

Overheard in the Souk the grapevine

● The Ministry of Interior website has finally been revamped and although it still needs some work, at least it no longer looks like it was done by an intern using Microsoft Frontpage. The biggest change other than the visual appearance is the ability to check your traffic fines right from the front page (scroll down). That's probably the most used feature on the website and so makes sense to have it on the main page.

I actually hadn't checked mine in ages and just did and found 5 violations! I used to get an SMS telling me I had violations but I guess the SMS feature isn't working. Sucks.

(Source: Posted by Mark, 2:48am, Sept 4, 2019)

● Up until yesterday, I had never been to the Tareq Rajab Museums. I'm aware that's odd considering I've been blogging about things to do and places to visit in Kuwait for 15 years now, but for some reason, I never thought of passing by the museums until yesterday. There are two Tareq Rajab museums, the Tareq Rajab Museum of Islamic Art and the main Tareq Rajab Museum, both located in Jabriya and are close to each other.

Tareq Rajab Museum of Islamic Art
This first museum is located right across from the New English School. I actually wasn't aware there were two museums

until I got there using Google Maps. I typed Tareq Rajab in Google Maps and clicked on the first result but when I got there it didn't look like the museum I had driven by before. So I asked security about it he told me that was the other museum located down the block. This museum focused on Islamic art and housed an extensive collection of Islamic calligraphy, old Korans and the famous Ka'aba coverings.

Although the building looks large from the outside, the museum itself wasn't that big and could be covered in under 30 minutes. Opening hours are Saturday to Thursday 9AM to 12PM and 4PM to 7PM. While on Fridays the museum is open from 9AM to 12PM. I'd call (25317358) and double-check before heading there though since yesterday the museums were open till 1PM and not 12PM. Here is the location on Google Maps. The entrance fee is KD2.

Tareq Rajab Museum
After quickly going through the Islamic Art Museum I got in my car and drove down the block to the main museum. Although the building on the outside isn't as impressive as the Islamic Art Museum, once you walk down into the basement where the museum is located, you'll quickly realize this museum is much bigger with a lot more things on display (over 10,000 pieces on display according to their website).

The museum is divided into two areas.

The first area contains calligraphy, manuscripts, miniatures, ceramics, metalwork, glass and jade, wood and stone-carvings. The second area contains objects which were produced in the Islamic world during the last 250 years including costumes, textiles, jewelry, weapons, and musical instruments.

I loved this museum since there were so many things to check out and they were all displayed pretty nicely. I was not expecting it to be this organized or this big, so I was really surprised and also kind of disappointed in myself that it took me this long to visit it.

Like the Islamic Museum, the opening hours to this museum is from Saturday to Thursday 9AM to 12PM and then from 4PM to 7PM. Fridays the museum is also open from 9AM to 12PM. Here is the location on Google Maps. The entrance fee is KD2.

(Source: Posted by Mark, 248am.com, Sept 1, 2019)

● A few weeks ago I reviewed the Chevrolet Bolt EV which is the first fully electric car that's being sold in Kuwait and yesterday, a friend sent me the pictures. It seems that Alghanim will be setting up electric charging stations around Kuwait and the one above is located in the Hamra Tower parking lot. This should help make the Bolt a more desirable and practical vehicle.

(Source: Posted by Mark, 248am.com, Aug 26, 2019)

com, Aug 26, 2019)

● The decision was taken by the Assistant Undersecretary for Consumer Protection and Control at the Ministry of Commerce to ban imports because the product contains pig gelatin.

The authority stressed the gum products of all kinds are not suitable for people who follow halal food because they contain pig gelatin.

It's the same reason why we can't get Lucky Charms and Count Chocula cereal in Kuwait anymore. From what I've been told, most gelatin is pig gelatin and if this rule was actually properly enforced, a lot more products would disappear from our supermarket shelves. If you want Ice Breakers you need to stock up on them ASAP before they completely disappear from the market.

(Source: Posted by Mark, 248am.com, Aug 26, 2019)

● Russell Peters, the popular comedian and actor will be coming to Kuwait next month for a one-night comedy event. He was previously set to come in June but for some reason that show never materialized, this time around it looks like it's really happening. Tickets go on sale in a couple of hours (at 10AM) and will probably sell out quickly. The last time Russell Peters

was in Kuwait was back in 2016.

(Source: Posted by Mark, 2:48am, Sept 3, 2019)

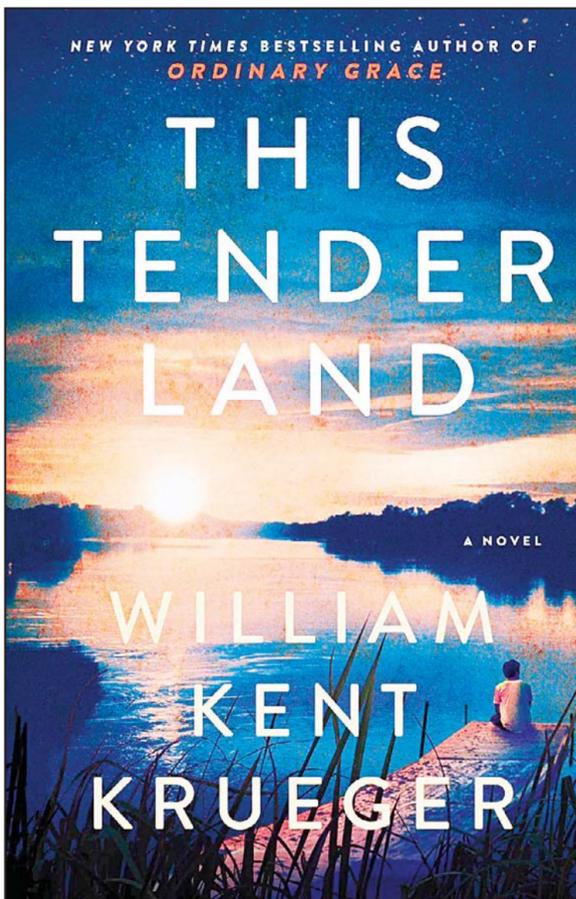
● The Kuwait Harps are starting a new season 2019/2020 of Gaelic Football and are looking for new faces to join the club. Gaelic Football is a form of football derived from the Irish ball games. There are some major differences between regular football and Gaelic football like the fact Gaelic football is played with 15 players per team and you can also hold the ball with your hands.

The Kuwait Harps compete primarily in tournaments based in the Gulf region and new players are always welcome and immediately feel at home within the club. The majority of the current squad were actually new to Gaelic Games when they first arrived in Kuwait. While many clubs in the Gulf region can depend on a strong pool of Irish players, this is not the case in Kuwait. While a core of the club may be Irish, it relies heavily on the support of players from the international expat community. Kuwait Harps Players have come from Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, Canada, USA, Australia and even Sudan to name but a few countries.

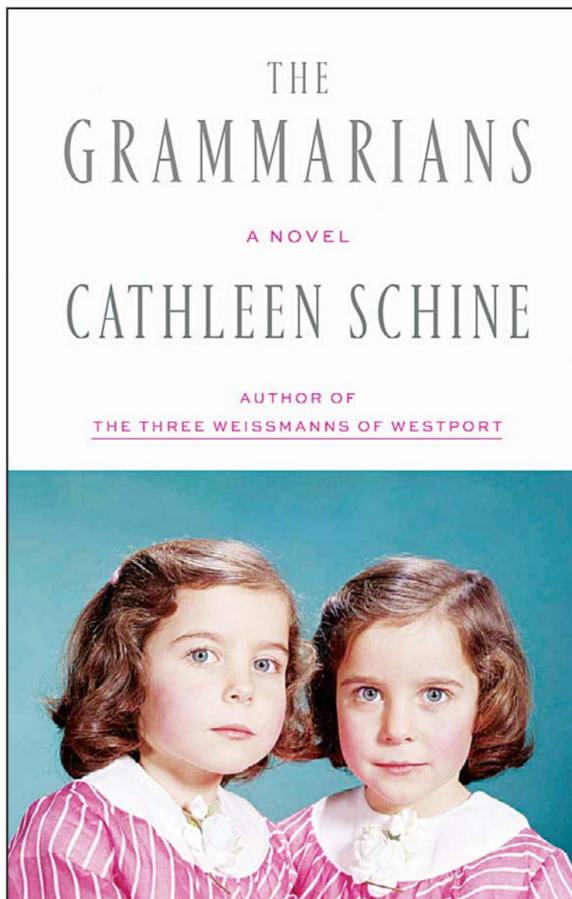
For more information email kuwaitharpsgaa@gmail.com or visit their Facebook Page, Instagram account @kuwait_harps_gaa or website kuwaitharpsgaa.com. (Posted by Mark, www.248.com, Sept 2, 2019)

Tongues Wag

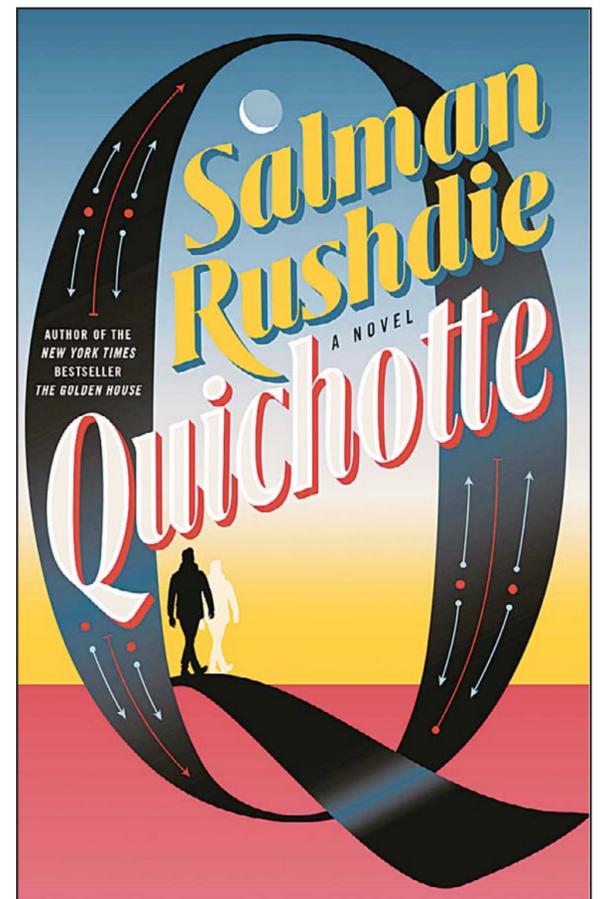
Books



This cover image released by Atria shows 'This Tender Land', a novel by William Kent Krueger. (AP)



This cover image released by Sarah Crichton Books/FSG shows 'The Grammarians' by Cathleen Schine. (AP)



This cover image released by Random House shows 'Quichotte' by Salman Rushdie. (AP)

Rushdie creates modern Don Quixote for tale of love, family

'This Tender Land' an affecting story about growing up

By Oline H. Cogdill

'This Tender Land: a Novel' by William Kent Krueger, (Atria Books)

Strands of the adventures of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer on the Mississippi River echo throughout William Kent Krueger's lyrical, compassionate "This Tender Land" in which four children try to escape their brutal life by taking a canoe down the Minnesota River.

Best known for his series about private investigator Cork O'Connor, Krueger delves deep into his second stand-alone novel for an affecting story about growing up and overcoming a childhood filled with neglect, abuse and racism during the Depression.

"This Tender Land" opens in 1932 when narrator Odysseus "Odie" O'Banion and his brother Albert endure a constant barrage of brutal treatment at the Lincoln Indian Training School in Minnesota where they were sent after their bootlegger father was murdered. The brothers stand out as the only white children among the Native Americans at the school where Odie is the rebel while Albert tries to go by the rules. Their closest friends are Mose, a teenage Sioux whose tongue was cut off when he was a child, and Emmy, a bright little girl whose mother is a teacher at the school. Emmy's mother and an ethical janitor are the only adults at the school who are kind to all the children.

Fed up with the abuse and trying to escape the aftermath of a fatal incident, the four set out on the canoe on the Gilead River that will connect to the Minnesota River. They plan to

eventually make their way onto the Mississippi River with their final goal being St. Louis. There, the brothers hope their Aunt Julia, whom they have only seen a few times, will take them all in. But the trip is fraught with peril – from the rivers themselves and from the law. Newspaper accounts maintain that Emmy was kidnapped and law enforcement officers up and down the river are on the lookout for them, as are the cruel owners of the school.

Except for the naive Emmy, the children have learned not to trust adults and, for the most part, that is reinforced on the trip. Along the way, they are held captive by a mad farmer who treats them as quasi family and indentured servants, visit homeless camps and meet train-hopping hobos. But they also find unexpected kindness from a family in a shantytown, ghettoized Jews, a boardinghouse owner who offers room and food to anyone, and a faith healer who offers them a temporary home.

In "This Tender Land," Krueger keeps the tension high as danger lurks on each turn of the river as well as illustrating how the trip tests the friends' bond, especially the relationship of the brothers. The children will have to grow up and overcome their hardships before they can understand one character's love of the land. Hard work is "good work because it's a part of what connects us to this land. This beautiful, tender land," says a farmer surveying his acres.

Krueger's Cork O'Connor stories have earned the author several awards and his stand-alone "Ordinary Grace" won numerous awards including the Edgar and Anthony for best

novel. "This Tender Land" should earn Krueger more accolades.

"The Grammarians: a Novel" by Cathleen Schine, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Cathleen Schine's captivating new novel, "The Grammarians," centers on a pair of identical twins named Daphne and Laurel, after the Greek myth of transformation, and their obsessive love of language. It's also about their family, and what happens to them as they grow older and some die.

In short, it's about everything and nothing, written with the tender precision and clarity of a painting by Vermeer, had that 17th-century Dutchman portrayed scenes of middle-class Jewish life in mid-to late 20th-century New York.

At first Daphne and Laurel's bond appears to be unbreakable. They delight in being identical and inseparable, with virtually interchangeable needs. They even have their own secret language, which they've been babbling since they were babies. But gradually they begin to differentiate. Rivalries develop, although both remain enamored of words, language and stories.

After college, Laurel becomes a kindergarten teacher while Daphne gets a job as a proofreader at an alternative newspaper in downtown Manhattan. "There is something fair and just in what we do," she declares one day to a fellow copy editor. "Grammar is good. I mean ethically good. If you think of all these words just staggering around, grammar is their social order, their government."

Eventually, Daphne becomes a

semi-famous columnist, "the Miss Manners of modern speech," offering fussy advice on language in a column for The New York Times. Laurel, meanwhile, discovers her true vocation as an experimental poet, giving her license to ignore grammatical rules and to embrace language as it's spoken.

Their disagreements escalate until one day, the indestructible bond ruptures. But in this tale of transformations, characters evolve, and nothing is forever.

Schine, the best-selling author of "The Three Weissmanns of Westport" and other novels, knows a thing or two about words herself. She moves the plot forward from decade to decade, evoking entire neighborhoods, social and economic strata, and fads and fashions, with just a few strokes.

The point of view shifts seamlessly – from Daphne to Laurel, their husbands, a cousin Brian. It even includes a prophecy, narrated by a dying character. And even though Schine herself is not a twin, she writes convincingly about twinning.

"This is what words do," Laurel thinks as she embarks on her new career. "They call out from the page and force you to listen. No, they allow you to listen." The same could be said of this wry and elegant novel.

"Quichotte" by Salman Rushdie, (Random House)

Good news! You don't have to read Cervantes' masterwork to enjoy Salman Rushdie's modern reinvention. You'll probably pick up on hundreds of additional references and

inside jokes if you have, but Rushdie has created something that feels wholly original even if you've never heard of the hopelessly romantic Spanish knight-errant who sees danger in windmills.

It does help to have an open mind, however. Rushdie's so-called "magical realism" (that's lit-crit for "making stuff up in an otherwise mostly real setting") is on full display here. There are mastodons in New Jersey, a talking cricket ("you can call me Jiminy") and even Oprah Winfrey has a legitimate talk-show competitor.

The crazy plot can't truly be summarized in a 500-word review, but Rushdie tells two stories simultaneously, Quichotte's quest to meet and live happily-ever-after with Miss Salma R., the aforementioned talk-show host of Indian origin, and the man writing his story, pen name Sam DuChamp, who has written only "modestly (un)successful" spy novels until he conceives Quichotte. The two stories bounce off each other in delightful ways, often matching each other character-for-character, before finally interweaving in a blockbuster ending that feels earned, even if not quite real.

Throughout it all Rushdie serves up his hallmark social criticism. Quichotte is introduced as a 70-year-old man of "retreating mental powers" suffering from brain damage caused by watching too much television. He lives in the present, or what Rushdie calls the age of "Anything-Can-Happen," a time when it "was no longer possible to predict the weather, or the likelihood of war, or the outcome of elections." Miss Salma R. is addicted to painkill-

ers and Quichotte was a traveling pharmaceutical salesman before embarking on his quest.

Rushdie even gives Quichotte his own Sancho, dreamed to life while witnessing the Perseids meteor shower near Devils Tower in Wyoming. As in Cervantes' novel, Sancho is the pragmatist to his father's idealist. When Quichotte uses the lessons of "The Bachelorette" to help plan his pursuit of Salma R. – "No great quest, my boy, was ever achieved except by those with faith." – Sancho retorts: "But if faith is all you've got, you're going to lose out to the guy with the moves and the good looks."

The book is crammed with pop culture references like that. He may be partly satirizing America's obsession with celebrities, but there's no doubt that Rushdie has paid attention to the trend. Sancho again, this time in an inner monologue: "A zillion channels and nothing to hold them together. Garbage out there, and both stuff out there, too, and they both coexist at the same level of reality, both give off the same air of authority. How's a young person supposed to tell them apart? ... Every show on every network tells you the same thing: based upon a true story. ... the true story is there's no true story anymore."

Lucky for us, there are true storytellers and Rushdie is near the top of that list. If you haven't read him before, this is a good book to start with – it's fabulist and funny while revealing an awful lot about the world we live in today. Plus, when you're done, if you pronounce it correctly, you can tell friends you read "Quixote." (AP)