

**The (Tipsy) Fairies' Midwife**

Though hardly the first person to reinvent popular notions of fairies, **Martin Millar** takes a charming, clever view of the fey folk in his slyly titled novel *The Good Fairies of New York* (Soft Skull Press, 2006; \$13.95). The central fairies are not all *that* good (though they certainly try), nor are they of New York. Punk rock fans Heather MacKintosh and Morag MacPherson are Scottish thistle fairies, part of a group that stumbled into New York after a serious bender. They wander through the window of Dinnie MacKintosh, a bitter, overweight fiddler with very little going for him even before he has hungover fairies vomiting on his floor. A spat sends Morag across the street to the home of kind, lovely Kerry, who suffers from Crohn's disease and is working on a Celtic flower alphabet in hopes of beating out her disappointing ex for the the East Fourth Street Community Arts Association Prize.

With their human friends, Morag and Heather get caught up in a tangle with New York's own fairies (of several nationalities); a homeless woman named Magenta, to whom meaningful objects

are mysteriously drawn; the fairy king of Cornwall, whose kingdom is on the verge of an industrial revolution; the fierce MacLeod sisters; the rest of the lost British fairies, who woke up in Central Park; and the ghost of New York Dolls guitarist Johnny Thunders, whose guitar – and guitar solos – are of no small importance. Millar's funny, enticing novel brightly evokes a New York City of a decade or two ago, and manages to touch on some serious issues – homelessness, chronic disease, racial tension – without ever losing its fairy-dusted, magical feel (except when you stumble across one of a handful of punctuation errors). For its gently magical approach to very real ideas and for the delicious characters of sassy, tipsy Heather and Morag and purposefully too-good and too-sour Kerry and Dinnie, Millar's unique tale is definitely worth a read. If you need further convincing, just take a peek at Neil Gaiman's glowing introduction.

– Molly Templeton

**New Conference, Astounding Authors**

I read more than 400 books in 2005 in an all-out sprint to try to win *Oregonian* columnist Steve Duin's book page contest (I was soundly trounced by a George Fox student, alas!). But my sore eyes aside, the point is that one of the top books for me that year was **Manuel Luis Martinez'** *Drift* (2003), a stunningly powerful novel of a young man trying to figure his way to maturity in San Antonio and L.A. Sex, responsibility, family, violence and dealing with a majority-white world all play into the novel.

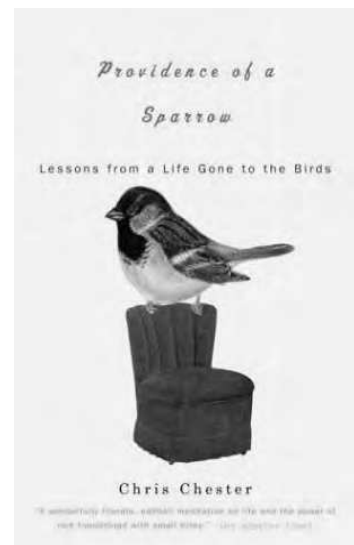
And damn, is this book beautifully written. It's available at the Eugene Public Library – check it out! Then, thanks to the UO's **New Writing, New Thinking Conference**, you (and I) can actually go up to Martinez to give him compliments. The conference, which runs Feb. 5-9 and was put together by Jonathan Wei, coordinator of the UO's Nontraditional Student Programs, brings to Eugene five authors whose focus on the experiences of immigrant and first-generation writers of color will shape the discussions.

Martinez, poet **Patrick Rosal** (*My American Kundiman*, 2006), novelists **Katherine Min** (*Secondhand World*, 2006) and **Jessica Hagedorn** (who's also a poet and a playwright; *Dream Jungle*, 2003) and journalist **David Wright** (*Fire on the Beach*, 2001) host a packed schedule of readings, presentations and panel discussions from Monday through Friday. The final event on Feb. 9 is "Spit and Slam," a student open mic with conference participants as judges. This looks like just about the coolest conference ever at the UO, and thanks to many conference sponsors, it's *free*. Check out the conference website at [studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/nwnt/index.htm](http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/nwnt/index.htm) to find the full schedule of events. Me, I'm just going to be honored to be in the same room as these talented, thoughtful authors.

– Suzi Steffen

**Go to the Birds**

It's February; it must be time to pick up a book. A particular book, that is (we're firm believers in picking up books, oh, *constantly*): **Chris Chester's** *Providence of a Sparrow*, this year's Readin' in the Rain selection. Readin' in the Rain kicks off at 6:30 pm Friday night at the Downtown Library with a presentation by educators from the Cascades Raptor Center and "Nature Translated, From Nest to Page," a talk by Melissa Hart. Book discussion groups abound throughout the month, and Chester



comes to town for a free talk and reading at the Hult Center on Feb. 21. Chester's book is a memoir about how a tiny sparrow, fallen from the nest outside Chester's Portland home, changed his life in ways big and small. Chester's prose falls somewhere between anthropomorphism and sci-

ence, the emotional and the observant, as he records the effect B, as he and his wife Rebecca call the bird, has on his existence. For more on *Providence of a Sparrow*, see the *EW* review online at [www.eugeneweekly.com/2002/09\\_12\\_02/special.html](http://www.eugeneweekly.com/2002/09_12_02/special.html)

– Molly Templeton

**Book Notes:** **Martha Gies** speaks on "Where Imagination Meets the World: The Role of Research in Fiction and Nonfiction," 6:30 pm 2/1, Baker Downtown Center. \$10; Willamette Writers members free. **Readin' in the Rain Umbrella Opening:** meet the birds of the Cascades Raptor Center, 6:30 pm; talk by Melissa Hart on "Nature Translated, From Nest to Page," 7:30 pm 2/2, Downtown Library. Reading and book release party for **Joseph Millar's** *Fortune*, 5 pm 2/3, Tsunami Books. **Red Sofa Poets** reading and CD release party, 4 pm 2/4, Tsunami Books. Poet and translator **Clayton Eshleman** discusses "Translating Vallejo," 5:30 pm 2/8, 112 Lillis, UO.

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