

THE JULY NEWSLETTER



Bertha's World

Pierre Durand's monthly newsletter for the quirky, the nutty and noir

July 2025 - Volume 1, Issue #01

Thank you for subscribing to my monthly newsletter, my very first one! You are with me from the very beginning!

I thought carefully about starting a newsletter before taking the plunge. Many authors have various ways in which to connect with their readers. Some use social media channels, others prefer newsletters, YouTube channels, etc. I am not on social media (unless you count GoodReads and I'm not there that often anyway) so a newsletter is my way of engaging with you. And I have decided on monthly because I am committing to consistency in frequency and in what you can expect. I hope you enjoy them as much as I enjoy writing them.

So, let me tell you what to expect. The newsletter is not just about my work. In fact, that is the smallest part and the last thing I will speak about in each issue. Rather, I am guessing you like books, so I want to share with you what I read the month before writing the newsletter and let you know what it's about in case it appeals to you. I don't say whether I think it's a 'good' or a 'bad' book (after all that's such a personal decision), rather the aim is to let you decide whether you wish to add it to your reading list. Second, you will receive news and comments about things in the publishing world: trends, books, bookshops and book clubs etc. as well as news about authors and screenwriters and their works.

Why have I called this first newsletter Bertha's World? Well, she is a fictional character that has grabbed the attention of readers. I think that's because, first, of what she represents. She is something bigger than us and yet her story could so easily have gone unnoticed. I have often said that the untold stories are usually the most interesting ones. So, in recognition of Bertha, I want to infuse the newsletters with references to lesser-known reading preferences, writers, films, and news. Things that you may not ordinarily come across in mainstream media. It is a way for me to draw attention to untold stories that may otherwise just diffuse into the ether. And second, Bertha's World is bigger than just her story. There is a one-man show, and the podcast channel Stories with Bertha will start in a few months. And to keep the story of Bertha's Law alive, there are printed copies of the images available.

At the end of each newsletter, I will give a brief preview of what to expect in the next one.

The July Book Recommendation

If All the Cats in the World Disappeared by Genki Kawamura, is a fairly short novel, probably not much longer than a novella. It has done really well, especially in the writer's native country, Japan. It tells the story of a young man who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. There is an 'out', however. He is visited by the devil (often dressed in garish Hawaiian shirts) who offers him a chance to live one day longer each time he makes something disappear from the world, like clocks, movies, and so on. The book is, of course, about more than that. It is about relationships, mortality, reconciliation, and is his reflection of a life. That may sound heavy going, but it's couched in what is sometimes a light story. Although I have to say there some touching parts. I found there to be a flavour of *Life of Pi* or *Waiting for Godot* about it, and I think anyone who enjoyed those books will enjoy this as well. As readers of my own books will know, I am partial to these kinds of stories, so needless to say, I enjoyed the read. It falls very much into the quirky, nutty and noir that I so enjoy, with a touch of magical realism.

Bibliophile News

Now that I have turned to writing professionally, I have paid more attention to bibliophile news and am struck by how many small book clubs and boutique bookshops there are. And how important it is to support them. I have spent time in George, a town in the western Cape of South Africa and came across the Silent Book Club (SBC George) run by Norine and Susan. SBC is actually a global club started by friends Guinevere de la Mare and Laura Gluhanich in San Francisco. It has branches (1700 I think at last count) in 57 countries. If you like the idea of spending an hour reading in silence with companions, this is something you will appreciate. Search for Silent Book Club online (or ask your preferred AI bot), you can't miss it. I spent time at one of the reads in George and it was a fun way to read in quiet and make new acquaintances. And speaking of George, while I was there, I had the great pleasure to have the first launch of *Bertha's Law* at the garden route mall.

Book Launch and New Networks



Pictured with me is Nikki Jackman



A wonderful turnout at a delightful

Joy. She is, I believe, one of a few
teaching artists in Africa, and she
was this discussant

store, staffed and managed by the
friendliest people

The garden route, for travellers to South Africa, is an absolute gem. I suspect that other Africans will find that the weather will take a while to get used to (especially in Winter), but I only say that because compared to the other parts of southern Africa, it is very wet! The kind of wet that creeps into your bones. Although, it's all relative. Folks from Belgium where I have also lived will find it positively bright and sunny. And there are many fantastic days all year round.

The launch was at Wordsworth Books and staff and manager (Philip Wiltshire) were very welcoming and, quite unexpectedly for many bookshops I have come across, eager to host author evenings. I have attached two photos. The one is with discussant Nikki Jackman. Take a look at her website and search the profile for Nikki Jackman Joy. She is, I believe, one of a few teaching artists in Africa. The other photo was sent to me by the organisers.

Teaching artistry is a fairly new movement. One of the real developers and instigators of its growth is Eric Booth in New York City. [Disclosure: Eric is my uncle, and more about teaching artistry in a later newsletter.]

Coming In August

I have obtained copies of two books—The Fourth Boy and Salt Water Pool Boy—and I will tell you about these in August. Both, although especially the second novel, have LGBT+ elements and themes so for readers interested in that be sure to see August's newsletter.

June is a busy month for me with promotions in South Africa planned for my book Bertha's Law. And in bibliophile news, I will tell you about my experience of 'Finding your Timothy', a phrase used by book marketers and publishers when they ask authors who their ideal reader is. Although my Timothy is actually someone called Lorenza and the story may surprise you.

Be free to be, Bertha and me.

Pierre Durand



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