



New World Monkeys

Nancy Mauro

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A savagely smart, darkly comic literary debut, *New World Monkeys* exposes the false idols of marital tranquillity, small-town idyll, and corporate Darwinism in the dazzling voice of a major new talent.

Duncan and Lily, young and adrift in a prickly marriage and lackluster careers, flee Manhattan for the peaceful allure of a recently inherited crumbling Victorian home. But the two are left with little time to ponder the traditional "he said, she said" failings of a relationship: On an upstate road miles shy of their house, a wild boar leaps to his death in front of their Saab—an accident whose consequences will haunt them throughout the summer.

That was no ordinary hog.

Lily and Duncan arrive in the eccentric town of Osterhagen to discover the boar had a name: The Sovereign of the Deep Wood. That it was the town mascot. And, as the hapless urbanites are coerced into the vortex of tea socials, cannon fire, and communal history, they realize that the residents of the bizarre hamlet intend to seek justice for their fallen hero.

Next come the bones.

Duncan, an adman whose controversial new campaign could make or break his career, wants a temporary escape from the pressures of urban life. But his pastoral retreat darkens when an attempt at gardening turns up a human femur in the lawn, a headstone inscribed simply Tinker, 1902, and a sense that Lily's family may have violence in its aristocratic blood.

And then there's Lloyd.

Lily, conflicted about her marriage and her career, spends her days at the local library researching her impossibly arcane dissertation topic but can't seem to make any progress. One day she observes the town pervert in action and befriends him.

Lloyd, a Peeping Tom, invites her to follow him on a bird's-eye tour of Osterhagen that may help her home in on her own flaws and failings.

Keep digging.

Thrown together in their complicity over the boar's death, fueled to exhume Tinker's bones from the garden, and inspired by Lloyd's philosophical savoir faire, Duncan and Lily begin to excavate the profound truth about themselves and their marriage. But how deep can the two dig before the summer's violent beginning catches up with them?

New World Monkeys Details

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From Reader Review New World Monkeys for online ebook

Roy says

3-1/2 stars. Not being able to award half stars is the only bone I have to pick with this otherwise fantastic site. Nancy Mauro's *New World Monkeys* is better than most of the books I've awarded 3 stars to here but not quite in the league of the majority of those I've given 4-star reviews. Alas I had no choice but to either round up or down. This fine debut novel, told in alternating narration, is in short about a married Manhattanite couple that has reached a rocky patch, one they're unwilling or unable to communicate about other than by allowing themselves to grow apart. When Lily inherits a house in upstate New York she uses this as an excuse to move there for the summer while working on her obscure dissertation, never mind that the small town's library is insufficient for her needs. Her husband Duncan is an ad man, balancing his eat or be eaten profession with taking the trip upstate once a week to spend weekends with his wife. So they're separated, but not really; married but no longer intimate in any sense of the word; perhaps still in love with each other but neither certain how to express it. The change of scenery brings various quirky characters into their unsettled lives and immediately puts blood on their hands, that of a not so wild boar which turns out to be the town mascot. Duncan has a jeans campaign that he's in charge of as distraction from the state of his marriage, Lily has an unlikely friendship with the local Peeping Tom willing to show her the ropes as diversion, and together the couple find a mystery to literally unearth in the form of a scattered skeleton buried in their garden. But the various odd characters and events that populate this tale mainly function as backdrop to the story of a couple trying to determine if they've reached the end of their road, or merely a slippery turning point. Mauro's command of language is strong and her skillful prose moves the reader through the pages of her book swiftly. I look forward to more from her.

Shirley says

Well, those are many hours I will never get back! What a waste of my time! I should have abandoned this book a long time ago but I kept on reading hoping it would improve. It didn't. A couple whose marriage is in trouble go to a summer home hoping that maybe things will change. So many odd and yet trivial things occur. The title has no relevance until possibly right near the ending. The ending isn't believable. Give this one a pass.

Amber Sky says

Marriage to someone you do not like is torture. So much torture that if you write about it and it becomes published and someone like me who reads the jacket will check it out, spend the whole night reading it and feel like she/he has been through the whole tortuous ordeal themselves. Well written in that it kept me up longer than I should have been finishing it but too well written that it made me wish that one of the characters would just break, call it quits so I could feel some sort of satisfaction. I enjoyed the side stories, but I found myself wondering what reality it was set in? It irked me. I'm still mad I stayed up so late reading it. The writing was beautiful though. The idea for a blue jean ad campaign... not so much.

Rebecca Gomez Farrell says

The premise of the book is fine--a couple getting close to divorce spend the summer in an old, family heirloom of a house, and end up killing the town mascot of a boar, digging up the bones of an old family legend, and indulging their craziest urges in order to find themselves again. There's a lot that's right about that premise, but I'm really not fond of the idea that humans need to embrace their innate animals to have true realizations of who they are. I just don't agree, and reading a book that ultimately has that as its central idea does not appeal to me. Plus, I didn't like any of the characters. So . . . meh.

Jason Furman says

At it's best this book merits five stars. The opening scene -- in which the husband runs over a feral hog and the wife finishes him off -- is a masterpiece of psychologically insightful black comedy. And the advertising campaign developed over the course of the book for a company that makes both flared and straight blue jeans tops anything Mad Men has come up with. Overall, the book is highly original, funny, and psychologically insightful as it diagnoses a marriage that is falling apart and then comes back together. That said, it is also somewhat repetitive at points and aimless the second half is at times aimless. But I'm very much looking forward to Nancy Mauro's second novel.

Jennifer says

Manhattanites Lily and Duncan's marriage is falling apart, so they decide that Lily will take up residence in her family's run-down Victorian mansion in a village along the Hudson. There she will work to finish her dissertation while Duncan, an advertising exec, visits on weekends. Village life, the pursuit of Ph.D.s, and the world of advertising (shades of Mad Men), are all mercilessly and amusingly sent up. All library employees will appreciate the antics of the local pervert who finds the study carrels of the local library the perfect place to stalk uniformed parochial schoolgirls. "New World Monkeys" takes on so many cotemporary habits in a way that feels very Evelyn Waugh to me.

Aaron says

The dividing line between this book only getting one star and the two I decided on is how beautiful the writing is and how fantastically developed the two main characters are.

The themes and plot of this book revolve around a few very odd things: the accidental death of a wild boar, the discovery of human remains in an otherwise serene yard, attachment to a pedophilic pervert, and the use of Viet Nam as an image to sell blue jeans. All of these elements combine to tell the story of a troubled marriage finding its way again. Throughout the novel, the two main characters would consistently do things that made me hate them a mere few pages after I had learned to love them again. In the end, I was rooting for the couple, understood the things they had learned about themselves, and was on board with where they stood as a marital unit, but my continual contemplation throughout that I should give up and read something else instead does not make me believe that any of these things will stick in my mind very long.

Joy says

Ever been pretty much apathetic to a book and yet you can't put it down? That's the dilemma I faced with "New World Monkeys." The book is the story of two married 30 somethings, Lily and Duncan, whose marriage is strained.

Lily decides to spend her summer at the ancestral home her parents inherited while Duncan joins her during the summer several hours north of New York City. The couple accidentally kills a boar their first night and spends the summer lying to the townspeople about the slaying. The townspeople for the most part are one dimensional and almost caricatures of stereotypes. The scrapes the couple gets into are fairly trivial and unbelievable. The ending seems pretty much thrown together and abrupt. All in all, avoid this book.

Paula Hebert says

any book that has as one of its central characters the town mascot, a wild boar named Sovereign of the Deep Woods, has to be read, take an emotionally removed couple from new york, add the aforesaid porker, some incensed farmers and townspeople, the local pervert, a family skeleton-really!-and let things ferment. I felt like I was in the twilight zone reading this novel, just a little off balance at every turn, until things are so out of control you can't go back. the couple, unlikeable as they are, are fleshed out and think through their seperate dilemmas with well written phrasing, bringing the reader into the story with them. I really enjoyed reading this book.

Diane says

3.0 out of 5 stars Great Writing....but...Not a Story for Me, December 12, 2009

Customer review from the Amazon Vine™ Program (What's this?)

In NEW WORLD MONKEYS, Lily and Duncan are a Manhattan couple, whose marriage has seen better days. Duncan is in Advertising, and working on a new campaign, and Lily is working on her dissertation. They are headed to upstate New York to a run down mansion that has been in Lily's family for years. On their drive along a darkened road, out pops a wild boar that runs smack into their car. If that isn't bad enough, the animal is not dead yet. So Lily does what Duncan won't do and take a tire iron to the creature to put an end to its suffering. They then move the boar to a ditch and continue on their way to the quaint village of Osterhagen (fictional). To the couple's surprise they find out the boar was actually the town's mascot: Sovereign the Deep Wool! The boar had a owner who isn't very happy that Sovereign is missing, and he is bent on seeking revenge. There are more offshoots to this story, but I did not think it was necessary to reveal all the details.

My Thoughts - I had some reservations about this story, but I love trying out new debut authors so I gave it a go. The story is quirky and, for me it was outright bizarre. Don't get me wrong, this author has potential; her writing style is terrific, and the characters were well developed. It is just that this novel had multiple story lines, and unsympathetic characters and a story that just did not work for me.

Chris says

I did not enjoy this book at all. I read through to the end, because I figured with all the positive reviews that it had to get better at some point. To start, I did not find the characters likable in anyway. From Lily and Duncan's refusal to communicate, to their "inability" to fess up about the boar, to Lily's friendship with the local perv, and finally to Duncan's marketing of Vietnam, there was nothing to like.

Mathew Peters says

BANAL, dull, painfully boring I could go on and on about how bad this book is. The tension in the marriage lacks real emotion, the plot is not compelling, and the author appears to be writing a narrative solely to advertise just how pretentious she is. I could care less about the dead bore, the buried body, or the outcome of this couples marriage, and that is largely due to the authors failure to build any suspense. Largely her failings are due to the narrative style she chose. This might have been a compelling story if she had limited the narration to one of the characters but because she decides to tell us the story I find myself not being able to relate to the spineless marketing husband or the cold hearted bitch of a wife. I don't know how the author could stand to revise this over and over because reading it only once has been torturous,

Sally Ross says

First of all, I would never review a book I didn't finish reading, which just makes me crazy when I see people do this. I had many mixed emotions about this one. It was funny at times and also dark, but what it left me with "when finished" was apathy. I didn't care about the characters in this book at all. I didn't care what happened to them or any of the crazy people in their town. I was glad to be done with the book just so I wouldn't have to keep these people in my life. That being said, the author has woven a very original story with strong character development, but for me, as Randy would say; "It was just all right".

Carol says

The title is a bit silly, and deceiving: this is a very finely tuned story of a marriage in trouble, a wild boar, advertising, and a small town. I would love to have a conversation with Nancy Mauro to see if her speech is as elegantly crafted and precisely chosen as her writing. An example (in a chapter about observing an elderly woman): "The old woman below is covered in flesh only loosely tacked to the bone here and there, at the elbows and temple and knees...A tangle of veins decorates her thighs, blue tinsel wrapped indiscriminately around a tree." But not all her sentences are like this - she wisely knows to vary their structure and length to keep the story moving and to give us a break to digest what she has just painted.

The couple in peril, Duncan and Lily, are flawed and not quite loveable, like people you care for going through a bad spell. The small-town residents seem to have been weirded-up a notch for dramatic purposes, and, for the same purposes, the advertising folk are supreme, and almost unbelievable, asswipes (ps - thanks for that word, Mr. Bellow!) But none of these liberties ruin the swing of the story, and the exquisite pleasure

in Mauro's crafted sentences.

Mauro deserves fame and fortune for her storytelling and scene- and character-building skills.

Nick Cato says

After reading about this in a 2009 issue of Writer's Digest magazine, I was lured in by the quirky premise: but thanks to my heavy reading schedule, I missed the original hardcover release. The trade edition came out this past September, and I'm glad I finally had the chance to check out Mauro's highly-praised debut novel.

Duncan and Lily have been married 5 years. Already on the verge of separation, Lily decides to spend the summer at an inherited Victorian home in the small upstate town of Osterhagen in order to work on her dissertation. Duncan--recently put in charge of a make-him or break-him ad campaign--plans to visit on the weekends but remain in the city during the week to get the job done.

The tale takes a strange turn right from the get-go when our couple run over a wild boar on their ride upstate. Stuck under the front of their Saab, Lily puts the boar out of its misery with a tire iron when Duncan hesitates to do so. They place the animal in a nearby ditch, and shortly after settling in the new home they learn the boar was actually the town's mascot...and that it has a jealous owner.

While Duncan puts together a controversial ad campaign in the city (he attempts to sell blue jeans using a Vietnam theme and two porn-looking asian models), Lily begins her studies at the Osterhagen library, only to be distracted by a peeping Tom named Lloyd. Fascinated by his techniques, she actually befriends him and begins to join him on excursions. The relationship between these two is the highlight of the novel.

Duncan's growing paranoia about his wife deepens when he attempts to start a gardening project in their new backyard, only to unearth human bones they learn belonged to Lily's great grandfather's nanny: the couple become obsessed with piecing together the skeleton as well as the story behind it: all the while they're trying to keep their secret of killing the boar under cover, the boar's owner's annoying poodle starts to show up in their back yard, digging around their bone find. Eventually, Duncan takes care of the poodle in an attempt to make up for his mishandling of the boar situation.

With some serious small-town tension that brings several classic horror stories to mind, nearly endless dark and sarcastic humor, and three of the richest characters I've had the pleasure of reading in many moons, NEW WORLD MONKEYS is a love story that's anything but sappy; Mauro cleverly uses odd relationships, unusual situations, and rich symbolism (as well as Lily's past) to study a couple on an uncertain course. The final chapter is a surreal, beautiful end note that had me longing for more.

Even if literary novels aren't your thing, NEW WORLD MONKEYS is a best bet if you're seeking something truly out of the ordinary. I'll most certainly be reading this one again.
