

Review of *SCHEMES, DISGUISES, & TRAPS* A Novel by David Orsini

For readers in search of compelling books, David Orsini's novel *SCHEMES, DISGUISES, & TRAPS* will not be a surprise or a disappointment. David Orsini writes an unforgettable prose that merges the best of nineteenth and twentieth-century rhetorical style with superb descriptions of modern characters and environment. This book draws the reader into a frightening world of excitement, glamour, narcissism, cruelty, and manipulation from the first paragraph and holds us to the last surprising line. The novel is set in a world of enormous riches, privilege, and elegance with characters who struggle to maintain their places or to create a place in a culture that demands extraordinary courage, hard work, and determination to get to the top at any cost, even murder.

We are not allowed the luxury of dismissing these characters because of their greed or self-serving motives. Orsini reveals their origins and their reasons for making choices that anyone with principles would question and then reject. Instead, we are drawn into their backgrounds so deeply that our understanding of their psychological and emotional demands mitigates any negative judgments that would make us dislike them. In other words, we are torn between contempt for these characters and compassion for their needs, desires, and the lives into which they were born and are trapped. Thus, we witness two major characters planning the murder of a man they do not even know. We observe the uninhibited sexual practices of these conflicted characters—even a son seducing the wife of his father with whom he has always been very close. And we hear the rationalizations of people who will do anything for multi-millions of dollars and a life of power and pleasure. We peek behind the scenes of a world most of us will never know, and we are held spellbound on every page. Any reader who loves beautiful writing, amazing characters, fascinating plots, and psychological insight will love *SCHEMES, DISGUISES, & TRAPS*. I certainly recommend it.

Reviewed by Lois A. Cuddy

Lois A. Cuddy received her Ph.D. from Brown University. She is Professor Emerita of English, Women's Studies, and Comparative Literature Studies at the University of Rhode Island. Her books include *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Evolution* (Bucknell University Press) and *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880 to 1940* (Bucknell University Press). Her articles, on authors as diverse as Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton, T. S. Eliot, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Eliot and Homer, and Samuel Beckett and Dante, have appeared in journals in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Professor Cuddy is also the author of *Penelope's Song* (Big Table Publishing), a revisionist novel about the wife of Homer's Odysseus.