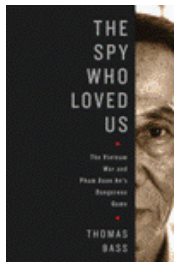


have never seen a white boy before. They follow him everywhere, touching his skin and pulling his arms: "I feel like an animal in a petting zoo," he writes.

The author digresses frequently from the main story to tell endearing anecdotes from his time as Mallam Beel/Mista Bello, as he was called in the two villages. His introductions to characters like Faralu the horse groom, Jagga the town crier, and Alhaji Mallam Harouna the scholar are lovingly given, and the descriptions of Mallam Beel/Mista Bello's reception in his sometime hometowns will almost make readers want to journey to remote Africa—Sam's descriptions of the flies and the odors may scare them off again. (December) *Whitney Hallberg*



The Spy Who Loved US: The Vietnam War and Pham Xuan An's Dangerous Game

Thomas Bass
PublicAffairs
Hardcover \$26.95 (320pp)
978-1-58648-409-5

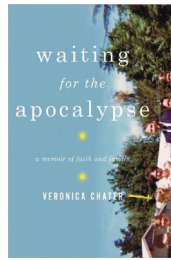
Pham Xuan An's story is as intriguing as it is revealing about the Vietnam War. The author's masterful account shows how An, who spent more than half a century providing critical intelligence for North Vietnam, faced certain death if his intelligence work were discovered by the United States, France, or the South Vietnamese government. An has been the subject of three biographies written by Vietnamese authors, one by a French writer, and last year's *Perfect Spy* by Larry Berman. This book's distinguishing feature is the author's accounts of his meetings with An in Vietnam between 1992 and 2006. An was not always truthful or open about parts of his life, but these interviews provide excellent insight into the war from the communist perspective and show a growing closeness between the writer and the ex-spy.

Not only a spy, An was also an excellent strategic planner, providing critical intelligence about the Diem regime, the Battle of Ap Bac, and the Tet Offensive to his countrymen. An learned his craft from America's leading spymaster of the war, Colonel Edward Lansdale, who befriended him. After the war, An was awarded sixteen medals for his service, including the equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

While An's covert career flourished, his career in journalism also received accolades. Writing for Reuters and *Time*, he was admired by colleagues who were, of course, totally unaware of his night job. Following his death, Frank McCullough, his boss at *Time*, said, "Not once in the years he worked for me did An ever slant his reporting. Paradoxically, he loved the U.S. and its democracy."

Bass has written five previous books, including *Vietnam: The War Comes Home*, and is a professor of English and journalism at the University at Albany. This first-rate account,

which will appeal to general readers as well as historians, portrays An as a man caught between two cultures who never lost sight of his ultimate goal, peace and prosperity for Vietnam. (February) *Karl Helicher*



Waiting for the Apocalypse: A Memoir of Faith and Family

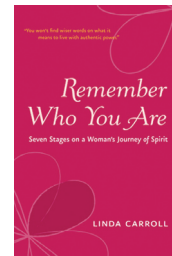
Veronica Chater
W.W. Norton
Hardcover \$23.95 (329pp)
978-0-393-06603-6

Chater, a widely published essayist, gives us an impressionistic portrait of a family immersed in extreme Catholic traditionalism. Written from the perspective of the child and adolescent, Chater is successful in letting readers experience the chaos that was her family life. When this memoir begins, Chater's father is a California Highway patrolman and the family lives a comfortable and outwardly normal suburban life. At home, however, he is obsessed with his belief that Vatican II is "the greatest crime in history apart from the Crucifixion." Disgust with the American Catholic Church and a friendship with Harry Doten, a wealthy (and eventually untrustworthy) traditionalist, leads him to quit his job and move the family to Portugal, where he expects to find dogmatic fidelity. There, Chater's imagination is steeped in the prophecies of Fatima, the expectation that "the world was teetering on the brink of the Holy Chastisement: an apocalypse so huge that entire nations would be annihilated...."

When Portugal proves to be a disappointment, the financially impoverished family of thirteen returns to California, and Chater's father, believing that "the Crusades of the twentieth century had begun," becomes an activist in the "counter-revolutionary movement." The girls in the family are forbidden to wear modern clothes and Veronica's deception ("keeping a single pair of pants was like having a fire extinguisher on hand") leads to "a long series of self-preservation." Not surprisingly, she and her older sister experiment with drugs, listen to suggestive music, go to discos, and become sexually active. When these secrets (and her sister's pregnancy) are discovered, their father disowns them, but a few days later, their mother, an exemplary prodigal parent, seeks them out and brings them home.

That incident serves as a metaphor for the abiding loyalty to family, not faith, that emerged from this childhood. Chater writes about her complex father with affection, ambivalence and, ultimately, acceptance, but the heart of this book is her mother, the indomitable woman who was her husband's backbone but who "refused to let religion come between her and us." This book is a worthy testament to her mother's legacy of love. (February) *Rachelle Linner*

BODY, MIND & SPIRIT



Remember Who You Are: Seven Stages on a Woman's Journey of Spirit

Linda Carroll
Conari Press
Softcover \$12.95 (126pp)
978-1-57324-367-4

In her latest book, *Remember Who You Are*, Linda Carroll offers an astonishingly diverse array of thoughts. From Coretta Scott King to Sappho, the pages of *Remember* are enriched with a wealth of meditations from great women thinkers, sprinkled between the poetry and prose of the author. *Remember* serves as a guide to reconnecting with a spiritual dimension within oneself, an essence that Carroll argues is shared among women. A gifted poet, Carroll acknowledges the power behind words. She uses the writings of Virginia Woolf and Alice Walker to reaffirm this shared essence and the power of womanhood. Although *Remember* is not a feminist manifesto, Carroll truly believes in reinforcing the beauty of the feminine, and there is poetry in that.

Carroll traces the journey of remembering through seven stages that she argues are interchangeable and overlapping. *Forgetting* is one of the pivotal stages, something that Carroll argues happens at birth when we first enter the physical world. Now if this sounds vaguely reminiscent of a religious doctrine, the author is more than aware of it. She argues that "Remembering is the key to most world religions and to spiritual experience....In whatever way we are awakened, we are reminded for a moment of a different realm of existence with its own truth." Clearly, *Remember* is a spiritual guide; however it shies away from the rigid boundaries of religious doctrine. Instead of listing rules and regulations, Carroll offers a more celebratory take on rediscovering spirituality, the results of which are much more empowering for the reader.

Ultimately, what separates Carroll's tale of spiritual awakening from so many other self-help/spirituality books is her emphasis on what we already have, not what we are lacking. Although she names moments when we may feel a spiritual void, Carroll is careful to focus her stories on celebrating and rediscovering an essence that she argues is inside of us, waiting to be rediscovered. Her narrative accounts for the alienation that women may experience in our society, and connects that to a larger spiritual amputation that occurs at an early stage in life. Carroll's philosophy goes farther than simply saying that the problems do not exist within us, but instead that the *answers* do. Such an affirmation celebrates the beauty of womanhood in a society that often punishes it. (November) *Elizabeth A. Shramko*