

DEBORAH O'TOOLE

Winter Newsletter, 2021

TOPICS

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Hello dear readers,

As we come into the holiday season, I have much to be thankful for. This is not just a metaphor to spread cheer, but rather an example of real-life circumstances giving me the opportunity to feel the grateful spirit in truth.

Last summer was long and hot. I began to feel off-kilter in mid-to-late August, my focus all but disappearing and my energy level reaching an all-time low. I blamed my symptoms on the heat, which was inescapable. I lost all interest in writing, reading, and everything else in general. As time went on, I slept more and ate less, hardly a fit recipe for healthy living. My fingers and toes were always cold, turning purplish on occasion. It wasn't until November that I finally went to the doctor, who ordered a battery of blood tests to get to the bottom of my malaise.

Come to find out, my circulation was restricted as the result of blood clots in my leg and lungs. If I had perhaps waited a week longer, more or less, I might not be here relating my woes. The two clots in my lungs were small and not interrupting blood flow to my heart, but the diagnosis was scary nonetheless. I am now on a three-month regimen of blood thinners, which has already helped considerably, giving me a new energy and a slow return of my usual focus. I've also learned not to take one moment of time for granted, including loved ones. *Tell them you love them every day.*

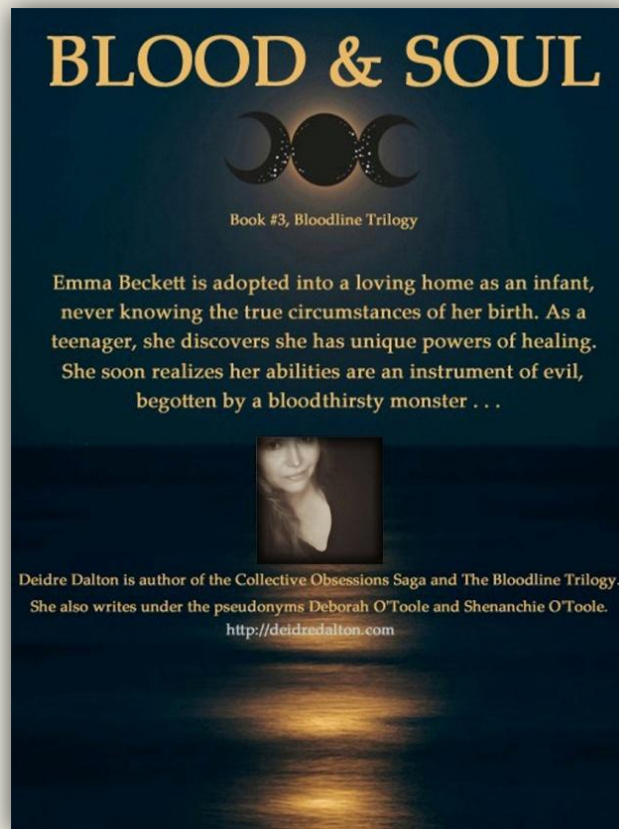
As I said, I have much to be grateful for this holiday season and hopefully for many years to come.

~ IN PROGRESS ~

Needless to say, my writing suffered during the three-month span of aforementioned dicey health. I now find myself with a renewed energy and focus, which I welcome back with open arms. However, because of the lull, I've been forced to push back the release dates of both Blood & Soul and In the Shadow of the King, along with a few other projects.

- ❖ Blood & Soul (2022)
- ❖ In the Shadow of the King (2023)
- ❖ Lizzie Borden (*historical essay, Summer 2022*)
- ❖ Michael Collins (*historical essay, Autumn 2022*)

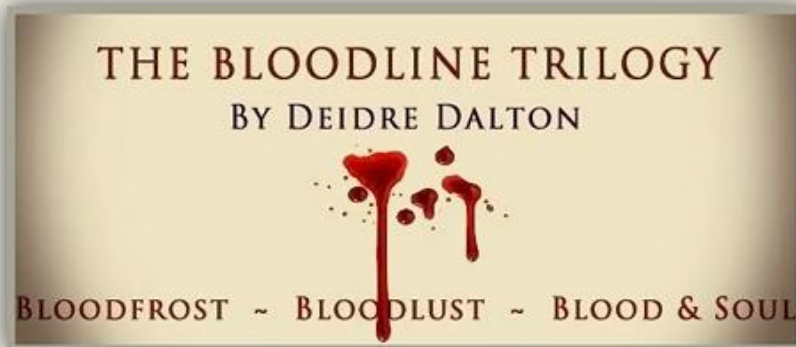
I did manage to put the finishing touches on a possible back cover for Blood & Soul.



The eerie, triple moon imagery is perfect for the storyline. The three women depicted in the Bloodline Trilogy - Noel, Kate and Emma - finally reach an acceptance about their unique gifts, and appreciate (but sometimes loathe) the people who have impacted them along the way. They leave the final storyline filled with hopeful inklings for the future.

I'm anxious to finish the novel as it completes the Bloodline Trilogy, once and for all. I began writing Book #1 Bloodfrost in 2012, although it wasn't published until 2019. There were large gaps in the process as I finished other projects in the works (Celtic Remnants, Glinhaven, Mind Sweeper and The Crypt Artist).

Book #2 Bloodlust is the longest novel in the series (531 pages), taking me about three years to complete before it was published in early 2021. I think it will be fitting to see Book #3 Blood & Soul released in 2022, marking a decade since I envisioned and began writing the trilogy in the first place.



As per my usual notation, storylines, estimated release dates and book cover designs may be subject to change.

~ ODE TO MS. DANIELS ~

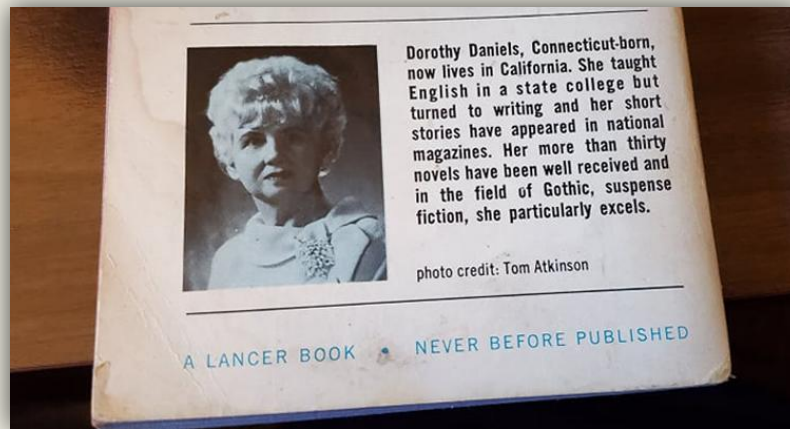
It's no secret that I'm a huge fan of author Dorothy Daniels. Her books have been one of the handful of constants in my life, her subtle skill somehow excelling in spite of the simplicity found in many of her stories. As I re-collect all of her novels for my permanent bookshelf, reflecting on her history as a whole has also become an enjoyable pursuit.

From BGSU/University Libraries:

Dorothy Smith Daniels was born in Connecticut on July 1, 1915. She earned a diploma from Central Connecticut State College in New Britain, Connecticut. She married Norman A. Daniels, a writer, on October 7, 1937, and presumably died on December 3, 2001. Daniels began her writing career in the early fifties while living in New York City by writing short stories. She became ill, discontinued writing, and moved to California in 1956. In 1961 she resumed her career with hard cover doctor-nurse stories. Paperback Library became interested in her books and purchased them. They sold so well that they contacted Daniels to do original doctor-nurse paperbacks. Paperback Library then suggested that she try her hand at Gothic novels. Her husband, who had been writing detective and suspense stories for years, offered to guide her in the media. She switched to Gothic fiction and wrote exclusively in that genre from that point on, with over one hundred forty novels in print. She also wrote under the pseudonyms: Danielle Dorsett, Angela Gray, Cynthia Kavanaugh, Suzanne Somers, Helen Gray Weston, Helaine Ross, and Geraldine Thayer.



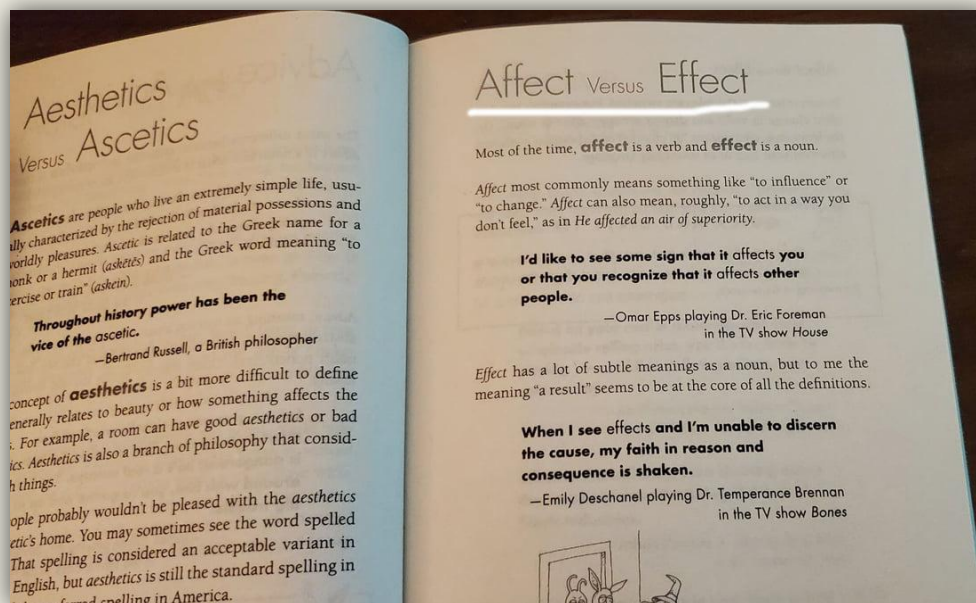
The image below is one of the few authenticated picture of Dorothy Daniels I've been able to find (located on the back cover of *Cliffside Castle*). This diminutive-looking lady was an amazingly prolific writer, something I can only hope to aspire to. She churned out more than 142 novels between 1965-1985.



I owe an enormous literary debt to Mrs. Daniels as she was a staple read of my late teen years into my 20s. She helped shape my own writing style over the years, especially an attention to detail that has followed me during my entire career to date. Her influence on me has been everlasting, and priceless.

~ GRAMMAR GOODIES ~

Even after all the years I've been writing, there is still one word that gives me pause to double-check. It's like a mental block with me, but maybe this little guide will help: [Grammar Girl's 101 Misused Words You'll Never Confuse Again.](#)



"Further" versus "Farther" can also be ambiguous words that seem to have the same meaning, but in fact do not. Many years ago, I found the easiest way to remember which defines what was "Further" (as in addition to, i.e. "furthermore") and "Farther" (as in distance).

The photograph of Kate showed a beautiful woman with long, blonde hair, blue eyes and pale skin. She had a rather prim mouth and slightly oversized nose, but there was an arresting allure, an intensity, about her that was hard not to notice, even as displayed in a still image. Emma saw nothing of herself in the woman who gave her life, except perhaps for the blue eyes.

Unable to help herself, Emma delved further into Kendrick Lester, her grandfather for all intents and purposes.

Kendrick Lester

As a community organizer for both the East End Community Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development, Kendrick Lester (born November 13, 1956) was often called upon to assist low-income single mothers and their children. It was later discovered he had held, tortured, raped and killed several of the women, burying their remains under bluebell bushes in his backyard at 139 Chestnut Avenue in Jamaica Plain-Roxbury. In two instances, he was known to have been aided and abetted by his

Further vs. Farther

Although they are often used interchangeably, "further" and "farther" don't have exactly the same meaning. Basically, "farther" refers to actual distances between objects while further refers to figurative distances or something that is additional or more. Here are some easy-to-understand definitions and examples of how to use the two words.



Note: Above book sample taken from the ongoing and upcoming *Blood & Soul* by yours truly writing as Deidre Dalton, while the illustration came from *Your Dictionary*.

~ FELINE LULL OF LOVE ~

Part of the "break" during my health scare included making a stray cat part of our family. Around September 7th, a small kitty wandered into our yard. That in itself is not unusual as we keep a feeder out to accommodate several strays who usually come by every night, but there was something different about the small kitty. He meowed at us repeatedly, as if in desperation. It felt as if he had chosen us, and now he's here to stay. His name is Dusty, but I've already nicknamed him "me little boyo."



(Above): Meet Dusty O'Toole Dalton, our new baby boy.

We went through all of the local lost/found pets sites with no results, and he also scanned negative for a chip.

Jerry took Dusty to the veterinarian for a thorough check-up. The doctor estimated him to be about 6-7 months old, and he weighs a little over 7 pounds. He also had his vaccinations, a de-worming treatment (just in case), and blood tests came back negative for all feline diseases. He's a healthy little terror. Dusty was "fixed and chipped" on October 14th.

Hissy hates him, naturally. She is none-too-pleased about the goings-on with Dusty and makes her displeasure known quite frequently.



(Above): Hissy showing her displeasure at the recent turn of events.

Hissy and Dusty engage in regular battles at the sliding glass door (with Hissy inside and Dusty outside). The hissing, growling and caterwauling can be intense. We intend to bring Dusty inside when the weather turns colder (in the basement), but in the meantime he has a heated bed with food, water and litter box in the garage. He loves dry food and Vienna sausage, but turns his head away when offered tuna or other moist cat food.

We keep Dusty locked in the garage at night because we saw footage from the security camera where he chased several of them off in the wee hours, most of whom are twice his size. Now that winter has kicked in, Dusty has the run of the basement at night. Jerry fixed-up the family room for him, which includes tots, a big, comfy couch, and plenty of food and water.

Our "little" family now includes two beautiful cats, and about 50 duckies in season. :)

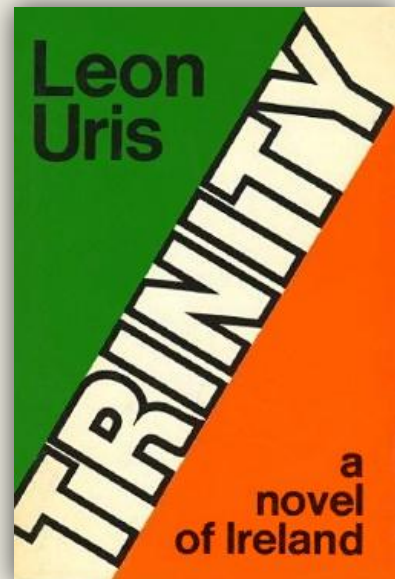
~ LEISURE ACTIVITIES ~

Every five years or so, I re-read favorite novels with relish. It might seem silly since I've read them before and already know the outcomes, but revisiting certain books always gives me great pleasure. The top three titles have not changed in many years.

Comments about the books come from my reviews of the specific novels.

"TRINITY" BY LEON URIS

Trinity by Leon Uris is the great novel about Ireland. If you had no passionate feelings about the Irish culture and their struggles before, you certainly will after reading this book. There are some parts of the book - taken straight from a page in history - that will outrage a person of Irish descent (the "Penal Laws" being one example). Leon Uris brings to life this terrible struggle within the Irish people, not only for independence from the British but from their own inner struggles about right and wrong, and their own morality.

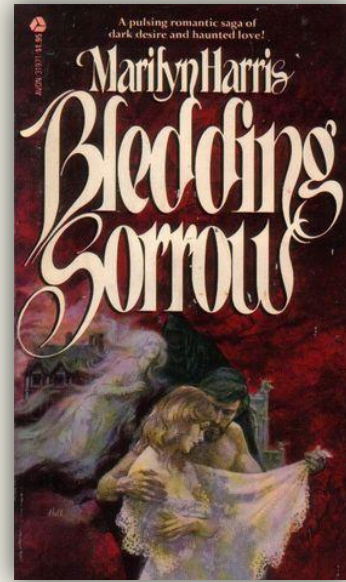


Terrorism is a deadly and hellish business in any situation. The "war" in Northern Ireland was not only about terrorism – it was about the right of people to worship as they please, and to decide and govern their own laws. Any act of violence is reprehensible and beyond the pale. However, it is a fact of life in this day and age and in the many centuries before the modern turmoil.

Trinity is a fictional story only in the sense of the main characters, but the struggle and the sadness and the terrors are all too-real. The history in this story is dramatized in many powerful scenes, and at times Uris' writing is strongly eloquent. The book has a relentless power and drive (almost on its own, it seems at times), and is based on real tragedy in Ireland. Mr. Uris has neither diminished nor made trivial this despairing heartbreak.

"BLEDDING SORROW" BY MARILYN HARRIS

Bledding Sorrow by Marilyn Harris is one of those books you simply cannot put down once you start reading it. The book is intriguing, yes, and very dramatic, but is also twisted in such a fashion that only English writers seem able to achieve. Obsessive fetishes and mental preoccupations are very normal in *Bledding Sorrow*, as are the oddly humorous scenes and deadly serious episodes. It is an utterly fascinating read, yet at the same time strangely repulsive.



If you have read other books by Marilyn Harris, then you will most likely understand her style. There is an eloquent human element in her prose, as well as an appreciation for the sadomasochist existing in all of us to some degree or another. If you take the time to read *Bledding Sorrow*, you will find the adventure quite worthwhile and oddly satisfying.

The cast of characters in this book is truly amazing, some of them are quite funny. My favorite has to be Mavis Bonebrake, who is the "cook" of the facility. Mavis is one of the most gross and disgusting characters you will ever come across, not only for her complete crudity but for her ghastly appearance in the story. She is physically repugnant. Her favorite pastime is regaling fellow workers and tourists alike of her active sexual life during her London winters. Mavis seems to love the shocked reactions she gets from people.

Martin Axtell is the local doctor in Bledding Village, and a closet homosexual. His dearest longing in life is to live in blissful harmony with Geoffrey Bledding at the estate, with the two of them as lovers, of course. Martin Axtell regularly pays visits to Ann Bledding, usually after Geoffrey has beaten her when she rejects him sexually. The good doctor keeps all of the abuse secret, naturally, as he truly wants Geoffrey for himself.

Bledding Sorrow remains one of my all-time favorite books. The first time I read it in the mid-1970's, I thought it would make a great movie. As the years passed and I reread the book several times, my perception of it changed. I became more aware and understanding

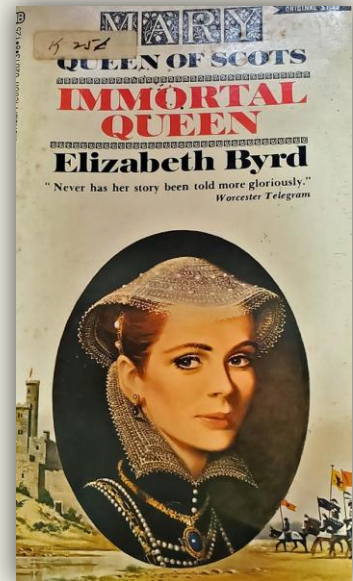
*of certain writing elements. It struck me that **Bledding Sorrow** is true brilliance at its best. It is riveting, sadly tragic, very "English" and certainly laugh-out-loud comical at several points in the story.*

"MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS: IMMORTAL QUEEN" BY ELIZABETH BYRD

Mary Queen of Scots: Immortal Queen by Elizabeth Byrd.

Click on image to view larger size in a new window. The story of Mary, Queen of Scots is not new by any means and is certainly not original anymore. How many times can you tell the same story? I've read dozens of books about Mary, but the version of her life written by Elizabeth Byrd is by far the most outstanding work.

Elizabeth Byrd writes with a flair for the dramatic, while at the same time keeping true to the historical facts of Mary's life. Ms. Byrd paints Mary as a real woman, with real feelings and desires. This is not a romance novel, although it may seem so when Mary falls in love with Lord Bothwell. The book is written in dramatic sense that is easy to understand, even if you don't know anything about Scottish history. The dialog is descriptive, as are the customs of the day.



*This book is one of the best-written I've ever read. I rank **Immortal Queen** with some of my favorites: "Bledding Sorrow" by Marilyn Harris, "Trinity" by Leon Uris, "The Thornbirds" by Colleen McCullough, "Shogun" by James Clavell and "A Woman of Substance" by Barbara Taylor Bradford. In fact, if you liked "A Woman of Substance," you will love **Immortal Queen**. The two books are basically about the same thing: in essence, powerful women pitted against men in a world where women were meant to stay home and have babies. The pressures and difficulties women experienced were real and daunting. Mary's plight was almost insurmountably complex in the world of 16th century Scotland and England. Religion was an issue as well, but Mary remained firm to her Catholic faith and never wavered.*

*Mary had quite a life and it is almost impossible to tell the story in one breath. Ms. Byrd writes **Immortal Queen** with accurate historical fact, but the lively dialog and circumstances are played out in such a mesmerizing fashion that one can't help but like Mary, Queen of Scots. She was human, after all, with all of the typical frailties and insecurities. Even if you know next to nothing about Mary's time and place in history, you will quickly become fascinated by it once you read Elizabeth Byrd's outstanding account.*

~ UNTIL NEXT TIME ~

Another newsletter will be coming your way in late spring/early summer 2022, so keep your eyes peeled.

Meanwhile, visit my [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages for updates, or go to my blog [Irish Eyes](#) to view recent posts.

Happy Holidays to all, and - until next time - *happy reading . . .*

Deborah O'Toole 🍀

Sunday, 12th December 2021

