



Vol. 2, No. 26, June 26, 2020

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From the Editor

Hello Pages of the Past historical fiction lovers! I hope this finds you all happy, thriving, and devouring and/or writing, historical fiction books.

This week we've worked our way up to 'Q' in the A to Z theme of historical fiction writing. It's a perfect place to pull out my favorite 'Q' word – quilts – and share a bit about a set of 1934 quilt squares that I found many years ago in a yard sale. Those vintage quilt squares have made their way into several stories and magazine articles, with a few books simmering away on the back burner of my mind. But more important than the stories that these squares have inspired, is the friendships I've made of several of the descendants of the women that created these squares so many years ago. Those friendships are treasured and are a true connection from the past to the present. And that part of the story isn't fictional.

Today DK Marley joins us to chat about her books, set in a time much further back than the 1934-time frame of the quilt squares. She brings Shakespearean times to life and introduces us a world long, long past. Keep reading to see what fascinating tidbits she's sharing with us today.

Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Anne Louise Bannon, Gini Grossenbacher, Pamela Nowak, Joyce E.S. Pyka, and more!

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Quilts Inspiring Stories



It's always fun discovering how different books had their beginnings. Sometimes the book, or the basic plot, was based on a particular person. Or a specific incident that happened. Or an overheard conversation. And sometimes, a certain object can trigger a whole book.

Since we're working our way through historical fiction in an A to Z fashion, and we're at the letter 'Q', today we're talking about QUILTS and how quilts can become either the impetus or the centerpiece of a novel.

My own fascination with old quilts being featured in stories began over fifteen years ago. I lived in Southern California at the time, in the Inland Empire, midway between Los Angeles and Palm Springs. One afternoon I went to visit a friend in Palm Springs. On the way home, I spotted a 'Yard Sale' sign and quickly turned left. I wondered yard sales there offered anything different than the typical ones at home.

Most of it was a disappointment. Same old stuff. Old clothes. Old books. Tires. Miscellaneous kitchen equipment. I rounded the corner for a pass down the last row, empty handed, when I came across the Old Bedding Department. Ugh. I'm not going to go home with anyone's old blankets or pillows either.

But then I spied a blue plastic laundry basket, full to the brim with old unpieced quilt covers.

My heart started beating faster.

I knew those vintage fabrics. I'd lusted after many a hand pieced quilt in antique stores. I'd come home with one or two raggedy ones that I could afford. Occasionally I'd pick up a single quilt square for around \$15. But I usually had to leave them displayed where they were, as my pocketbook could rarely afford the numbers printed on the sale tag.

I sifted through the laundry basket. There were three unquilted tops and in the middle was a stack of quilt squares with appliqued Sunbonnet Sues and Overall Bills on mottled and stained muslin.

I quickly did a mental count of how much cash I had in my wallet and how much I could come up with if I hit a local ATM machine. Running the numbers in my head, hoping I could afford at least one of the quilt tops, and maybe one or two of the squares, I approached the young woman overseeing the sale.

When I asked her about the prices for the quilt tops, she replied with a bit of disdain in her voice. "Oh, those are *old!*"

Ummm....yes....I *know* those are old. That's exactly why I want them! But these thoughts I kept to myself and did not voice.

I forget if her answer was fifteen or twenty dollars – *for all of it!* Whichever one it was, I had that much in my wallet and didn't need to make a speedy run to the nearest ATM. I gave her the cash and started to lift them from the laundry basket.

"Oh, take that too," she said.

Knowing that I'd gotten the best end of the bargain, I forced myself to walk very slowly and calmly to the car, not taking off in a quick dash with the loot like I wanted to.

I made it about two blocks away before I pulled the car over so I could go through the basket and examine all the goodies. Three quilt tops – one huge one completely hand sewn – and thirty quilt squares, one embellished with "From Mother, To Doris" with "1934" stitched into the bonnet.

Twenty-seven of the thirty squares had a name stitched on it. It took me several years before I could track down the origins of these squares. It turned out that they were created by women and young girls in a now-defunct town, Athelstan, Iowa, that sat on the Iowa/Missouri border.

Knowing my non-sentimental sons wouldn't be interested in these pieces of the past, I knew that at some future date, the squares would be either back in another yard sale, or in the dumpster. I began looking for a local historical society that might be interested in them instead.

I found one. The Taylor County Historical Museum is located in the nearby town of Bedford, Iowa. And many of the descendants of the women that created these squares were still in the area. One of the daughters was even a volunteer at the museum, and by the time I took the squares to the Museum a few years later, she was the Director, although she's since stepped down but still involved with this awesome organization.

I delivered the quilt squares to the museum in 2014, eighty years after their creation. Over 70 people attended the presentation that morning, and I met and talked to many of the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the women who created these squares so many years ago. Six years later it is still one of my most treasured weekends. The friendships I made over these squares remain and they are still dear to my heart.

I know. You're thinking – this is a nice story, but what does it have to do with historical fiction?

Yes, it is a bit lengthier than I intended. But, these quilt squares are one of my favorite topics and, well, once you get me started...

But that's how an object can end up turning into a work of historical fiction. Sometimes all we need is a piece from the past that gets our mind wandering. We start thinking of who could have owned it? What role did it play in their life? How did they acquire it? And the plot starts spinning from there. Before we know it, we're developing characters, and timelines, and motives and scenes. And a story has its beginning.

The same has happened with these squares. I started a novel about them. Twice. But I've never gotten too far with it. In this case, because the people were real people that lived and walked the dusty roads of Athelstan, I want to do them justice. I don't want to willy-nilly write a story, and then someone's grandchild reads it and says – But Grandma wasn't like *that!*

But I have done a few short stories about the squares. Some have been published online. I won a writing contest with another. A few stories and articles – mostly nonfiction – were printed in national publications, such as *Quilters World*, *Country Magazine*, and *Good Old Days*.

Earlier this year, writing under the pen name Jasper Lynn, I published an easy reader about the quilt squares, [A Gift from the Heart](#). I have a chapter book underway and have a middle-grade book outlined for next year.

And the adult fictional tale? It's still in my brain, waiting to be told.

Meanwhile, while I'm still dabbling away, tentatively thinking about writing the story of the women behind these squares, other authors have completed the task and written their own stories featuring quilts.

Here are a few:

Sarah's Quilt: A Novel of Sarah Agnes Prine and the Arizona Territories, 1906, by Nancy E. Turner

In 1906, the badlands of Southern Arizona Territory is a desolate place where a three-year drought has changed the landscape for all time. When Sarah's well goes dry and months pass with barely a trace of rain, Sarah feels herself losing her hold upon the land. Desperate, Sarah's mother hires a water witch, a peculiar desert wanderer named Lazrus who claims to know where to find water. As he schemes and stalls, he develops an attraction to Sarah that turns into a frightening infatuation.

And just when it seems that life couldn't get worse, Sarah learns that her brother and his family have been trapped in the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. She and her father-in-law cannot even imagine the devastation that awaits them as they embark on a rescue mission to the stricken city.

Sarah is a pioneer of the truest spirit, courageous but gentle as she fights to save her family's home. But she never stops longing for the passion she once knew. Though her wealthy neighbor has asked her to wed, Sarah doesn't entirely trust him. And then Udell Hanna and his son come riding down the dusty road.

The Star Garden, by Nancy Turner

It is winter 1906, and nearing bankruptcy after surviving drought, storms, and the rustling of her cattle, Sarah remains a stalwart pillar to her extended family. Then a stagecoach accident puts in her path three strangers who will change her life.

In sickness and in health, neighbor Udell Hanna remains a trusted friend, pressing for Sarah to marry. When he reveals a plan to grant Sarah her dearest wish, she is overwhelmed with passion and excitement. She soon discovers, however, that there is more to a formal education than she bargained for.

Behind the scenes, Sarah's old friend Maldonado has struck a deal with the very men who will become linchpins of the Mexican Revolution. Maldonado plots to coerce Sarah into partnership, but when she refuses, he devises a murderous plan to gain her land for building a railroad straight to Mexico. When Sarah's son Charlie unexpectedly returns from town with a new bride, the plot turns into an all-out range war between the two families.

Finally putting an end to Udell's constant kindnesses, Sarah describes herself as "an iron-boned woman." She wants more than to be merely a comfortable fill-in for his dead wife. It is only through a chance encounter that she discovers his true feelings, and only then can she believe that a selfless love has at last reached out to her.

The Persian Pickle Club, by Sandra Dallas

It is the 1930s, and hard times have hit Harveyville, Kansas, where the crops are burning up, and there's not a job to be found. For Queenie Bean, a young farm wife, a highlight of each week is the gathering of the Persian Pickle Club, a group of local ladies dedicated to improving their minds, exchanging gossip, and putting their quilting skills to good use. When a new member of the club stirs up a dark secret, the women must band together to support and protect one another. In her magical, memorable novel, Sandra Dallas explores the ties that unite women through good times and bad

The Forgotten Seamstress, by Liz Trenow

A shy girl with no family, Maria knows she's lucky to have landed in the sewing room of the royal household. Before World War I casts its shadow, she catches the eye of the Prince of Wales, a glamorous and intense gentleman. But her life takes a far darker turn, and soon all she has left is a fantastical story about her time at Buckingham Palace.

Decades later, Caroline Meadows discovers a beautiful quilt in her mother's attic. When she can't figure out the meaning of the message embroidered into its lining, she embarks on a quest to reveal its mystery, a puzzle that only seems to grow more important to her own heart. As Caroline pieces together the secret history of the quilt, she comes closer and closer to the truth about Maria.

The Quilt Walk, by Sandra Dallas

It's 1863 and 10-year-old Emmy Blue Hatchett has been told by her father that soon their family will leave their farm, family, and friends in Illinois, and travel west to a new home in Colorado. It's difficult leaving family and friends behind. They might not see one another ever again. When Emmy's grandmother comes to say goodbye, she gives Emmy a special gift to keep her occupied on the trip. The journey by wagon train is long and full of hardships. But the Hatchetts persevere and reach their destination in Colorado, ready to start their new life.

The Mapmaker's Children, by Sarah McCoy

When Sarah Brown, daughter of abolitionist John Brown, realizes that her artistic talents may be able to help save the lives of slaves fleeing north, she becomes one of the Underground Railroad's leading mapmakers, taking her cues from the slave code quilts and hiding her maps within her paintings.

Eden, a modern woman desperate to conceive a child with her husband, moves to an old house in the suburbs and discovers a porcelain head hidden in the root cellar—the remains of an Underground Railroad doll with an extraordinary past of secret messages, danger and deliverance.



The quilt squares proudly displayed in their new home, and not stashed in someone's closet or being sold in a yard sale.

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Author Spotlight: DK Marley

Part of the fun of Pages of the Past and connecting with other historical fiction lovers is discovering new authors that write in era's that I typically don't read. DK Marley is one of those. I must admit that I've not read Shakespeare, nor have I read much of anything in this time period. (Fifty lashes!) But in meeting DK Marley and reading about how some of her books have developed, I'm anxious to dive into her books and this era. Join DK as she shares her writing journey with us today.



Today we welcome D.K. Marley as our spotlighted author. In just the last two years, D.K. Marley has four books to her credit and they're already winning awards. Her first book, *Blood and Ink*, has already won a Bronze medal from The Coffee Pot Book Club Awards, and a Silver award from the Golden Squirrel. Set in the late 1500s, Marley tackles a conundrum revolving around Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Can you tell us a little bit about what inspired your plot for this book?

Yes, of course! I have always been a Shakespeare fan since I was very young, so when I had the opportunity to visit London for the first time in 1997, I made plans to visit Stratford and the Globe Theatre in London. Upon my visit to the Globe, they were having an exhibition in the visitor's centre and one of the displays showed the five men who possibly wrote the plays of Shakespeare. I was rather shocked since I had never heard this premise before, but the notion intrigued me. I took out some pen and a napkin, I think, and jotted down some notes. I found myself drawn to one particular man - Christopher Marlowe. It wasn't until I returned to the States after the trip that I started doing some research and making more notes that I decided that this story needed to be written. It took 15 years from start to finish, a labour of love indeed, but that is how it all started.

I have to say that you're much more knowledgeable about Shakespeare than I am, probably more so than most readers. What inspired your fascination with this legendary playwright?

My grandmother started my fascination with Shakespeare. She was an English Literature teacher and an avid fan herself of the Bard. When I was 11 years old, she caught me sitting in her hallway in front of her bookshelf with her college textbooks in my lap. One was her copy of the Complete Works of Shakespeare. Later that afternoon, she came up to me with it in her hands and handed it to me, saying it was a gift since she saw how much I loved reading it. After that, I was hooked.

Your second book, *The Prince of Denmark*, follows with the Shakespeare theme. How does this book differ from your first?

I really tried to stay true to the original, only deviating when I felt the story needed to expand. A play is only a four-hour slice of the real story and a fiction novel allows you to really delve into the details of things and actions and feelings that are behind the scenes. I used the play by Shakespeare as a base, changing the wording to a more modern rendering, but then filled in the backstory. So, what you have is a more fleshed out version of Shakespeare's play. And with a few secrets revealed that the Bard did not reveal on stage!

Your third book, *Child of Love & Water*, jumps away from your prior two, both in era and in continent. *Child of Love & Water*, while still very historical in its setting – 1722 – is still far from the late 1500s/early 1600s of your earlier books. And it moves clear across the ocean to an early America. Can we ask what prompted this new tale and how it transpired from inception to printed book?

This book is truly one from my heart. I lived close to Jekyll Island for a while and the island is my family's favourite vacation spot. From the time my kids were little, we spent at least one time a year there until my husband and I finally moved there in 2011. I worked on and off on the book throughout the years and for a long time it just sat on my shelf. But then, in 2015 when I lost my daughter to a drunk driver, the time came for me to finish and publish it since the theme of love, and the relationship between a mother and daughter, pulsed vivid in my brain.

Jekyll is truly an enchanting island. I remember sitting there on the beach when I first thought of the book and thinking of how peaceful and how much love the island emits. I started thinking of the island itself as a young girl, an innocent girl, and wondered about the history of the island. How did the first settlers change her? What kind of intolerance and racism did this pure unadulterated beauty experience all those centuries ago?

When you sit on the beach there, families gather of all races, and there are no thoughts of intolerance or colour, so I thought how this young girl might teach that in her own innocent way. Anyway, that is how the book started.

You were on a roll and the books were flowing. Your next book, released a year ago, *The Fire of Winter*, revolves around Lady Macbeth and the rule of Scotland. How did Lady Macbeth end up being the central character in your latest book?

Again, since this is in my Fractured Shakespeare series as is *The Prince of Denmark*, I knew the subject of Macbeth must be next. Everyone knows the story from Macbeth's point of view, but what of the lady? I know the story has been told before, even from her POV, but somehow I wanted to do the same I did with

Hamlet, to let the play be the guide and to flesh out the scenes. I added quite a bit to the backstory with this one, though, since there is so much the play does not tell about Lady Macbeth's motivation behind doing what she did. I did have to make her a bit of a monster, but when you read why, I hope some readers will feel a bit of empathy for her. However, I must admit, her own ambition does not lend itself to you remaining with that feeling. She is very much like Rebecca Sharp from *Vanity Fair* in that regard, at least I hope readers feel that way.

We've asked before – and been told that an author can't choose a 'favorite child'. But, of your four books, is one closer to your heart than the others? And why, or why not?

Blood and Ink is definitely my favourite, and then, *Child of Love & Water*. *Blood and Ink* was my longest cared for child, and *Child of Love & Water* was the one who ripped my heart out.

I have to admit that Shakespeare is not one that I've really read, nor been drawn to. But after reading about your books, I'll confess that I'm intrigued and am now looking forward to reading them. For others that perhaps haven't read much in this particular era, is there anything you'd like to share about this period that may tempt us to devour the pages?

In the literary world, Shakespeare is taboo. You don't mess with Shakespeare, I have learned. But I am a writer and his life is an open book, so to speak. There are too many questions, too many secrets and possibilities for one not to want to know more. Readers crave to peer inside a person's life, to peek through the chink in the wall, or press an ear to the door. Yet, so many people are intimidated by the works of Shakespeare, or they think the plays are boring, or too long, or too wordy, or too hard to read, which all of it may be true to a certain degree, so that is why I decided to offer up a different way of reading his works. Books are for entertainment, the same that his plays were for entertainment. His plays are better seen on-stage to be understood, and my books are better read and heard to obtain a rounded perspective of the man himself. The Tudor Era is no doubt one of the most fascinating periods of English history, thus the reason for so many books written about it. The intrigue and secrets will probably never come to an end, thus giving writers like myself an endless opportunity for more stories. I love the line from Hamlet, which I have used in relation to my books - "And therefore as a stranger give it a welcome. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Is there anything you'd like to share with us that I didn't ask you about?

I am currently working on the third and fourth in the Fractured Shakespeare series based on Romeo and Juliet, and The Merchant of Venice, with the tentative titles of "*Star-crossed*" and "*The Jew*". And a NEW series, on a completely different vein, four books in the series in the Historical Fantasy Time-Travel Genre, with the tentative titles of "*The Rowan Tree*", "*Once Upon a Time*", "*The Dolorous Stroke*", and "*Time Heals All Wounds*" - five sisters disappear from Wales during the conflict of WWI and find themselves immersed in the story of King Arthur. So, I am busy busy busy!! Thank you so much for inviting me to participate in this interview!

Thank you for joining us today, D.K. We appreciate your time in sharing your passion with us. Please leave a few links where our readers can find you and your books and we'll go follow and friend you.



You can find DK Marley's books here:

Blood and Ink: <https://www.amazon.com/Blood-Ink-DK-Marley-ebook/dp/B07BTPM222>

Child of Love & Water: <https://www.amazon.com/Child-Love-Water-DK-Marley-ebook/dp/B07J9VWY17>

The Fire of Winter: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07SGYFZT8>

The Prince of Denmark is currently preparing for re-release with the upcoming release of an audiobook.

You can find DK Marley here:

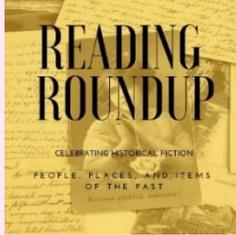
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BIO: D. K. Marley is a Historical fiction author specializing in alternate historicals, Shakespearean adaptations, and historical time-travel. She lives in the United States with her husband and an English Labrador.

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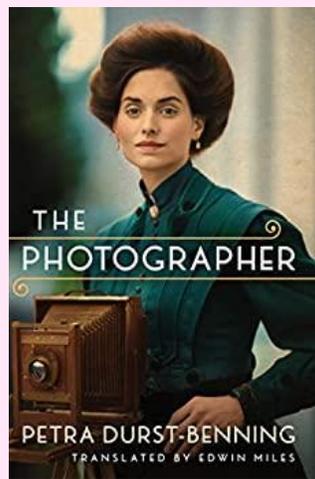
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The 1900s/1910s

The Photographer

Petra Durst Benning



In 1905, on her twenty-sixth birthday, Mimi Reventlow receives a marriage proposal from the vicar of her family's church. But a future of housework, childcare, and servicing a parish doesn't appeal to the restless and unconventional Mimi. She has ambitions of her own—to follow in the footsteps of her beloved uncle Josef and become a traveling photographer. Leaving behind all that has been mapped out for her, Mimi dares to pursue her passion and sets out alone to make her own mark.

A visit to her ailing uncle in the idyllic mountain town of Laichingen, Germany, pauses Mimi's journey. Here, among provincialism and rejection, she struggles to find her place within a vibrant but wary community. But Mimi's resilience is only strengthened by adversity. Her courage is indomitable. Maybe here, among surprising kindred spirits and longing hearts, in a place she never expected, Mimi's dreams might be coming into focus.

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