

# Book Reviews

**Gone Girl** by Gillian Flynn (Orion Publishing Group, \$25.00) Gillian Flynn is the architect of some intriguing and complicated schemes in this story; nothing less than genius, the way she lays the groundwork and brings it all together. When Nick Dunne's wife Amy disappears on their fifth wedding anniversary, she leaves a disheveled house, indicating a struggle and probable kidnapping. She also leaves a diary, presented in alternating chapters, through which we get to know her—at least we think we do. We're duped for a number of entries; later a new personality begins to emerge and renders her nearly unrecognizable.

By that time, she's presumed dead. "It's always the husband," Nick laments, as he is grilled by detectives Jim Gilpin and his partner Rhonda Boney, whose appearance, in some of the book's funnier moments, prompts "I've Got a Girl Named Boney Maroney" to run through his mind. We get to know Nick through alternating autobiographical accounts of his life prior to, with, and after Amy, and we soon discover that we didn't know him as well as we thought either.

Additional characters in the lives of each spouse further erode their picture-perfect images. The conclusion has been criticized by some as disappointing, maybe even a copout by the author. Perhaps Flynn's ending was more realistic than one wrapped up neatly and tied with a bow. *Gone Girl* is now a movie with Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike; hopefully, the filmed version will be as compelling and entertaining as the book.—*Tamara Shaffer*

**An Unnecessary Woman** by Rabih Alameddine (Grove Press, \$25.00) Seeking refuge from the dangerous Beirut streets in her apartment and in the literature she adores, seventy-year-old Aaliya Saleh knows that most people consider her life to have been a wasted one. After the death of her father when Aaliya is only two, when she and her mother move to the house of the man who is both her uncle and new father and her cousins must make room for another two mouths at the table, Aaliya has al-



ways known that she is not fully welcome anywhere. As an adult, when she dares to divorce her husband after a few years of unhappy marriage, Aaliya understands that her life path will be challenging and unconventional.

The only saving grace in her life is the comfort provided by literature. From the age of fourteen, she begins translating books into Arabic. For a nonreligious woman, the translations, which she begins every January 1, becomes her new religion. She has dozens of completed translations awaiting publication in her empty guest bedroom which she imagines will gain her kind of immortality, the same immortality as that possessed by the original authors.

Aaliya is irreverent and blackly funny. She is both aware of her desire for a modicum of fame and self-mocking at the same time. She writes, "I didn't dream of becoming a star, but I thought I might have a small non-speakingrole in a grand epic, an epic with a touch of artistic credentials. I didn't dream of becoming a giant—I wasn't that delusional or arrogant—but I wanted to be more than a speck—maybe a midget. I could have been a midget."

Aaliya who has spent much of the novel narrating neighborhood activity from the safety of her apartment, finally experiences a family emergency that necessitates a visit to her cousins and mother. She also has an encounter with her neighbors that lead the reader to believe that perhaps, just perhaps,

Aaliya's forty years of translations may not have been wasted after all. She may be proven to be a midget in the end. As readers we can only hope that one of our own will succeed.—*Susan E. Zinner*

**The New Love Deal: Everything You Must Know Before Marrying, Moving In, or Moving On!** by Gemma Allen, Judge Michele Lowrance, and Terry Savage (The New Love Deal, Inc., \$16.95). Three experienced Chicago professionals: a prominent family lawyer (View from the Bar), a long-time judge and mediator (View from the Bench), and a famed financial writer (View from the Bottom Line) provide excellent doses of common sense and sensibility on a variety of relationship issues essential reading for all couples from Park Avenue to the park bench, whether they are getting married, moving in together, have children and property together, or have been married or living together for years. As the authors clearly state: "The process of discussion, negotiation, and finding solutions requires openness and integrity. Those are also the requirements of a successful relationship."

The landscape for love has changed. In order to cope with this "new deal," the authors share step-by-step smart suggestions, lessons learned, and questions to ask as well as checklists, myths, truths, and pitfalls to avoid. They argue that this is a process and it takes planning. Write things down. Listen to each other. Negotiate with each other as life changes the love landscape. The benefit is that readers can create a firm foundation for a lasting life together.

The authors are pragmatic and honest in their approach. They show how to reduce the odds of courting disaster. From estate planning and insurance to cohabitation, prenuptial, and postnuptial agreements—the authors present a treasure trove of advice, examples, and information. Best of all, they share numerous ideas for helping all of us plan for success to make our hopes and dreams a reality. This book is the real deal on love and life, love and the law, and money matters of the heart.—*Kathleen A. Welton*