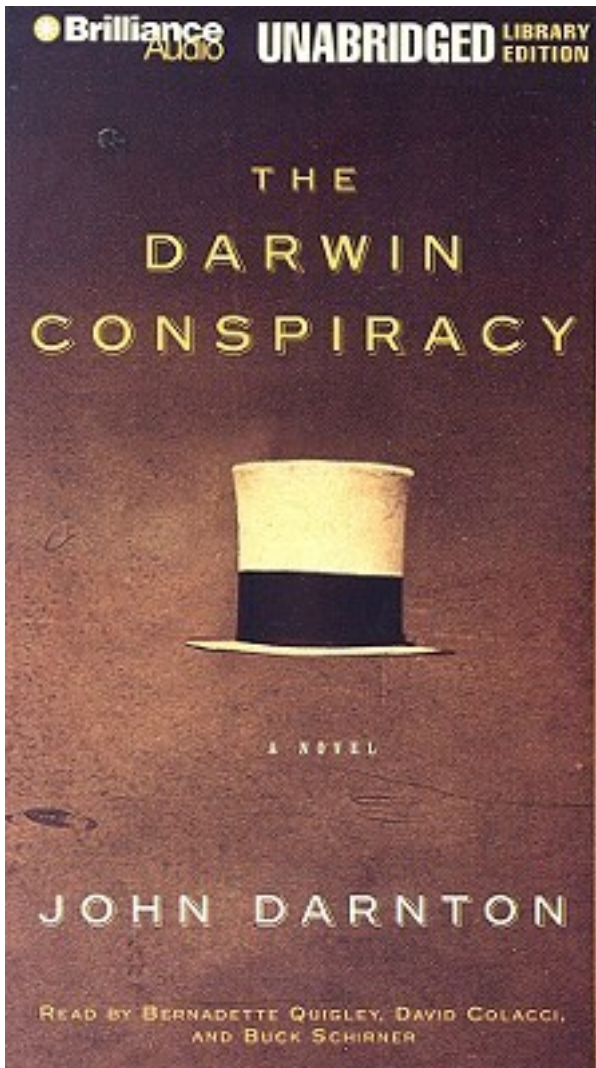

John Darnton

Darwin Conspiracy, The



Title: Darwin Conspiracy, The

Author: John Darnton

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Description

In this riveting new novel, bestselling author John Darnton transports us to Victorian England and around the world to reveal the secrets of a legendary nineteenth-century figure. Darnton elegantly blends the power of fact and the insights of fiction to explore the many mysteries attached to the life and work of Charles Darwin.

What led Darwin to the theory of evolution? Why did he wait twenty-two years to write *On the Origin of Species*? Why was he incapacitated by mysterious illnesses and frightened of travel? Who was his secret rival?

These are some of the questions driving Darnton's richly dramatic narrative, which unfolds through three vivid points of view: Darwin's own as he sails around the world aboard the *Beagle*; his daughter Lizzie's as she strives to understand the guilt and fear that struck her father at the height of his fame; and that of present-day anthropologist Hugh Kellem and Darwin scholar Beth Dulcimer, whose obsession with Darwin (and with each other) drives them beyond the accepted boundaries of scholarly research.

What Hugh and Beth discover—Lizzie's diaries and letters lead them to a hidden chapter of Darwin's autobiography—is a maze of bitter rivalries, petty deceptions, and jealously guarded secrets, at the heart of which lies the birth of the theory of evolution.

Insightful reviews

Seek: I enjoyed the mystery that Darnton had set up, though I found it rather difficult to sympathise with any of the characters. However, I do applaud the way Darnton ties up the modern and historical plot threads very neatly, and sets them up to echo each other. (In particular, I really liked how the theme of scientific deceit/malpractice runs through both the modern times (Hugh's brother Cal falsifies results, albeit for ostensibly good reasons) and Darwin and Wallace and McCormick (in the past) engage in different levels of deceit, with Darwin's being arguably the greater.)

Still, I did not particularly enjoy the book. I wonder if I am partly hampered by the problematic reconstruction of the voyage of the *Beagle*. Granted, the title of the book already hints that liberties are to be taken with the history as we have generally constructed it. It is clear that Darnton has done his research. But while I usually enjoy historical fiction and mysteries, I found the extreme fictionalisation of events and the conspiracy of Darwin, his supporters, and Wallace to be a little difficult to swallow in this case.

Jason Golomb: My definition of historical fiction is a work that takes key pieces of a very real history while expanding and filling in the gaps of the unknown to create a more fully fleshed version of reality. John Darnton's "The Darwin Conspiracy" targets something a little different. Darnton takes the bones of history, specifically Charles Darwin's trip to South America on board 'The Beagle', and wraps around it a skin of his own creation, to display an alternate version of how he came to develop his notions of evolution.

At the core, Darnton builds a mystery around why Darwin took so many years to actually announce his suggestion and evidence for evolution and 'survival of the fittest'. Why was he so sickly? And what was the nature of his relationship with the English intelligentsia of the 19th century? On Darwin's trail in the modern world is Hugh, a meandering and unfocused student of evolution and history with a very sad soul, and Beth, his girlfriend who has a unique connection of her own to the Darwin family. Hugh discovers a journal written by one of Darwin's daughters, hidden in the back of an accounting ledger. It doesn't take long for Hugh to realize that there's a rather nasty secret that her father Charles has been keeping for a very long time.

Darnton structures his book around three distinct narratives: Hugh and Beth's search for the hidden truth of Darwin's trip; Darwin's daughter Lizzie's journal; and Darwin's own monologue during his trip on the Beagle. Each thread is laced with multiple micro-plots and mysteries that compound and build upon each other providing the drive of the primary mysteries.

The book is well written and the distinct plot points that ultimately wind together are interesting enough to make this a solid, but light-weight, read. The characters are a little all over the place and either not sympathetic nor particularly well developed to drive the story itself. There's no elegance to the unraveling of the mystery giving a sense of a rather heavy handed editor.

I enjoyed the book and its look back across 150+ years to the world of 19th century exploration, and the very conservative Victorian world through the eyes of Lizzie. This is a good, but not great, novel.

Tony: Darnton, John. THE DARWIN CONSPIRACY. (2005). ***1/2. This is a clever work of historical fiction arranged much like a crime novel. It explores the life of Charles Darwin, through his journals (Voyage of the Beagle), discovered letters of his younger daughter, Lizzie, who is either fictional or of whom not much is known, and two modern-day researchers who stumble upon some inconsistencies in the records. Although well researched – much of the historical references are well-documented in known works – the novel seems too much contrived at times to carry the reader along with it. The theme of the conspiracy is the undocumented relationship between the ship's surgeon on the Beagle, McCormick, and Darwin. The role of the ship's captain, FitzRoy, also comes into question. These relationships lead to what you might have guessed – a surprise ending. It really wasn't much of a surprise as the author telegraphed his moves chapters ahead of time. In all, I'd say this was a good read, but probably best at the beach.

Friends of Linebaugh Library: This ancient novel is an engaging conspiracy of Charles Darwin's existence and a question of the place production and evolution fairly spawn from...a actual

"what if it occurred like this" tackle history. the radical jumps among timelines. First, a fictionalized model of Charles Darwin's trip round South the United States at the Beagle. The second, a modern day Darwin student who stumbles upon the magazine of 1 of Darwin's daughters, and maybe discovers a secret while he stumbles upon numerous formerly forgotten correspondences and journals written from the views of these as regards to the now famous/infamous naturalist together with a hidden bankruptcy of his personal autobiography. The writings demonstrate remarkable complexities that carry into query the particular foundation of The starting place of the Species. Of the 3 intertwined stories, from the viewpoint of Darwin himself, the diary of his daughter, and latest researchers, the letters from Lizzie, his daughter have been my favourite a part of the book. fact be told, it was once rather well researched, yet a bit slow. It held my attention, yet i will see the place a much less sufferer reader would possibly not persevere to completion.

Maren: obviously there's an incredible volume of hypothesis and artistic license taken during this book. Moreover, i am not usual sufficient with the identified background to ensure how exact the old parts of the tale may well be. However, Darnton's tale is unquestionably engaging. He cleverly combines previous and present, with journals and letters bridging the gap, to create a storyline that not less than piques a reader's curiosity sufficient to benefit more. I, for one, loved it tremendously. It was, perhaps, a section predictable. at the least i used to be capable of come to conclusions earlier than the characters did, yet that used to be demanding to prevent because the reader is seeing the occasions from an old element of view. In any case, it's a ebook i might most likely reread to choose up at the subtleties I neglected the 1st time out.

Lisa H.: one other example the place I want i may supply half-star ratings. This learn like a kind of books that appear to were written via a person who, having accomplished their post-graduate English measure research, figures they could placed all that info to solid use. no longer the case here, as Mr. Darnton is older and has written a few different issues first, however the entire factor smacked of what I name "James Michener syndrome", AKA "Look in any respect the examine I did!!" That stated - components have been very interesting, and so long as i did not get too hung up at the hideous coincidences (like, whereas looking for uncharted learn territory within the completely explored lifestyles tale of the recognized naturalist, a suffering perennial pupil serendipitously discovers the hidden diary of Charles Darwin's daughter Elizabeth, amid a field of family money owed paperwork) i discovered the old environment intriguing.

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