



This Other Eden

Marilyn Harris

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"The secret of the entire world is whispered here at Eden...." — Since time out of memory, Eden Castle had ridden the storm-swept Devon cliffs like a ghostly figurehead on a ship of the damned. — He was the last Lord of Eden Castle, Thomas Eden, a man of brooding desire and sudden passion ... — She was his servant girl, Marianne Locke, the fiery young beauty who would rather submit to the cruel kiss of the whip than suffer the lust of a man she did not love...

From the wild Devonshire coast to the glittering literary salons of London, the tumultuous union of these two proud people hazed a raging tempest of enduring love.

This Other Eden Details

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Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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THIS BOOK IS CURRENTLY 99-CENTS FOR KINDLE! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? Y'all need to pick up my favorite gothic bodice ripper asap, so you can tell me what you think! I'm counting on you!

? I read this for the Yule Bingo Challenge, for the category of *Voldemort: book w/ a villain*. For more info on this challenge, click here. ?

Books like this are why I read bodice rippers. Okay, some of them are *bad*, and reading them is a meta-experience tantamount to MST3K, where the bulk of the enjoyment is making fun of what a festering pile of fail they are. But on the other hand, some of these vintage delights are genuinely good, on their own merit, and while cheesy and oftentimes un-PC, they tell a damn good story.

THIS OTHER EDEN was recently rereleased for Kindle via Endeavour Press, and so was its sequel, THE PRINCE OF EDEN. THE EDEN PASSION is to be released shortly after - and I know this, because I was lucky enough to receive a FREE copy of the third book in this series for review. You know what that means - a reread of the first book, and a gleeful binge of the second, before dive-bombing into the third. **Romance novels are like potato chips: you don't consume just one. YOU EAT THEM ALL.** ...Or, failing that, you eat as many as you can before someone rips the bag from you.

THIS OTHER EDEN is set in Georgian England. It opens with the public whipping of a sixteen-year-old girl named Marianne Locke. She's being punished for disobedience to Lord Eden - there are many reasons behind this "disobedience": she witnessed the illegal operations he's holding in his cellar, was too proud for her station, and most bitterly, *she dared to refuse his advances*. Marianne waits for her fate in a charnel pit, which is where people throw the corpses of dead animals and dead human beings post-slaughter, before being hauled out of that stinking cesspit for public flagellation.

Obviously, this punishment traumatizes her on a mental and physical level, so she's sent to live with her half-sister, Jane. Jane resents her younger sister because she was always the favorite, and sees this as the perfect chance for revenge. She has her sister live in the pantry (and then later a servant's bedroom) and has her perform all the duties of a servant for her and her common law husband. Unfortunately the husband quickly falls for Marianne, and this creates tension. And yet - it's a weird tension, because even though things between Jane and Marianne are tense, they never really seem to overtly hate one another and resort to things

like murder, the way characters do in Bertrice Small novels. That's a subtlety that really makes THIS OTHER EDEN stand out: all the characters are complex and none of them are purely good or purely bad.

For example, even though Jane softens towards her sister, she's still quick to sell her out to Lord Eden multiple times whenever she needs the money. And Eden is only too happy to take this blood money. He spends about 80% of the book, plotting and scheming to find ways to get Marianne into bed. (And not just any bed, at one point he attempts the use of a Celestial Bed, which is a very real and ridiculous thing.) At first it's a matter of domination and pride, but then he actually starts to love her - but unfortunately, he realizes he loves her only *after* he screws up, and at that point he is literally willing to give her *anything*, even the literal skin off his own back, to have her.

This is a gloomy Gothic behemoth that is the perfect example of the evolving romance genre, when the Gothics of the 60s and 70s began to yield to the infamous bodice rippers of the early 80s. It pulls off both roles with finesse: gloomy castles, smuggling operations, scammy sexologists, muddling and sinister relatives, rape, murder attempts, dens of iniquity, superstitious townsfolk, the French revolution, and so much more. But THIS OTHER EDEN goes one step further, with a hero who is truly selfish and childish, and a heroine who is opportunistic and self-absorbed. This is less a romance than an intricate (and intimate) character study of two truly terrible people who gradually overcome their flaws, as well as a realistic portrayal of class and the entitlement of divine right, and how a character might realistically go about overcoming that for the sake of love.

On my first reading of this book, I gave it 3 stars. I'm not sure what 2013 me was thinking, because this book is really, really good. The lush and vibrant writing alone is worth an extra star. Seriously, I could just swim in the prose of this novel as if it were a warm, dark sea. The atmosphere, story, and wide cast of characters are all unique and compelling. This is definitely one of the better bodice rippers I've read, and probably the best-written one to boot. If you're a fan of epic, atmospheric stories like OUTLANDER, where half the fun is the journey and the delay of gratification when it comes to unresolved sexual tension, you should pick up THIS OTHER EDEN. I don't think it will disappoint.

On to book two!

4 stars!

Naksed says

This little book came out of nowhere and sucker-punched me. I could just as easily come up with justifications for a one star rating as I could for the five star rating I eventually came up with. WTH did I just read?

To begin with, I would not qualify this as a romance or bodice ripper, certainly not a conventional one. An epic tragedy? A family saga? A historical fiction? An OTT gothic? Insane in the Membrane? Perhaps a little bit of all of the above. It truly is a book that defies categorization.

When I think I have read it all and can predict every plot twist and turn, this book manages to surprise me. When I think I am impervious to all the torture porn and emotional manipulation that permeate so many "dark" books, I was completely knocked over. I mean, I don't know anyone finishing this book and not coming away with a renewed hatred of humanity, a misanthropy to end all misanthropic philosophies.

In Lord Eden, you have an anti-hero who is a ~~big fat jerk~~ the devil incarnate. I have read some really jerky rakes in my time but if memory serves, all of them, the most evil of them, KNEW they were being evil and secretly loathed themselves for it.

This guy is COMPLETELY and TOTALLY oblivious to it all. In fact, he is one of those abusers who casts himself as the victim and has a long list of grievances against the people that he crushes under his shiny black boot heel. Humbert Humbert is the only fictional character that comes to mind to even come close to such a degree of completely oblivious evil.

When, 300 pages in, you finally think OMG, he is finally getting it, the transformative power of love has finally conquered him, made him see the error of his ways and we are going to have the necessary repentance and groveling that will achieve his redemption, you find out in the next breath that he STILL has not changed an iota. It was an all act, another ruse in his single-minded obsession to get what he wants because it is his due.

What can I say? There is nothing as entertaining as a well written villain and the author, Marilyn Harris, has managed to crown the king of all villains in her creation of Lord Thomas Eden. And that is saying a lot in a book where the cast of characters represent the basest, most evil and disgusting facets of humanity.

As for the heroine, Marianne Locke, the author was once again wonderfully successful in avoiding the cliche Mary Sue character, not making her a doormat or a martyr, despite all the horrendous injustices that fall on her.

The book really came alive for me when she spoke and interacted with other characters. There was a lot of Tess of D'Urberville in her but where Tess was hopelessly a victim, Marianne is the kind of heroine with the pluck to survive and thrive. I really admired her pride and her strength. Just as the aristocracy of France is being destroyed by revolutionaries across the Channel, she, a fisherman's daughter is sweetly but irrevocably bending the heir to one of the oldest families in England to his trembling knees before her.

The novel was not without its flaws. The beginning of it is incredibly snail-paced and some of the details of the setting excruciating. If it wasn't for the glowing review of a Goodreads HR enthusiast that I avidly follow, I may have set it aside and what a shame for that! There are huge info dumps devoted to the politics of the time, the impact of the French revolution, etc. slowing down the plot development and I could have done with a little less of the history lessons.

But overall, this book, for me, cannot be anything other than five stars. It is truly unique. For those

adventurous and resilient readers out there who are willing to engage in this difficult and dangerous trek of about 500 pages, I am sure they will feel moved and changed by it, even if they don't end up loving it.

Harris has written 7 novels in this Eden series and I am looking forward to going through all of them however this is not the kind of book that I can marathon read. I need for the wounds to heal before I can muster the strength. From what I hear, it gets worse, a lot worse, in the upcoming books.

Karla says

This review will probably make no sense because I'm still trying to process this book's awesomeness. But for what it's worth, here it is....

This book is **a 5 megaton starload of awesome**. From Tom Hall's seductively Gothic cover art to the size of the book to the lovely nostalgic red-edged pages, I started lurveing this meaty retro Victorian sensation novel from the first page. And it didn't let up. Its awesome perfection was such that I feared it might puff into vapor and I would wake up and realize it had all been a dream.....

Oh, my sad journey in romance of finding an honest-to-goodness rake. So many poseurs, so few genuine critters. (Anne Stuart? Oh crap, my pancreas just exploded from laughing so hard. And don't get me started on all the pups who are touted as the most notorious rakes in all of London, trying to wear bad boy pants but acting like they're barely out of Fauntleroy knickers. I scoff at the lot of them. Run 'long home, son! You bother me.)

I knew I had to go old school to find the rake of my dreams, the one who made me **believe** in his badness, his utter dissolution, his seemingly total inability to be, well, human - but who eventually sees the light and wins the girl and deserves her in the end. Because this lord would take your modern "rakes", beat them up, steal their lunch money, and give them a parting kick in the 'nads for good measure. Then he'd chop them up and use them for chum or cheap peasant food or something.

Oh, Thomas Eden. You are so set in your ways of being the Fifth Earl and Thirteenth Baron of Eden Point. There is nothing and no one you can't have. Your titled lineage goes back to the 10th century, and that's a fuckton of privilege, authority, and reeking elitism that's built up over time for you to glut yourself on without a twinge of conscience. Any man would relish that heritage and power and become a blind hostage to it, and when you are Lord and God of your massive estate in remote North Devon - a rocky and harsh place with easily cowed tenants - well, I suspect that one might go just a little bit insane. London periodically serves as a place to go wild and whore and gamble and peer at the loonies in Bedlam for an afternoon's entertainment, and after 20+ years of such a lifestyle....a man's personality and habits are a lost cause. Change won't come easily. It's OK, Thomas. I understand.

And that's what surprised **AND FRIGGIN' DELIGHTED** me when I read this book. He was bad to the bone and did so many heinous things, but I understood him and felt sorry for him. Eden is so single-minded and ruthless about getting Marianne Locke into his bed that he will stoop to anything. He will have her whipped for disobedience, he will follow her to London to rape her in the dead of night, he will bombard her with courtly calling cards and flowers, he will (view spoiler), he will do ANYTHING to get her and he believes, all the while, that he is totally within his rights to do so. These rights aren't the creepy pulled-from-his-ass justification that Anthony Welles used in Devil's Embrace to make him feel moral and good in kidnapping and raping that dope Cassie. Eden's rights are what makes England hum along as a world power

and rightly dwarf everyone else in Europe, especially those bloodthirsty little pygmies in Paris. Some people rule, the others fall in line. If not, then the sun will explode and the world will end. Or worse, some assholes in America won't shut up about freedom and inalienable rights and shit and they'll take every opportunity to moon their mad ex-king like a bunch of gloaty hooligans. See? Horrible. What *is* the world coming to? Damn salt in the wound, that's what it is. Well, they'll be sorry and wish they hadn't given up such a sweet deal when they had it.

Marianne's obstinant refusal and principled stand to protect her virtue totally baffles him. ***What 16-year old peasant girl does that????*** She makes him flounder and obsess and plot and plan, she upends his entire conception of **how the world works** and he is totally ill-equipped to process such a simple notion as "No." By dint of her consistent principles, she wears him down by making him do things that he would not have ever considered doing had she been the typical peasant wench glad to spread her legs for the master. Her refusal causes him to destroy or completely alter lives (sometimes wittingly, sometimes not), but he is aware of the consequences of his power (and gradually becomes ashamed of it) for the first time in his self-absorbed 40-year life. By book's end, he has been transformed in matters of the heart - at least where one girl is concerned - and is slightly more aware of the human world around him. No, it's not a perfect and pretty conversion with a shiny ribbon and bow. That would be ridiculous and unbelievable and **WOULD HAVE RUINED THE WHOLE STORY.**

Harris did an excellent job of portraying the time period and making her characters act appropriately. Eden is such a man of his times, lord of a title and castle that dates back centuries, who works himself up in an utter rage at the goings-on in France, where the "natural order" is being ground into the dust for idiotic notions of liberty. He is part of the class that made England strong and at the same time weakened it.

I have to make an honorable mention of something in this pure, dark Victorian melodramaesque crack rock of a novel: A highlight of Eden's journey in his pursuit of Marianne was the segment about his fascination with something called "The Celestial Bed" that was patented by a Dr. James Graham. Purported to have elemental powers and a connection to the universe and guarantees fertility and sexual pleasure to all who pay heftily for the privilege of seXXXoring in it, it is Eden's last-ditch attempt to get Marianne where he wants her and make her enjoy it as much as he will (hey, that's progress right there).

The part where he first hatches the plan made me facepalm in embarrassment for the poor blighter falling for this quackery, and when the scheme climaxes, it's absurd and completely "omg, where's a rock I can hide under?" but....weird as it may sound, Graham and his Celestial Bed were a real sensation in Georgian England. Harris did a superb job of weaving historical fact (in this case, a total historical oddity) into her story and making it serve both the plot and the character arc of her anti-hero and heroine and their relationship.

And what's more, by the end of this ultimate "taming of the rake" story, Eden is still Lord of Eden Point with his world view still somewhat intact. Yes, he won Marianne and she is the treasure of his heart and he defies society to have her by his side, but he is still an aristocratic - and autocratic - man in 1798 England where everyone has their place. The end has a fine and warm little scene with fellow social misfits Lord Nelson and Emma Hamilton, but the Eden household has an inheritance problem that could become something thorny. Despite the happy fade-to-back, all might not be well in the future.... The Edens, I feel, are their own worst enemies.

Eden is an anti-hero from a bygone age. I wonder what would happen to him in today's romance world. Methinks his redemption would include vowing to hand out bread to the poor on Sundays, setting up a refuge for war widows and orphans, and/or admitting that he is no better in God's eyes than the poorest of men on

his land. In later books, he would be the lovably irascible and devoted spouse of an affectionately chiding Marianne, and they would appear briefly for the big "family gathering" scene in each series book that has the bakers' dozen+ of brothers, sisters, cousins, best friends, and their spouses and fiancés show up to deliver a banal line or two of dialogue---

Bottom line: This is a book where the characters don't come to the reader; the reader has to go to the characters to understand, appreciate, and enjoy them. **Context, people! Context!** That goes for Eden and Marianne all the way down to Marianne's family and the various servants, friends and acquaintances that populate the novel. Their lives and experiences and the world in which they live of two vast social spheres make them act in ways that seem natural and believable, even if it is sometimes base and ugly (or, in the case of *The Celestial Bed*, endearingly gullible to a sparkly cure for what ails. Oh, times have changed, haven't they?) And it was real fun to watch the slow and tortured journey of a blockhead aristocrat try to face a heretofore unknown problem of the flesh with all the sledgehammer tools of his class and position.

Mini Honorable Mention: There isn't much in the way of inner dialogue and naval-gazing so that all mystery is stripped away from the characters and we get to watch them flog themselves on a shrink's couch for 600 pages, spoonfed every last shred of their psyche. Thank Bloody Christ for that. Understanding the characters through their actions and behavior within their world is what made these people accessible and delightfully open to interpretation.

I wish to Hell they still wrote them like this.

Misfit says

4.5 stars

Oh, how to begin describing what this book is about? Set mainly on the north Devon coast during the 1790s, the main focus of the story is Lord Thomas Eden, the Fifth Earl and Thirteenth Baron of Eden Point and Marianne Locke, fisherman's daughter. Marianne manages to catch Lord Thomas on a bad day and he orders a public flogging, which she barely survives. Marianne's recovery is slow, and she's eventually sent to live with her sister Jane in London (Jane isn't exactly thrilled to have a much more beautiful sister living with her). Circumstances bring Marianne back into Thomas' life and let's just say he's hot to have her, and his mindset just doesn't grasp the word **NO**. The chase is on, and Lord Thomas will go to any lengths to have her, and he's ably assisted by Marianne's double-dealing sister Jane.

"As the world was full of predators, now the King of Predators had arrived among them, a man schooled from birth in the art of selfishness and brutality."

And if and when Lord Thomas catches Marianne, you don't think it will all be smooth sailing, do you? Not on your life, just fasten your seatbelts because it's going to be a wild and bumpy ride. I can't even begin to describe the things that happen to both of our pair, and Harris is not an author to pull punches, she definitely will take you to the dark side of life and Thomas is definitely one of those characters you love to hate. Or did I hate him? I loved the way she brought in lesser known bits of history (oh, Dr. Graham and his *Celestial bed* ;)). This is the first book I've read from this author, and there are more in my immediate future, starting with book two in this seven book series. Highly recommended.

Joe_saltears says

They really did romance the weird way back in 70s.

We have a classic setting in characters - the powerful lord and a beautiful fisherman's daughter. The hero has the heroine whipped almost to death, scarred for life, leads her father to madness, attempts rape when money and sweet talk won't work (but is stopped by a stray bullet of another suitor), stages a fake marriage and thus tricks her into living with him for a year or so, until she gives birth to a child, and then informs her of the arrangement. But surely this is all OK, since he ends up marrying her for real in the end and they live happily ever after and he kinda regrets some of his past actions and thinks he might have been a bit rash.

His liberal treatment of the ladies also causes the young ward of his oldest and most trusted servant to kill herself. And then they have to kill the father, 'cause the old fool seemed to have taken it personal. But this is OK too, since he said he's sorry.

And the heroine apparently thinks it's OK too, since a mad father or two aren't really going to make much of a difference, are they? Anyway, there's a good way to make incautious things like rape, torture, murder and smuggling go away and have people pretend they never happened. It's called MARRIAGE, in case you didn't know.

Regan Walker says

Emotionally Wrenching, Enthralling Tale from 18th Century England

It's hard to see how this book could be rated anything other than 5 stars just for the effort it is. The writing is meticulous, the plot intricate, the characters well drawn and the story enthralling. It's a well-told tale of cruelty, deception, dishonor and treachery—and, yes, it's emotionally wrenching. I also thought the ending was melancholy. There are a few other negatives that I will point out that might turn away readers who would prefer a more sedate historical romance. Just so you know, this was my first by Harris, and it's the first in the Eden series (see list below). I've already got book 2 waiting on the shelf to be read though I may take an emotional break before I come to it.

Set in England, beginning in 1790, it tells the story of Thomas Eden, the Fifth Earl and Thirteenth Baron, lord of the stone monolith, Eden Castle, on the Devon coast, and the servant girl, Marianne Locke.

Marianne is no ordinary servant, being both beautiful and taught by a well-educated tutor to young ladies. She is smart and, for the most part, quite a reflective thinker. However, she is naïve and too trusting, and thus taken advantage of by those who would manipulate her, including her sister and Lord Eden. Somehow, through all the betrayals (and there are many), she maintains her kind heart. That I wanted to slap her at times was a reflection of how easily she was misled.

As the story begins, 16-year-old Marianne is being publicly flogged for rebuffing Lord Eden's advances. The event scars her for life and nearly kills her. (It also drives her father to madness.) All that changes her. Once a spirited beauty, she is now a shell of a young woman, sent to London by friends of her father to see if she can be revived. There she lives with her conniving sister who is jealous of Marianne's beauty. Jane is the kept mistress of a journalist named William who quickly falls in love with Marianne.

Alas for Marianne, Lord Eden has not forgotten her. No matter he is more than twice her age (she is 16, he is

40), he lurks in the background plotting to have her and willing to do any unethical thing to achieve his goal. Thomas Eden is a man who sees himself above all those who serve him, who thinks he is entitled to take any young girl's virginity simply because she is "low born." To their shame, most of his acquaintances aware of his dirty dealings either enable him or look the other way. He goes from one "heinous deed" (his words) to another. I was 3/4ths of the way through the book when I decided this man was beyond redemption. I so wanted to see him fall, and fall hard. In the end, he did not fall hard enough for me.

If you don't like stories where the hero and heroine are separated for a time, or a "hero" who seems truly evil, this may not be the book for you. Still and all, it kept me up to the wee hours of the morning reading—two nights in a row. So, for the brave among us, I do recommend it!

The Eden series: (All are Victorian save for the first)

This Other Eden (late 18th century)

The Prince of Eden

The Eden Passion

The Women of Eden

Eden Rising

American Eden (Civil War)

Eden and Honor

Joanne says

Wow! What a book! Haunting, shocking, dark, edgy, with violent passions.....great, great storytelling by a new-to-me author, and I'm very much looking forward to reading more of the Eden series. Definitely not for those who like their romances sweet and chaste, as Thomas Eden is a dark, passionate lord of his times and Marianne a headstrong and stubborn servant (which gets her in deep trouble with his lordship in the first place!) Unlike anything I've ever read!

Kerrie says

WARNING: GIFs ahead

You know what this book needed?

A bunny. **LOTS of bunnies.**

Don't get me wrong. I loved this book, as those 5 stars attest. However, from beginning to end the gloom, doom, and consequences of every *very human flaw* that the characters possessed made this a very suffocating, disturbing, uncomfortable read which almost defies description.

Sometimes I just couldn't bear to look.

For instance, I usually prefer to personally like at least one character, even just a little bit. All of these characters were fairly loathsome in different respects, but the aforementioned human flaws kept them from

being total monsters.

Lord Thomas Eden is strictly a man of his time, where there are 2 kinds of people - the nobility and the help. This accident of birth allows the former to do whatever it likes to the latter with nary a twinge of conscience. He's the ultimate rake with no redeeming values. This time around, he's all horny for Marianne the fisherman's daughter and he'll do whatever it takes to bed her (and toss her aside once he's popped that cherry). His well-laid plans often have unforeseen results.

As with anyone who has never had to face real-life consequences for his actions, he's emotionally stunted. When coming up against resistance or anything that doesn't fit the scenario he has lined out (*"I'm a Lord and you're an inferior, you'll do as I wish and you'll be happy to do so"*) he flails out in all directions like the spoiled, overprivileged drama queen that he is and heads for the fainting couch.

Even the heroine, Marianne, didn't get sympathy from me until the last 70 or so pages. In the beginning of the story when she was under the most duress, other aspects of her character came out through the words of others that perhaps she got what she deserved for being such a spoiled, willful brat. Her behavior at her sister's house in London clinched it for me. Did not like her.

I'm new to Marilyn Harris's brand of crazy WTFery and despite all the warnings and heads-up that I got, I was still shocked at some of the turns the plot took. That scene with William Beckford and the serving girl (once again totally caused by Eden's "I'm the puppetmaster!" sense of noble entitlement)? Totally didn't see it coming.

And Harris has the balls to never tell us what actually happened.

What struck me the most about this book was the very realistic vibe. Throughout I kept thinking, Yes this was the way things were. Women had *no* rights, were treated as objects for men to do with as they pleased, and they had no recourse - only to suck it up and deal with it in whatever small way was available to them. Someone as elevated as Eden was still taken in by the snake oil of a Celestial Bed. The structure of English society was really that stagnant (and ossified) and the threat of that rigid order being overturned from the rumblings in America and France were really a cause of concern - from Eden's point-of-view, anyway. But considering his actions in the name of that lauded social structure, bring on the revolution, I say!

What a long, bleak read that was. Even the HEA at the end wasn't enough to counteract it. But I'm hooked, and no doubt will get greedy and glut myself on the Human Agony of the Eden clan. I hope I have the stomach for it.

Julz says

It's hard to call this story a romance. To me, this is more a dark story of an older man who becomes obsessed over a young girl and the lengths he would go to to "have" her after a major faux pas(*cough*;) at the beginning in response to her rejection of him. Gradually the obsession becomes a romance and you start to warm up to the guy along with our heroine.

However, I still can't call him a hero, which is one thing I love about the story. The lead male character is very real from his selfishness and immaturity to his gullibility and knobby knees.

If you like it grittier, can tolerate everything not being tied up in a neat little bow, and can see a woman learning to love a terribly flawed man who's done some really bad things, then I highly recommend this book.

Sarah Mac says

This book was beyond awesome, but don't take my word for it; I hereby refer you Karla's excellent review, where she spazzed & fangirled enough for both of us. Not that EDEN doesn't deserve spazzing & fangirling - - but this was a buddy read, so it's a totally legit cop-out on my part. ;)

They really don't write books like this anymore -- and that's a damn shame. The historical backdrop was sweeping, yet deft touches of micro-history make the characters & their tribulations all the more realistic. The language is descriptive but precise; gritty, painful details come to life as thoroughly as ethereal thought & feeling. Recommended for those who enjoy Anya Seton or Wilkie Collins (though not set in the Victorian period, it has a very Wilkie-ish sense of dramatics).

Anna says

Dark, delicious, disturbing, and madder than a box of frogs. Loved it!

Mermarie says

How dare you Harris? I was fully prepared for a cliffhanger, or every sort of maddening havoc to unleash at the final page but lo--she surprises again, with **normalcy**. Ultimately, this is a story that's positively **human**. This will likely be all-over-the-place review and drudgery in itself, so, if you've got anything else to do, don't feel compelled to read further. I *forgive* you. ;P

Most writers, I've found -- tend to keep a certain archetype and follow through with the character, rarely straying beyond that character's alignment(yes, kill me, I'm a former D&D dweeb). Harris seems to defy that with utter, depraved glee, to my thankfulness. I never, at any point, felt as if she cookie cut a character into a corner and dared not exceed their general makeup. If anything, she let the characters write themselves, they were on their own. She didn't tell **me** what I wanted to hear, or tell me about them, in particular. I didn't glean this, "oh, so this character is like this **ONLY**, so it's all safe and neat with Sunday's laundry freshness abound and I'll never ever--ever let you down!" What the cast of characters said to me was this; they're capable of anything. **Anything**. Just as capable of good, as they were menace....and with no clear villainous character to set all of my frustrations against, sending my emotional chagrin into a frenzy with a lynch mob or witch hunt to cut that character down. You are completely on your own, when you feel the urge to

villianize one of them. Steeple fingered, chair spinning villains are nonexistent, and you're forced to begrudgingly accept the faults and vices of these otherwise, seemingly **harmless** characters. So many times, I've stopped and attempted to analyze the cast, in hopes of predicting the ultimate villain...because obviously we sort of write in these justicar roles, and people aren't allowed to realistically make mistakes to a degree they'd be unforgivable.

Beyond the lovely saga of doomed love affairs, I believe that was completely excluded by me, as I took far more delight in the characterization. Yes, Thomas is able to be jilted, made a fool of, shot without the heroine bandaging him up and eventually leading to the ultimate bathtub dip. His moments of spilling his heart out, you perceived it as, "**AWWW..FINALLYYY!! FINALLY I CAN CLASSIFY HIM AND COMFORT MYSELF WITH PREDICTABILITY AND A HERO WHO IS MASTERED! HE IS NO LONGER A THREAT AND HAS REDEEMED HIMSELF! AND THE PEASANTS REJOICE! AHH, FINALLY MODERNIZED!**" -- then five minutes later, he's snickering behind the door, wondering where the hell he got that material to wine and dine Marianne. I was tricked. I was just as much soaking it up, as Marianne was.

What Monson only scrapped the surface of, Harris is enforcing into every scene. Dear, merciful cheese. She has the capacity to center on every dark recess of a soul and somehow beautify it shamelessly.

William - who had admittedly raped women in his past, whom he felt the need to... had this free spirited, defy-the-mainstream Conservative view aura to him, that was adequate for his role. Marianne showed him a certain engaging purity and interest in the world, that he didn't immediately want to jade. His role as a protector was likely the most *heroic* deed done unto Marianne within the entire novel. ..and still, he was still not safe from Harris' Terror brigade. XD

Harris overjumped those bounds again, and refused for the read to only find the most pure minded and heroic males as the man the heroine ends up loving. She tested our response with flinging William into the mix, laughing at us for thinking any of them were without skeleton decorated closets.... and in some cases, moreso than the other...

Broken, utterly jaded, and still capable of peering through the scrim of immorality and thereto humanity, somehow. This seems to defy all historical anachronisms we're systematically force-fed.

*Harris takes an old, safe archetype, and twists it inside out, till it's wearing sheaths of intestinal monstrosity. The unknown fellow's skull used as a mock, Shakespearean prop for Thomas's soliloquy? Thank you, Harris. For rekindling the art of surprise and setting me back on my rocker..... *struck dumb by a thunderclap**

I won't go into further details on the conduct and acts of debauchery inflicted on the heroine Marianne, but I will say this to wrap up this half-assed review for good measure:

Yes, his endless depravity and selfishness utterly destroyed everyone's lives around him, and it wasn't as if he actually learned from his mistakes, but he definitely, and fully **paid** for them. Furthermore, it took her survival of his destruction to save his wretched life.

``Laurie Henderson says

Sometimes I'm in the mood for DRAMA! and I didn't go wrong when I chose this book to read.

Every emotion you can think of was probably in this enjoyable, light read.

I first learned of this book from voting on the list:

<https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/9...>

Several people highly recommended this book as one of the best trashy novels they ever read so I was extremely curious to see what all the fuss was about.

Believe it or not, the author, Marilyn Harris, is a very talented author and this book was not written as the typical bodice ripper. Harris created so many great, unique characters and made them very believable with good traits and bad. The suspense was first rate too and I loved the gothic atmosphere.

I definitely want to read more of her books in the future and a big thank you to Diane Lynn for recommending this one.

Kelly says

I picked up *This Other Eden* on the recommendations of several GR friends, and didn't expect to like it as much as I did. If more historical romance was like this, I'd read more historical romance.

The novel starts with young Marianne Locke about to be publicly whipped for defying the local lord, Thomas Eden. After this punishment, a traumatized Marianne is shipped off to live with her jealous sister in London, while Lord Eden continues to dwell on Marianne and wonder if he should have been more lenient with her. Not because he thinks having her whipped was *wrong*, mind you, but because he thinks it was a waste of his chance to sleep with her. From there it's a sprawling, twisty plot with betrayals and lies and secrets all over the place, culminating finally in a redemption arc that will wring you out.

Thomas is, at the beginning of the book, a spoiled brat. A 40-year-old spoiled brat. His entire life has shaped him to be one--he's always had everything he ever wanted and could satisfy any whim as soon as he thought of it. He's like the toddler who breaks his toys and then can't understand why they're no fun anymore. And he's utterly befuddled by Marianne.

Marianne, while more sympathetic, was actually harder for me to get a handle on--she can be elusive as a character. She can go from nearly catatonic to guileless to sophisticated in five minutes. She's a bit of a puzzle and I was never quite sure I had her figured out, though I liked and sympathized with her.

Really, all of the characters--even the ones I "boo! hiss!"ed at--are complex individuals with many facets.

I also loved that there was such a palpable sense of the time the novel was set in, and of place (both in London and in Devon). *This Other Eden* felt *meaty*, like there was as much book here as I could have wished for, and none of it filler. This reminds me less of the average romance novel and more of something hefty and epic like *Forever Amber*.

And still I kept telling myself I wasn't going to get emotionally involved with this one. Instead, I must

confess, Marilyn Harris got me.

It's a really dark book and definitely not for the squeamish; there's a fair amount of gore and rapeyness. I think part of the reason I enjoyed the book was that I knew this going in, and so I was able to switch on my "gritty book goggles" like I do for GRRM. I doubt I'd have been able to stomach this if I'd gone in expecting fluff. NOT FLUFF, PEOPLE. Really. I mean it.
