

FARRELL, Richard (*ca.1969), USA

Accidental Pugilism (2011, in: *Hunger Mountain, Vermont College of Fine Arts, Genre Creative Non-Fiction*)

Nicht übersetzt

Der Autor erzählt seinen ersten Anfall als Düsenjägerpilot bei einem Formationsflug bei äußerster Konzentration. Er beschreibt sehr detailliert seine Auren und diskutiert sie im Vergleich zu Thom Jones und Dostojewskij.

Zum Autor (Hachette Book Group 29.3.25):

„**Richard Farrell** is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a former pilot who holds an MFA in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. His work has appeared in *Hunger Mountain, upstreet, New Plains Review, Potomac Review, Descant*, and elsewhere. Originally from Worcester, Massachusetts, he teaches creative writing at Grossmont College in San Diego, where he lives with his wife and two children.”



San Diego Union Tribune 10.5.21:

“When the title character of Richard Farrell’s debut novel, “The Falling Woman,” survives a plane crash, she lands on an epiphany. Farrell knows how that feels. The epiphany part, anyway.

In the case of the fictional Erin Geraghty, the change of heart comes when the plane that is supposed to take her from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco explodes in mid-air. Everyone on the plane dies except for Erin, who uses her second chance to rethink her whole life.

In the case of the man who created Erin, the miracle also happened in midair. In 1992, the Massachusetts native had begun Primary Flight Training at the U.S. Navy’s flight school in Pensacola, Fla., making good on his childhood dream of becoming a pilot. But after he had an **epileptic seizure during training**, Farrell was told he would never be able to fly again.

By the end of that day, the life Farrell had envisioned for himself was over. He was 23 years old and as lost as he would ever be.

"I was in complete shock. I didn't even know what epilepsy was," said the Point Loma resident, who is doing a virtual event with the Run for Cover bookstore on May 14. "I realized later that I was lucky. But at the time, it was crushing."

Farrell's future changed in a matter of minutes. Finding a new one took a lot longer.

After his flying debacle, Farrell found solace in books, the heavier the better. At first, it was Russian literature and a **Dostoevsky** kick that went on for five years. When he and his wife, Maureen, relocated to St. Louis so she could attend medical school, Farrell decided he was going to become a writer.

He read a lot of books about writing, including John Gardner's classic "The Art of Fiction." But as Farrell discovered, reading about writing wasn't the same as actually doing it.

"It was the first time I tried to write, and I didn't write a damn thing," Farrell said. "It was terrible, but it was interesting. It rekindled a passion for having something to believe in."

And Farrell kept believing.

He believed when he put writing aside to teach anatomy and physiology at University of San Diego High School (now Cathedral Catholic High School), after he and his wife moved to San Diego for her residency.

He believed when they moved to Twentynine Palms, even though his renewed attempts at writing did not go well.

He even believed when the couple moved to Spain and six months of writing didn't produce anything except the knowledge that he didn't really know what he was doing.

It wasn't until Farrell began working on his master's in writing at the Vermont College of Fine Arts that he found the tools he needed to shape his dream into something like a reality.

Just before graduate school ended in 2011, he wrote the short story that became the earliest draft of "The Falling Woman."

Nine years later, in June of 2020, that short story became a published novel. And Farrell's early heartbreak became the inspiration for a story about the freedom that comes from recalibrating your life.

The novel's inciting incident is the case of Pointer Airlines Flight 795, which comes apart in midair over Kansas. Charlie Radford is a young investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board who is sent to help determine what caused the crash.

Like the author, Radford had to give up his boyhood dream of being a pilot because of a health condition. And like Farrell, Radford gets caught up in the unbelievable story of the "Falling Woman," a passenger who appears to have survived the crash, only to disappear from the hospital before anyone finds out who she is.

Erin Geraghty is that passenger, and in the grueling, mystifying process of finding out where she went and why, Radford discovers the truth about what he really wants, and the changes he will have to make to get it.

You could say the same for Farrell. Even after a year that did not go as anyone had planned.

In one of those confounding pop-culture coincidences, "The Falling Woman" came out just six months after Ann Napolitano's "Dear Edward" and Rye Curtis' "Kingdomtide," two novels that were also about the sole survivors of plane crashes. Farrell's book also came out during the pandemic, which meant that all in-person readings and other events were put on hold.

There was no anticipating any of this, and in the end, none of it mattered all that much. Life gave Farrell a second chance at a dream, and he made that dream come true. The journey had its share of turbulence, but you can't beat the destination.

"I couldn't be happier about where I am now. This is what I wanted more than what I wanted before," said the 52-year-old author, who teaches writing at Grossmont College and San Diego Writers, Ink. "I was a scared, timid kid who wanted to prove himself by being a fighter pilot, but that's not who I was. This is much truer to who I am on this earth.

"All of that pain of not getting what I wanted has led me to a place where I can live a life I want to live. I don't think that would have happened if I'd gotten my wings."

Literatur