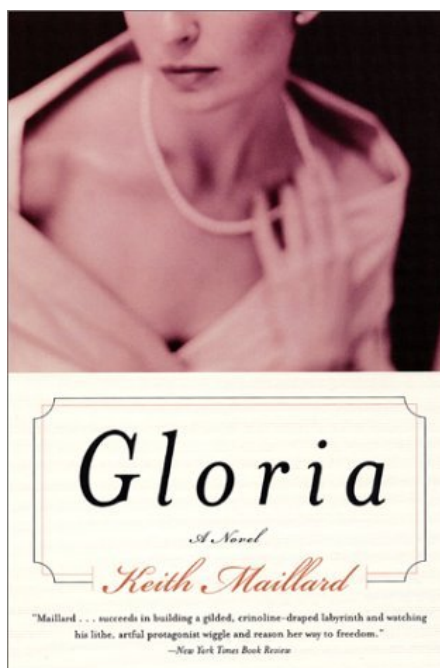




Gloria

Keith Maillard

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Gloria, a recent college graduate, class of '57, has everything a girl could want. Expected to make a brilliant marriage to a wealthy but conventional man, Gloria finds herself torn between society's expectations and her own search for a future that is both passionate and fulfilling. Her quest uncovers the intensity of desires, the gift of intellectual accomplishment, and the surprising power of friendship.

Gloria is a vivid and intimate portrayal of a privileged yet claustrophobic world, where conflicting expectations for women foreshadow an impending revolution. Gloria Cotter, in her last summer at home before setting out for the larger world, must find her way into an unimaginable future.

Gloria Details

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Author : Keith Maillard

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Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Coming Of Age, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Gloria for online ebook

Jocelyn says

I loved this book, beyond anything I could have anticipated. My initial hope was that I could get into it; little did I know that I'd be transported to the 1950s so deeply and effectively. This was exactly the book I was looking to read: engrossing, detailed, nuanced, dynamic, smart. What a satisfying read!

Ruth Kevghas says

I felt like Gloria was a live person and if I could just turn a corner somehow I could sit by the pool with her....

Claire says

OK, before we start, I think it should be made clear that I want to BE Gloria Cotter...her blend of beauty, perspicacity, wit and emotional depth is the template for everything I strive to be. Like Gloria, I was a precocious child; like Gloria, I found that being a small adult thrown in with a pack of near-feral kids who seemed hellbent on either assimilating or crushing all in their path necessitated adaptive behavior from a young age; and, like Gloria Cotter, I have a heart and head that are often at odds. Throw in a mess of crinoline and a penchant for memorizing long passages of Spenser, and we might as well be sisters.

Of all Maillard's mid-century character-ensemble novels, *Gloria* is by far his best (with *The Clarinet Polka* a close second). Maillard's grasp of not only the things that make a character live and breathe, but the things that make us give a damn about them, makes this book a delight. His refusal to pander to the LCD, his dedication to showing us ALL the facets of his young heroine and not just the shiny, perfect for mass-consumption tidbits, made me a lifelong fan. As I traveled through Gloria's life with her, I came to understand how powerful the will and the human spirit are, and how even the smartest of us can be as dumb as a bag of hammers when it comes to problems our brains aren't wired to solve.

A summary of *Gloria's* plot - Girl meets boy, Girl loves boy, Girl bucks convention, discovers her own path in life, and encounters the early edges of self-enlightenment - might turn to mush in the hands of someone less skilled, but as I said before, Maillard's insistence on presenting his characters as true individuals and not mere stick figures gives the whole book heft, and the urbane, unceasingly clever (but never emotionless) prose makes *Gloria* a friend you'll want to visit again and again.

Christine says

I really liked this book initially and wanted it to be the book I was hoping it would be. Premise follows a steel heiress and her plight to 'find herself'. Author does a good job really placing you in the characters' shoes, he changes the point of view periodically. The book was going swimmingly until around the 200pg mark and it took hard right. The author introduces characters that are verbally and sexually abusive/manipulative. It goes away for a little while and returns with force. If the author had just left or really really toned down those aspects, it would have been a really interesting book. I'd like to take a mental

cleanse from some of the scenes. Barf.

Emily says

I didn't love it as much as Maillard's near-perfect Clarinet Polka, but I didn't expect to. Nonetheless, it's pretty incredible. And is it just me, or can this guy write some fantastic non-sex scenes?!

Sarah Beth says

Set in the summer of 1957, this story follows Gloria Cotter, a wealthy and beautiful young college graduate who finds herself home after college graduation and floundering at finding her next step. Although beautiful, privileged, and intellectually accomplished, Gloria feels stifled and trapped in her insular world. Expected to make a good marriage to a man from a similar background, Gloria feels trapped at the thought of falling into marriage and then motherhood and instead considers pursuing a PhD and teaching English. Set on the cusp of cultural change, Gloria's dilemma beautifully and eloquently illustrates the conflicting expectations for women and is an intimate portrait of life for college educated women in the 1950s.

To the world, Gloria appears as a wealthy, well-heeled young woman with every advantage; "she felt like the stereotype of the utterly, utterly bored society girl in some big, sloppy, popular, pointless novel - maybe John O'Hara. [...] And then, finally, there was the subtle and quite intense pleasure in knowing that, if she appeared to be the perfect, stereotypical country club girl, she had succeeded in fooling everyone" (23). Although Gloria is skillful at playing her part socially, her diary and reflections reveal that she feels it as an act and she is simply a consummate actress. Or as her advisor tells her, "I must admit, dear Gloria, that you did fool me for a while. But the truth of the matter is that you have *never* been one of those girls - no matter how well you have learned to disguise yourself as one of them" (545). Gloria is a restless soul on the brink of making a momentous decision - whether or not to break away from the mold that her country club setting expects of her and following her own path. Ironically, despite the tension between her mother, Marcelaine, and Gloria, the two are more alike than they realize, something the reader learns through flashbacks that show an uncertain and lost Marcelaine as a college student herself.

Although I typically dislike efforts of authors to narrate from the opposite gender, Maillard did an excellent job of writing from the perspective of a young woman in the 1950s. In the notes, he reveals that he was consciously striving to emulate the style of novels of that time period and I believe he succeeded. Gloria is a product of her time and age, the expectations of which shape every character and action in the novel. For instance, Gloria's father Ted, a vice president at a steel company, is clear about his expectations for fellow executives: "Raysburg Steel was not interested in a single man over thirty (what was wrong with him?), a divorced man, a man with personal problems or screwy opinions, a man who runs around on his wife - or whose wife runs around on him" (94). It is this rigid social structure that has both created and imprisoned Gloria.

Maillard takes on multiple themes in the over 600 pages that make up this novel: religious faith, family ties, limitations on female scholars, societal expectations, sexual purity and exploration, alcoholism, issues of class and social rank, the perils of boarding schools, fashion and materialism, homosexuality, and female friendship. At heart, this is about a young woman who cannot envision her future self and is struggling to find the path to this unknown future; "What she couldn't imagine was *who that person would be* standing up in front of the classroom and lecturing - certainly not any version of Gloria Cotter she'd ever met" (344). This novel took me by surprise with its quiet power and the complexity of its characters, namely Gloria. A beautiful, complex, and deeply absorbing coming of age story that I felt absolutely immersed in while

reading.

4.5 Stars

Kellyamye says

Coming of age story of Gloria Cotter during the 1950's and 60's before the women's movement--well written, developed and believable characters. One of the best books with a female protagonist written by a man that I've ever read.

I wasn't constantly thinking, "she wouldn't do/think/be that way."

Long, but enjoyable easy read. More of a character study than anything else, so if you love a fast moving plot, Gloria isn't for you. Only three stars because tho I'll always think of Gloria fondly, she isn't a character that will really stick with me.

Reading of this book will be enhanced if you're familiar with pre-Shakespearian English literature (I'm not), especially with Spenser's "Faerie Queen" and/or the poetry of Wyatt :o)

Saleh MoonWalker says

Onvan : Gloria - Nevisande : Keith Maillard - ISBN : 60935979 - ISBN13 : 9780060935979 - Dar 656 Safhe - Saal e Chap : 1998

Heather says

Ahhhhh ... this book is special to me for so many reasons. First off, I read parts of it on a bus trip from Düsseldorf to Paris. It speaks volumes for the power of a good book that I, many times, chose to read rather than look out the window at the gorgeous unfamiliar countryside. Even though I was in college in the late 90s, I could totally relate to the main character Gloria's emotions as she traversed her journey as a college girl in 1950s Virginia. The author not only captured what it was like to come of age in that time, but he also provided detailed flashbacks to the adolescent events that shaped Gloria into the person she became while in college. It's really hard for me to explain in words the perfection of this novel, but if you have some spare time to bite off this big "chunk o'book," you should do so. If you ever felt the magic of visiting a college friend's hometown, adoring your English professor, or just spending sunny days at the pool with your best friend, you can revisit those feelings in this book. I'd reread it again in a heartbeat (if only I had time). Thank you, Keith Maillard! I'll forever think of Gloria Cotter whenever I hear the word "crinoline."

Suanne Laqueur says

It's rare that I find a book that strikes such a deep note in me. This was like a ten-fingered chord on an organ. It's a hefty tome—it weighs pounds. I'd put off reading it because of its size but once I started, I could not stop. It just blew me away. The story, the characters, the attention to detail, the social and cultural minutiae

of 1950s America against the beautiful literary references...

And above all, Gloria.

Gloria. Her mental flooding. Her anxieties. Her raw desires. Her fears. Her joy. Her pain.

I truly identified with Gloria. Tears dripping on the page as she said or thought what I always did. I loved her. I felt her. I wanted to talk to her.

I loved this book. And I went on to love Clarinet Polka, too.

Amy says

This was dark chocolate: rich, delicious, decadent, and turns out, it's good for you. Loved it.

Michelle-- Fawn & Fern Books says

I don't even know what to say besides that I wish I was Gloria Cotter.

This book is pure heaven if you like to read coming of age novels. It's 600+ pages so it's not a fast read, but I honestly prefer it that way. You get so deep inside Gloria's mind you forget who you are.

I can't believe this was written by a man. It was just..perfect. I love Gloria's flaws, and how she had to be someone other than herself to fit in. I loved that she was an English major in a sorority full of girls that weren't even close to as nerdy as she was. I loved all the references to famous poets and authors, I loved that her Mother called her "Miss Priss" and the tension/jealousy between them. I loved every single perspective in this book.

Now that it's over, I'm going to go slowly walk away from it so I don't try to start it again already.

Highly recommend. 5+ stars.

Josephine says

I picked this book up at the Bargain Books one day because it was a brick--I love long complicated books as a rule--and because I was intrigued by the hardcover version of cover art, and now I only wish I'd purchased multiple copies, as mine is starting to tip and sway as the spine crumbles. The first time through, I thought I'd made a mistake, even at half price but finished it anyway...and promptly read it all again as I'd been sucked into the book and its premise. I've been hooked since...and people who know me can attest to the fact that I don't like much recent mainstream fiction. Tastes vary--I don't promise everyone will like this book, but the best way I can describe it is: well-written enough that I slip into the book as I read to the point of feeling that I've been transported physically into the events of the book, and into the characters' thoughts.

The framework story is set in the summer of 1957, between Gloria's graduation from college and beginning graduate school at Columbia; no one she knows, from her wealthy father and society mother to the country

club set her age, can understand why she'd rather get a PhD in English than marry the extremely eligible young man whom she's been dating through college. No woman in her circle works, though most have gone to college. This framework alternates between her father's experience moving into the CEO position at Raysburg Steel, her mother's struggle with middle age and the death of her own mother and Gloria's own thoughts and self-doubts, and her struggle with one of her father's subordinates. The bulk of the book, however, is Gloria's flashbacks to her childhood and adolescence, struggling to fit in to a society which has no place for intellectual women. By the book's end, she's learned how to act the role well enough that she's elected sorority president and chosen May Queen, but has not truly *become* the young woman she appears to be.

I was born ten years after this book was set, so can't speak to how accurately Maillard portrays 1950s society, but it's an enthralling read, packed with detail to the point of tediousness...if they didn't all serve to expand on Gloria's character and her relationships with friends and family. The text's structure is a trifle confusing upon first reading, as Maillard slides so smoothly between 'now' and 'then', dreams and reality, that it's not always clear at first that he *has* shifted. I, like many readers, wonder what happened to Gloria in later years, although I don't want Maillard to bow to reader preference! I'd rather be left with my own imaginings than struggle through something created out of obligation to readers/publishers/financial need.

Karen says

The author did a great job of capturing period details, but the book was much much wordier than it needed to be. Also, he spent so much time emphasizing Gloria's great ability to "play the game" and act like a perfect society girl that it was easy to lose sight of what was supposed to make her interesting, which was her love of poetry and desire for a PhD. I didn't end up liking her as much as I'd expected to.

Clarissa says

Probably my favorite novel of all-time. I read it again every summer and have since I was fifteen.
