

Gasp!

Writing, History and Books by Laura Axelrod

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About Laura

Laura Axelrod is a writer and book reviewer. Her plays have been performed in California, New York and Europe.

Her book reviews appear regularly in the Birmingham News and on the Newhouse News Service wire.

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May 20, 2009

Book Review: Drawers & Booths by Ara 13

Drawers & Booths by Ara 13
Covington Moore, 228 pages, \$15.00.

In a city occupied by the American military, a villager is beaten by vigilantes. Trapped in a ring of tires, the man is burned alive.

"[Drawers & Booths](#)" begins as a story about military officers who are seeking to "win the hearts and minds" of its citizens. The story is abruptly interrupted by the narrator who mocks readers as he explains himself.

"Well reader, you might as well follow me since you've come this far. I'm not quite sure what you expect to get out of all this. Maybe you're just killing time. But you'll have to excuse me if I don't analyze your motives any further. I've got a job to do."

The storyline then moves to Auschwitz for a brief visit with victims of Josef Mengele. The chapter - three pages - ends with a juxtaposition of Mengele's evil and the love that the victims have for each other.

The narrator is looking for a murderer. Once he figures out that his character name is an anagram, he realizes who he needs to capture and bring to trial... God. With gentle references to Law & Order, God is brought to the courtroom.

Is he responsible for man's inhumanity? Does one need to believe in God in order to have morals? These are a few of the questions debated during the trial.

Metafiction is defined as fiction that never lets readers forget they are reading a book. Through constantly calling attention to the story, the role of the author and the non-existence of the characters, readers are forced to go beyond their normal assumptions and expectations.

Under a less skilled hand, "Drawers & Booths" could have been an indulgent exercise in preciousness and self-righteousness. However, [Ara 13](#) checks his agenda at the door. Consistently steering clear of easy answers, he raises the possibilities of metafiction to a new level.

"Drawers & Booths" is an exciting debut by an author who is one to watch.

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