



The Removes

Tatjana Soli

Download now

Read Online ➔

The Removes

Tatjana Soli

The Removes Tatjana Soli

As the first wave of pioneers travel westward to settle the American frontier, two women discover their inner strength when their lives are irrevocably changed by the hardship of the wild west in *The Removes*, a historical novel from *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning author Tatjana Soli.

Spanning the years of the first great settlement of the West, *The Removes* tells the intertwining stories of fifteen-year-old Anne Cummins, frontierswoman Libbie Custer, and Libbie's husband, the Civil War hero George Armstrong Custer. When Anne survives a surprise attack on her family's homestead, she is thrust into a difficult life she never anticipated—living among the Cheyenne as both a captive and, eventually, a member of the tribe. Libbie, too, is thrown into a brutal, unexpected life when she marries Custer. They move to the territories with the U.S. Army, where Libbie is challenged daily and her worldview expanded: the pampered daughter of a small-town judge, she transforms into a daring camp follower. But when what Anne and Libbie have come to know—self-reliance, freedom, danger—is suddenly altered through tragedy and loss, they realize how indelibly shaped they are by life on the treacherous, extraordinary American plains.

With taut, suspenseful writing, Tatjana Soli tells the exhilarating stories of Libbie and Anne, who have grown like weeds into women unwilling to be restrained by the strictures governing nineteenth-century society. *The Removes* is a powerful, transporting novel about the addictive intensity and freedom of the American frontier.

The Removes Details

Date : Published June 12th 2018 by Sarah Crichton Books

ISBN :

Author : Tatjana Soli

Format : Kindle Edition 384 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Westerns, Military History, Civil War

 [Download The Removes ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Removes ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Removes Tatjana Soli

From Reader Review The Removes for online ebook

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

5 impressive stars to The Removes! ? ? ? ? ?

This book. Wow. It took me a while to read The Removes because I had to tread slowly. Although it is smoothly written, it required me to take some breaks from it, which I will describe why in a bit.

Set on the American frontier, The Removes is told with three narrators, a fifteen-year-old named Anne, as well as George Armstrong Custer, and his wife, Libbie. In the opening scene, Anne's family is attacked without warning by the Sioux, and she is held captive. As I read this scene, I knew The Removes would be a special read. The writing was crystal clear and three-dimensional, and the storytelling was emotional, raw, honest, and realistic.

Libbie Custer is thrust into an unknown, hostile life as she travels with her husband and the U.S. Army to the frontier. Once a well-to-do somewhat spoiled only child, Libbie faces daily the harsh realities of frontier life. It makes her stronger, though. She toughens, hardens, to survive her new reality.

Even though we hear from Custer himself, The Removes is really Anne and Libbie's stories. How they come to terms with the arduous life on the plains, and more importantly, how it shapes their roles as women given society's expectations at the time. While being mightily dangerous, the frontier is full of freedoms for Anne and Libbie that they would not know elsewhere.

Readers should know this book has graphic scenes of war. Those parts were painful to read at times, but I had to remind myself over and over that you cannot "pretty up" war, and one of this book's many strengths is in its honesty and authenticity.

The Removes is an ambitious undertaking of a novel, and it delivers on every level. The characters are smashingly developed. I adored them all. The sense of time and place is completely transportive. The pacing builds suspense, and I am pleased I took longer to read this one. It required my time and energy, and I gave it. I learned about "frontier life," but even more so, I learned about "life."

Thank you to Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus, and Giroux for the complimentary copy. All opinions are my own.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: www.jennifertarheelreader.com

Karen says

I really enjoyed this book, a mix of fact and fiction on the life of General Custer during The Civil War and Indian wars. The story is told through the eyes of Custer, his wife Libbie, and a fifteen-year-old girl who is abducted by the Cheyenne in Kansas. Despite the violence of these times, I was engrossed mostly in the stories of the women and their difficulties and hardships in these times of western expansion, and also the life of the Indians.

Thank you to Netgalley and FSG for the opportunity to read this book!

Melissa Crytzer Fry says

Wow. I could probably stop there, honestly, because that's about all you need to know. But... I can't do that because I loved this book too much *not* to talk about it.

This novel was an *intense* portrayal of yet another of America's darkest periods of history. And it is told through the perspectives of three fascinating characters: two women whose lives were connected in various ways to Gen. George Armstrong Custer, and Custer himself.

I will reiterate one of my frequent sentiments about historical fiction: books like this *need* to be required reading in our high schools. This book, in particular, includes actual historical photographs, drawings, maps, snippets from newspapers, and congressional mandates – all of which served to illustrate the stark reality of the government's continued betrayal of the native people (One statement by President Andrew Jackson on "The Case for the Indian Removal Act" still has my head SPINNING. The rationalization he used leaves me speechless).

But don't fear this book being too history laden. As the author admits, it *is* fiction, chock full of actual historic accounts, but filled with real and imagined characters about whom you will come to care. You may not always agree with their actions, but you may understand them, if only to a degree. To be sure, this is a heartbreaking novel.

But Soli does such an excellent job of portraying the thoughts of both sides in this horrible conflict. You will love *and* hate Gen. Custer (and change your mind many times in between), a man haunted *by* and equally drawn *to* battle. He often comes across as a complete contradiction – in the way he loves, in his feelings toward the Indians, in his actions – which he recognizes in himself. Soli's ability to transport us into his mind to understand his conflicted motivations is nothing short of incredible. The same can be said of the characters of Anne and Libbie; the third-person omniscient narration often winnows down into close introspection, which provides an emotionally immersive experience. And, of course, your heart will break for the native Indians; you will gasp at some of their retaliations, but you may just come to *understand* them. The same can be said of the Army's behaviors as well.

This novel moved me to *many* emotions (anger, sadness, sometimes laughter), not only for the disrespect of human rights, the government's duplicity, and the subsequent savagery of battle on both sides, but for its glimpse at a once-whole, untarnished, respected earth embraced by the native tribes. I shed tears, and likely at a part of the book that most others won't: a scene involving a solitary buffalo. The actions of the men in that scene made my heart ache, as it was such an accurate portrayal and foreshadowing of human disconnect with the earth, which continues in even greater magnitude today.

So, *The Removes* – obviously, due to its tie with American Indians – has a great deal of nature and earth-connection to it, which spoke to my own passions and sensibilities. Two passages, in particular, struck a chord with me. The first, when Anne is talking about her white ancestors:

Before her captivity she had always lived protected in houses, inside walls, under roofs. Caged. Even when traveling, she had been hidden away under the canvas canopy of wagons. She had not experienced the immensity of the land around her but rather had lived in fear of it. Did her people hate nature that they were so determined to tame it?

The second, when Custer is speaking to White Buffalo:

- *What else can one do with such wilderness but conquer it? (Custer)*
- *Revere it, pray to it. (White Buffalo)*

If you prefer your fiction to be filled with happy moments and to end wrapped up nicely with pretty bows, this may not be the book for you. As the author, herself, said in the Author's Note, "We honor the past when we depict it as accurately as possible without contorting it to contemporary mores. By doing this, we allow ourselves to better understand our present." This, she did in spades. Discerning readers who really want to contemplate history will appreciate this book, which is, at its heart, a story about war. Custer's ruminations in the book may sum it up best:

"Studying the histories of the world, not even brotherhood was enough to safeguard people who had what others coveted."

It's a story about man's historic inability to see through others' eyes and respect their differences. It's about man's ability to rationalize his abhorrent behavior. And it's about love, and devotion, and growing into one's true self.

Those who enjoyed Philipp Meyer's *The Son*, Jonis Agee's *The Bones of Paradise* or Paulette Giles's *News of the World*, would likely enjoy this literary novel that will leave you thinking about more than the characters, alone. This is not a book to be rushed. Take your time with it. It will leave you thinking about human nature, man's actions, and our own definitions of happiness and love.

Special thanks to my book buddy, who provided this book as an ARC in advance of publication, even though I didn't quite finish it before official release. So grateful!

Of note: Some may feel the scenes toward the latter part of the book begin to feel bogged down in "yet another war scene" – or even rushed through – but I think, in the end, these narrative choices served the tempo of the story well, as they illustrate the monotony of soldiering, but also the 'hurry up and move out' feel of military campaigns.

Esil says

3.75 stars

The Removes is a strong work of historical fiction, but it's awfully hard to read — the kind of book that made me want to turn away more than a few times. The story is set in the 1860s and 1870s in the US during the American Indian Wars. The story focuses on two women living separately difficult lives. Anne is a fictional character who is taken captive at the beginning of the story during an attack on her homestead. Libbie is the wife of General Custer, who was a captain in the Calvary during the American Indian Wars. Besides focusing on these two women, Custer and battle scenes feature prominently throughout the story.

At the end of the book, Soli says that her novel is based on real accounts she found of the Wars that do not romanticize either side. The result is a story that is well written and rings true, but that is often relentlessly brutal. I'm glad I read it, but I can't say that I enjoyed the experience.

For those who have trouble with violent stories, I should mention that the violence is not just between humans but also at times directed at animals.

Thanks to my monthly readings buddies Angela and Diane for reading this one with me. It made the experience much more bearable. And thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an

advance copy.

Tammy says

While I enjoy historical fiction, it's not often that I read American historical fiction. In the case of *The Removes* I made an exception because I thought *The Lotus Eaters* (Soli's first novel) was remarkable. *The Removes* is exponentially better. The title, at first glance, refers to the removal of the indigenous Native Americans from their land and the first scene is brutal when a fifteen year old girl is removed from her family and taken captive. Anne's captivity depicts the nomadic and arduous existence of the Sioux. As a whole, the aboriginal people were lied to by an American government unable or unwilling to understand their culture. The Indian Wars were the result with many, both Native American and white, removed from this life.

Custer figures prominently and is portrayed as being an effective and fearless leader, cocky and dandyish which leads to his demise at Little Big Horn. His long suffering wife, Libbie, leaves her comfortable family home and, when she is allowed, becomes a camp follower living a punishing life on the Great Plains comparable to Anne's.

I am tempted to employ worn out clichés: Mesmerizing! Addictive! Unputdownable! This excellent literary work of fiction spurred me on to fill in the gaps in my knowledge via Google and kindled an interest in this time period. I was thrilled to find a bibliography at the end of the book which provides a beginning reading list. From start to finish this book is nothing less than spectacular.

Tracey says

Thank you, NetGalley, Farrah, Straus, and Giroux, and Tatjana Soli for a free advanced copy.

I was so looking forward to this read. But, I am sorry to say it just did not work for me. I am blaming myself as I thought the prose would read differently.

I enjoyed Anne's story so much more than that of Autie and Libbie. There was more time spent in the beginning of the story following Anne's sufferings and life among the Indians, it just wasn't enough for me. The descriptions of frontier life I believe are very accurate, very descriptive and brutally honest. Although, I may have not enjoyed this well written story, I believe others will.

Diane S ? says

I think most of us, at least those close to my own age, learned of Custer's last stand, in history class. That is though, all I ever knew about him. There was so much I didn't know, for example I never knew he fought in our Civil War where he was made the youngest Brigadier General at the age of twenty five. Nor did I know anything about his wife Libby, who seems to be a special person in her own right. This book starts with Custer fighting in the Civil War, and is told from three different viewpoints. Custer himself, his wife Libby and a young fifteen year old Annie, whose family is homesteading when they are attacked by Indians, her family slaughtered, she herself taken by the Indians.

So Custer's role as Indian fighter begins, as he is called on once again to help rid the west of marauding Indians. This is a graphic and violent book, the west was certainly a savage place to be. Promises and peace brokered were continually abused. The Indian way of life threatened, the settlers life one of fear, so much death of people, livestock, constant back and forth savagery.

Custer's death at little big Horn was probably the way he would have wanted to die, in many ways it seemed his destiny. He came to respect the Indians and their way of life, he had no clue what to do with himself if he wasn't in the cavalry. Had he not died he probably would have ended up like Sitting Bull, a specimen to show off at freak shows. I came to appreciate what an emblematic character he was for the times. I loved Libby, her strength, her fortitude, she was quite a woman and I would like to read more about her. What happened to her after Custer's death. Annie, my heart broke for her, her treatment during and after captivity is certainly realistic. Such conflicted, harsh and judgemental times.

Soli's research is terrific, her writing vivid and certainly realistic. She does an amazingly thorough job at showing the many sides of this time period. A few photographs are included as is an author note. A harsh read, but an important one for those who have an interest in this time period. If ever one had thoughts about the romanticism and adventure in the old west, this book puts paid to that.

This was mine, Angela's and Esils monthly read and while we all cringed at the violence, we all thought it was well done. So thanks again my reading buddies.
ARC from Netgalley.

Angela M says

By the very nature of the slice of American history (1863- 1876) depicted in this novel, violence and death and abuse and brutal treatment permeate the story. The writing is exceptionally descriptive and that makes it difficult to read. Yet, this prevalence of violence is what makes this so realistic. This is what happened. Soli in her note points out that this period of time about the frontier has been romanticized - not so here. There are no holds barred, as she tells the story of George Armstrong Custer, famed as an officer in the army during the Civil War and the American Indian Wars, his wife Libbie, and a young girl, Anne who is taken captive by the Cheyenne Indians. The book mainly is comprised of alternating narratives of these three characters.

My recollection of Custer from high school history so long ago is of the battle of Little Big Horn, "Custer's Last Stand", but I really knew nothing of the man. Soli portrayed him, I thought, as a complex man. My feelings about him were quite ambivalent and a quick look at some biographical info on him seems to reflect mixed views on his legacy. Libbie was an interesting character, loyal to her husband, strong and adventurous enough to accompany her husband on some missions. Anne, who the author tells us was an imagined character, is the one who will remain with me for her sometimes unimaginable strength and resilience in the face of her captivity. This appears to be well researched and is a fantastic work of historical fiction. It's hard to say it's an enjoyable read; it isn't, but it is well written and impressive in so many ways.

Thanks as always to Diane and Esil for the thoughts they shared while we read this.

I received an advanced copy of this book Crichton Books/ Farrar, Straus and Giroux through NetGalley.

Debra says

4.5 stars

"Danger knows full well that Custer is more dangerous than he."

I love books which not only educate me but also evoke feeling and leave me thinking about them for long after I have finished reading. This was one of those books.

Yes, this book is about General George Armstrong Custer, a.k.a. Autie, and ultimately his last stand, but it is also about his wife, Elizabeth "Libbie" Custer and a fifteen- year-old girl named Anne who was taken captive during an attack on her homestead.

"The land, forgiving and without limit, will be the last true freedom."

Exploration of the American frontier, the wild west, Indian wars, battle, love, loss, captivity, lust, self-reliance and inner strength are all highlighted in this book. I learned a lot about Custer and his career while reading this book. Not only did I learn about Custer, but I learned more about American History, the brutality of war, and the harshness of life on the plains. Reading books such as this always make me appreciate what I have and the times I live in.

The strength of this book is in its female characters. Fifteen-year-old Anne watches as her family is slaughtered. She is taken prisoner, raped, abused, traded, and subjected to the harsh realities of being held captive. She must rely on her inner strength and courage to survive. She becomes adept at reading situations and doing what she must to keep alive. She even cares for another young captive and befriends a female member of the tribe while in captivity. She also gives birth to two children while captive. She is subject to a life of constant change, starvation, heat and cold, constant movement and hard work.

Libbie is the daughter of a judge who does not want his daughter to marry the young, cocky Custer. He is a known womanizer and civil war hero! Custer is dashing and brave and Libbie can't say no. She leaves behind her life of luxury to follow Custer to the plains. She is thrown into a life she does not know and must adapt to her surroundings. A life of hardships, constant moving, long periods of separation from her husband, loneliness, jealousy and unease become a way of life for her. Custer and Libbie wrote long letters to each other full of euphemism and double-entendre. One article I read described their letters as Victorian aged sexting. Custer even faced court Marshall and arrest for coming home to see his Libbie! They had a great love but that did not stop Custer from being a womanizer which caused Libbie great heartache and jealousy.

This book feels very sweeping in scope. It covers a lot of information and while reading I found myself doing my own research on the internet about Custer and his wife and the battle of little big horn. There are some violent scenes in this book. Battle is graphic and bloody. There are scalping's, mutilations of bodies, suffering, horrible treatment and casualties on both side of the battles. Don't let this scare you away. While reading this book, I thought of a quote from the movie, Blood Diamond: "Sometimes I wonder....Will God ever forgive us for what we have done to each other?"

This book was simply wonderful. I loved how both women became stronger in the face of danger and fear. Both had their lives changed forever and yet grew as individuals and found inner strength and confidence. Like Custer, they both had great courage and bravery. All the characters in this book are in a fight for survival. For some it is their job, for others it is a way of life. Custer sought his whole life to be a hero, but for me the women were the heroes in this book!

Talk about a book which evokes feeling! I thought about this book even when I wasn't reading it. It truly is

masterful, and I learned a great deal. Custer is an American Icon and I was captivated learning about him. Can you even imagine going into a battle where the odds are stacked against you?

"A mood, unspeakable, hovered over the expedition, and a sense of gloom that nothing would lift to pervaded the men. They mumbled of bad dreams and made out wills. Unholy alliances were struck to avoid torture by the enemy. None smelled victory, they stank of fear, yet Custer refused to bow to it. How could he?"

I can't say enough about this book, so I will simply say READ IT. Even if you are not a fan of westerns - READ THIS BOOK. I don't consider myself a fan of westerns, but this is more than just a western. It is a story of strength, survival, and resiliency. It is wonderfully written and captivating. This is not a book which should be read fast - read it slowly- savor it, learn from it.

Also- read the Author's Note at the end of the book. She describes her fascination of the wild west of America from the viewpoint of someone who came to the United States when she was five years old. She describes how she took some liberties and that this book is a work of imagination blended with fact and history.

Historical fiction buffs, history buffs, war buffs, army buffs, wild west buffs, strong women buffs, well-written book buffs - this book is for you!

Thank you to Farrar, Straus and Giroux and NetGalley who provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All of the thoughts and opinions expressed in this review are my own.

Read all of my reviews at www.openbookpost.com

Krista says

Rating: 4 stars

This work of historical fiction features George and Libbie Custer, and Anne Cummins. Annie was captured by the Sioux in a raid on her home when she was fifteen. The timeframe the main story occurs is from the early Civil War years until Custer's death at The Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana Territory. (1861 – 1876) The storylines alternate between Libbie Custer, George Custer, and Annie Cummins. The book really speaks to the hardships and horrors endured and inflicted during the Civil War, and the US expansion of the American West.

George and Libbie grew up in the same small town. George was a member of a large, ragtag farming family; and Libbie was the coddled daughter of a local judge. Improbably the couple married. Let it be noted that they married AFTER George made a name for himself as the youngest Brigadier General appointed during the Civil War. Soon after marrying George, Libbie decided that if she was ever going to see her husband she would have to go on campaigns with him. Therefore she joined him during the Civil War, and out went out West after the Civil War ended. Custer for his part was trying to retain his name in the public eye after becoming a general, and war hero during the Civil War. He kept accepting postings to forts that were deeper and deeper into Indian Territory, and where hostilities became more acute and violent.

Libbie for the most part seemed to relish her time at the forts, mainly I think, because it afforded her time with her husband. She coped fairly well with the uncivilized conditions of the forts, and did try to support George as best she could. She was an interesting amalgam of a historical figure. I assumed that she would have been a shrinking violet given her sheltered upbringing, but as depicted by this author, she actually

stepped up to the challenges posed by her expeditionary years with the Army fairly well.

The person who did not fare well was Annie Cummins. She was the only survivor of an attack on her settlement, and was dragged away by the Sioux at the age of 15. Apparently, the Sioux didn't treat their white captives any different than they did Native Americans stolen from other tribes, but oh that treatment was horrendous. Captives were beaten or killed for small transgressions, starved, and pushed past the point of exhaustion with never ending work tasks and long treks on foot. While in captivity Annie gave birth to two children. After about 10 years in captivity, Annie was unexpectedly scooped up by the Army during a massacre on her Indian village. Her return to the 'white' world unfortunately did not go well. All she wanted to do was to retrieve her children, but no-one had any sympathy or understanding as to why she would want to do that. They blocked her every attempt to return to the Sioux.

There is a lot of time spent in Georg Custer's head, which I found to be plausible, but a bit disconcerting for a work of historical fiction. The author depicted Custer as carrying around all the ghosts (but he didn't see them as ghosts) of the men who died in his battles. I think the author was trying to portray a form of what today we could deem, PTSD. I don't deny that he could have had those feelings, I'm just not sure that there is a historical reference for that line of thought, especially as they became bigger and bigger factors in the Custer's decision making process.

I thought that this was a really good book. This was tough time in American history. It was a time of broken promises to the Native Americans, and a war of brother against brother in the Civil War. This story captures all that in an engaging way. I wish the years hadn't unfolded in that way, but they did. I'm glad that I now know more about George and Libbie Custer, and the mindset (on both sides) of the settling of the American West.

Thank-you to NetGalley; Sarah Chrichton Books; and the author, Tatjana Soli; for providing a free ARC copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Fran says

Go west, young man. Settle in the wide open spaces. Yes, settlers experienced freedom and liberty but were arguably unprepared for unmentionable hardship and violence. The nation's policy of Manifest Destiny with the intention of expansion and conquest fueled the Indian Wars on the frontier.

In 1866 Kansas, the Cheyenne frequently rode to homesteads demanding charity, not necessarily freely given. It was "necessary to work the fields with a hoe in one hand and a rifle in the other". Fifteen year old Anne Cummins witnessed an unspeakable raid and the slaughter of her entire family. She was part of a group of women and children taken captive. Deprivations included lack of food, clothing and shelter. During the first snow, Anne tore her apron in half to wrap pieces of cloth around a child's bleeding feet. Anne learned to eat anything she was given immediately or risk having it stolen. This created a pattern of starvation, satiation, then starvation which sapped her physical strength and endurance.

Libbie Bacon was the only surviving child of a judge. She was indulged by her father and stepmother. At the age of nineteen, it was her job to be "husbanded". Independent Libbie turned down proposals, instead, devoured books. At a party, she encountered George Armstrong Custer "Autie". He was the son of a farmer and did not travel in the same social circles. Autie, a Civil War hero six years later, exuded extraordinary confidence. Once married, Libbie Bacon Custer became a presence on many military campaigns. At times though, long absences occurred with communication solely by letter.

George Armstrong Custer was much admired for his strictness. He was a fearless leader in battle, admired and loved by his men. During the Civil War, soldiers petitioned to serve under Autie's command. The Indian Wars were completely different. Autie's worst nightmare was to die unknown. Some newspapers hinted that he was not the same high caliber leader when compared to his Civil War days.

"The Removes" by Tatjana Soli was told in alternating sections. The characters were well developed displaying their inner thoughts, trials and tribulations. The reader was privy to their longings, dreams and heartbreaks. The crime, violence and cultural genocide occurring during the building of the railroads and the settling of the west were achingly brought to light by the sensitive, well researched and eye-opening writing style of Tatjana Soli. I highly recommend this tome.

Thank you Sarah Crichton/ Farrar, Straus and Giroux and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "The Removes".

Meike says

DNF @42 %

Indian Wars chick lit. This book has it all: Stock characters whose motivations make no sense, clumsy narration, cringeworthy pathos, and "wisdom" that even Ayn Rand would probably consider dubious.

One of our female narrators is Libbie, "the most eligible girl in town", with an "independent streak" who has already "turned down a number of proposals". But beware: She "was always realistic about herself - she was nothing particularly special except for Autie's love for her." You think that's a) reactionary writing and b) makes no sense? Well, I agree.

Autie is a ruthless war hero - "being a soldier was in his blood" - and a "swan if there ever was one" (like, a swan who partakes in massacres, you know), who writes Libbie sentences like: "I bury my nose in your scented handkerchief that you gave your Bo on leaving." Seriously?

And then there's Anne, the other protagonist (both stories are presented in a parallel montage). She is captured by Native Americans who are portrayed as raping, murderous savages (to be fair, I heard that this changes in the second half) and, over the course of several years, fights for her survival.

I think I see what Soli aims to do here, but the book is a mess. George Armstrong Custer ("Autie") did really exist and fought in the Civil War and in the Indian Wars, and was of course really married to Elizabeth Bacon Custer ("Libbie"). While their story is certainly interesting, Soli's book does not feel like it processes historical material - it feels contrived. The character depictions are not believable and when there's a change of heart, it comes out of nowhere, or rather, the reader notices the function for the plot, but it feels artificial. Also, the subject of the frontier and the Native American genocide requires a far more critical standpoint and nuanced depiction, IMHO.

The following passage made me abandon the book:

"For silence the animals (dogs) were muzzled with rope, then stabbed or strangled. Two of his own hounds had followed, and he moved away to not see the violence done to these loyal pets. Herculean were the sacrifices victory demanded."

The herculean task of finishing this book proved to be too much for me. If you want to read about the Indian Wars, then pick up Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West, which is a masterpiece. If you want to read a new book by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, my favorite American publisher, read The Shepherd's Hut,

Kudos, Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment, or The Dead: A Novel, all of which are fantastic books.

I really wanted to like this more.

Liz says

This is the first book I've read by Tatjana Soli. It won't be the last. Starting with an Indian raid of a Kansas homestead, she paints an in depth story where you can see the entire narrative play out like movie scenes.

The novel bounces between Anne, one of the few survivors of the raid, Libbie Custer, her husband George and Tom, George's brother.

I've said it before and will reiterate the sentiment again, a good historical novel teaches you something as it tells its story. Soli explains George Custer. A poor farmer's son, he is quick to learn the lessons of war from the generals he serves under during the Civil War. When Libbie joins him on the war campaign trail, she learns both the good and bad about her husband and about what war can do to one's sense of morals. In fact, in each of the sections, it quickly becomes apparent there are no "good guys". If anything, over and over again, it is the women and children that are the victims. Some of the scenes are graphically cruel and hard to stomach. But such is war and Custer has taken his lessons to heart. By the end, he has more respect for the Indians than for those in power in DC. And he understands, that both the Indians and the cavalry are not long for the world.

The title references not only the removal of the Indians from their lands, but each woman's removal from family and the only world she knew. "Wilderness lay impenetrable in every direction, civilization a forgotten dream. Could the great cities of the world still exist simultaneously with this primitive world?"

The writing here is flat out gorgeous and just captures each moment. This would have been a five star book for me but there are places where the tempo drags and feels drawn out. As would be expected, this is a sad novel. There are no happy endings.

My thanks to netgalley and Farrah, Strauss and Giroux for an advance copy of this book.

Carol says

Whew! What a life! "He loved war and thirsted for victory."

THE REMOVES is a historical work of fiction that tracks the life of General George Armstrong "Autie" Custer through the American Civil War and American Indian War ending with the massacre of "**Custer's Last Stand**" at Little Big Horn in Montana.

The novel also follows wife Libbie Bacon Custer who endures hardships, some scary times (*OMGOSH, the Dakota blizzard*), disease....and humiliation....from her womanizing husband, but she stands by HER man even after his death....despite his many indiscretions. She knew Autie loved her too.

And Wow! meet the tough, young 15 year old Anne Cummins who, after an Indian attack on her family's homestead is ultimately captured by the Cheyenne, starved, repeatedly raped throughout her young life while being worked to near death as she fights for survival in the wild....but FINALLY help is on the way....or is it?

As you would expect reading a novel about the Civil and Indian wars, these were dangerous times with much brutality, mutilation and catastrophic loss of human and animal life. General Custer, however, survived many major battles in his lifetime....he loved being in the heat of it....his BIG ego feared being left out....his goal to retain his standing as the golden boy war hero, one of the "**finest specimens of soldiers**" never faulted....to the very end.

General George Armstrong Custer ... December 5, 1839 - June 25, 1876.

Many thanks to Farrar Straus and Giroux via NetGalley for the arc in exchange for review.

Elyse says

This is the 4th novel I've read by Tatjana Soli. I absolutely love her books.

"The Lotus Eaters" was an extraordinary debut that resolved around three characters who were affected by the Vietnam War.

"The Forgetting Tree", takes place on a ranch in Southern California.

"The Last Good Paradise", a comic/ tragic tale, takes place on an island resort in the South Pacific.

"The Removes", historical fiction, is definitely - by far - Tajana's most ambitious novel to date.....an epic story of the Indian Wars on the western plains.

In every book I've read by Tatjana Soli, I've walked away having learned new things about the greater world.

Tatjana also develops characters so well, I could live inside her books for days, and never want to come up for air.

In "The Removes", (I lived inside 'this' book long full days - passing up exercise- and normal life responsibilities). I don't usually choose to read books with a lot of bloody killings. If I had not loved, trusted, respected, and admired Tatjana Soli as much as I do....I would not have chosen to read this book by 'subject matter' alone.

As it was, I dived in with great determination, to read every word with vigor as a fully active reader. Given that Tatjana wrote it, which I just want to say, now,: "WOW"..... INCREDIBLE..... I can't begin to imagine how much work was involved. It's really an Extraordinary book.....

I figured I could 'at least' take this novel on and do everything I could to comprehend it - (look up things if needed- which I did) - and give her book my full attention.

The first 5 to 10 % had me nervous. It definitely started right out...but a little 'too' much for my comfort. WE WERE SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF UGLY WAR....with LOVED ONES. I was afraid I couldn't go on. I didn't want to be so sad so fast. I was sad - right away. But then I relaxed - the entire book couldn't be pages

of loved ones killed. It's still not a fluffy easy-breezy read.....yet it sure becomes all encompassing.

I had to put the book down several times - to have conversations with my husband.

He was helpful. I wanted moral support. I sincerely wanted to read this - learn - grow - and even be proud of myself (silly and embarrassing mentioning this in a review). I feared I might not understand something - or my mind would shut down.

I just needed to talk about the history and the characters with someone 'while' reading this. Paul was a wonderful partner and support of my process.

I started picking up my own natural rhythm and became deeply involved. I really didn't need Paul any longer- but it was still nice to know he was near by.

I was home alone when I put the book down (about half way)....when a scene was not only devastating graphic - but combined with the conflicted emotions between two brothers - George Custer and his younger brother, Tom, - two military soldiers- I just felt sooooo sad. I cried - and needed a break.

This novel was deeply affecting. As the two main women in this story discovered their inner strength- when their lives were changed forever - I stretched and strengthen alongside them in ways too. Their story -(Anne Cummins and Libbie Custer), and Civil War Hero George Armstrong Custer's story will stay with me forever. The supporting characters are also memorable. And as I took this journey- I kept being floored of how the changes kept occurring- never knowing what was coming down the pipes next.

The combination of intimacy among the characters - of intertwining stories - (Anne who is captured by the Indians- the Cheyenne - and Libbie who married Custernicknamed Autie), with intoxicating luminous narrative —we experience dark corners of history - [crazy mad tumultuous times] - but we also experience remarkable resilience, breathtaking imagery, and transformation out on the battlefield.

With tenacity and sensitivity.....Tatjana Soli walks us back into the past....it's haunting - heartbreaking- a book that will linger a long time.

A few quotes and/ or tidbits to give small flavors of the characters:

Libbie:

"Libbie became quite the flirt. She was surprised how much she enjoyed it, both the pleasure it gave to the days and how it took the sting from Autie's neglect. With the protection of a wedding ring, she could be more bold than she ever dared as an eligible young lady".

Autie: George Armstrong Custer

"Men craved leadership and this he performed ably. Each man wrestled with private torments in the deepest night; that was the only place that human was allowed in war. He had been wrong to chastise Tom for covering the Indian woman. Tom was still a boy, tenderhearted. That had all been squeezed out of Custer. Only Libbie fed the little bit of gentleness left him".

Anne:

Tribal life was defined by constant movement. In Anne's second year of captivity there was much suffering from lack of food. She had already had two miscarriages – and buried Elizabeth - the young girl she watched over from the day they were both captured and both lost their families.

At age 17 - Anne was pregnant again. She had a little baby girl - named her Solace, after Elizabeth.

An old grandmother, Unci told Anne: "You are now part of the Cheyenne. You must keep your eyes open to find your place".

Horses and Dogs:

Many had died of starvation... Their bellies immediately sliced to eat. It was never enough to satisfy too many empty bellies.

Scarcity, suffering, excruciating heat, or horrendously freezing cold and windy, the elements were a war in themselves.

Libbie & the Prairie:

“The prairie wind howled ceaselessly, bending the will of them all. Yet she had grown a liking for it over the last months. She had been weaned, developed a hunger for the chalky bite of freedom - the most irresistible elixir once developed a taste for it. She loved Autie, but also what was beyond him, the whole untamed world out there in its infinite liberty”.

Soooo much more I could say - write - express about this wonderful book!

Thank You Farrah, Straus, and Giroux, Netgalley, and Tatjana Soli (so much to be proud about!!!)
