

Tracks

Daniel McLinden

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Opening in 1900 in the New Mexico Territory, with strategic stops on the way to 1977, every chapter packs a powerful punch or an uplifting message.

Monetary success and the American dream remain elusive, intangible concepts in this story of resilient immigrants facing cultural discrimination. Spanning a period of seventy-seven years, Daniel McLinden's *Tracks* is a realistic yet inspiring account of industrious people seeking happiness and security in a stratified society.

McLinden offers a unique perspective on gender bias as well as old-fashioned chauvinism, adding layers of character-building fortitude. Intelligent women, along with the men they love, combat sexist obstacles on the path to contentment. These male and female protagonists flaunt diverse outlooks on life—Mexican, Italian, Irish, Scottish, German, and Danish. Opening in 1900 in the New Mexico Territory, with strategic stops on the way to 1977, every chapter packs a powerful punch or an uplifting message.

Written in a succinct, straightforward style, McLinden's fast-paced delivery provides poignant snapshots of significant moments, good and bad, focusing on a touching tribute of love then juxtaposing the scene with a hate crime or an act of war later in the narrative. His words evoke strong emotion and crystal clear images.

In this violent scene, a tragedy unfolds: "He slapped her across the face, undid the hand brake, started the car, and peeled out. There was a jog in the road ahead ... The car was going too fast to take it."

This descriptive passage appeals to the senses: "They walked south of the cove to the sound of breaking water. The foam was luminescent under a half moon. The air was thick with the smell of stranded sea weed and kelp at low tide."

Situations that depict conflict move at a rapid pace, convincing and brutally honest. Characters reveal themselves through actions and reactions. What remains unclear is the underlying intent behind the story.

Tracks is called a "testament to the spirit of immigrants." The novel seems to portray a miserable environment that does not always culminate in the fulfillment of dreams. Goals and aspirations are often sidetracked, and despite the tenacity seen in many, only a few accomplish what they set out to do without suffering.

Vibrant and alive, every page pulses with the human will to survive under difficult circumstances. Deeply moving, every meticulously crafted scene captures attention as well as the heart. The book's ultimate message may be open to interpretation rather than written on a philosophical stone slab. In the United States, no one's experience is like another's, and success itself is subject to personal definition.

McLinden holds degrees in Spanish and law. A civil trial attorney and a professor, he teaches at two colleges in Los Angeles. Light on introspection and heavy on dialogue, this title will appeal to history buffs and lovers of adventure.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (April 17, 2015)

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