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Christine Barber

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Late on a Monday night, editor Lucy Newroe answers the phone in the *Capital Tribune* newsroom. The caller is the notorious Scanner Lady---an anonymous elderly tipster whose hobby is to phone the newspaper with gossip from her police scanner. The old woman tells Lucy she heard two Santa Fe cops discussing a dead body. But when Lucy checks out the tip, she discovers Scanner Lady has been killed.

She tries to enlist the help of Detective Gil Montoya, but his mind is on another death. He has just been handed the case of Melissa Baca, a seventh-grade teacher whose body was thrown off the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. Over the course of the next few days, as Lucy and Gil hunt down the culprits in each murder, they discover their cases are intertwined in the most intimate ways.

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The Replacement Child Details

Date : Published September 30th 2008 by Minotaur Books

ISBN : 9780312385545

Author : Christine Barber

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Thriller

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From Reader Review *The Replacement Child* for online ebook

Carrie Drake says

Good first book in a series. The character Lucy will have to grow on me if she is part of the series, not very likable in my opinion. There are lots of open ended stories to keep me reading the second in the series. Good background on New Mexico. I'm not sure that I understood the affect the ending had on Lucy, a bit confusing to me.

Cris says

I picked up *The Replacement Child* because it won the Tony Hillerman Prize which is awarded to a first novel set in the American Southwest.

Barber did a good job with her setting; both the physical geography and the cultural behavior came through convincingly. Unfortunately, I don't think any of the other aspects were written nearly as well. Barber clearly focused on characterization, and she **did** show rather than tell. But while I know lots of things about the various characters, I don't feel like I actually know the characters. (Though to be fair, I don't really want to. I didn't find any of the characters to be appealing or particularly sympathetic.)

The pace was excruciatingly slow. There was no sense of momentum. The story seemed to plod along. I judged much of the writing to be unpolished.

As for the storyline itself, well, Barber left a **lot** of holes and unanswered questions. Barber did not indulge in 'fair play'. (The reader has no chance to figure out the mystery before the protagonists since multiple pieces of information are not revealed to the reader.) And the ending is abrupt. The reader is presented with 'the solution' in a low-key climax and then the books is over.

Overall I wasn't impressed. While Barber did an excellent job in creating her setting, both geography and culturally, the rest of the aspects needed work.

Quillracer says

An interesting story with some predictable but mildly surprising twists.

Barber has many 'day to day' life scenes for the major characters that, while they eventually tied into the plot, seemed overly long compared to their degree of relevance to it. For most of the book, they read as if Barber had set to chronicle every moment of their lives, making this feel more like a literary or 'slice of life' novel than a mystery.

Barber offers a good description of northern New Mexico, but never made the place come alive for me. A truly great author can make me see a place as if I'm there. Barber delivered postcard images, nice but not the same as feeling as if I am there.

Lucy Newroe, one of Barber's main characters, is a bit of a turn off. The alcoholic (or ex-alcoholic) main character is so common to mystery novels that it has become a cliché. Plus she comes across as self-centered and a bit whiny. Nothing about her made me care for her or about what happened to her.

This book won the first Tony Hillerman Prize but nothing in it showed me how it earned that honor, unless other entries in competition were the mangiest of curs.

Other books by this author will go on my 'only if I'm desperate for a book to read' list. That's the best Ms. Barber merits.

Elizabeth McIlhaney says

This was the first Tony Hillerman Contest winner, and among the ones I have read, which is almost all of them by now, it is tied with one other for my favorite. In quickly scanning some of the reviews on Goodreads, I found what I consider an excessive amount of criticism of the very things that make this book so good, in my opinion. As a second-generation New Mexico Anglo whose maternal family arrived in the 19th century, this book captures northern New Mexico Anglo and Hispanic culture better than just about any work of regional fiction I have read to date. Barber's writing is all in the details, and there are so many, bringing the characters, the locations, the culture, the plot, into full focus throughout. If one has spent much time in any or, as I have, in most of the major locations found in the story, through several decades or more, with extended personal and professional networks in all, it is a thrilling experience to finally find a writer who can bring truth to life via fiction. As a former reporter and editor myself in several states and decades, I found the depiction of that profession amazingly accurate, including her analysis of gender issues and depiction of the alcoholic-laced subculture. I always perceived us single women reporters and editors, especially in our younger years, as so stressed. That stress often got expressed in unusual ways. Lucy's OCD approach to reshelving items in stores was a new one for me, but in character with other expressions of stress I have witnessed, experienced or been privy to via confidences from peers. Women in Lucy's position must appear so confident and steely, so in charge, few people know what courage it takes to present that image day in and day out given the shocks and trauma to the psyche the profession can and often does bring with almost cruel regularity. Support from male peers is iffy at best, with rare exceptions --if a gal is lucky, and women in positions of power in the profession remain too rare to describe patterns. An Anglo woman living in the midst of Central and Northern New Mexico Hispanics more than half a century, including family members, it is amazing to me how well a writer from Wisconsin captured all of us on paper. When I was in college, we called this kind of writing New Journalism, being created at the time by Tom Wolfe, Ken Kesey and others who relied on in-depth research and real people to create composite-character situations that gave accurate portrayals of contemporary realities in the subcultures of our nation in the 1960s and 1970s. No one did that for New Mexico though, until now. I hope to see many, many more novels in this wonderful series that I have only just begun. Barber even did a great job with the old lyrical Spanish given names found only in this part of the nation. Kudos! (less)

Veronica says

For anyone who judges a book by its cover, you may notice the medal stating that this book is the first winner of the Tony Hillerman award. Although I have never personally read any of Hillerman's work, due to

the vivid descriptions of the New Mexican landscape and the rich characters created by Ms. Barber, *The Replacement Child* seems well-deserving of the praise. This book follows a clever (albiet risk-taking) female reporter through a tale of crime, betrayal, and deceit set in the rugged Southwest. With its rich cast of characters, a book like this draws out every emotion a mystery should: shock, surprise, curiosity and yes.. even confusion! Don't despair though.. everything comes together in the end if you stick with it. All in all, this novel captures all the elements that the writer could have intended... perhaps more. A truly "Good" read!!

Garlan 🍷 says

This is Barber's first novel, set in the American SW (New Mexico) that won the Tony Hillerman Award in 2007. It has the usual first novel flaws; excess descriptions, and some narrative that doesn't propel the story. A good editor could have pared a little bit out. Still, overall this was a good book. The story was good, and the characters were believable. The basic storyline is about Lucy, an editor for a local newspaper who gets a tip on a murder from an unnamed source. She develops a working "relationship" with a local police officer, Gil Montoya, who is investigating the crime. When Lucy's source is murdered, she believes there is a connection to the ongoing investigation, and must convince the local cops. Gradually the ties between the two cases are established and the culprits revealed.... Nothing in Lucy's personal life is resolved and everything goes back to normal by the story's conclusion. Not a great read, but a decent one that is fairly short. 3 stars.

Sharon Mensing says

It's easy to see why this first book in the Gil Montoya and Lucy Newroe series won the first Tony Hillerman award for a debut mystery set in the Southwest. I had previously read and loved the third in the series, which made me want to go back to the beginning of the series. Barber sets this series in Santa Fe, one of my favorite places. Each of the books added to my knowledge and appreciation of the area. I've just got one left, BONE FIRE, and I'm looking forward to that one. Hopefully, Barber's busy on the forth in the series. In THE REPLACEMENT CHILD, Lucy (a newswoman) hears about a murder from Scanner Lady, a woman who listens to her police scanner and calls the newspaper to notify the reporters. At the same time, Gil (a policeman) is working the murder case. The two connect through the case, and when an older woman is also killed and there's a scanner in her living room, Lucy tries to convince the police that the two murders are related. How that all works out makes for interesting plot twists. Both Gil and Lucy are extremely well characterized, and even the supporting members of the cast jump off the page as real people. The Santa Fe locale is another star of the story. And the plot is complex enough to keep the reader's interest in this character driven mystery.

MB says

A lot of characters to keep straight in the beginning, but I hope this is the first of a series. It's a perfect mystery, in my mind. You can't predict the ending, or any of the twists, but the wrap-up isn't so farfetched you find yourself gnashing your teeth. And I especially liked that it's set in Santa Fe and makes reference to places I know from my visits there. Makes me want to go back.

Lots to like about the main characters. Flawed, but not to the point of being unlikeable. Not too slutty, no gratuitous cursing just so the author can drop an F-bomb. I can relate to their flaws.

Franny says

This Santa Fe mystery was difficult to rate - and probably should get only 2 stars. Still, on the plus side, Barber's story-telling is very nicely done for a first novel and she keeps us guessing through most of the book. On the down side, however, the "reason" for the first murder is so implausible I could only shake my head. Then, Barber's attempts to tie several threads together failed to the point that some were just left dangling. I suspect she was awarded the "Tony Hillerman Prize" (a contest award) because of the setting and her take on the Hispanic community of northern New Mexico. I can't really recommend this book, but I hope Ms. Barber continues her efforts as I believe she has the ability to do better.

Monty says

The author of this book is the winner of the first Tony Hillerman novel writing contest. The story is rich with New Mexico landmarks and culture. The first 40-50 pages were a little rough reading but once that was over the story ran on its own steam. I could hardly wait to find out how the murders would be solved. I would have given this book four stars, but I didn't like how Lucy, one of two main characters, was such a lush. I recommend this as a change of pace book to read.

Aaron Adler says

I'm making my way through the Hillerman Prize winners list: first time authors writing mysteries set in the American Southwest.

The Replacement Child is set in New Mexico and follows a SW transplant news reporter and a local down-home young sheriff as they hunt down suspects in the murder of the sister of another local deputy. No spoilers here, so don't worry. The book moves along well and is especially good at the details of working a small town newsroom (freelance journo here...) and the tedium of working local stories that might or might not ever be read.

It's a quick read and decent mystery, but not a brain buster.

Nancy says

Best mystery I've read in a long time! Learned about New Mexico, too. A win-win.

Ruth says

Excellent mystery with Santa Fe New Mexico for the background. Two highly developed characters and beautiful descriptions through out the book. It is the first novel to win The Tony Hillerman Prize. I enjoyed reading it.

Reynolds Darke says

A good police procedural set in New Mexico. The cop and newspaper editor conflict is interesting and not headed toward romance here in the first of the series.

Kayeb says

I would read this author again and enjoyed the book.

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