



# The Unmade World

*Steve Yarbrough*

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Set against a backdrop of the current political and cultural upheaval in the US and Eastern Europe, *The Unmade World* is a thoughtful, scope-y literary novel with a dose of suspense that moves from Poland to California to the Hudson Valley and back to Poland. It covers a decade in the lives of an American journalist and a Polish small businessman turned petty criminal and the wrenching aftermath of an accidental, tragic encounter between these two on a snowy night in 2006 on the outskirts of Krakow.

The accident costs the lives of the American journalist Richard Brennan's wife and daughter, an event that colors the rest of his life. It also leads to a downward spiral for Bogdan Baranowsk, leaving emotional scars as he suffers the seemingly inevitable loss of his business, his home, and his wife.

*The Unmade World* is a story of ordinary, otherwise decent people from various backgrounds and circumstances who must learn how to live with the personal grief, sense of guilt, and the emotional consequences of violence. Along the way, the novel grapples with a spectrum of cultural and political issues. It includes a murder mystery wrapped around the corruption of major college sports, the pressures on immigrants and refugees in both the US and Poland, the fallout of political change, economic upheavals and armed conflicts--including the horrific destruction of Luhansk, Ukraine in 2014. It also references the 2016 presidential campaign, cultural politics in the American university, and the demise of print journalism, etc., though never in a dogmatic or overtly partisan way.

## The Unmade World Details

Date : Published January 6th 2018 by Unbridled Books

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Author : Steve Yarbrough

Format : Kindle Edition 384 pages

Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Mystery

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# From Reader Review The Unmade World for online ebook

## Corey says

Review to come.

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## Susan says

Excellent! Fascinating combination of the suspense of a mystery and the richness and psychological depth of a number one literary novel. Interesting insights into the transition in Poland after the end of the Soviet era. Superb depiction of the effects of loss and guilt over long time periods.

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## Maryrose says

One of the best written books I have read in quite a while. Characters well developed. Good story with real surprises. I would recommend this book

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## Jo Ann says

I can hardly wait to hear the author talk about this book, ask my questions about the book, and learn more at Booktopia, 2018, Vermont. I love Steve Yarbrough's writing!

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## Debbie says

4.5 stars. I started and then took a break from this book because I knew Richard would lose his family and I just wasn't ready for the pain that I knew I would feel with Steve Yarbrough's writing. So I got it together and read on. What a book. This author writes, I think, about people and the human condition, and he does it so well. In addition there were so many layers in this story to think about. I can't wait to talk about this at Booktopia.

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## Raj says

Compelling read told by a masterful storyteller, however the plot and direction at times asked for a little more.

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## **Ginger says**

Unusually slow-paced for something called “a thriller,” but a satisfying read. The sounds of Ella Fitzgerald bookend this tale. As with jazz, appreciating story requires a shift in mindset and a certain patience, apart from the hustle and bustle of daily life. The characters are vividly crafted; the countries in which they live are brought alive. This was not my usual fast-paced crime thriller. I’m glad to have given this book a chance.

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## **Andrew Neely says**

This is the second of Steve Yarbrough's novels I have read, the first being *The Realm of Last Chances*. Like that novel, this one is character driven, and Yarbrough is a master of painting complex portraits through writing. This is not to say that the narrative is not compelling, because it is. But once you're finished with the novel, you'll look back on it and the characters will dominate your recollection. None are necessarily extraordinary in any way either, which to me makes them all the compelling and relatable.

The narrative is driven by one event early in the novel that has life-changing effects on each character. The story is then about how each character deals with what remains of their lives in the aftermath.

The settings and themes are otherwise intriguing. He hits on journalism (two main characters are writers or journalists); the modernization and westernization of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the decline of the Soviet Union (and then Poland's recent return to strongman politics); Eastern European war; and even modern day American university bureaucracy and politics.

The novel may or may not be for you, depending on your reading tastes. I am obviously a fan.

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## **Linda says**

Everyone’s world becomes unmade eventually., sometimes by our own actions, the actions of others or just plain luck. Those who don’t or can’t cope are no better or worse, no stronger or weaker, than those who do. I am reminded of the quote about all of us “leading lives of quiet desperation”.

I read this book for Booktopia and now I’ll be looking for other titles by this author. Excellent read.

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## **Eric says**

I've now read two novels by Yarbrough, and if I can characterize him based on those two, I'd say he writes about characters who have experienced great loss and must go through the motions of life until, by the grace of the Universe, another reason to live materializes.

Richard Brennan, an investigative journalist, loses his wife and daughter in an auto accident. Bogdan Baranowski loses his business, and later, his sense of self, as he descends into a life of crime. Their stories are intertwined. They must work through their loss/guilt, and find their own reasons to carry on. If they

should ever meet, the results may be explosive.

At the end of the day, we seem sometimes to wander aimlessly through this world. But if we're lucky, we discover those mercies that make life seem like more than an empty exercise.

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### **Gail M says**

Five stars reflects slight increase in generosity in 2018. Good writing, characters, descriptions, plot.

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### **Rick Mathis says**

A finely crafted, intricate novel that addresses the consequences of tragedy in the modern world. A great read by a fine author.

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### **Shaun Bossio says**

I don't know what to say about this book except it was one that kept calling to me, especially when I was away, and found difficult to put down when I was not. With a full-time job, a full graduate class load and an internship, I often don't get as much time to read what I'd prefer during the semester, but this book kept forcing me to find the time in the best way. If I lost out on any sleep in my consumption, i gave it up all too happily to continually come back to Richard and Bogdan. Even now, as it lays complete in my lap, I feel sorry that I don't have more time to spend with these new friends I've made over the last two weeks. That's not to say that the ending is lacking-on the contrary, I found it to be right on key-but I wish there was simply more to read. I suppose I do know what to say, after all, and to put it simply, this is a book I will come back to again, because like a good friend, I know I won't be able to stay away for long.

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### **Gale says**

An extraordinary novel from a master storyteller that reveals more about humanity than most of us will learn in our lifetime.

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### **Debbie says**

First of all -- a very big thank you to the booksellers at Northshire Books in Manchester, VT for directing my attention to Steve Yarbrough's "The Unmade World." This book captured my attention from the first page and never let go. I read it in one day because I had to know what happened to all of the characters. The story takes place between 2006-2016 and moves seamlessly from Krakow, Poland, to Fresno, CA, to the Hudson Valley and back to Poland. Yarbrough tells the story of two men. Richard Bennett is an American journalist, who loses his Polish wife and this daughter in a terrible accident (no spoiler, this happens in the first few pages of the book) and never fully recovers because he holds himself accountable for their deaths. Bogdan, a

native of Poland, is a semi-successful businessman until he's not, and then his life spirals downward until he becomes a petty criminal, together with his friend, Marek. After causing the deaths of some people, for which he is never caught, Bogdan and Marek get involved in helping an unscrupulous contractor remove elderly people from buildings he is trying to rehab, for which Bogdan is tried and convicted of harassment and sentenced to a year in prison. Bogdan, like Bennett, cannot forgive himself for what he has done. Although these two men never meet, at least officially, their lives become irrevocably intertwined. Yarbrough does a masterful job at moving between the two men's stories during and after the events that changed their lives forever. Both men seek redemption, although they are never able to forgive themselves. Neither one is completely successful in leaving his "tale of woe" behind him, but, in the end, both come to grips -- with the help of others -- with who they are and what their lives mean.

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