



Stone Junction

Jim Dodge , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

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Introitus lapidis, que arranca con el rechazazo propinado en la mandíbula a una monja, es una odisea moderna sobre la búsqueda del conocimiento y de la comprensión, simbolizados por una extraña esfera de diamante, supuestamente la Piedra Filosofal, custodiada por el gobierno de los EEUU. Daniel Pearse, un huérfano acogido por la Alianza de Magos y Forajidos, debe seguirle la pista en un mundo en el que la venganza, la traición, la revolución, las sustancias químicas alucinógenas, la magia y el asesinato se imponen como norma. *Introitus lapidis* te hace retorcerte de risa tanto como sumirte desconsoladamente en la tristeza, pero te absorbe por completo en todo momento.

Stone Junction Details

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Author : Jim Dodge , Thomas Pynchon (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Stone Junction for online ebook

tim says

If you have not yet read Jim Dodge, start with Fup, the "fable that became a fable." Fup sets the perfect tone for Stone Junction and introduces a recurring, if minor character in the later. Both stories are deeply moving, full of insight, and written with incredible heart and humor. I also recommend saving the great introduction by Thomas Pynchon until the end, as he gives away plot points that are better left as undiscovered surprises.

Judy Abbott says

‘a??rt?c? bir kitap. ?im?ek ?eklinde yara izi, gizli büyücüler birli?i tabii Harry Potter’? an?msatt?. Rowling buradan esinlenmi? veya bir güzel alm?? fikri. ?lginç, merakla okunuyor ama hikâyede sürekli yeni karakterler f??k?r?nca biraz s?k?ld?m sonlara do?ru.

Bir de kitaba önsöz yazm??lar, önsözde kitapta ne oluyor ne bitiyor anlatm??lar hey allah?m ya. Önsözü okursan?z benim gibi sonunu bile bile kitab? okumak zorunda kal?rs?n?z :(

Max Nemtsov says

You don't have to be illegal to be an outlaw.

[illegible]

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Naomi says

I think I first became aware of this book when searching Amazon for "Haight-Ashbury." I finished it a few weeks ago, and I MISS IT! To have that life, to have people approach the world that way -- man, to have someone take me to a remote ranch with the directives to contemplate, to notice, to think...well, that would outshine a lotto win. I'd explode with happiness! And you get to DO that while you read this mangificent measure of a book. It's pretty obvious I can't contain my zeal. I want to cover my walls with the words and thoughts contained in this book and make my house a poetry magazine of Jim Dodge quotations (his idea as described in the book, not mine).

Okay. I had to celebrate a bit with you. To quote Dodge, "I found the truth, and it is simple. Life is amazing." So is this book.

Amanda says

Woo! A book that's made it onto my favorites shelf!

The ending was fairly unsatisfying to me but this is the most interesting, creative book I've read in recent memory. I don't even know quite how to describe it. I've never read an author that so fluently writes so many different characters and different worlds - and does it without it reading as disjointed or broken apart.

I keep coming back to the word "creative". It was also FUN. A fun adventure story, one that reminded me of the suspense of Harry Potter towards the end even though the plot doesn't resemble HP in the slightest. This novel is strange, so I have trouble recommending it for anyone who doesn't enjoy quite a bit of imagination, but damn it was really good.

Mosca says

This book sets its own terms, existing somewhere in the lands of political fantasy--if such a geography exists. Here lives an underground and ancient, loosely-organized collaboration among those who have always lived outside the law. This loose confederation of anarchists, magicians, gamblers, alchemists--and others who live in a counter-economy//counter culture--has its own codes of honor which easily substitutes for rules.

This organization and the characters that interact with it are the protagonists of this lively tale. And the anarchic assumptions by which these folks measure their actions are a big part of the charm of this book. I was drawn in from the start and held attentive until the end. This book is fun and worth your time.

I am confused about the darkness and other elements of the ending. But I may re-read this book at some time and clarify some of my confusions.

tENTATIVELY, cONVENIENCE says

review of

Jim Dodge's Stone Junction

by tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE - October 30, 2017

[This review is truncated by a word limit. For the full review, go here:
<https://www.goodreads.com/story/show/...>]

I'm not familiar w/ the author. I probably got this b/c the front cover looks vaguely science-fiction w/ a 'futuristic' black dome w/ green lights & a smoke stack that looks like it might be more at home on a large sea-faring boat than in the desert where it is in the image & w/ a foregrounded black-gloved hand that's partially on fire. I don't recall noticing the ad blurb on the back from one of my favorite authors, Thomas Pynchon:

""Here is American storytelling as tall as it is broadly and deeply felt, exuberant with outlaw humor and honest magic. Reading *Stone Junction* is like being at a nonstop party in celebration of everything that matters.""

As much as I love Pynchon's writing, I admit that that capsule review alone wdn't've been enuf to hook me if I weren't so easily hooked anyway. This traces the life of a character who goes thru the usual sensationalist plot devices involving explosions, drugs, robbery, gambling, & call girls - all those things that a public in search of cheap thrills seems to love. At least one character is almost straight out of a Hunter S. Thompson tale of drug abuse. All that didn't necessarily bode well for me - including the sensationalist dramatic beginning:

""Sit down, slut," Sister Bernadette screamed, slamming the desk top with her open hands as she jumped to her feet. "I said *sit down!*"

"Annalee, just under sex feet tall and a little over 130 pounds, broke Sister Bernadette's jaw with her first punch, a roundhouse right with every bit of herself behind it." - p 4

A friend of mine who was left-handed went to Catholic school & every time he used his left hand & a nun saw it the nun wd hit that hand w/ a ruler. Apparently, one of the doctrines of the church was that the left hand is the 'devil's hand'. Now, to me, that's so obviously stupid it's ridiculous - but how many children suffered b/c of it?! Keeping that story in mind & other tales of sadistic nuns I'm not likely to get upset by the image of a nun being punched. NUNtheless, to some readers this might be a chain-puller.

One of my initial criticisms of Stone Junction was the fantastic improbability of much of it. I made a similar observation in my recent review of Bruce Sterling's Heavy Weather:

"What happened when I started reading this? I was immediately sucked into the writing, it was *thrilling*, it's a *thriller* of sorts. I could identify with the characters, the lunatic fringe obsessed w/ studying tornadoes. Am I a storm chaser? Nope. Am I a meteorologist? Nope. Am I a hacker? Nope. So it really just plays into an aspect of my fantasy life. I am, however, an 'outsider', a person barely tolerated by a society of robopaths. & it's from that highly experienced position that I started questioning the narrative POV of Heavy Weather: Is this something written by someone who knows how to write a thriller but who doesn't necessarily come from the social milieu that his heros are located in?" - <https://www.goodreads.com/story/show/...>

My point is that it's all well & good to write a *novel* where all these exciting things happen, wham, bam, thank you spam, but I don't prefer wallowing in fantasies in the long run, I prefer actual real life activities wch don't usually involve the kind of sensationalism that bks like this represent. E.G.: Annalee goes out hitch-hiking w/ her very new baby & immediately gets picked up by an exceptionally good ride:

"As good-humored as his name implied, Smiling Jack was in his late thirties. He had a faded IWW button on his Stetson's band and a pair of rolling dice on his belt buckle. Annalee liked him immediately." - p 6

Yep, I'd say being picked up by someone showing signs of the Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World union, is pretty damned lucky. Then again, it's not impossible.

"Like most teachers, Annalee learned with her student. Each New Year's Eve they chose a subject to study together. One year it was rocks. One year, birds of prey. The year devoted to meteorology was the most fun. Each night they put their sealed forecasts for the next day's weather into a jar, opening them after dinner on the following day as if they were fortune cookies. They plotted their relative accuracy and the day's weather data on a wall chart that had become a mural by winter solstice. On New Year's Eve, a few minutes before midnight, they ceremoniously rolled the mural up, tied it with a sky-blue ribbon, and stored it like a precious scroll in a fishing-rod case." - p 18

Now, I'm not *against* home-schooling but I'm not *for* it either. Home schooling can be an honest attempt to break free from indoctrination *or* an attempt to make the indoctrination airtight. When I went to school, if we start w/ kindergarden that wd be 1958 to 1971, it was public school all the way - I never heard of private schools or home-schooling. There was Catholic School, maybe the Quakers had a Friends School, I don't know. I don't think there was a plethora of choices, kids just went to the nearest public school & that was that. I hated school but in my experience of it it wasn't so bad.

If there had been a school for 'exceptionally bright or talented' students my parents wdn't've wanted me to go there anyway - esp if it meant spending money. I certainly *wdn't've* wanted to be schooled by my parents. My dad was never home, I only recall seeing him a few times before my parents got divorced, & my mom was ignorant & brainwashed.

These days, schools have changed so much. I don't know anyone who sends their kids to public schools, as in

the neighborhood school. Everybody sends their kids to more specialized schools, schools w/ particular philosophies, places where the arts are emphasized, or the environment. Parents & kids together can pick a place that appeals to them. It seems like an improvement to me. One friend of mine who taught at a local school for the arts put together a music ensemble that was so good that being part of it wd be an honor indeed. The public schooling I got was boring & mediocre. The current extent of my knowledge is based on my own research conducted outside of school. If a person's desire to be educated is self-motivated then they're much more likely to accomplish something important, IMO. Then again, there's the usual situation of privilege: when yr parents actually support you w/ deep pockets it goes a long way.

I only have one friend whose child has been partially home-schooled. I don't know how successful the home-schooling's been but I'm sure it's been subject to the erratic difficulties of the parent's life. My present impression is that the main people currently in favor of home-schooling are those who object to the separation of church & state. As such, these are people who want their children to be thoroughly indoctrinated in whatever their religious beliefs are. I suppose one can say 'That's their right' fairly enuf but I don't think any schooling is satisfactorily educational if its myopic. Then again, I'm an atheist, the thought of a child under my tutelage being bombarded w/ religious fantasy horrifies me. Parents like Annalee in Stone Junction wd be rare indeed. Parents like those that Betsy DeVos represents seem much more common.

One thing's for sure, if DeVos gets her way & students are allowed to bring guns to school I'd strongly advise parents to keep their kids away from those schools. DeVos justifies this by fear of bears but somehow I reckon that more humans have killed their fellow humans than bears ever will. For a reading of mine that's partially about DeVos check out "Cosmic Grunt / Betsy DeVos" (<https://vimeo.com/203362094>).

Annalee & her son, Daniel, have to flee from their no-longer-safe-house along w/ the person that the law is really after, Shamus. Thanks to one of the more unlikely tropes of the novel, they are instantly aided by a network that Shamus & Smiling Jack, etc, are associated w/:

"A thin, hawk-faced man was waiting for them at the landing strip near the Great Salt Lake with new driver's licenses for Shamus and Annalee (now James and Maybelline Wyatt), credit cards in the same name, four thousand dollars in cash, and a '71 Buick registered to Mrs. Wyatt. He told them to drive to Dubuque, Iowa, and make a phone call to the number he provided." - p 27

The reason for the heat?

"When Shamus slithered through the hole he'd cut in the cyclone fence, a guard who wasn't supposed to be there called halt, but Shamus clubbed him with his flashlight just as the guard pulled his gun. It went off harmlessly, but the shot brought security to full alarm." - p 27

""If I didn't feel for sure that that guard off smoking a joint was an accident, a random twist, I'd have to believe Volta would have found a way to make sure I didn't pull it off." - p 38

So the guard was where Shamus wasn't expecting him to be b/c he'd sneaked off to smoke a joint. I've been critiquing the novel in terms of its improbabilities, not b/c I'm such a diehard 'realist' or against fiction but more b/c I *am* interested in the way underground networks might work in real life, the less sensational ways that people might bond & assist each other based on much more subtle shared intellectual interests, e.g..

As for a guard guarding a place where uranium cd be stolen getting stoned, some might say that's really ridiculous. To the contrary, I had a friend who was in the US Army whose job was guarding nuclear missiles as they came off a conveyor belt in South Korea. My friend loved being in the military in S. Korea b/c he &

his friends had a local houseboy who kept their place clean & probably cooked for them & it was a very easy life. He told me that they got stoned all the time. He also told me it wasn't too unusual for the conveyor belt workers to be so incompetent that the nuclear missiles might fall off the belt from time-to-time. Apparently, it took more than that for them to explode but, still, wd you want stoned soldiers guarding nuclear missiles?! I wdn't.

Anyway, Shamus's fortune turns as he takes a hostage to drive him out who wants to escape too.

"Finding a hostage, however obtuse, wasn't the end of Shamus's luck, for the old man who drove him through the front gate with a gun at his head was Gerhard von Trakl, Father of Fission and the ranking nuclear scientist in America. Shamus intended to keep Trakl only until they reached the getaway car, the first of three switches he'd already set up.

"But to Shamus's wild surprise, von Trakl begged to go along. He told Shamus that he was a virtual prisoner of the U.S. government and was no longer interested in the work they wanted done." - p 27

Making matters even more exceptionally lucky, Shamus just happens to be in the right place at the right time to be rescued from roadblocks.

""Ain't none of my business, friend, but less'n my scanner done fucked *all up*, they'll have a roadblock at the end of the valley 'fore you can fart the first bar o' 'Dixie.' Be my suggestion to ride with ol' Silas Goldean here, seeing as how me and most of the local law grew up together and get on fine, and they know I have a fondness for going over to the res'vor this time of night and soaking a doughball for them catfish. Got a good place for you to ride, too."" - p 28

Right, sorry, it's possible but I have way too little faith in humanity to believe it's even remotely likely. I'm sure that many or most of my so-called friends wd turn me in immediately, people are venal. Big time.

At the core of the organization that unites & helps our heros is a group called "AMO". It's this type of group, w/ its incredible genius, imagination, skill, & flexibility that's very appealing at the same time that it's very unlikely. Even the Cosa Nostra, wch seems to be strongly united around greed, ends up having internecine bloodbaths. Anarchists are often mocked for not being able to agree w/ each other. In my opinion, what makes anarchists effective is our ability to act independent of each other & to make temporary alliances not reliant on stable hierarchies. Neoists may be even more extreme than anarchists w/ some neoists clearly pursuing personal power agendas while others do our best to undermine them.

""But whatever the true derivation of its name, AMO is a secret society—though more on the order of an open secret, in fact. Basically, AMO is a historical alliance of the mildly felonious, misfits, anarchists, shamans, earth mystics, gypsies, magicians, mad scientists, dreamers, and other socially marginal souls. I'm told it was originally organized to resist the pernicious influences of monotheism, especially Christianity, which attacked alchemy as pagan and drove it underground.[""]" - p 30

Count me in. I'm criminally sane. Of course, I'm reminded of Robert Anton Wilson & Robert Shea's Illuminatus Trilogy (1975), written before this Dodge bk (1990) & Pynchon's Against the Day (2006 - although many of his early works wd also qualify such as The Crying of Lot 49 (1966)). Back to Annalee:

"Soon she was a singer and lead kazoo in a perpetually ripped aggregation known as the Random Canyon Raiders, whose repertoire included traditional, if obscure, favorites, as well as spontaneous and raucously pornographic sociopolitical polemics. The Random Canyon Raiders were devoted to high times and low art,

and Annalee rediscovered a social life. She began to cut loose." - p 47

That wd've been in 1979 in the novel's chronology (maybe?). I think of the Holy Modal Rounders & the Fugs starting in the decade before. In my own life, I think of B.O.M.B (Baltimore Oblivion Marching Band), from 1979, who were a guerrilla action performance group &, hence, more theatrical than musical.

"The first bite left flesh hanging from the roof of Daniel's mouth. He sucked air to cool it.

""Spicy, huh?" Mott said, shoveling another spoonful.

""Yaaa," Daniel gasped.

""You bet. Secret's in the chiles. I grow my own, out o' my own stock—been perfecting it for ten years now. You mighta noticed that little hothouse out in back of the barn? That's all chiles. And I go in there every chance I get and insult 'em. Call 'em stupid-ass, low-down, dipshit heaps of worthlessness. I pinch 'em, piss on 'em, slice off a branch here and there. Water 'em just enough to keep 'em alive. No water—that's what makes 'em hot, but the abuse is what makes 'em *mean*."

"Daniel, popping his second can of beer, was still unable to speak, but he nodded in understanding.

"Mott shoveled down more chili, sweat coursing off his forehead. "This is venison chili. Where's the beef? Hey; Fuck the beef. And fuck all them fancy chili cookoff winner recipes. This stuff is deer meat chiles, spring water, little bit of wild pig blood, and three tablespoons of gunpowder. Sometimes I throw in a handful of them psilocybin mushrooms if there's any around, though personally I think they weaken it."" - p 102

That might seem extravagantly exaggerated &, yeah, I'm sure it's meant to be, but, HEY!, I had a roommate who was in a "Weird Food Club" & they tried to come up w/ the hottest hot sauce they cd. He synthesized something & I'm sure he gave them a run for their money. Another friend of mine met a guy in a rural area outside of Baltimore who sd he fed his dog gunpowder "to make it mean" & while he cd've been lying such behavior doesn't seem out of character w/ people I've met.

"They arrived back at the barn shortly after dark, taking a different route: cocaine, vodka, demerol, and the last few miles, a few DexamyI spansules." - p 108

Outrageous drug intake is obviously something that's been glorified in a generally macho way as part of the rock'n'roll lifestyle &/or by the Yuppies. Live fast, die young. I prefer live as fast as you can to still enable you to die old (or just "Live fast, die old"). I found an article online at openculture.com about the aforementioned Hunter S. Thompson entitled "Hunter S. Thompson's Harrowing Chemical-Filled Daily Routine":

"7:05 Woody Creeek Tavern for lunch—Heineken, two margaritas, coleslaw, a taco salad, a double order of fried onion rings, carrot cake, ice cream, a bean fritter, Dunhills, another Heineken, cocaine, and for the ride home, a snow cone (a glass of shredded ice over which is poured three or four jiggers of Chivas.)

"9:00 starts snorting cocaine seriously

"10:00 drops acid

"11:00 Chartreuse, cocaine, grass

"11:30 cocaine, etc, etc.

"12:00 midnight, Hunter S. Thompson is ready to write

"12:05-6:00 a.m. Chartreuse, cocaine, grass, Chivas, coffee, Heineken, clove cigarettes, grapefruit, Dunhills, orange juice, gin, continuous pornographic movies."

[..]

"HST outlines his ideal breakfast. It consists of "four Bloody Marys, two grapefruits, a pot of coffee, Rangoon crêpes, a half-pound of either sausage, bacon, or corned-beef hash with diced chilies, a Spanish omelette or Eggs Benedict, a quart of milk, a chopped lemon for random seasoning, and something like a slice of key lime pie, two margaritas and six lines of the best cocaine for dessert.""

Alas, Thompson eventually killed himself - but it might not've had to do w/ the above intake. There're probably some people who've tried to follow Thompson's example just like there've definitely been people who tried to follow William S. Burroughs's example. Bad idea, folks, not everyone's the heir to an adding machine company fortune, not everyone had Thompson's unique stamina.

"After that first obliterating trip with Mott, Daniel kept his drug intake down. he declined so often that Mott finally told him, "Tell me when you want something," and quit offering." - p 108

That wd be me. I've been accused of not being "hard-core" by a woman who cdn't function w/o smoking pot all day b/c I only took one toke. Sorry (NOT), but I have self-control - something I'd encourage cultivating more than pot in yr grow rm.

Daniel becomes apprenticed to a gambler.

"Daniel learned, if only theoretically, how to play position and manage money, when to raise, call, or fold, how to quickly assess the strengths and weaknesses of other players, the best times to bluff, how to calculate pot odds, how to spot tells, and cheaters, and marks." - p 139

I've, 'inevitably', been around gambling & gamblers most of my life but I cd never care enuf about gambling to ever be good at it. I will say, tho, that a real card sharp is a wonder to behold. I knew one once, I think his name might've been Leroy, & he was *fast*. Watching him shuffle cards in mid-air & all the rest was amazing. He was obviously seriously invested in his trade.

"Occasionally he wanted a woman, and most often she was a five-hundred dollar call girl. Daniel liked call girls. They were adventurous, usually independent, often beautiful, took pride in their erotic charms and understanding, and there were no complications." - p 143

No "complications"? Here's where the author's idealized fantasy is a bit too far-fetched for me.

[This review is cut off here by a word limit. For the full review, go here:
<https://www.goodreads.com/story/show/...>]

Oriana says

I'm too tired to organize my thoughts into coherent paragraphs, so instead here's a numbered list thingy, sorry if it's lacking in artistry.

1. I'm about 99 percent sure I've read this before, but I can't remember much of anything about it. When I went to my library to find something else today, this just *leapt* off the shelf at me, so.
 2. Not many books seriously grab you with the first five or ten pages; this one had me riveted by the end of the first paragraph.
 3. Jim Dodge — like Pynchon, though most of you don't believe me — is so electrifyingly *fun* to read. Something amazing just shines through every paragraph.
 4. Re: 2, that first amazing chapter? It involves a sixteen-year-old pregnant orphan breaking a nun's jaw. If that doesn't make you want to run out and get this book, don't bother reading the rest of this review.
 5. I'm going to call this book *mystical* realism. I think this is distinct from magical realism because the first three quarters of the book is totally grounded in the consensus version of reality (that's good, right? I got it from *Atmospheric Disturbances*). But even when it veers into the mystical/magical, it's a shift that is wholly believable because of all of the mystical shit that went on before.
 6. Since you probably don't have any clue what I'm talking about, I'll do a quick summary. This is the story of Daniel Pearce. He is the kid who the woman in points 2 and 4 is pregnant with. He grows up in a totally loving and wholly unorthodox environment, as his mom sort of runs a safe house for outlaws (but the *honorable* kind, the fascinating and brilliant and *good* kind). Everything is cool until mom is killed when Daniel is fourteen. After that he is taken in by the people for whom his mom ran the safe house: AMO, a loose network of alchemists, magicians, and outlaws. He falls under the tutelage of a series of incredible men and women, who each teach him various amazing skills (meditation and waiting, safecracking, drug and sex appreciation, poker and gambling, disguise, and finally vanishing). You realize that he is amassing the lessons he will need for the quest he's about to embark upon, on which he will both search for his mother's killer and steal a six-pound round diamond from the CIA.
 7. I was going to say that this is a bildungsroman, but then I checked Wikipedia, and I guess it's actually a künstlerroman. Regardless, it's a sensational story of an incredible journey undertaken by an amazing hero and populated by a stunning array of fantastic supporting cast members.
 8. The book is introduced by Thomas Pynchon.
 9. Jim Dodge has a spectacular writing style, combining totally believable dialogue with amazing characters and plenty of beautiful description. As I said earlier, there's a certain kind of author who you can tell just had *so much fun* writing that you can't help but be just as enthused to read it.
 10. I fucking loved this book.
-

Marcus Miller says

This is a great, different and interesting book. It starts off really well, has some truly colourful characters and the story winds and weaves towards who knows where but... then it falls off the rails a little towards the end.

I am not 100% sure if my review is too low, as it really is a great book, but it's quite long, takes its time building you up and the payoff is a little - weird and ultimately not very satisfying.

It's such a strange book that I am not really confident in my review, it is a 5 star book for the first two thirds and then slowly becomes a 4 and then 3 star over the last 100 or so pages. I guess some may love the ending and may understand what it means but my ever logical brain found it a little hard to take and not very satisfying.

Still, certainly an interesting book and a great one to discuss if you are in a book club or do some group reading.

Lucas Sierra says

Una novela de formación y una novela de carretera, una novela fantástica y una novela negra: *Stone Junction*: Una epopeya alquímica se mueve en esas cuatro categorías, enhebrándolas todas en una historia que se desarrolla en un ambiente pre-informático, con personajes que eligen la marginalidad como forma de libertad y se comunican entre ellos con un lenguaje metafórico lleno de metafísica-pop.

Daniel Pearse es el niño defendido, criado sin las reglas de la escuela hasta convertirse en el joven iniciado de una sociedad secreta conocida como la AMO (Alquimistas, Magos y Forajidos, por sus siglas en inglés). Seguimos su camino con la lectura: sus primeros deslumbramientos junto a su madre, sus múltiples maestros (Wild Bill ha sido mi preferido) que dan clases de meditación, consumo de drogas duras, póquer, robo de cajas fuertes, entre otras bases sólidas de la vida moderna, y, finalmente, el enfrentamiento con el desafío para el cuál había sido educado y el descubrimiento del amor.

Es, en el fondo, debajo de toda la parafernalia alquímica y sus reflexiones éticas, una novela sencilla. Una trama simple, que se revela página por página, llena de situaciones emocionantes no del todo inesperadas y que, pese a su tendencia existencial, no se aparta de una de las más sagradas funciones del artefacto literario: entretener al lector. Quizás fuera consecuencia de leerla luego de haber paseado por la densidad de *Sodoma y Gomorra* o la poética críptica de *Lumpérica*, pero al leer *Stone Junction: Una epopeya alquímica* disfruté como un niño.

Hizo ecos con mis primeras lecturas. Con eso que en mi época todavía no llamábamos "Young Adult", o que si sí lo llamábamos así nunca me di por enterado. Narración directa, entrelazando a veces varias líneas de trama, dejando al lector atar cabos. Y lo más importante: ingenua.

Ingenua, pero no inocente, y por esa distinción, gracias, Jim Dodge.

Me refiero a que la novela lanza líneas como éstas:

Los forajidos sólo hacen el mal cuando creen que está bien; los delincuentes sólo creen que

hacen el bien cuando hacen el mal. (35)

Caminar desnudo bajo la lluvia de primavera es uno de los mayores placeres espirituales al alcance de las criaturas humanas. (48)

Simplemente recuerda que si juegas a la ruleta rusa, una recámara cargada entre seis, un diecisiete por ciento de las veces estarás muerto. (225)

-He oído a Wild Bill afirmar más de una vez que "anarquista alemán" es una gran contradicción. Que lo más que te puedes encontrar es un bautista hegeliano. (285)

-Señora, puedo ser quien quiera ser, siempre y cuando sepa quién soy. (512)

Y uno las lee con media sonrisa en el rostro (particularmente la última, porque nos recuerda a Don Quijote) pese a lo enfático de su simpleza, porque la acción de la trama, los acontecimientos, las enmarcan en un mundo que se sabe vertiginoso, aleatorio, pero al que vale la pena oponer esa ingenua fe: en el honor, en la poesía, en el ingenio, en la libertad:

-¿Qué me dices, Volt? Venga, vamos a ponernos hasta el culo y a llenarnos de desesperación sentimental, y finalmente concluir que la vida, a pesar de tanto desengaño y tanto grito angustiado, vale cada latido y cada aliento. (428)

Salud.

P.D: Este es mi primer libro de la colección *Héroes Modernos* de Alpha Decay. Me gustó el cuidado en la edición (apenas tres detalles menores en error: uno en concordancia de tiempos de la traducción, otro en la repetición de un artículo y el último un punto que desapareció) y es probable que añada más títulos suyos a mi biblioteca.

P.D.2: No lean el prólogo hasta leer la novela. Abunda en adelantos.

P.D.3: El trabajo de traducción se toma la molestia de incluir notas al pie para explicar juegos de palabras intraducibles. Eso se agradece. Mucho.

Ollie says

Thomas Pynchon, in his introduction to this novel, talks of a story grounded on Magic (with a capital M) from a time before the internet appeared in our lives. In my view, it's the kind of mysticism which was sought by the Beats (one of them, Gary Snyder, is even thanked in the novel); a form of American Magic Realism as seen through a hashish haze, to the sound of rock & roll.

Like Gabriel García Márquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude" (the epitome of Magic Realism), giant characters come and go in the life of Daniel, a boy destined to learn all the outlaw skills in America and steal a perfectly round diamond, kept by the government, for mysterious organisation AMO ("I Love" in Spanish). These giant characters are sketched very quickly, but so perfectly, by Jim Dodge as to make you wish they'd stick around a bit longer - or even win novels of their own. The novel is at its best when their dialogue spits one great line after another to a bemused Daniel (and reader).

Although the story plods a little towards the end, the appearance of a Tarantinoesque killer, and the diary entries of a mad girl with an imaginary daughter, liven things up. There's so much to chew in this novel, and so much to enjoy.

P.S. Make sure to only read Pynchon's introduction after finishing the book, unless you enjoy spoilers.

Drew says

I think the last time I was this gripped right from the beginning of a book was when I read *House of Leaves*, and the time before that was probably *Infinite Jest*. *Stone Junction* isn't really much like either of those, though, so don't get the wrong idea. *House of Leaves* is gimmicky and academic, and *Infinite Jest* is long and fairly difficult. *Stone Junction* is significantly shorter* and definitely way more accessible. On the title page it calls itself an "alchemical potboiler." Using the word potboiler isn't totally inaccurate, but I think it does the book a disservice; potboiler to me implies almost pulp, a book that barely has to be thought about. But *Stone Junction* contains plenty to think about, if you're the thinking type. There's Oedipal stuff, ethical quandaries, obsession, betrayal, outlaws (not to be confused with criminals, as distinguished later), and even a heist. And so on. Basically, Daniel Pearse is being trained by the best in all the dodgiest, sketchiest outlaw arts, in order to get some sweet revenge. And also to steal a huge diamond.**

Dodge is a master of aphorism, too, which is a hard thing to be post-Oscar Wilde, post-Maugham, post-Carlin. The thing is, Daniel, the main character, goes through a series of teachers for the first part of the book, who teach him a number of skills that flirt with the supernatural. Mystical is probably an appropriate word. And these teachers dispense knowledge in all sorts of pithy little lines. But the tricky part of having a whole bunch of wise teachers or gurus in your book is that you have to be as smart as all of them. Too often, I see lines that are meant to be philosophically profound, and I end up scoffing at them, because they're either cliché or just kind of...lame. Shantaram is a good example of this. Dodge's aphorisms are spot on, though, which is really cool. Just a couple examples:

"Outlaws only do wrong when they feel it's right; criminals only feel right when they're doing wrong."

"I can only echo my old friend Ludwig Wittgenstein's sweeping disclaimer that "the world is the case." Alas, dear listeners, we can only drink it by the glass."

If that's not enough to grab the attention, I don't know what is. Maybe the first one's a little tired, and the second's more of a joke. Maybe I'm overestimating how much other people will like that sort of thing. Oh, wait, though, did I mention there's a *heist*? That's my point about this; that there's something for everyone. I should note that, like *House of Leaves*, and unlike *Infinite Jest*, the end of the book doesn't quite live up to the promise of the beginning. But no less a man than Thomas Pynchon disagrees with me on that point, and who are you going to believe? Me or him?

*I think. The strange thing is that my copy has taller, wider pages than a normal book, and also small, close-packed text, so small it's actually sort of hard to read the passages that are in italics (of which there are few, thankfully). And that comes out to about 350 pages. So it's hard to say.

**That's literally all I'm going to say about the plot. Spoilers would likely cripple enjoyment, although I had some slight spoilers thanks to Pynchon's intro, which I skimmed, and I still loved it.

Setenay K. says

Önsözde spoiler var, en son okuyun. (Neyse ki bu konuda gerekli uyarı? önceden aldım ben, önsözü en son okudum.) İlk fırsatta hakkında bir blog postu yazacağım.

Allycks says

This is one of those books where the plot is original and the pace is upbeat, the characters are well-described and the twists are in abundance, but overall the work falls well short of the sum of its parts. I really wanted to like *Stone Junction*. I enjoyed its Pynchon-Tom Robbins kind of Americana raw boned wide-eyed American late 20th century style, with occasional touches of Richard Ford-like blatantly non pretentious poetic observations-- but only up to a certain point. Then it kept going, and the characters kept piling up to overabundance, and we kept on getting reasons to love the protagonist and his mother, and the enthusiasm for life got a little canned, and the pace and plot started grinding down, and it was tough to get through at the end. I do appreciate Jim Dodge's utter writerly brio, and I'm looking forward to reading his 'Fup' (based on goodreads reviews) but I must say that *Stone Junction* is pretty much an overcooked fowl.

Grin says

This book is a mix between *Lord of The Rings*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *On the Road* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. I loved it! I recommend this book to anyone who liked the above books, and also people who need books to move fast or end up reading books in short spurts (on the bus) or work a job where they need to leave the world for a while and get totally absorbed. I couldn't put it down and the writing is smart, the characters are just as memorable as anything that Krauss could write- minus any sentimental crap.

The only thing I would say is don't read the intro or the back of the book- I didn't and there are plot spoilers so thank god. Also there are two chapters which are particularly slow, one of them being right before the

end. But I forgive that...
