



***Fates and Furies*, by Lauren Groff**  
***Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, October 2016***

Lauren Groff's *Fates and Furies* was reportedly President Obama's favorite novel of 2015. Our erudite former president is known to be an avid reader. Intrigued, I moved *Fates and Furies* to the top of my reading pile.

*Fates and Furies* focuses on the 25-year marriage of a golden couple, Lotto and Mathilde Sattewhite. Each of them is tall, stunningly attractive, and magnetic. They met and married just before their Vassar graduation. Their contemporaries envy and admire them. Lotto and Mathilde have a brilliant future ahead of them, it would seem.

The first half of the book, entitled "Fates," centers on Lotto, who was born during a raging Florida hurricane. His parents, Gawain, who had made millions in the water-bottling industry, and Antoinette, named their son Lancelot. They expect that luck would shine on the boy. His nickname is "Lotto," and greatness is his destiny.

Soon after their hurried wedding, Lotto and Mathilde move to New York City where Lotto tries to make it as an actor. Lotto's now widowed mother disapproves of his marriage and disinherits him. Lotto struggles with minimal success, while Mathilde supports them both, working long hours at an art gallery. She too believes that Lotto is meant for great things. And when Mathilde discovers a play Lotto had written, she encourages him to turn to playwriting. As Lotto finds success as sought-after playwright, Mathilde becomes his muse and retreats in his shadow.

In "Furies," the second half of the novel, Mathilde's mysterious past comes to light. Beneath Mathilde's ice-princess exterior is a quiet rage, just bubbling under the surface. It's been said that in every marriage there are secrets. The ones Mathilde buries deep inside have long-reaching implications for her "perfect" marriage.

This eclectic novel may not be for everyone, but its originality fascinated me. "Marriage," Mark Twain once noted, "is the union of two good forgivers." I'll leave it

to readers of *Fates and Furies* to decide which character—Lotto or Mathilde—is the better forgiver.