

from the Southwest

Posted on Nov 17, Posted by [Lois Lowry](#) Category [Uncategorized](#)

I am currently in a hotel in Sierra Vista, Arizona, preparing to check out and head to Tucson to catch a flight back home. A lovely visit here, and 1300 kids in a big auditorium yesterday...all of them attentive and quiet for an hour! Amazing!...and I have been with good people surrounded by gorgeous scenery and breathing dry, crisp air. Altogether a great combination and I thank the town of Sierra Vista for choosing "The Giver" as their "One Book, One Community" read this year.

As I usually do, I have my laptop with me (very irritating that expensive hotels usually charge something like \$10 a day to hook into the internet, and here a little Fairfield Inn gives me access at no charge. Waldorf Astoria: consider this a scolding) and this morning, killing a little time, I took a look at Roger Sutton's blog, which you can access through the Horn Book website. I like the Horn Book and I like Roger, who is smart and funny and irreverent and also knows more than most people about children's literature.

This morning I was startled to see a book of mine mentioned, and since his blog is public access I assume there is no problem with my quoting this post here:

Betty did advance a question that I thought might be of interest here. "Have you noticed," she asked, "that most of the book debate this year has been about allegory?" and went on to mention The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, Gossamer, and The Boy in the Striped Pajamas. It's true that each of these titles has inspired strong reactions; also true that what's often being debated is "the lesson" of each story, both its nature and effectiveness. All stories have lessons, of course, but these three seem particularly fixed upon "the representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form," my digital AHD's definition of allegory.

Betty also included Jeannette Winter's picture book Mama in this group, but I'm not so sure about that one. Fable, maybe, except it's practically nonfiction. But like the novels above, it's brought the knives out. Why is that? I'm all for a little sharp carving, but I'm wondering if there's something in the nature of allegory itself that prompts the strong response.

What was startling to me was the mention of "strong reactions," "being debated," "brought the knives out"....because I have been completely unaware of any of that. Knives flashing, and I didn't even know to duck and swerve?!! Well, maybe it is just as well that I am completely out of the loop, if there IS a loop. My mind is on other things now, with a new book in progress, and I am no good at debate anyway. But please, if anyone knows anything I should be warned about, so that I can ready my helmet and armor...or a hiding place...do clue me in.

I head to Germany Thanksgiving Day, and will be with my 13-year-old granddaughter (and just received German translations of "Messenger" that I can take to her. She gives my books in translation to her friends as birthday gifts). Then in mid-December I will go back to the farm in Maine, where I work so well free of the distractions of real life.... (mostly distractions that I love: my "movie group" of Boston women; we get together to discuss movies periodically...which means of course that we have to SEE movies; concerts and theater; friends....I've invited all the neighbors, 24 total, for a potluck supper at my house December 3rd). All of that is fun, and makes my life busy and very fulfilled. But in Maine, especially this time of year, it is sooo quiet and peaceful. Movies only by way of Netflix. Phone ringing rarely. Wind blowing. Birds calling. The deer and wild turkeys will have gone into hiding because of hunting season. (I will have to dredge up my bright orange hat). The sky will be gray and cloudy, the air chilly, the lake water dark and cold; Mt. Washington will have snow on its forbidding peak.

I have just had the opportunity to read the brilliant film adaptation of "The Giver" written by Vadim Perelman. This is the third screenplay I've read, over the years, for this book, and this one really gets it right...is completely true to the book, while adding in the visual elements that a movie needs, doing it so well that in some cases I thought, while reading: "Oh, I wish I had written that into the book!" It enhances the ending without compromising the ambiguity. Really an incredible job. Now the hard part is in the hands of the producers...one of them Jeff Bridges...who are trying to get a major studio involved.

Time to finish packing up to head to the airport. Nelson DeMaille into my carry-on; the only time I read such books - thrillers, page-turners - is on long plane trips. Toothpaste into its dumb little see-through plastic bag.

Home again, home again, jiggety-jig.

Tags: Untagged