



Travel Writing

Peter Ferry

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DEBUT FICTION

Pete Ferry, our narrator, teaches high school English in the wealthy suburb of Lake Forest outside of Chicago, and moonlights as a travel writer. On his way home after work one evening he witnesses a car accident that kills a beautiful woman named Lisa Kim. But was it an accident? Could Pete have prevented it? And did it actually happen, or is this just an elaborate tale he concocts to impart the power of story to his restless teenage charges? Why can't he stop thinking about Lisa Kim? And what might his obsession with her mean to his relationship with his girlfriend, Lydia?

With humor, tenderness, and suspense, *Travel Writing* takes readers on fascinating journeys, both geographical and psychological, and delves into the notion that the line between fact and fiction is often negotiable.

Travel Writing Details

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Author : Peter Ferry

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From Reader Review Travel Writing for online ebook

Joline Atkins says

I WANTED to love this. And at first, I did. But I think I was more drawn the locale: Chicago. And more specifically, the north shore, where I spent 20 years of my life. I hung on Pete's movements - Sheridan Road, Green Bay Road, Lake Forest, Glencoe, etc. But as for the story, I really struggled to remain focused, and as is a sign of my interest, I wasn't compelled to crack the spine and dive into it every day. It just proved to bring up 20 years of memories. But the story? Meh. (And the author lives in Evanston, so now I feel even more like a heel.)

Cathy Ashley says

Quite a curious book, where the author merges and intermingles travel writing, fictional travel writing and fiction; truth, fiction and account of the relationship between truth and fiction, so that by the end you still don't really know whether it is entirely fiction or whether some of it is true. The author gives the protagonist his own name, you *know* that at least some of it is true, so the extent to which it is true is not only the conundrum he is presenting to his creative writing students, but to us as readers. Plus it's a good mystery story. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Jim says

If you know me, you might be able to guess why I picked this novel up (hints: name and locale). The very beginning of the 'story?' with the exotic girl who might be driving drunk and naked drew me in. But then there is a misunderstanding at the funeral home. Like a tv situation comedy, the misunderstanding could easily be cleared up by a mature adult. But then there would be no story. I want to scream at the dopey protagonist teacher- "Just correct this. "

I also lose interest when writers talk about writing. Way too self absorbed. Numerous diversions are encountered, none of which advance the story or bring characters to life.

So I skimmed to the end to see what happened to the girl. ("Spoiler alert") see below.

Sexual abuse and drugs. Lovely.

Terry says

(Thanks, Dad and Sally, for the Christmas gift.)

This book wants to be the kind of mystery novel that raises questions about fact and fiction (all the blurbs on the dust jacket promise as much), and it takes an interesting angle on the question (the protagonist, like the novelist, is a high school teacher who is telling the story to his class as a way of illustrating ideas about story-telling). But after its initial flourishes it turns out to be just an interesting story--or an interesting set of stories that are woven together but don't really comment on each other. The story of the writer's/narrator's personal life and the mystery that he is trying to solve are both well written and end satisfactorily, but they never quite close the circuit together. The light never quite comes on.

Irina D says

I marvel at people who publish what is really, actually a writing exercise and not a work of fiction. Stop doing that. Just stop.

The premise of this book is interesting, but that's about it.

Clare says

This is a curious, compelling story that keeps spinning you round in circles, an unusual sort of blending of fact and fiction that also mixes up genres - memoir, mystery, travel tales. It kept me interested, but I'm not able to give it 4 stars, perhaps because there's something about the author/narrator that I don't really like. I have no way to know to what degree they are one and the same. Definitely worth reading.

Christine (booktumbling) says

Peter Ferry, narrator in *Travel Writing*, is a high school English teacher and part-time travel writer. In an effort to inspire his somewhat apathetic students, he tells them a story about an incident that happened to him on his way home. Peter was driving behind an obviously impaired driver. When they reached a stop light, there was a brief moment of eye contact with the stunning woman driver, then the other vehicle sped away and Peter witnessed the deadly crash of the other car and the death of its driver Lisa Kim. He believes he may have been able to prevent the car crash and embarks on a mission to discover Lisa Kim's history and what may have led to her accident. The mission soon turns into an obsession which threatens to destroy his job and his relationship. Peter attends Lisa Kim's funeral, meets members of her family under false pretenses, searches for an ex-boyfriend, and investigates her doctor who seems to have somehow contributed to her death. The book not only tells the story of Peter's preoccupation, it also is a study into the disintegration of the relationship with his long-term girlfriend mixed with discussions with his friends and flashbacks to some of his travels.

When Peter's students recognize the name of a counselor and some other characters, they ask Peter whether the story is true. Peter explains that some but not all of the elements are based on facts.

"I don't understand," says Nick.

"Well, it just works better that way," I say.

"I'm not sure I agree," says the girl whose hair is blue today, "and I definitely don't buy this hypnotism stuff. That sounds hokey to me. Sounds like Seinfeld or something."

"But that's the part that's true," I say. "Gene really does use hypnotism and he really did use it on me."

"Now let's see," says Nick. "You put something in that isn't true because it works better, and you put something in that doesn't work because it's true. I'm not sure you can have it both ways."

"Sure I can; it's my story," I say.

Sounds like a pretty straight-forward book. Then you realize that Peter Ferry, author of *Travel Writing*, is also a high school English teacher and part-time travel writer. This brings up the question – is the story of Lisa Kim based on an experience of the author? Did he actually jeopardize his relationships? Did he tell this story to one of his English classes.

Travel Writing is a truly creative work. I was caught up in the story and caught up in the question of how blurry is the line between fact and fiction.

Merrill says

I like to know whether I'm reading fiction or non-fiction when I pick up a book. I absolutely hate being teased by an author who makes his audience wonder if the story he's telling actually happened or not. It's just weird that the main character in the "novel" has the author's exact same name and exact same occupation. Just get on with it and call it non-fiction. Or better yet, I'll just read something else, thank you.

Alex Templeton says

All in all, I found this book disappointing. It is about an English teacher who is telling a story (that may or may not be true) to his class about an obsession he (may not have) had with a young woman whom he witnessed being killed in a car accident. I felt it was a muddled story that claimed to be about the shifting lines between fiction and reality, but threw in too many other things (seemingly unrelated travel writing, midlife crises, relationship issues) to be coherent and, in the end, mean much to me.

Nancy (Hrdcovers) says

Too Much "Travel Writing" In This Book

As I begin to write each review, the first thing that comes to mind is whether or not I couldn't wait to get back to the book I'm reading each time I put it down. I wish I could get this feeling more than I do but I'm satisfied with the possible dozen or so times each year this situation will occur. Did it occur with *Travel Writing*? Sad to say it didn't. I'm so in the minority here, however, based on all of these other reviews. Not only did I not look forward to picking it up again but I actually couldn't wait to finish it and move on to all the other good books I have waiting here for me to read. That's right....John Irving's book just came out!!!

I know an argument can be made about why I just didn't stop reading it and move on to something else. I'd like to be able to do this but, once I start a book, I always finish it. This is why you'll see many reviewers with only four and five star reviews in their repertoire....they put down the books they don't like and,

consequently, don't review them. It's also why many books here are actually rated higher than they should be because the ratings don't take into account all of the people who read a few chapters and decide that the book wasn't for them.

So why didn't I like it? I'm a very black and white person; very cut and dry. It either "is" or it "isn't". When an author writes a story that is perhaps true and perhaps not true, yet parts are definitely true while other parts are definitely not, he/she loses me. I don't like to play guessing games when I'm reading. I don't mind this when I'm reading a mystery/thriller and I know from the first page what I signed up for. That's fine with me. But this story within a story, whether it's real or not, just does not fly with me. The bottom line is that I don't like to be confused when I'm reading. Challenge me...yes!!! Confuse me...no!!!

Every other reviewer has already told the story about Peter Ferry, teacher/travel writer, who witnesses a car crash and begins to tell the story to his writing class. From that point on, the reader is not sure if it ever actually happened or if only part of it happened. It reminded me of Toni Morrison's books where you never really know what happens and, according to her, if you have to ask, she won't tell you anyway.

Since the author is also a travel writer (as is the narrator), the book is flooded with little paragraphs and chapters of travel snippets that bored me to death and had nothing to do with the story. As a matter of fact, they messed up the fluidity of the story as far as I was concerned.

I know others might feel I'm being a bit too critical but I tell it like it is....or at least how I feel it is. Now if that's "real" or "not real", that's for you to decide.

Trish says

This was one weird collection of linked stories. I actually thought it creepy. (And I don't have purple hair.) I listened to it over a period...maybe a year?...when I ran out of downloaded audiobooks and somehow thought it might develop a point. Peter Ferry is a teacher of writing. Perhaps one of his lessons for his students is to write--write what you know, write anything at all, just so long as you are writing--but, you know what? After listening to/reading this I might come down on the nature side of the nature/nurture debate. Either you can write or you can't. You can always improve, but if you don't have something interesting to say, no matter how you say it, it isn't going to be interesting.

eb says

In his blurb, Dave Eggers says this book isn't coy. What nonsense! It's coy as hell. Metafiction isn't sticky enough to hold together a narrative so diffuse and boring. Travel writing, a murder mystery, classroom discussions about love, Hemingwayish descriptions of food--zzzzzzzzzzzz.

Dan says

While this is Ferry's first novel, he demonstrates mastery of language, setting and character throughout most of the book.

I scouted over at Amazon for a review, because I wasn't quite sure where to go with my comments. Lo and behold, the Washington Post piece pegged my problem with "Travel Writing," why I couldn't give it five stars.

The classroom scenes and travel scenes are phenomenally well done. They're so powerful I actually want to search out some of Ferry's magazine travel writing on line when I get a chance. He captures the scene and the setting perfectly, dribbling in personal details in precise measure; not too much, and not too little.

The heart of the book, though, is the murder mystery surrounding the narrator witnessing a young woman's death, and how that event unravels the rest of his life. The main character's live in love, Lydia, is strongly drawn, and the reader feels for her as the narrator pulls further away into the morass of what he perceives as a murder.

One major failing - as far as I'm concerned - is the light touch Ferry gives to the death of Peter and Lydia's expat friend, Charlie Duke. Charlie colors the couples stays in Cuernavaca, but his death glances off the narrator like water off an umbrella. I expected more.

This is a solid book, and one which bodes quality future tales. But its treasures lie from midway through the read and on, so don't let yourself get bogged down early.

That said, I'm knocking it back to three stars.

Gertrude & Victoria says

Not that it matters much, but I'm writing this review for the second time. The first review I ended up deleting the following morning realizing it was utter garbage. I wrote it while drinking and watching the Olympics. I think that says enough.

There were many things I liked about this story. Let me list some: (1) the writing was quite good as far as contemporary works go. (2) the narrative was carefully put together. (3) it was humorous, and that's pretty important sometimes. (4) the travel pieces were fun to read, and added an element of romance or adventure, if that's your thing. (5) I could, at times, closely relate to the narrator/main character. (6) finally, the ending was quite intriguing and well-thought-out.

There were a few negative things but mostly only minor nuisances, so overall this book was worth my time; however, to be quite honest, I prefer reading books that were written long ago by men/women who have been forgotten to those written today by men/women who should just as well be forgotten.

Terry Tsurugi says

I loved this book. It was hard to put down and I got really involved in the plot and characters. The book accurately reflected the ambiguities, difficulties, and capriciousness of real life and real people, but at the same time, the plot came to a very neat, well-constructed resolution that tied up all the loose ends in a satisfying way, similar to a Dickens novel or Hollywood movie. So this book combines the best of both worlds--the sophistication and truthfulness of serious literature and the careful plotting and page-turning

momentum of a good popular or genre novel. I think I enjoyed this novel more than any other I've read that was published during the last couple of years.
