



Three Junes

Julia Glass

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A luminous first novel, set in Greece, Scotland, Greenwich Village, and Long Island, that traces the members of a Scottish family as they confront the joys and longings, fulfillments and betrayals of love in all its guises.

In June of 1989 Paul McLeod, a newspaper publisher and recent widower, travels to Greece, where he falls for a young American artist and reflects on the complicated truth about his marriage.

Six years later, again in June, Paul's death draws his three grown sons and their families back to their ancestral home. Fenno, the eldest, a wry, introspective gay man, narrates the events of this unforeseen reunion. Far from his straitlaced expatriate life as a bookseller in Greenwich Village, Fenno is stunned by a series of revelations that threaten his carefully crafted defenses.

Four years farther on, in yet another June, a chance meeting on the Long Island shore brings Fenno together with Fern Olitsky, the artist who once captivated his father. Now pregnant, Fern must weigh her guilt about the past against her wishes for the future and decide what family means to her.

In prose rich with compassion and wit, *Three Junes* paints a haunting portrait of love's redemptive powers.

Three Junes Details

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Author : Julia Glass

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From Reader Review Three Junes for online ebook

Neil Litt says

This is an odd book. The first and third of the three sections are anchored by a woman named Fern who is a catalyst for critical transitions for different members of a Scottish family who she meets many years apart, in Greece (the early section) and the Hamptons (in the later section). She has no awareness that the people she is meeting are related to each other.

The family themselves are the subject of the long middle section, which is a first-person account by the gay (favorite) son of the man who's point-of-view dominates the dull (and lengthy) first chapter. This son is by far the most charismatic character in a constellation that is saturated with stereotypical stand-ins for ordinary people.

It takes a master like Wolff or Forster or James to illuminate the ordinary moment and elevate it to literature. Glass does not rise to the occasion. Each section presents alternating scenes; in each section there is an alternating "present" moment and a flashback. This reader could not help suspecting that the auhtor lacked the confidence to attempt to sustain a single story and cross-cut to create "drama" where no drama existed. This novel wants to be a Merchant-Ivory film but it is at best a made-for-tv film to be shown on Lifetime.

If I seem to have been underwhelmed, you understand me perfectly. Glass is a competent writer telling an unremarkable story in an understated way.

Daniel says

At times irony seems to have many levels; recently I saw the musical Altar Boyz and could not for the life of me figure out how multi-layered the irony was (a group of young guys poking fun at boy-band evangelization simultaneously evangelizing in a Godspell way). Dare I hope for irony in the NYT Book Review on the back cover of Three Junes? "TJ brilliantly rescues, then refurbishes, the traditional plot-driven novel..." By "plot" don't we usually mean "stuff happens in a somewhat connected way?" Would a family's eating, walking dogs and dying count as stuff happening? So far as I can tell, virtually nothing happens in this book, except that a few of the characters pass away. I repeatedly thought to myself: this book is plotlessly pointless (or is it pointlessly plotless?). I kept reading because the writing was decent line-by-line and a dear (female) friend lent it to me with an endorsement. It is not a book for boys who like action. The novel is also referred to as a "literary triptych" because, I suppose, it has three parts: Part I is third-person narration focalized on Paul, the paterfamilias; Part II is first-person narration by Fenn, the gay son in New York; Part III is third-person again focalized on Fern, the ex-lover of Fenn's ex-lover. As this description indicates, the connections among the sections are tenuous. It is, of course, a not so new attempt at giving three different perspectives of the same thing, but here "thing" is not an event but characters. If you are interested in characterization as creative-writing exercise, then you might find this book fascinating. Here is a sample of what I mean: "With Heather, Fern is the closest and also the most contentious. For their entire childhood, they shared a room. Heather was the athlete: swam, played field hockey, fenced. At schoolwork, she was comfortably mediocre." It reads like a class exercise, especially considering Heather is never mentioned again.

Another complaint I have touches not just on this book but on virtually all modern American fiction. I understand that some of us have yet to get the God-is-dead memo and we're out of step, but must books

really be written with such stiflingly limited horizons? These people are all so absurdly earth-bound, with the possible exception of a rather flat character named Lucinda who is a Catholic activist and admittedly sympathetically portrayed. I am reminded of another book popular with the ladies that I recently suffered through for a friend: *The Time Traveller's Wife*. (Notice to males: do *not* let your girlfriend/mother/sister make you read this pointless book.) Everything about it is so small; the characters have nothing significant to think about but themselves. Even a great book from the eighties like *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* manages to avoid being big somehow. And by "big" I don't necessarily mean religious; *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, at least deals with over-sized dreams and the American experience while being essentially a boy-meets-girl book. Why must all the novels written today be essentially about nothing? Is there no one wondering about anything bigger than family psychology?

The woman who wrote this book is smart and literary, and, because books are in part a kind of pseudo-conversation with the author, it can be worth your time. For me, the whole thing would almost be saved by the fact that Mother McLeod raises border collies, the best dogs alive. Sadly, she's dead on page one.

Fabian says

Attempts to cohere titans of American & British Lit about family bonds (a-la USAs Jonathan Franzen, a-la UK's Zadie Smith) together with those about the AIDS epidemic/"gay lifestyles" (USA: Michael Cunningham, UK: Alan Hollinghurst)--but in my opinion fails miserably to rise to their level. (Their heights being absolutely unreachable anyway.) It's hefty. The award is not deserved; the Ian McEwan-like snobbish air of contemporary Euro-affluence never settles well with me.

Ugh... next!

Kate says

I'm tempted to give this book five stars, but it isn't my nature to gush and I think, based on her characterizations, that Julia Glass would understand my reticence to love without any reservations. But *Three Junes* captured me and I hereby recommend it to you. When I finished this novel, a long journey of imaginary characters across hundreds of pages, I felt at once connected to the world and affirmed in my humanity. Life is imperfect and we love anyway. As best we can.

Lena says

This novel begins in June of 1989. Scotsman Paul McLeod is vacationing in Greece, his first trip since the death of his wife six months earlier. While traveling the islands, his attention is drawn to a young American artist. As his interest in her grows, he reflects back over the course of his marriage - its beginnings, its never-resolved uncertainties, and its untimely ending.

Six years later, June of 1995 finds Paul's son Fenno returning to Scotland from his expat life in New York for his father's funeral. His attempts to cope with the inevitable challenges raised by spending time with family members during a crisis is flavored by his own recollections of a past relationship with a New York neighbor who slowly succumbed to AIDS.

The last June in this novel occurs ten years after the first. Fern, the young American artist from the first section, is now pregnant. Though her boyfriend has been a steady one, she struggles to tell him about the pregnancy, reflecting back on her failed first marriage as she does.

Julia Glass is a competent storyteller; her smooth prose and skill at involving the reader in the lives of her characters engaged me from the beginning. In the middle section, however, I found myself struggling with the chopped up narrative, unable to keep track of where in time Fenno's mind was resting as he jumped between his present and his past. In addition, though he is the character Glass spends the most time on, I found Fenno the most inscrutable of all of them.

Given the intensity surrounding the decline of a human life due to AIDS, I guess it's not surprising that the middle section of this book was heavy at times. The tone is far from maudlin, but there is a lot of death for its characters to process, so it's not exactly light reading.

Ultimately, I admired the way Glass wove together her stories and showed us how each of these characters was impacted by death in their own way. But this is one of those books where I enjoyed contemplating its insights after I had finished it more than I enjoyed actually reading it.

Vicki says

There are a lot of beautiful things about this book, but to be honest, it gets weighed down by the whiny primary character, Fenno, who has the longest section all to himself. He's angry, and we have no idea why. Very angry, and very self-righteous, and we have absolutely no idea. Yes, he's gay. One parent is okay with it, one parent isn't really, but doesn't get in Fenno's face about it. Fenno has exiled himself to NYC, and amidst countless witty observations about the differences between boisterous Yanks and reserved Brits, seems to stew further in his anger and self-imposed loneliness. There is a lot of jumping around in the narration, and at times, it seems as if this jumping is only for the sake of jumping, for the author to support some structure she thought up before she ever began, from which she doesn't want to stray. Not because it's best for the story.

The best part of the novel by far is the first section, concerning Fenno's father. Much more sympathetic. I don't need every narrator to be likeable. That's not my issue. My issue is that I need to understand why somebody acts the way they do, whether they're sympathetic or not. Not really clear to me in this book.

Trish says

This book is not at ALL, what I expected. From the cover I was expecting another typical book club, chick-light book about three women named June...little did I know. I loved this book because it was complex and seemed very "real" life. Nothing was nice and tidy and that's my kind of world.

Sally says

LOVE. LOVE. LOVE.

Interlocking stories that weave back and forth through time, across the Atlantic up to Scotland and down to the Adriatic and over to Manhattan. Spans the course of the life of a mother, her husband, their three sons, those sons' marriages and children, plus many other not-so-minor players.

Beautiful language, scenery, dialogue, character development.
Best of 2011, or at least the last, freshest, and most vivid in my memory.
READ this.

Barbara Klaser says

This is one of those stories that I suspect will stay with me, but this time it's partly because of so many unanswered questions and in a sense longings I had for the characters that never quite panned out. But perhaps that's the point. *Three Junes* is told from three different points of view in different time periods - with lots of flashbacks from the characters' memories. The three point-of-view characters are an older, recently-widowed man, Paul McLeod, his oldest son Fenno, who is gay, and a young woman named Fern who in a sense ties the whole series of stories and memories together. My favorite of these three characters was Fenno, my least favorite Fern, but perhaps because I saw some of my own weaknesses in her, a tendency to let others' influences provide her too easy excuses for not doing what she loves and wants to do. A sense that she does what she considers to be inevitable instead of what she wants. The others do this too, but she being the female was perhaps easier for me to identify with and find fault with as well. But don't we all do this to some degree? We let life and others lead us around, but there's that saying, "Go with the flow," and maybe it's not always such a bad thing to do. It's just that as a creative person I don't like to see anyone's creativity suffer for it.

One of my favorite characters is a red, blue, and violet Eclectus Parrot named Felicity, who sings scales whenever it rains. The bird belongs to Fenno's friend Malachy, but Mal persuades Fenno to take care of her, in fact adopt her, and she is a somewhat important part of Fenno's story as the practical stepping stone to Fenno's relationship to Mal. She doesn't steal the story, but she could if she wanted to.

I'm rambling though. Maybe that's because I don't want to say too much about the story, for once I get started it would be too easy to include spoilers - though this is anything but a plot driven book. This is more the slow, psychological kind of story that I enjoy but anyone who needs action and excitement will detest. The book begins in June of 1989 with Paul's trip to Greece, which is where he meets Fern. The settings move between Greece, Scotland (where Paul grew up, raised his family, and runs a newspaper), and Greenwich Village, where Fenno has made his home. Fern is a young American woman, much younger than the elder McLeod, and is more of a fantasy for him, when he meets her on a trip to Greece shortly after his wife's death. In their brief friendship he regains a glimpse of youth, life, hope, and anticipation of the future that helps him return to life and gives his marriage and his new life alone some perspective. (I was relieved there was no clichéd affair to spoil this for me.) Fern unwittingly helps Paul come to better terms with his son being gay, through the simple gift of a painting.

The two other Junes, in 1995 and 1999, bring the characters around in a kind of spiral, ending with Fern's portion of the story, and a visit to Long Island. Again I don't want to spoil it for anyone. There is a lot of heartache and longing between these pages, and I found a surprising number of passages I wanted to savor and even quote.

One thing I noticed about myself as a reader, while digesting this novel, was how I visualize some characters

as actors that I know of, and following on that I was struck with the idea that one of the characters, Mal, might have even been visualized by the author as Johnny Depp. I could swear I heard his voice in the dialog.

My biggest quibble with this book is not that it ended, but that it ended too abruptly, though now that I've had a few hours to digest that, I realize I can tie the ends together as I wish, in my mind, or let them be. Perhaps the lack of conclusion is a gift.

Stacy says

I liked Paul very much, but wasn't really drawn into his story. There wasn't enough going on for me. I loved the middle section told from Fenno's perspective. He wasn't the most likeable character ever, but I thought the storyline was great. The third section completely lost me. I didn't get it. Fern was not nearly compelling enough for her own section. I know it brought everything full circle, but it wasn't enough for me.

The book was a mixed bag. I liked the writing and the family drama. I like the idea of what Glass was trying to do, but it felt like a gimmick that only half worked. I would have liked the book a whole lot better if she'd just expanded the middle section to include the first part and then left the last third out altogether.

I don't know if I'm making any sense. It's a hard book to talk about even if I was willing to fill this post with lots of spoilers. I'm glad I read it and will definitely give Glass another try. This was her debut novel and is a National Book Award winner

there's more on my blog <http://stacybuckeye.wordpress.com/201...>

Michelle (Michelle's Book Ends) Shealy says

I'm so glad I'm done! The book was split into 3 parts, with a single character related in some way to the other characters in the other 2 parts. In the first part of the book, it was slow to get going. Then it reached an even kind of level.. Part 2 was probably the best part of the book with the obvious relationship to part 1. Part 3 was boring and probably not the character you're going to expect. I thought it would never end. I know anyone who reads this is going to expect in part 3 that it will pull all the parts together..but they left the obvious hanging. I didn't like this book very much but once I start one I finish it. Its doubtful I'd pick up another book by this author.

Connie says

Julia Glass' debut novel is an intricately written multigenerational story about a Scottish family and their friends. It is a triptych with the sections set in the month of June in the years 1989, 1995, and 1999.

The father, Paul McLeod, is on a tour of Greece in 1989. He's remembering his marriage to his recently deceased wife whose passion was raising dogs. Paul becomes friends with an American artist, Fern, during the vacation.

Paul's son, Fenno, narrates the second and longest part of the novel. Fenno is a reserved gay owner of a

charming bookstore in Greenwich Village. He is called back to Scotland when his father unexpectedly dies. His younger twin brothers and their wives plan the funeral, and secrets are revealed from the past. There are also flashbacks to Feno's New York City life during the AIDS crisis. He helps Malachy, a neighbor and an irreverent newspaper music critic, during his last days. Feno is also asked to adopt Mal's pet parrot, Felicity, who brings beauty and affection to Feno's life.

The painter, Fern, shows up again in June of 1999, widowed and soon to be a single mother. She is staying in a beach area of Long Island with Tony, a housesitter and friend of Feno. A dinner party brings them together. Fern, who had confided in Paul during the Greek trip in the early part of the book, now has a long heart-to-heart talk with Feno. This section could have been edited down a bit.

"Three Junes" is a book about relationships and family. There are memories of past events, especially while mourning the four people and several pets who die. Always an animal lover, the author drew on her personal experience with an organization that helped people with AIDS take care of their pets when she was writing about Malachy and his parrot. Julia Glass is a painter as well as a writer, and she brings ordinary events to life with an artist's eye for detail and color.

Kalen says

So much fun to discover a book and author you'd never heard of. I won this book at our Booktopia Yankee Swap and it was completely new to me. Started reading on the plane ride home and had a hard time putting it down the rest of the week.

Each of the three sections of this novel could stand alone as its own novella (in fact, the first part was originally published this way.) I love linked stories where characters have connections that they never know about but the reader does.

Feno is a fantastic and complex character and he and Mal will be in my brain for a long time (maybe in part because both of them make me think of *A Little Life*?) The third part surprised me but in a good way. I thought someone else's story would be the focus instead.

Recommended for book groups--there are so many conversation points here and lots of "coulda, woulda, shouldas."

Dawn says

Three Junes is a novel following, for the most part, a Scottish gay man in New York. He is rather personality-less, with a penchant for being on his own. Most of his aloneness hinges on his fears of relying on someone else and the current AIDS scares (this is set in the late 1980s). The book is separated into three parts, starting out from the point of view of his father. It goes back and forth between different times with his wife and children, and the "present" time after his wife's death on a tour of Greece. I have to admit, I was wanting more description of the places he visited in Greece as they were all places I've been, but alas, the story stuck with his strange, generic tour mates. When the wife/mother was in the story, she was highly un-

likeable, it seemed that every time she spoke with her husband, she had her back turned, as if he was not near important enough.

The second, and largest part of the book is from Fenno, one of three sons of the father from the first part. This section goes back and forth between the "present" when his father has died and he is back in Scotland with his brothers and their families, and his life in New York a few years before in which he was secretly involved with a secretive nomadic man, Tony, and friends with Mal, a man dying of AIDS. His relationship with both men seemed rather the same except for the sexual nature of them. With Tony, it was basically an ongoing booty call where Fenno is just there when needed and pines when Tony is away. With Mal, Fenno waits on him as a doting son or nephew, never really expressing his enjoyment of Mal's company to Mal himself. Throughout, Fenno appears destined to live his life alone forever.

The third, and last, section is from the point-of-view of Fern, who I believe is one of the people on the Greek tour with Fenno's father. I'm still not sure this is the case, as I had the impression that she was middle-aged and this Fern, who is several years later than the first two sections, is considerably younger than middle-aged. She is alone as well, being widowed a couple years before. She is pregnant with her boyfriend's child (who is Greek - figure that out) but she has yet to tell him of the child. She is friends with Tony (exes to be exact - again, figure that out), and visits him and meets Fenno and one of his brothers. ***Spoiler***The ending is rather open, with the reader led to believe Fern is possibly going to do the right thing.***end spoiler***

The book's style, with the going back and forth between times with just a little break in the text to denote a change (no notes on time, year, etc.), is rather disconcerting. I had a hard time figuring out when it was and who was there and who knew what. And with the Fern at the end, I was very confused at her appearance, and why it was decided the book should end with her, was unclear. I was glad that Fenno was in the last section, but felt a little cheated that most of the book was about him, from his perspective, and then I was taken away from him and pushed to another consciousness.

Overall, the book was interesting, but the style and not very likeable characters detracted from it. I think that I wouldn't recommend this to anyone. But I wouldn't tell someone not to read it.

Glenn Sumi says

This winner of 2002's National Book Award is a perfectly fine, earnest, inoffensive middlebrow literary novel written by someone who probably REALLY REALLY liked *The Hours*. No coincidence that there's a blurb by Michael Cunningham (the author of *The Hours*) on the back.

But it feels terribly thin by comparison. The narrative is contrived and affected; you can see Glass straining for her epiphanies. And I'm not sure what the *point* is... that family is a mysterious thing? That we create our own families, our own sense of home, wherever we may be?

Fine. But give us some compelling, rich characters, not ciphers; and because there are at least three distinct settings, at least make us feel they're different.

Still, Glass knows how to write a sentence. I just hope she learns how to string them together into a cohesive whole in other books.

Michelle says

Although different from my expectations, I enjoyed this book a lot for its character explorations, unique structure, and descriptive writing. Broken into three parts, the first section is a third-person narrative from the perspective of the Scottish father, reflecting on his wife's death and his three sons. The second part is first-person narrative in the voice of the oldest son Fenno. This section is surprising in so far as Fenno can be overly rigid, often unexplainably angry, and you desperately want him to open up to his family and friends, and yet, you find yourself rooting for him to find his own happiness. The third section is again third-person narrative, but this time focused on Fern, an ex-lover of Fenno's ex-lover. Although this section feels somewhat disconnected from the book -- introducing us to new characters at the end of the story -- it is satisfying in that it gives you a final picture of Fenno from another's perspective. And from there you see that Fenno has perhaps found some resolution to his issues with letting other people into his life. In all three sections, the author jumps back and forth between past and present, interconnecting the two and pulling you forward. Overall, I would say, don't expect a traditional plot where much happens; this is an exploration of characters, more than the events in their lives.

Floramanda says

One of the things that I love about being in a book club is that it pushes me out of my reading comfort-zone. I have read so many things that I normally would not have picked up on my own. Sometimes I'm disappointed, but still look forward to the conversation. Sometimes I find a jewel that has a gift for me that relates to where I am at that moment in time. *Three Junes* was, surprisingly, a gift.

I've read some interviews with Julia Glass where she discusses the book being about love and loss, and certainly how people are interconnected. The real theme to me was motherhood, or parenthood, and I enjoyed the different images of "motherhood" (and I'm including Fenno in this category) that Ms. Glass creates. Each "mother" is different, leaving lasting legacies to "her" children while still retaining what makes "her" unique.

From Maureen, who is more connected to her puppies than her children, to Lucinda, who has to watch her son die (every mother's worst nightmare). Lucinda also helps out at a home for pregnant teens, a cause she eventually gets Fenno involved in (Fenno as a doula! Ha!). Contrast those mothers to Veronique, a mother of four still running her own business yet lovingly involved in her children's lives (in that French kind of way). Then there's Fern's own mother, and Fern herself, just embarking on the journey of motherhood. Even Fenno's relationship with Mal, which in another time or situation would have been romantic, becomes more maternal in nature instead. Finally, Fenno's gift to Lillian, so she could have her greatest wish fulfilled, at the sacrifice of his own feelings (how motherly!).

I did love the tendrils that weave throughout the story, connecting the characters across time and distance. I enjoyed the small descriptive jewels. I appreciated being surprised that I liked Fenno so much. But it is the images of motherhood that still flicker in my mind.

David Lentz says

The equation of a true artist, per Glass, is as a "proud pilot of an improvised life." (Page 277) Glass can really write: that is, her style is elegantly crafted and a joy to read. She reminds me a bit of Michael Cunningham with her rich syntax and sonorus, articulate style as well as her themes and the descriptions of characters and places. I picked up this novel because it won a National Book Award and my wife adored it. I like the way that Glass moves effortlessly among disparate settings to transport the reader from Greece to NYC and the English countryside. At the close of the novel I admit that I was somewhat annoyed that Glass was still introducing long expositions of characters. But I really felt that characters like Fenno, Tony, Mal and Fern were roundly and compassionately drawn figures. The story line takes unexpected and for the most part rewarding turns: Mal's illness was very Michael Cunningham and has emerged as a contemporary theme that we've had a great many literary opportunities to dwell upon. I'm not sure when this thematic focus of the plague will simply cease to be considered original or engaging among contemporary novels but, personally, I'm already there. What makes this novel interesting is what Fenno does both for Mal and Fern as their friends in light of their situations. Tony is an intriguing antagonist to Fenno's protagonist and becomes key in the plot's denouement. I consider *Three Junes* a very good but not great literary novel. The straight-ahead, traditional, narrative style makes for quick reading and Glass, by her own definition, artistically pilots the reader adeptly through her intelligently improvised world.

Sharyl says

Three Junes, by Julia Glass, has been hanging around on my bookshelves for quite some time. Yes, that's shelves, plural, since it's been around for at least two rearrangements. Glass won the 2002 National Book Award for this novel, and surprise-surprise, I loved it. The Junes in the title refer to three different months, different times in the life of the McCleod family, but it's not exactly chronological--there are many flashbacks woven throughout the book, which is perfectly paced. The father is Paul McCleod, who hails from a well-heeled Scottish family, and he runs the newspaper his father founded. His wife, Maureen, breeds and trains collies, and together, they have three sons: Fenno, followed by the twins Dennis and David.

The book opens as Paul is taking a guided tour of the Greek Islands after he has been widowed, which gives him ample time to reflect on his past life and how he feels about his family. Paul will eventually decide to become a British expatriate living on Naxos, leaving much of his former life behind. We see his family through his eyes first, with his perceptions, feelings, and frustrations. After that, the novel follows Fenno, the eldest son who seems to be the most distant one, even before he crosses The Great Pond to live in New York City. Fenno normally returns to Scotland for Christmas, but of course he makes a couple more trips because of his mother's death, and later, for his father's. During these visits, his interaction with his brothers and their wives provide still more history, and so the family portrait is viewed from many angles.

I'm not doing a good job of explaining why this book is so interesting. It's not an action-adventure book, but it is a page turner, nonetheless. It's about the variety of relationships people form throughout their lives, and I found the characters very interesting. The novel ends with a beautiful coincidence that the concerned characters may never even know about. At the end, I got the feeling of a circle being completed.

A very good read.

Cara Lopez Lee says

Julia Glass is a superb writer, and my mind sank into her luxurious words the way my body might sink into a thick quilt or warm beach sand. I enjoy stories in which characters' lives interconnect in ways that the characters themselves can't see, and stories that show us how often we think we know someone well when we really don't. I was particularly drawn to the main story of Fenno, the intellectual, emotionally disconnected, ever-yearning gay man who takes us deep into a life that smashes stereotypes.

Fenno is a perfectionist first-born son who believes that his two younger brothers, twins, are always judging him - for being gay, for being stodgy, for deserting his family to move to New York - yet who fails to recognize that he is constantly judging them. In his love life, Fenno is even more tragically in denial, pining for a lover who refuses to be pinned down while failing to realize that the love of his life is right before his eyes. How can he admit to loving a somewhat pretentious intellectual, when it might require him to admit the man is a mirror for his own flaws? Yet he does lovingly tend to his true love's needs throughout a battle with AIDS - so it seems his denial is also self-protection from guaranteed grief. The question is, can he learn to accept the loving heart within him that he has long denied and begin embracing life with all its uncertainties?

Glass tells two other stories in the book: one from the point of view of Fenno's father, as the man travels Greece after the death of his wife and tries to come to terms with the ambivalence of that marriage, the other from the point of view of a young woman whom the father meets in Greece. These characters, too, must decide whether they can let go of the pain of the past to embrace life and love before it's too late. I didn't feel as emotionally compelled by the two secondary stories, except where they intersected with Fenno's. There was a formality in the language applied to the thoughts and dialogue of the characters that made it tough to get close to them at times. However, in Fenno's case that style fit his character, and certainly the rich descriptions made his life feel quite real. I loved the detailed description of his relationship with his macaw, a stand-in for the love he had trouble sharing with humans. Overall, Glass has pulled off a lovely piece of art, that offers much to consider about the human condition.
