

Book Reviews: So many books, and so little time

by Various UT Authors

It's pretty rare when a hunter kills a wild bison, at least legally. It's even more rare that said hunter is a pretty good writer. Yet that's what comes together in "American Buffalo: In Search of a Lost Icon" (Doubleday, 277 pages, \$24.95).

Steven Rinella, author of "The Scavenger's Guide to Haute Cuisine" and an Outside magazine contributor, won a lottery to hunt a herd of buffalo in Alaska. He managed to track and snag one — that was the easy part. There was the journey back with his butchered prey, via white-water rapids with hungry bears and hypothermia an ever-present danger:

"Speaking of bears, the two grizzlies must have continued to hang around the area during the night. I cut the first set of tracks when I'm still a quarter mile from where I left the buffalo's front leg. I can see where one of the bears came downriver toward my camp along the Copper and then turned around and walked back. It's unnerving, the way the bears will pace back and forth, testing and exploring. It reminds me of a burglar casing out a job."

The odd couple catches the eye: Tom Wolfe, on the front of the book, and Daniel Handler (aka Lemony Snicket), on the back cover, both touting Rodes Fishburne's debut novel "Going to See the Elephant" (Delacorte Press, 293 pages, \$22).

Fishburne, a writer and editor, has written a very San Francisco story "think reality seen through a fog of magic realism" with the tale of one Slater Brown, a writer out to conquer the city by the bay. Trust me, it's not easy being an author (Brown's "efforts" get the italics):

"His first attempt at writing the story for the Trumpet owed something to James Joyce:

"In the fogsphere, a row of shiny faces appeared, rattling on about the sandywind of San Francisco ...

"The next had a touch of Hemingway:

"The city was quiet. The streets quiet too. I walked until the nails fell out of my shoes and the soles began to slap the ground like applause. It was good.

"Finally ... he tried out his Old Testament voice:

"In the quiet hour just before the sunset ... "

Many appreciate former Jimmy Carter's efforts to bring an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict â€” the man keeps speaking out, writing books and badgering both sides to settle their differences.

Many are exasperated by Jimmy Carter's record of getting in the way of ending the Israeli-Arab conflict â€”

his distortions of history and current events inflame more than they calm the waters.

With that in mind, being wary might be the best way to approach the former president's latest Middle East tome "We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land: A Plan That Will Work" (Simon & Schuster, 227 pages, \$27). Carter makes plenty of sense in his call for the U.S. to be an honest broker, to spell out and endorse the compromises that must be made on both sides "and for both sides to step up to the plate and fully engage in the peace process.

But, at the same time he goes on and on about his involvement in the issues, he minimizes such strong efforts as President Clinton's U.S.-brokered peace settlement in 2000. Carter covers this attempt, which came close to success and had all the basic ingredients of Carter's current plan, in just two pages. At the same time, he ignores how his indirect support of Yasir Arafat during that effort "which was, rightly or wrongly, inferred by Arafat to be approval of his rejectionist stance" factors into the death of thousands since then.

Like I said, be wary. Carter's heart is in the right place, but it will take more than heart to bring peace to the Middle East.

And now for someone really wary of the ex-prez: Mike Evans. Exhibit A: "Jimmy Carter: The Liberal Left and World Chaos" (Time Worthy Books, 589 pages, \$35). Evans, author of 18 books and founder of the Evans Institute for Middle East Studies and the Jerusalem Prayer Team, tilts to the right more than a little and has written this book as a direct counterpoint to Carter's:

"We can hope that ... 'We Can Bring Peace to the Holy Land' [editor's note: The title's wrong, but we'll cut Evans some slack, figuring he wrote it before the final title was announced] will not be as controversial and error-riddled as his previous 'Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid,' released in 2006.

"... (Carter's) latest plan, however, is no more and no less than the old Road Map Plan ... dressed up in 'The Emperor's New Clothes' and just as transparent" â€” and Evans will have none of this "prescription for chaos."

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