

<p><b>Lisa moore</b>  <a href="mailto:moorelisamoore@hotmail.com">moorelisamoore@hotmail.com</a>  99.231.200.189  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 12 June 2010 10:47:39 +0000  Looking forward to meeting everyone this morning!</p>
<p><b>Sally</b>  <a href="mailto:sa.moore@sympatico.ca">sa.moore@sympatico.ca</a>  65.94.102.6  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Fri, 11 June 2010 03:02:33 +0000  I am inclined to agree, Carin. But why write any of it from John's POV at all? If it's all about Helen, then what happened to John should interact with Helen through Helen's POV, and compel her to change. As it stands, she reacts initially, then acts like John's decisions are irrelevant. I think this is why Christina and I got off track with the 'diversion'. It's like a thread that was started and left hanging. And while we're at it. I had trouble with Barry, too. At first I liked him and wanted them to get together. Then Helen just kind of takes it for granted and seems to see it as some kind of fulfillment of her own need. She doesn't really interact with Barry that much on an emotional level. So he doesn't quite lift out of fiction for me. In contrast, Cal was very real. At the end, you get the sense that Helen is safe, but not really engaged with those around her. Kind of sad, I thought, where I wanted to feel happy at the end. Maybe that was the point? That you can never get back what you lost, so just settle for what appears in your kitchen? I mean, Helen really doesn't put much effort into it. Barry just happens.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 10 June 2010 22:06:51 +0000  Oh you guys...! You're fab. I love this John talk, even though I don't feel exactly the same way. For me, John was (and I accepted this) the 'story that is not going to be told'... Right from the start when he asks Helen that question about the difference between what you are and what you must become (I'm paraphrasing because I'm too lazy to look it up). He is, in a way, a plot device. The whole thing is about Helen for me. Her journey through these twenty five years. I just assume ten thousand other things have occurred -- many of them to John -- but I'm so into her POV (and I love how generous the author is with that; easy to be distracted, but she stays with Helen, nutty and maudlin as it gets at times... because grief can be nutty and maudlin) that I find the other storylines almost intrusions. Which is, I supposed, how Helen saw 'life' at times. The part of it that was on the 'outside'... John's story is so minor by comparison. I didn't need to know more than his reality prompted Helen to think about her own reality. I can't tell you how I LOVE to hear/read/consider a different perspective to my own. Thanks guys! For putting your thoughts out there!</p>
<p><b>Sally</b>  <a href="mailto:sa.mo0re@sympatico.ca">sa.mo0re@sympatico.ca</a>  65.94.102.6  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 10 June 2010 03:34:55 +0000  Christina, I could not agree more. John really spoke to me. In some ways his grief was more alive to me because it was more active, and in fact interactive. He seems to be trying to affect change in the world, use his father's death as a catalyst for learning what needs to be questioned, and then the author drops the story line, pushes him back into Helen's world where her children are peripheral. John is arguing with his sisters at the prom event, talking about safety issues and you think that will tie back into the plot, but it doesn't. It gets washed over to use a metaphor from the book. He just gives in to the baby thing, fakes an arc and we don't get to see that transformation. I was disappointed. He is such a wonderful character otherwise and he deserved that realization. The reader invests a lot in him and we deserve it, that sense of his emotion, elation in figuring it out. Instead, he's sleeping on the couch.</p>
<p><b>Christina</b>  <a href="mailto:christina@105creations.com">christina@105creations.com</a>  99.244.223.150  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 10 June 2010 03:16:51 +0000  Sally, you really hit on the head one of my big problems with the novel: what happened to John's story? There he was, having his world turned upside down by getting a woman pregnant, he has bad dreams, he meets her, and...the birth happens off-page? And all we get is to hear him on the other end of the phone reveal the sex of the baby? That's all? Also, what motivated me to read this book was opening it up and reading the section about John's interview with the oil company (about how they "enhance efficiency" by removing safeguards). I was convinced it was going to be a sly corporate satire, and on an extremely relevant topic, considering the BP oil spill. And yet, he gets interviewed, and nothing happens! I don't know why I'm fixated on John's situation so much, but the cover copy made it sound like his having a child was going to bring disruption and reconciliation into Helen's life. Instead, it became a non-event.</p>
<p><b>Sally</b>  <a href="mailto:sa.moore@sympatico.ca">sa.moore@sympatico.ca</a>  65.94.102.6  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 10 June 2010 02:22:27 +0000  By the way, if you haven't finished the novel, skip the paragraph in my posting that starts with 'I liked the end.' I don't think it reveals that much, but just in case you think so...</p>
<p><b>Sally</b>  <a href="mailto:sa.moore@sympatico.ca">sa.moore@sympatico.ca</a>  65.94.102.6  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 10 June 2010 02:15:11 +0000  I have to say, for me, it was about how, when you love someone that much, when you are what they are and they are you, it's too much of a betrayal to move on. You can't do it, or you lose that intimacy, you risk losing that deep love that connects you to another human being. That part of it made me cry a lot. I wanted more connection for Helen with the people in her life. John in particular seems like he was abandoned by the author. He is so well drawn and intriguing, and you feel his arc coming, and then it's just kind of thrown away at Helen's wedding. And there's no resolution between him and Helen, which I needed. She was so excited about having a new grandchild, about John coming home, then suddenly he is there and she barely notices him. Those two are central to the novel, and in a way they tie Helen and Cal together, but it just kind of drops off. I liked the ending. Yes, it seemed a bit contrived, frankly I could see it coming, and my one complaint was that it was 'eclipsed' by the lunar event which I didn't think was needed. But I liked how Barry came back out of the water. It made you think Helen felt safe. And that was the point, I think, the closure. The novel has some brilliant revelations, observations and descriptions. I was in awe of some of them. It is well crafted, although at times I had trouble following the timelines and had to go back and check, and found myself doing math to resolve it all. I found this distracting. I liked how it wove all the timelines back in, though, and how the relevance dawned on you. As for the form, I really don't know why people have trouble with punctuation. It was invented for a very good reason and we shouldn't be afraid to use it. It was confusing most particularly where the quotation marks were left out. I had trouble figuring out who was saying what and it pulled me out of the intimacy at times. This annoyed me in places. I enjoyed the humour, and the subtlety of the novel very much. And I liked how understated the emotion is. Speaking of the male/female thing, there were several instances where I thought, 'I really don't</p>

	believe men think this way' and in some cases I didn't think people in general think that way. For instance the escargot in New York, where John is trying to think what muscle in the body it resembles. Things like that pulled me out of the story. In general, no plot. But I expected that going in. As Carin says, it's for the character driven loving reader. As such, it is a deeply moving, affecting novel.
<b>carin</b> cmakuz@rogers.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Sun, 6 June 2010 02:01:20 +0000 Ingrid -- I'm starting Alligator tonight!
<b>carin</b> cmakuz@rogers.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Sun, 6 June 2010 01:59:36 +0000 After all that initial chat about gender perceptions, who'd believe a chap has put the whole deal in perspective...?? I second Ingrid's hear hear! and agree with what you've said, Roger, re Helen's inner story BEING the story. It's about grief -- one woman's struggle to deal with a very personal issue amidst the wider world of kids and injustice and expectations and 'norms' -- and god only knows what all else, but it's always there, lurking. It must have been tempting to inject, to a greater degree, the 'other' -- to dilute things with John's life, her daughters' lives, etc. She includes them because of course they exist -- time has moved on -- but she's remained 'stuck' in some ways that are only now becoming apparent as John presents a new phase, as her granddaughter graduates, as Barry enters her life. Life IS moving on, despite her. The implication is that she's allowed, enabled, nurtured, all these years, all these people, in order that they CAN move on. Now it's her turn. Scary as that is. She has no more excuses. And yessirree, Bob... Bring on March
<b>Ingrid</b> contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com 216.106.111.111 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Fri, 4 June 2010 13:43:14 +0000 Well said, Roger! Hear! Hear! And while one can't help but HOPE for a hopeful happy ending, it sure is good to get one after all that Helen had to go through. Hope must reign supreme, otherwise we'd all go stick our heads in the alligator's jaws. Speaking of which...last night, I began to read Moore's ALLIGATOR. Seems this is going to be a whole different kettle of...er...fish.
<b>Roger</b> xrogerh@yahoo.ca 70.31.73.105 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Fri, 4 June 2010 09:49:20 +0000 Good AM Carin! I enjoyed everything about February! Where's March? Lisa's characters; detail; history; sentiment; grit; perceptions; etc. mark her a person who knows humanity. I found Helen's honesty honest. No mincing words, nor feelings. No cowardice. A true portrayal of a real person playing out the hand fate dealt her. Lisa skillfully put me into Helen's shoes from the uncertain beginning to the very natural and warm ending. Leading Helen to play her new hand with a new husband and grand daughter. Couldn't be more real. . .
<b>carin</b> cmakuz@rogers.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Mon, 31 May 2010 23:31:05 +0000 Betty, Betty, Betty. You have some wild sayings if nothing else. "Cock a snood." "I fear I'm making myself obscure." And what, pray, is potato peel pie?? Good glory. I love it all! Not the least of what I love is your observation re male/female emotion. Or at least the expression of it. Yes, I agree, I think we're closer on this than outward appearances would suggest. And the fact that men are taught from boyhood to 'keep it in' is, perhaps, one of the reasons that 'let it out' in inappropriate ways as they get older, in violence, etc. Amateur psychology theory. Take no notice. I'm so happy that you're going to read the book! Hurry hurry! I can't wait to hear your thoughts. And that silent heart attack you mention. Lord. I've never heard of that. What is it exactly?
<b>carin</b> cmakuz@rogers.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Mon, 31 May 2010 23:23:27 +0000 Christina -- I read with interest your comments about your own experience at having lost your dad, and how you felt, what your perspective was of things going on around you. Compared with the story in FEBRUARY, we can see how very powerful perspective is and how different the story would be if it were from John's POV. I think that's an excellent point/question to bring up with Lisa Moore. I've read that she, too, lost a parent at a young age. It's interesting that she chose to write from the POV of a the wife. Perhaps the other is still too raw. As for this story, I understand why we're so in Helen's head. Ingrid makes the point very well; we're seeing deep inside Helen, to the part that is extremely personal, almost guiltily so. Not that she wouldn't have 'done' for her children in the course of 25 years, and witnessed their pain, but Moore takes us past that to a place that is pure man/woman. I think it's important to know that place exists within our parents. Within us. An excellent point. I hope to discuss this further: children vs adult 'grief'. Is the adult entitled to their own private version?
<b>carin</b> cmakuz@rogers.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Mon, 31 May 2010 23:15:06 +0000 Roger -- You are both eloquent and hilarious, as usual! I continue to be impressed with your ability to see the 'global' picture, rather than from a (merely -- and I mean 'merely' in the kindest way!) male perspective. Maybe being around all those daughters has helped?? I will be very interested in your take on the ending. I'll say no more, lest I give it away.
<b>carin</b> cmakuz@rogers.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Mon, 31 May 2010 22:57:37 +0000 Ingrid, you've saved me trying to put into words my take re the absence of 'how the kids felt'. I agree that this particular slant on Helen's story/history is all about her. Like slicing off a piece of her that's just about dealing with Cal's death. No doubt she's had feelings, made observations, grappled with 'stuff' re the kids and had to help them through their own process of grief. But that's a big story. Seems to me, Moore may have wanted more of a close-up on grief, rather than a panorama. An interesting notion in itself. That there's a distinction.
<b>Ingrid</b> contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com 99.239.184.199 Guestbook #1	Submitted on Mon, 31 May 2010 19:37:04 +0000 Hi, all! On the fly, as usual. Good to see the musings going on here! Something Christina said made me pause--about "expecting more sadness", an interesting observation, one that Carin has responded to. It brings us back to the whole discussion about social expectation...and even about what a story decides to tell. My two cents: In the telling of this story, it's a given that grief is present in full measure for all of them, even for the youngest who would only experience it indirectly. It seems to me the author chose to focus on the survival aspect, i.e. presuming that one CAN and DOES survive a tragedy. Helen, even in being the hub of this familial wheel, cannot say what her children feel--she cannot even really express what SHE feels, she's that muddled, numbed, and busy. She can however see how the kids behave (and even that changes; as kids

grow up, their lives become less an open book to a parent). She relays how the kids act out, get into trouble, cling, fail, rebel, change, succeed, manage to grow up not completely damaged, find lives for themselves and some semblance of peace. In the end, I don't think any of the kids fully understand the impact Cal's loss had on them, or Helen's influence on their lives, etc. In the end, it's the usual push-pull of personalities and events both major and minor. Everyone shoulders baggage, and most everyone gets on with living. I think that's the crux of it: we can put ourselves in that spot enough to understand sadness is present, but it's the getting on with things--as Helen and the kids more or less do, each in their own way--that matters. Roger's point about Barry and Helen is a good one. There again, it doesn't really matter what becomes of Helen's reaction to Barry. More to the point, she DOES react, which in turn allows her to shed an old dead skin, and she begins to sense fresh possibility again.

**Roger**  
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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Sat, 29 May 2010 12:01:10 +0000  
Carin, I love your questions! The Male - Female thing: We've been conditioned by centuries of ignorance & prejudice to believe the gap between is greater than it is. Take conditioning & indoctrinations away and we are left with the obvious appreciated-differences between our sexes. Certainly a lot of room here for more very interesting discussion ;- ) (Actually, I deal with this in the crux of "Copulating Luck In Our (Sort-of) Christian World":-) "February" I think is a ground-breaker. Lisa, through Hellen, and her other characters privies us to human idiosyncracies, foibles, fears and greatness, while common to all, are more often suppressed or denied. Helen, (Hell-in?) is ever in & out of situations that challenge her conditioning. As well Jane, John and others. Who is the homeless author that touches Jane? Who is Jane, that in her troubles can 'love' this unfortunate & part with a 20? Am I the guy hoping to find a Publisher? Of course! I'm on page 266, so I don't know whether anything materializes between Barry & Helen. It matters not. What is significant, as I see it, is the good-feeling Helen gets from Barry's aura. A feeling that is too often tinged with guilt, suppressed and leaves a twinge of guilt that eventually leads to depression. IMHO:-) I like Helen. She is vulnerable, responsive and loyal. She faced the loss of Cal with a determination to survive fate and injustice that only a woven-woman/person can. WOW! I am verbose. LOL!

**Christina**  
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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Sat, 29 May 2010 01:55:23 +0000  
Hi Carin, Re: John's reaction. I suppose I was just expecting more sadness or (at the very least) some confusion. There's no mention of any of Helen's children crying or even being upset. If I remember correctly, the narrator never mentions Helen having to reassure them that everything will be ok, or shows her trying to explain that Daddy won't be coming home. At the very most, John just expresses befuddlement that his parents' love made them so vulnerable, and the narrator shows John trying to shoulder the responsibility of being the "man" of the house. But I don't hear any of the children saying "I miss my dad" or even "what was Dad like, Mom?" Having gone through something similar myself, I was consumed by this overpowering desire to \*know\* - and knowing that there were things about my history, even about my grandparents and great-grandparents and so on, that I could never even hope to learn because of time and distance drove me to distraction in my teenage years.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Fri, 28 May 2010 18:26:21 +0000  
Hello again Carin- it's no use. I will have to read 'February'. Somehow or other, I must make the time. I just read a snippet from the Globe & Mail review and it sounds very much like my own book, tragedy and humour side by side, as depicting true life. My story is full of Celts too. I am overawed by their bravery and determination in the face of unsurmountable challenges. Got to get out and drive to the nearest Chapters store. More from me later...

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Fri, 28 May 2010 18:17:58 +0000  
Hi Carin, My theory about the difference between male/female grieving is that we each carry a different quotient of our opposite sex's emotional genes'. Don't you find some men have more of a feminine softness and understanding than others? I'm not talking about gender types or homosexuality, but I am more drawn to the man who is unafraid to show his softer, gentler side and who can cry openly, without all the macho, 'stiff upper lip because I'm a man' bravado. I think it takes great courage to break out of type and to cock a snood at society's expectations of who or what we should be. So I suppose it's inevitable that the sexes will grieve differently, but the degree, the length of grief and the depth of it is surely commensurate with the extent of each person's sensitivity or softer side? As a good friend of mine would say at this point: 'I trust I am making myself obscure?' I know what I do believe, without doubt or reservation, and I will brook no opposition on this one. I know that it is possible for the heart to break. When my mother died in 1989 I had a silent heart attack. I didn't learn about it until months later when my doctor pointed it out during an annual physical, nevertheless, my heart was damaged and I felt no symptoms when it happened. Great topic isn't it? Ciao for now, Betty P.S. I just baked a potato peel pie and my husband was the guinea pig- he said it was delicious!

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Wed, 26 May 2010 22:59:51 +0000  
Hi Christina. Great to see you here. Your comments have certainly made me think. And thank you for bringing some personal experience of loss to the discussion, difficult as that may be. I will be coming back to address various points another time, but for now, I'd like to focus on the absence of 'howling' by the children. I hadn't thought of that myself, but I completely get what you mean by suggesting it seems something's missing. I can only assume that it's the Newfoundland 'way', as Moore describes it in various scenes -- this stoic-ness, where one doesn't say thank you or I love you or I'm falling to pieces please help me. One acts. If you want to thank someone for some kindness, you re-shingle their roof one day when they least expect it. If you want to say I love you, you smile. That's it, that's all. And in this world, strangely, that seems to be enough. But you wanted more from, say, John. I can see that. But I picture John like his dad, like everyone else. Stoic. That, for me, made the book -- knowing these people were made of the same emotions I am, but they express it so differently. What would you have had John do differently? I'm very curious about this, given what you, yourself, went through. What would seem more realistic to you?

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Submitted on Wed, 26 May 2010 22:45:24 +0000  
Betty -- I hadn't heard of the 'Guernsey' book so I googled it and it sounds lovely. Are you enjoying it? Your comparison of grief with loneliness struck a chord with me. You're right. The two

<p>Guestbook #1</p>	<p>do often go hand in hand. I realize you haven't read FEBRUARY but your theory makes complete sense in terms of what the protagonist is going through. Her husband has died in an oil rig disaster off the coast of Nfld (based on a real event) and she's almost floated through twenty five years, at least in an emotional sense. There's a sense of lives lived on separate planes. The 'then', the 'them', the 'now', the 'her on her own'... My god, it's so complex. And how brave you are to "go out on a limb" as you have re men and women grieving differently. I think I know what you're saying, but do you really believe there's a difference (beyond what's apparent on the surface)?</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Wed, 26 May 2010 22:23:28 +0000  So, Roger, you're a camper? I should have known you were outdoorsy from your Seven Questions... something about writing in the sunrise/set that suits you best. Out by the dock? Very interesting points you've made. Not the least of which is the "it's not chick-lit, it's life-lit" one. I may have that embroidered on something. I was thinking, the other day, about the way some of our very best women writers are disparaged for being... uh, women? Atwood led the pack on this. Some men won't read her because they feel she's writing too much from a woman's perspective. I'm wondering if they expect her to write from a llama's perspective instead. On the other hand, thankfully, some of the more enlightened of your species -- you being the poster boy of enlightenment I have reason to believe -- 'get' books by women, the way women 'get' books by men. I'm talking literary more than genre -- not that there should be lines drawn in the sand about the latter either, though I do see more distinctions. Barbie vs GI Joe, that kind of thing. I know very lovely chaps indeed who are mad for Carol Shields. And so they should be. As for FEBRUARY, I don't understand it one bit. The fact that it's from her perspective is only a beginning, an opening into a whole world of 'issues', experiences, thoughts and feelings that surely we can all tap into. I wondered, from a chap's perspective, what sort of a person you found Helen to be. Did she remind you of anyone you know? Is she the kind of person you'd be proud to say was a friend? Or would you want to 'snap her out of it'...? The question goes for everyone else, of course, I'm just interested in Mr. Morrison's view given he's the lone (super brave) lad in on this so far. (Though there are others out there reading it... and you know who you are!)</p>
<p><b>Roger Morrison</b>  <a href="mailto:xrogerh@yahoo.ca">xrogerh@yahoo.ca</a>  70.29.126.94  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Wed, 26 May 2010 13:09:46 +0000  Couldn't resist Carin's invite to "camp". Nor can I resist telling Lisa how much I am enjoying "February". Not only her creative-writing, also her innovative technics: No chapters; no cronology; yet a flow that drew me in to tears when a daughter races without thinking to rescue kids on an air mattress. And to anger at the brute reality to survive that forces risks put before security by powers without empathy. Fear covered by jest &amp; jokes. As a male I appreciate Helen's intimacy. Real life requires intimacy that too often is shallow, IF there at all. "February" isn't chick-lit. It's life-lit! Roger</p>
<p><b>Betty Tyrrell</b>  <a href="mailto:bettyandbob130@rogers.com">bettyandbob130@rogers.com</a>  174.112.191.104  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Wed, 26 May 2010 12:53:26 +0000  Good morning Carin, and thank you for a warm welcome. At the moment, I am re-reading The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society because I am facilitating at June's Book Club meeting of the Unionville Book Club. I am rushing off to art class and I wouldn't miss it for anything. We have a wonderful comraderie among the women and are all supportive of each other's efforts, much like a writer's circle. As to grief- don't we all carry a certain amount around with us constantly? Someone once said that you can feel more lonely in a house full of people and I think that's very true. Loneliness and grief surely go hand in hand? Both are a form of suffering. I will go out on a limb and say that the female species grieves more and grieves over many more situations than our male counterpart. Our hearts are softer and more tender; we bruise more easily, and I believe we have more empathy. And on that note....I will sign off.</p>
<p><b>Christina</b>  <a href="mailto:christina@105creations.com">christina@105creations.com</a>  99.244.223.150  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Wed, 26 May 2010 02:39:14 +0000  Hi all, I'm just near the end of the book (about 5-6 pages to go) and I have to admit my thoughts about it are extremely mixed. On one hand, I understand that the narrator's voice is so aloof and dispassionate because it's trying to make us empathize with Helen's mindset - the distance, the passive voice, etc. We're supposed to feel the greyness and coldness with her. This is a choice the author has made, and I can see what the goal was behind that choice. However, I think I would have been able to relate to the novel more if I felt that Helen had more rage; her recollection of the moments during and immediately after the accident sound far too precise and mannered. It feels like even though her family was there to help her, they didn't give her the unequivocal support she needed to feel like she was allowed to break down. I must note that I make this critique from very personal experience: I lost my own father at a young age (I was a few years older than John was in the novel when Cal died), and my experience of grief has been painful and acidic and overwhelming and full of blurriness. Surely, wouldn't at least *one* of Cal's children have been howling and incoherent on the inside? John was deeply affected, but Cal's death made him just as cold and glassy as his mother.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Tue, 25 May 2010 23:52:42 +0000  Hello Lisa -- How wonderful to see you here! As you may have read, the conversation has taken the occasional 'gender writing' turn, which seems so often to be the case with literary work by women. Why is that?? I'm thinking of the piece by Alex Good, as an example, which made me nuts. I wondered: how can a book about the emotional repercussions after the Ocean Ranger disaster, (though, yes, seen from a woman's perspective -- oh terrible sin) be referred to as women's fiction (whatever that is)? Were it that the oil rig was staffed with women instead of men, and (essentially) the same book, called MID-WINTER, 1982, was written from the perspective of Cal, by a guy named Les Moore, I seriously doubt it would be discussed on a gender basis -- even if it happened to make a few references to guy parts and 'guy' emotions. Sigh. It's possible I need air so will leave it there for now. A lovely evening here on the shores of Lake Ontario. Hope the same for beautiful St. John's.</p>
<p><b>lisa moore</b>  <a href="mailto:moorelisamoore@hotmail.com">moorelisamoore@hotmail.com</a>  142.162.184.216  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Tue, 25 May 2010 18:00:16 +0000  Hi Everyone! Checking in.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199</p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 22 May 2010 15:04:02 +0000  Hello ElizabethBetty, and welcome! Looking forward to chatting. Have you had a chance to look around the site? The Home page has a long list of links to various bits of literary news. The Events</p>

<p>Guestbook #1</p>	<p>page covers, in photos, some past doings, and on the right-hand sidebar you'll see links to Seven Questions (short interviews with WCDR members) and info/chats on past book club authors. We're currently reading FEBRUARY by Lisa Moore --and she'll be our guest at the June 12 breakfast. However, we're open to chatting about anything bookish or indeed anything inspired by something read. So...what are you reading??</p>
<p><b>ElizabethBettyTyrrell</b>  <a href="mailto:bettyandbob130@rogers.com">bettyandbob130@rogers.com</a>  174.112.191.104  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 22 May 2010 12:58:34 +0000  Hi! I'm a new member of WCDR;the proud author of my first novel, and brand new at chat sites,but I would welcome being a part of any intelligent discussion on literature. For now, I will concentrate on inventing a gravitar and reading some of the members' comments. Incidentally, my web page is still a work in progress- well, I did warn you how much of a novice I am!</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Fri, 21 May 2010 01:37:22 +0000  Roger -- yes, the BP thing. And then there was that helicopter/oil rig disaster not so long ago, with only one survivor. You're so right in saying that it's the families, the communities, that are left to deal with the debris of these 'mistakes'. And when, as in FEBRUARY, we see that these mistakes and their effect don't just 'go away' in some tidy obedient manner but affect people's lives in profound ways, well, folk want to say there's something too sentimental in that worth mentioning. I think the oil companies (et al) of the world need to have all the Helens of the world propped right up in front of them (not to mention the wildlife) so they can enter the real world a bit and stop mucking up the works in their highly profitable, highly destructive, highly blindfolded ways. Now you've got me all worked up!</p>
<p><b>Roger</b>  <a href="mailto:xrogerh@yahoo.ca">xrogerh@yahoo.ca</a>  70.29.130.233  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Tue, 18 May 2010 17:24:59 +0000  Carin, thank you! It's nice to be a part of things. "Only Guy" is the story of my life: Five daughters makes me female committed &amp; comfortable. I look forward to reading the technic-disaster pages. Too much like the BP happening! As always, the front-line takes the hits while Moms lament and top-brass count their cash!</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Mon, 17 May 2010 21:09:58 +0000  Roger, I'm so pleased you're reading with us. I enjoy your fresh, unique take on things. Still chuckling over all those thrashing-in-their-coffins English teachers. And yes, you're the only 'guy' on the eChat board, though I know others have read it too; don't know where they are -- shy maybe? So are you enjoying it overall? I thought the details about the Ocean Ranger itself was great reading. The negligence by the oil company, life on the rig, the life [they didn't have] as a couple -- all nicely portrayed. Very timely in a way, what with the mess in Louisiana.</p>
<p><b>Roger</b>  <a href="mailto:xrogerh@yahoo.ca">xrogerh@yahoo.ca</a>  70.29.131.209  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Mon, 17 May 2010 10:57:26 +0000  Hi Ingrid, thanks for your thoughts. "Function leads form." As, generally, a nonconformist, results-oriented guy, I've often collided with the method-folks. LOL! So, I like the fact that old succumbs to new. Seeing it in the relm of "Literature" is most refreshing. I love watching all of my old English Teachers kicking their coffins. :-)</p>
<p><b>Ingrid</b>  <a href="mailto:contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com">contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Sun, 16 May 2010 15:13:19 +0000  Good to see you here, Roger! It will be interesting to read more of your view of the book. It has lingered with me a few days now, which means it left some mark. As to your question of current writing styles, my two cents = follow what feels right for you, for your voice and your story...rather that following what appears to be a trend simply because it's flavour of the day. You could certainly try it on for size, see if it flows, see if it serves the story in any way (form following function?) But ultimately, the story and the writing have to engage, no matter how they're presented on the page. Carin, glad you've met THE OUTSIDER/STRANGER! It's been a long time since I read the book, and the only reason I mentioned it was because the discussion about grief jangled my memory bells, with respect to Camus' presentation of the social 'norm'. You're right; Merseault is an entirely different ball of wax from Helen. But I was merely thinking of Camus' observation of how society says "THIS is how you should behave" and how quickly one can be perceived as stepping 'outside' that norm. Helen deals with her loss in HER own way--much of her story is about loss (of youth, one kind of future, companionship, etc.) even though she knows enough to plod on, no matter how she feels. And as time goes on, we see how she understands what she has gained as well, and she slowly lets go, remembering things that weren't so 'rosy', more and more forgetting details of Cal. Anyway, the discussion reminded me of that element of Camus' book, and for a moment, I wondered 'hmmm'...that was all. :)</p>
<p><b>Roger</b>  <a href="mailto:xrogerh@yahoo.ca">xrogerh@yahoo.ca</a>  70.29.126.116  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Sun, 16 May 2010 11:53:16 +0000  Just picked up February yesterday. First thing that struck me is its nontraditional technics: No Chapters. No quotation marks. No chronology. Is this THE current writing style? I also found it in "Fall" the Giller runner-up. (Both of the writers are under the age of 50. Oh to be :-) If so, would this be a better way of seducing an Agent or Publisher to at least read a manuscript? I find nothing wrong with this style. Actually, it seems far more "creative" than being bound by 'gramatical rules.' It has me wondering, since I'm once-again redrafting my work, if I might be wise to follow what appears to be a new 'trend.' Any thoughts? As for the story, I'm enjoying it. It's easy to relate to Helen's thoughts and concerns. Only on page 33, I can't say more about my sense of feelings. Probably more to say later. Am I the only guy-reader :-)??</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 15 May 2010 21:32:52 +0000  Mary, yes...I love how Helen holds on to the details of daily life. Light and sound and smells, and all that snow... always snow. I know it's Nfld but even they have summer. There are few references to buttercups and warm breezes, even in her memories. (Or have I missed them?) I wondered if it was a way of keeping herself in a 'cold' place...? Also, given your comments on your latest review, Donna Milner's book, where you say something about a little too obvious foreshadowing as one approached the end... how did you feel about Moore's ending in 'February'? Too nicely tied up, or pleasing/plausible?</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  99.239.184.199  Guestbook #1</p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 15 May 2010 21:21:06 +0000  Ingrid, I had not read 'The Stranger' but, oddly, I'd purchased a second hand copy only a few weeks ago and it was on my TBR pile. So... after your comments the other day, I've now read it. And glad I did. For many reasons. Camus' example of grief-related behaviour (or lack of it, in society's view) is so strong that I can see how you might wonder if it had an influence on Moore's</p>

writing of Helen. But only because once read, the character, Merseault, would be hard to forget. Not because I actually see any similarity with the way Helen is grieving. Merseault buries his feelings of his mother, rendering her 'in the past' and therefore insignificant -- only the present is important to him, and the idea of the future. Whereas Helen has Cal on the brain. She's re-living detailed moments of their life together. In fact, as I write this, it occurs to me she's almost a perfect opposite to Merseault! She WON'T bury Cal, won't allow him to become the past, has zip idea of the future. The similarity, for me, is how both M. and H. focus on the minutiae of their reality (the one place their lost loved one is 'not'). In M's case, I would think it's because he likes to believe he is beyond mere connection to people, but deep down IS connected, at least to his mother (whom he begins to 'remember' at the end...), and in Helen's I'd say it's because she wants to be less connected to Cal in certain ways. (p.69, end of first para, touches on the guilt: "Every time she says no to him in a dream she forgets him a little more.") Merseault is screwed up in a different way. He needs to admit that he IS, despite his every brilliant philosophical rambling... like everyone else on the planet: connected to his mama, at the very least. (Of course, 'The Stranger' is a whole other conversation... but what an interesting comparison this is!)

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Thu, 13 May 2010 22:54:34 +0000  
Hey Karen: Nice to see you here. Glad you liked the book. It's a little gem if you ask me. Definitely for the character-driven reader. Hello. That's me alright. Stuff that happens is always incidental; I'm interested in how people deal with stuff that happens. And Lisa Moore has definitely got her finger on the pulse of that with Helen. More tomorrow. Just dashing past at the moment.

**Karen Cole**  
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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Thu, 13 May 2010 20:38:35 +0000  
I didn't read everyone else's comments on February, but this is a superb book, my favourite of the three we've read as a club. Moore's weaving of past and present is so natural, that you never wonder where you are. The contrast of John's casual approach to fatherhood to Cal's dedicated style is striking. Helen is a totally sympathetic character and Moore pulls us into her longings, joys and sorrows. The backdrop of the tragedy is a nagging ache that we long to see treated. And then, along came Barry. . . Thanks for choosing this book, Carin and co. I really didn't care for Lisa Moore's Alligator. It left me wondering what all the fuss was about. But this book spoke to my heart.

**Ingrid**  
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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Thu, 13 May 2010 14:00:11 +0000  
Last night I finished FEBRUARY. Wow. It's going to take a while for it all to sink in, so to speak, but...wow. Liked it, I did. Very much. To call this "chick lit" is to deny half the population their right to read about, feel, and better understand grief--one of the things that makes us human. And oh...what the sea swalloweth, the sea also spitteth back. Hoorah! \*smile\*

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Wed, 12 May 2010 20:58:10 +0000  
Hi, Mary! Yes, I like your take on it...that Helen narrows her "focus on meaningless drivel to help her put one foot in front of the other." That's a real reaction, isn't it? Taking one step at a time; making it through just this day, then the next day, and so on. I found myself becoming invested in her progress, and suddenly we are also allowed to share in her terrible moments, like when she tries to assemble the baby's crib, 'loses it' and smashes it instead. Last night I really enjoying the scenes as they unfolded. Had to finally make myself stop and go to bed, instead of continuing to squint at the page! This is part of what's fun about reading as a writer: trying to figure out what's being revealed, and how. Admiring how story threads are woven, pulled, dropped, picked up again, etc. You can come at things from a number of angles, testing theories, and eventually (hopefully), the series of discoveries falls into place for an AHA! moment. (Can't wait to see what happens next. Have to admit, I'm still kind of hoping that Barry's phone chats turn out to be with his dear old mother.) ;)

**Mary**  
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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Wed, 12 May 2010 18:48:14 +0000  
Ingrid, You won't get away from this style of writing in the book. I accepted it as a way of showing her scattered mind, coping with the humdrum, tiny focus on meaningless drivel to help her put one foot in front of the other. She seems to be speaking out loud and the reader is invited along for the ride. I grew to love her for it. Mary

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Wed, 12 May 2010 15:10:50 +0000  
Did that last post of mine make any sense? I was soooooo tired, signed off, then sat and read the book almost to the end. Decided to save the last few pages for today. And now I'm beginning to think that Helen ISN'T mixing the two lives together at all; rather, she's always comparing them - BCD and ACD - 'Before Cal's Death' and 'After Cal's Death'. I guess that's the natural course of things.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Wed, 12 May 2010 01:02:43 +0000  
p.s. "Sop" or not, we each come to a work of fiction with our own 'baggage'. It 'personalizes' our response to the writing. It'll be neat to see what mine is at the end. Right now, I can say there have been a number of poignant moments that really hit hard...as when it dawns on Helen that Cal's been gone as long as he has, and she can't believe it. You hear her repeated stories: "It took a long time for the settlement" and it's just like we all do when we tell our stories, over and over, sometimes only to ourselves, to solidify them into the story of "this, my life". You hear her telling her own story of the years since his death, and of their years together, and it's all intertwined, as though she can't separate the two, doesn't want to, and is determined to include him, as though she will somehow incorporate him into this, the life they've missed together. She's been living it for both of them, and not. They're both half dead, half alive. ....what a bummer.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Wed, 12 May 2010 00:36:37 +0000  
Have you read Albert Camus' THE OUTSIDER (The Stranger, L'Étranger)? The protagonist's mother dies (among other things), he doesn't grieve the way society expects he should (among other things), and he's punished more for that than for those 'other things'. I wonder if that was on Moore's mind, even if on a subconscious level. Helen's talk of "outside" and "inside" could be a faint echo of Camus. Or not. But you just never know what creeps up on you in your writing! Anyway, yesterday, I read to page 169 and the book seems to have found its stride...or I have. ha.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Tue, 11 May 2010 23:10:07 +0000

Well put. And the idea of the reader being 'inside' when the character is 'outside' is interesting. I've never thought of it in quite those terms. Moore handles that especially well. And it suits this story, no? Who defines the whole idea of grief -- who decides what form it takes, and for how long? Society. It decides everything. But of course society is a collective idiot. I think Moore is trying to be very realistic about grief and some of its manifestations -- ie, not the proudest moments perhaps, when someone says: I was devastated for twenty five years... and here's the nitty gritty of what it was like. I can't wait to hear some takes on the ending. There's a review out there somewhere -- I may have included it on the Current Book pages -- where they dis it by saying how tidy it is (oops... better not reveal too much; not sure where others are in the reading). Yet I found it (and I'm not a sop) perfect. Of course, I thought, what else would make her feel as comfortable to (finally) leave the past and move on? As much as I understand the crowd that says oh there's too much (contrived) metaphor, I can't help feeling that Moore has worked hard to get to something so tender and real it only 'feels' like metaphor. But if we stop and think, we might realize that, yeah, we do that. (Or maybe I'm just a sop?)

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Mon, 10 May 2010 22:08:40 +0000

Reactions to art are unique to the reader, and they vary with mood. (Mine was less than sunny this a.m.) But that's also what makes the discussion so interesting. And as a writer, it's enlightening to analyse why one reacts the way one does to a piece of writing. Anyway, I could also argue (from the other side of the desk) that these telling moments in Helen's head are a means of showing her sense of distance, her sense of 'outside' and 'inside', though, oddly enough, when SHE feels 'outside', WE are actually sitting 'inside' her head, watching her. Pick. At. Her. Emotional. Lint. ha.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Mon, 10 May 2010 21:05:52 +0000

Ingrid: Ha! Navel lint! I love it. And I know what you mean. I immediately turned to p.62 and re-read that section. However. While yes, it does tug us out of the experience for a moment and into the navel... for me, it wasn't enough to be jarring. On reading it the first time I hardly noticed (did I even notice? probably not); what I was doing was holding my breath, wondering what would happen with the horn-honker. I rather like how she butts his actions right up against all that "I thought I was dead" stuff. Suddenly we're back in the land of the living as he gets out of his truck, slams the door and comes over. Then we're back to the 'other' place, or something like it, when Louise mentions the Ocean Ranger... True, she could have kept it more 'show', more active, and I'm trying to imagine the scene otherwise, without that navel-gazing jaunt. My take is that it was a choice at wanting to create a lull before the wallop, rather than a fuzzy darlin' moment. (though I love that phrase too!)

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Mon, 10 May 2010 20:45:50 +0000

This morning, I began to read FEBRUARY. Got to p.64 and wanted to post my response so far: it's mixed. Some sections of the narrative are evocative and engaging, such as that on p.18-19, which perfectly captures the already endless, isolating, mind-numbing nature of a mother's days (nevermind one who's just lost her husband): "I am putting supper on the table [...] Close the door; we're not heating the street. [...] Shut the door. Shut the goddamn. [...] I said don't bounce the ball off the. Look at the wall! Look at the mark on the. What did I say?" Boy, that hits home! Yet other sections are too distanced, caught in a net of telling (p.62): "But she didn't move. She felt like she couldn't move. Or that she had moved, had got out of the car, had lived out the rest of her life, and had died and was dead and was back in the car, a ghost, or something without musculature or bone. Something that could never move again." And that's where I want to shout, "Enough already! Get back to \*showing\*, so we can stay with Helen's sense of 'disembodiment'!"...and by that, I also mean her having been truly 'disembodied' of Cal, now that they've returned from Pier 17 where the dead men are being kept. It's those little bits of CanLit navel lint that irritate, because they shove the reader aside and out of the scene, while the writer marvels at some little fuzzy darlin' of their own making. But I should reserve judgement till I finish the book.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Mon, 10 May 2010 14:41:49 +0000

Thought I'd pop in for a moment on what's morphed into a sunny if chilly Mother's Day. Carin, the "dick lit" reference at the breakfast meeting sure got folks chuckling! Seems the term's been around awhile (I never remember sources), yet it didn't catch on quite like "chick lit" did (...hmm, wonder why?) Labels seem innocuous, but rarely are. Gloria Steinem made an interesting observation in 2007 in the \*Huffington Post\*: "Think about it: If ANNA KARENINA had been written by Leah Tolstoy, or THE SCARLET LETTER by Nancy Hawthorne, or MADAME BOVARY by Greta Flaubert, or A DOLL'S HOUSE by Henrietta Ibsen, or THE GLASS MENAGERIE by (a female) Tennessee Williams, would they have been hailed as universal?...Indeed, as long men are taken seriously when they write about the female half of the world -- and women aren't taken seriously when writing about themselves much less about men or male affairs -- the list of Great Authors will be more about power than about talent." I say, "Hear, hear!" Other responses appeared on the site <http://oneminutebookreviews.wordpress.com/2007/07/26/the-case-against-the-phrase-%E2%80%9Cchick-lit%E2%80%9D-quote-of-the-day-gloria-steinem/>

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Sun, 9 May 2010 01:32:15 +0000

Mary: are we the only ones having a sensible conversation about the book??? Thank god for us. So have you finished it? And yes, I love that 'juddered' verb... I also love the way Moore writes sentences like: "She said about the rain." She's brave enough to report the language the way it's spoken, not filtering it in any way. In fact I think she's quite brilliant with dialogue generally.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Sun, 9 May 2010 01:25:44 +0000

Ingrid: without having read the book, you've offered up some pretty interesting lines of chat -- you'll go down in WCDR history of course, as being the one to instigate chick lit vs dick lit... So now that you have a copy of 'February' in your hot little hands, I can hardly wait for your insightful CD vs DL comments! And more.

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Guestbook #1

Submitted on Sun, 9 May 2010 01:20:58 +0000

Barbara: congrats on winning the Reviews prize! 'Hope to see you on these pages. Would love to get your take on this gorgeous book.

<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Sun, 9 May 2010 01:10:40 +0000  Hi Joan! Your chap mentioned you might be interested in joining us. Hope to see you here sometime. The conversation is open to anyone and discussion is open to anything. Preferably book related! We've recently been chatting about books being gender specific. 'February' by Lisa Moore is our club selection at the moment and there's some nattering out there (primarily by male reviewers/readers) that it's a "women's book"... mostly (in my opinion) because it deals with introspection of a physical nature and with physical aspects of 'women' that men would, perhaps, rather not deal with/acknowledge. In my opinion (not that anyone's asking) 'February' is most definitely not a "women's book" -- it's very much about people, ie, men as well as women. But the bits about women are possibly too 'personal' for men to cope with. Cracked nipples during breastfeeding, for example. This = cringeworthy for most men, I'm guessing. Is this a fair assessment? Is it fair to say that if a book contains such and such, it's destined to swing one way or the other?</p>
<p><b>Ingrid</b>  <a href="mailto:contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com">contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com</a>  <b>216.106.111.247</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Mon, 3 May 2010 18:20:12 +0000  Whoa, talk about busy days! Too busy. I'd really like to read FEBRUARY so I can better follow yours and Mary's discussion, Carin. And this morning I heard Peter Carey interviewed on the radio, and his new novel sounds really intriguing too... AGH! Too many books, not enough time! I was wondering...what do you think of the distinctions made between and the labels placed on 'chick lit' and 'd*ck lit'? (I don't know if that last one is an actual term, but I kinda like it, now that I've typed it. ha.)</p>
<p><b>Mary</b>  <a href="mailto:lynwood@sympatico.ca">lynwood@sympatico.ca</a>  <b>74.15.89.160</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Sun, 2 May 2010 13:16:28 +0000  Carin, I felt the same way about page 156. Paring it down to the basics. What if all dating forms allowed for that honesty? I'm on page 179 where the family gathers in the kitchen to see Claire before her date arrives, and the doorbell rings, everyone thinking it's "the date" coming to pick her up, but it's Mrs. Conway, a neighbour. I LOVED the creation of the verb judder as it's used here, "The conversation juddered back up to a loud volume. " Mary</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Sun, 2 May 2010 11:35:32 +0000  Mary: I'm wondering where you are in the book; I don't want to give anything away. As for John, I thought the John's Girlfriend chapter (p.190) was a lovely insight to both John and how he sees his parents. I think Moore handles this chapter so well in showing John's "lost love" experience, followed by a beautiful image of his young parents, followed by "...John did not want that for himself." It's all so weirdly poignant and paradoxical. But then why would he want 'that' for himself?? 'That' including (in his mind) death and pain and ultimate loneliness. And yes, I'm in love with the way Moore paints a large picture, allows the narrative and our mind to go elastic... then snaps us (with Helen) back to the present. I find the structure of the story interesting in that we go 'back', not chronologically, but as she's able to do... like stepping into the ocean toe by toe, rather than diving in. One of my favourite bits is p.156 where she recalls filling out a dating questionnaire. "If she had been honest she would have asked: Could you be my dead husband for an afternoon. Could you put on his clothes..." Egad. There are so many places throughout this book where I imagine Moore in a pool of tears as she wrote -- so raw is the emotion in such an innocuous package that I wonder if it, at times, surprised her, as it does me, the reader.</p>
<p><b>Mary</b>  <a href="mailto:lynwood@sympatico.ca">lynwood@sympatico.ca</a>  <b>74.13.110.132</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 1 May 2010 19:16:37 +0000  Carin, Finally, son John gives us a POV about his mother (and father). And wonders why they would love so much and risk so much for love. The author has a way of leading you in one direction with a memory and pulling you short in the next sentence in the present. Mary</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 29 April 2010 20:36:22 +0000  Ingrid: Thanks for keeping me company! Just dashing out at the moment -- but this discussion on "women's literature" warrants attention. I'm so glad it's been set in motion! More, much more, later.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 29 April 2010 20:32:07 +0000  Mary: I agree about the ordinariness of Helen's days, her life. I think that's what Moore does so well, shows the details of a life we all recognize. And bit by bit we're drawn in until we're feeling what Helen does. And like her, we say huh?? When did all this happen?? I'll be interested in your thoughts as you go on. This 'being drawn in', this slow seduction, may not happen to everyone. (Maybe I'm just easy!)</p>
<p><b>Mary</b>  <a href="mailto:lynwood@sympatico.ca">lynwood@sympatico.ca</a>  <b>74.13.110.132</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 29 April 2010 18:43:10 +0000  Hi Carin, I'm on page 64 of February, right at the place where she has received Cal's Valentine card in the mail. What strikes me about Lisa Moore's images of Helen's life is the ordinariness of looking after her family when Helen is not really there. She's plodding on and making mistakes. We've all had times like that in our lives. We're empathetic with Helen for doing the right thing by working through her pain. She doesn't come out and say it (so far), but the writer has shown us how much she loves her kids and Cal.</p>
<p><b>ingrid</b>  <a href="mailto:contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com">contact.ingrid.r@gmail.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Tue, 27 April 2010 19:45:13 +0000  Hi, Carin. Can't stand the thought of you rambling around in here all by your lonesome. (I've been working to a major deadline, and now that that's done, I can move on to the next item on my platter. Sure wish it was chocolate!) I haven't read Lisa's book yet, but am intrigued. I have her collection OPEN and should revisit it. Regarding the categorizing of literature by gender, that whole notion has always seemed an easy out, a pigeon-holing that precludes useful assessment and critique because it sets up immediate bias (and has more to do with marketing than writing). It's good that Good (pardon the repetition) raises the point about the male/female "demographic ghettos" and mentions Ondaatje's "dull, portentous romances" -- if Ondaatje had been a 'she', I suspect THE ENGLISH PATIENT would never have made it past bookstore 'Romance' shelves. In fact, many men write love stories (always have, still do), but their books don't get labelled "Romance Fiction". Rather than simply judge a book by its subject matter, and cover art, and awards, and hype, and all those superfluous elements, why not take a closer look at the art, or vitality, or beauty, or potency, or newness of the writing itself? Or the lack thereof? Or at the insights into human experience that are documented and offered up? INDIVIDUALS write books. Sure, you can put blue marbles in a pile and red marbles in another pile, or separate the women from the men, but in the end that doesn't tell us anything about the process that shapes each</p>

	<p>one. Our individual experiences form a unique blend, and in literature, it's that blend that makes possible a unique (and new) perspective.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Tue, 27 April 2010 01:23:47 +0000  Well, to continue the discussion with myself, I've now finished the book and can say I'd include it among my all-time favourites. Absolutely. And I say this, aware of the controversy(ies) surrounding it. Not the least of which is Alex Good's piece last June (which I'll have up on RAW tomorrow), wherein he contends it's so much "women's literature" -- something to do with bleeding, cracking and milk squirting nipples (not the preferred image men have of women's breasts...? I'm not quite sure what his problem is). I'm fascinated by the idea of "women's literature" and "men's literature" (what defines the two and who makes the distinctions?) and would love to have a discussion about this, but have tried with our last book and it went nowhere, so am not holding my breath. In any case, just an update for now. Will continue the chat with myself tomorrow or the next day.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:matildamagtree@yahoo.com">matildamagtree@yahoo.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Sat, 24 April 2010 21:47:17 +0000  I'm on the last few pages of the book; only 60 or so left, and I'm getting that I-don't-want-it-to-end feeling; I keep setting it down to make it last longer but soon find myself lunging for it again, wondering what everyone's got up to while I've been away. It's hard to say what I love best about this gorgeous piece of work but the chapter titled 'The Portal' (p148) literally took my breath away this morning. I had to stop reading and collect my thoughts. The pacing is swift and the tiny broken sentences are astonishing in what they convey. From the beginning, the narrator asks us to imagine the scene the night the rig went down, then stops us and has us imagine some tiny detail instead: whether someone might have been drinking tea or coffee, for instance. This is mixed with tossed in facts about the shocking sad truth of the men being insufficiently equipped and trained and how the most basic information, had they been given it, would have saved their lives. The rising emotion in sentences like this: "Because those men didn't know and they didn't know, they didn't know, and it could happen to any one of us." We are moved along in Helen's fantasy (which has Cal playing cards) until finally, as we always knew it would, the rig begins to sink. When Helen imagines the portal breaking, the water coming in, she too, in her mind, panics, begins searching for Cal, but his seat at the imagined card table, is empty. "...and she's running and there's a lot of noise now, down the corridors, and she's banging on doors. "She can't imagine where he is. She can't even imagine." She plays this fantasy over and over, as a source of comfort, hoping maybe for a different outcome. Not that the rig doesn't sink; she's too pragmatic for that, but that one of these times, she'll find Cal sitting at that card table. May I just say My God. This is writing.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Mon, 19 April 2010 14:13:51 +0000  I took my own advice and spent Sunday morning reading the first half of 'February', then spent the rest of the day tearing up every time I thought of Dave O'Mara's call to Helen to say that Cal had died. It wasn't Cal's death that got to me, or anything related to the idea of his death. It was the way Helen "didn't faint because she had the children in the house and the bath was running." And how Dave O'Mara didn't know he wasn't speaking and all that he was saying when he wasn't, and then the amazing gift of opening himself to her when he 'was', when he said how he'd held Cal's hand. This, from someone we know plays their emotional cards close to the chest, for whom actions, not words, are how they say 'I love you'. It was how Helen already knew in her heart that Cal was dead but when Dave said he'd gone to identify the body and told her, 'It was Cal', she 'lost her peripheral vision'. It was the way she then focussed on a tiny speck of light on a table she and Cal had bought and "...willed the spot to open wider so she could take in the bowl with the apples and the side of the fridge and the linoleum, and then the window and the garden." And how the effort of this (while still on the phone with Dave) made her face "damp with with sweat as if she had been running." THAT'S what got to me. Just curious -- can anyone think of other books with a powerful 'death sinks in' moment?</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Fri, 16 April 2010 02:09:52 +0000  Hey, where's my gravatar?</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Fri, 16 April 2010 02:08:04 +0000  Maybe better to digest it in chunks to start off. In which case, do you think she ever answers that question John asks at the beginning? About the difference between what you are and what you're meant to be?</p>
<p><b>Sue</b>  <a href="mailto:sue@piquantproductions.ca">sue@piquantproductions.ca</a>  <b>76.67.249.229</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Thu, 15 April 2010 15:11:44 +0000  I finished the book last night. I'm still awash in it. The writing is beautiful, but it's the structure that I want to go back and study. The loss of Cal seems to me to be the lynchpin around which everything swirls. I can really feel the web of personalities in this book like a fabric and the unravelling - the pull in the fabric that Cal's death is. I don't think I even really have words for this yet. Reading it was an organic experience. It's going to be work for me to drag my reaction into a cognitive place.</p>
<p><b>carin</b>  <a href="mailto:cmakuz@rogers.com">cmakuz@rogers.com</a>  <b>99.239.184.199</b>  <b>Guestbook #1</b></p>	<p>Submitted on Wed, 14 April 2010 22:54:11 +0000  For me, John's question to his mother about the difference between what you are and what you have to become, felt like the premise of the story we're about to read. It leapt from the page. I love how that para ends with: "Sometimes his voice was perfectly clear." (Earlier she says how it often cuts in and out, and later she refers to the infrequency of his calls or how 'incoherent' he can be.) Interesting, I thought, that despite the conundrum(ish) qualities of the question, she heard it/got it, clearly. As if it's a question she, too, wants to answer.</p>
<p><b>Author</b></p>	<p>Comment</p>