



Famous Drownings in Literary History: Essays on 21st-Century Jewishness

Kevin Haworth

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What exactly does it mean to be young, Jewish and creative in 21st-century America? How do you reconcile a quiet life in the Midwest with a parallel life in Israel? And how do you fit in a five-year-old son with an interest in frilly dresses? Ohio professor and celebrated cultural essayist Kevin Haworth answers these questions and more in this, his debut full-length essay collection; and the answers are part Sloane Crosley, part Philip Roth, with a dash of Malcolm Gladwell's intelligence and a pinch of Denis Johnson's poetic style. Already the winner of a pre-publication grant from the Ohio Arts Council, from a former winner of the Samuel Goldberg Prize for Jewish fiction, this will be right up the alley of those who enjoy "The Believer" and "This American Life," a charming but darkly tinged look at circumcision, terrorist bombers, the Catskills in the '70s, and all the other confusing things that make up the life of post-9/11 Jewish American parents and artists. Download it for free, or order the special handmade paper edition, at [cclapcenter.com/drownings].

Famous Drownings in Literary History: Essays on 21st-Century Jewishness Details

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From Reader Review Famous Drownings in Literary History: Essays on 21st-Century Jewishness for online ebook

Lori says

I work for the publisher, so I won't rate or review this book, but if you're into non-fiction essays that focus on the darker, more contemplative side of human nature, with a specific focus on modern day Jewishness.. you'll want to add this to your list!

Judith says

Excellent collection of creative non-fiction essays, with something for everyone -- circumcision in rural Ohio, Orthodox in the Catskills, Israel (settlers in Sinai, kibbutzim, Ethiopians), drowning and gender, the midrashic impulse -- all in a very small package.

Heather says

Read my review and listen to Kevin Haworth read an essay from the book at [Between the Covers...](#)

Stacey says

This was a nice collection of short essays by a writer who grew up in a rather conservative Jewish community in the Catskill mountains of upstate New York. The author has also lived in Israel and in the Appalachians (Ohio/West Virginia area) and explores what it means to be a Jew in modern times. There are stories about Ethiopian Jews who emigrate to Israel, about the author's experience as a teenage lifeguard and his later rescue of a toddler from drowning. Some interesting Jewish history described here as well. The best essay is about his son's bris and I also enjoyed his musings on his lovely wife Daniela, a rabbi, and his precocious children.

Since it's Mother's Day, this quote taken from the essay entitled, *Cut* seems both beautiful and very fitting:

It's true, she looks pretty demolished; her nipples are cracked from constant nursing and her hormones are yawing up and down like a lifeboat on the waves. All she wants is to hide away in our room with the baby. 'All these people are going to descend upon us,' she cries, practically behind the bedroom door. 'People like your mother,' she adds.

On a side note, I really wanted to purchase the hard copy version of this book, which is supposed to have been published on special paper with a wood cover, but alas, the publisher informed me it's out of print.

Jason Pettus says

FTC DISCLOSURE: I am the publisher of this book.

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted illegally.)

APOLOGIA: A "critical" essay deliberately kept completely positive, often to convince others to believe the same way the author does about a subject

Why I Signed 'Famous Drownings in Literary History' -- An Apologia

Like any other small press, CCLaP gets its share of cold submissions; and like any other small press, the majority of them are mediocre to okay, a few are outright terrible, and a tiny little sliver are good enough to sign and publish. We're going to have a lot more of them in 2013, as a recent feature in *Poets & Writers* magazine has significantly increased our national awareness among unsigned writers, and soon our catalog will not just be dominated by Chicago authors but also ones from New York, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and various other places; but the first cold submission we ever accepted and published was Kevin Haworth's *Famous Drownings in Literary History* this past October, which came to us by way of Athens, Ohio, because of Kevin's friend David Ebenbach reportedly having a good experience with us in 2011, when publishing a short story in our group book *Amsterdamm'd If You Do: An Anthology About Setting*. And it's not just the first cold submission we ever published, but kind of a miracle that a manuscript of this quality was made available to us in the first place; because to be frank, this college professor's collection of essays about being liberal and creative yet traditionally Jewish in the 21st century is something that could've very easily gotten published through any number of academic presses much more prestigious than us, and in fact it's my understanding that Kevin is the subject of some discussion among his academic peers about his decision to go with a "hipster" commercial outfit rather than the traditional academic-press route. (Or at least, I have to imagine that he's the only person in his circle to have a book published with a comics-style illustration on the cover.)

And that's because Kevin's writing is as impeccable as you would expect from a full-time writing academe and a former winner of the Samuel Goldberg Award; analytical yet poetic, with the dry humor of a Sarah Vowell NPR piece but the clipped serious style of Denis Johnson, he weaves together journalistic research and the creatively personal into a kind of addictive hybrid of essay, not traditionally scholarly and not exactly Chuck Klosterman but an engaging, thought-provoking blend of those extremes. And hey, what better subject to tackle these days than the struggle to reconcile a traditional faith with the kind of liberal, creative lifestyle that puts one in touch with a lot of bitter atheists, all while raising a young family as well; especially since it seems that conservatives have claimed a kind of monopoly in the last thirty years on faith and religious belief, and have committed a string of atrocities around the world using logic that a lot of religiously faithful don't believe in at all. Kevin does this in a way that pulls you into the book more and more as you continue, a rare and wonderful thing among a collection of unthemed short pieces like this, and picks subjects that have a strong natural interest of their own: circumcising his son, that son then developing an obsession at the age of five with wearing frilly girls' dresses, the rituals that tie in so closely with Jewish holidays, Israel and Zionism, the black Jews of the African Diaspora, the Catskills in the 1970s, and on and on and on, a cornucopia of funny and serious subjects that you don't have to be Jewish to appreciate, but that helps explain contemporary Jewishness in a way a hundred Wikipedia pages could not.

I knew this was a special manuscript the moment I saw it, and thankfully the external world has backed me

up since: it was the winner of a grant from the Ohio Arts Council, has received large write-ups in the Chicago Tribune, NYU's *The Revealer* and Ohio University's *Perspectives*, and is currently in the running for the prestigious Grub Street Prize (keep your fingers crossed), along with a multitude of praise all over the blogosphere. It was a privilege to put it out, precisely because I knew it was this good, but also because I like having a chance to support manuscripts like these that can be sometimes tough to land at a commercial place: it's not quite academic enough for a lot of academic presses, not quite pop enough for pop presses, something for a thinking person who also wants to be entertained, and I like to think that CCLaP is particularly good at putting out these kinds of stories, the kind that sit on the borders of so many traditional genres and styles. We'll be sending Kevin out this spring on a virtual book tour, to about twenty other litblogs and the like, so just drop me a line and let me know if you'd like to take part; but in the meantime, I hope you'll get a chance to stop by the book's online headquarters if you never have, to either download a free electronic version or order a handmade paper edition.

Julie Levin says

Kevin Haworth is one of those writers who can make prose, even non-fiction, sound like poetry. I didn't know his work before I read this short volume of essays, but I will be reading his writing again. His interweave of the political with the personal, the spiritual with the mundane, is moving, enlightening and thoroughly pleasurable.

Jennifer says

Another great offering from CCLaP!

I'm a curious girl. It's one of the reasons why I love to read. Information please! Besides the fact that this is wonderfully written it also satisfied my WANT TO KNOW ALL THE THINGS personality.

When I find myself researching the topics brought up in a book I know it's a winner. While reading this I whipped out my phone and started hunting for more information about the Dreyfus Affair. Not long after that I was reading all that I could find on the Hawks Nest Tunnel Disaster.

Famous Drawings in Literary History is intelligent, moving, and humorous. An admirable collection of essays, this is a book that I highly recommend.

Jason Pettus says

I was the editor and publisher of this book! Essay on the process coming soon!

Petra Eggs says

Odd little essays on what it means to be one of the Tribe in the 21st century and although very cultural, not

very religious at all. It's beautifully-written with a light hand, an easy read of selected musings and episodes in the author's life as it relates to his Jewishness. If that isn't recommendation enough, here's another. It's a free download [here](#).

Joey Pizzolato says

An absolutely stellar collection of essays--I reviewed it for Curbside Splendor Publishing. If you'd like to check it out you can follow the link below. If not, just read the book and see for yourself.

Thanks for the interest!

Full review: <http://www.curbsidesplendor.com/curbs...>

Eleanor Stanford says

Smart, moving essays about lifeguarding in the Catskills, a son's bris, carrying a yarmulke in one's pocket (just in case), and other apt, thought-inspiring reflections on 21st century Jewish American life.

Ben says

Wherein where we are faced with raising, protecting, and controlling children we don't quite understand in a world we don't quite understand, even when we have a culture to draw on, literature, or our ability to save people from drowning.

More - <http://bentanzer.blogspot.com/2012/11...>
