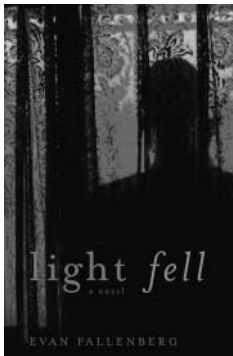


what happy to be in America, but the children are surly, wear too much makeup, and smoke in the back of the school, and the elderly smell vaguely bitter, not sure where they are or how they came to be there; all of them wonder why the America they're living in is nothing like the America they've dreamed about. You've seen them all before yet you've never bothered to really think about them, and by the time you get to the end of *The Last Chicken in America*, you realize you're going to miss them terribly once they're gone. MO



**LIGHT FELL**

*Evan Fallenberg*

Soho Press, Inc., 2007. 229 pp. \$22.00 (pbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-56947-467-9 (pbk.)

As I began this book, I thought, "How am I ever going to review this?" *Light Fell* begins with the intense, forbidden, yet fully consensual love affair between a Judaic scholar of some note and an *illui*, a brilliant Orthodox rabbi. Fallenberg's prose is beautiful, his phrasing perfect, his allusions to Judaic literature and scholarship impeccable. And, though the love between these two men is so beautiful it might even be considered holy, it necessarily leaves serious destruction in its wake.

Though I kept wanting to believe in the sanctity of love, and in particular this love, I found myself hating what these two men had done. I, as a mother and wife and child, felt the profound devastation of the wives and mothers and children in the story. As it turns out, so does Fallenberg. The story continues from the points of view of the family members, each of whom is affected

in very different, yet serious ways.

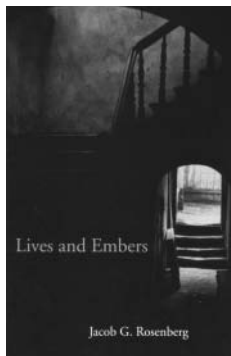
The book takes on a more complex energy. A tableau of family relationships emerges, which is no longer simply black and white, but many shades of gray. The central ques-



**A tableau of family relationships emerges, which is no longer simply black and white, but many shades of gray.**



tions of the book shift. You find yourself recognizing that the question of whether or not you condone the affair that starts the book is not the main point. The story becomes one that centers on questions of humanity, forgiveness, and love. I finished and knew I could review this book. I thought to myself, "This is a heroic work." JMB



**LIVES AND EMBERS**

*Jacob G. Rosenberg*

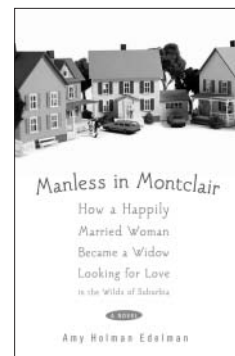
University of Alabama Press (Fire Ant Books), 2007.

184 pp. \$19.95

ISBN: 978-0-8173-5447-3

This book is really two books in one. The first, *Lives*, consists of short stories linked by the premise that life draws from art and poetry, not the reverse. The stories in *Embers*, the second section, are miniature glimpses of life, usually not longer than a page or two, which were inspired by Midrash, scriptures, and the simple utterances heard by the author in his daily life. The main characters of these little stories

range from the matriarchs and patriarchs of the Bible, to famous historical figures and Shalom Aleichem-type characters, to something as incongruous as a desk calendar! For this reader, the short vignettes work better than the longer stories in the first section. Taken together, the two sections of the book still only tell part of the author's story; some of the events he experienced in the Holocaust still cannot be put into words. LKG



**MANLESS IN MONTCLAIR: HOW A HAPPILY MARRIED WOMAN BECAME A WIDOW LOOKING FOR LOVE IN THE WILDS OF SUBURBIA**

*Amy Holman Edelman*

Shaye Areheart Books, 2007. 244 pp. \$22.00

ISBN: 978-0-307-23695-1

We all know you should never judge a book by its cover, but still I was surprised to find this one much more enjoyable than I expected from its title and blurb. The first part of the story recounts how Isabel finds love with Michael and the details of their courting, marriage, and parenthood together until his sudden demise. The author intertwines Isabel's grieving process and acceptance until her daughters demand a new daddy. In the meantime Isabel has found solace from a convenient but possibly temporary companion. The second half of the book is humorous but weaker as we read about Isabel's hardship enduring endless dates with an array of misfits in search of a husband. Edelman's writing style makes for a quick read as she touches on emotions that ring true for female readers. MBA