



Reviewed by D. Andrew McChesney

This complex and riveting story takes place, largely between the World Wars. A former German soldier migrates to North Dakota, opens a butcher shop and establishes a family. He also organizes men of the little town into a singing club. A young woman who had grown up in the town returns, first as a partner and companion to a former doughboy and sideshow entertainer, and eventually as an employee and more at the butcher shop. Her father is the town drunk, drinking he says, for his lost love, her mother. But not everyone is who we think they are, and while a few hints are scattered throughout the pages, things are not made clear until the very end.

This is an engrossing tale, very well written, that holds the reader in suspense until the very end. We explore the confusion often experienced by immigrants to a new land as they try to retain a hold on the old and yet open up to the new. We learn of and sympathize with those who have been here for a very long time, and yet who have been marginalized and set on the wayside. Along the way we experience the tragic death of a family accidentally locked in a root cellar and the death of the local sheriff at the hands of the woman he is madly in love with. It is a very thorough and compelling examination of the human condition. It is one of those stories that when finished will cause the reader to simply sit and reflect for a while. Regardless of what genres one normally reads, this one is a must.