



The Haunted Bookshop

Christopher Morley

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A charming and entertaining novel that captures the romance of books and bookshops. "When you sell a man a book," says Roger Mifflin, protagonist of this classic bookselling novel, "you don't sell him just twelve ounces of paper and ink and glue--you sell him a whole new life." The Haunted Bookshop finds Mifflin and his wife, Helen McGill, ensconced in Brooklyn, where they encounter some strange goings-on in their bookstore. The unraveling of the mystery provides a rollicking plot while allowing Mifflin (and Morley) to expound on the delights of reading and the intricacy of the bookseller's art. Newly designed and typeset in a modern 6-by-9-inch format by Waking Lion Press.

The Haunted Bookshop Details

Date : Published July 1st 2008 by Classic Books Library (first published 1918)

ISBN : 9781600967733

Author : Christopher Morley

Format : Paperback 168 pages

Genre : Fiction, Writing, Books About Books, Mystery, Classics

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From Reader Review The Haunted Bookshop for online ebook

Cyndi says

If you go to this book looking for ghosts you'll be disappointed but if you go to it looking for humor, a mystery and interesting characters straight out of the end of WWI then this is a good choice.

President Wilson is headed out to the peace talks at the end of the war. The trip is the opening terrorists have been waiting for.

The Haunted Bookshop, so named because the owner is haunted by all the books he hasn't read (I can identify, Dude) has lost track of a book. He is happy someone loved the book enough to steal it. It is also the Presidents favorite book.

This was an excellent book and a fun read! One of my favorite parts was the prescriptions the bookshop owner put on his bulletin board. He called them his 'bibliotherapy'. He listed books for when a person needs happiness, or if you have trouble sleeping, etc. ??

Miriam says

I seem to be the only person to like Morley's first book, Parnassus on Wheels, better than the sequel. I think it was mainly that I enjoyed Helen as a POV character better than Aubrey, who I didn't much care for. I mean, I get that his callow-youth-ness was deliberate, but I didn't care much about him nor was I rooting for him to get the girl. You can do better, Titania!

The German spy plot was pretty silly, although it probably held up better in the WWI era. It was fun, though, and all the parts about books were good.

Sue says

This is a charming homage to the world of second hand booksellers, set in the time immediately after WWI. Roger Mifflin reprises his role begun in Parnassus on Wheels but is now stationary with his now-wife Helen in a bookstore in Brooklyn, not rolling along the roads of the country as an itinerant bookseller. The story allows for frequent philosophical musing on the place of books in the then modern world, the place of the seller as an educator of the masses.

If this sounds heavy, it most definitely is not. The novel is light and fun with a smile on most every page. Some of the thoughts about the publishing industry seem surprisingly modern. It seems some things never change. There is a mystery and a romance to top off the tale.

Highly recommended as a period piece but I recommend reading "Parnassus on Wheels" first.

Jasbr says

In diesem Buch steckt wirklich sehr viel: Wir lernen nicht nur eine außergewöhnliche und unvergleichliche Buchhandlung in New York kennen, in der es spukt, sondern auch einige tolle Charaktere, die man einfach gern haben muss. An erster Stelle steht hier natürlich der Buchhändler Roger Mifflin, der durch seine Liebe zu Büchern überzeugt und immer das passende Zitat für jede Lebenssituation zur Hand hat. Seine Art macht ihn sympathisch, denn für ihn stehen immer die Bücher und die Literatur im Vordergrund, nicht der Profit. Seine Frau Helen, die ich schon im Prequel super fand, bekommt in dieser Geschichte leider nur eine kleine Rolle. Dafür lernen wir Titania kennen, eine junge Frau aus gutem Haus, die die Arbeit in der Buchhandlung beginnt und etwas frischen Wind zwischen die verstaubten Buchregale bringt.

Die Geschichte lebt von ihren Charakteren, zeigt sich aber auch sehr gesellschaftskritisch, vor allem gegenüber dem 1. Weltkrieg, der kurz vor dem Einsetzen der Handlung endete. Der Autor lässt durch seinen Protagonisten die Sinnlosigkeit eines solchen Krieges aufzeigen und plädiert für den Frieden.

Aber es geht nicht nur um Bücher: Auch Spannung ist geboten, sodass der Leser auch in eine kleine Kriminalgeschichte verwickelt wird. Diese zieht sich zwar durch das ganze Buch, war für mich jetzt aber eher eine kleine, schöne Nebenhandlung mit einer Wendung, mit der ich gar nicht gerechnet habe.

Der Schreibstil ist auch hier sehr klassisch, was mir sehr gut gefallen hat, da es sich super schön lesen lässt und mal etwas ganz anderes ist. Schön sind auch die vielen Buchzitate, die in die Handlung integriert werden. Ich habe richtig Lust bekommen, wieder mehr Klassiker zu lesen, auch wenn es leider nicht alle erwähnten Bücher wirklich gibt. Manche Titel entspringen dann der doch der Fantasie des Autors.

Insgesamt hat mich das Buch genauso wie sein Prequel begeistert: Von mir gibt es 5 Sterne! Nehmt es in die Hand, ihr werdet es so schnell nicht wieder weglegen.

Sketchbook says

"Read, every day, something no one else is reading," said the civilized Christopher Morley. Here's his valentine to lovers of books and bookshops. What are spies doing at the shop in Brooklyn? Reading the same book, of course.

An early work (1919) from the likeable Morley is excessively *cute*. It reads like a YA story as W1 spies in Brooklyn seek to plant a bomb in a book that will be given to dullard President Wilson as he heads by ship to the Peace Conference. This ode to bookstores, "one of humanity's great engines," has a barking dog who nabs the culprit and has a final woof.

Kwoomac says

This book is a follow up to Morley's *Parnassus on Wheels*. Here rather than a traveling bookshop, the setting is a bricks and mortar shop in Brooklyn. I was definitely disappointed with this second book, starring the same characters. Where the first book made no mention of WWI, this book beat me over the head with it. It was written in 1919. Lots of lecturing by Roger Mifflin, the protag of *Parnassus*. The tone is very anti-German. Where I found Mifflin to be lovable and passionate and maybe a tad eccentric in *Parnassus*, here I found him to be a long-winded bore. I felt like I was trapped in a room with a boring history professor. There was no way for me to escape. I have found I can't generally skim because I'm sure I'll miss something critical

(unless it's gory, then I skip away), so I slogged through many speeches on war. I kept chanting as I read along: two stars, two stars, two stars. The author had a section about the masks we wear around others, always hiding our true selves. I felt like he was trying too hard and should've stuck to the lighter tone of Parnassus.

Then, the focus moved from Mifflin to our hero, Aubrey Gilbert. Aubrey has romantic feelings for Titania, the beautiful young woman working in Mifflin's shop. Aubrey is sure there's something underhanded and possibly dangerous going on in the bookstore, so he decides to investigate before anyone (Titania) gets hurt. Aubrey works at an advertising agency, and he can't seem to turn off that part of his brain. In every situation, he thought of a way to sell a product. I quite enjoyed those bits. That part of the story was fun and earned it another star.

Back to what I didn't like. I hated the treatment of the dog Bock in both books. In Parnassus, Mifflin sells his bookmobile to Helen McGill, including his horse and dog. Okay, I'm not a horse person, so I could kind of see that he considered the horse a working animal needed to pull the caravan but to just give away a dog you've had for ten years! Ten years! And he gives him away to a stranger!

Maybe I'm taking this too personally. A few years ago, I saw a picture of a grizzled old chocolate lab in the local paper. He was ten years old and free for adoption. I took one look at those sad brown eyes and knew I had to have him. My husband was less sure. We had another lab and two cats already. When I called to get the story on Bodhi, I was told the owners were a young couple who were moving to Florida. They took Bodhi's 11-year-old mother with them and brought Bodhi to the pound. Separated him from his mother! Once my husband heard that, it was a done deal. Bodhi was the best dog ever! We only had him for three short years, but it was the best decision ever. My sweet Bodhi boy.

So anyway, back to the book. It bothered me that he just gave Bock away in Parnassus. Regarding the second book, let's just say I was not happy with Bock's role.

On a positive and final note, I learned a new word, always fun. A librocubicularist is someone who reads in bed! That's me!

Dorian says

Many - most? - of the books available on Project Gutenberg are otherwise forgotten. Some of them quite deservedly so. And this is one of those.

Roger Mifflin runs a secondhand bookshop in just-post-WW1 Brooklyn, and expounds at great and rather tedious length on his philosophy of bookselling. Aubrey Gilbert works for an advertising agency and falls in love with Roger's "apprentice", the beautiful daughter of the advertising agency's biggest client. A copy of Carlyle's "Cromwell" keeps vanishing from and reappearing on the bookshop's shelves.

The basic story is a slightly silly, but perfectly serviceable, thriller involving Aubrey, the bookshop, and German spies. It also contains much to interest the dabbler in social history, with the descriptions of lodging houses, cheap restaurants, and other details of life in New York a hundred years ago. Unfortunately, the author couldn't resist letting Roger babble on about books, bookselling, and reading, at quite appalling and utterly irrelevant length, leaving the story hanging at often inopportune moments. And his thoughts, alas, are repetitive and not really very interesting.

The author would have done better to have saved the philosophising for an essay and left the story uninterrupted.

Pamela says

Jolly good fun! A delightful story (love letter of sorts in a figurative way) celebrating bookshops, booksellers, bibliophiles, wordsmiths, and the joyous phenomenon of being 'haunted' by books.

"Did you ever notice how books track you down and hunt you out? They follow you like the hound in Francis Thompson's poem. They know their quarry! . . . It's one of the uncanniest things I know to watch a real book on its career - it follows you and follows you and drives you into a corner and makes you read it."

Woven into this classic is a dallying real world romance between Roger's apprentice bookshop clerk and a newly acquired advertising acquaintance, in addition to an 'explosive' bit of book sleuthing surrounding the disappearing, reappearing, Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, with Elucidations by Thomas Carlyle: Volume 1.

"Living in a bookshop is like living in a warehouse of explosives. Those shelves are ranked with the most furious combustibles in the world - the minds of men."

Morely's writing is such that one can't help be amused, enlightened, and drawn in by wit, wisdom, and wonderment. There's something here for every bibliophile - whatever your genre preference. Especially delightful: the laugh aloud moments of snark and snick humor poking fun at advertising, publishing, literary deficiencies, marriage, and book haunting's.

"Some people have let their reading faculties decay so that all I can do is hold a post mortem on them. But most are still open to treatment. There is no one so grateful as the man to whom you have given just the book his soul needed and he never knew it."

Fun illustrations too. And so many, marvelous quotable quotes:

"The real book-lovers, you know, are generally among the humbler classes. A man who is impassioned with books has little time or patience to grow rich by concocting schemes for cozening his fellows."

"One thing . . . you must grant the bookseller. He is tolerant. He is patient of all ideas and theories. Surrounded, engulfed by the torrent of men's words, he is willing to listen to them all."

"It is only the very young who find satisfaction in lying abed in the morning. Those who approach the term of the fifth decade are sensitively aware of the fluency of life, and have no taste to squander it among the blankets."

Oh, yes, so many marvelous quotes!! AND a plethora of literary masters and their works are celebrated within these antiquated pages - pages steeped in the luscious essence of aging bookbinding aromas -that I've jotted down to haunt, before they haunt me.

All the way around (sans a rambling letter mid book that seemed stuck in like a footnote???) I thought this a most worthy and enjoyable reading experience.

FOUR **** Bibliophile Wonderful, Humorously Entertaining, Classic Wordsmithy **** STARS

Maria Clara says

UNA DELICIA. En serio, una historia deliciosa, mágica. Su autor, Christopher Morley, nos adentra en una librería encantada (tal como reza el título del libro), donde conoceremos la pasión que siente el librero por los libros; por esos fantasmas que, según él, asechan a todo lector. También veremos y conoceremos a la señorita Titania, hija de un rico hombre de negocios, que se traslada a vivir a la librería, y como no, al publicista que palpita por su amor. Y como no podía ser de otra manera, toda historia necesita un misterio..., que no voy a desvelar.

"No soy un negociante, sino un especialista en ajustar cada libro a una necesidad humana. Un libro que para mí es bueno a usted podría parecerle una tontería. Mi gran placer es prescribir libros para todos los pacientes que vengan hasta aquí deseosos de contarme sus síntomas. Algunas personas han permitido que sus facultades lectoras hayan decaído tanto que lo único que puedo hacer es colgarles un letrero que diga Post Mortem. Aun así, muchos tienen todavía la posibilidad de recibir tratamiento. No hay nadie más agradecido que un hombre a quien le has recomendado el libro que su alma necesitaba sin saberlo".

Anatoly says

Maybe different in tone from Parnassus on wheels but I still liked it. The plot isn't really original (and maybe it is? you have to remember that this book was written a century ago) but the writing is fantastic. Short and lovely.

Brenda says

Mr Roger Mifflin and his wife Helen ran The Haunted Bookshop together – living upstairs above their shop was a delight and a pleasure for them both. Mr Mifflin spent his days wreathed in cigar smoke, enjoying the customers and their pursuits for the next best book. The evenings were extra special as the people who had toiled over a day's work could relax and browse the many shelves with Mr Mifflin always on hand to help with a suggestion should they need it. His explanation on the name of his bookshop was unexpected, with a little sign at the entrance for all to see.

When a vivacious young woman by the name of Titania Chapman began as Mr Mifflin's assistant, she was full of excitement – her father had arranged this job for her as he and the proprietor were good friends – her love of books was great, but she hadn't had much opportunity to read. This would change. And the day a young man by the name of Aubrey Gilbert entered The Haunted Bookshop to sell Mr Mifflin some advertising was the beginning of an adventure which could have had a disastrous ending...

Originally written in 1918 *The Haunted Bookshop* is an absolute delight. The war and the effects the

Germans had on London are mentioned with Mr Mifflin sure the war would not have happened had the Germans read his books, some special titles in particular. The long (and sometimes tedious) discussions were interspersed with a slowly weaving plot which crept up gradually, to gather speed and shock in the conclusion. I very much enjoyed this unexpectedly wonderful book, and have no hesitation in recommending it to all.

Dorcas says

2.5 Stars

I found this somewhat disappointing after Parnassus on Wheels. in Parnassus, we had a sweet, comfort read, perfect for book lovers. In Haunted Bookshop, we still have a bookish setting which is nice, but the story itself (in my opinion) is a cheesy, rather boring mystery featuring German troublemakers, a missing book, and a tepid romance.

Nope, not a winner for me.

By the way, this is not a ghost story. The only "ghosts" are fictional characters living in unread books.

Oh, and one thing that bugged me as a book lover, the incessant SMOKING done in the bookshop. Nooooo, don't do it! Think of the yellow tar, the smell forever impregnated in the (now) sticky pages. No, no no. NOT in a bookstore. Such desecration, oh I can hardly take this sitting down.

Ps...Some of my GR friends enjoyed this a lot more than I did, so don't let me put you off, you might enjoy it more.

Jonfaith says

Long ago I fell back on books as the only permanent consolers. They are the one stainless and unimpeachable achievement of the human race. It saddens me to think that I shall have to die with thousands of books unread that would have given me noble and unblemished happiness.

Scott Esposito made a shocking confession a few years ago on Conversational Reading: he didn't go to used book stores. He bought used books exclusively online. I was and remain shocked. Julian Barnes noted once with typical eloquence in The Guardian that the internet has certainly solved the dilemma of The Collector, but what it has obscured is the clumsy accidents in the stacks which change our lives.

I picked this up at a sale a few years back. My attentions were drawn to such because of a GR list about numerous texts cited within, including Burton's Anatomy. Well, not only is Anatomy of Melancholy referenced, it is inspires the protagonist and the novel three-quarters of the way through. This can be read a well crafted potboiler about 1919 Brooklyn. it is also an alert about what is slipping from view. The Haunted Bookshop was selected as a diversion on day ravaged by sinus issues. It's call is greater than that. It is an affirmation of our nerdy treks.

Beverly says

A love letter to booksellers, The Haunted Bookshop says, "In every bookstore, small or large, there are books we have not read; books which may have messages of unsuspected beauty or importance. They may be new books, they may be of yesterday, or of long ago. . . We have what you need, though you may not know you need it."

Richard Derus says

Well-loved books from my past

Rating: 3.5* of five

Allegedly a spy story-cum-mystery, it's really a love note from author Morley to the trade of bookselling, with a side of supremely sweet love story.

And I can't help myself, I am charmed and beguiled by the book, by the memories it holds, and by the sheer anti-German fervor of it.

This book and *Parnassus on Wheels* were in my maternal grandmother's library. She died in 1977, and I chose these two books to be mine because I liked the titles. I read them over that summer, while I was staying in California with my father and stepmother. It was a trying period. The escape into a whimsical, crabby, loving relationship between the couple before and after their marriage was welcome, and the stuff about books...the mystical *fit* between reader and writer, abetted by the bookseller...has stayed with me all these years.

My father was a very proud Nordic Aryan. He thought of himself as an *Übermensch* of the first water, and was constantly extolling German thises and thatses and buying Blaupunkt radios and Telefunken TVs and BMWs and Porsches. I used the period-perfect anti-German caricatures in this book to get up his nose in a way he couldn't complain about without getting his titty in the wringer of freedom of speech and encouraging reading etc etc. Hours of fun for me, I can only imagine how ready to murder me he must have been. Heh.

So it's unlikely I'll reread the books now, but what joy they afforded me then! Given the sheer meanness of my appreciation for them, I think it wisest to leave these two entertainments in the groves of memory as lovely flowers beside the path leading to adulthood.

Marts (Thinker) says

This classic mystery was a real page turner, very exciting, and for the book lover there was a lot of additional knowledge on the history of various books, authors, etc. The plot, which focuses on some unusual

happenings at the Mifflin's bookshop, was well presented and though it appeared to be a bit slow at times with Roger Mifflin expounding on books and their importance coupled with many elements of the book trade, the information was so interesting that I don't believe the volume deserves anything less than 5 stars...

"When you sell a man a book," says Roger Mifflin, protagonist of these classic bookselling novels, "you don't sell him just twelve ounces of paper and ink and glue you sell him a whole new life."

Cassandra says

Ich habe das Buch aufgeschlagen und hatte das Gefühl, da spricht jemand aus den Tiefen meines bibliophilen Herzen. Roger Mifflin ist die Idealvorstellung eines Buchhändlers. Er und seine Frau leben ihren gemeinsamen Büchertraum in dem Antiquariat ‚Parnassus‘, in dem es laut ihrer Aussage spukt. Es ist ein ruhiges Leben, in dem sich alles um Bücher und ihren Hund Bock dreht. Welcher Leser fühlt sich da wohl nicht verstanden und möchte am liebsten gleich einziehen? Doch der Leser sollte sich nicht in den Büchern und dem Rauch der Pfeife verlieren und so geht es bald nicht mehr ganz so beschaulich zu. Eine reiche Erbin wird zum Azubi des Buchhändlers und ein junger Mann darf bald am eigenen Leib erfahren, dass Bücher durchaus gefährlich sein können.

Mich sprachen besonders der Sprachstil, die eingestreuten Weisheiten bzw. Gedankengänge an. Manche Passagen empfand ich doch als etwas langatmig, dann wieder überschlagen sich die Ereignisse. Der Autor hatte einige sehr schöne Ideen, die Charaktere waren meist nachvollziehbar, allerdings konnte ich die Handlungsweise von Aubrey nicht verstehen, ich fand sie teilweise überzogen und ziemlich einfältig.

Die Geschichte spielt im Jahr 1919 und so kann ich die Wut auf die Deutschen ganz gut nachvollziehen, aber so ganz einverstanden kann ich mich damit nicht erklären. Wer das Buch gelesen hat, kann sich vielleicht denken, was ich damit meine.

Drei Gründe, um dieses Buch zu lesen:

- Leser fühlen sich verstanden und gut in dieser Buchhandlung aufgehoben
- Spannende Story, die sich natürlich um ein Buch dreht
- Man nostalgischen Charme mag

Siv30 says

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Kathrina says

Required reading for every booklover. I had to wait a day before writing this review so I wouldn't gush too embarrassingly. The book contains a trite, amusing little mystery, interesting in it's parallels to current history and acts of terrorism. Yes, the pen is mightier than the sword, and I wonder if the secret service keeps an eye on copies of Team of Rivals and Lush Life, Obama's recent reading picks.

But the book is magnificent when Morley lets Mr. Mifflin rant. At times I felt I was reading current blogs on bookseller sites: "She asked for The Passing of the Stone, and it turns out she wanted Shelters of Stone; it was blue; it was on this table last year; it has a vampire..."

Do booksellers supply the demand, or create the demand? I've always believed that booksellers do not deal in "merchandise", though my beliefs are strongly challenged after repeated inquiries for Twilight, Charlaine Harris, and Lost Symbol, just as Mifflin is discouraged by "that book about the boy raised by Monks." You mean Tarzan?! I like his idea that the uncommon customer acts as our "unconscious agent of book-destiny," leading us to an author we haven't yet met. I'd like to call myself an agent of book-destiny, shedding light on the books that hold up despite a lack of advertising. Sounds rather angelic, no?

This is the first time I've ever been tempted to read a book a second time right away. But the pull of book-destiny will assert itself too strongly, and I know I'll be led, instead, to read a handful more Morley titles as I can find them (why are they going out of print?!) with, perhaps, a few more readings of the first through third chapters, for some phrases to keep in my head as the next person asks me for "that history of Masonism" or "Dear God, it's Vodka."

Eleanor says

Good fun: a wildly improbable plot, a beautiful damsel, a resourceful swain, very wicked baddies, Roger and Helen Mifflin, their dog Bock, and lots of secondhand books. What's not to like!
