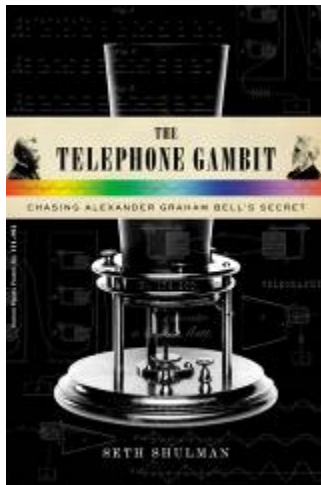


## **BOOKLIST REVIEW**

**12.1.07**



A “remarkable challenge to received wisdom...potentially rewrites history even as it immediately lures readers with scandal and iconoclasm.”

--*Booklist* (starred review)

Full review below:

★ *The Telephone Gambit: Chasing Alexander Graham Bell's Secret*  
Seth Shulman. Norton, \$24.95 (256p) ISBN 978-0-393-06206-9

As Charlotte Gray depicts him in *Reluctant Genius* (2006), Alexander Graham Bell was a high-strung personality, especially in early 1876, when he patented the telephone. In this remarkable challenge to received wisdom, Shulman suggests that the reason Bell might have appeared so nervous was because he had a guilty conscience—it's possible that Bell pilfered another man's idea and is a historical imposter. Shulman discovered an anomaly in Bell's laboratory notes. It is a drawing of the breakthrough device in a telephone and looks similar to an illustration in a patent application submitted by Elisha Gray on the same day as Bell's submission. This coincidence propels Shulman's sleuthing, and the intrigue entails some irregularities in Bell's application as well as a patent examiner who years later testified that Gray deserved the fame, not to mention the fortune, for the invention. An impressive aspect of Shulman's sleuthing is his measured assessment of facts; he claims none as a smoking gun, but, taken together, they seem to implicate Bell's benefactor, if not Bell himself. Pending Shulman's reception from the historical profession, this book potentially rewrites history even as it immediately lures readers with scandal and iconoclasm.

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