ANIL AGGRAWAL'S
Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology
The world's first online journal devoted entirely to forensic medicine and toxicology · Published 1 January and 1 July

VOL. 7, NO. 2
Downloaded from www.anilaggrawal.com · ISSN 0972-8074 (Online) · https://www.anilaggrawal.com/ij/vol_007_no_002/reviews/pb/page001e.html

Featured Books

(Review 5 - by Charles Patterson, USA, North America)

FEATURED BOOK : QUIZ SECTION

AN IMPORTANT BOOK



[Main page] Reviews | [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10]

[Interview with Sylvia Tomlinson] [Quiz based on *Plucked and Burned*]

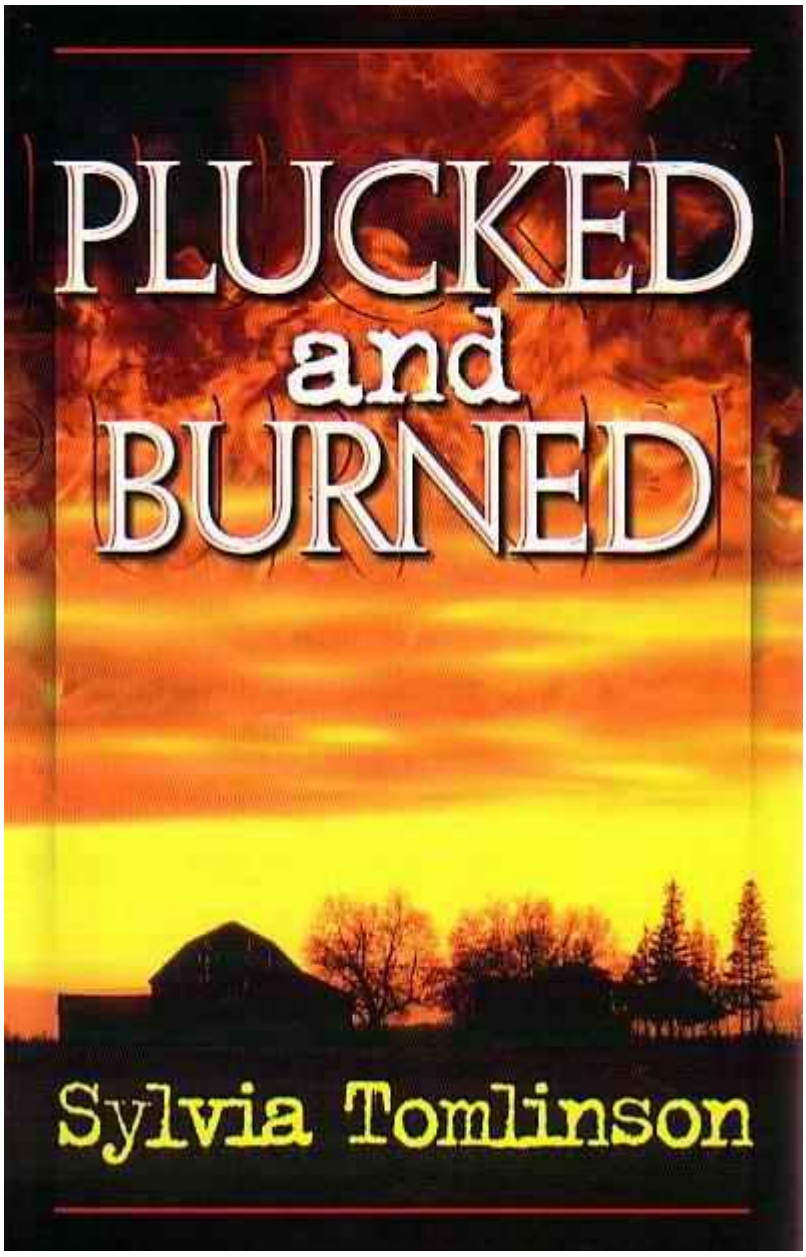
Rating : 10/10
★★★★★★★★★★
(10/5)

Plucked and Burned *by* Sylvia Tomlinson. Paperback, 8" x 6".
Redbud Publishing Co., P.O. Box 4402, Victoria, TX 77903-4402, USA. E-mail: info@redbudpublishing.com Publication Date 2003. x + 237 pages. ISBN 0-9720293-2-X. Price $19.95

Official site: Click here to visit.

Amazon Link: Click here to visit

Click cover to buy from Amazon



This skillfully crafted novel explores the world of chicken growers (and to a lesser extent slaughterhouse workers) who are exploited by the powerful American poultry industry.

The plot, set in rural Oklahoma , centers on a married couple who decide to raise chickens to earn extra income. Doug Blackwelder , who narrates the story, already raises a few cattle, and his wife Dena quits her teaching job to help with the added chores. Together with Doug 's brother and their best friend, they sign up to become chicken growers for a large corporation called Poultry Unlimited. However, their dream of easy money and comfortable living soon turns into a nightmare of exploitation, debt, fear, and murder.

In the very first chapter after a teenage Mexican poultry worker is accidentally electrocuted, the body of the brothers' best friend is found hanging from a rope in his chicken house. Although his death is declared a suicide, the brothers suspect foul play. The mystery of his death is not solved until the very end of the novel, and along the way there are plenty of surprises to keep the reader turning pages to find out what's going to happen next.

The book shows the growers to be no more than indentured servants, kept in line by the poultry company that arbitrarily cuts off shipments of chickens to anybody who complains or causes trouble. When the growers under Doug 's leadership finally begin to meet and discuss their grievances, the tension increases and the reader is left to wonder what dirty trick Poultry Unlimited will come up with next to intimidate and control the growers.

In the book's most dramatic chapter Doug confronts the company's Bible-quoting CEO, whom he once knew in high school, at his mansion high up on a hill overlooking the town that the locals call Mt. Pluckmore.

Although the story is fictional, its author Sylvia Tomlinson has obviously done extensive research into the plight of poultry growers and the system under which they operate. The poultry company supplies the growers with periodic shipments of thousands of baby broiler chicks from the company's hatchery, as well as feed, medication, and technical instruction to make the chickens grow as fast and as cheaply as possible (the industry now is able to get chickens up to their "slaughter weight" of five pounds in less than seven weeks). In exchange, the growers provide the housing, utilities, and labor, and the company keeps ordering equipment upgrades that the growers have to pay for themselves.

...Although the story is fictional, its author Sylvia Tomlinson has obviously done extensive research into the plight of poultry growers and the system under which they operate. The poultry company supplies the growers with periodic shipments of thousands of baby broiler chicks from the company's hatchery, as well as feed, medication, and technical instruction to make the chickens grow as fast and as cheaply as possible...

View this book on Amazon

This system of vertical integration allows large agribusiness corporations to control food production and drive small family farmers off their land, concentrating money and power at the top of the pyramid and debt and poverty at the bottom. Denied access to markets and faced with growing debt and the threat of bankruptcy, the once proudly independent family farmers are left with a grim choice: either sign one-sided, exploitive contracts with the poultry industry that take advantage of them and deny them access to courts to settle disputes, or give up their farms that may have been in the family for generations. Is it any wonder that for many the only way out is suicide?

While the book does not focus on the system's ultimate victims, the chickens (9,000,000,000 were raised and slaughtered in the U.S. last year), there are plenty of dead birds around to suggest that it's not a pretty picture. From two of the female characters who work in a Poultry Unlimited slaughterhouse (euphemistically called a processing plant) and talk about their jobs, the reader learns something about what happens there.

Plucked and Burned reminds me in some ways of *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair 's famous novel written 100 years ago about the U.S. meat industry (I wrote about in my own book-- *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*). Sinclair's book gave Americans their first look inside the Union Stock Yards, a vast complex of slaughterhouses in Chicago , as seen through the eyes of the novel's protagonist, a young Lithuanian immigrant by the name of Jurgis Rudkus.

...Plucked and Burned is an important book that sheds much needed light on the inner workings of the powerful American poultry industry that exploits workers and birds alike. Those interested in reading a well-written, timely, realistic tale of corporate power and greed and the fear, fraud,

poverty, and even arson, suicide, and murder that it can lead to will not be disappointed by this page-turner of a book...
When he joins others on a tour of the Yards given by a fellow countryman the day before he is to report to work there, Rudkus sees for himself up close the Yard's industrialized system of assembly-line slaughter of hogs and cattle. Once he begins work the next day and moves around the Yards from job to job, he learns the extent to which the system exploits workers as well as animals. Toward the end of the novel, when he remembers back to his first visit to the Yards when he watched the killing of hogs, he thinks how grateful he is that he is not a hog, but then he realizes that "a hog was just what he had been--one of the packers' hogs." In her novel written almost a century later, Ms. Tomlinson similarly suggests that chicken growers suffer some of the same mistreatment that the chickens do, hence the book's title *Plucked and Burned* .

The Jungle, which contains some of the most harrowing scenes in American literature, created an immediate sensation when it was published in January, 1906. Although the meat industry issued vehement denials, the public outcry over the diseased and rotten meat portrayed in the novel was so strong that within six months of the book's publication, the U.S. Congress passed two new meat inspection laws--the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Beef Inspection Act.

Ms. Tomlinson has said in interviews that she hopes her book will help win bargaining rights for contract farmers and lead to other legislative reforms. Her book has already been getting attention in poultry publications, but only time will tell what its lasting impact will be.

Plucked and Burned is an important book that sheds much needed light on the inner workings of the powerful American poultry industry that exploits workers and birds alike. Those interested in reading a well-written, timely, realistic tale of corporate power and greed and the fear, fraud, poverty, and even arson, suicide, and murder that it can lead to will not be disappointed by this page-turner of a book.



-Charles Patterson
Email: eternaltr@earthlink.net
Charles Patterson is an animal lover and an inveterate crusader of animal's rights. His book Eternal Treblinka - a sensitive book on the sad plight of farm animals - has won praise all over the world and has been translated in over 25 languages. For more on his book, readers may want to the linked page (page001).

Order this Book by clicking here
Or by contacting the author personally at:
Sylvia Tomlinson
P O Box 4424

Victoria Texas 77903
USA

E-mails: sylvia@redbudpublishing.com;
ccr-firebirds@juno.com;
highplainsgypsy@yahoo.com

Request a PDF file of this review by clicking here. (If your screen resolution can not be increased, or if printing this page is giving you problems like overlapping of graphics and/or tables etc, you can take a proper printout from a pdf file. You will need an Acrobat Reader though.)