

production; something too seldom present in typical mystery and supernatural reads. Many authors simply don't take the time to build in these layers of complexity and meaning.

Secondly, *The Ball Crossing* holds passages that provide strong connections to the environment. Moses, in particular, is able to 'read' the natural world around him for clues: *"In all his days, Moses Chestnut had never seen a jay bird so close at hand. Its kind were among the most wary of the scarce life that remained visible during the winter months. Never alone, the blue jays moved in small flocks through the bleak landscape in search of whatever sustained them. They were vigilant of threats and quick to cry out a warning to which all the other creatures of the northern forest paid heed."*

His ability to pay attention to these signs and interpret them as warnings and premonitions of danger blends into the general animist undertone that permeates events and their evolution: *"Had he looked to the ground on the right edge of the doorway as the two entered the barn, Moses Chestnut might have noticed the fresh curls of wood that had settled there on the old hay and manure. If he had recognized them, then he would certainly have looked up to see the strange pattern of cuts high up the timber of the doorframe. Made by a skilled hand with a sharp knife, they formed a series of animist images like something from a language scarcely spoken now though once as familiar in this place as the whisper of wind."*

As LaPage's evil evolves and begins to devour the world with its brutal vengeance, Francis Hakey and his fellow hunters come to find that the violence of war is nothing compared to the predatory purposes of a supernatural force beyond their control. The Ball murder not only consumes all their lives, but leads to something even more threatening: a final confrontation that brings with it a heavy cost.

Yet, there's the promise of peace at the end of the storm...if Francis can survive long enough to find it: *"And though the scene about him was more awful than any he'd known in the war or the time since, he was filled with a sense of profound calm and peace as if the hand of God reached down to touch him."*

Vivid, embracing, and speckled with violent confrontation and the prospect of total annihilation versus redemption, *The Ball Crossing* isn't for readers who want a casual 'whodunnit' mystery, but for those who enjoy complex reads with more than a hint of the supernatural thrown in for good measure.