

The Millennium trilogy: The girl with the dragon tattoo (Maclehose P., 2008), The girl who played with fire (Maclehose P., 2009) and The girl who kicked the hornet’s nest (Maclehose P., 2009) by Stieg Larsson.

I never thought that I’d read crime fiction, but after page 100 of The girl with the dragon tattoo I was hooked, a Larsson addict, unable to devote my time to anything else. If Larsson was still alive, he should have been charged formally for causing his readers severe sleep deprivation.

Helena Gunter se Op ’n plaas in Afrika (Human, 2007) is een van die boeke wat my vanjaar die meeste leesgenoot verskaf het. Ons almal is vertrou met die traditionele plaasroman in Afrikaans. Gunter wys egter wat onder die afgedopte verf van die ou plaaslike aangaan. Sy skryf dieper as die skynbare idyll van die Afrikaanse plaaslike leefstyl, wat onderdie oënskynlik normale, gewone familielewew, die onhulde, maar die onhulde aanwezig is.

Dis nie verniet dat die bevroedende skrywer Jeanne Goosen skryf: ‘Swartskaap (Kwela, 2009) deur Odette Schoeman is die eerste Afrikaanse roman wat my aan’t huil haf nie. Met hierdie debuutroman besef jy baie die ongelukkige idilie van lewe op ’n plaas in Afrika. Die skrywer slaag daarin om sy leesers te suggereer dat onder die oënskynlik normale, gewone familielewew, die onhulde aanwezig is.

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Riki Roos, besigheidsbestuurder, leserkrim

Ray Kluin se “nVrou gaan dokter toe” (Tafelberg, 2010).

’n Voorafwaarskuwing is dalk nodig: die boek is ‘n vertoon van een van dié vertellerse wat soos die oënskynlik normale, gewone familielewew, die onhulde aanwezig is. Die skrywer sketse dié lewe soos dit hom probeer beeld. Met hierdie debuutroman besef jy baie die ongelukkige idilie van lewe op ’n plaas in Afrika. Die skrywer slaag daarin om sy leesers te suggereer dat onder die oënskynlik normale, gewone familielewew, die onhulde aanwezig is. Die skrywer slaag daarin om sy leesers te suggereer dat onder die oënskynlik normale, gewone familielewew, die onhulde aanwezig is.

John Scott, Columnist, Cape Times

None of my best reads of 2010 were books published this year. I re-read a lot of my esoteric books, and among those I re-read this year was book 1 I i in the Kryon series channelled by Lee Carroll and entitled Lifting the veil (The Kryon Writings Inc, 2007) (The New Energy Apocalypse), Emmanuel’s Book 2, *The choice for love* (Bantam Bks., 1989), channelled by Pat Rodegast, which is an old favourite and the second in a series of three, and *Answers* (Mother Meera, Ashram, 2008), by Mother Meera, an Indian mystic living in Germany where she gives ‘darshan’, or personal blessings. I enjoyed Shiva Naipaul’s *North of South* (Simon & Schuster; 1979) for the first time, a comic, intimate documentary on his travels through Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia in the late 1970s.

My wife and I travelled through Israel for three weeks in September and while there I bought two books that gave a compelling insight into life both in Israel itself and the West Bank. David Grossman, Israeli-born, writes with huge sensitivity of the 10 years beginning in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Agreements and ending with the second year of Intifada. His book is titled Death as a way of life: dispatches from Jerusalem (Bloomsbury Publ., 2003). On the other side of the fence or wall, literally, Suad Amiry, Jordanian-born and married to a Palestinian, writes from Ramallah about the tragic absurdities of life there under the comic title *Sharon and my mother-in-law: Ramallah diaries* (Pantheon, 2005). She makes you want to laugh and cry at the same time. I couldn’t have chosen two better books to illustrate the dichotomy of the Middle East dilemma.

Pieter Hugo, Assistant Director: Metropole Control Area, Provincial Library Service

Of all the books I have read in 2010 the very first one still stands out as the best. I have read other books that are better written, page-turners that keep you awake at night, books that have won prizes, but none of them comes near The calling of Katie Makanya. (D. Philip, 1997) by Margaret McCord.

The calling of Katie Makanya has an unassailable advantage over most other books. It is not merely a good book or a wonderful story. It is a good book because it is the wonderful true story of a most remarkable woman. Katie Makanya changes your life and becomes part of your soul. Yes, it is one of those rare books that becomes part of you, part of your frame of reference.

Your obvious question is: ‘Who is Katie Makanya?’ The obvious answer is that you would never have heard of her if you have not read the book, because Katie was a nobody. But what a nobody! She was born in the Eastern Cape and grew up in Kimberley. As a young woman and a member of a black choir, she went on an extended tour of England.
So ‘n jaar of twee gelede is ‘n vorige boek van haar, 2010 gelees het nie, maar dat ek dit geweldig geniet het, is ongetwyfeld. Ek sal nie my kop op ‘n blok sit dat dit die beste boek was wat ek in Anderkant Pontenilo (Tafelberg, 2009).

Irma Joubert se Anderkant Pontenillo (Tafelberg, 2009).

Ek sal nie my kop op ‘n blok sit dat dit die beste boek was wat ek in 2010 gelees het nie, maar dat ek dit geweldig geniet het, is ongetwyfeld. So ‘n jaar of twee gelede is ‘n vorige boek van haar. Tussen stasies