



The Balcony

Jane Delury

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A "breathtaking" (Jennifer Egan) century-spanning portrait of the inhabitants of a French village, revealing the deception, despair, love, and longing beneath the calm surface of ordinary lives.

What if our homes could tell the stories of others who lived there before us? Set in a small village near Paris, *The Balcony* follows the inhabitants of a single estate—including a manor and a servants' cottage—over the course of several generations, from the Belle Époque to the present day, introducing us to a fascinating cast of characters. A young American au pair develops a crush on her brilliant employer. An ex-courtesan shocks the servants, a Jewish couple in hiding from the Gestapo attract the curiosity of the neighbors, and a housewife begins an affair while renovating her downstairs. Rich and poor, young and old, powerful and persecuted, all of these people are seeking something: meaning, love, a new beginning, or merely survival.

Throughout, cross-generational connections and troubled legacies haunt the same spaces, so that the rose garden, the forest pond, and the balcony off the manor's third floor bedroom become silent witnesses to a century of human drama.

In her debut, Jane Delury writes with masterful economy and profound wisdom about growing up, growing old, marriage, infidelity, motherhood - in other words, about life - weaving a gorgeous tapestry of relationships, life-altering choices, and fleeting moments across the frame of the twentieth century. A sumptuous narrative of place that burrows deep into individual lives to reveal hidden regrets, resentments, and desires, *The Balcony* is brimming with compassion, natural beauty, and unmistakable humanity.

The Balcony Details

Date : Published March 27th 2018 by Little, Brown and Company

ISBN :

Author : Jane Delury

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Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, France, Literary Fiction

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From Reader Review The Balcony for online ebook

Donna says

The first and second stories were only okay. I decided to stick with it. The third story was boring. The characters weren't dynamic or interesting and the story went nowhere. I really wanted to like this book because I liked the premise. However, I didn't see finishing this book as a good investment of my time.

Diane S ? says

Review soon.

Nicole Beaudry says

The Balcony was a perfectly good read. The sections come together quite neatly, revealing bits and pieces about other sections as they unravel. I certainly thought some were much stronger than others, and I particularly disliked the section in which Adèle and her parents went on vacation - and I very much enjoyed the final section, which was quite fragmentary and had a very different feel from the others. Overall, the prose was capable with occasional flashes of elegance, and the characters were usually interesting and different enough that it wasn't terribly confusing to try and hold on to the threads of so many.

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

3.75 stars to The Balcony, a tale of an old French manor house and the fascinating people who resided within! ?? ?? ?? .75

If these walls could talk!

The synopsis of The Balcony enthralled me. The story follows a French estate's residents from the Belle Époque to the present day over several generations, different families, and living under various circumstances.

A young American au pair in the present, an ex-courtesan, a Jewish couple pursued by the Gestapo, the haves and the have-nots, the young and the old; all of their stories are told in an alluring way by Jane Delury. Each of the characters were in search of something while living under that vast roof. These chapters felt much like short stories that were all bound by the historic property.

This book is full of heavy emotion, much of it sadness. The characters are both flawed and fascinating, and their stories converge in a skillful way.

The Balcony is best-suited to a reader who enjoys a cast-full of absorbing characters, short stories with a link tying them together, and a melancholy, somber tone.

Thank you to Jane Delury, Little, Brown and Company, and Netgalley for the ARC. The Balcony will be

released on March 27, 2018.

Ellen says

The story lost me as it jumped between people and time periods. Most of the stories dealt with the dark or unhappy side of life. I was anxious to finish the book and move on. Not for me, despite the French setting. Needed a scorecard to keep track of characters and their connections.

Linda Hill says

One house with ten interwoven stories spanning over a century.

When I began reading *The Balcony* I hadn't actually read the blurb and was initially thrown by the fact that I had what seemed to be totally discrete and unconnected stories. My preconceived ideas were quickly challenged and I found myself immersed into a lyrical and enchanting world based around one house and its occupants.

The quality of Jane Delury's writing is so sophisticated and actually quite tense and disconcerting so that I felt reading *The Balcony* was like having something tantalising and beautiful just out of my grasp. I loved the atmosphere of the writing and could appreciate its depth and richness but I can't quite define why it is so impactful. Having the one house as a backdrop gives a coherence and balance that is perfectly poised.

The way in which history swirls on the page, with links between the stories being uncovered a bit like fairy tale treasure, is spellbinding. Sometimes it is the characters who reverberate through the tales, sometimes a theme and sometimes something tangible like *peg solitaire* or Russian dolls. Indeed, the Russian dolls are an apt metaphor for the structure of the stories. Each is different and unique in its own right but connected and understandable in relation to the others.

And the themes depicted here are universal ones that permeate humanity; love, hate, death, birth, jealousy, survival, war, identity are all here, making for a book that a reader can return to several times over and still find something new and relevant.

The Balcony was unexpected. Each story stands alone and is satisfying to read, but taking the collection together, seeing the connections intertwine and having those moments of clarity and understanding elevate *The Balcony* into a truly mesmerising read. I thought it was intelligently written, beautifully constructed and fascinating. I really enjoyed it.

Penny (Literary Hoarders) says

Merde! January hasn't even come to an end yet and I'm already marking a book as a DNF. :(I'm just not connecting in any way with this one.

This was a highly anticipated book, I was happy to have received it from Netgalley, but I'm just going to have to shelve this one.

Shayna says

I think this book was meant to be beautiful, and it was. But it was completely lost on me.

You should not attempt to read this book over more than a day or two, unless you have amazing memory. I don't.

This is really a bunch of short stories that are all related. But it jumps time periods and references names from previous stories, and it's hard to follow. I kept wishing I had started the book with a family tree that I built out each chapter.

By the end I had totally forgotten how anyone was related and which time period certain events took place, and the last chapter was something I couldn't understand at all.

Just pay really close attention while reading this. Maybe take some notes. That's not an enjoyable way for me to read but I would've liked to have followed this better.

I think it was too boring for me to reread. I appreciate the concept and the writing, but it's not enough for me to pick this up again and try to piece things together better.

2.5 stars.

Patty says

Title...The Balcony

Author...Jane Drury

My "in a nutshell" summary...

This book seemed to me to be a series of related short stories that were connected by time and characters and events. The stories took place in France...often in the same cottage/country house.

My thoughts after reading this book...

Hmmm...my thoughts...I liked some of the chapters...some were difficult for me to enjoy. People lived, became ill, died...people were affected by hunger, war, their own frailties...life in general.

What I loved about this book...

I know I didn't really love this book but it was a thought provoking sometimes enjoyable reading experience. I loved the author's descriptive writing.

What I did not love about this book...

There was no fast pace with this book...no chilling page turning.

Final thoughts...

Would this be a good choice for you...potential reader?

I am not sure how to recommend this book. Perhaps readers who enjoy history, flawed characters, sadness and a bit of joy...would enjoy this book. I don't think I want to read another book like this any time soon. It was a slow reading experience...for me.

I received an advance reader's copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley and Amazon. It was my choice to read it and review it.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

via my blog: <https://bookstalkerblog.wordpress.com/>

"I see how Hugo looks at you, and I see how you look at him. I am only telling you it is alright if you want to."

"I don't. And I thought you loved him."

She smiled at me, warily. "Silly girl," she said. "What can you possibly know about love?"

This novel is full of such sad beauty, stories that converge, changing facts, tying moments until everything makes sense. It is at turns romantic and tragic, it is stories in the brutalities of fate. It is a book I have added to my favorites list, because when I devoured it back in November I felt sad it was over. If you're looking for a light little French read, this isn't for you. If you want stories with depth, flawed characters, love that is forbidden, characters who make mistakes, all tied to a French estate then it's perfection.

The novel begins with an American student given the opportunity to work as an au pair for a married couple, Olga and Hugo in the French countryside. Her job is to keep Élodie (their young child) company and help her practice English while Hugo works on his book and Olga prepares for their move. Before long she falls for Hugo's allure, a flirtation begins but she isn't seeing the full picture. Her passion is a distraction, and it isn't until later she really understands her purpose for being there and just why Olga was so careful with Élodie. There is the former courtesan now the lady of the manor who later becomes an eclipse, a man who as a boy protects his damaged brother from his bully of a father, a mother and daughter who find themselves in positions of belongings from a family of Jews who had to escape into the night and everything flows gorgeously.

Hélène wonders how to connect to her with her granddaughter during a visit while her husband drifts further and further away in his mind, the distance of time and age a wall she longs to scale, she decides to let grandchild chose a fruit and is flummoxed by the child's choice. A woman is seduced by a poet and is much gossiped about, a mangy dog forces his way into a woman's heart, a woman falls for a much older man not once perceived as a threat by her husband. There is a heritage of secrets passed down, wrongs made right in small gestures, and yet some stories are crushingly sad from start to finish.

Many of the characters bounce through time, and there is a resolution to many of the stories. There are regrets and chances that pass, untried desires, and incidents that alter the course of a life. My heart truly broke reading about the brothers, Guy and Jacques and the difficulties with their father. How Guy's mental

state drives the family to do something irrevocable soured me, and yet it's a reality some families know too well. Yes, the novel is heavy and dark at times, but it has the ability gut you and I was fully engaged.

I wish I could write about each story at length, I particularly found myself laughing at the thoughts H  l  ne has about   lodie's behavior and her body because Europeans deal with issues of 'weight' in ways we Americans find downright mean, and they see as refreshing honesty. You can feel her biting her tongue, wanting so badly to correct the child's 'imperfections' and yet she dearly loves her. I found myself nodding, because it sounds like my elders. All their 'cruelties' were simply 'critiques' to the betterment of their family. Yet H  l  ne is not cruel, not at all, she is simply the product of an earlier time.

Yes, read it!

Publication Date: March 27, 2018

Little, Brown and Company

Martha says

The stories told in this capable debut are built around a place where, as different people move in and out of the old manor house and cottage in a small, nondescript village somewhere outside Paris, the meanings of the spaces, objects, and surroundings change, history re-writes, and a larger story is told. As someone who has lived in a family with wide spread generations and listened to stories told by a grandmother born in the 19th century, I was enthralled by all of the different pieces the voices of different decades, from 1910 to the present, contributed to the whole of the story of this place at the edge of a forest. The book is actually a series of linked stories, moving mostly forward, a couple of times backward. Each story reveals a little more of the stories before. There's not a lot of happiness or feelings of warmth between characters or among families. There's a fair amount of sorrow, and so many unfulfilled or half fulfilled longings. The writing is careful and slim, at times maybe a little chilly. But by the end I felt oddly fulfilled, as if I had looked through the photo albums of that piece of land as a docent narrated the stories of what I saw.

KC says

Ever wonder the history of a home and its occupants? Multiple stories, time periods, family lineage, and historic goings-on fill the pages of this "if walls could talk" novel. Delury was able to set a perfect country landscape, vivid and lush and oh so very French, sadly I was unable to connect well enough to the inhabitants and had a difficult time following the family's ancestry.

Eliece says

This was one of the most oddly written books I've ever read. It's quite short, only 241 pages, but ranges over a hundred years. It's like a generational saga, but unlike most of those, does not proceed in a chronological order. I felt so schizophrenic by the time I was 2/3 of the way through it, that I got out a yellow pad and tried to make a more logical account of the many characters. That was after I heard myself yelling, "Who in the hell is Charlotte?"

I think the author was trying to write an unusual book, and she certainly did that. I think she probably wrote

it in a logical manner, and then tossed the chapters up in the air, and however they landed is how they were published. Probably not...but that's how it felt as I read it. The "And Or" chapter was just ridiculous. Just because you can write something in an arcane manner doesn't mean that it's a genius idea.

It was kind of interesting how the author bit by bit revealed how most of the characters were related, but because it was so disjointed I would have to reread the whole book and take notes as I went to be sure how and where all the pieces fit. And I don't care enough to do that!

I think it would make a good story if written in a logical order and expanded, somewhat along the lines of "The Nightingale" or one of Belva Plain's sagas.

Looking back on it, it seems the whole book boiled down to how most people were very disappointed with their lives and especially their spouses. Quite a sad story, really.

Faith says

This is a collection of pointless short stories very loosely connected by a house outside of Paris. The stories might also have been connected by characters, but since (for no discernible reason) they weren't presented in chronological order, it was impossible to keep track of them. The stories all felt so shallow and uneventful that I read four of them and gave up. But I confess that I am not usually a fan of short stories. I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Elaine says

The Balcony is a series of short stories featuring the locals of a small French manor and cottage over a century.

We are introduced to men, women and children who have lived in the area, worked for the family, and listened to brief snippets of their lives, hardships, loves and tragedies through the years.

The problem with these short vignettes is you never really get to know anyone well enough to like them, much less understand them.

I found it difficult to identify with anyone and there was just one too many stories about *adultering*.

Life is much more than falling in love with old men and having affairs because you have unresolved *Freudian* daddy issues.

At first, I mistakenly assumed the stories all had something to do with the *balcony* of the manor or the *balcony* featured prominently in the stories.

I think I would have preferred it if the manor or the *balcony* had been a focal point of the stories, in that the house itself is a character since the lives of the inhabitants revolve around it and they were so dull.

The writing was fine but nothing could alleviate the monotony and drudgery of people I didn't care for.
