The Orchard: A Memoir
Theresa Weir, 2011
Grand Central Publishing
240 pp.

Summary
The Orchard is the story of a street-smart city girl who must adapt to a new life on an apple farm after she falls in love with Adrian Curtis, the golden boy of a prominent local family whose lives and orchards seem to be cursed.

Married after only three months, young Theresa finds life with Adrian on the farm far more difficult and dangerous than she expected. Rejected by her husband's family as an outsider, she slowly learns for herself about the isolated world of farming, pesticides, environmental destruction, and death, even as she falls more deeply in love with her husband, a man she at first hardly knew and the land that has been in his family for generations.

Theresa becomes a reluctant player in their attempt to keep the codling moth from destroying the orchard. Yet she and Adrian eventually come to know that their efforts will not only fail but will ultimately take an irreparable toll. (From the publisher.)

Author Bio
• Aka—Anne Frasier
• Birth—ca. 1950s
• Where—Burlington, Iowa, USA
• Education—Artesia High School, Artesia, New Mexico
• Awards—Romantic Times Best Romantic-Adventure Writer Award; Romance Writers of America Award (RITA); Daphne du Maurier Award; Romantic Times Career Achievement Award.
• Currently—lives in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

Theresa Weir is the real name of Anne Frasier, a USA Today bestselling author of nineteen novels that have spanned the genres of suspense, mystery, thriller, romantic suspense, paranormal, and memoir. Her books have been translated into twenty languages.
Weir's debut title was the cult phenomenon *Amazon Lily*, initially published by Pocket Books and later reissued by Bantam Books. Writing as Theresa Weir, she won a RITA for romantic suspense (*Cool Shade*), and a year later the Daphne du Maurier for paranormal romance (*Bad Karma*).

In her more recent Anne Frasier career, her thriller and suspense titles hit the USA Today list (*Hush, Sleep Tight, Play Dead*) and were featured in Mystery Guild, Literary Guild, and Book of the Month Club. *Hush* was both a RITA and Daphne du Maurier finalist. Well-known and respected in the mystery community, she served as hardcover judge for the Thriller presented by International Thriller Writers, and was guest of honor at the Diversicon 16 mystery/science fiction conference held in Minneapolis in 2008. Frasier books have received high praise from print publications and online review sites. Her short stories and poetry can be found in *Discount Noir, Once Upon a Crime*, and *The Lineup, Poems on Crime*. She is a member of Sisters in Crime, International Thriller Writers, and Crimespace.

**Life**

Theresa Weir was born in Burlington, Iowa, a river town settled by German, Irish, and Dutch immigrants. Her blue-collar parents divorced when she was six, and the next twelve years were spent in poverty, moving to and from Florida, Iowa, California, Illinois, and New Mexico. She graduated from Artesia High School, Artesia, New Mexico.

After high school she worked as a waitress, a factory worker at Albuquerque's Levi Strauss (where she sewed the Levi's logo on the back pocket of jeans), followed by a secretarial position at Wally's LP Gas in Santa Fe, New Mexico. At age nineteen, she joined her uncle at his bar in rural Illinois across the Mississippi River from her birthplace of Burlington, Iowa. While tending bar at the Pilot House, she met an apple farmer and the two married three months later.

Shortly after moving to the farm, in the mid-1980s, Weir began writing. Her first manuscript, *Amazon Lily* (under Theresa Weir) was rejected by multiple agents and publishers because they believed that her hero was unlikable. Four years later, in 1988, she was offered a contract with Pocket Books—and her ground breaking, multi-award winning *Amazon Lily* was published.

The novel finally sold and went on to win the Romantic Times Best Romantic Adventure Writer Award, but Frasier continued to encounter editors who disliked her characters. In Frasier's words, her characters are "imperfect people who had problems, who didn't always make the right choices, but in the end triumphed." The characters have real, interesting problems, including a hero with agoraphobia and a heroine with an eating disorder.

Her work has continued to be popular with readers and fellow romance writers, however, and in 1999 she was awarded a Romance Writers of America RITA Award for Best Romantic Suspense for her novel *Cool Shade*. She has also been awarded the Daphne du Maurier award for romantic suspense, and she has been awarded
Romantic Times Career Achievement Award and been nominated for a Romantic Times Reviewers' Choice Award for Long Night Moon.

During her years of writing romance novels, Frasier's editors often asked her "to remove the blood and bodies" from her plots. She decided that instead it would be easier for her to remove the romance and focus more completely on the mystery of the story. After several years, she found a publisher willing to allow her to move her writing into this new direction. Although she has now stopped releasing new romance novels, her thrillers do contain elements of romance. (Adapted from Wikipedia.)

Book Reviews

[S]earing...the past is artfully juxtaposed with the present in this finely wrought work. Its haunting passages will linger long after the last page is turned.

_Boston Globe_

What do those perfectly round, shiny red apples really cost? This poignant memoir of love, labor, and dangerous pesticides reveals the terrible true price.

_Karen Holt - O Magazine_

Equal parts moving love story and environmental warning.

_Entertainment Weekly_

The use of heavy pesticides over decades on Midwestern farms forms the dark, moody leitmotiv of this affecting memoir set largely around a 1970s orchard by thriller writer Weir (aka Anne Frasier). As a 21-year-old from a divorced home who grew up in Miami and Albuquerque, with a talent for art but little prospects to educate herself, Weir gravitated toward the Midwest, where she worked as a waitress in her uncle’s bar in Henderson County, Ill., just off the Iowa border; farmers dropped in for beer and a secret stash of porn her uncle kept in the back, their arms dusted with the herbicide they used in the fields. Smitten with young, handsome Adrian Curtis, the scion of a large apple orchard that seemed to be under a curse of bad luck, Weir soon married the serious, reticent young farmer and lived with him in a small cabin on his parents’ farm, although she hadn’t a clue about being a farm wife; moreover, her in-laws despised her as an outsider (“white trash”) and nobody expected her to last long. Nonetheless, the marriage endured happily, two healthy children were born, and Weir improbably managed to start a career as a writer. But then both Adrian and his father were diagnosed with and died from cancer. Afraid of further contaminating themselves, Weir and her two children eventually moved out of the county. Weir, now living in Minneapolis, narrates a truly disquieting tale of familial dislocation and rupture.

_Publishers Weekly_

A foreboding memoir of the author’s early marriage into an agricultural family, and her emotional navigation between rootlessness and heritage.... The strongest feature of the book is the determined loyalty that allows Weir to discover beauty amid strife, as well as the touching conclusion.

_Kirkus Reviews_

http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/14-non-fiction/8619-orchard...
Discussion Questions

1. The author’s decision to move to Illinois and help her uncle with his bar was made on a whim. Have you ever made a decision that seemed small and insignificant at the time, but in the end redesigned your life?

2. How might the lack of adult guidance in the author’s childhood have laid the groundwork for her decision to get married so quickly?

3. Why did the author stay on the farm, especially in the beginning? Could her unconventional upbringing have led to an acceptance of a situation many women wouldn’t have tolerated? How did her mother’s rocky relationships play into Theresa’s unclear view of marriage?

4. Would you have stayed given similar circumstances?

5. The author is never quite sure why Adrian married her. Was it passive aggressive behavior on his part? Did he want to annoy his mother? Was he attracted to someone who represented the freedom he could never have? Or was it something else?

6. Did the author’s ambivalence toward her mother-in-law antagonize the situation? Should the author have tried harder to fit in?

7. A scion is a rogue branch that is unlike the rest of the tree. How were the author and her husband both scions? Was one more of a scion than the other?

8. Some cultures believe that no one can really own the land. Should farmers be monitored more closely and held accountable for farming practices? Do they have a responsibility that extends beyond themselves? Or should they be able to do whatever they want with the land they own?

9. The Orchard reads a little like a dark fairy tale. What are some similarities between The Orchard and a fairy tale?

10. In one scene, we’re given insight into what drives Ruth. In many ways she’s a product of her time, her generation, her childhood, and her environment. Her behavior would have been considered acceptable in certain circles, and her battle was not only for the farm, but for her newly found identity. Did you ever feel sympathy for her as the life she’d worked so hard to build collapsed?

11. We know that salesmen once drank the herbicide they were selling as a way of demonstrating the product’s “safety”, but do you think Lily really existed?

12. What scene impacted you the most?

13. In the final scene, do the roses have significance beyond a simple gift of flowers?
14. Did you learn anything new about apples? If so, what? Will you ever look at an apple the same way again? (Questions issued by publisher.)
Theresa Weir

Full text biography:
Theresa Weir
Birth Date: 1954
Known As: Fraser, Anne
Nationality: American
Occupation: Novelist

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Awards:

Personal Information:
Born 1954; married; one daughter. Address: 2500 St. Paul, MN. E-mail: annafraser@comcast.net

Career Information:
Romance and mystery writer

Writings:


NOVELS

• A Guava Bay. Silhouette (Buffalo, NY): 1990.

NOVELS, UNDER PSEUDONYM ANNE FRASER

Sidelights:

Romance novelist Theresa Weir is known for creating heroes that stand out from the usual mold. As she told Anne Fraser in an interview for the All About Romance Web site, her first book was "turned down again and again. I received some very, very negative letters-just one of which I look back at personally. The recurring theme in the letters was this: They hated him." Eventually her book Among Lily featuring a hard-drinking, foul-mouthed anthropologist, a social worker who's a former nun, was published and won the RT Book Reviewers Choice Award. 

Her new book, The Silent Assassin, features a budding romance between a debonair British policeman and a social worker who's a former nun, as they work to uncover the truth behind a murder. The protagonist, a former nun, is a strong, determined woman who is not afraid to take on men. She is a woman of strong convictions, and she is not afraid to voice her opinions. The book is a suspenseful mystery that keeps the reader guessing until the very end. Weir's next novel, Silent Assassin, will be published in October 2013.

Weir's novel, Among Lily, was published by Harlequin and was well-received by readers. In the book, the protagonist, Lily, is a former nun who left the convent to become a social worker. She is a strong, independent woman who is not afraid to speak her mind. The book tells the story of Lily's journey of self-discovery and her love for the thoughtful man, Alex. The two are forced to confront their feelings and their past while on the run from dangerous enemies.

In 2004, Weir won the RT Book Reviewers Choice Award for her novel, Among Lily. Her novel, The Silent Assassin, will be published in October 2013 and is currently available for pre-order on Amazon.com.

Weir's new book, The Silent Assassin, was released in November 2013 and is currently available for pre-order on Amazon.com. The book tells the story of a social worker and a former nun who work together to solve a murder. Weir's novels are known for their strong female protagonists and their ability to keep readers guessing until the very end.
Weir’s War responded: “It’s something I always thought I would do; it was just a matter of when and how. I don’t see writing as my only means of support, as I had to figure out a way to live while writing a memoir. My strategy was to sell my house in Saint Paul and live off the proceeds of that sale while I wrote. That’s what I did.”

Reviewing the work in USA Today, contributor Greg Wilson wrote: “The memoir is so beautifully written that the reader is often swept along, despite a tale that is so gloomy you might want to begin thinking of it before noon. Lonely farms. Small-minded people. Crazy mother.” Toronto Globe and Mail contributor Kathleen Bynoe described the work as a “lyric, unquiet book that reverberates quietly, like a slow-release book.” Bynoe also asserted “The Orchard is being hailed, perhaps inevitably, as an equal with Rachel Canning’s 1992 classic Silent Spring.” It isn’t... but you might think of this as a complement to it. The personal story that dives home the theme behind the unanimous love of statistics that Canning so quietly weaves.” Booklist contributor Carol Haggis remarked “Weir’s own story is as harrowing as they come, yet filled with an uncanny self-awareness.” Maclean’s critic Patricia Dunnington observed the work as a “Jealously-Clothed book.”

Related Information:

BOOKS

PERIODICALS
- Booklist, September 15, 1998, Diana Tavel Hird, review of Some Kind of Magic, p. 914; September 1, 2011, Carol Haggis, review of The Orchard, p. 29.
- Booklist Weekly, September 24, 2011, Jeanne Kohler, review of The Orchard.
- Globe and Mail (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), September 23, 2011, Kathleen Bynoe, review of The Orchard.
- Maclean’s, October 3, 2011, Patricia Dunnington, review of The Orchard, p. 38.
- Slant Magazine, October 12, 2011, Kathryn Long, review of The Orchard, p. 1E.
- USA Today, September 16, 2011, Craig Wilson, review of The Orchard.

ONLINE

Source: Contemporary Authors Online, 2012
Gale Database: Contemporary Authors Online
Gale Document Number: 005096777
Chewy emotional center

Don't neglect a character's emotions even when dealing with an externally driven plot.