

Fiction

Darwen Arkwright and the Peregrine Pact

A. J. Hartley (GRS'92,'96)

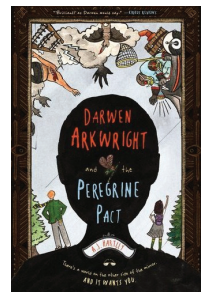
Penguin Group

NOTHING IS AS it seems in A. J. Hartley's book for young adult readers. Mirrors reveal more than reflections. Teachers can't be trusted. And the new kid at school is more unique than his name.

Darwen Arkwright is a seemingly normal 11-year-old boy. At least, he would be in his hometown of Lancashire, England. But living with his aunt, Honoria Vanderstay, in his new home in Atlanta, he couldn't be any more out of the ordinary. His accent, yellow-gold eyes, and love of cricket and soccer give his new classmates at Hillside Academy reason to bully him.

Early on it becomes clear that there's another reason for Darwen's uniqueness. While waiting for his aunt to finish shopping, he spies an odd-shaped bird flying through the mall. No one else seems to notice the not-quite-bird-not-quite-bat zipping toward one store. He follows the creature until it disappears inside a store called Mr. Octavius Peregrine's Mirrors. The wise shopkeeper notices that the boy harnesses special powers (especially if he could see that Flittercrake) and gives him one of his mirrors.

Darwen hangs his new mirror on the inside of his bedroom closet door. And that's where the adventure truly begins. Each night, the mirror turns into a "portula" to another world only he can see, where a moonlit forest and a serene, bubbling fountain beckon him to explore. That first night, he passes through the



"I have 30 books planned, since there are 30 Major League Baseball teams."

ing for children made you a better writer?

Surprisingly easy. I strive to make both types of writing clear and concise, although it is nice to be able to use bigger words and longer sentences in my technology writing. Writing for kids has made me a better writer, because I've learned to focus on simple, direct ways of saying things. That's important in any kind of writing.

How often do you get to Fenway Park?

Not as often as I'd like—a few times a year. I'm usually too busy working on baseball books at home. Plus, I spend a lot of time watching my sons play baseball on their high school and neighborhood teams.

Are your fans both boys and girls? Does the appeal go beyond baseball fans?

The Ballpark Mysteries audience is really both boys and girls. When I'm speaking at schools, the girls ask the most questions. But I get the most fan mail from boys (especially reluctant readers) and their parents, who are thrilled to have found books that connect with them emotionally. There's a shortage of exciting, engaging books for boys in that age group.

Do readers send you story ideas, and if so, do you use any?

I do get requests to write about my readers' favorite baseball teams, like the Rockies or Milwaukee Brewers. I've had a few suggest some mystery ideas, and even had one child write a mystery for me. He wrote the "mystery of the New York Mets," since he's a Mets fan. He even created his own cover art, table of contents, illustrations, and "about the author" page. And it was a pretty good mystery!

What's the funniest question a kid has ever asked you?

My favorite school visit experience was also my most humbling. It happened

after my second book was published. When I finished my presentation to 200 kids, a boy raised his hand and asked,

"So, how many books have you published?" I explained that although only two had been published, several more were in the works. I thought I had done a great job answering his question, but I knew he wasn't impressed when he said, "So...you're really not that famous at all, are you?"

These stories would work nicely as animated or live-action television shows—any possibility of that?

I'd love to see my main characters, Mike and Kate, on TV, visiting ballparks and solving mysteries. My agent is investigating it, but nothing has clicked yet.

I've read that you were inspired by the Hardy Boys books of your youth. What other books and writers have inspired you?

One of them was *Harriet the Spy*. I loved the idea of spying on other people and writing down observations in a notebook. I even went as far as to buy a miniature pen and small notebook to carry around with me to write Harriet-like notes. Another series that made a strong impression on me was *The Mad Scientists' Club*, which details the adventures of a club of boys who used science and smarts to play tricks on the people in their town and do cool things, like win a hot air balloon race and build a miniature submarine. Of course, I also liked mysteries, like the *Encyclopedia Brown* and *Hardy Boys* series.

What are you working on now?

I'm working on more Ballpark Mysteries. Three are written (books five, six, and seven, set in Kansas City, Chicago, and San Francisco), and I'm currently writing book eight, set in Miami. I'm under contract for one more, which I'll start when I finish the Miami book. But I'm not sure yet where that book will take place. Perhaps Toronto or Philadelphia, but we'll see.

mirror to Silbrica and befriends Moth, a fairylike creature known as a dellfey, who serves as his tour guide and cultural interpreter. She warns him that her peaceful home is in danger.

With each visit to Silbrica, Darwen meets new gruesome and fearful characters. There are the Scrobblers, with green flesh, tusk-like teeth, and a penchant for catching children in nets, who ride on motorbike-type contraptions, the headless Gnashers, whose mouths are filled with rows of shark-like teeth. And a menacing black Shade that passes swiftly through the forest swallowing every life it touches.

Darwen barely escapes each encounter as he struggles to understand why these horrible creatures are methodically destroying Silbrica and, in turn, the dellfey's home. He also has a sneaking suspicion that they are after something on his side of the mirror. He and his new school friends, budding archaeologist Rich and Alex, a talkative performer with a penchant for flamboyant earrings, form a "Peregrine Pact" to solve the mystery.

Hartley spins a heart-pounding page-turner that constantly keeps you wondering what else will emerge from Silbrica's beautiful and beguiling forest. It might also make you take a long look as you pass a mirror late at night on the chance that something's staring back.

Leslie Friday

Nonfiction

Argyle Armada: Behind the Scenes of the Pro Cycling Life

Mark Johnson (GRS'89/'95)
VeloPress

FOR THOSE WHO follow pro cycling, Johnson's large-format book is a sumptuous banquet of intimate reporting, internationally spiced and lavishly served. For the rest of us it is, at the very least, a feast for the eyes. A writer and photographer who has covered cycling for national and international publications since the 1980s, Johnson was embedded with American cycling Team Garmin-Cervélo for its 2011 season, and he takes us along for the ride in



all its grueling ups and downs, from winter training camp in Spain to July's Tour de France.

Despite its glossy heft, this is not your typical coffee-table book. Johnson doesn't skimp on the narrative, which follows in sweaty, often technical detail the travails and challenges of the team, its crew, and its director and CEO, Jonathan Vaughters. Introducing a range of personalities, he chronicles a series of races, including the Vuelta a España, the USA Pro Cycling Challenge, the Grand Prix Cycliste de Québec, and the Tour de France.

The text details the geography, setbacks, and day-to-day logistics of most everyone involved, from the athletes themselves to race organizers, mechanics, cooks, and spectators. Interwoven are photographs reflecting the drama of the races, from aerial panoramas to wheel-level views to the anguished face of a cyclist undergoing physical therapy.

The photos of the courses as they wind through lush valleys, snow-capped mountains, and rolling desert are vibrant and dramatic, and, combined with the thorough written account, the effect of this 200-page volume is to put us right there with the teams, to conjure their physical world to the point where we can almost feel the chill in the mountain air. Lithe and toned in their blue argyle jerseys, the cyclists look like members of some superior species.

But Johnson takes care to humanize them. After winning the U.S. team championship in the 2011 Tour de France, cyclist Christian Vande Velde, with celebratory beer in hand, takes the microphone: "From being the little engine that could to standing the whole effing team on the podium in Paris. It's been huge. I'm sure it's been fun to watch for you guys, but this Tour *sucked*. It's been hard. It's been terrifying. But you know, it's been fruitful, and we've been on the giving end, so cheers to everybody.

This has been awesome."

Johnson's book is likely to find its way to the coffee tables of many pro cyclists. The rest of us can settle back and enjoy the ride. SS

A Billion Wicked Thoughts: What the World's Largest Experiment Reveals about Human Desire

Sai Gaddam (GRS'09) and
Ogi Ogas (GRS'07)
Dutton

OGAS IS A computational neuroscientist and biodefense researcher. Gaddam is a data mining consultant who designs nanoscale processors. Together they have written a book about sexual desire, specifically—very specifically—what turns people on and why. But their meandering scientific romp is the first to rigorously reap the data of what they call the world's largest experiment on human behavior: the internet.

Although the discipline known as sexology was born in 1886 with the appearance (in a cold shower of Latin) of the landmark tome *Psychopathia*



Sexualis, the origins of desire "remain mysterious and controversial," the authors write. Despite the efforts of Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and others,

the question of why we like the things we like has never, they say, been adequately answered. Direct observation, on a broad scale, is not an option. Citing a 1973 Swarthmore College study in which 90 percent of students placed anonymously in a dark room ended up touching one another, the authors point out that the internet, with sites for every imaginable (and unimaginable) sexual hunger, preference, fetish, and diversion, is "like a much, much larger version" of that experiment. "Put a billion anonymous people in a virtually darkened room. See what they do when their desires are unleashed."

From here the authors are off and running through a riveting compendium of kinks, squicks (kinks likely to gross you out), and fantasies running the gamut from girls gone wild, cheating wives, and gay frat boys to horny Amish women—the list, of course, goes on and on. But with nearly 150 pages of footnotes, this readable

and often quite funny volume (“The best way to a man’s heart is to saw through his ribs.”) is much more than a Dogpile or Google harvest.

The authors weave their internet observations throughout with insights on the evolutionary nature of desire, the possible roots of fantasies of sexual coercion and sadomasochism, and an examination of reasons why in study after study, men’s brains assert their reptilian side.

What are readers to make of all this? The authors conclude that “our sexual software, originally designed to play the odds, now allows us to play the field, searching for partners who match our unique sexual tastes with unprecedented precision.” They remind us that “the greatest hurdle to sexual harmony” is ignorance of the fact that the opposite sex, and its sexual preferences, are “fundamentally different from ourselves.”

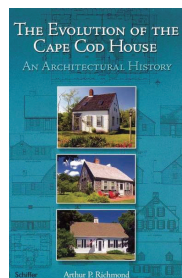
As for the increasingly pervasive human need to forage for sexual adventure online, the authors urge us not to worry—we are in control. “We can accept our fantasies,” they write, “without becoming slaves to them.”

The Evolution of the Cape Cod House: An Architectural History

Arthur P. Richmond (SED’65)
Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.

THIS LAVISHLY ILLUSTRATED coffee-table book celebrates that most humble of domestic dwellings, the Cape Cod house. Richmond acknowledges that he has no formal training in architecture, but says he did extensive research and drew on numerous historical sources to trace the evolution of the one-and-a-half story homes that are synonymous with such seaside towns as Barnstable, Dennis, Orleans, and Wellfleet. The author of *Harbors of Cape Cod & the Islands* has an intimate knowledge of the region, a history buff’s love of detail, and an accomplished eye as a photographer. He notes that his book is not just about a specific house style, but “also about history and the people who lived in these homes. It is about the farmer, yeoman, fisherman, mariner, schoolteacher and minister, and other folks that comprised the fabric of the community.”

The book defines the several architectural characteristics that distinguish a Cape house. For starters, these homes tend to be small and rectangular in shape, with the width “being slightly longer than the depth.” Other distinctions include steep gable



roofs, large central chimneys (usually opposite the front door), and minimal or complete lack of exterior ornamentation. The book examines more than 100 historic Cape houses still existing in southeastern Massachusetts. Beautifully photographed by the author, each tells its own unique story. There’s the Elkanah Higgins house in Eastham, which has been in the same family since it was built in 1783; the Sproat-Ward house, c. 1712, built in Lakeville for a Revolutionary War general, whose secret rooms and hidden openings allowed inhabitants to “fire on unfriendlies”; and the Joseph N. Howe house, built in 1830 in Milton—a rare Cape built of granite, not wood.

Richmond’s exterior and interior images of these homes make the reader want to experience them firsthand, which is possible since many are today seasonal museums. *John O’Rourke*

Extreme Weather: A Guide to Surviving Flash Floods, Tornadoes, Hurricanes, Heat Waves, Snowstorms, Tsunamis and Other Natural Disasters

Bonnie Schneider (COM’91)
Palgrave Macmillan

MAKE TIME TO read these 225 pages carefully and Schneider may turn out to be one of the best friends you’ll ever have. A meteorologist at CNN since 2005, she has reported on the most catastrophic weather events of the past decade.

The ever-present threat of epic, deadly disasters, from tornadoes to floods to earthquakes to wildfires, should inspire more than fear. We should, to the extent possible, be educated and

prepared, and this packed volume offers crucial information and simple survival tips and corrects common, potentially lethal misconceptions.

With 11 chapters devoted to different disasters and additional sections on using social media and creating disaster plans for pets as well as people, Schneider prefaces each section with a harrowing real-life story, a scientific primer, a definition of terms, and a straightforward translation of, say, a tornado watch versus a tornado warning, hurricane categories, or rip current “outlooks.” In sober, direct prose, the succession of lists (what to do when your car stalls on a flooded road, what to do during a wildfire if you are at home, what to do if you’re caught in a rip current) is

WEB EXTRA
Through July, Bonnie Schneider will answer your weather questions at bu.edu/bostonia.

peppered throughout with hair-raising facts: a landslide can move at 35 miles per hour, unnoticed tsunami waves can advance at the speed of a commercial jet plane, and heat causes more fatalities per year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined.

We learn that in 1980 in the central and eastern United States, extreme heat caused an estimated 10,000 deaths, and that a lightning bolt can travel horizontally many miles from a thunderstorm, hence the term “bolt from the blue.”

Schneider doesn’t limit her advice to weather-besieged folks in houses, large buildings, or cars; there are sections on surviving disasters on boats, at campsites, and on the beach. She tells us when we can rely on our cell phones and when we can’t, and how to safely reenter homes and buildings after the damage is done.

If this, well, torrent of information doesn’t make you want to settle on high ground and pull the covers over your head, it affords the opportunity to be proactive. Schneider offers a handy, concise outline of basic disaster supplies to stow at home, in the car, and at the



office. After this crash course in what can go wrong, why, and how, securing that three-day water supply, battery-powered radio, flashlight, and whistle doesn't seem like too much trouble. SS

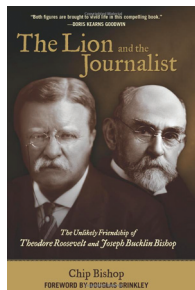
The Lion and the Journalist: The Unlikely Friendship of Theodore Roosevelt and Joseph Bucklin Bishop

Chip Bishop (COM'67)

Lyons Press

"I AM ALWAYS wishing I could see you," Theodore Roosevelt once wrote to the journalist Joseph Bucklin Bishop, demonstrating the personal affection they shared along with their political outlooks. Having friends in high places, especially one who became a force-of-nature president, would benefit Bishop throughout his career, as his great-grandnephew Chip Bishop makes clear in this breezily readable history.

Roosevelt and Bishop's acquaintance dated to the 1890s and Roosevelt's tenure as New York City police commissioner. Bishop, then an editor for New York's *Evening Post*, befriended him and backed his crusade to wipe out police corruption and cronyism. Later, Bishop had the Rough Rider's political back as Roosevelt ascended to governor, vice president, and on the assassination of William McKinley, the Oval Office. He co-led Roosevelt's New York campaign when the president ran for his own term in 1904. Their friendship and political alliance survived a disagreement over Roosevelt's handling of the 1902 coal miners' strike, which threatened to freeze many to death. Bishop felt Roosevelt overlooked the mine owners' pigheadedness, a criticism he made directly to his friend in a letter. Their association also transcended their personality differences—the brash, physical, but patrician bull of a president versus the small, bald, farm-bred journalist from Massachusetts. But they shared a passion for reforming political institutions at home and extending the nation's reach abroad, notably in TR's ambition to build the



Panama Canal, linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He brought Bishop to Washington at a generous (and controversial) salary as secretary of the Isthmian Canal Commission, where his duties included massaging favorable coverage out of the press for the costly project and recording its official history. Bishop ultimately moved to Panama, becoming "the president's eyes and ears on the isthmus," his relative writes.

Roosevelt and his reporter remained close after their public service. The ex-president not only made Bishop his authorized biographer, but also agreed to his suggestion that they publish an edited compilation of letters Roosevelt had written to his children. Published in 1919, after Roosevelt's death, *Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children* was a runaway best seller and TR's gift from the grave to his friend, who would be financially secure for the rest of his life. Chip Bishop, a Cape Cod marketing and communications consultant, keeps his account of these intersecting lives admiring without lapsing into sycophancy; for example, he dutifully records Bishop's written references to a newspaper owner who'd fired him as "the Jew."

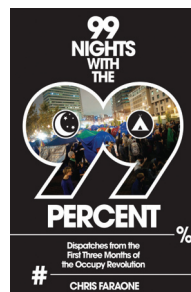
This enjoyable book carries the imprimatur of noted historian Douglas Brinkley, who wrote the foreword.

Rich Barlow

99 Nights with the 99 Percent: Dispatches from the First Three Months of the Occupy Revolution
Chris Faraone (COM'04)

Write to Power

FARAONE SPENT 99 nights with the Occupy movement so we didn't have to. A feisty, entertaining correspondent, or in his words, "occu-journalist," he dedicates the book to "anybody who has ever had to sleep outside a building in which million-dollar condos sit empty." His decision to crisscross the



nation on a shoestring to report for the *Boston Phoenix* on a "cultural shift" he believed the media was largely ignoring was "a no-brainer." As Faraone, whose breathless entries spare few,

puts it, "Television journalists, their faces dusted with goo and blush, were reluctant to muddy their shoes" in the movement's camps.

Faraone, who earned a master's in journalism at BU, doesn't give a damn if his shoes are muddy or his bed is made of concrete. He hit the road, yielding this collection of *Phoenix* dispatches and black-and-white photo montages. Despite his stark, unapologetic prose—"I've always hated cops"—and bottomless outrage, he reports with an even hand. Reading his spirited account of clashes both internal and external among occupiers from Boston to Seattle has the effect of searing documentary footage. Picture a *Medium Cool*-style take on Occupy, with cops occasionally given credit for being human.

Sleepless and protein-deprived, Faraone keeps up a dizzying pace, holding forth in blogs, tweets, radio interviews, and news articles on the Occupy front lines. His most colorful reporting emerges from Boston, his home turf, where the district attorney subpoenaed Twitter hashtags as 99 Percent activists fell in with the general cheer of First Night. "Authorities could have found any number of suspicious activities under way," writes Faraone with characteristic, and endearing, sarcasm. "The peace vigil could have easily been mistaken for a satanic séance, and who knows what was in those holiday brownies?"

But he is poker-faced in his descriptions—for example, a police raid on Occupy Boston in which "the prevalent emerging image was that of a member of the group Veterans for Peace being arrested while his American flag was trampled."

Perhaps most commendable about this book is its embrace of dogged advocacy journalism—a craft largely reserved for the young and tenacious, and one that is growing fainter and less rigorous by the day. SS ■