

Featuring 333 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction, Children's and YA books

KIRKUS

VOL. LXXXVII, NO. II | 1 JUNE 2019

REVIEWS



There are still readers who know **Elizabeth Gilbert** only as a memoirist. Whatever *Eat Pray Love* did or did not do for you, her new novel, *City of Girls*, shouldn't be missed.

p. 14

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: Excellent June Books

BY CLAIBORNE SMITH



Claiborne Smith

Photo courtesy Michael Thad Carter

This Storm by James Ellroy (June 4): “Ellroy, master of California noir (*Perfidia*, 2014, etc.), serves up a heaping helping of mayhem in this second volume of his Second L.A. Quartet. If there’s a constant in Ellroy’s storytelling, apart from snappy prose, it’s that there’s a fine and often indistinguishable line between good guys and bad guys: His cops are dirty, his villains sometimes blessed with noble virtues. There’s not much nobility in this new novel, though, which picks up after Pearl Harbor in the uneasy months when Nazis are floating around on the streets of Tijuana and LA, soldiers and sailors are battling zoot-suiters, Father Coughlin is sputtering anti-Semitic propaganda across the line on Mexican radio, and Japanese Americans are being rounded up for internment....A gritty, absorbing novel that proves once again that Ellroy is the rightful heir of Chandler, Cain, and Hammett.”

A Primer for Forgetting: Getting Past the Past by Lewis Hyde (June 18): “Transformation, creativity, and philosophical liberation all may involve relinquishing memory....Forgetting, he discovers, does not necessarily imply loss. For Emerson, “self-forgetting” was essential for personal self-renewal and cultural reinvention....Considering the connection of memory to creativity, the author finds that many artists, composers, and writers seek “the delight or anxiety of fresh perception” rather than “the comfort or dullness of the habitual.” “Remembering betrays Nature,” wrote the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa....An eclectic and insightful miscellany of playful, spirited, provocative reflections.”

This Time Will Be Different by Misa Sugiura (June 4): “Sugiura’s sophomore novel deftly questions accountability for past injustices. Seventeen-year-old Japanese American CJ Katsuyama lives with her single mother and free-spirited aunt in present-day Silicon Valley. Though pushed by her mother to aspire to greatness, CJ feels she only excels at arranging flowers at the family flower shop. CJ is intimately familiar with the history of the store, sold for a pittance to Robert McAllister, a white man, while her family was interned during World War II....A discovery about the McAllister patriarch leads CJ and other student activists to embark on a campaign that creates tension within their community and further complicates CJ’s relationship with her mother, a partner at McAllister Venture Capital. Sugiura tackles an abundance of topics with finesse, including social and economic injustice, allyship, and feminism, simultaneously breaking down the Asian American immigration narrative and the myth of the model minority....Essential.” (Fiction. 14-18)



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The Kirkus Star is awarded
to books of remarkable
merit, as determined by the
impartial editors of Kirkus.



Margarita Engle and Rafael López introduce Teresa Carreño, a Venezuelan refugee and piano prodigy who played for Abraham Lincoln. Read the review on p. 98.

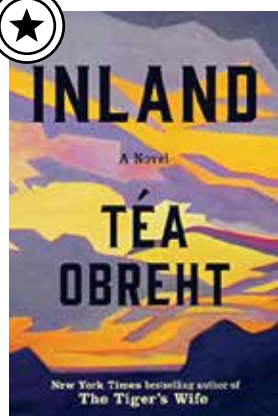
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FICTION

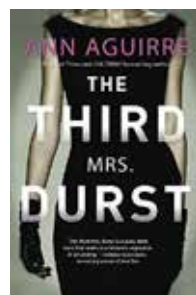


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INLAND
Obreht, Téa
Random House (384 pp.)
\$27.00 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-0-8129-9286-1



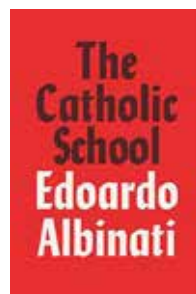
THE THIRD MRS. DURST

Aguirre, Ann
Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (312 pp.)
\$24.99 | Aug. 8, 2019
978-0-7387-6131-2

A beautiful girl from the wrong side of the tracks marries into wealth—but is her husband the dream that he seems?

Marlena Altizer grew up just one of a dozen siblings with a deadbeat mom in middle-of-nowhere Kentucky. When she runs away at 16 and ends up working as an increasingly popular model, things seem to have turned her way. She catches the eye of Michael Durst, a wealthy man who is willing to give her everything, though he seems a bit controlling. Marrying into wealth has provided Marlena the security she always wanted, but this isn't the Cinderella story it seems. Michael's two previous wives both died, one from an accident and the other by suicide, and it's starting to seem these might not be the unexpected tragedies they appeared to be. Aguirre has deftly set the trap for Marlena, and each scene is a cat-and-mouse game as we wait to see which member of the couple will come out on top. The weakness of the book is that, though it's told from Marlena's perspective, halfway through it becomes clear that she knows things she never shared with the reader. Then there's a whole other undercurrent that seemingly appears out of nowhere, throwing the reader off pace. Earlier hints would have made the transition less awkward. The only fully realized character here is Marlena, and suddenly she's a question mark, as well. The mystery is well constructed but hard to follow. It just feels like something's missing.

A mystery becomes a tale of revenge, though it may lose the reader along the way.



THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Albinati, Edoardo
Trans. by Shugaar, Antony
Farrar, Straus and Giroux (1,280 pp.)
\$40.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-0-374-11925-6

A vast, philosophically charged novel of education, faith, and crime by Italian writer Albinati (*Coming Back: Diary of a Mission to Afghanistan*, 2004).

At the core of Albinati's bildungsroman, its narrator a minor writer named Edoardo Albinati ("I'd

like it if my reputation as a writer were sufficiently great that I could hope to have a street named after me in my city, just a little, out-of-the-way street”), is a terrible crime: Three alumni of his Catholic all-boys school kidnap, rape, and murder two teenage girls, a real-life 1975 event known in Italy as the Circeo massacre. Albinati mentions the crime early, then builds up to it over hundreds of pages in which he meditates on the ordinary violence of daily life in Rome and the specialized violence that comes from attending parochial school, with its cliques, beatings, and priestly oppression. Albinati's hero is a pimply, unattractive nerd named Arbus, who, Albinati learns much later, was an intent student of “the different ways of killing people” even though he was mild-tempered and inoffensive in a setting that was “marked by a very particular enthusiasm for violent abuse.” Albinati, as both writer and character, ponders the nature of this violence, especially as it is visited upon women (“The positive fact—positive, that is, in the sense of effective, documented—that women suffer violence becomes the very reason they suffer it”); among the other topics are the abuse of authority by authoritarians in the priesthood and in politics as well as the tangled politics of Italy, with some of his classmates communists, others fascists, and Arbus ever the individualist, a “Nazi-Maoist,” which is to say, one of the people “who chose the worst...of right-wing and left-wing extremism.” Albinati's musings on the philosophical meanings of rape, murder, education, and other matters are the substance of this book, which, if boiled down to actual deeds, would scarcely add up to a novella. A little goes a long way, and there's a lot of it.

Talky and pensive; for readers who like their fiction laden with more reflections than deeds.



WHISPER NETWORK

Baker, Chandler
Flatiron Books (320 pp.)
\$26.99 | Jul. 2, 2019
978-1-250-31947-0



Viciously funny and compulsively readable, Baker's first adult novel is a feminist thriller for the #MeToo era.

In their years working in-house at Dallas sportswear company Truviv, Sloane, Grace, and Ardie, all three high-powered lawyers, have become not only friends, but a de facto support group, because they are, by their gender, perennial outsiders. Not that anyone would say as much, not explicitly. They are not oppressed; they are *achieving*. They have good degrees. Their husbands, if they have them, are nice and supportive. They blow-dry their hair. And yet theirs is an uphill battle, because they are perennial outsiders in a corporate culture built for men. They aren't all bad men. “But even the good ones—especially the good ones?—pretended not to notice the lines: how much more deference they earned on the phone for having a male voice,” explains Baker's Greek workplace chorus. “Or how their height and stature and morning stubble gave an authoritative weight to their ideas that ours never had.” The

bad ones—the ones who cross lines—are discussed only in whispers; the stakes are too high to do anything else. Until the women catch wind of a spreadsheet that's circulating: The BAD Men List, shorthand for “Beware of Asshole Dallas Men,” an anonymous document with male names and misdeeds, ranging from the uncomfortable to the predatory. When Truviv's CEO dies and their immediate good ol' boy boss, Ames Garrett, is put up for the job, Sloane can't sit by and do nothing, watching him do to other, younger associates what he once did to her. But when she adds his name to the list, she can't possibly anticipate what will come next. Deliciously campy, the novel is part who-dunit and part revenge fantasy, and Baker's (*This Is Not the End*, 2017, etc.) fondness for over-the-top foreshadowing only serves to enhance the delightfully ominous mood. It's a breezy page-turner of a book, which is the brilliance of it: Under the froth is an unmistakable layer of justified rage.

Over-the-top in all the right ways.



WHAT I'M READING THIS SUMMER



MY FAVORITE THINGS to do during the summer are eat and read outside—preferably at the same time, and occasionally at the beach. I'm excited to dig into the pile that's been growing next to my desk, surefire novels by authors whose previous work I've loved. At the top is *Rabbits for Food* by Binnie Kirshenbaum, who I've been following since reviewing her debut

novel, *On Mermaid Avenue*, many years ago.

That book would also be perfect for beach reading if you can find a copy; here's what I said in *New York Newsday* in 1992: "Mermaid Avenue in Coney Island is home to the Cyclone, a roller coaster which may not be the world's tallest or most technologically advanced but which continues to delight riders with its sheer precariousness....To Edie and Monrose, the best friends who are at the heart of *On Mermaid Avenue*, a ride on the Cyclone is the ultimate expression of their philosophy: Aim for the stars and don't look down." I've never managed to get on the Cyclone myself, watching both my mother and my son ride it over the course of decades; I'd rather sit on the beach



Binnie Kirshenbaum

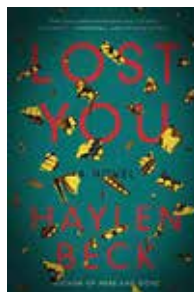
Photo courtesy/Leah Overstreet



with my book. But I loved reading about Kirshenbaum's intrepid women and look forward to meeting the characters in *Rabbits for Food*. Our reviewer says that "Kirshenbaum is a remarkable writer of fiercely observed fiction and a bleak, stark wit; her latest novel is as moving as it is funny, and that—truly—is saying something."

Another thing I've never done is read Elizabeth Gilbert's pre-*Eat, Pray, Love* fiction, but I loved her last novel, *The Signature of All Things*. Our reviewer calls her new *City of Girls* "a big old banana split of a book," which surely makes it the perfect thing to throw in my beach bag next to *Rabbits for Food* on the way to Coney Island. Happy reading! —L.M.

Laurie Muchnick is the fiction editor.



LOST YOU

Beck, Haylen
Crown (320 pp.)
\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-5247-5958-2



A woman risks everything for her child in Beck's (*Here and Gone*, 2017) latest.

Libby is enjoying a well-deserved vacation with her 3-year-old son, Ethan, to celebrate her book contract. At the resort, she can pamper herself and enjoy spending time with her little boy, things that have been hard to do since her husband left them when Ethan was a baby. It was a long, difficult path to motherhood for Libby, and in the end, Mason just couldn't deal with it. But she has Ethan now, and he is all she needs to feel complete. But when Ethan disappears while Libby literally has her back turned, her worst nightmare comes true. Because Ethan isn't abducted by just anyone, but by someone who knows him and who calls him "Little Butterfly." What is the true story of Ethan's parentage? What secrets has Libby buried deep in the past? And who is willing to do anything to get revenge? There is a lingering sense of unease established in the very beginning of the novel—because the reader knows it's a thriller, yes, and so something is going to go wrong—but even more because of Libby's personality. She's established as an overstressed single mom desperately worrying about everything. Her tight hold on Ethan can't end well for either one of them—but the truth is completely mind-blowing. No spoilers here: The twists and turns are not only masterfully paced and layered, but so is the emotional impact. Once another perspective is offered within the narrative, this other character captures the reader's sympathy—but it's also true that while we may not always like Libby, she has our understanding, too. Beck plays both characters off one another until close to the end, unspooling tension to an almost unbearable breaking point.

An adrenaline-pumping, anxiety-inducing thriller built around a core so sentimental it just might make you cry.



KILLER'S CHOICE

Begley, Louis
Talese/Doubleday (240 pp.)
\$25.95 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-0-385-54494-8

Hard-boiled meets high society in a novel of unspeakable horror among the unspeakably wealthy.

In the third (*Kill and Be Killed*, 2016, etc.) in a series of thrillers featuring Jack Dana—Marine hero-turned-best-selling novelist with a sideline of fighting high-level corruption—Begley continues to fall short of the incisive craftsmanship that earned him acclaim with more-literary novels such as *About*

Schmidt (1996). Having dispensed with an evil nemesis at the end of Volume 2, Begley doesn't even bother with a plausible successor or much of a plot. Instead, this is more of a wildly implausible addendum to the last novel, one in which Dana rationally realizes that "dead men don't send messages or stage macabre Punch-and-Judy shows," but he nevertheless finds himself enveloped within a scenario that seems masterminded from the grave. For those who missed the first two installments, the author provides recaps of every significant plot point while reintroducing stock characters such as the Asian manservant Feng, a "former member of the Hong Kong Police Force Special Duty Unit," who would lay down his life for his boss and who is also a gourmet cook who makes a mean martini and is "the picture of Asiatic propriety." Jack's girlfriend is the international-lawyer daughter of a billionaire tycoon, not much interested in men until the comfort she found in Jack's cuddling led to more. A household massacre that reminds everyone of Charles Manson, only worse, proceeds to extortion plots and kidnapping, all apparently designed to flush Jack from his lair of safety. But for what reason? To what end? Jack determines that it is he who will

flush *them* out: "If these people want to have a go at me, let them. I may be able to teach them a lesson."

The major lesson learned here is that Begley's crime series has run its course and was an ill-advised detour from its inception.



RULES OF WAR

Betley, Matthew

Emily Bestler/Atria (368 pp.)

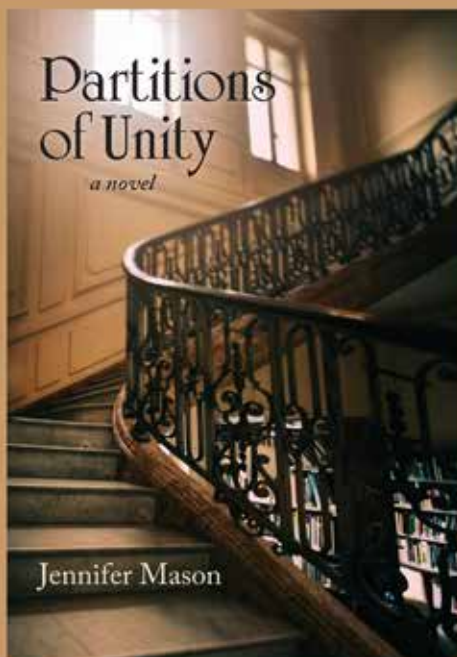
\$28.00 | Jul. 16, 2019

978-1-5011-6202-2

An American Special Forces officer teams with a Venezuelan counterintelligence agent to combat a nebulous international organization.

Bringing his experiences as a former Marine officer, Betley (*Field of Valor*, 2018, etc.) returns with his serial character, former Marine Force

Partitions of Unity By Jennifer Mason



A chance encounter joins a San Francisco-based dominatrix and a UC Berkeley math professor in a formidable whodunit--an engagingly atmospheric mystery--exceptionally intelligent. The pair of characters follow an intimate journey through the greater Bay Area.

"...truly complex concoction..."

"...fast-paced and intelligent...engagingly atmospheric."

"...knowledge of Northern California...gives the entire narrative a sense of place that readers will find to be truly satisfying."

"...this mystery is a curious, gilded oddity that's well worth the time and effort."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 978-0-9980221-0-9 (hardcover) • ISBN: 978-0-9980221-1-6 (paperback) • ISBN: 978-0-9980221-2-3 (ebook)

For information on publishing and film rights, email car182764@gmail.com

A doorman in 1970s New York City makes a series of bad decisions.

CORNELIUS SKY

Recon veteran and apex soldier Logan West. In this outing, Chief Inspector Santiago Rojas of Bolivarian National Intelligence is charged with locating West, with the promise of medical treatment for his daughter if he succeeds. It doesn't take long for Rojas to find Logan, along with former CIA special operator Cole Matthews, at a Bahamian resort, on a mission to find the traitorous American vice president. Nor does it take long for the Glock pistols to be drawn, the bone-crushing unarmed combat to commence, and the edged weapons to find a home in human flesh. Basically, it appears that violence follows Logan wherever he goes, and he is more than ready to greet it. However, with a child of his own on the way, Logan quickly sees the nobility in Santiago's actions and accompanies him back to Venezuela, where Logan learns that high-ranking Venezuelan and Russian officials are helping the missing veep. Logan puts aside any concerns about the Venezuelan human rights record to help Santiago save his daughter and to punish the American defector and anyone helping him. Some of the connections in this account of international intrigue appear somewhat loose, but there is a surplus of gunplay and military tactics to keep the pages turning for fans.

An action-packed tale of deep-state double crossings and the elite soldiers charged with ensuring American interests.



CORNELIUS SKY

Brandoff, Timothy

Akashic (224 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

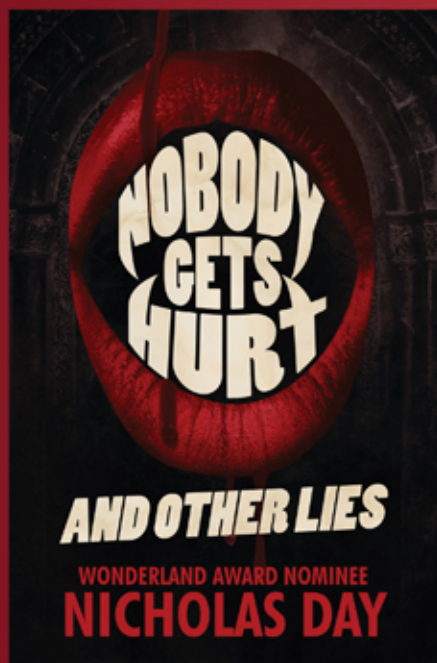
978-1-61775-708-2

A doorman in 1970s New York City makes a series of bad decisions regarding his livelihood, family, and sobriety.

The title character, also known as Connie, has a contrarian streak and a penchant for heavy drinking—both among the reasons he has difficulty holding down a job and why his wife has kicked him out of their home. Connie drifts in and out of various bars, as well as his place of employment,

NOBODY GETS HURT AND OTHER LIES

By Nicholas Day



ISBN#: 978-1-947654-93-8

From riverside towns in the Midwest and a future Paris above the clouds, to ancient lycanthropes and vindictive pachyderms, this collection of supernatural terrors and heartbreaking reality, explores identity, addiction, love, and death.

Plunge headfirst into fifteen tales of monsters, madness, and all the darkness human hearts can carry. Danger lurks around every corner, every decision a step closer to demise. Everybody gets what's coming to them in the end.

"Nicholas Day is a fantastic writer, he's a thrilling, poetic, gruesome and balls to the wall in-your-face craftsman of twisted horror and bizarro."

—SCREAM Magazine

"Often horrific, relentlessly stark, and truly unforgettable."

—Kirkus Reviews on *Now That We're Alone*

For information on publishing and film rights, email nicholasdayonline@gmail.com | nicholasdayonline.com

a posh Fifth Avenue building, having halting and philosophical conversations with people he encounters. Brandoff writes precisely about Connie's mental state and lucidity: "His Rolodex of drunks included full-blown blackouts, wherein days and, in a handful of cases, weeks of the calendar got recessed for good, but more generally he browned out." Eventually, Brandoff reveals that Connie's father committed suicide in a way that also killed Connie's younger brother. It's a detail that helps explain why Connie feels compelled to numb himself and why his connections to his loved ones oscillate between tenderness and something more bitter. Certain details reinforce themes of dysfunctional families: Connie takes in a production of Eugene O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, and he befriends the 13-year-old son of a deceased former president who bears more than a passing resemblance to John F. Kennedy Jr. and is one of the tenants of the building where he works. But the presence of celebrity in this narrative never clicks with its focus on Connie, making for some awkward tonal shifts. When Brandoff focuses on the details of New York City life, he establishes an atmospheric, lived-in quality. But a tendency to sum up certain descriptions too neatly leaves some passages feeling heavy-handed.

Brandoff's debut novel has a few dissonant moments, but its detailed portrait of a self-destructive character retains a haunting power.



SPEAKING OF SUMMER

Buckhanon, Kalisha

Counterpoint (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-64009-191-7

Buckhanon's fourth novel (*Solemn*, 2016, etc.) charts a tumultuous year in the life of a black woman whose mother has died and twin sister has vanished.

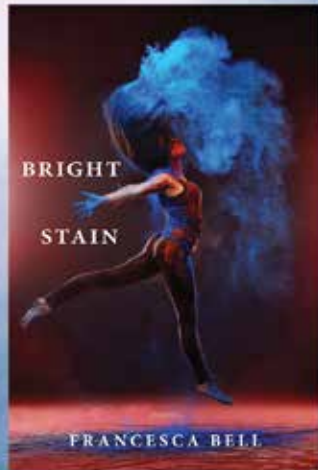
It's 2015, and a grieving Autumn Spencer loses her grip on her professional and personal lives as she searches for her missing sister, Summer. While the novel explores issues of race, gender, and violence with nuance, too often awkward prose distracts from the story's gravity. At times it can be hard to believe that Autumn, a 34-year-old Midwestern transplant to Harlem, is a savvy freelance marketer and website wordsmith given the book's odd narration. At one point, Autumn describes the people who've helped her as having "emerged in my time of need as suddenly as a cold sore, in unpredictable sequence and bulk," a peculiar simile for a group of supporters. Her descent into financial insecurity is convincing as she loses clients while she's obsessing over Summer, but other storylines lack emotional resonance. Much of the novel unfolds in Autumn's disembodied thoughts, untethered from time and space, rather than in concrete scenes, especially early on. The story's main characters rarely interact in real time. Buckhanon reserves flashbacks for a particular moment in Autumn's childhood after the death of her father, but these too occur mostly in overview. These structural

choices sacrifice clarity for the sake of suspense. The story does open up about halfway through with a crucial revelation that allows for more satisfying novelistic scenes and conflicts. Buckhanon understands the complexities of trauma. Her portrait of Autumn's grief, fragmented memories, and inner turmoil all synthesize current scientific research on how people cope with traumatic experiences and might seek to heal.

Unfortunately, a somewhat clumsy chase for mystery overshadows the accurate portrayal of one woman's struggles with mental health.

BRIGHT STAIN

by Francesca Bell



A gritty poetry debut that examines the power and perils of womanhood, sex, and religion.

Bell finds beauty and horror in the tiny moments of life and turns them into art.

"The imagery is incisive and unique..."

"A penetrating collection of ruthless, unapologetic poetry."

—Kirkus Reviews

francescabbellpoet.com

ISBN: 978-1-59709-861-8

www.redhen.org 



BAD THINGS

Bush, Nancy

Zebra (384 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jun. 25, 2019

978-1-4201-4293-8

A string of connected murders in a small town reunites two former sweethearts in this romantic thriller.

A reunion between former high school friends known as the A-Team ends up in a mysterious death and sends Edwards Bay into a tailspin of gossip, rumors, and even violence. Kerry Monaghan is awoken in the middle of the night by a frantic phone call from Diana Conger. Kerry's stepbrother, Nick, is dead. A night of partying led to disastrous consequences, with Diana being painted as a killer, but that theory quickly loses steam once Diana is found dead, strangled in her apartment. As bodies start piling up, secrets come to light about the A-Team: their affairs, their vices, and

so much more. Local cop Cole Sheffield suddenly has his hands full. The suspense is at the forefront, with great focus given to outlining all of the complex dynamics between friends, lovers, and family. Kerry and Cole's romance feels lackluster when compared to the attention and detail given to the escalating number of murders. Dramatic and tense, the book delivers as a thriller with dark hometown secrets filled with drugs, sex, and lies, but the weak romance negates a believable happy ending for Kerry and Cole. Those hoping for an emotional payoff amid all the jealousy and backstabbing might be left underwhelmed, as there is no complement or balance to the onslaught of drama plaguing a rather large cast of characters. Not Bush's (*Jealousy*, 2018, etc.) best. Longtime fans might insist on reading this one, but newcomers to romantic suspense should give it a pass.

A salacious mystery with a middling romance.



HOLLOW KINGDOM

Buxton, Kira Jane

Grand Central Publishing (320 pp.)

\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5387-4582-3

When a deadly virus changes human-kind forever, S.T., a domesticated crow with a mouth like a sailor, and his dog, Dennis, teach the animal kingdom how to survive the apocalypse.

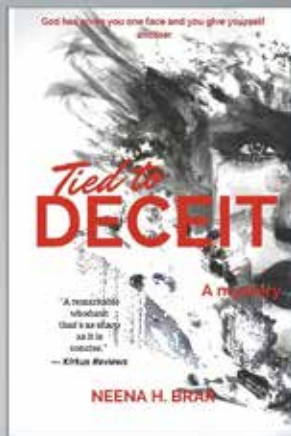
After their owner becomes a slobbering, zombielike creature with a deadly cellphone obsession, unflappable crow S.T. and loyal canine Dennis venture out into Seattle. They soon realize other domesticated animals aren't as lucky and are trapped in their locked homes. With his innate knowledge of the MoFo (human) world, S.T. uses his corvid intelligence and Dennis' high-powered sniffer to come to the rescue. When old and new predators emerge in a city quickly returning to nature, S.T. and Dennis join forces with wild crows and other animals to keep their territory safe. It's an intriguing and fun premise that starts with a strong and saucy voice, but this debut novel gets very muddled very quickly. In lieu of giving her lively animal characters a rich narrative arc, the author focuses too heavily on not-so-subtle morality tales about every injustice and environmental crisis in the world today. The science is messy, wins feel too easy, and losses don't cut as deeply as they're meant to, though it's possibly saved by witty one-liners and the author's sharp take on a bird's eye-view of Seattle.

A heavy-handed zombie apocalypse-meets-nature documentary meant to inspire humans to do better, but it loses its way.

Tied to Deceit By Neena Brar

In Brar's debut mystery, a detective uncovers secrets surrounding a murder in 1970s India.

"The smart, believable denouement will have readers looking forward to Brar's next endeavor."



"A remarkable whodunit that's as sharp as it is concise."

—Kirkus Reviews

"A literary mystery saga that includes far more depth and psychological and cultural insights than your typical murder mystery's scenario." —Midwest Book Review

neenabrar.com

ISBN: 978-1-77515-803-5 (paperback) • 978-1775158042 (hardcover) • 9781775158028

For information on publishing and film rights, email neenahbrar@yahoo.com

Seven linked stories explore aspects of contemporary manhood.

HUNTER'S MOON



HUNTER'S MOON

Caputo, Philip

Henry Holt (288 pp.)

\$28.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-62779-476-3



Seven linked stories explore aspects of contemporary manhood.

Though all but one are set in a small corner of Michigan's remote, rugged Upper Peninsula, the seven stories that compose this collection are anything but claustrophobic. Probing deeply into the male psyche, Caputo (*Some Rise by Sin*, 2017, etc.) confidently tackles subjects that include the sometimes-catastrophic price of failure, the relations between fathers and sons, and the emotional battles faced by returning combat veterans. While hunting figures prominently in most of the stories—like “Blockers,” in which three high school friends reunite on a fateful weeklong bird-hunting trip, or “The Nature of Love on the Last Frontier,” set in the Alaskan bush as

a father and son lock horns in a tense generational conflict that turns life-threatening—even readers unfamiliar with that pursuit will find themselves immersed in Caputo's fast-moving narratives. In vivid and minutely observant prose, he writes with assurance about his characters' wilderness experiences and with equal sensitivity about the captivating natural beauty that surrounds them. Will Treadwell, a Vietnam veteran and one-time owner of a popular local brewpub, appears in five of the stories, including “Dreamers,” which is built around an incident of frightening violence, and “Lost,” an understated evocation of the terror of accidental isolation in the unforgiving forest. His recurring presence is a quietly effective linking device. “The Guest,” a portrait of an episodic middle-age affair and the only story with a female protagonist, brings back Lisa Williams from “Blockers” years after her life has been altered irrevocably by the events of the earlier story. The collection's final entry, “Lines of Departure,” again features Treadwell and a narrator named Phil, whose biography bears some resemblance to Caputo's own. Unfolding at a week-end retreat for troubled veterans, it's a compassionate glimpse of how “the psychic pain of war's aftermath could be as isolating as



ISBN: 978-1-5423-6948-0

M-WORLD by Stephen Flanagan

A teenager who can grasp alien symbols becomes the key to resisting a megacorporation in this debut YA sci-fi novel.

“The plot is well-orchestrated, with several tense battle scenes, some surprises, and a growing sense of urgency as the narrative progresses that leads to a taut, deftly described, complex, and cinematic action sequence.”

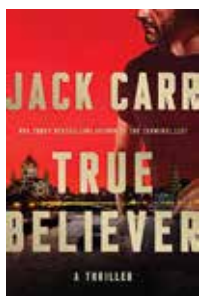
“Exciting, heart-pounding action; genuine motivations; and vivid writing make this a compellingly entertaining coming-of-age tale.”

—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing and film rights, email stephen.flanagan@gmail.com | www.stephenflanagan.com

acute physical pain" and a fitting conclusion to an intense, often unsettling journey into the male mind and heart.

Expertly blending plot and character, each of these taut, propulsive tales possesses novelistic depth.



TRUE BELIEVER

Carr, Jack

Emily Bestler/Atria (496 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jul. 30, 2019

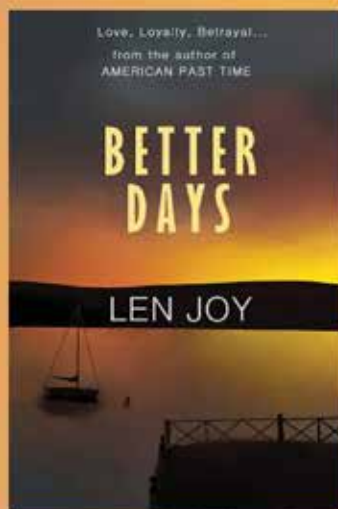
978-1-5011-8084-2

Branded a terrorist for killing corrupt government officials responsible for the murder of his wife and daughter, most wanted ex-Navy SEAL James Reece comes out of hiding to go after an Islamic extremist following a massacre in London.

The U.S. officials were part of a conspiracy to conceal the lethal effects of an experimental new drug. In addition to killing Reece's family, they arranged for the troop he commanded

in Afghanistan to be sent into a deadly ambush. Reece survived, but his days are numbered thanks to a brain tumor caused by the drug. Weary of living in hiding with so little time left, he agrees to a deal in which he will be pardoned for his crimes if he goes after the people responsible for the London tragedy. The action heats up as the scene shifts from Turkey to Ukraine to Iraq and Reece discovers the main culprit is an ambitious Russian oligarch with ties to organized crime. But the best part of the book is the setup, during which Reece, alone aboard a 48-foot yacht in the middle of the Atlantic, reflects on it all. For someone with violence in his DNA, he comes off a bit too agreeable. "Just because you broke a few laws doesn't mean you lost the high moral ground," a cohort says, referring to the "one man mission of retribution that left a swath of bodies from coast to coast." But Reece is interesting enough to narrow that credibility gap. And though former SEAL Carr's redaction of names and places in the narrative is a bit much, the novel packs a punch.

Carr's second effort is a well-crafted thriller with timely reflections on the increasingly complicated world of international terrorism.



ISBN#: 978-1-945181-44-3



ISBN: 978-1-981074-91-4



ISBN: 978-0991665907

A high school basketball coach deals with small-town secrets.

This setting feels real, like North Bath, New York, in Richard Russo's *Nobody's Fool*.

"Joy avoids the temptation to wrap everything up too cleanly after introducing so many complications."

**"A character-rich, skillfully plotted
Midwestern drama."**

—Kirkus Reviews on *Better Days*

"...The moral and ethical questions raised by his own actions, and those closest to him, are what keep these pages turning: the reader is keenly interested in finding out what choices Darwin will make. A great read by a writer who keeps getting better and better."

—Sands Hall, author of *Flunk: Start. and Catching Heaven*

"Short, edgy tales with depth."

—Kirkus Reviews on *Letting Go*



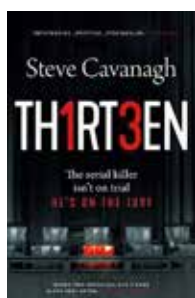
**"A well-crafted novel that will particularly appeal
to sports and history aficionados."**

—Kirkus Reviews on *American Past Time*

For agent representation or information on publishing and film rights, email leonard.joy@comcast.net | lenjoybooks.com

To carry out the final steps of a grandiose scheme, a sophisticated serial killer becomes a juror on a celebrity murder trial.

THIRTEEN



THIRTEEN

Cavanagh, Steve
Flatiron Books (320 pp.)
\$27.99 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-250-29760-0

To carry out the final steps of a grandiose scheme, the sophisticated, supremely evasive serial killer Joshua Kane becomes a juror on a celebrity murder trial in Manhattan.

The defendant is Hollywood star Bobby Solomon; a heap of incriminating evidence has gotten him all but convicted of stabbing his wife and a security guard. The only person who can get Solomon off, and stop Kane from manipulating the jury into a guilty verdict, is defense attorney Eddie Flynn, back from Cavanagh's (*The Plea*, 2018, etc.) other two novels. A one-time con artist, Eddie has been hired by a high-powered law firm working for the studio releasing Solomon's new movie. When Kane, sneaking around after dark with his trusty filleting knife, starts killing off jurors he has determined are leaning toward an acquittal, the case goes haywire—but keeps going, one of the more questionable details in the novel. While the premise of the book is promising, Cavanagh is too clever for his own good. The gimmick of the killer jurist is worn so thin that the murders have no real impact. It would be one thing if Kane had a unique personality to go with his rare congenital analgesia, which makes him unable to feel pain, but he's just another faceless madman with a troubled upbringing. Though Flynn is hardly alone among crime-fiction heroes in struggling to win back his wife and child, he's pretty enjoyable. But his winning ways can't distract us from the desperation of an eighth-inning reveal by the author pertaining to the case.

In spite of mounting murders, the suspense is uneven in Cavanagh's carefully plotted mystery.



SHADES

Cintrón, Esperanza
Wayne State Univ. Press (144 pp.)
\$18.99 paper | Aug. 5, 2019
978-0-8143-4688-4

In this debut collection of interlocking short stories that span decades, Detroit is both the setting and a character itself.

The Detroit of these stories can be both brutal and familial: Its men and women work, drink, and live hard. Big auto is ubiquitous—as are the constant undercurrents of class and racial tension—and sex is a commodity as often as it's not. Men are often violent toward women, even if they love them. Divided into two sections, East-side and Westside, which comprise nine stories each, the book begins in the 1960s and extends at least into the '80s—time and place are occasionally difficult to pinpoint. Certain vernacular and dialogue skew contemporary, as in the first story, "The Beard,"

which takes place in the 1960s and includes the line, "She look at me all bug-eyed and shit." The scope of the book can contribute to a sense of confusion. While a large cast of characters and their complicated web of relationships are vital to the tone and structure of the stories, the sheer number of characters and the ways they relate to one another are a lot to keep track of, particularly when the same character is called both George and Scooter. Cintrón has a flair for description and can conjure a mood in a single phrase like "The church is full of Grandma," or "She sat back, enjoying the smell of leather upholstery and the occasional breeze from the river." While evocative, Cintrón's descriptions often take the form of dense paragraphs, which don't allow her characters much room to breathe or talk. Cintrón is the author of three poetry collections, which shows late in the book when she inserts descriptive stanzas that move and lilt in a way their prose counterparts do not: "lunchtime on the waterfront / just me and george watching / animated sisters filing out of office buildings / coalescing around food vendors / trucks and three-wheeled wagons / the smell of hot dogs and tamales."

Resonant though imperfect, Cintrón's stories insist we pay attention to the nuance and texture of life.

Bakersfield Boys Club

by Anne Da Vigo

A mother desperately tries to protect her teenage son from a powerful ring of pedophiles.

Bakersfield Boys Club

by Anne Da Vigo

"This is a beautifully crafted and thrilling novel, unflinchingly realistic without sacrificing hope."

"A sensitively intelligent dramatization of the abuse of power."

—Kirkus Reviews

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INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

ELIZABETH GILBERT

HER NEW NOVEL, *CITY OF GIRLS*, IS A BIG OLD BANANA SPLIT OF A BOOK, SURELY THE CURE FOR WHAT AILS YOU

By Megan Labrise



Photo courtesy Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

THERE'S AN EFFERVESCENCE in Elizabeth Gilbert's joyful new novel, *City of Girls*, that belies the circumstances of its completion.

"This is the book that I wrote in grief," says Gilbert, whose personal life became a source of worldwide interest with the 2006 publication of her No. 1 *New York Times* bestselling memoir *Eat, Pray, Love*. Ensuing years brought fame, fortune, and an augmented bibliography: She has published a sequel memoir (*Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace With Marriage*), a critically acclaimed bestselling novel (*The*

Signature of All Things), and a self-help book for creatives (*Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*). She also had a profound romance with best friend Rayya Elias, a writer, musician, and filmmaker who became Gilbert's partner soon after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the spring of 2016.

"I had been working on [*City of Girls*] for three years before Rayya got sick," Gilbert tells Kirkus, "and from the minute she got sick, I could not begin to care about it. I just couldn't imagine me caring about it, anyone ever caring about it, it mattering in any way whatsoever. I didn't look at it for the entire 18 months that she was dying. And it just seemed like such an impossible thing to revisit.

"But somehow, within a few weeks after her death," in the winter of 2018, she says, "I got some kind of a message from the mothership—and it might have been Rayya—that said, *This is the way out*. And it just seemed so incongruous" to write fiction, which she considers an essentially joyful act, while she was deep in sorrow. "But ultimately, that's what the book is about. It's about saying yes to your entire life, to every single bit of it. To the shame and the loss and the nostalgia and the beauty."

Set primarily in dazzling 1940s New York, *City of Girls* is the frolicsome tale of a woman who says yes to her entire life. Vivian Morris is 19 years old in the summer of 1940, freshly expelled from Vassar College after a lackluster freshman year, when her Connecticut blue-blood parents send her to live with eccentric Aunt Peg, owner of a downtrodden

yet divine Art Nouveau theater in midtown Manhattan. In a blink, Vivian's life goes from circumscribed to swirling, chockablock with showgirls and artists and cocktails and banter and fashion and sex.

Gilbert writes in Vivian's voice:

My longing for excitement and my curiosity about sex made me not only insatiable that summer, but also *susceptible*. That's how I see myself, when I look back on it now. I was susceptible to everything that had even the vaguest suggestion of the erotic or the illicit. I was susceptible to neon lights in the darkness of a midtown side street. I was susceptible to drinking cocktails out of coconut shells in the Hawaiian Room of the Hotel Lexington. I was susceptible to being offered ringside tickets, or backstage entrances to nightclubs that did not have names. I was susceptible to anybody who could play a musical instrument, or dance with a fair amount of panache. I was susceptible to getting into cars with just about anyone who owned a car. I was susceptible to men who would approach me at the bar with two highballs saying, "I seem to have found myself with an extra drink. Perhaps you could help me out with this, miss?"

Unlike most female libertines in literature, whose "wanton ways" inevitably lead to punishment and ruination, Vivian, who tells the story of her sexual awakening from the vantage of old age, looks back on her life with pleasure for her adventures and tenderness for her missteps.

"At some point in a woman's life, she just gets tired of being ashamed all the time," Gilbert writes. "After that, she is free to become whoever she truly is."

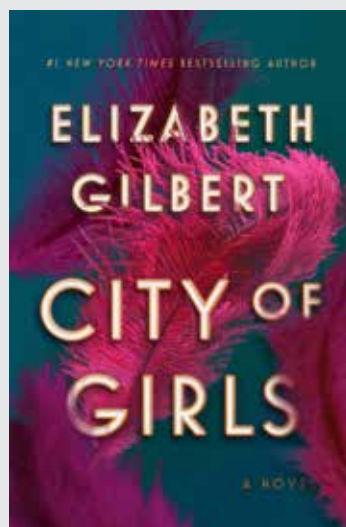
Vivian Morris is the kind of woman who eats life with a big spoon and the kind of character readers will never forget. "Jammed with terrific characters, gorgeous clothing, great one-liners, convincing wartime atmosphere, and excellent descriptions of sex," Kirkus writes in a starred review, *City of Girls*

is a novel "which can only be described (in Vivian's signature italics) as *transcendent*. There are still many readers who know Gilbert only as a memoirist. Whatever *Eat, Pray, Love* did or did not do for you, please don't miss out on her wonderful novels any longer. A big old banana split of a book, surely the cure for what ails you."

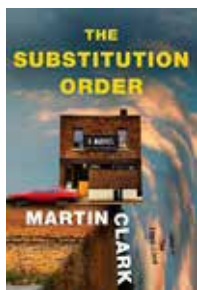
"Part of writing this book is wanting to honor girls like me," says Gilbert, who calls the passage regarding Vivian's susceptibility to New York's charms "pure memoir." "There's a certain kind of a girl who just wants all of that, and wants all of that very young, and wants a lot of it, and is much more curious than she is afraid."

"There's force in girls and women at certain times in their lives, a desire that has its own muscle to it, where it goes out in search of the thing that it wants," she says. "And it says, I'm going to take that because I want that. It doesn't mean that it's a good idea, and it doesn't mean that it's without consequence, and it doesn't mean that it's not risky. It just means that let's not forget that women also are agents of desire sometimes and not just there to consent or not consent. I also wanted to tell that story."

Megan Labrise is the editor at large and co-host of Kirkus' Fully Booked podcast. City of Girls received a starred review in the March 1, 2019, issue.



CITY OF GIRLS
 Gilbert, Elizabeth
 Riverhead (480 pp.)
 \$28.00 | June 4, 2019
 978-1-59463-473-4



THE SUBSTITUTION ORDER

Clark, Martin

Knopf (352 pp.)

\$27.95 | Jul. 9, 2019

978-0-525-65632-6

A disgraced attorney encounters a threatening stranger who demands that he join a multimillion dollar insurance scam.

"I deserve better than this misery," says Virginia attorney Kevin Moore in

Clark's (*The Jezebel Remedy*, 2015, etc.) entertaining legal thriller. But that's not entirely true. Kevin has earned his trouble after a three-month cocaine and booze binge that led him to cheat on his wife with a stripper and land in the middle of a police raid. Now he's sober, on probation, facing divorce and disbarment, and making sandwiches in a cut-rate sub shop. One day a stranger shows up and urges him to participate in a multimillion dollar legal swindle. When Kevin refuses, the threats begin,

and soon he's arrested on new (and trumped-up) charges. As if that's not grim enough, he suffers a stroke. But Kevin isn't about to become a victim, and he can wield the law like a weapon, so he puts a plan for payback in motion. The author of four other clever, amusing legal novels, Clark is not nearly as well known as he should be. A retired Virginia circuit court judge, he knows his way around the system, using the law as a foundation for novels that never rely too heavily on action or courtroom pyrotechnics. Instead, he explores the rural South and the people who live there. He writes with hilarious insight about subjects that include but are not limited to the legal and medical professions, trucks with "Southern by birth, Rebel by the Grace of God" bumper stickers, and the impossibility of the presumption of innocence for anyone who has ever been arrested. "Once you make a single mistake, everything else you do is viewed through a warped lens," Kevin laments.

After a mistake, revenge is deeply satisfying—and so is this book.



ISBN (Paperback): 978-0-692-10406-4

ISBN (ebook): 978-0-692-10407-1

www.littlegirlleaving.com

LITTLE GIRL LEAVING

A NOVEL BASED ON A TRUE STORY BY LISA BLUME

2019 Best First Book Award Winner

"Deeply moving and evocative."

Gabrielle Glaser, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

"Insightful, poignant and riveting."

Judith Landau, MD, consultant to the UN and WHO

"A sensory barrage. A page-turner."

Sharon Solwitz, Doheny Award, The Center for Fiction

"A disturbing and illuminating tale about sexual abuse."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

For publishing rights or film rights, please visit www.littlegirlleaving.com

Almost everyone in rural Nova Scotia seems to have a skeleton (or a mermaid) in their closet.

WATERMARK



THE HELPLINE

Collette, Katherine

Atria (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jul. 23, 2019

978-1-9821-1133-5

This debut novel from Melbourne-based writer Collette replaces the chubby, clumsy rom-com heroine of yore with a mathematically smart, socially inept protagonist in need of redemption.

Germaine's long tenure at an insurance company ends ignominiously, forcing her to take a job at the city-run Senior Citizens Helpline, where—in a self-guided attempt to decrease call times—she is farcically unhelpful. Regardless, Mayor Verity Bainbridge taps Germaine to help with a special project for a special friend. The friend, amazingly, is one of Germaine's heroes—disgraced sudoku champion Alan Cosgrove, now in charge of the local golf course. The project: reprimand the elderly managers of the nearby senior center who've recently put chains on the tires of golfers using the center's parking lot. Germaine, fancying herself friends with the mayor, is all too happy to comply; she also imagines a burgeoning romance with Alan Cosgrove. The only problem is that, as her interactions with the senior-center staff unfold, she finds her loyalties shifting. Or at least she feels increasingly uncomfortable with her civic role, which is nearly the best she can do in terms of self-awareness. Luckily, she has boatloads of supporters—co-workers, the seniors, a neighbor, her mother, and, obviously, a love interest—to prod her (painstakingly) toward morally and romantically positive outcomes. Writing from Germaine's perspective has pros: Readers get detailed explanations of her entertainingly particular logic while still seeing more poignant aspects of her inner life, and Collette includes enough clues about what's going on around Germaine to show the often very funny disconnect between the two. But because Germaine is not a naturally empathetic or kind character, it is difficult to know how her scrappy fan club determines she's worthy of their loyalty.

Clever writing about an awkward character.



WATERMARK

Conlin, Christy Ann

Astoria Press (320 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-4870-0343-2

In these moody tales mingling family sagas with the fantastic, almost everyone in rural Nova Scotia seems to have a skeleton (or a mermaid) in their closet.

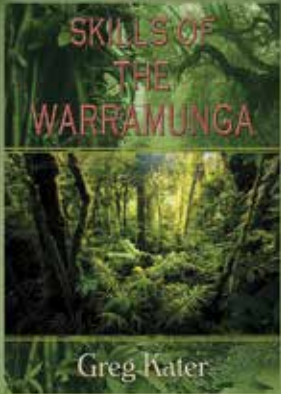
The author of two gothic novels, Conlin (*The Memento*, 2016, etc.) shows her flair for crafting mystery and suspense even on the smaller stage of the short story. "Dead time" peels back the layers of 15-year-old Isabella's insistence that she didn't murder her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend. A widower carrying on his late wife's tradition of taking her elderly relatives on

an annual outing winds up delivering them to an unexpected end in "Full Bleed." And in "The Flying Squirrel Sermon," in the wake of her grandmother's disappearance, a woman travels to her ancestral home to piece together the mystery of "women evanescing." While these stories are deliciously discomfiting, when Conlin hews closer to realism she captures the true horrors of family dysfunction. This is especially true in "Eyeball in Your Throat," which chronicles Lucy's perpetual disapproval of her daughter, Deidre, who flirts with drugs and alcohol and winds up in rehab—only to reveal on the last page just how self-injurious Lucy's lifetime of disappointment is. Conlin has clear-eyed sympathy for women trying to get over breast cancer, beastly husbands, sexual abuse, and tragic childhoods; consequently, there aren't many happy endings, though the prose soars effortlessly throughout. When Eve in "Desire Lines" unexpectedly hears from her hippie father, whose negligence led to her 4-year-old sister's death 30 years earlier, she considers the nature of memory, how "even as adults we never stop trying to complete the childhood story. We never stop trying to find the ending."

Suspenseful excavations of family secrets, as smart as they are creepy.

Skills of the Warramunga

By Greg Kater



Greg Kater

In this last installment of a trilogy, two Commonwealth Investigation Service agents embark on a rescue mission in the jungles of British Malaya.

"...works well as a stand-alone novel while still providing a satisfying final act for the trilogy."

"An enjoyable adventure set during the era of late British colonialism."

—Kirkus Reviews

gregkater.com.au ISBN: 978-0648278085

For information on publishing and film rights, email greg@gkater.com



THE SATURDAY NIGHT GHOST CLUB

Davidson, Craig

Penguin (224 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jul. 9, 2019

978-0-14-313393-3

A coming-of-age narrative about ghosts, friendship, and family secrets.

Jake Baker is a neurosurgeon who takes us back to the summer when he was 12 years old and growing up amid the tackiness of Niagara Falls, a landscape desperately in need of redemption. Although Jake is something of a loner, he hits it off with two kids new to the neighborhood, Billy and Dove Yellowbird. While Billy is the same age as Jake, Dove is two years older, and Jake is immediately smitten by her strength and self-confidence. There to help them all in their transition out of childhood is Jake's eccentric Uncle Cal, like Jake, an "odd duck" who is almost like a child himself. Cal owns a shop

called the Occultorium and has over time "cultivated a network of mystics and paranoiacs and those who saw the world at a different skew." Through motivations mysterious even to himself, Cal proposes that they form a Saturday Night Ghost Club to explore arcane places around their neighborhood, including a Screaming Tunnel ("Cataract City's most famous haunted spot"), a car that has been submerged for years in the bend of a river, and the remains of a house that had been ravaged by fire. As he moves through these adventures, Jake transitions from being terrified to accommodating himself to both the strangeness of his uncle and the strangeness of the world. Through his parents, Jake eventually learns how Cal is connected to each of the venues he takes the children to even though Cal himself doesn't understand the depth of these connections. As a result of these experiences during this memorable summer when he's on the cusp of adolescence, Jake's understanding and compassion are enlarged: tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.

Through the intensity of his characters' experiences, Davidson reconnects us to our own memories of growing up.



Through lies, manipulation, and murder, everyone is on a seventeen day march to fulfill or defy prophecy; the world will end or begin anew, come the Eve of Snows.

In Rice's fantasy series launch, an island ruled by seven clans faces body-possessing demons and a threat of a Holy War.

ISBN: 978-1-7324083-1-9 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-7324083-0-2 (e-book)

ISBN: 978-1-7324083-2-6 (hardcover)

"Brimming with well-defined details and characters; augmented by bountiful enthusiasm and spirit."

—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing and film rights,
email ljrice@sunderingthegods.com | LJamesRice.com



THE BIRTHDAY GIRL

de la Cruz, Melissa

Dutton (288 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5247-4377-2

On her 40th birthday, a fashion designer reflects on everything she has—and everything she stands to lose—as the life she thought she left behind catches up to her.

Ellie de Florent-Stinson is throwing an epic birthday party for herself at her mansion in Palm Springs, and no one seems to be looking forward to it, least of all her. Though she's grateful to be married with four kids, her home life is less than ideal: Her husband is unemployed, her twin boys are wild, and her daughter is being bullied at school. Her stepdaughter makes an appearance at the party, but so does her husband's vicious ex. Worst of all, if she doesn't come through with a new business deal soon, Ellie's company will go bankrupt—thinking of her age, she laments that fashion has changed. In alternating chapters, de la Cruz (*All for One*, 2019, etc.) contrasts the glamorous but vacuous world of the backstabbing elite with gritty but often sweet memories of Ellie's impoverished youth living next door to her best friend in an Oregon trailer park. In a flashback set 24 years in the past, Leo (as Ellie was then called) and Mish are celebrating Leo's 16th birthday by shoplifting at the mall and meeting up with Mish's boyfriend (who's Leo's secret crush). Mish is the heart of the story—a true friend who shouts "It's your birthday! We! Are! Celebrating!" even if "celebrating" means little more than sneaking liquor and trying to find a better place to hang out. If Ellie's adult friends could be this sincere, she might feel less alone. But something happens by the end of the Sweet 16 party

that Ellie will spend the rest of her life trying to forget, and on the night of her 40th birthday, someone from her past will come back to remind her.

Scandalous and bittersweet, our heroine's charmed life seems to teeter on designer stilettos as she gets closer to the truth of who she really is.



SIDE CHICK NATION

de León, Aya

Dafina/Kensington (352 pp.)

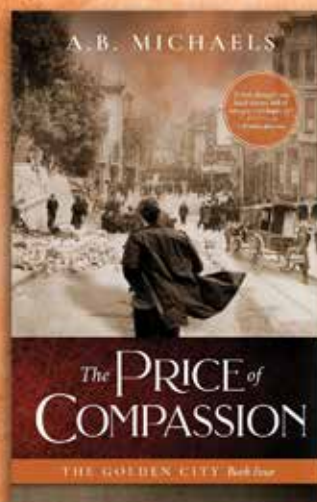
\$12.95 paper | Jun. 25, 2019

978-1-4967-1579-1



Everything changes for Dulce Garcia, perennial party girl and sugar baby, when she meets Xavier, a freelance journalist, on a plane to the Dominican Republic, then gets caught in Puerto Rico during Hurricane Maria.

Dulce, whose parents were Cuban and Dominican, was born in Puerto Rico and has bounced her whole life between the mainland U.S. and the Caribbean. After having been groomed into prostitution while she was in high school in New York—"Dulce always remembered how she was fourteen and wearing a Minnie Mouse t-shirt when she met Jerry," her pimp—Dulce escaped with the help of Marisol Rivera, the former director of a New York health clinic, but she's soon under the thumb of another abusive boyfriend. Seeking refuge with an aunt in the Dominican Republic, she meets Xavier, a young freelance journalist, as well as Phillip Gerard, a rich businessman. A couple of dates with Xavier has her falling for him, but then Gerard lures her with a luxury hotel stay and a shopping spree, and she convinces herself she didn't deserve a sweet relationship anyway. Dulce travels with Gerard to Puerto Rico and decides to stay there, then winds up stuck on the island when Maria hits. Meanwhile, Marisol's Puerto Rican cousins are in dire straits after the hurricane takes out their home, and as they and Dulce make their ways to safety, their stories will converge. Dulce reconnects with Xavier, whose press credentials give her



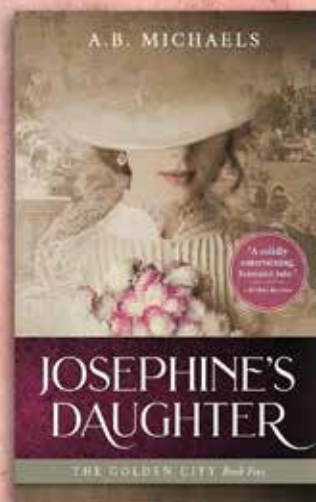
Murderer, healer, or both? After San Francisco's 1906 earthquake and fire, gifted surgeon Tom Justice stands accused of murder, but won't declare his innocence or admit his guilt. A gripping novel of medicine, morality, and madness.

"...suspenseful and engaging throughout."

"A well-thought-out legal drama, full of intrigue and duplicity."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 978-0997520101



Never doubt a Firestone female. In Book Five of A.B. Michaels' Golden City series, two generations of women rebel against high society, fight injustice, and forge their own paths in America's Gilded Age.

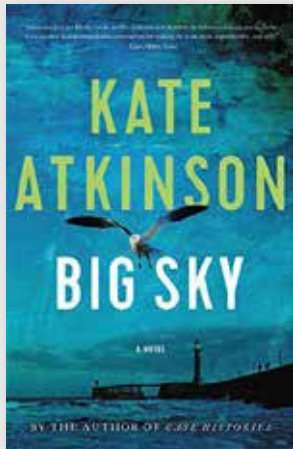
"A solidly entertaining, feminist tale that's also well-suited for medical-history buffs."

—Kirkus Reviews

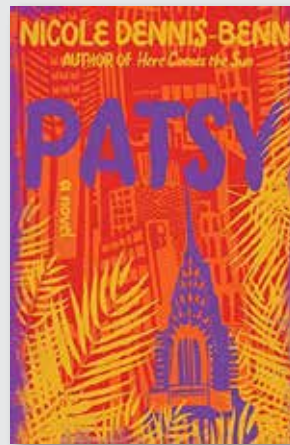
ISBN: 978-0-9975201-2-5

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10 GREAT SUMMER READS



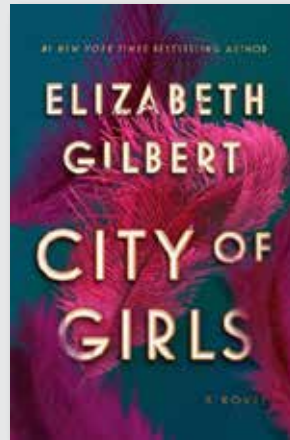
BIG SKY
by Kate Atkinson



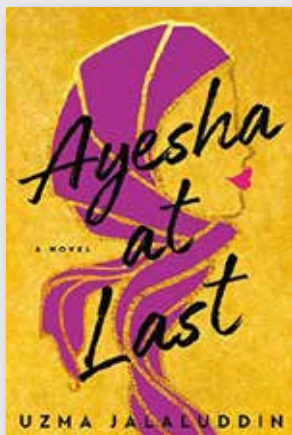
PATSY
by Nicole Dennis-Benn



FLEISHMAN IS IN TROUBLE
by Taffy Brodesser-Akner



CITY OF GIRLS
by Elizabeth Gilbert



AYESHA AT LAST
by Uzma Jalaluddin



ASK AGAIN, YES
by Mary Beth Keane



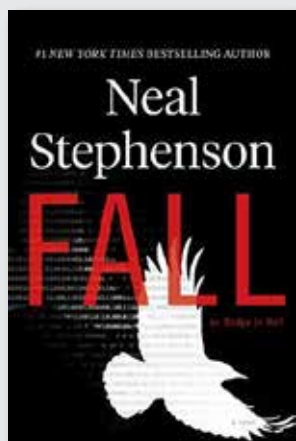
DELAYED RAYS OF A STAR
by Amanda Lee Koe



RED, WHITE, AND ROYAL BLUE
by Casey McQuiston



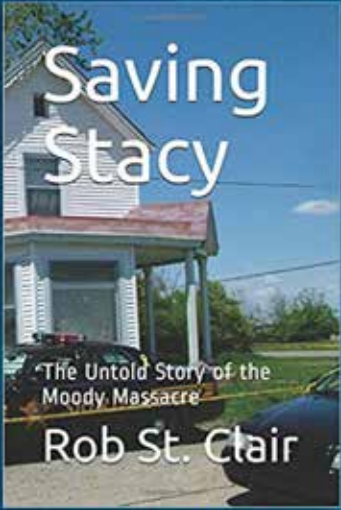
ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS
by Ocean Vuong



FALL; OR, DODGE IN HELL
by Neal Stephenson

opportunities she never dreamed possible even as their relationship fractures, while her connection to Gerard is of great interest to Marisol, who targets him for a cryptocurrency sting after he raises money ostensibly to help the island but then uses it to acquire prime island property at rock-bottom prices. The fourth title in de León's genre-bending *Justice Hustlers* series is a multifaceted tale. On one level, it's an entertaining feminist heist tale with a satisfying Robin Hood-style caper or two, but where the book truly shines is in spotlighting the challenges facing former sex workers and in angling an unflinching lens on the plight of Puerto Rico, both before and after the Maria disaster.

An absorbing, enlightening book that exemplifies the power of good storytelling.



Saving Stacy

by Rob St. Clair

St. Clair's debut historical novel challenges the official record of a real-life multiple murder in a small Midwestern farm community.

ISBN: 9781791379919

"This riveting novel has all the ingredients that true-crime fans crave."

"An engagingly written book that may heat up a cold case."

—Kirkus Reviews

For agent representation and information on publishing rights, email rbstclair@gmail.com



THE DUTCH MAIDEN

de Moor, Maren

Trans. by Doberty, David

World Editions (312 pp.)

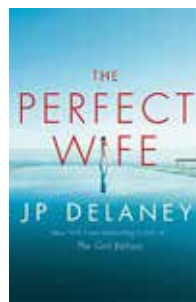
\$17.99 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-64286-018-4

A darkly obsessive novel about a girl training as a fencer on the eve of the Second World War.

When Janna is sent from her Dutch home to Aachen, in Germany, all she knows about Egon von Bötticher, the man she'll live with, is that her father knew him during the war. That would have been World War I. It's now 1936, and Janna, who shows real talent in fencing, goes to von Bötticher to be trained. She finds him, an isolated, mysterious man with a disfiguring scar across his face, in a large, mysterious house with two disgruntled servants. Then a pair of identical twins arrive, boys near Janna's age. Inevitably, 18-year-old Janna finds herself in love with von Bötticher. In any case, she imagines that she is. Soon she's visiting his bed and, after he falls asleep, rifling his drawers. She finds a cache of letters to von Bötticher from her father, Jacques, and yet another cache of letters that von Bötticher addressed to Jacques but never sent. At first, Janna thinks the letters will reveal what happened between von Bötticher and her father, what happened to von Bötticher during the war. But the truth only seems to grow more convoluted, and clarity is nowhere in sight. That's the point—or part of it, anyway—but the result can be frustrating. De Moor's novel has darkly gothic overtones, reminiscent in places of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, and while that dark mood can be seductive, it isn't strong enough to carry the entire novel. Von Bötticher never coheres as a character, and there are so many dreamy moments that a few more straightforward touchstones would have been helpful. The true horror seems not to be the past, and whatever happened there, but the future, which these characters anticipate but don't—yet—encounter.

Occasionally seductive, de Moor's debut in English ultimately founders in its own dreamy mists.



THE PERFECT WIFE

Delaney, JP

Ballantine (432 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5247-9674-7

Perfect wife, perfect life, right? Not so fast.

Delaney (*Believe Me*, 2018, etc.) returns with a domestic artificial-intelligence thriller. Five years after an accident, Abbie wakes up covered in bandages and surrounded by machines. The catch? This isn't the real Abbie; this Abbie is a cobot, or "companion robot." The real Abbie—a wild, beautiful artist and devoted mother—was never found.

A 13-year-old girl raised by distant relatives is sent abruptly back to her birth family with little explanation.

A GIRL RETURNED

Her husband, Tim, a Steve Jobs type complete with God complex and anger issues, owns Scott Robotics, a cutting-edge Silicon Valley darling. Tim has spent half a decade and an enormous amount of resources to bring his wife back. The novel is told from the alternating perspectives of Abbie the cobot, who propels the novel forward, and Scott Robotics employees, who provide a Greek chorus of exposition. Cobot Abbie doesn't just look like her namesake: She has her thoughts, memories, and voice; feels maternal toward Danny, her autistic son; and begins to learn the original Abbie's secrets. But she also is her own person—well, robot. The tension between the inherited and innate is portrayed nicely, and the ethical questions surrounding Abbie are interesting. If robots are capable of feelings, empathy, and pain, should they have the same rights as humans? If not, how should they be treated? There's a particularly heartbreaking scene when cobot Abbie makes a bouillabaisse—without senses of taste or smell—and uses rotten fish bones. With shame and despair, Abbie thinks, "Your stock—your beautiful, elaborate, saffron-infused fumet—was poisoned from the start." To add insult to injury: Artificial smelling technology exists but

Tim has cut corners. A fitting metaphor. The twist—or, rather, twists—is genuinely surprising and quite disturbing, but it feels like a slap in the face by taking away what little agency had been given to the female characters.

A well-paced page-turner with a sour ending.



A GIRL RETURNED

Di Pietrantonio, Donatella

Trans. by Goldstein, Ann

Europa Editions (176 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-60945-528-6



In this slim novel by award-winning Italian author Di Pietrantonio, her first translated into English, a 13-year-old girl raised by distant relatives as their own is sent abruptly back to her birth family with little explanation.

The Amazing Life of Johnny Saint Gold

By Robert Santoro

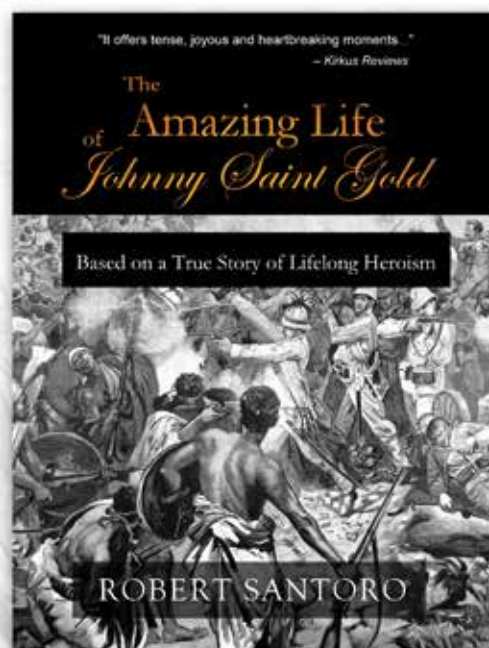
In this debut historical novel, Santoro recounts the sensational life of his father, an Italian immigrant at the turn of the 20th century.

"... tense, joyous, and heartbreaking moments..."

"He breathes life into the story through small details..."

"A heartfelt...tribute to a man who encountered considerable adversity."

—Kirkus Reviews



ISBN #: 978-1794098756

For general inquiries or agent representation, email bob901711@gmail.com

THERE'S A LOT OF LIFE AFTER DEATH IN NEAL STEPHENSON'S LATEST

NEAL STEPHENSON'S NEW NOVEL, *Fall; Or, Dodge in Hell* (June 4), is a true doorstopper, clocking in at the better part of 1,000 pages. The hefty page count is business as usual for Stephenson, bestselling author of acclaimed and sweeping works of science fiction and fantasy. It has been argued that our attention spans are getting shorter and shorter, but Stephenson points out that there's a hunger for immersive stories that require a big time investment. And that length feels particularly necessary here, since Stephenson's protagonist, Richard "Dodge"

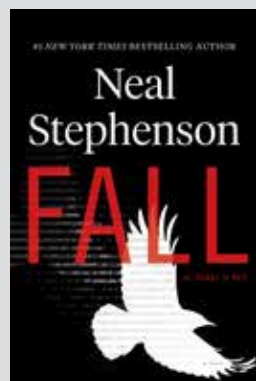


Neal Stephenson

Photo courtesy Brady Hall

Forthrust, lives more than a few lives by the book's end. And that's after he dies in the opening chapters.

As a younger man, Dodge drew up a will saying he wished to have his brain uploaded into a computer,



with the eventual goal of rebooting him, so to speak. It's a laughable directive for the average person, but Dodge was a billionaire, and given advancements in technology, Dodge's brain is now in the cloud.

As the novel progresses and the timeline in Bitworld takes over and turns to the fantastical, the timeline in the real world becomes all

too recognizable. The online landscape has gone haywire to the extent that no one can agree on facts as basic as the existence of a city in Utah. And yet there is still hope to be had in Bitworld, as the novel imagines what would happen if we no longer had to agonize over death. It seems unimaginable now, but as Stephenson points out, change happens fast: One day you're dead and the next you're a god. —C.E.

Chelsea Ennen is an editorial assistant at Kirkus Reviews. Fall; Or, Dodge in Hell received a starred review in the April 1, 2019, issue.

The book opens with the unnamed narrator carrying a suitcase and a bag of shoes up the stairs to an apartment where the door is stuck closed. At last a child with untidy hair opens it. "She was my sister, but I had never seen her." The man she has until now believed to be her father is dropping her off. In the dining room, her birth mother receives her without ceremony or interest, not bothering to get up from her chair. When the girl runs back down to the car, desperate to convince her erstwhile father to take her back ("Mamma's sick, she needs my help. I'm not staying here, I don't know those people"), he removes her bodily from the front seat and drives away. "The tire marks and I remained on the asphalt....The air smelled of burning rubber. When I raised my head, someone from the family that was mine against my will was looking down from the second-floor windows." Raised an only child in a comfortable, middle-class home, accustomed to days at the beach and dance lessons, she finds herself in an apartment crowded with violent strangers. There's not enough to eat, and no bed has been arranged for her. She sleeps on a mattress stuffed with sheep's wool, holding the sole of her sister's foot against her cheek: "I had nothing else, in that darkness inhabited by breath." In spare, haunting prose, Di Pietrantonio shows a girl struggling not only to understand, but to survive and belong. "You haven't known poverty," her birth mother tells her, "poverty is more than hunger." Class inequality, misogyny, and sexism are all at work as well. Late in the novel, in a scene both harrowing and illuminating, her two worlds overlap when she and her sister visit the house of the woman who raised her.

A gripping, deeply moving coming-of-age novel; immensely readable, beautifully written, and highly recommended.



TODAY WE GO HOME

Estes, Kelli

Sourcebooks Landmark (400 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-4926-6418-5

Two women, separated by a century and a half, survive life in the United States military in Estes' suspenseful, neatly structured second novel.

Larkin Bennett has recently returned home to the state of Washington after a stint in Afghanistan, suffering from PTSD and mourning the death of her best friend and fellow soldier, Sarah. As she cleans out Sarah's storage locker, she discovers the diary that Sarah said inspired her to become a soldier. It belonged to Emily Wilson, who grew up on a farm in Indiana and, during the Civil War, changed her name to Jesse and posed as a man in order to join the Army. Estes (*The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*, 2015) moves smoothly between the stories of Larkin, who with the help of her grandmother and other friends and relatives begins to find her way back into civilian life, and Emily, who both faces the horrors of war and starts to recognize the freedom inherent in appearing to others as a man. Estes includes passages from the

Galligan builds the complex plot of this intense novel around three strong central characters.

BAD AXE COUNTY



(fictional) diary but primarily reveals Emily in the third person. Although the historical dialogue is occasionally anachronistic (would anyone in the 1860s say, "Yeah, me too?") and the contemporary dialogue is sometimes overloaded with facts about the past, both central characters are credible and well developed. They're surrounded by equally intriguing secondary characters, including Emily's brother Ben and fellow soldier Willie and, in the contemporary sections, Sarah's brother, Zach, with whom Larkin forms a tentative relationship. Though it would have been easy to make Emily the more compelling character, Larkin's struggles with survivor's guilt and the day-to-day issues of recovering from war make her story just as riveting.

The novel brings the Civil War era to life and effectively links it to contemporary times.



I KNOW EVERYTHING

Farrell, Matthew

Thomas & Mercer (334 pp.)

\$24.95 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5420-4497-4

A fatal car crash off a cliff in New York's Hudson Valley turns out to be homicide.

Farrell (*What Have You Done*, 2018) opens with a gruesome prologue set in a basement, where an unnamed dying

man chained to a wall surveys two corpses while hearing noises upstairs. Chapter 1 jumps to psychologist Randall Brock's research on talk-therapy methods designed to reduce and eliminate patients' homicidal fantasies. Brock himself becomes a murder suspect after his wealthy philanthropist wife, Amanda, dies in an automobile accident the same night she's received a humanitarian award. Police officer Susan Adler leads the investigation; she's a single mother struggling to balance her commitment to criminal analysis while raising two sons whose father fails to take them on a promised ski trip to Vermont. Adler's attractive new partner, Tommy Corolla, charms Adler and her children and wants to take her out after the case closes; he suspects Brock: "It's always the husband." The night of the accident, a mysterious stranger catches Brock's attention at the awards dinner, then shows up at his office after Amanda's death. The stranger knows about the death of Brock's brother when they were children, declares to Brock that Amanda was murdered, claims to have seen the whole thing, and offers to tell Brock who killed her in exchange for Brock's revealing his own truths, although the arrangement will be off if Brock tells police about their encounters. The stranger seals the deal by revealing one of Amanda's dirty secrets. Heavy-handed exposition sometimes weighs down the dialogue, short sentences the author uses to close chapters fall flat, and some of the plot twists are predictable.

An intriguing premise inexpertly executed.



BAD AXE COUNTY

Galligan, John

Atria (336 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jul. 9, 2019

978-1-9821-1070-3

The small towns and coulees of southwest Wisconsin might not sound like a typical setting for a noir crime novel, but some very dark deeds propel this one.

Galligan (*The Wind Knot*, 2011, etc.)

builds the complex plot of this intense novel around three strong central characters. Heidi Kick is interim sheriff of rural Bad Axe County, tapped after the death of her corrupt predecessor. Besides dealing with workplace sexism and the seemingly endless crimes generated by pervasive poverty and substance abuse, she's still trying to solve the deaths of her parents 12 years ago, wrongly (she believes) written off as a murder-suicide. Bad Axe native and one-time local baseball hero Angus Beavers walks out of spring

The Lone Blond Born in The Barrio

By S. Moeller

The Lone Blond Born in The Barrio

By S. Moeller

"Moeller's prose is simple and elegant throughout this novel, constructing subtle observations that often blossom into images of surprising beauty..."

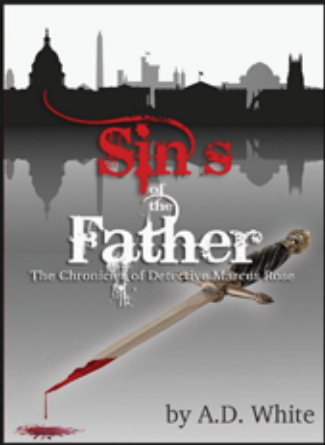
"The hypnotic rhythms of the language help to pull the reader through the deliberately paced plot, often creating moments of mystery and tension where, in the hands of a lesser writer, they simply wouldn't exist."

"...probes the complexities of race in the American Southwest—including the notion of passing, and the impact that can have on one's identity." —Kirkus Reviews

For agent representation, email smp_brand3524@yahoo.com

training in Florida to return to his family's junkyard when he hears the old sheriff is dead, pursuing a mysterious mission involving a long-frozen corpse. Teenage Pepper Greengrass arrives in the Bad Axe town of Farmstead in the van of a pimp, having run away from her home in the Wisconsin Dells and her abusive stepfather. She's armed with lots of attitude but might have underestimated how much danger awaits her. In well-crafted prose, Galligan alternates among them until their stories crash together in a mystery driven by savage misogyny and human trafficking. His portrait of life in the rural Midwest is about as far from bucolic as possible but vividly convincing. The book pulls no punches in its nightmarish depictions of violence, an essential part of its plot. In its early chapters, the book's mordant humor, female sheriff, and quirky minor characters echo the movie *Fargo*, but Galligan raises the stakes beyond the comic. And indomitable Heidi, fiercely smart Pepper, and Angus, goodhearted despite his dreadful upbringing, are characters worth caring about.

Striking prose, engaging characters, and a searing story of crimes rooted in the heartland power a darkly irresistible thriller.



Sins Of The Father
By A.D. White

Detectives from the
Washington, D.C.,
Police Department
have a serial killer
case on their
hands in this third
installment of a
procedural series.

by A.D. White

“Remarkable, insightful characters
reinforce this entertaining murder story.”
—Kirkus Reviews
ISBN #9781799062295

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by A.D. White

“Remarkable, insightful characters reinforce this entertaining murder story.”
—Kirkus Reviews
ISBN #9781799062295

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HARD MOUTH

Goldblatt, Amanda

Counterpoint (256 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-64009-242-6

When terror about the future intersects with the anticipated death of a loved one, many people act out in previously unimaginable ways.

For 30-something only child Denny, finding out that her father has been diagnosed with cancer for the third time sends her into a complete meltdown. This is compounded by the fact that he has decided to forego treatment—no chemo, no radiation, just in-home hospice care. When Denny learns this, she unravels, but she does so without tears, pleadings, or prayer. Instead, the unwelcome news leads her to sabotage her job at a laboratory, and, after getting fired, she decides to vanish, telling no one where she is headed. Her new home, a remote cabin on a distant mountaintop, lacks electricity and is heated only by a wood fireplace. There are no nearby neighbors or stores, and she must bring enough food with her to last for the duration of her stay—projected at a year. To say that this is a challenge for someone who has never lived outside the Washington, D.C., suburbs is an understatement. Nonetheless, Denny wants this, badly. Or thinks she does. At times, Gene, an imaginary friend she has had since age 14, pops up and offers quips, advice, or opinions. Then he, too, vanishes, and despite Denny's purported desire for solitude, after a horrible storm destroys the cabin's roof, she is both relieved and frightened to find a mysterious man named Haw in her front yard. Haw is simultaneously menacing and appealing, and it doesn't take long for Denny to become entangled with him. Suffice it to say that the love-hate relationship that unfolds is not for the faint of heart. There's violence and cruelty, all of it matter-of-factly described, with Denny betraying little-to-no emotion about the circumstances she faces.

By turns creepy and thought-provoking, this is a resonant debut about love, independence, and mourning.



THE ESCAPE ROOM

Goldin, Megan

St. Martin's (368 pp.)

\$26.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-21965-7

Four people answer an ominous summons from human resources only to be deliberately trapped in an elevator in Goldin's debut thriller.

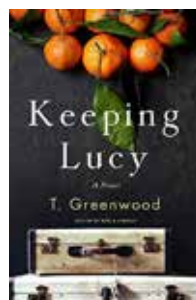
In the highflying world of finance, Vincent, Sam, Jules, and Sylvie used to be superstars, but recently they've failed to close too many lucrative deals, and they know their jobs are hanging by a thread. Called to a Friday evening meeting at an office building under construction, they become trapped in the steel



elevator, which has been rigged to emulate an escape room. If they solve the clues, perhaps they can find their way out. At first, they assume it's just the worst team-building exercise ever—but the clues point them toward a much darker possibility. How much do they know about the deaths of two young associates? Will they be able to solve the mystery and escape—or is the whole system rigged against them? There's a Spanish proverb used by Tana French in *The Likeness*: "Take what you want and pay for it," says God." The main characters in Goldin's novel should probably have paid more attention to the second half of that saying. Powerful, attractive, and unbelievably wealthy, they truly believe that their security and success are worth protecting at any cost. Despite the unsavory characters—or perhaps even because of them—this novel is pure entertainment. Offering a modern take on the classic locked-room mystery, Goldin strings the reader along by alternating chapters set in the past and in the present and by peppering the present chapters with riddles and word games. This is a commentary on the cutthroat, hypocritical world of finance, where one must sacrifice everything to stay on top. It

provides us with antagonists we love to hate as well as a sympathetic heroine who pays the ultimate price for survival: her own sense of goodness and fair play.

Cancel all your plans and call in sick; once you start reading, you'll be caught in your own escape room—the only key to freedom is turning the last page!



KEEPING LUCY

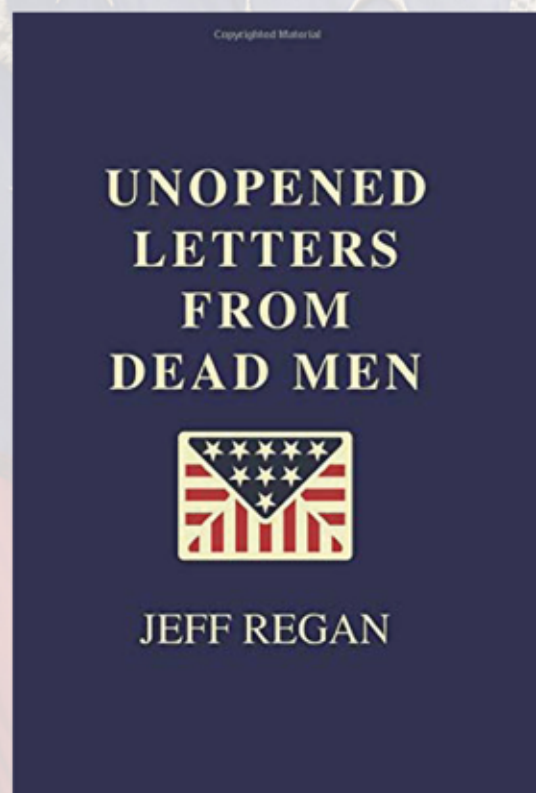
Greenwood, T.

St. Martin's (320 pp.)

\$27.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-16422-3

Greenwood's earlier novels of family dysfunction (*Rust and Stardust*, 2018, etc.) have hooked onto issues ranging from anorexia to child abduction; here Down syndrome disrupts a young woman's life and marriage.



Unopened Letters From Dead Men

By Jeff Regan

Regan tells the story of three men attempting to move beyond the death of their family's matriarch in this debut novel.

"...effectively delves into the psyches of all three of its major characters, exposing problems that go much deeper than the loss of a wife or mother—including problems of the world at large."

"A brooding family saga with emotional depth."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 978-1-945630-83-5

For information on publishing and film rights, email jeffregan@ymail.com

In 1963, 22-year-olds Ginny and Ab, drawn together by their oh-so-sensitive appreciation of poetry, fall in love despite class differences—he's a student at Amherst College; she's a working-class "local girl." By 1969, stay-at-home mom Ginny is caring for their 4-year-old son, Peyton, in a wealthy suburb while Ab, who never wanted to be a lawyer, is toiling away in his father's high-powered Boston firm. After the premature birth of their second child, Ginny holds her daughter, Lucy, only briefly before the doctor whisks the infant away, explaining she is "mongoloid" and unlikely to survive long. Once her tranquilizers wear off, Ginny learns Ab has followed his rigidly autocratic father's dictate and removed Lucy to a state-run facility called Willowridge, coincidentally located just outside Amherst. Though distraught, she accepts Ab's decision. What is most problematic in the novel is not Down syndrome as an issue but Ginny as a character. Her passive dependence (not even learning to drive), "willful ignorance" in accepting whatever conditions her husband's family demands, and further "willful ignorance" of current events like Vietnam and feminism make her seem anachronistic. In 1971, when Ginny learns that Willowridge, where she's never visited although her mother lives nearby, is under investigation for mistreating children, she finally goes to see Lucy. What begins as a legally permitted off-campus weekend stay spirals out of control into technical kidnapping when Ginny decides she cannot take fragile but increasingly alert Lucy back, Ab and his family be damned. Poor Ab is portrayed as a spineless wonder even when he succumbs to Ginny's miraculous new strength of will.

A serious subject cheapened by melodrama that rings inauthentic.



ACCOMMODATIONS

Greg Wioletta

Trans. by Croft, Jennifer

Transit Books (120 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Jul. 9, 2019

978-1-945492-23-5

A young woman starts college in early 1990s Poland.

Greg's (*Swallowing Mercury*, 2017, etc.) second autobiographical novel picks up where her first one left off.

Wiola, her young protagonist, leaves the remote Polish farm where she's grown up and arrives in Częstochowa, a nearby city, to pursue college. The slim book is light on details regarding college itself. Instead, Greg focuses on the incidental conversations Wiola has with the various people she encounters. Her living situation is somewhat precarious—she stays, first, at a workers' residence, then at a convent—so she has all sorts of conversations with all sorts of people. It's 1994, and the Soviet Union has collapsed, but World War II is still fresh in many people's minds. Wiola meets a woman who describes how German soldiers destroyed her family. "I began to hear gunfire coming from Warsaw Street," she says, "and then they came for us." But most of Wiola's encounters are far more mundane than this one. A florist at the market laments the rising cost of vodka ("I hate

to think what's next!"), and a sketchy character called Scurvy tells Wiola about his time in prison. Unlike *Swallowing Mercury*, this novel focuses primarily on the external—what Wiola sees as she walks about the city, what she hears—rather than her inner thoughts. Greg's prose is pristine, each image crystalline in its clarity, but this is not a novel that covers large distances. By the end, Wiola has certainly traveled beyond her beginnings, but it takes subtlety to understand just how far she's gone.

Jewellike in its intensity, Greg's latest novel is a strong follow-up to her first.



THE ACCIDENTALS

Gwin, Minrose

Morrow/HarperCollins (416 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Aug. 13, 2019

978-0-06-247175-8

White sisters in 1950s Mississippi lose their mother to a botched abortion and spend the next several decades struggling to navigate their own fraught relationship.

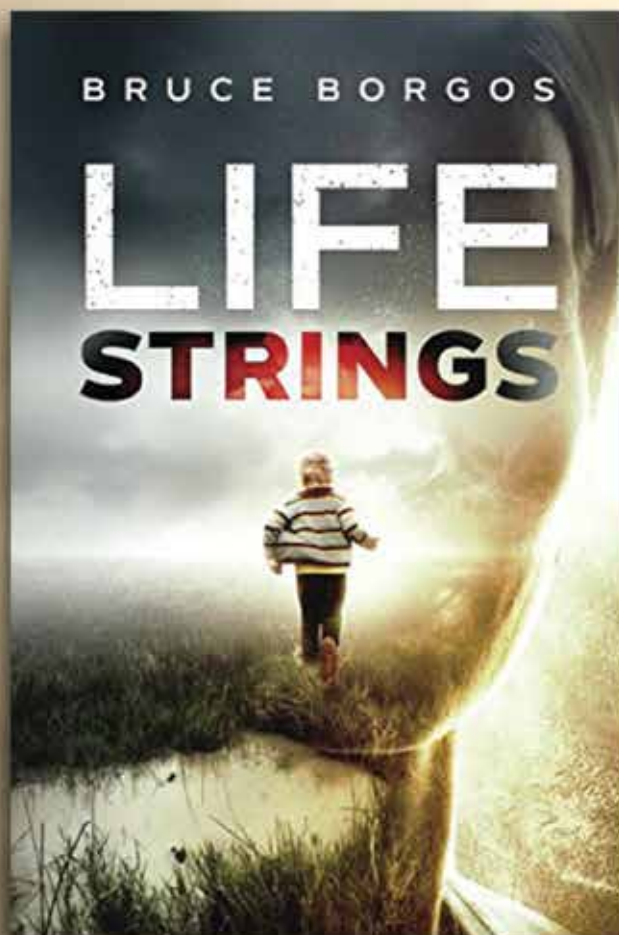
Grace and June McAlister live in Opelika, Mississippi, where their father is an accountant for the lumber mill and their mother stays home to look after the family. The girls don't know that their mother, Olivia, always wanted to be more than a wife and mother. When Olivia discovers she's pregnant again, she visits a local abortionist whose shoddy technique causes her irreparable physical damage. After Olivia confesses to her husband, Holly, what she's done, he takes the girls to see the giraffes at the nearby zoo. During the time they spend looking at animals, Olivia bleeds out and dies at home. As Holly grieves his wife, he becomes obsessed with protecting his daughters. Instead of tending to their meals or hygiene, though, he spends all his time in the backyard, digging a bomb shelter. After a few years of Holly's subpar supervision, Grace ends up a pregnant teenager. When her sister, June, discovers the pregnancy, she immediately tells Holly, and he sends Grace to a home for pregnant girls where she can wait out the pregnancy and put the baby up for adoption. Grace blames June for several unfortunate events that follow, and their strife continues for decades thereafter. Every time the sisters attempt to move beyond the mistakes of their shared past, something new seems to get in their way. An important story about women's reproductive rights and the consequences of limited choices, the novel will transport readers to the rural Mississippi of a bygone era. The prose is teeming with beautifully vivid portraits of local birds and vegetation as well as evocative descriptions of contemporary foods, homemade liquor, and weekday dinners. Told from the perspectives of multiple characters, including the sisters, their parents, and Ed Mae Johnson, an African American nurse from the orphanage, the story offers unique and insightful perspectives on family, race, forgiveness, and personal agency.

An artfully crafted tale that explores how restrictions on women's choices impacted female relationships in mid-20th-century America.

LIFE STRINGS

By Bruce Borgos

In Borgos' novel, a man travels to war-torn South Sudan in search of a cancer patient's biological daughter.



"Borgos' exciting story manages to capture the heaviness, wonder, and danger of Africa in a smoothly written narrative. It's full of well-drawn characters, and Borgos provides them with backstories that easily explain their capabilities."

"An impressive novel full of action, politics, and emotion."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

ISBN # 978-0-9975726-3-6

For agent representation or information on publishing and film rights,
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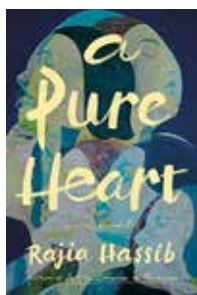
THE WINEMAKER'S WIFE

Harmel, Kristin
Gallery (400 pp.)
\$28.00 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-9821-1229-5

Harmel (*The Room on Rue Amélie*, 2018, etc.) returns with another historical novel set in France during World War II.

This novel alternates between 1940 at the Chauveau Champagne winery near Reims as the German occupation begins and the present day in the same area, where recently divorced Liv Kent's 99-year-old grandmother, Edith, has brought her so that Edith can attend to some "business." Gradually Liv begins to understand they are in Reims so she can learn what happened in 1940 that changed the futures of her grandparents, their friends, and the Chauveau winery. She discerns this in part from the new man in her life, Julien, grandson and partner of Edith's longtime lawyer. Harmel weaves in real historical figures such as Otto Klaebisch, the "weinführer" in Champagne during the war, and Count Robert-Jean de Vogüé, Resistance leader and head of Moët & Chandon. The story of fictional Resistance member and Champagne proprietor Michel Chauveau may be realistic, but parts of the story about his young wife, Inès, are less convincing. The Chauveaus employ winemaker Theo Laurent, whose wife Céline's family is Jewish. While Inès' naïve insistence that Céline's family is far from danger is somewhat understandable—many people were unable to believe what was happening at the time—it doesn't square with her recollection of her WWI veteran father insisting "You can never trust the Huns!" Inès' vacillating sympathies might reflect her youth, but they set up a chain of events that leads to dramatic changes in her life, which in turn set up the dramatic unveiling of Edith's secrets in the modern section of the book. All of which requires suspension of disbelief. Liv's love interest, while sudden, is somewhat more believable, as is Edith's reluctance to tell Liv the family history. Even in those sections, Harmel resorts to formulaic moments, such as a mix-up about whether Julien is married and a scene where a character is welcomed to heaven with forgiving words from other characters.

A somewhat entertaining but mostly predictable story; Champagne fans and readers who can't get enough WWII fiction will probably still enjoy it.



A PURE HEART

Hassib, Rajia
Viking (320 pp.)
\$27.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-0-525-56005-0

Her sister's death at the hands of a suicide bomber leads Rose Gubran to piece together a complex portrait of a sibling whose inner motivations remained largely in the shadows.



The Arab Spring that shook Egypt in 2011 left Rose, an ambitious Egyptologist, largely unscathed. After all, she followed her American journalist husband back to the United States just months before history turned. But her sister, Gameela, who gets swept up in the revolutionary fervor, does not have the same luck. Instead, years later, Gameela is dead, the unfortunate victim of a suicide bombing. Rose is wracked by guilt: She believes she could have done more to salvage her frayed bonds with her sister. Worse, Rose worries that her husband's newspaper profile of a suspected sympathizer of the Muslim Brotherhood might have indirectly contributed to Gameela's death. Egyptian mythology deifies the goddess Isis, who helps resurrect Osiris, the god of the underworld, after he is killed. Rose is the modern-day equivalent of Isis, convinced that she can imagine Gameela whole again. Hassib (*In the Language of Miracles*, 2015) expertly follows the bread crumbs as Rose assembles a fractured picture of the sister she never knew. Gameela's motivation to lean on religion as a succor remains mostly opaque till the very end. Nevertheless, the story fluidly explores how even seismic historical events can mix with everyday emotions such as sibling rivalry and insecurity to concoct a potent brew. "Our lives here are about politics. And religion. Every single day... We're not all American, Rose," Gameela reminds her sister. "Some of us don't have the luxury of a normal life."

A devastating definition of the new normal in which revolution does not always deliver real power to institute change.

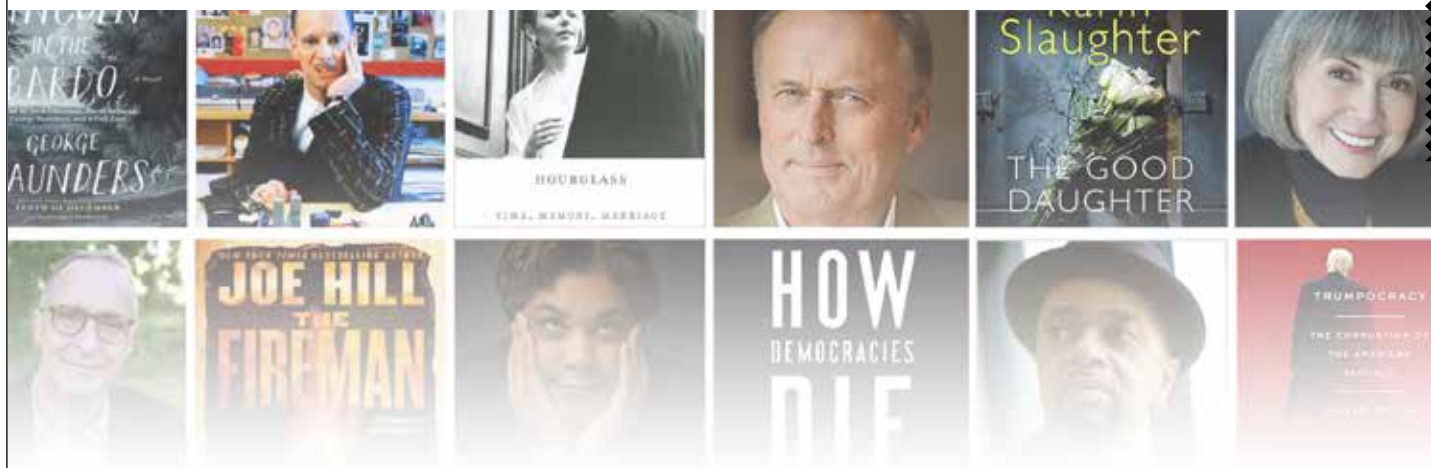


CRASHING THE A-LIST

Heacock, Summer
Harlequin MIRA (400 pp.)
\$15.99 paper | Jul. 9, 2019
978-0-7783-6928-8

In Heacock's (*The Awkward Path to Getting Lucky*, 2017) second novel, a down-on-her-luck 30-year-old finds incriminating information about a movie star and finds herself pulled into his orbit.

Clara Montgomery followed all the rules: She went to college, got a job in publishing, and spent her 20s building her career. But shortly after turning 30, she is laid off from her dream job and finds herself living on her brother's couch while working a temporary job cleaning out storage units. In one of them, she finds the records of an old escort agency and the headshot and resume of one named Caspian Tiddleswich, who went on to become a major celebrity. Her friend wants to sell the details to a tabloid, but Clara isn't sure what to do—until she drunkenly leaves Caspian a voicemail about the find and the two are pulled together by media attention and chemistry. But there is little in this book to pull in a reader. The premise itself is too shaky to build anything on; Clara gets Caspian's number via text from someone who once worked with him on an audio book, and after one drunken voicemail, Caspian (a stand-in for Benedict Cumberbatch) shows up at her front door to apparently hand over whatever he must in order to keep his



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**KIRKUS
REVIEWS**

Autofiction at its smartest and most effective.

THE TOPEKA SCHOOL

past under wraps. The characters themselves are outlandish and grating rather than charming and interesting, and it's hard to root for Clara and Caspian's blossoming romance. While tabloid culture is rich with romantic potential, this book falls flat.

This would-be tale of love and celebrity demands too much suspension of disbelief.



A NICE CUP OF TEA

Imrie, Celia

Bloomsbury (400 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-63557-355-8

Charming restaurant La Mosaïque is in dire financial straits, but when its owners try to auction off some artwork, they set off a chain of events that may spell utter ruin.

In this, Imrie's third novel about five Londoners who have retired to the South of France (*Nice Work (If You Can Get It)*, 2016, etc.), pooled their resources and talents, and opened a chic restaurant, hilarity mixes with rather serious troubles. Of course, the Brexit referendum and the terrorist attacks of July 14, 2016, have economically devastated the businesses of Bellevue-sur-Mer. The friends' plan to sell the Picasso mosaic medallion embedded in the floor of their restaurant, however, inadvertently draws the attention of the Picasso estate, which not only bans the sale, but also presents a bill for administrative costs of recovering the priceless art. Luckily, Marcel, the owner of a neighboring bar, may be interested in buying them out if he can have their financial books for a few days. Yet the five friends face personal troubles, as well. Sally, a former actress, is beset by the unwelcome attentions of a horrible couple she once shared the stage with—and Phoo and Eggy Markham are eager to take every opportunity to remind Sally what a failure she was. Chef Theresa has begun receiving strange gifts, photos and phone calls, suggesting she may have a stalker. Even worse, Theresa's granddaughter, Chloe, has gone missing and may be traveling to France in the company of a pedophile. From marijuana-laced brownies to slapstick boat chases, Imrie capitalizes on her background in comedic acting, creating scene after scene rife with screwball comedy. And as the multiple mysteries collide—besides the stalker and kidnapping, there's the question of who is sabotaging the restaurant's online reviews—Imrie nimbly ratchets up the excitement.

A caper-filled romp in the Riviera sure to delight expats and mystery lovers alike.



CAMPUSLAND

Johnston, Scott

St. Martin's (336 pp.)

\$27.99 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-250-22237-4

Been to college lately? Here it is in all its glory, from the trigger warnings and the bias response teams to the hookups and the hashtags, served with plenty of kombucha and seasonally correct vegan stew.

Johnston's debut skewers life at Devon University in Hav-enport, a body double for Yale, from the buildings and clubs on campus to the white clam pizza in New Haven, including a nod to the 2015 Halloween-costume dust-up. Our hero is Ephraim Russell, a good-looking young white man and professor of English originally from a peanut farm in Alabama who was born to teach 19th-century literature, who "couldn't imagine a place he'd rather be" than Devon, who has a 4.4 out of 5 on RateMyProfessor.com, rare indeed. He has a beautiful African American girlfriend named D'Arcy, and he is up for tenure this year—life could not be better. But the fall semester will bring Eph low. Among the characters who play a role in his downfall are Lulu, a gorgeous, rich, and utterly cynical Manhattan freshman; Red, a seventh-year student not currently enrolled but leading the Progressive Students Alliance; and Milton Strauss, the popular 17th president of the university. The trouble unfolds in short chapters and articles from the *Devon Daily*, and, in more ways than one, it all starts with Mark Twain. This high-spirited, richly imagined, and brave novel is a delight to read. Here's a trigger warning, though: Since its relentless mockery of the campus political climate never actually acknowledges the reality of racism and sexual violence, it should not be read by those who lack a sense of humor. Also, the ending seems to suggest that the solution is to go back to the idyllic way things used be. That can't be right. But it's a satire! The whole point is to lighten up.

Smart and hilarious.



THE TOPEKA SCHOOL

Lerner, Ben

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

(304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Oct. 1, 2019

978-0-374-27778-9

In which the author scrupulously investigates his upper-middle-class upbringing to confront its messy interior of violence, betrayal, and mental illness.

Adam, the center and occasional narrator of Lerner's (*The Hatred of Poetry*, 2016, etc.) essayistic and engrossing novel, enjoyed a privileged adolescence in the Kansas capital during the 1990s: He competed nationally in debate, had plenty of friends, and was close to his parents, two psychologists at an illustrious foundation. (Lerner is again



in autofiction mode; he, too, competed in high school debate, and his parents are psychologists who've worked at Topeka's Menninger Clinic.) But all is not well: Fred Phelps' homophobic Westboro Baptist Church recurs in the narrative, a childhood concussion has left Adam with migraines, and his parents' marriage is strained. Lerner alternates sections written from the perspectives of Adam, his mother, and his father with interludes about Darren, a mentally troubled teen who committed an act of violence at a party that Adam feels complicit in. How much? Hard to say, but the book sensitively gathers up the evidence of abuse, violation, and cruelty in Adam's life. Though the conflicts are often modest, like Adam's mom's fending off Phelpsian trolls angry at her bestselling book, Lerner convincingly argues they're worth intense scrutiny. As a debate competitor, Adam had to confront a "spread"—an opponent's laying out a fearsome number of arguments, each requiring rebuttals—and Lerner is doing much the same with his adolescence. How do childhood microaggressions build into a singular violent act? Were the rhetorical debates between the Phelps and the foundation a rehearsal for contemporary Trumpian politics? Few writers are so deeply engaged as Lerner in how our interior selves are shaped by memory and consequence, and if he finds no clear conclusion to his explorations, it makes the "Darren Eberheart situation" increasingly powerful and heartbreaking as the story moves on.

Autofiction at its smartest and most effective: self-interested, self-interrogating, but never self-involved.



CAGING SKIES

Leunens, Christine
Overlook (304 pp.)
\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-4197-3908-8

An avid young Hitler supporter discovers that his parents have been hiding a Jewish girl in their house.

Johannes Betzler is a child in Vienna when Hitler comes to power and Austria votes for annexation. In school, he learns that "our race, the purest, didn't have enough land" but that "the Führer had trust in us, the children; we were his future." Johannes joins the Jungvolk and, once he's old enough, the Hitler Youth. At home, meanwhile, his parents grow more and more discomfited; they're quietly opposed to the Nazi party but well aware of the danger they'd be in if they voiced their opposition—even to their own son. Then, as a teenager, Johannes is maimed by a bomb, losing a hand and part of his cheekbone. Wounded, he returns home, where for months he is bedridden, alone in the house with his mother and grandmother. Increasingly, his father is—mysteriously—gone. His mother seems to be acting oddly and, finally, Johannes discovers the reason why: There is a girl, a Jewish girl, hidden upstairs in a secret partition. This is where Leunens' (*Primordial Soup*, 2002) novel takes off. Johannes becomes increasingly fixated upon Elsa. At first, her existence prompts him to question his devotion to Hitler—is

he betraying the Führer by not reporting his parents?—but as time goes on, and as Johannes' preoccupation with Elsa grows more sexual, these doubts fade. Leunens is a strong writer, her prose supple and darkly engaging. Her depiction of wartime Vienna is nearly cinematic and utterly convincing. But it isn't clear if Johannes is meant to be a sympathetic character, and as the novel goes on, and his choices grow more and more disturbing, it becomes harder to sympathize with him. Nor does he change, exactly, over the course of the book, although his circumstances certainly do. Ultimately, it's unclear what Leunens' larger purpose is. This is a dark, disturbing novel—but to what end?

Vivid prose isn't enough to lift this book from its own excruciating depths.



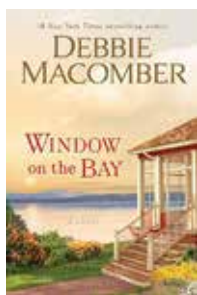
THAT'S WHAT FRENEMIES ARE FOR

Littlefield, Sophie & Gershell, Lauren
Ballantine (320 pp.)
\$27.00 | Jul. 30, 2019
978-1-984817-96-9

A New York City socialite tries to impress her friends by making over a spin instructor into a weight-loss and mind-body-connection guru.

In *Littlefield* (*The Guilty One*, 2015, etc.) and first-time author Gershell's debut novel as a pair, Julia Summers loves her husband, James, and her two children, Henry and Paige. But, to be honest, Julia really loves herself most of all. She's a vapid, vain, Upper East Side stay-at-home mom, and everything she does is carefully calculated to impress the fellow moms, her so-called friends, at her kids' private school. But she has become complacent, and her influence as a trendsetter has weakened. When a long-unnoticed leak ruins the Summers' vacation home in the Hamptons and Julia is forced—*forced*—to spend the summer in the city with her children while her husband works around the clock and her friends relax in their own country homes, she does the only thing she can think of: foists the kids off on summer camp, the nanny, and a backup babysitter so she can focus on losing weight and regaining her social cachet. She makes it her summer project to re-create Tatum, a bubbly instructor at Flame, a boutique gym that has not yet become popular with the rich-mom crowd. "That was my catnip," Julia says. "I was an urban bloodhound trawling for treasures that went unnoticed by others, and I was famous for my finds." But Tatum is not so easily controlled. She dates who she wants, she makes friends with whom she wants, and she makes the same bad decisions that 20-somethings everywhere have made and will continue make. The novel focuses solely on Julia's story, told in the first person, and the other characters and events appear flattened and one-dimensional through the prism of her opinions.

There are no heroines in this tale: It's a predictable, slow-moving train wreck you can't look away from.



WINDOW ON THE BAY

Macomber, Debbie
Ballantine (336 pp.)
\$27.00 | Jul. 16, 2019
978-0-399-18133-7

Macomber (*Be a Blessing*, 2019, etc.) threatens to set her latest beach read in Paris, but her characters have other plans.

Maureen Zelinski and Jenna Boltz have been friends since college. Years ago, their plans to go to Paris were thwarted when Maureen found out she was pregnant. Now that they're both single mothers whose children have left the nest, the time is right to dust off their passports and try again. In a somewhat disappointing turn of events, Maureen and Jenna don't make it to Paris just yet. Instead, they stay in Seattle and pursue new love interests. Jenna, a nurse, meets orthopedic surgeon Dr. Rowan Lancaster in the emergency room after her mother falls and hurts her hip. Maureen, against her better judgment, accepts a date with Logan, a union plumber who frequents the library where she works. Jenna is afraid to date a co-worker after her workplace romance with her ex failed, but when Rowan proves to be a good listener, she's more willing to discuss her options. Maureen doesn't think she'll fit in with Logan and his beer-drinking buddies, but she's surprised when she enjoys their date at a football game. Meanwhile, Jenna worries about her children, Allie and Paul, as they navigate college and life. Though the story is primarily told from the two mothers' perspectives, Allie breaks into the narrative with a surprising connection to Rowan. Maureen's daughter, Tori, also takes on the role of confidante. The happy endings (and potential travel plans) unfold with a touch of realism to contrast the idyllic backdrop of the Pacific Northwest.

Despite the false start, this heartwarming story sweetly balances friendship and mother-child bonding with romantic love.



NOTTINGHAM

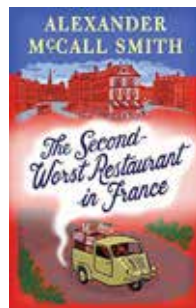
Makaryk, Nathan
Forge (496 pp.)
\$26.99 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-250-19560-9

The legend of Robin Hood revisited and revised.

Before the action moves to Nottingham and environs, we're plunged into war in the Holy Land in 1191, where Robin of Locksley serves as a body double for King Richard. After the brief but intense siege of Acre, the center of gravity shifts to Nottinghamshire, where we meet an extended cast of characters we're familiar with through hundreds of years of legend: Robin, Marion, Will Scarlet, John Little, Alan-a-Dale, Friar Tuck, and many others populate the forest and shire around Nottingham. But in Makaryk's retelling,

the Band of Merry Men is not so merry, for they're preoccupied with the machinations of Roger de Lacy, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and his sordid companions. Interestingly, Robin only occasionally has center stage here, for the narrative is more interested in power relationships both in Nottingham and among Robin's band of thieves. Will Scarlet and his lover, Elena, are more active in the fight against de Lacy than Robin Hood, and they're somewhat contemptuous of Robin's timidity in the face of brute force. Ultimately, de Lacy is assassinated and replaced by the hapless William of Wendenal, who claims the people "know [he's] a fraud" —hardly the way to claim a role of either villainy or leadership. The novel occasionally rattles with what seems either odd or jarring word choices. For example, it's difficult to imagine Robin actually saying "Well damn" or Eric of Felley exclaiming "What the hell is this?" And despite the epic dimensions, there's surprisingly little payoff in action scenes, for most of the characters are preoccupied with advancing political or power agendas rather than fighting.

A disappointing take on a legend still alive with possibilities.



THE SECOND-WORST RESTAURANT IN FRANCE

McCall Smith, Alexander
Pantheon (256 pp.)
\$25.95 | Jul. 16, 2019
978-1-5247-4829-6

McCall Smith's sequel to *My Italian Bulldozer* (2017, etc.) switches its focus from Italy to a small French village where the earlier novel's hero, a Scottish food writer, falls into very mild adventures while trying to improve the local restaurant.

After finishing his recent food guide to Tuscany, 36-year-old Paul Stuart has returned to Edinburgh and is living "part-time" with his editor/girlfriend, Gloria. But Gloria's cats prove an annoying distraction whenever Paul sits down to write his newly contracted book on the philosophy of food. When the already lukewarm romance with Gloria sputters out, he accepts an invitation from a relative known to their family as "Remarkable Cousin Chloe" to join her in a village near Poitiers. He's hoping he'll have the quiet and peace to finish his philosophy tome before his publisher's six-month deadline. Instead he ends up hanging out with 50-something Chloe and the landladies of the villa she has leased. These older women involve him in various escapades surrounding the local restaurant described by the novel's title. The waitress is busy hiding from her new baby's nefarious father, so Chloe and Paul volunteer to take over for her; the owner, who has no cooking skills, falls for Chloe while Paul finds an unlikely ally in turning the food service around. Paul comments that Chloe strikes him as belonging to an earlier era "when people made tactless remarks and rarely apologized for what they were." Actually, Chloe's list of ex-husbands, her mysterious, rather daring career, and her New Age-y politics of kindness make her seem a more contemporary, as well as more

A brilliant, beguiling story.

WHEN THE PLUMS ARE RIPE

intriguing, character than Paul himself. He's a young fogey who exhibits the formal, bloodless sensibility of someone around 70 (McCall Smith's age)—affronted by students playing loud music, he rejects passes from several young women and is tired of song lyrics about love.

McCall Smith knows how to turn a phrase, but this novel never rises above a low simmer.



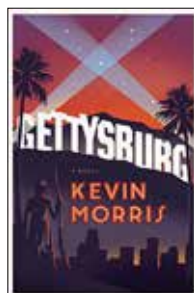
THE WOLF WANTS IN

McHugh, Laura
Spiegel & Grau (272 pp.)
\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-0-399-59028-3

In a small, dead-end Kansas community devastated by the opioid epidemic, two young women grapple with dark family secrets.

It has been less than a month since Sadie Keller's 36-year-old brother, Shane, died suddenly, but Sadie can't get straight answers as to the exact cause of his death. His widow, Crystle, is evasive, claiming she came home and found Shane unresponsive. An impatient Detective Lacey Kendrick is equally unhelpful, noting that the coroner had ruled natural causes, possibly a heart attack, based on some prescriptions found at the scene. She has no time to investigate further because the recent discovery of a child's skull in the woods may be connected to Macey Calhoun, who vanished with her father the previous spring. Besides, untimely deaths are all too common in Cutler County, Kansas, thanks to the drug crisis. Sadie must now delve into her brother's private life for answers. Meanwhile, 18-year-old Henley Pettit is desperate to escape her disreputable family and limited future in Blackwater. But her addict mother has relapsed after two years of sobriety, and a housekeeping job with the wealthy Sullivans entangles Henley in a complicated relationship with spoiled only son Jason. Alternating between Sadie's first-person narration and Henley's third-person perspective, McHugh's (*Arrowwood*, 2016, etc.) domestic thriller links the two storylines when the Calhoun case becomes a double homicide with a possible connection to Shane's death. Although terrible crimes lie at the heart of this novel, it is more sorrowful portrait of troubled families than gripping suspense; the culprits are obvious early on. Still, readers will become invested in the struggles of the well-drawn lead protagonists; the stoic and resourceful Henley will especially remind Daniel Woodrell fans of Ree Dolly, the heroine of *Winter's Bone*.

Inspired by the still-unresolved sudden death of McHugh's brother, this third novel is atmospheric grit lit with emotional depth.



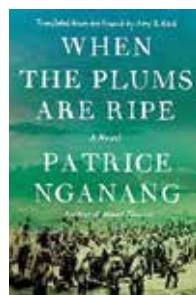
GETTYSBURG

Morris, Kevin
Grove (352 pp.)
\$26.00 | Jul. 2, 2019
978-0-8021-4738-7

In a wry take on the male midlife crisis, a Hollywood lawyer spends a weekend reenacting the Battle of Gettysburg with a *Playboy* Playmate, to the consternation of family and friends.

John Reynolds Stanhope, age 47, was named after the Civil War general instrumental at Gettysburg, grew up near the battlefield, and worked as a guide there. Now he's a successful Hollywood lawyer, agent, manager, and producer, but he's also flabby and has insomnia, and his pilot about sleep just got rejected by A&E. So he has secretly planned a weekend playing his namesake with Gettysburg reenactors at a sports field north of Malibu. Then stuff happens—and through it all, Morris (*All Joe Knight*, 2016, etc.), a Hollywood lawyer and producer himself, cracks wise on Tinseltown with an insider's glee. Reynolds gets drunk while discussing a reality TV project with a former Playmate and a one-time Miss Universe and decides to bring them to the battle. His wife, a top-notch movie producer, uses an app to discover he lied about his weekend golf plans and pursues him, eventually asking their daughter and her friend to meet her there. Reynolds' lunch companions invite their sons. The worried wife also asks for help from her husband's longtime client, a character based on Norman Lear, who brings along an actor suggesting Tom Cruise without Scientology. While the solo weekend gets as crowded as the Marx Brothers' stateroom scene, Reynolds navigates battlefield skirmishes, existential questions, and awkward interactions with his wife and daughter. Morris gives him some fine speeches about history and war. But amid all the comic material, the hero's quasis—“a feeling that nothing [is] worth half a try”—may just be the biggest shell among the hail of potshots at Hollywood culture.

A well-written work that some readers may find entertains more than it engages.



WHEN THE PLUMS ARE RIPE

Nganang, Patrice
Trans. by Reid, Amy B.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux (368 pp.)
\$28.00 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-0-374-28899-0

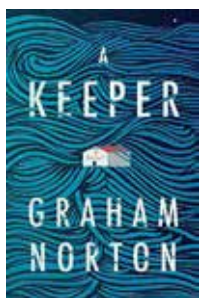
What happens to a colony when its colonizer becomes colonized itself? That's the question underlying this layered story by Cameroonian novelist Nganang (*Mount Pleasant*, 2016, etc.).

The second volume in a projected trilogy on his country's history before and during World War II, Nganang's richly detailed



novel opens with an evocation of that magical time of year when plums come into season: "In Yaoundé, the heart of the country is revealed when the plums are ripe." Yet the fate of the plum is not happy: So many of them flood the marketplace that at the end of the day any unsold surplus is simply tossed into the street to be crushed by passing cars and trampled underfoot. Just so, Nganang writes, did the country discard its young men when they were pressed into service as riflemen fighting the Axis powers and Vichy France to liberate their Nazi-occupied colonizer. "Yes," Nganang queries, "was Cameroon going to remain under the control of a defeated country?" The answer, ironically, is that France will be freed from its oppressors long before Cameroon will, even as the intellectuals argue about the status of their homeland under foreign rule—"Even if France has always treated us as its colony, my brother, we are a protectorate, not a colony," says one. At the center of the story is the poet and bureaucrat Pouka, who silently watches his bosses secretly practice the Nazi salute as a precaution; a spinner of mathematically precise alexandrines, he insists on being called maestro, "following Mallarmé's lead." For all his fine ideas, Pouka, ever cautious, remains safe in the capital while the younger men in his circle go off to fight, each ending badly: "Hebga ran to where his friend was buried in the sand... chopped to bits...." A nice touch is another evocation, this one of *Lysistrata*, that brings the story to a close—and now with revolution in the air.

"History is our one true mistress," Nganang ventures, but that mistress is unfaithful. A brilliant, beguiling story.



A KEEPER

Norton, Graham

Atria (320 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 13, 2019

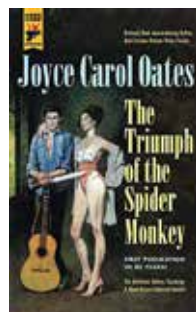
978-1-9821-1776-4

A daughter discovers layers of secrets surrounding her parentage when she returns to Ireland to settle her mother's estate.

University professor Elizabeth Keane flies to Ireland to clean out her mother Patricia's house in Buncarragh and ready it for sale. She discovers a box of letters from Edward Foley, the father she never met and whom she was told had died when she was an infant, and realizes she has little idea who Patricia was outside her role as a mother. Nearly all grown children realize this truth at some point, and yet it hits Elizabeth at an especially timely moment, as she's a single mother to her son, Zach, who is nearing adulthood, and she faces a life just as alone as she perceived her mother's to be. To complicate matters, her mother's lawyer informs Elizabeth that she has inherited a second property, her father's house, which prompts a new round of investigation. Interspersed with the chapters about Elizabeth's questions, other chapters flash back to detail Patricia's initial correspondence and later relationship with Edward. These sections become increasingly tense as Patricia visits his home and glimpses the sadness and dysfunction that grip him and his mother. In the present moment, Elizabeth's life

also becomes uncertain as she discovers Zach is lying about visiting his father and keeping secrets of his own. Irish television personality Norton (*Holding*, 2017, etc.) has crafted what turns out to be an ominous mystery for his second novel as two stories about motherhood unfurl simultaneously. At times, the characters seem to almost be running to keep up with the plot twists, which leaves little time for full development or more than surface-level insight into their motivations. Unlike Norton's first novel, focus is on the plot as the site of intrigue, but affinity with the characters is the cost.

A page-turner well suited for readers seeking a light domestic thriller.



THE TRIUMPH OF THE SPIDER MONKEY

Oates, Joyce Carol

Hard Case Crime (224 pp.)

\$9.95 paper | Jul. 16, 2019

978-1-78565-677-4

A reprint of a minor novella first published in 1976 that's still a full-blown freak show of serial murder, psychological self-torture, and literal disintegration.

Ever since he was plucked from inside a locker in a New York bus terminal shortly after his birth in 1944, Bobbie Gotteson, aka the Maniac, has shattered expectations, and not in a good way. He's traveled the country as a singer and songwriter, screen-tested (or maybe not: the putative studio denies it, and no footage has survived) for a movie role, and spent considerable time in prison. Now, put on trial for one of nine murders, more or less, he's accused of committing, he lets it all hang out, recalling his relationships with Melva, whose son he's been mistaken for; Danny Minx, his rapist and protector in stir; Baby Sharleen, who killed herself before she could testify against him; and a host of wraithlike women who drift in and out of his consciousness. "Consciousness," in fact, may be too definite a term for Bobbie's monologue, which persistently tramples on the distinctions between inside and outside, laughing and screaming, guitars and machetes, Jesus and Satan, first and third person, and the sanity Bobbie claims and the madness he acknowledges. A straight-faced footnote announces early on that "all remarks in this strange document are the Maniac's, even those he attributes to the 'court' and to other people." Oates (*My Life as a Rat*, 2019, etc.) withholds the gruesome details of Bobbie's butchery; the defiant confession of this fictional counterpart of Charles Manson is horrific, often carnivalesque, but never salacious or sensationalistic. As a bonus, this edition includes *Love, Careless Love*, a sequel of sorts that traces the doomed bond that forms between Dewalene, a young woman still traumatized by her encounter with Bobbie, and Jules, the disturbed young man hired for unknown reasons to keep an eye on her.

What's most memorable about these twin blasts from the past is Oates' mastery of distinctly different flavors of nightmare, from the surreal to the flat-out demented.

A quiet tale that considers the way small, human connections can disrupt the callous powers of authority.

THE MEMORY POLICE



INLAND

Obreht, Tëa

Random House (384 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-0-8129-9286-1



A frontier tale dazzles with camels and wolves and two characters who never quite meet.

Eight years after Obreht's sensational debut, *The Tiger's Wife* (2011), she returns with a novel saturated in enough realism and magic to make the ghost of Gabriel García Márquez grin. She keeps her penchant for animals and the dead but switches up centuries and continents. Having won an Orange Prize for *The Tiger's Wife*, a mesmerizing 20th-century Balkan folktale, Obreht cuts her new story from a mythmaking swatch of the Arizona Territory in 1893. The book alternates between the narratives of two complex, beset protagonists: Lurie, an orphan and outcast who killed a boy, and Nora, a prickly frontierswoman with her own guilty conscience. Both speak to the dead. Lurie sees ghosts from early childhood and acquires their "wants," while Nora keeps up a running conversation with her daughter, Evelyn, dead of heatstroke as a baby but aging into a fine young woman in her mother's mind. Obreht throws readers into the swift river of her imagination—it takes a while to realize that Lurie is addressing all his remarks to a camel. The land is gripped by terrible drought. As Nora's homestead desiccates, her husband leaves in search of water, and her older sons bolt after an explosive dispute. An indignant local drunk wonders whether "anybody else in this town [had] read an almanac or history in their lives? What were they all doing here, watching the sky, farming rock and dust?" Still, a deep stoicism, flinty humor, and awe at the natural world pervade these characters. They are both treacherous and good company. Here is Nora, hyperaware of a man who's not her husband: "Foremost on her mind: the flimsiness of her unlaundered shirt and the weight of her boots." Lurie, hiding among the U.S. Army's camel cavaliers (you can look them up), is dogged down the years by Arkansas Marshal John Berger. Their encounters mystify both men. Meanwhile, there are head lice, marvelous, dueling newspaper editorials, and a mute granny with her part to play.

The final, luminous chapter is six pages that will take your breath away.



THE MEMORY POLICE

Ogawa, Yoko

Trans. by Snyder, Stephen

Pantheon (288 pp.)

\$25.95 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-101-87060-0



A novelist tries to adapt to her ever changing reality as her world slowly disappears.

Renowned Japanese author Ogawa (*Revenge*, 2013, etc.) opens her latest

novel with what at first sounds like a sinister fairy tale told by a nameless mother to a nameless daughter: "Long ago, before you were born, there were many more things here...transparent things, fragrant things...fluttery ones, bright ones....It's a shame that the people who live here haven't been able to hold such marvelous things in their hearts and minds, but that's just the way it is on this island." But rather than a twisted bedtime story, this depiction captures the realities of life on the narrator's unnamed island. The small population awakens some mornings with all knowledge of objects as mundane as stamps, valuable as emeralds, omnipresent as birds, or delightful as roses missing from their minds. They then proceed to discard all physical traces of the idea that has disappeared—often burning the lifeless ones and releasing the natural ones to the elements. The authoritarian Memory Police oversee this process of loss and elimination. Viewing "anything that fails to vanish when they say it should [as] inconceivable," they drop into homes for inspections, seizing objects and rounding up anyone who refuses—or is simply unable—to follow the rules. Although, at the outset, the plot feels quite Orwellian, Ogawa employs a quiet, poetic prose to capture the diverse (and often unexpected) emotions of the people left behind rather than of those tormented and imprisoned by brutal authorities. Small acts of rebellion—as modest as a birthday party—do not come out of a commitment to a greater cause but instead originate from her characters' kinship with one another. Technical details about the disappearances remain intentionally vague. The author instead stays close to her protagonist's emotions and the disorientation she and her neighbors struggle with each day. Passages from the narrator's developing novel also offer fascinating glimpses into the way the changing world affects her unconscious mind.

A quiet tale that considers the way small, human connections can disrupt the callous powers of authority.



LOVE AT FIRST LIKE

Orenstein, Hannah

Atria (336 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

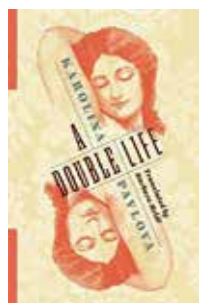
978-1-9821-1779-5

An Instagram mishap leads to a fake engagement announcement for a struggling jeweler...and when sales spike, she decides to play along.

Eliza Roth spent her childhood dreaming of owning a store, and with her sister, Sophie, she's able to make her dream come alive in the form of Brooklyn Jewels. When Eliza finds out via Instagram that her no-good ex is engaged, she indulges in one of her favorite ways to take out her frustration—creating fake engagement announcements for herself, using the beautiful rings she sells in the store, complete with cheesy, gag-inducing captions. But when Eliza wakes up to a flurry of Instagram activity, she realizes that she accidentally posted her fake announcement, including an eye-roll-worthy caption: "They say when you know, you know...and I know I want to spend the rest of my life with

you.” Eliza and Sophie are both mortified, but the two of them quickly see that all this online attention is bringing in major sales. And with an upcoming rent hike that means they might not be able to stay in their current building, plus Sophie and her wife’s expensive fertility treatments, they need the money. When a wedding venue reaches out to offer their facility to Eliza free of charge, she pounces on it. All the publicity from a highly Instagrammable wedding will surely bring in the money they need. The only problem? There’s no groom. She sets off to find a fake fiancé in a bar and ends up stumbling upon Blake, a fellow jeweler who seems picture perfect. When they start dating, Eliza doesn’t tell him about her plan...and as they grow closer, she thinks it’s too late to come clean. But when Eliza starts to develop a real connection to her bartender friend, Raj, things get a lot more complicated. While some aspects of the story strain credulity (Blake frequently says he isn’t on Instagram, but it seems unlikely that he or one of his friends wouldn’t encounter some of the online press about Eliza’s “engagement”), the story is so fun and fast paced that it hardly matters. Orenstein’s (*Playing With Matches*, 2018) writing is quick, witty, and compulsively readable even when Eliza’s desperate actions evoke cringes. Although the story is over the top, the feelings are real, and readers will be able to relate to Eliza’s struggle to find her soul mate in the age of apps and social media.

A classic wacky rom-com and an ideal summer read.



A DOUBLE LIFE

Pavlova, Karolina

Trans. by Heldt, Barbara

Columbia Univ. (160 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-231-19079-4

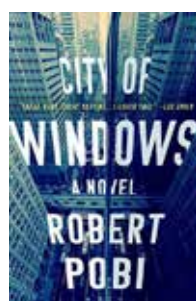


A comedy of manners written in 19th-century Russia.

By day, Cecily is “so used to wearing her mind in a corset that she felt it no more than she did the silk undergarment that she took off only at night.” She is a good daughter, impeccably refined, perfectly prepared for high society. This is mid-19th-century Russia, but it could almost as easily be Regency England. Social strictures are stringently maintained. Cecily is of marriageable age; she may be too refined to even recognize her own desires, but her mother, Vera Vladimirovna, would like to see her married to the eligible, and wealthy, Prince Victor. Cecily’s closest friend, Olga, has her own eyes set on Victor—a match Olga’s mother would very much like to encourage. There’s also Dmitry Ivachinsky, a well-behaved but insufficiently moneyed young man. But with the right amount of prodding—by just the right person—Dmitry Ivachinsky might just stake a claim on Cecily, leaving Prince Victor open for Olga. Refined as she is, Cecily is blind to these machinations. It’s only at night that Cecily’s mind becomes unfettered, that her imagination can expand. Each chapter concludes with the end of a day; at each ending, the prose slips neatly into poetry, reflecting the state of Cecily’s mind. Pavlova, who completed this, her only novel, in

1848, was reviled by many of her Russian contemporaries. She had the distinct misfortune of writing at a time when the very idea of a woman writer was at best considered laughable and at worst monstrous. One of her contemporaries wrote that, in Pavlova, “there is nothing serious, profound, true, and sincere.” He couldn’t have been more wrong. Her only novel (she mostly wrote poetry) is brimful with wit and with sharp observations of the class in which she was raised. Pavlova has Jane Austen’s fine eye for social manners and hypocrisies even if she doesn’t quite maintain Austen’s level of subtlety. It’s possible that her own bitterness about her world sometimes thwarts the artfulness of the novel. She writes of Cecily, “Her soul was so highly polished, her understanding so confused, her natural talents so overorganized and mutilated by the unsparing way that she had been brought up that every problem of life perplexed and scared her.”

Rich with wit, Pavlova’s only novel is a masterful sendup of high society.



CITY OF WINDOWS

Pobi, Robert

Minotaur (400 pp.)

\$26.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-29394-7

The FBI brings in astrophysicist, amputee, and former agent Dr. Lucas Page when a sniper takes aim in the middle of a New York blizzard.

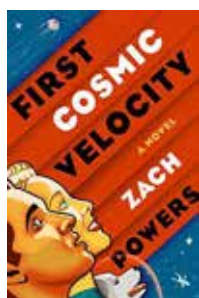
It’s almost Christmas, and Columbia professor Lucas Page is looking forward to getting away from his students and spending a couple of weeks with his wife, Erin, a pediatric surgeon, and their four, soon to be five, adoptive children. It’s not to be. A sniper has killed Lucas’ old FBI partner, Doug Hartke, and Special Agent in Charge Brett Kehoe asks Lucas to use his unusual talent to tell him where the shot came from. It’s been a decade since the incident that nearly killed Lucas and cost him an arm, a leg, and an eye, but he can still pull off what, to others, seems like an impossible trick: In a blink, he can see the city as a “matrix of interconnected digits, a mosaic of numbers that stretched to the horizon.” It’s a singular talent that makes him a hot commodity in what turns out to be a doozy of a case. After all, making the shot that killed Doug Hartke “would be like trying to thread a needle while riding a mechanical bull set to Motörhead.” The eerily talented sniper continues to take out cops at an inhuman pace, and the FBI has a suspect, but Lucas doesn’t believe they’ve got the right guy and enlists a few of his sharpest students to help him find a connection between the victims. The cat-and-mouse game that follows takes Lucas to his limits and beyond and puts his family firmly in the crosshairs. Investing in Dr. Lucas Page and his extraordinary family is ridiculously easy, and, crankiness aside, he has a solid core of decency that shines through. Lucas is surrounded by genuinely interesting supporting characters, such as his de facto partner Agent Whitaker, who has a preternatural talent for anticipating what Lucas is thinking, and Dingo, a fellow amputee and former BBC

The Soviet space program is only half successful in Powers' debut novel.

FIRST COSMIC VELOCITY

combat photographer who lives over the Pages' garage. Keep an eye out for a heart-pounding sequence involving Dingo and an actual broadsword. Pobi's (*American Woman*, 2014, etc.) keen attention to the mechanics and challenges involved in having multiple prostheses is a plus, although readers will have to wait to find out more about the incident that caused Lucas' life-altering injuries.

Relentless pacing, tight plotting, and a brainy, idiosyncratic new hero make this one a winner.



FIRST COSMIC VELOCITY

Powers, Zach

Putnam (352 pp.)

\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

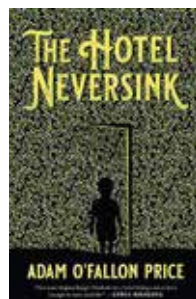
978-0-525-53927-8

The Soviet space program is only half successful in Powers' debut novel.

It's 1964, and though the Russians have figured out how to launch their cosmonauts into space, they can't figure out how to get them back down. In order

to hide this frightening secret from the world—even from Premier Nikita Khrushchev himself—the space program, led by a man known only as the Chief Designer, recruits pairs of twins. One twin is trained to go into space, never to return, while the other prepares to play the returning hero and recite lines about what it feels like to be in zero gravity (“at first like falling...and then you float”). One of the left-behind twins, Leonid, begins to doubt the project as he's whisked around on a press tour by Ignatius, a mysterious figure charged with keeping the fake cosmonauts in line. Despite the attempted intervention of Western spies, the coverup somehow holds together. But the Chief Designer runs out of twins before he figures out how to make a fully functional spacecraft. And what's to become of the left-behind twins down on Earth, doomed to live lies? Powers' writing style is delicate and almost otherworldly; as in his collection of stories, *Gravity Changes* (2017), each word is carefully chosen, every sentence deliberately flowing into the next. Unlike the stories in that collection, this novel feels more like it's drifting through space than moving along a clear orbit. Even so, scenes centered on the characters' emotional lives are touching, and the dreamy tone brings a touch of fantasy without pushing too far into whimsy.

A lovely and hopeful story from a promising writer.



THE HOTEL NEVERSINK

Price, Adam O'Tallon

Tin House (288 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-947793-34-7

A generational saga that chronicles the legacy of the Sikorskys—Jewish émigrés from Eastern Europe—across the span of four generations as they grapple with the aftermath of a dark secret in the declining grandeur of the family's

Catskills hotel.

Price's (*The Grand Tour*, 2016) second novel opens in 1931 in the small town of Liberty, New York, with the news that George B. Foley—eccentric transportation tycoon—has committed suicide. As Foley died without heirs, his property is sold at auction to local Jewish innkeeper Asher Sikorsky. Asher, a fiercely proud patriarch whom bad luck seems to follow from continent to continent, manages to transform both the building and his own fortunes, and—with the help of his wife and children—renovates the vacant manor into the thriving Hotel Neversink, crown jewel of the Catskills Borscht Belt circuit. And yet the tale Price pieces together over the course of his decade-hopping chapters—narrated by indomitable hotel manager Jeanie Sikorsky; her comedian brother, Joseph; Jeanie's earnest grandson Lenny and dissolute grandniece Alice; the taciturn hotel detective; a kleptomaniac second cousin who works as a hotel maid; and a loosely affiliated host of other Sikorskys or hangers-on—has more to do with the aftermath of the family's success than it does with their hard-won triumphs. In 1950, when a young boy disappears on the property, the hotel's idyll is rocked; in 1973, when 9-year-old Alice is assaulted in a basement storeroom where the missing boy's bones come to light, its long decline is inevitable. Yet even as the remaining Sikorskys fight over whether to maintain their family's legacy or cut their losses and thus save the family itself, there are those among them who wonder if the children who have disappeared from the towns and woods around The Neversink are victims of coincidence or part of a calculated plot to destroy the family. Part genealogy, part murder mystery, part ghost story, the book's ambitions overwhelm its scope. The result is a powerfully wrought novel of a specifically American place and time inhabited by appealing characters who are only fuzzily sketched. A last-minute revelation resolves the book's central mystery with unconvincing, explosive drama, and the reader is left wondering not what will happen next to the suffering Sikorskys but rather where all the careful nuance of the previous pages has gone.

A book of great ambition and promise that errs on the side of a poorly conceived plot.



THE WORD OF THE SPEECHLESS

Ribeyro, Julio Ramón

Trans. by Silver, Katherine

New York Review Books (264 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-68137-323-2

Sometimes bleak, sometimes warily humorous stories by Peruvian writer Ribeyro.

Ribeyro (1929-1994) is in the second tier of the Latin American Boom, much less well known than his compatriot Mario Vargas Llosa, to say nothing of Gabriel García Márquez, Alejo Carpentier, and Jorge Luis Borges. The latter's influence can be sensed in some of the stories gathered here, especially the ones in which Ribeyro's protagonists turn out to be ghosts, as the closing of the first story, "Tracks," reveals: "He remembered that the monogram on the handkerchief were his initials, and he no longer had any doubt that inside his room the spectacle of his own death had just taken place." In another story, a fisherman similarly awaits his own murder; in still another, a bankrupt man considers the relief that a plunge down a seaside cliff, "that precise border between the earth and the sea," might bring. Some of Ribeyro's stories, especially the earlier and the shorter ones, are imbued with death, sometimes revealed, sometimes acknowledged at the very beginning of a story ("But he...found little interest in all of these subjects, as he had been dead for three days"). Almost all have a kind of knowing cynicism to them, with ironic distance but not without humor, as with the long story that gave its title to a late collection, "For Smokers Only"; there, the protagonist, a chain smoker like the author himself, admits to a host of health problems—"indigestion, nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite, heart palpitations, dizzy spells, and a stomach ulcer"—that have beset him while concluding that, well, since Flaubert smoked so much that his mustache was yellow and Gorky and Hemingway were also addicted to tobacco, there may just be good literary reason to keep puffing away. Albeit happy endings are few, Ribeyro's stories often offer unexpected twists, their characters mysteriously disappearing in a flurry of snow or puffs of smoke from cigarettes here and guns there.

A welcome selection of prose that introduces a Latin American master to English-language audiences.



GOOD GIRL, BAD GIRL

Robotham, Michael

Scribner (368 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jul. 23, 2019

978-1-9821-0360-6

Troubled psychologist Cyrus Haven has to evaluate a girl without a past while finding out who killed a rising young figure skater.

Evie Cormac is an enigma. No one knew who she was when she was found



in a secret room in a north London home, weighing less than a child half her age, which was determined to be 11 or 12. Only a few feet from her hiding place was the decomposing body of a man who had been tortured to death. Given a new name, she ended up in Nottingham's Langford Hall, a high security children's home, after a series of foster homes. Now, six years later, she's eager to be declared an adult, so Cyrus must evaluate her for possible release. Evie is rude, unruly, self-destructive, prone to occasional violence, heartbreakingly naïve, and very, very broken. She also seems to be able to tell, with remarkable consistency, when someone is lying. This intrigues Cyrus, who wrote a thesis on human lie detectors, aka "truth wizards." When Cyrus makes an impulsive choice to temporarily foster Evie, it brings a basket of challenges to his already complicated life. Meanwhile, Cyrus is assisting his mentor, Chief Inspector Lenny Parvel, in the investigation of the suspicious death and possible rape of 15-year-old Jodie Sheehan, who was called the "golden girl of British skating." Some shocking revelations lead Cyrus and the police down a rabbit hole of dark family secrets, and Evie can't help but involve herself in the investigation. It's the careful and often poignant interplay between Cyrus and Evie that elevates this consistently stellar yarn. Cyrus' parents and sisters were murdered when he was just a boy, and by all accounts Evie's childhood was nothing short of a hellscape. Trauma unites them, but Robotham (*The Secrets She Keeps*, 2017, etc.) seeks to show that together, they might begin to heal. Readers will adore the brilliant hot mess that is Evie, and more than a few moments are breathtakingly sad, such as Evie's confusion about her wrinkly fingers during a long bath...because she's never in her life had one.

Robotham is a master plotter at the top of his form, and readers will surely hope to see more of his complicated new characters.



THE WOMEN OF THE COPPER COUNTRY

Russell, Mary Doria

Atria (352 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-9821-0958-5

Russell (*Epitaph*, 2015, etc.) offers a lesson in American labor relations in this fictional portrait of Anna Klobuchar Clements, a 25-year-old miner's wife who led a wildcat strike against the large Calumet, Michigan, copper mining company Calumet & Hecla in 1913.

Though little remembered today, Annie Clements acquired the sobriquet "America's Joan of Arc" for her leadership during the monthslong labor uprising involving as many as 9,000 miners. Annie comes across as a larger-than-life heroine—physically striking at 6-foot-1—although also a warmhearted woman with an increasingly conflicted emotional life. Initially she seems no different from other miners' wives, stretching pennies to keep house while accepting her husband Joe's drunken bluster and

A darkly glittering jewel from a promising new voice in thrillers.

DEVOTION

beatings without complaint. Her sorrow is that after seven years of marriage she has yet to conceive. Instead of motherhood, Annie has thrown herself into her responsibilities as president of the Women's Auxiliary of Local 15, the Western Federation of Miners. No matter that Joe refuses to join the union. A miner's death pushes Annie to call for a strike to improve salaries and safety conditions. Experienced union organizer Charlie Miller (a fictional composite of two real union leaders) doubts the strike will succeed, but he recognizes that Annie is a powerhouse he must support. Charlie invites photographer/reporter Michael Sweeney (also a composite) to Calumet to get national coverage. Michael finds himself drawn not only to the drama of the strike, but also to Annie, who inevitably discovers she reciprocates his desire. Union icon Mother Jones makes a cameo appearance, and then there's Annie's real-life nemesis, James MacNaughton, the company's general manager, whose interest in hygiene seems almost progressive until he reveals himself as a greedy capitalist committed to maximum efficiency and profit whatever the human cost. Russell writes with her usual verve, but readers will miss the emotional density of her best work, in which abundant research melts into the human drama; here, characters often feel like puppets manipulated to sell a slice of union history from a decidedly anti-capitalist angle.

Historical fiction that feels uncomfortably relevant today.



I HEART OKLAHOMA!

Scranton, Roy
Soho (288 pp.)
\$25.00 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-61695-938-8

Scranton's second novel (*War Porn*, 2016, etc.) is less genre-bending than genre-shredding: part Kerouac-ian road trip, part end-of-days satire of Trump-era America, part fever dream, part extension and revision of *Badlands* and

Natural-Born Killers.

At the book's center is a jaded writer named Suzie. She agrees to go on a cross-country road trip with an iconoclastic video artist—a former Wall Streeter who seems like what would happen if one of Tom Wolfe's *Masters of the Universe* quit finance and decided to remake himself by method-acting Wolfe's prose style—and the filmmaker's videographer/aide-de-camp. The early chapters, as the three of them clash and bristle and preen as they try to find the shape of the thing—of their quest, of themselves, of America itself—are fascinating and hyperkinetic. These pages are simultaneously high flown and earthy, like a Platonic dialogue as written by Quentin Tarantino. All art is bluster and nonsense, Suzie says to the filmmaker, but the “best stuff...is so highly refined and audacious and dense that nobody cares whether it's bullshit or not.” That theory of art is this novel's aim and ideal, and for a good while Scranton succeeds at it. But midway through, the trip flies apart—the center cannot hold, or at least the vintage 1971 Plymouth

Valiant they're driving cannot hold these three egos—and the book becomes, for a time, a fever dream, what Scranton calls a “dream ballet,” before we rejoin Suzie, heading west again, alone this time, as she composes a retelling from Caril Ann Fugate's perspective of her murder spree with Charlie Starkweather. Not all Scranton's risks pan out—the descent of narrative into chaos is more appealing in principle than in, you know, *narrative*—but this novel has big ambitions, a whipsawing imaginative energy, and, at its heart, the urgency and earnestness of a jeremiad.

America, Scranton seems to argue, will not, cannot, end well.



DEVOTION

Stevens, Madeline
Ecco/HarperCollins (304 pp.)
\$26.99 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-0-06-288322-3

Reduced to picking up men in bars in hopes of trading sexual favors for a meal, Ella is definitely down on her luck. So when an offer comes to work as a nanny for a wealthy young couple, she jumps at the chance. But the job may cost more

than she bargained for.

Ensnared in a lovely town house between Park and Lexington avenues, Lonnie and James seem to have everything Ella never had. Both women lost their mothers early, but Lonnie's died young, leaving her to the care of an overbearing father and private school, while Ella's simply packed up and left. Instead of struggling to make rent, Lonnie luxuriates in writing, easily living off her own trust fund and James' work in finance. Yet Lonnie seems to invite disaster, trysting with their friend Carlow practically under James' nose. Soon Ella finds herself drawn into games of sexual risk, assumed identities, and drug-addled escapades. With each character unstable and unreliable, Stevens' debut novel shimmers with tension. Ella isn't simply a damsel in distress; she might be a villain herself. Stealing mementos from Lonnie's closet, borrowing her clothes, reading (and rewriting) her journal (not-so-cleverly hidden in the freezer)—Ella treasures these souvenirs, squirreling away rings and someone else's memories with equal abandon. What everyone in this novel wants is both crystal clear—money, power, attention—and deliciously obscure. Why is Ella so drawn to Lonnie? Why is Lonnie so eager to pull Ella into a tangled web of marital and extramarital relationships? Stevens delicately pulls the threads together, ever so slowly, until a fateful night strangles any possibility of changing the course of anyone's fate. And then Lonnie disappears.

A darkly glittering jewel from a promising new voice in thrillers.



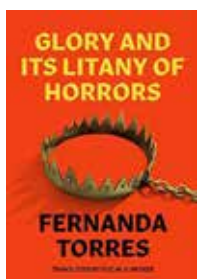
SURFSIDE SISTERS

Thayer, Nancy
Ballantine (320 pp.)
\$27.00 | Jul. 2, 2019
978-1-5247-9872-7

Longtime best friends struggle to remain connected when their lives take divergent paths.

Keely Green and Isabelle Maxwell have been attached at the hip since preschool. Although they are both natives of Nantucket, they have always had very different lifestyles. Where Keely resides in a modest home, Isabelle's attorney father is able to provide his family with every luxury. Even so, the girls bond over their love of Nantucket and shared dreams of becoming writers. As they grow and end up at different colleges, they see that life can often complicate friendships, and they begin to gradually grow apart. When Isabelle declares she has found the perfect man, Keely begins dating Isabelle's long-ago boyfriend, Tommy. Tension over Tommy causes the young women's relationship to grow increasingly strained. Adding drama to this now-fraught relationship is the moment when Keely makes it as a bestselling novelist and moves to New York, while Isabelle, who was always the more cosmopolitan of the pair, is still living on the island, with no professional prospects in sight. Despite her success, Keely feels empty without Isabelle at her side. As these young women see their lives unfolding in ways they never expected, the biggest question they face is whether they will ever find a way back to each other. Offering details about life on Nantucket—both during the winter months, when only true islanders are present, and in summer, when the town is overrun with vacationers—Thayer (*A Nantucket Wedding*, 2018, etc.) brings the island to life so vividly that Nantucket becomes its own character. Told in the third person, the novel follows Keely as she navigates coming-of-age, changing friendships, romance, and caring for an ailing parent. The author also sheds a bright light on some of the difficulties inherent in the writer's life, including loneliness and constant self-doubt. Told in a plot-focused, accessible prose, the novel appears at first to be a light read, but it deals artfully with heavier issues, including guilt, envy, and forgiveness.

An engaging tale about how childhood expectations can be transformed on the journey through adulthood.



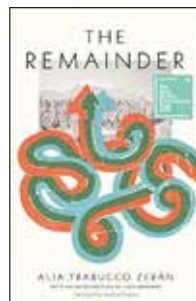
GLORY AND ITS LITANY OF HORRORS

Torres, Fernanda
Trans. by Becker, Eric M.B.
Restless Books (224 pp.)
\$17.99 paper | Jul. 23, 2019
978-1-63206-112-6

The career of a middle-aged Brazilian actor goes seriously off the rails—and then plunges into the abyss.

Bad things happen in this second novel by Brazilian actress Torres (*The End*, 2017), and then bad goes to worse, but the tone of the novel remains closer to farce than tragedy. Having forsaken the soap operas that made him a star, the narrator has committed himself (and his financial resources) to a touring production of *King Lear* while his life offstage has become more Lear-like than his performance onstage. His mother has dementia; she believes her son is her husband, and she keeps trying to seduce him. At least she talks. Her mother-in-law, the actor's grandmother, remains alive but barely lucid. And so the family members he might expect to help him care for his mother have their hands full. "I thought back to Lear's madness," he laments. "I should have studied my grandmother more closely." For his real-life predicament strikes him as closer to the madness and tragedy of Shakespeare than what he has been portraying on stage, even before he had brought the whole production crashing down on him by breaking into uncontrollable laughter at the most inopportune time. The bulk of the novel finds him reminiscing on how he has found himself at this juncture. He remembers his early days studying under a radical polemicist, when he learned that revolution preached from the stage can lead to disastrous consequences. He found his own revolutionary inspiration in *Hair*; it was lust that led him to acting and then to love with an older actress who found it impossible to separate her roles from her life (a recurring theme throughout the book). A series of set pieces then includes a disastrous film shoot and a biblical TV soap titled *Sodom*, where "ripped dancer girls weaned on iron and protein supplements shook their silicon during the Dance of the Seven Veils." He thinks he has hit his absolute bottom when he takes a toilet paper commercial in his role as Lear in his attempt to recoup his losses. But in a novel like this, things can always get worse.

From an inside perspective, there really is no business like show business.



THE REMAINDER

Trabucco Zerán, Alia
Trans. by Hughes, Sophie
Coffee House (224 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-56689-550-7

First novel by a Chilean literary scholar who serves up a centrifugal story of death, history, and mathematics.

Felipe Arrabal, a young man living in Santiago, and his friend Iquela have an unusual ability: They can see the dead, legions of whom are to be found in what he describes as "the strangest of places: lying at bus stops, on curbs, in parks, hanging from bridges and traffic lights, floating down the Mapocho." The dead are everywhere, and Felipe uses "apocalyptic maths" to try to account for them all, millions on millions, their number added to dramatically by the murderous military government of Pinochet and company. Iquela's heart goes aflutter when she meets Paloma, an ever so cool young woman who has come to Santiago from Berlin; she

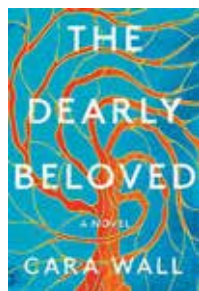


A moving, eloquent exploration of faith and its response to the refining fire of life's challenges.

THE DEARLY BELOVED

smokes, has blonde hair, looks tough, and knows the ways of the world. Paloma is so mysterious that a cop wonders whether to bust her for smoking underage “or let her do as she pleased.” Clearly Paloma does what she pleases most of the time, raised, like Iquela, in a home that has deep, hidden roots in the anti-Pinochet resistance movement. “We were so young,” laments Iquela’s mother, looking back on the day she met Paloma’s mom, who, alas, has died—and now her body has gone missing somewhere on the other side of the Andes. She might be anywhere, Iquela observes: in an airplane hangar, in a morgue, back home in Berlin, or “locked inside the photograph hanging on the wall of my mother’s dining room.” Clueless, the three go on a winding journey in search of the wayward body, adding “an improvised inventory of corpses” to Felipe’s endless calculations. The story is told matter-of-factly, with a few hints of magical realism layered in, especially as it draws to a close: They might be angels or Valkyries, perhaps ghosts themselves, but whatever they are, they’re memorable companions on a strange trip.

Thanatofiction at its best and a debut that leaves the reader wanting more.



THE DEARLY BELOVED

Wall, Cara

Simon & Schuster (352 pp.)

\$26.99 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-982104-52-8



Molded by their backgrounds and childhood experiences, the individual members of two couples adopt beliefs which will define them—until they are confronted by a heart-wrenching challenge.

Writing with restrained lyricism, Wall’s debut—15 years in the making—offers a kind of literary chamber music, combining the viewpoints of a quartet of characters across multiple decades and events. Charles, the son of a Harvard professor, is a man reliant on research and insight. James, whose drunken father was broken by war, will grow up to be full of impatience and the urge to action. Nan, the daughter of a Southern minister, has learned patience and generosity while Lily, orphaned at 15, is happiest when withdrawn. Charles’ unswerving love for Lily is matched by James’ determination to marry Nan even though neither couple seems a natural fit. When both men opt for a life in the church, Nan is better equipped for the role of clergyman’s wife than independent, brittle Lily, who feels no obligation to conform. The four eventually connect when Charles and James are offered the joint ministry of Third Presbyterian Church in Greenwich Village. Old-fashioned in tone and subject matter, the story is set in the mid-20th century and evokes some of the stifling social norms of the era. Wall has a very precise sensibility, and there is no escaping the sense of tidy predetermination in the clear, fixed positions of her four figures and their various oppositions, seen through the debates, struggles, rejections, and consolations that arise among them. Finely drawn and paced and written with intense compassion, the novel shifts

ground with a late development that will test and push forward each of the four, leading to a conclusion consistent with Wall’s grace and control.

A moving, eloquent exploration of faith and its response to the refining fire of life’s challenges.



THE DEAD GIRL IN 2A

Wilson, Carter

Sourcebooks Landmark (416 pp.)

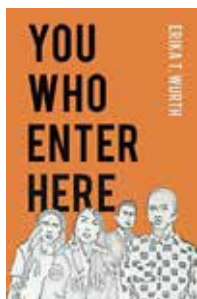
\$15.99 paper | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-4926-8603-3

A troubled ghostwriter’s past may be the key to an explosive secret.

Life hasn’t been the same for Jake Buchanan since the accident that seriously injured his 8-year-old daughter, Em, and drove a wedge between him and his wife, Abby. Jake just hopes that his new job writing the memoirs of a mysterious and wealthy Colorado man will at least ensure they can pay for Em’s medical bills. When he meets former teacher Clara Stowe on his flight to Denver, he’s instantly drawn to her. Small talk turns to something more profound when Clara reveals that she plans to kill herself at the site of two mountain peaks, Aspen’s Maroon Bells. And that’s not all. Clara was adopted as a child, as was Jake, and neither can remember their childhoods before they were adopted. It’s enough to convince Jake that they’ve met for a reason, and he implores Clara to contact him if she needs him. Through alternating narratives, it’s revealed that Clara and Jake were both invited by a mysterious man named Landis to take part in a clinical trial designed to help them unlock memories and meet their full potential. Both were given an evocative, illustrated book and a vial of pills and have gone through various changes in the months since, such as heightened empathy for Jake and Clara’s self-imposed isolation and fascination with death. When Jake is approached by a woman claiming that Landis isn’t quite what he seems, he finds himself in a relentless quest for the truth that just might kill him. Wilson (*Mr. Tender’s Girl*, 2018, etc.) explores how good intentions and hubris can lead down dark paths while tackling themes of sorrow, guilt, and the intoxicating power of memory and human connection with equal aplomb. He even throws in a murder mystery for good measure and delivers a denouement that is both strangely sad and exceedingly creepy. Dean Koontz fans in particular will find a lot to enjoy.

A disturbing, propulsive, and satisfying thriller. Wilson is an author to watch.



YOU WHO ENTER HERE

Wurth, Erika T.

Excelsior Editions/State Univ. of New York Press (248 pp.)

\$19.95 paper | Mar. 1, 2019

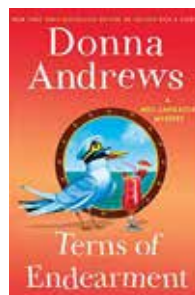
978-1-4384-7316-1

A dark story of crime, addiction, and homelessness among young Native Americans whose only escape is by way of the grave.

They're not much older than the teenage protagonists of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, but though they occupy some of the same literary turf, Wurth's (*Buckskin Cocaine*, 2017, etc.) principal characters are harder bitten and more obviously doomed. Matthew is living on the edge of the Navajo Nation, doing his best to drink himself into an early grave, when he meets Chris, who takes him to Albuquerque and enrolls him as a member of a Native American gang, putting him at war with other gangs. Chris is tough, a stone killer who gets his kicks going out on drive-by shooting missions: "He said it was like shooting fish in a barrel. He also said it was more exciting than smash and grabs, because that rarely involved people." In the amoral confines of the gang, Matthew, Chris, and a few other young people steal, commit random acts of violence, sell drugs, and spend their days waiting for something big to happen. When it does, it is explosive, whether scraps with rivals or the triangle Matthew forms with Chris' girlfriend, Maria, who lures him with bleak promises: "We can be junkies together. That would be nice." It's no *Romeo and Juliet*, though it plays at the edges of a conventional love story, and it does not end remotely well for anyone concerned. Wurth's story is sometimes obvious—it's a rather heavy bit of symbolism that Matthew would be taking his cues from a "tattered copy of Dante's *Inferno*," which of course gives the book its title—but it's told with grim assuredness, the interactions among the characters real. A literal trigger warning: The book is spattered with violence and its aftereffects, but not a bit seems out of place.

Expertly told; a well-crafted portrait of lives lived without hope in the shadow of death.

M Y S T E R Y



TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

Andrews, Donna

Minotaur (320 pp.)

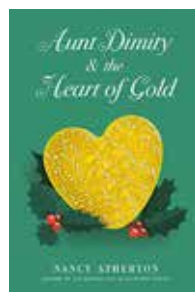
\$26.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-19297-4

Meg Langslow's maiden sea voyage, a trip to Bermuda, rapidly turns into the cruise from hell.

Of all the offers he's had to lecture aboard cruise ships, naturalist J. Montgomery Blake has selected Pastime Lines because they'll give him a steeply discounted rate for all the companions traveling with him. For Monty, that means his daughter and son-in-law; their children, Meg and Rob; Meg's husband; Rob's fiancée; Meg's aunt and two cousins, herbalist Rose Noire and Caerphilly County Deputy Horace Hollingsworth; and zoologist Caroline Willner. Within 24 hours, they're all sorry they ever booked passage on the *Pastime Wanderer*. Trevor Ponsonby-West, Monty's indispensable assistant, takes to his cabin, then vanishes as completely as if he'd never boarded. Desiree St. Christophe, the aging doyenne of ravished-virgin romances, leaps into the Atlantic the first night at sea, provoking not a single tear from Angie Weyburn, Kate Trevanian, Tish Gregory, and Janet Costello, four other writers convinced that Desiree's plagiarism suit drove their friend Nancy Goreham to suicide five months ago. The *Wanderer's* navigation system goes on the fritz, and repairs require cutting all electrical power to the rest of the ship. Most of the thinly stretched crew, and many of the passengers, are stricken with food poisoning. And although there's no way anybody's going to find Desiree's body, Meg and her father's search of her cabin discloses a quite different corpse. As the *Wanderer* sits becalmed at the edge of the Bermuda Triangle, giving Rose Noire the willies, Meg's mother rouses the passengers with a stirring speech: "Many of us are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs on board the ship."

The Poseidon Adventure with a laugh track that drowns out most of the individual characters' voices.



AUNT DIMITY AND THE HEART OF GOLD

Atherton, Nancy

Viking (240 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 18, 2019

978-0-525-52268-3

Christmas in the Cotswolds in Atherton's (*Aunt Dimity and the King's Ransome*, 2018, etc.) latest.

The holidays have come to Finch, close to where Americans Lori and Bill Shepherd and their three children live and where Bill runs the

Exotic animals, unbridled sex, and murder provide all the necessities for a perfect honeymoon.

LOVE AND DEATH AMONG THE CHEETAHS

British branch of his family's law firm. Unfortunately, the seasonal festivities are blighted by a virus that's laid the village low. Lori is thrilled when her healthy group is invited to Christmas dinner at Anscombe Manor, where her best friend, Emma Harris, lives with her husband, Derek, and runs a riding school. The dinner, which includes an Indian sweet recipe Emma found in a handwritten cookbook left by a former owner, is a smashing success. But Emma seems out of sorts, and their friend Bree Pym announces that her fiancé has just dumped her. An unexpected ice storm traps them and gives them an extra guest: Miss Matilda Trout, whose car slides into a ditch when she stops to ask for directions. Emma, who's recently cleared out a room full of junk, is puzzled about the original use of the room, which is windowless with six wall sconces and linenfold wainscoting and is in the oldest part of the house, built by the Mandevilles in the 16th century. Self-effacing Tilly Trout identifies it as a Roman Catholic chapel and suggests that there may be a priest hole as well. Indeed there is, one containing a statue of the Hindu goddess Parvati, numerous jewels, and a large golden heart with the initials C and M. Lacking Christmas festivities to keep them busy, Lori and her friends benefit from Tilly's expertise on almost every subject as they try to track down the person who made the shrine. Love blooms as both Tilly and Bree find new swains and discover an old love affair.

Atherton's fans can count on the charm of her picture-perfect Cotswold village and the warm Christmas feelings, as long as they don't expect much of a mystery.



RELATIVE FORTUNES

Benn, Marlowe

Lake Union Publishing (320 pp.)

\$24.95 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-5420-0521-0

When Julia Kydd arrives in New York in 1924, she thinks her only struggle will be to fight her half brother's control over the inheritance she's shortly due. But before long, she's involved in a mystery—and maybe even a murder.

Julia, who had been living in London and trying to make a go of her fledgling publishing company, is about to turn 25—the age when she is to inherit her share of a large fortune. On the boat back to New York, she reunites with Glennis, an old school friend who is rich, feisty, and more than a little flighty. Together, they explore Jazz Age Manhattan while Julia hopes her elder half brother, Philip, will not contest the will. However, when Glennis' sister, a well-known suffragette, dies under strange circumstances, Philip makes Julia a proposition—solve the mystery and he won't fight the will. As Julia probes into the secrets of Glennis' wealthy, pompous, and proud family, she also learns a great deal about the issues facing women who brave society's scorn for demanding equal rights. In this debut novel, Benn shows that she's done her research into the mores and manners of the age—from art and fashion to the requirement that a man must sign for any loan a woman wants to take out.

At times, though, these chunks of information slow down the plot instead of being seamlessly woven into it, and Benn spends perhaps a little too much time pondering the limited options available to women of the era. The ending, with its multiple surprises, helps a little and certainly sets up things for spunky Julia to appear again.

There is enough promise in this first outing to hope that, with a little less pondering and a little more pacing, Benn's next mystery will be livelier.



LOVE AND DEATH AMONG THE CHEETAHS

Bowen, Rhys

Berkley (304 pp.)

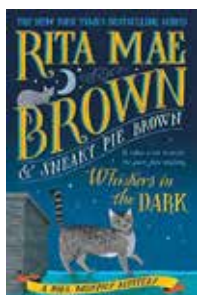
\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-451-49284-5

Exotic animals, unbridled sex, and murder provide all the necessities for a perfect honeymoon.

Lady Georgiana Rannoch (*Four Funerals and Maybe a Wedding*, 2018, etc.) may no longer be 35th in line to the throne, but she's finally Mrs. Darcy O'Mara. Although she and Darcy return to Rannoch House to go through wedding presents, Darcy promises her an exotic honeymoon, and when the queen offers them the use of Balmoral at a garden party, he announces that they're going instead to Kenya. They fly with Rowena Hartley, a mean girl at Georgie's school, and her brother, Rupert, both on a visit to their father, who wants to see the children he's ignored for years now that he's become Lord Cheriton. An even worse fellow passenger is Mrs. Simpson, who plans to spend time with the Prince of Wales. Georgie has always suspected that Darcy's some kind of spy, and she's uneasy that the trip's been arranged by government official Freddie Blanchford but eager to stay with Diddy Ruocco in the infamous Happy Valley, where they meet lots of aristocrats who live in high style. Darcy admits that he's on the trail of a jewel thief, but Georgie suspects he's holding back a bigger secret. When they dine with Lord Cheriton, aka Bwana Hartley, he makes a hard pass at Georgie and displays his short temper and Nazi sympathies. Invited to one of Lady Idina's wild overnight parties, they realize that the couples spend all night changing partners. A shocked Georgie spends a restless night alone with Darcy until they sneak out early in the morning only to discover Bwana's car in the middle of the road and his partly eaten body nearby. From that point on, the beauties of Kenya take a back seat to sleuthing, which disturbs someone enough to bait wild animals to kill them.

Bowen provides more social commentary than usual in this lighthearted series, revealing the careless bigotry and racism of the aristocratic Brits in Kenya, and the tale is all the better for it.



WHISKERS IN THE DARK

Brown, Rita Mae & Brown, Sneaky Pie

Bantam (288 pp.)

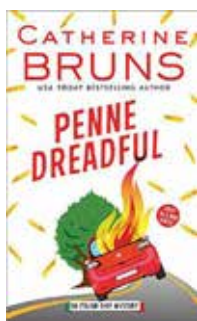
\$28.00 | Jun. 4, 2019

978-0-425-28718-7

A present-day killer strikes during the preparations for a veterans' benefit while an 18th-century family attempts to modernize their household routines.

After working to ready the Institute at Aldie, Virginia, a site for agricultural programming and the current home of the National Beagle Club of America, for the Hounds F4R Heroes fundraiser for veterans, Harry Haristeen and Susan Tucker join their fellow volunteers for some fireside political musings. Arlene Billeaud and Jason and Clare Holzknecht, whose strong political opinions stem from their war experiences, agree on the importance of supporting veterans through the beagle-focused fundraiser. Harry's longtime cat companion, Mrs. Murphy, along with Pewter, veteran dog companion Tee Tucker, and new addition Pirate join the festive preparations. But they're startled when they spy Ruffy, an unfamiliar beagle who has the distinction of being a ghost dog on Aldie's premises. Conversations about politics and beagles are interspersed with the ongoing story of Cloverfields (*Probable Claws*, 2018, etc.), an 18th-century farm whose upstairs/downstairs dynamics inform the problem of a murdered body that Harry's been pondering almost as an aside. Modern times see a killer at Aldie that Ruffy's trying to keep quiet; the story of past times alternates between a trio of runaway slaves and a romance that may unite two farms. It's never entirely clear why the focus is split between past and present, but that doesn't seem to be Brown's leading concern anyway, though it's hard to say just what that concern is this time or where the series is going.

Franchise fans who aren't enamored of the more recent focus on sport hunting or political philosophy will feel even further alienated.



PENNE DREADFUL

Bruns, Catherine

Sourcebooks (416 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-4926-8425-1

A talented amateur chef turns pro in an attempt to solve her husband's murder.

Opening her own restaurant had always been Tessa Esposito's dream—a dream she shared with her husband, Dylan, whose accounting expertise would have put him in the office while

she was behind the stove. Before Dylan's sudden death in an auto accident, Tessa's only experience cooking for the public was a couple of months at Sunnyside Up, a local breakfast place. But she's reeling from losing her young husband, so when

Tessa's police-detective cousin, Gino Mancusi, tries to interest her in a job at Slice, Anthony Falducci's pizzeria, she's pretty underwhelmed. At least, until Gino reveals that Dylan's death was not an accident and that before his crash, he was spending an awful lot of time with Anthony and his brother, Vince. Approximately one minute later, Tessa's out the door to grab a job application. Anthony snaps her up on the spot, and next thing you know, Tessa's stretching dough, cooking up her signature sauce (based on her grandmother's secret recipe), and even whipping up a stromboli or two, hoping to expand Anthony's meager menu. But stripped-down as the food offerings may be, there are clues aplenty at Slice: weird phone messages, sketchy delivery drivers, bags of white powder stashed in the walk-in, and endless mixed messages about whether Dylan was hitting on Anthony's daughter, Isabella, or Izzy was chasing Dylan. By the time Tessa sorts out what's what, she may have made herself her husband's killer's next target.

Bruns, author of the Cindy York, Carrie Jorgenson, and Cookies and Chance mysteries, must have the stamina of a short order cook. Her new heroine's sauce may be spicy, but her plotting needs a bit more polish to break away from the crowded culinary cozy pack.



THE TELL TAIL HEART

Conte, Cate

Minotaur (288 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jun. 25, 2019

978-1-250-07208-5

A cat fancier in an island town delves into a murder that brings her own family secrets to light.

Maddie James, a cat lover through and through, has returned to her childhood home of Daybreak Island to open JJ's House of Purrs, a cat cafe catering to

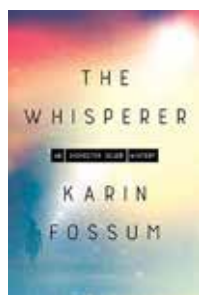
other fans of felines. Even in the off-season, business is going well, which is a major relief to Maddie now that she has to pay the inflated prices of Dr. Drake, the island's new veterinarian. Maddie's even been catering to bestselling thriller author Jason Holt, though she doesn't realize that for weeks she's been so close to fame until her sister, Val, points him out. To be fair, Maddie's preoccupied with other matters. One of the cafe's visitors has claimed that Maddie's longtime feline companion, JJ, is actually hers and not Maddie's. Unsure what to do, Maddie enlists the help of her grandpa Leo, the island's former chief of police, to try to set things right. She learns that the claimant's name is Thea Coleman, but when she tries to learn more about Thea online, there's nothing to be found. And that's only the beginning. As readily as grandpa Leo helps Maddie with her problem, he seems to have issues of his own, though he's reluctant to trust Maddie even when she can tell something's wrong. Leo's problems are connected to Leopard Man, one of the island's resident characters who dresses in cat prints and speaks exclusively in Shakespearean quotations. In the wake of a sudden murder, Maddie has to figure out Leo's link to Leopard

Who knew organizing garage sales could be a dangerous occupation?

LET'S FAKE A DEAL

Man in order to solve the crime and learn about her own family in the process.

In a subgenre in which dialogue and character development typically take a back seat to ailurophilia, Conte's cat cafe series (*Purrder She Wrote*, 2018, etc.) is eminently readable and often immersive.



THE WHISPERER

Fossum, Karin

Trans. by Dickson, Kari

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (336 pp.)

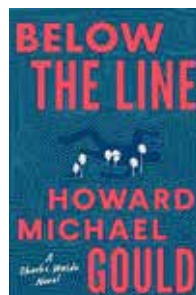
\$24.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-328-61419-3

A familiar damsel-in-distress story veers off script into territory that would be too dark for almost anyone but Fossum (*Hell Fire*, 2016, etc.).

Kirkelina shop clerk Ragna Riegel was born to be hurt. An only child whose parents died years ago, she was too unattractive even as a teenager to appeal to most men, and her seduction by much older photographer Walter Eriksson, long since departed for Stockholm, left her on her own to raise a son, Rikard Josef, who took off for Berlin as soon as he possibly could. Over the years, Ragna has comforted herself by fantasizing about her son's professional success as chief manager at the upscale hotel Dormero as she's waited for the annual Christmas cards that are her only other link to his present-day life. In the meantime, a botched operation on her throat reduced her voice to a whisper, alienating her from the world even further. An even nastier chapter in her sad life opens with an anonymous letter that warns her: "YOU ARE GOING TO DIE." Ragna disposes of the letter as briskly as if that disposed of the problem, but others soon follow: "IT'S NOT LONG NOW," "I'M WATCHING YOU," "NO ONE WILL HEAR YOU." A series of intercut chapters shows Ragna, whose frantic calls to the police have been deflected by anodyne responses, conversing with series regular Inspector Konrad Sejer, who finally offers her sympathy and understanding. It gradually becomes clear, however, that Sejer regards Ragna not as the potential victim of a crime but as a criminal herself. But not much else is clear at all. What can this gentle, frightened woman have done to break the law, and what on Earth could have led her to do so?

The answers to these questions, though certainly disturbing, are so obvious that most readers will see them coming from far off, turning this mystery into an extended exercise in dramatic irony. The moving, late-blooming relationship between mother and son adds a welcome note of grace.



BELOW THE LINE

Gould, Howard Michael

Dutton (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-5247-4486-1

Quirky bicycle-riding ex-cop Charlie Waldo (*Last Looks*, 2018) reunites with his Mercedes-driving partner in crime-solving—and wild sex—Lorena Nascimento to take on the case of a spoiled teenager suspected of killing her history teacher.

Waldo, the Marie Kondo of detectives with his refusal to own more than 100 items, has recently returned from a long isolated stint in his tiny house in the woods (well, he had his chickens to keep him company). He and Lorena, a licensed PI, first encounter 15-year-old Stevie Rose when she asks them to find her missing older brother. Then she goes missing. Her teacher, whom she admitted she slept with, is found dead. And the parents she claims were killed in an accident are found alive and well, all things considered. (Her TV producer father is still bummed over the failure of a procedural he describes as "Love Boat meets *The Shield*.") The path to solving the murder is crowded with oddballs, including "extortionate" LAPD cop Big Jim Cuppy, who has it in for Waldo, and trafficker Don Q, whose gratitude for Waldo's getting his daughter into a second-grade class goes only so far. And then there is the bear that scares the expletives out of Waldo—actually a Presa Canario dog with major jaws. If Maynard G. Krebs had become a PI, he might resemble Waldo, a longhair who is equally thrilled about work. But Maynard never had a woman to rhapsodize over the way Waldo rhapsodizes over Lorena or, one can assume, the "staggering" sex.

Seasoned TV writer Gould's offbeat second novel all but assures his series has legs. Or at least large paws.



LET'S FAKE A DEAL

Harris, Sherry

Kensington (304 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-4967-1698-9

Who knew organizing garage sales could be a dangerous occupation?

In her new career as a garage-sale manager, Sarah Winston has run into a lot of mysteries (*The Gun Also Rises*, 2019, etc.), but she's never been arrested—until she's about to open a sale of surplus items for a couple who claimed to be downsizing. Officer Jones has gotten a tip that everything on sale is stolen property, and Sarah realizes that Kate and Alex Green have conned her and vanished, leaving Sarah holding the bag. Jones, dismissing Sarah's protestations of innocence, throws her in jail. Luckily, her crime solving has given her some connections, and when a friend on the force can't help, he calls mob lawyer Vincenzo

DiNapoli, who springs her. Sarah quickly realizes that to clear herself, she's going to have to solve this case with a little help from her friends. Since she doesn't want to smear the reputation of her boyfriend, the district attorney, she goes to work herself, armed only with a bad cellphone picture of the fraudulent couple. Her former husband was an Air Force officer, and her friends on the nearby base include Michelle Diaz, who has troubles of her own because someone's filed a complaint against her. As a woman, Michelle has to work twice as hard and put up with harassment from jealous male officers who make nasty comments when she meets Sarah for a drink. After one of them ends up dead in Michelle's car, Sarah adds the murder to her long list of things to clear up. She's shocked to learn how easy it was for the Greens to make her look guilty, but she does dig up some clues showing that the duplicitous couple had done it before and hinting at a possible Air Force connection. Happily, her friends support her, and a planned sale of cat-themed items keeps her from falling into despair as she pursues the mysterious couple and a murderer.

Plenty of mysterious circumstances and garage-sale tips keep the angst-ridden story moving at a headlong pace.



SMOKESCREEN

Johansen, Iris

Grand Central Publishing (432 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jul. 30, 2019

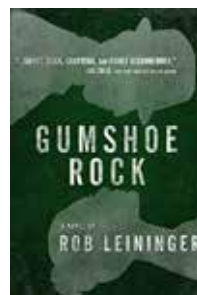
978-1-5387-1308-2

An emotional and highly deceptive plea entices forensic sculptor Eve Duncan from Atlanta to Africa, where all hell promptly breaks loose.

Journalist Jill Cassidy wants Eve to drop what she's doing and book passage to the fictional country of Maldara, where an attack by Botzan rebels on a village school has left 27 children dead. Eve can render the bereaved parents a priceless service, urges Jill, if she uses her matchless skills to reconstruct busts of the deceased from their skulls, and she plies Eve with enough sob-story details to overcome her resistance. But she doesn't tell Eve the truth, or at least not the whole truth. The real reason Jill and CIA agent Jed Novak want Eve to come is so she can determine that a 28th skull—that of mercenary Nils Varak—isn't really Varak's at all but another skull intended to make the world believe he's dead. Eve, already stung by Jill's deception, points out that the skull has tested positive for Varak's DNA; Jill counters that it must have been faked. While Jill and Novak try to come up with evidence that would support their theory and Eve begins her painstaking reconstructive work on the skulls, Zahra Kiyani, who accepted the presidency of Maldara after her father, the incumbent, was assassinated, seizes more and more greedily the power she thinks is due her as a descendant of Cleopatra's daughter Kiya and the country's rightful queen. She uses her sexual dominance over U.N. diplomat Edward Wyatt to wring concessions from the international community and holds terse exchanges with an unseen party over what to do about this interloping

American. How can Eve and her ragtag allies possibly prevail against such entrenched and well-armed adversaries? Readers who take this last question seriously are clearly newcomers to Johansen's venerable franchise (*Dark Tribute*, 2019, etc.).

No matter how intense the action gets, the outcome, for better or worse, is never in doubt.



GUMSHOE ROCK

Leininger, Rob

Oceanview (368 pp.)

\$26.95 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-60809-330-4

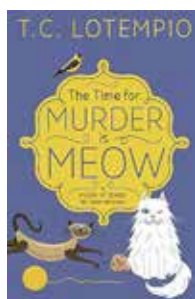
A fourth round of wisecracks, fisticuffs, come-ons, and the occasional homicide for Reno private eye Mort—only his mother called him Mortimer, and that was a mistake—Angel.

Clary Investigations, owned and operated by tough cookie Maude “Ma” Clary, has two cases on its current docket. Karen Galbraith wants the agency to find her runaway daughter, Megan, and CPA Evelyn Joss wants to know what Michael Volker, her junior partner, did with the \$13,600 he withdrew from the company's account. Ma and Lucy Landry, the ex-waitress who caught Mort's eye and more in his last outing (*Gumshoe on the Loose*, 2018, etc.), find Megan Galbraith in record time. But the other case is trickier even though Volker hasn't taken the trouble to run away; he just stammers and orders Mort out of his house when he's asked about the missing funds. Evelyn Joss isn't inclined to press too hard, but once Volker knows she's onto him, she knows it won't be long before the cops get involved and raise the stakes. That's a pity, because Mort has already been dumped into what looks at first like a nonpaying case when he finds the skull of Ronald Soranden, the vanished head of the Northern Nevada IRS, in Lucy's convertible. Fear not: Since Mort already has a nationwide reputation as a discoverer of high-profile corpses, it's not long before IRS Commissioner William V. Munson dangles a fat consultancy fee before him if he can identify Soranden's killer. Stopping by to pick up Lucy in Munson's martini-fueled government jet (a nice touch for all concerned), Mort goes on the hunt, looking not so much to finger the perp, who turns out to be pretty unsurprising, but to find out why Soranden was worth killing, a question that turns out to be well worth asking.

Fans of Travis McGee hungry for red-meat private-eye adventure will tune out the mystery and focus on the hero's effortlessly self-confident sex appeal, superhuman physical strength, and nice way with dialogue.

An orphaned girl is caught in a clash of religious cultures.

KNOT ON HER LIFE



THE TIME FOR MURDER IS MEOW

LoTempio, T.C.

Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (312 pp.)

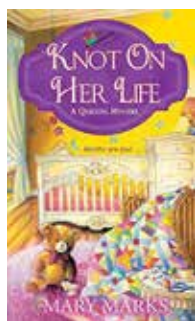
\$15.99 paper | Aug. 8, 2019

978-0-7387-6036-0

A former TV fixture investigates small-town gossip that led to a local museum's rejection of her aunt's Cary Grant collection. Oh, and there's a murder, too, in this series kickoff by LoTempio (*Death by a Whisker*, 2018, etc.)

Retired from Hollywood at the ripe old age of 38, Crishell McMillan, more widely known as *Spy Anyone's* Shell Marlowe, moves to Fox Hollow, Connecticut, to take over the pet store her Aunt Tillie left her. In addition to the Purr N' Bark, Shell's inherited Tillie's world-class collection of Cary Grant movie posters as well as Tillie's roommate, a Persian named Purrday after *His Girl Friday*. So long as Purrday gets along with Shell's Siamese, Kahlua, Shell's happy to welcome a new cat into her life as she prepares the Purr N' Bark for an eagerly anticipated grand reopening. But Shell's business plans take a back seat when the local museum board refuses to display items from Tillie's Cary Grant collection. Who do they think they are? Shell is so shocked that she spends most of the story trying to tease out the board members' motives, certain that since they couldn't possibly be indifferent to the finest movie memorabilia available, something must be amiss. She knows she's on the right track when board member and possible blackmailer Amelia Witherspoon is suddenly offed. Naturally, Shell wonders whether solving Amelia's murder will lead to answers about Tillie's Cary Grant collection. Some standard romantic tension is thrown in when handsome Detective Josh Bloodgood is assigned to the case. All the best lines, however, go to Shell's friend and former co-star Gary Presser, ne Philip Tewksbury, whose efforts to help Shell all but steal the show.

Readers who can't buy into the book's low stakes will miss out on the heroine's highly amusing friend in a tale that's enjoyable despite a transparent lack of guile.



KNOT ON HER LIFE

Marks, Mary

Kensington (304 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jul. 30, 2019

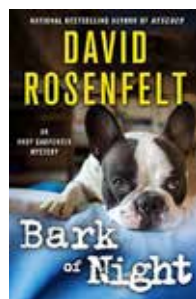
978-1-4967-2050-4

An orphaned girl is caught in a clash of religious cultures.

Martha Rose is an observant Jewish woman with a close circle of friends, a passion for quilting, and a surprising amount of experience with detective work through her fiancé, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agent Yossi Levy, and her son-in-law, LAPD detective Noah Kaplan (*Knot My Sister's Keeper*,

2018, etc.). When Marigold Poppy Sarah Halaby comes to her door to inform her that Martha's neighbor Sonia Spiegelman, Poppy's new foster mother, won't wake up, her visit launches Martha on a complicated and dangerous mission. Sonia recovers from her diabetic coma, but because Poppy's social worker fears she may be unable to care for Poppy, Martha steps in to help. She learns that Poppy's parents, Rachel and Ali Halaby, were murdered, with Poppy a possible witness. Both Rachel's Orthodox Jewish family and Ali's Muslim family disowned the couple and refused to take in Poppy when they were killed. Her parents had agreed to raise the precocious Poppy as Jewish but teach her about her Muslim heritage. Martha's wealthy half sister, Giselle, offers to pay for a bodyguard for Poppy, but when they learn that Poppy's father was an undercover agent for the FBI and his killer may plan to return, Yossi gets ATF agent Hector Fuentes to take the job. Determined to find family members who'll accept Poppy, Martha tracks down the Katzenozen family and discovers that Rachel's sister, Leah, lives in New York. Leah, who's been trying to get her stubborn grandfather to let her adopt Poppy, agrees to meet them secretly but backs off once Martha reveals the danger she's in. Martha approaches the Halabys through the family lawyer, but Marwan Halaby stubbornly resists even though her grandmother is anxious to meet Poppy. Fed up with the self-righteous families mired in distrust, Martha knows she must find the killer if she ever wants to see Poppy settled in a loving home.

A fine combination of detective work and religious bickering presented with wit and style.



BARK OF NIGHT

Rosenfelt, David

Minotaur (304 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jul. 16, 2019

978-1-250-13309-0

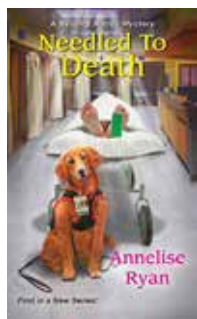
A dog finds yet another way to drag Paterson lawyer Andy Carpenter into his 19th recorded murder case, this one with even more than 19 fatalities.

Andy's vet, Dr. Dan Dowling, is distressed because somebody's dropped off

a French bulldog in perfectly good health and paid to have him euthanized even though a chip implanted in the dog indicates that he belongs to someone else. Naturally, Andy overrules the order, takes the dog home, and thinks no more about it—until he realizes that documentary filmmaker James Haley, who's just been shot to death, was the real owner of the bulldog, whose name is Truman, and that the man who ordered Truman's death was almost certainly Haley's killer. It's too late for the police to arrest George Adams, the mob enforcer Dowling's receptionist recognizes as the man who wanted Truman euthanized, because he's already dead, executed along with his wife in suburban Philadelphia. The Paterson police, knowing no better, meanwhile arrest Joey Gamble for Haley's murder because he visited Haley that night, his prints are all over Haley's place, and they find the murder weapon in his home. So despite Andy's well-established

resistance to the practice of law (*Deck the Hounds*, 2018, etc.), he agrees to defend Joey. The case looks tough because the evidence, though it's all circumstantial, is impressive. So Andy's only chance is to tie Haley's murder to the shooting of Christopher Tolbert, a homeless man in nearby Clifton, and to a total of 18—no, make that 26—oddly similar deaths across the country in what turns out to be a startlingly widespread criminal conspiracy. One of the best hooks ever by an author who specializes in them, along with a constant stream of appealingly throwaway wisecracks and one of Rosenfelt's most successful portrayals of the professional criminals whom he often loves not wisely but too well.

Even dog haters should lap it up.



NEEDED TO DEATH

Ryan, Annelise
Kensington (336 pp.)
\$7.99 paper | Jul. 30, 2019
978-1-4967-1943-0

A distraught mother needs help to prove that her son was murdered in this exciting spinoff from the Mattie Winston series (*Dead of Winter*, 2019, etc.).

Sharon Cochran shows up at social worker Hildy Schneider's bereavement group with a strange request that changes the group's dynamic and Hildy's life. Sharon's son, Toby, has recently died after dropping out of college. The police have written his death off as an overdose. But Sharon speaks urgently and eloquently about why they can't possibly be right. Hildy, who grew up in foster homes after her own mother was murdered, can readily identify with Sharon's story. So she agrees to help, using her connections with the police and the coroner to get some answers. She even makes a copy of Toby's fingerprints that's good enough to open his computer and uses what she finds there to convince Detective Bob Richmond and coroner Mattie Winston to take another look at his death. Toby, who'd shown no sign of previous drug use, dumped his gorgeous girlfriend and sent his fraternity brothers emails warning them that he couldn't go along with some secret plan they had. When Hildy persuades Bob to let her ride along with him, her insights prove to be very helpful. Neither the fraternity house mother nor the fraternity brothers offer much help, but Hildy realizes that the secret they're hiding must be dangerous and most likely illegal. Her determination leads both to the answers she seeks and to an exciting new professional pathway that ends up including even her beloved dog.

A provocative page-turner.



HOPE RIDES AGAIN

Shaffer, Andrew
Quirk Books (288 pp.)
\$14.99 paper | Jul. 9, 2019
978-1-68369-122-8

Joe Biden's bid for the presidency is put on hold when a St. Patrick's Day stop-over to visit his old pal Barack Obama in Chicago turns into a mashup of crime, corruption, free-wheeling adventure, wisecracks, and sententiousness.

Some people have no respect, fumes Biden as he tosses aside *Murder on the Amtrak Express*, the roman à clef starring him, which sounds an awful lot like Shaffer's *Hope Never Dies* (2018). Who could possibly imagine that the eminent former vice president of the United States could get involved in such shenanigans? But hours later, Biden, who's come to the ex-president's hometown so that Obama can introduce him to Caruso, an activist rapper who could go a long way toward shoring up Biden's electoral appeal to African Americans, is hip-deep in another dose of the same. After Obama's BlackBerry goes missing, Biden recalls that Shaun Denton, a teenager who's risen above a tough childhood to become a member of Michelle Obama's Rising Stars program, had the perfect chance to swipe it. Not wanting to alarm his old running mate, Biden follows Shaun by himself until the trail ends on the city's South Side, where someone's shot Shaun twice. The kid isn't dead, but he's comatose, at high risk of infection, and unlikely to offer any useful information about who shot him even if he survives. So Biden and Obama join forces once more to track down the shooter, recover that errant BlackBerry, and figure out just how far they can trust Mayor Rahm Emanuel and whether Red Door, the charity run by Obama's friend pastor Jenkins Brown, is really on the level, all the while avoiding kidnappers (not entirely successfully) and locals quaffing green beer. This time around, Biden is less humorous than before, moralizing and generalizing as if he were honing lines for his stump speech at the end of every chapter.

Just as silly as it sounds.



PLAY WITH FIRE

Shaw, William
Mulholland Books/Little, Brown
(448 pp.)
\$27.00 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-0-316-56334-5

An earnest policeman investigates a lurid murder in the swinging London of 1969.

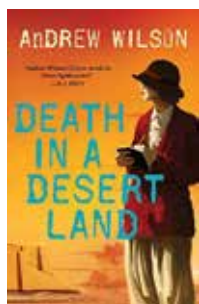
Julie Teenager is a thoroughly modern call girl, a gauzy confection in pink and white calculated to excite the fantasies of London's stodgy middle-aged salarymen as they realize history has treated them cruelly. The Beatles! The Rolling Stones! A moon landing! Oh,

Agatha Christie is packed off to Mesopotamia, where she solves an exceptionally intricate mystery.

DEATH IN A DESERT LAND

to be young in that shifting moral climate. And Julie Teenager can give them a taste of it. When Julie (real name Lena Bobien-ski) is brutally murdered, Cathal Breen of the London CID is assigned to sort it all out. Julie had a small roster of regular clients, and Breen begins with them, uncovering identities, checking alibis; there is some internal interference, which suggests that perhaps one of Julie's clients was a police official. Then MI6 becomes involved—perhaps Julie was working for a foreign government or assisting an agent of one. Julie's maid, Florence, who helped schedule her appointments, is at first difficult to identify and then vanishes. Breen is not making much progress, but he is attracting the disapproving notice of police higher-ups. His investigation takes place against the background of '60s London, and as a representative of the "establishment," Breen is often confronted with unexpected situations. One especially tasty moment occurs when he interviews the editor of *OZ*, the alternative newspaper Julie advertised in. The editor refers to "Germaine," who writes about sex, and readers with long enough memories will see the young Germaine Greer testing her abilities. The contrast between the predictable stuffiness of "proper" London and the vivid, if irresponsible, liveliness of the new generation is generally well handled and rewarding. Breen and his partner, Helen Tozer, are deftly presented and believable, but the many mysteries never quite cohere, and the resolution is somewhat unsatisfying.

A fun visit to a bygone era, though not without flaws.



DEATH IN A DESERT LAND

Wilson, Andrew

Washington Square Press/Atria (352 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Jul. 9, 2019

978-1-5011-9745-1

Agatha Christie is packed off to Mesopotamia, where she narrowly misses meeting her future husband, Max Mallowan, and solves an exceptionally intricate mystery.

It's 1928. Two years after noted adventurer and Arabist Gertrude Bell got a fatal dose of barbiturates in Baghdad, the discovery of a pair of unmailed letters to her father reveals her fear that she was going to be murdered. Instead of going public with the news, Davison, of the Secret Intelligence Service, thinks it more prudent to send his friend, mystery writer Agatha Christie, to the excavation at Ur, the last place where Gertrude worked as head of antiquities in Iraq, to mingle and make discreet inquiries. Arriving at Ur after being rescued from a street thief by site photographer Harry Miller, Agatha quickly meets its principals—director Leonard Woolley, secretary Cynthia Jones, architect Lawrence McRae and his troubled nephew, Cecil, and a visiting family, railroad baron Hubert Archer, his wife, Ruth, and their daughter, Sarah—all except for the queen of the dig, Leonard's wife, Katharine, "a Jekyll and Hyde character" subject to sudden moods and indispositions, who emerges only later. Shortly afterward, Tom, the stray cat Katharine's adopted and loved, is killed, with every

indication that his mistress was responsible. Things turn much uglier when Tom is followed in death by a human victim, and again all the evidence points to Katharine. With the authorities at least a day away, Agatha (*A Different Kind of Evil*, 2018, etc.) is unwillingly thrust into the spotlight as a detective in spite of herself. Although it takes many more pages and subplots and red herrings, she comes up trumps in the end.

The archaeological dig as the old dark house of period thrillers, with so much ingenuity lavished on the hyperextended finale that everyone will find something to treasure before the curtain comes down. An epilogue reveals that a surprising number of incidents and characters are drawn from history.



CONTRABAND

Woods, Stuart

Putnam (320 pp.)

\$28.00 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-0-593-08313-0

New York lawyer Stone Barrington (*Wild Card*, 2019, etc.) celebrates his 50th appearance by bedding two new women, each of whom leads him to criminal complications.

Minding his own business lying on the deck of his yacht off Key West, Stone hears, then sees, an airplane falling from the sky. He dives into the water, pulls the pilot to safety even before a police chopper can arrive, and discovers that the rescue diver is a beautiful woman. Since Detective Max—don't call her Maxine—Crowley of the Key West Police Department doesn't believe in one-night stands, she and Stone don't have sex till their second night together. By that time, someone has already relieved the wrecked plane of the watertight suitcases Stone saw perfectly well as he was grabbing pilot Al Dix, who disappears from the hospital shortly after a woman masquerading as a nurse tries to kill him. It's only a matter of time before the plane itself vanishes, leading NYPD Commissioner Dino Bacchetti, an old friend of Stone's, to reflect sagely, "missing pilot, missing cargo, and now, missing airplane." With nothing more than Max's charms to keep him in Key West, Stone is soon back in New York, where he's picked up at a bar by clothing designer Roberta Calder, who, on learning that Stone doesn't sleep with married women, announces that she wants to divorce Randall Hedger, her estranged husband. To avoid an unseemly conflict of interest, Stone hands the proceedings over to his associate Herb Fisher, who's doing a great job until the murders of Hedger and Robbie's friend Estelle Parkinson, a socialite, make Robbie's divorce unnecessary but accentuate her need for legal representation even further when she's arrested for murder. With this many felonies to keep track of, it's no wonder the cast consumes a record number of gimlets.

Longtime fans of the series who refuse to hold their breath waiting for these two plots to be connected—this is Woods, after all—will be pleasantly surprised when they do. Who said the age of miracles is past?

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



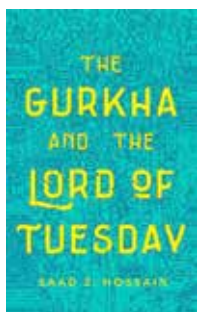
TEMPER

Drayden, Nicky
Harper Voyager (400 pp.)
\$15.99 paper | Aug. 7, 2019
978-0-06-249305-7

Drayden (*The Prey of Gods*, 2017) follows twin brothers struggling with destiny in a fantastical Africa.

In this world, nearly all children are twins, and all twins are designated one greater and one lesser via a ceremony that discerns which child has more of the seven virtues and fewer vices. A four-three split is common, five-two not unknown... but Auben has six vices and his brother, Kasim, only one. Their futures are as plain as the vice-marks on their skin—Kasim is destined for prosperity while Auben won't leave the ghetto of their birth. Refusing to accept this, Auben prays to Grace, the god of virtues. But it's Grace's dark opposite, Icy Blue, who answers him—and possesses him. Icy Blue brings Auben strange powers—healing and shape-shifting—but also temptations much darker than mere vice-driven mischief. When Kasim is also possessed (by Grace), the two brothers determine to learn how to conduct an exorcism by enrolling at an exclusive religious academy. Once there, Kasim catches the high priest's eye and rises in popularity, leading Auben to feel abandoned, alone with Icy Blue. The twists and revelations come at breakneck speed, leaving both characters' and readers' heads spinning. Auben must discover harsh familial truths to right a cosmic wrong if he's to save himself, Kasim, and everyone else.

Wildly imaginative worldbuilding mixes with a convoluted plot and sharp changes in tone for a strange brew.



THE GURKHA AND THE LORD OF TUESDAY

Hossain, Saad Z.
Tor (176 pp.)
\$14.99 paper | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-250-20911-5

A newly awakened djinn seeks to disrupt the calm of a seemingly utopian Kathmandu and falls in with company who may be even more dangerous to the orderly city than anyone realizes.

When Melek Ahmar, the Lord of Mars, the Red King, the Lord of Tuesday, Most August Rajah of Djinn, stumbles down from a mountain in the heart of the

Himalayas, he's peckish, crabby, and confused. Luckily, the first human he runs into, a Gurkha—or soldier—named Bhan Gurung, gives him food and explains the new world order to him: Society is now run by Karma, an artificial intelligence system which disseminates points to its citizens: "Points for service, points for good works...[with] mathematical prescience that would have beggared the Oracle of Delphi." People communicate telepathically thanks to implants in their brains; nanotech cleans the environment and people's bodies of toxins. Gurung confides in the djinn that he has skirted this system by removing his implants, and he's a "zero," completely outside the system of Karma. The Falstaffian djinn thinks this means Gurung can find him a merry band of fellow zeroes to eat, drink, and carouse with. But Gurung's motivations are as sinister as his past, and as agents working on behalf of Karma try to track down the soldier and the djinn, they head for a showdown that threatens everything the city is built on. Hossain (*Djinn City*, 2017, etc.) is a maximalist: In the space of this slim novel are elements of buddy comedy, thriller, sci-fi, fantasy, and philosophy. But somehow it all comes together in an entertainingly madcap story that asks what it means to be a citizen and what equality really looks like.

A rollicking genre mashup that should appeal to SF/F fans and well beyond.



THE MAGE-FIRE WAR

Modesitt Jr., L.E.
Tor (544 pp.)
\$29.99 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-250-20782-1

Third entry in a miniseries (*Outcasts of Order*, 2018, etc.) within the Recluse fantasy universe; this is the 21st novel overall. The struggle between white chaos magic and black order magic continues.

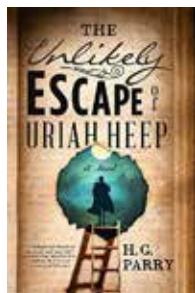
Beltur, a black mage with the extraordinary ability to blend both chaos and order, and his wife, Jessyla, a healer, have been driven yet again from their home by jealous rivals, unscrupulous rulers, and prejudiced townsfolk. Accompanying them is another refugee family, the black mage Lhadoraak, his nonmagical wife, Tulya, and their young daughter, Taelya, a budding white wizard Beltur is tutoring. They arrive in Montgren at the invitation of the ruling duchess, and they hope to settle in the town of Haven. The duchess's endowment of gold and troopers seemed generous enough, but Haven turns out to be lawless and half abandoned, bossed by thugs and agents of Massyngal, the malign, despotic duke of neighboring Hylden who has long nursed ambitions of annexing the place. To set the town to rights and defy the armies and chaos wizards of Hylden, Beltur will need all his considerable problem-solving skills and hard-won expertise as a battle mage. This entry pivots away from the two previous books, which explored complex philosophical and social issues, in favor of more direct action. Beltur, then, must figure out a way to defeat an opponent whose troops and wizards follow orders no matter what. And series

Fictional characters come to life—both literally and figuratively—in New Zealand writer Parry's bookish debut.

THE UNLIKELY ESCAPE OF URIAH HEEP

fans, understanding that the order in which the books are written bears no relation to the saga's internal chronology, will appreciate the supreme irony that the stronghold known to the future as Fairhaven was founded by black mages.

Readers who relish Modesitt's magical battles have waited through two volumes for them to materialize; they will find their reward here.



THE UNLIKELY ESCAPE OF URIAH HEEP

Parry, H.G.
Redhook/Orbit (464 pp.)
\$26.00 | Jul. 23, 2019
978-0-316-45271-7



Fictional characters come to life—both literally and figuratively—in New Zealand writer Parry's bookish debut.

Rob Sutherland's younger brother, Charley, wakes him in the middle of the night with a panicked phone call. "Uriah Heep's loose on the ninth floor...and I can't catch him." Fans of Charles Dickens will know Uriah Heep as the scheming villain from *David Copperfield*, and that is, in fact, the same Uriah Heep Charley is worried about. Besides being a wunderkind who blazed through a Ph.D. at Oxford as a teenager, Charley is a "summoner": He is able to make storybook characters appear in the real world, reading them out and then back into the pages of their books. His tendency to produce characters, from the kindly Sherlock Holmes to the more devious Heep, has caused stress for his family as they try to keep his talent a secret. Rob is also struggling with feelings of resentment toward his genius, magical brother, who has always made him feel painfully average and ordinary by comparison. Then, when the brothers find a magically hidden Victorian-era street, they meet Millie Radcliffe-Dix—the protagonist of a girl-detective adventure series sort of like Nancy Drew crossed with Indiana Jones—and a whole host of other characters who've been living there in secret. It seems that Charley's strange gift is not unique, and somewhere out there is another summoner who has a malicious interest in Charley. Many have tried and some have succeeded in writing mashups with famed literary characters, but Parry knocks it out of the park. She plays with the canon without trying to imitate it, all the while spinning a truly heartfelt story about the strained but powerful love between Rob and Charley. An appreciation for Dickens and a passing knowledge of literary theory will provide extra enjoyment, but a lack thereof is no excuse to miss this page-turning fantasy.

Just plain wonderful.



THE WOLF'S CALL

Ryan, Anthony
Ace/Berkley (432 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jul. 23, 2019
978-0-451-49251-7

In the first installment of Ryan's new fantasy series—essentially a continuation of Vaelin Al Sorna's story from the Raven's Shadow trilogy—the legendary warrior, attempting to live a quiet life in the Northern Reaches of the Unified

Realm, is lured across the ocean to the kingdoms of the Far West to save a lost love.

Sherin is a healer of great renown whom Vaelin once loved. He sent her to the Far West to keep her safe years earlier, but when he receives word that the tribes of the Iron Steppe have unified under a man named the Darkblade—who considers himself a god—and that Sherin is at the epicenter of an imminent war, he sets off on a quest to find and save her. Accompanying Vaelin are a misfit group of adventurers—including Nortah Al Sendahl, a disgraced nobleman and warrior struggling with his inner demons; Alum Vi Moreska, an immigrant Vaelin freed from slavery; and Ellese, Vaelin's niece and heir to the Fiefdom of Cumbrae, who is found as a stowaway long after the ship has set sail. Once the group reach the Far West, they discover that Sherin—known as the Grace of Heaven to the westerners—has disappeared with the Jade Princess, an ageless woman who lives in a remote temple above the clouds and is mythically powerful. Though the book is characterized by breakneck pacing, deeply developed characters, and impressively intricate plotlines, it's Ryan's (*Many Are the Dead*, 2018, etc.) subtle focus on vivid worldbuilding (particularly on varied sensory descriptions) that makes this such an immersive read. Although the conclusion is little more than a respite, the nonstop action, richly described setting, and cast of intriguing characters more than make up for it.

Readers who enjoy their fantasy fast and furious will find Ryan's latest to be an immensely satisfying, top-notch adventure fantasy.



THE LAST ASTRONAUT

Wellington, David
Orbit (400 pp.)
\$15.99 paper | Jul. 23, 2019
978-0-316-41957-4

A suspenseful, fast-paced story of first contact with an alien object that could destroy all life on Earth.

Sally Jansen was supposed to be the first woman to walk on Mars. But the 2034 *Orion* disaster put an end not just to the Mars mission, but to Jansen's career and any future crewed NASA missions along with it. Still, when a mysterious object shows up in the solar system and starts slowing down, everyone from NASA to its private-sector competitor, KSpace, knows

exactly what that means: This thing is alien. And it's headed straight for Earth. NASA's got just four months to put together a team to go and make contact with this alien object (before KSpace gets there, if possible) and try to find out what it wants. And that means Jansen's getting back in *Orion* for one more mission. With the fate of the human race hanging in the balance, the stakes couldn't be higher, but each member of the *Orion* team has their own personal agenda, as well—particularly Jansen, who's determined that this mission won't end the way her last one did. Once they get inside the alien craft, the story moves seamlessly into dark, psychological horror as the crew struggles to survive and make sense of the incomprehensible dangers they find.

A race against time to save humankind, a veteran astronaut trying to make things right, and an utterly strange and genuinely horrifying alien world to explore—this story's got everything.

ROMANCE



A MATCH MADE IN LONDON

Britton, Christina

EverAfter Romance (292 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | May 21, 2019

978-1-63576-615-8

Third in a historical romance series (*The Viscount's Promise*, 2018, etc.) about women who have been burned in love and the men who convince them to take a risk.

Ever since her family was ruined by a nobleman who seduced and abandoned her older sister, Miss Rosalind Merriweather “had been passed around as a [paid] companion...like a plate of particularly unappetizing food at a party.” Her latest charge is a painfully shy girl whose wealthy parents hope to marry into the nobility. Rosalind's sister's debauchery and subsequent death have made our heroine deeply skeptical of London society, especially of charming rogues like Sir Tristan Crosby. Rosalind's attempts to thwart Sir Tristan's attention to her charge bring them into contact, and he becomes intrigued by the tart-tongued woman from Staffordshire. Tristan's upbringing at the hands of a cruel father who far favored his half brother has made him feel like the worthless libertine Rosalind believes him to be. But Tristan has found a secret wellspring of happiness in his ability to use his charms to arrange suitable matches for young ladies like Rosalind's charge. Both Rosalind and Tristan have buried hurts which are slowly revealed as they begin to like and trust one another underneath their steady trading of barbs. At the same time, their growing attraction seems dangerous for them both. Britton's plot is motivated by a close study of the rules of the matchmaking

season in Regency-era London society, and she writes with respect for the refinement of the time period. While Rosalind's stereotyping of all London's rich families can be fatiguing, she eventually grows to acknowledge everyone's humanity: “We are all like paper dolls, flat, garbed carefully, only showing what we wish for others to see. But within we are books' worth of stories and dramas, heartaches and joys.”

A sweet, emotional Regency romance with enough simmering passion and lively, intelligent dialogue to please fans of the genre.



REDESIGNING HAPPINESS

Brooks, Nita

Dafina/Kensington (320 pp.)

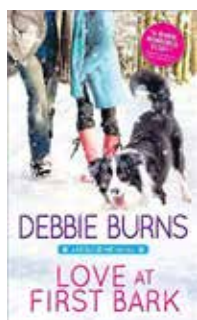
\$15.95 paper | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-4967-2192-1

A recently engaged interior designer must reassess her life when the father of her child reenters her life with shocking news about their past.

Yvonne Cable has “claw[ed] her way through Atlanta's cutthroat interior design community” and just landed a new contract with a local celebrity and a cherished article in a lifestyle magazine, and she's also become engaged to Nathan Lange, a home improvement TV star who wants to launch a show with her. Yvonne is ecstatic, and if she feels a little pushed around by Nathan's publicist and slightly annoyed by the fact that everyone seems more excited about the engagement than her other accolades, she'll get over it. She's reached some major goals and landed the perfect man, so life is good. Enter Richard Barrington, owner of the Weekend Warrior network, who wants to pick up Yvonne and Nathan's show—and is also the father of Yvonne's 6-year-old son, Jacob. Yvonne thinks he abandoned her, and Richard thinks she's been hiding Jacob from him. Realizing they've both been betrayed by Richard's father and ex-wife, they work to get Richard back in Jacob's life, which creates tension with Nathan, especially after it's clear that Richard is still in love with Yvonne. Brooks' smoothly written debut is full of characters at the tops of their professions who face a variety of dramas exacerbated by high-stakes business cultures and deep-seated family tensions. Almost all the major conflicts are external, however, and the final resolutions come from paths being cleared rather than obstacles overcome.

An interesting, engaging debut that doesn't ask enough of its characters.



LOVE AT FIRST BARK

Burns, Debbie

Sourcebooks Casablanca (352 pp.)

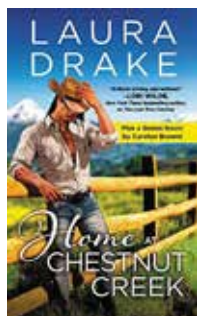
\$7.99 paper | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-4926-7284-5

Puppies, dogs, a young child, and a baby round out a Christmas romance between friends.

Widowed single mom Mia Chambers has no idea that Ben Thomas has been in love with her for eight years. Architect and mountain climber Ben fell hard for Mia at her college graduation, but a twist of fate meant he lost her to his best friend. Despite his heartache, he has been a steadfast support to her and her son during her troubled marriage (due to her late husband's mental illness and infidelity) and its aftermath. But the two may finally start to overcome the past with some help from the strays at the animal shelter where Mia volunteers. Burns (*My Forever Home*, 2018, etc.) adds to her Rescue Me series with this sweet but plodding tale of lost love regained. Long passages are devoted to descriptions of the animals, adoption processes, and dog antics, which may please some readers but leave others impatient for the romance plot's progression. It seems poised for drama when Mia discovers that Ben withheld some knowledge related to one of her husband's affairs, but the tension is defused quickly. The appearance of Mia's mother, Lynn, and ex-in-laws further dilutes the focus on Ben and Mia, though their sense of being abandoned by their mothers establishes an empathetic connection between them. But a passing reference to Ben's mom's Lebanese nationality and Lynn's stated spiritual connection to Africa and life in rural Kenya feel like an awkward attempt to gesture to diversity in a largely homogeneous landscape.

For readers who enjoy a nontaxing story of second chances.



HOME AT CHESTNUT CREEK

Drake, Laura

Forever Press (624 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-5387-4645-5

A woman on the run is attracted to a Navajo man and wishes she could make a new life for herself in Unforgiven, New Mexico.

Nevada Sweet has been plagued by bad luck and bad decisions. A few years earlier in Houston, she crossed a cartoonishly evil cartel leader and has been on the run ever since. After a hint that he's on her trail, she runs away to New Mexico hoping to find work at a diner owned by an old friend. Nevada plans to stay under the radar and save up some money before moving on. She believes she's in mortal danger, but as the details of her story unfold, the plot

becomes nonsensical and melodramatic. The urgency of her initial escape turns into inexplicable inaction. Determined to pay her own way, she refuses her friend's offer of a free room, instead choosing to rent an RV from the diner's short-order cook, Joseph "Fishing Eagle" King. Joseph (everyone else calls him "Fish") is impressed by her determination and respects her independence. The two strike up a delicate friendship but are wary of their mutual attraction. Joseph is Navajo and doesn't date white women because he's committed to preserving his culture and heritage; Nevada fears being found by the cartel, causing her to be distrustful and suspicious of making long-term connections. Although Drake (*The Last True Cowboy*, 2018, etc.) seems to have carefully researched the Navajo culture, it's uncomfortable to read first-person narration of a Navajo character written by a white author. The depiction of the Latinx villains as stereotypical bad guys is especially problematic; they are all violence and machismo and plan to sell "little blonde" Nevada into sexual slavery in Central America once they capture her.

Troubling in several ways.



TOO SWEET TO BE GOOD

Jackson, K.M.

Dafina/Kensington (352 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jul. 30, 2019

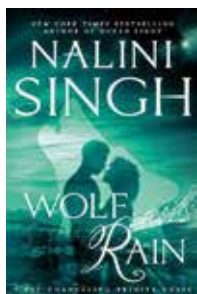
978-1-4967-1711-5

An aspiring actress and an ambitious real estate developer butt heads over an old theater in a small Georgia town.

Alexandra "Drea" Gale has been in Sugar Lake for a year now, helping out with her aunt's bakery as she recovers from a hip replacement. Nothing lasts forever, though, and Drea is beginning to plan her return to New York when a new challenge presents itself in the form of Mrs. Betty Kilborn, who wants Drea to help renovate her Redheart theater. Drea finds this a good reason to stick around a little bit longer. But there's a fly in the ointment: Betty's grandson, Kellen Kilborn, has stepped into the role of president at Kilborn Properties after his grandfather's passing, and his plans to launch the company into bigger and better things rests on selling the old, antiquated theater. He counters his grandmother's sentimentality with financial projections and business acumen, setting off a battle of wills with Drea. Kellen is determined to sell the theater to another real estate group while Drea believes in Mrs. Betty's dream of restoring the Redheart to its former glory. This opposites-attract romance is infused with small-town charm. Kellen is a bit cold and stuffy on the outside, which leads to quippy, rapid-fire banter with the more whimsical and confident Drea. Sparks start flying immediately, leaving readers anticipating their next scene together. Be prepared to fall in love with Sugar Lake, home of the Goode 'N Sweet bakery, known for its fluffy honey biscuits, and the Redheart, which has nostalgic themed movie nights and screenings of

Hollywood classics. This contemporary romance, with lovely family dynamics at its center, forgoes any unnecessary dramatics in favor of a warm, down-home feeling.

A true comfort read.



WOLF RAIN

Singh, Nalini

Berkley (400 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 4, 2019

978-1-9848-0359-7

After saving a woman from a serial killer, a wolf changeling will do anything to keep her safe, but the stakes get higher when her unique powers may signal the worldwide rise of aggressive rogue energy.

Nearing the first anniversary of his brother's death, Alexei Harte picks up an overwhelming psychic broadcast of grief and discovers an empath imprisoned in an underground bunker. When he rescues her, at first her only emotions seem to be rage and grief for her recently deceased cat. But as Memory begins to trust Alexei and the world he helps her enter, her conflicted, negative emotions begin to calm. The other empaths she meets help her understand that her gifts are unique and powerful and reframe them beyond her violent past which forced her to use them to help a psychopath. The more they work with her, the more they come to believe that she might be particularly positioned to help strengthen the complicated PsyNet, the vast psychic network on which the Psy depend to keep them connected and healthy. Alexei, meanwhile, is wrestling with the death of his brother, who went violently rogue one year earlier. He's definitely interested in making Memory his mate but worries he carries the rogue genes that threaten her even as he's trying to keep her safe from a variety of other dangers. The *Psy/Changeling Trinity* series continues with another complex, fascinating angle to the fall of Silence and its manifestations. Alexei's family represents the rogue component in the Changeling world, while Memory both represents and acts as the first line of defense against a rising rogue element within the Psy. Favorite alpha characters weave through the story, meeting the new challenge with their typical intelligence, flexibility, and collaboration.

Another *Psy/Changeling* page-turner from the brilliant Singh.

NONFICTION



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- ALEXANDER THE GREAT** by Anthony Everitt 64
- TALKING TO STRANGERS** by Malcolm Gladwell 66
- BEATEN DOWN, WORKED UP** by Steven Greenhouse 66
- TAKE IT LYING DOWN** by Jim Linnell 71
- FIRE AND FORTITUDE** by John C. McManus 79
- JOSEPH AND THE WAY OF FORGIVENESS** by Stephen Mitchell .. 79
- ARCHAEOLOGY FROM SPACE** by Sarah Parcak 80
- THE PLATEAU** by Maggie Paxson 81
- THE GOD GROOVE** by David Ritz 82
- TRICK MIRROR** by Jia Tolentino 84



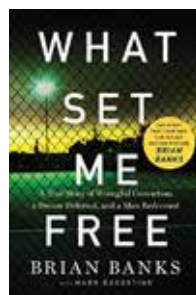
Talking
to
Strangers



Malcolm
Gladwell

BY NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *Outliers*
and host of the podcast *Revisionist History*

TALKING TO STRANGERS
*What We Should Know
About the People
We Don't Know*
Gladwell, Malcolm
Little, Brown (400 pp.)
\$30.00 | Sep. 10, 2019
978-0-316-47852-6



WHAT SET ME FREE
*A True Story of Wrongful
Conviction, a Dream
Deferred, and a Man
Redeemed*

Banks, Brian
Atria (320 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Jul. 2, 2019
978-1-982121-31-0

Affecting story of false imprisonment and redemption.

Banks was living something of a dream as a popular teenage football player attending Long Beach Polytechnic High School, “a public school with private-school level expectations” that was heavily scouted by college coaches. Then he had an encounter with a fellow student that ended in bad feelings—and not just that, but a rape charge. “Maybe Mom is right,” he thought for a moment, sure he did nothing wrong. “Maybe there’s nothing to worry about.” Instead, at 16, he was sent to jail, with bail set at more than \$1 million, then finally imprisoned for six years when his attorney urged him to accept a plea bargain. As he relates, Banks made good use of his time by attending school in prison and living what he calls three lives: one of memory of freedom, one of “just surviving jail, continuing to read, continuing to try to stay on the path of enlightenment,” and one of being uncertain of any kind of future as he awaited trial. Freed with the help of an initiative called the California Innocence Project, Banks secured a voice recording from his accuser recanting her charge—then, having discovered that he had long since passed his prime years for playing college ball, worked hard to secure his dream of playing pro. The author has since become an advocate for the wrongfully imprisoned, his life the subject of a film to which this book is a tie-in. What is striking about this inspirational narrative, one in a vast library of books set behind bars, is the author’s refusal to submit to rancor or bitterness. Innocent and certain of the rightness of his cause, he behaved in an exemplary way, which should have had greater effect but did not in a legal system that seems bent on punishment instead of rehabilitation.

In a time of widespread demands for judicial reform, this deserves wide attention.

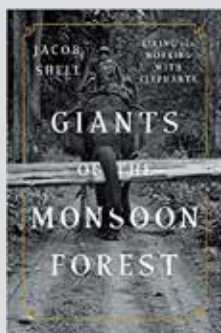
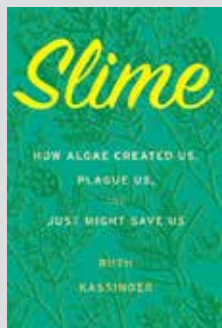
CAVES, ALGAE, AND ELEPHANTS



Photo courtesy Leah Overstreet

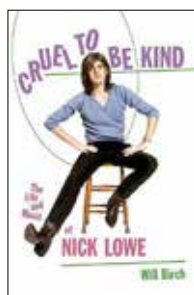
DURING THE SUMMER SEASON, I gravitate toward books in the nature and travel category; this June, there are three books I would like to call out for special attention. The first is the latest masterpiece from Robert Macfarlane, *Underland* (June 4), but I'll let our contributing editor, Gregory McNamee, tell you about that one in his interview with Macfarlane in this issue.

On June 11, Ruth Kassinger will publish *Slime*, a “fun and fascinating deep dive into the natural history, current uses, and vast potential of algae.” As she did in her previous book, *A Garden of Marvels*, the author dives into a little-discussed area of the natural world to deliver a consistently entertaining and informative book. “Never one to shy away from getting her hands dirty,” writes our reviewer, “Kassinger traveled around the world to interview researchers and see for herself how algae may help save coral reefs, curb climate change, and produce eco-friendly plastics.” The author also touts the benefits of algae as a possible source of sustainable energy.



Also on June 11, geographer Jacob Shell, a professor at Temple University, will publish *Giants of the Monsoon Forest*, an exploration of how “the fate of Asian elephants raises important questions for conservationists.” Traveling through the wild forests near the border of Burma and India, the author viewed firsthand the importance of these elephants to both the ecosystem and the economy of the region. As he notes, more than a third of the roughly 40,000 animals in the region are used for labor, and though animal rights activists “argue that elephants should live in the wild, Shell points out that with little effective protection, their habitat is vulnerable to deforestation.” In fact, “to those who see only a ‘picture of domination,’ Shell makes a persuasive case that the reality is complicated” in his “insightful look at a rare cross-species relationship.” —E.L.

Eric Liebetrau is the nonfiction and managing editor.



CRUEL TO BE KIND *The Life and Music of Nick Lowe*

Birch, Will

Da Capo (416 pp.)

\$28.00 | Aug. 20, 2019

978-0-306-92195-7

Solid, occasionally hagiographic life of the British musician who helped pub rock evolve into punk, New Wave, and beyond.

Nick Lowe (b. 1949), writes *Mojo* contributor and musician Birch, is “simply peerless,” a musician’s musician whose songs have been recorded by the likes of Elvis Costello, Tom Petty, Johnny Cash, and Rod Stewart. He is also an international man of mystery and renowned toper who, while now calmed down at age 70, would put the fear in Keith Richards for powers of consumption. The author recounts Lowe’s musical evolution from “beat group” to pub rock, the latter of which was a more energetic answer to America’s singer/songwriter wave of the early 1970s, born with the rise of bands like Kippington Lodge, which, though they “simply lacked teen appeal,” put Lowe at center stage as singer, songwriter, and bassist. An encounter with fellow musician Brinsley Schwarz sealed the deal. Their live debut was unimpressive, writes Birch, opening for Van Morrison; watching him onstage, Lowe recalls, “I had a mounting sense of dread that we’d made a terrible mistake.” They got better, launching a musical movement that fed directly into the punk ethos of a few years later. After Costello recorded his “(What’s So Funny About) Peace, Love, and Understanding,” Lowe came under increasing demand as a songwriter, boasting that he could write for anyone—the Clash, the Jam, Tin Pan Alley; he also began to produce while playing live with Dave Edmunds, Carlene Carter, Ry Cooder, and others. The question, asked and answered, as to why Lowe isn’t more famous is a little obvious; there are and have always been many journeymen musicians who provide rock-solid support without ever making the headlines. But though he tends to be a touch worshipful, Birch makes clear that Lowe’s contributions to pop music have been many and mighty—and certainly worthy of celebration with a biography.

If unlikely to bring new fans into the fold, sure to please old-time admirers of an essential rocker. (16 pages of photos)



CHURCHILL'S MENAGERIE *Winston Churchill and the Animal Kingdom*

Brendon, Piers

Pegasus (336 pp.)

\$28.95 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-64313-136-8

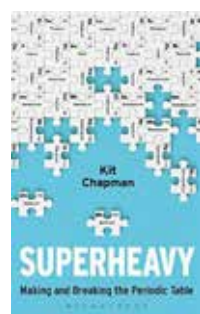
An engaging alphabetical encyclopedia of the animals Winston Churchill loved (and hunted) and used as imagery and metaphors in his fiery prose.

An entertaining account of [the] struggles to create elements that have never existed and that may or may not reveal spectacular new features.

SUPERHEAVY

It takes a devoted scholar of Churchill to be able to convey with fluent familiarity such details in the British leader's life and extensive body of writing. British author Brendon (*Eminent Elizabethans: Rupert Murdoch, Margaret Thatcher, Prince Charles & Mick Jagger*, 2013, etc.)—fellow of Churchill College and of the Royal Society of Literature and the former keeper of the Churchill Archives Centre—certainly fits the bill, and he offers an unquestionably unique look at the former prime minister. As the son of an aristocrat (his American mother's family was also wealthy) born at the splendid palace of Blenheim, Churchill was raised to revere hunting as the apotheosis of Victorian male valor and virility; at the same time, he was taught that "kindness to animals was the mark and the duty of civilization" (despite his carnivorous diet). The "inconsistencies" in Churchill's "wit, wisdom, and wayward genius" abound, and Brendon knocks against them throughout the book. The "bestiary" starts with "albatross"—the well-read Churchill used the Ancient Mariner's anguished response "I shot the Albatross" while expressing his frustration with Parliament's wrangling about Indian independence—and ends with "zoos," since one of his favorite activities was visiting them. Many of the animals in his metaphorical repertory came from the countryside, which he knew intimately as a boy. These include badgers, birds, hares, and foxes, animals he loved as a "humane sentimentalist" but also hunted for sport. Regarding lions, writes the author, "no twentieth-century leader has been more lionized or has attracted more leonine imagery than Churchill." Dogs and horses were his favorites, but Brendon's most touching portrait shows Churchill feeding his beloved "golden horde" of goldfish at Chartwell as a distraction from the overbearing worries of the 1940s.

An affectionate study by a respected Churchill scholar. (illustrations throughout)



SUPERHEAVY Making and Breaking the Periodic Table

Chapman, Kit

Bloomsbury Sigma (304 pp.)

\$28.00 | Aug. 27, 2019

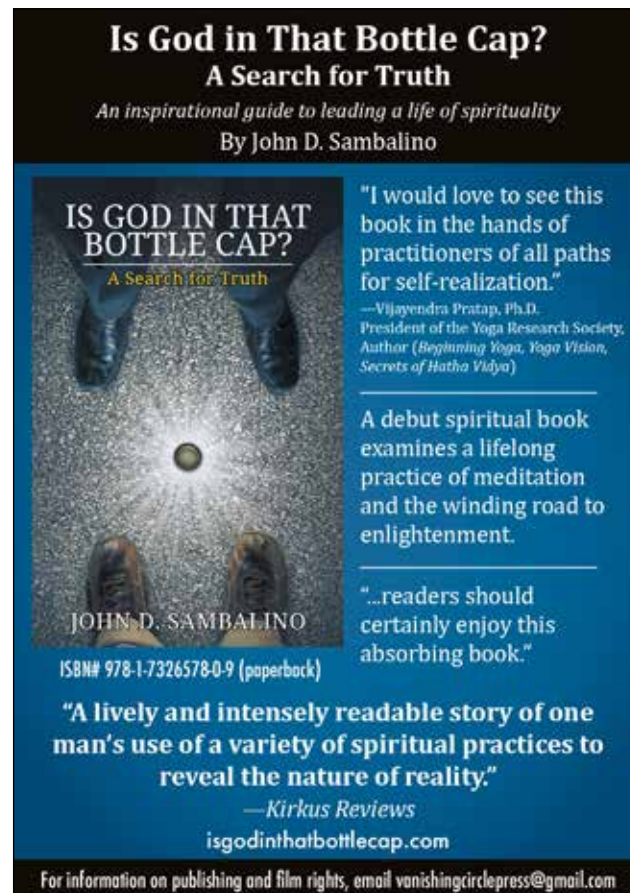
978-1-4729-5389-6

Perhaps the first popular-science exploration of the weird world of huge, unstable, laboratory-generated elements.

In his debut, British journalist and broadcaster Chapman first explains that elements from one (hydrogen) to 92 (uranium) exist in nature. Transuranium elements (greater than 92) are produced in nuclear explosions, nuclear reactors, or nuclear accelerators. All are unstable—i.e., radioactive—so they gradually break down, and the heavier they are, the quicker they disappear. This is no problem for plutonium, element 94, which is only mildly radioactive, and Chapman describes the huge industry that generates tons for use in bombs and nuclear power. Just beyond plutonium (Americium, Curium, Berkelium, Californium...), they can be produced in visible quantities and are found in X-ray spectrometers and smoke detectors. Those after Einsteinium (element

99) exist in microscopic amounts and have no commercial use, but they continue to fascinate groups of researchers, including one formerly led by Chapman's hero, Nobel Prize winner Glenn T. Seaborg (1912-1999), who discovered 10. Based in California, Germany, Sweden, and Russia, these groups compete fiercely to generate heavier elements, often in minuscule quantities, study their properties, and quarrel over who was first. The book's title refers to elements after 103, which are increasingly hard to produce in vanishingly small quantities but hold out the possibility of an "island of stability," a massive atom that reverses the trend toward increasingly fleeting existence. "The superheavy elements—elements from 104 and beyond—might last for seconds, but that's what makes them so cool," he writes. "When an atom of a superheavy element is created, it is probably the only atom of that element in existence *in the universe*." Chapman has done his homework, traveled the world to interview a colorful fraternity of scientists, and delivered an entertaining account of their struggles to create elements that have never existed and that may or may not reveal spectacular new features.

A fine pop-science account of elements that "are rewriting the laws of atomic structure."



Is God in That Bottle Cap?

A Search for Truth

An inspirational guide to leading a life of spirituality

By John D. Sambalino

IS GOD IN THAT
BOTTLE CAP?
A Search for Truth

JOHN D. SAMBALINO

ISBN# 978-1-7326578-0-9 (paperback)

"I would love to see this book in the hands of practitioners of all paths for self-realization."

—Vijayendra Pratap, Ph.D., President of the Yoga Research Society, Author (Beginning Yoga, Yoga Vision, Secrets of Hatha Vidya)

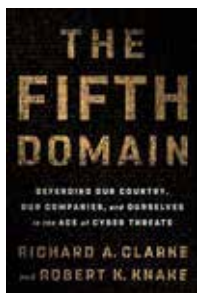
A debut spiritual book examines a lifelong practice of meditation and the winding road to enlightenment.

"...readers should certainly enjoy this absorbing book."

—Kirkus Reviews

isgodinthatbottlecap.com

For information on publishing and film rights, email vanishingcirclepress@gmail.com



THE FIFTH DOMAIN *Defending Our Country, Our Companies, and Ourselves in the Age of Cyber Threats*

Clarke, Richard A. & Knake, Robert K.

Penguin Press (320 pp.)

\$30.00 | Jul. 16, 2019

978-0-525-56196-5

Hacking, cracking, and stealing, whether elections or state secrets or cash—it's all in a day's work for the bad guys who populate the pages of this treatise on electronic security.

If you're an individual computer user, you can do things to keep yourself secure like using two-factor authentication and secret password phrases. But what if you're a nation-state? Cybersecurity experts Clarke and Knake (co-authors: *Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and What To Do About It*, 2010, etc.), both of whom logged time inside the cybersecurity arms of presidential administrations, have much to say

about the ways in which governments and companies have tried to make themselves safe from the legions of hackers out there, from your ordinary black hats to agents of Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and other entities. The militaries of those nations in particular are actively working to best our cyberdefenses—as the authors write, “the Russian military has not only used cyber weapons to collect intelligence, but has also employed cyber weapons to damage, disrupt, and destroy physical objects in the real world, beyond the realm of 1s and 0s.” Does this mean we're at war? Regardless of the answer, the Russians are bad at covering their tracks—that's how we know. Clarke and Knake survey the landscape: As they note, most governments may be bad at hiding information, but Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft “have security budgets that dwarf the GDP of Palau,” and the private sector is likely to be the driver behind any real reform in cybersecurity and subsequent hardening of the fortress. Meanwhile, the authors counsel reassuringly, as companies finally make the transition to more secure systems of transmission, encryption, and data storage, there is hope that the threats of old will one day be a footnote. For the moment, the cost of mounting an attack on a bank is vanishingly small compared to the amount the bank is spending on keeping secure, so those attacks will keep coming.

Largely of interest to policymakers and security experts, though with much for the *Wired* crowd as well.



“Delivers an intriguing look at a fragmented mind...”

—Kirkus Reviews on *Life of the Sailor*

“...expands upon...sailing as a metaphor for introspective search, and provides a broader account of the nature of individual equilibrium; these concrete illustrations are of great instructional value.”

—Kirkus Reviews on *Sailor's Psychology*

“...enthralling story of a fictional but familiar ideology.”

—Kirkus Reviews on *Escape from Kolyma*

Life of the Sailor: ISBN: 978-1450219051

Sailor's Psychology: ISBN: 978-1475905588

Escape from Kolyma: ISBN: 978-1532065446

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NATURAL RIVALS *John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and the Creation of America's Public Lands*

Clayton, John

Pegasus (336 pp.)

\$27.95 | Aug. 6, 2019

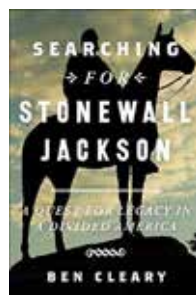
978-1-64313-080-4

America's battle over conservation vs. preservation.

Clayton (*Wonderlandscape: Yellowstone National Park and the Evolution of an American Cultural Icon*, 2017, etc.) divides his timely book into two parts: the relationship between friends and rivals John Muir (1838-1914) and Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946) and the dense underbrush of events, debates, bills, and laws regarding how America would protect public lands “that demonstrate our society's relationship with nature.” Muir, co-founder of the Sierra Club, was a prolific author, scientist, and political activist who helped protect Yosemite. He was raised in an evangelical farming family but slowly turned away from it, passionately appreciating God through the works of nature. Pinchot's family was wealthy. He dreamed of becoming America's first forester and served as President Theodore Roosevelt's chief adviser on environmental issues. Muir too was friends with the nature-loving president. Pinchot went on to found the U.S. Forest Service in 1905. Clayton looks at the issue of public lands through the lens of these two, seemingly like-minded men: prophet vs. statesman, a romantic vs. a practical man, and Muir's moral authority vs. Pinchot's tactical genius. As

the author shows, they were collaborative rivals, each offering "alternative paths to articulating a constructive societal relationship to nature." He uses the battle over damming Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley to provide water to San Francisco as a key factor in understanding the Muir-Pinchot rivalry. Muir fought hard against it; Pinchot acquiesced. Muir lost. Ultimately, "their friendship was drowned under a reservoir." The book is populated with a number of fascinating figures: Frederick Law Olmsted; co-editor of *The Century* magazine, Robert Underwood Johnson; and Aldo Leopold, who argued for balancing the use of public land with sustainable logging and water supplies. Today, Clayton writes, we need a "visionary management framework," not "culture wars."

A substantial contribution to understanding our environmental past. (16 pages of color photos)



SEARCHING FOR STONEWALL JACKSON *A Quest for Legacy in a Divided America*

Cleary, Ben

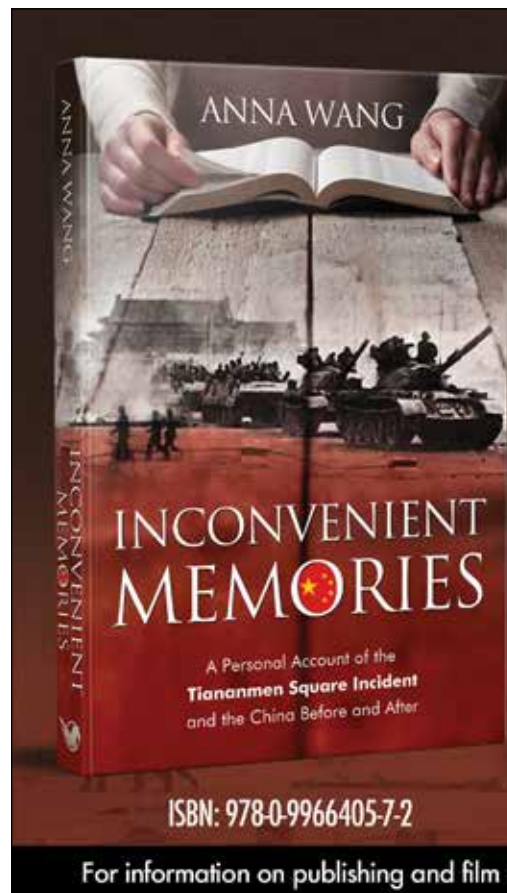
Twelve (384 pp.)

\$30.00 | Jul. 16, 2019

978-1-4555-3580-4

Virginia-based writer and teacher/historian Cleary takes on a thorny modern issue: How do we commemorate those dead who fought for the Confederates?

Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson spent a decade teaching at Virginia Military Institute, a job for which he was perhaps not entirely suited. "Then suddenly, with the war," writes the author, "he came into his own: commanding, organizing, fighting." Beloved of his soldiers and honored by foe Ulysses S. Grant as "a gallant soldier and Christian gentleman," he fought doggedly for the Confederate cause in what he called



INCONVENIENT MEMORIES BY ANNA WANG

A woman recounts her upbringing in China as the country struggles to gain full entry into the modern world.

"...artfully braids the personal and the political..."

—Kirkus Reviews

"A moving recollection of personal and national identity."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 978-0-9966405-7-2

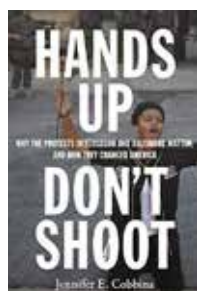
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A well-researched and spirited cultural history.

EVERYBODY'S DOIN' IT

"our second War of Independence" while, as Cleary notes, never apologizing for or openly supporting slavery. (Jackson did, however, own six slaves.) The author's investigation into Jackson's life and times begins with our own, with a Virginia monument that park rangers called "Stonewall on steroids," which was sculpted just before World War II and has the feel of an anti-Axis superhero. While an antihero to many, Jackson is revered in the South, especially among Virginians. On that score, Cleary gamely recalls a showdown with a New York academic who disparaged Southern boorishness: "My assertion that I was a Virginian—which to a southerner would have stopped her diatribe immediately—did nothing to check the flow." Yet, of course, that New Yorker had a point to make. Furthermore, writes the author, who spent many years teaching mostly African American students in the juvenile justice system and laments the "consequences of poverty and neglect, the legacy of the slavery that Johnson was fighting to defend," that point needs to be heard out in Southern quarters. Cleary, who observes that "interest in the Civil War is a middle-aged white guy kind of thing," is both sensitive and sensible, and readers along the way will learn both of Jackson's gallantry and the essential wrongness of the enterprise for which he died.

An honest, searching book sure to tread on the toes of supremacists and iconoclasts alike.



HANDS UP, DON'T SHOOT *Why the Protests in Ferguson and Baltimore Matter, and How They Changed America*

Cobbina, Jennifer E.

New York Univ. (288 pp.)

\$25.00 paper | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-4798-7441-5

An academic study of the police killings of black citizens as "examples of racial hostility, racial bias [and] legalized racial subordination."

Cobbina (Criminal Justice/Michigan State Univ.) builds her narrative from a mixture of her own observations, interviews with experts, and data gathered through carefully designed research. Throughout, the author emphasizes high-profile deaths caused by law enforcement personnel in Baltimore and suburban St. Louis. Cobbina, a black woman who worried about being the victim of police force during her research, focuses mostly on the police killings of black males, but she also looks at the use of deadly force against black women and men and women of other races. Beginning with an expansive history of racial inequality in America, the author posits that such racism has often led to excessive force used disproportionately against blacks by police. After summarizing the historical context, Cobbina explains how racism, as well as the unique aspects of a specific city, resulted in the Baltimore death of Freddie Gray and the Ferguson, Missouri, death of Michael Brown. The author devotes a chapter to an examination of whether black police officers are more or less likely than white officers to

employ deadly force against black males. She concludes that the hiring of additional black police officers often leads to negligible positive impact because it is an overly simplified solution to a deeply complex problem involving poverty, lack of hope for meaningful employment, and other structural factors rarely solved by local governments. In the second part of the book, the author shifts focus from the use of force to protests by citizens in Baltimore and St. Louis. She tries to discern why some individuals join protests despite the risks of police force, why many of those protestors quickly drop active resistance while others persist, and why a portion of despairing citizens never become actively involved. For an academic monograph, the author mostly eschews scholarly jargon while also not relying exclusively on anecdotal accounts.

Though not groundbreaking, a useful reference on a topic that requires continued examination.



EVERYBODY'S DOIN' IT *Sex, Music, and Dance in New York, 1840-1917*

Cockrell, Dale

Norton (384 pp.)

\$29.95 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-0-393-60894-6

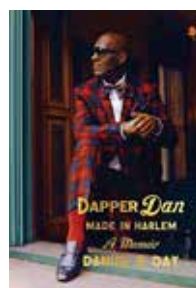
A history of the hot music and provocative dancing that lit up the Gilded Age.

Cockrell (Emeritus, Musicology/Vanderbilt Univ.; *Demons of Disorder:*

Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World, 1997) offers a colorful panorama of New York City nightlife from 1840 until the start of World War I. In the mid-19th century, music became wild: "exhilarating rhythms, a brassy sound, the thumping bass, and sinuous melodies" responded to—and incited—new dance crazes that swept the nation. Young people, and especially lower-class patrons, flocked to dance halls, a cheap and alluring form of entertainment, where they "tough danced," a term applied to energetic dances such as "the walk back, the hug-me-tight, the lovers' two-step" and sexy animal dances, such as the bunny hug, kangaroo squeeze, jackass step, and the grizzly bear. All of them gave men and women a chance to embrace, gyrate their bodies, and twirl madly. In 1909, Cockrell discovered, 95 percent of young working-class women in New York went to dance halls, some every night, most at least once a week. "Shaking of hips, shimmying, twisting, and thrusting of the lower body were all parts of the accepted repertoire of moves," writes the author. Sex was in the air: in music, dancing, and prostitution, which flourished in dance halls and saloons, inspiring determined private and public reform efforts. Drawing on newspaper reports, court records, song lyrics, reform tracts, and travel guides, among many other sources, Cockrell fashions an abundantly populated narrative featuring musical performers and composers (Irving Berlin, for one, whose hit song gives the book its title), dancers, club owners, madams, prostitutes, gangsters, reformers, preachers, policemen, politicians, and exuberant patrons of dance halls, bars, and saloons—some of

which served special clienteles. "Dive," for example, was a term for a saloon frequented by blacks and whites, located in "below-sidewalk cellars"; when "dive" became applied more broadly to disreputable venues, Black-and-Tan came to refer to racially integrated establishments; and the Slide catered to gay men and women.

A well-researched and spirited cultural history. (30 illustrations)

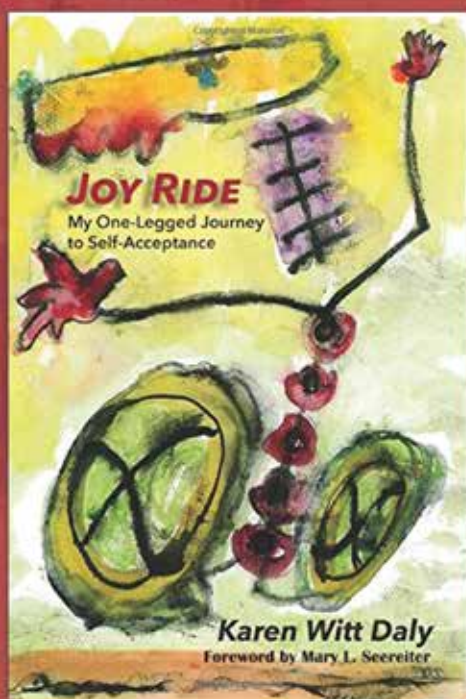


DAPPER DAN
Made in Harlem: A Memoir

Day, Daniel R.
Random House (304 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jul. 9, 2019
978-0-525-51051-2

After nearly three decades of shaping much of what we know of as "street style," Harlem-born Day, aka Dapper Dan, tells his life story in an engaging prose style.

From growing up hungry in the 1940s and '50s ("nothing makes you question the purpose and meaning of life like hunger") to being a master dice gambler to opening (and subsequently closing) his own clothing boutique, the author chronicles his own story as well as that of the changing societal landscape of Harlem. Day's parents had moved from "tight-knit rural communities in the South where everyone knew each other" to black Harlem, where families "did their best to re-create those communities." There was little



Joy Ride By Karen Witt Daly

An inspiring, fiercely honest, and grace-filled memoir of a woman's triumphant journey from childhood cancer to adult improvisational dancer.

"To read Karen's book is like having a dance you will never forget. Her ability to transmit her life experience in words will transform you just as she has transformed herself many times...Her writing is like her dancing, authentic and honest..."

—Alito Alessi, Creative Director and Founder, DanceAbility International

"The strength of this deeply moving memoir lies in its blunt honesty regarding self-perception...coupled with her straight-talking approach, she expresses a beguiling tenderness toward readers..."

"Sharp, courageous writing in a powerful memoir." —Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 9781977815446

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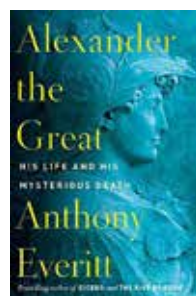
Nearly unparalleled insight into the period and the man make this a story for everyone.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

crime and decent education in the public schools, but as Day grew older, the allure of the streets became more important than an education. The author quit high school as the neighborhood was becoming increasingly violent and fragmented due to new housing projects and the rise of heroin and crack, and he took up gambling as his primary hustle. He became a master of his trade, "somewhere between a magician and a scientist," and he used his smarts through dice games as a primary means of income to support his growing family. After a brief stint in prison for a credit-card fraud scheme in Aruba, Day, increasingly spiritually minded and determined to get off the streets, returned to Harlem and opened the clothing boutique Dapper Dan, specializing in furs and leathers. "Fashion for me wasn't about expression," he writes. "Fashion was about power," a message that resonated with his neighborhood connections, drawing in the hustlers with money to spend. Day eventually found a creative way to screen print the logos of high-fashion labels, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Fendi, and make custom clothing for his first customers—the black gangsters of Harlem. Since then, his clothes and vision have become iconic to

American hip-hop culture. With clients like Jam Master Jay, Flavor Flav, and Beyoncé, Day continues to have an instrumental effect on black urban culture.

A dynamic version of the mythic American dream.



ALEXANDER THE GREAT His Life and His Mysterious Death

Everitt, Anthony
Random House (512 pp.)
\$30.00 | Aug. 27, 2019
978-0-425-28652-4



Everitt (*The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World's Greatest Civilization*, 2016, etc.) shows us the genius of Alexander (356–323 B.C.E.) in a biography that reads as easily as a novel.

In order to provide a full picture of this fascinating figure, the author seamlessly weaves in comments from friends and foes alike, including Demosthenes and Aristotle. Alexander was driven to conquer the impossible, whether it was fording a river or driving his army to India's "river ocean" to see the "world's edge." From the strong influence of his mother, Olympias, and father, Philip, who shifted the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean, he received a Greek education and the strength to take over the world. Philip was not cruel but certainly ruthless as he became leader of all Greece, exhibiting how self-government by the defeated could minimize expenses. After Philip's murder (with lots of suspects), the task of invading Persia fell to Alexander. He inherited a large, disciplined army, a wealthy empire, and Philip's military genius, allowing him to quell uprisings. He had no personal ambition but delighted in danger; he was audacious to the point of lunatic courage; he was devoted to his friends, respectful of enemies. Alexander's masterful engineers, artillery, and siege engines, along with his incredible luck, helped as he defeated the Persians time and again. He won the day against the Persians at the Granicus, which made him the leader of Asia Minor. Darius III escaped not once but twice, leading Alexander further into unknown territory. Moving into India, Alexander respected the different cultures and rejected racism, but he alternated chivalry with ferocity. Wartime massacres and total destruction of Thebes, Tyre, and Persepolis were cases of cruel necessity rather than gratuitous cruelty. Celebrations could turn into drunken quarrels and turned his men's respect into fear as they longed for home. Everitt has a wealth of anecdotes and two millennia of histories to work with, and he delivers and interprets them flawlessly.

Nearly unparalleled insight into the period and the man make this a story for everyone.

The Creative Copywriter's Companion

by Tom Attea

A copywriting pro reveals all in this how-to manual.

THE CREATIVE COPYWRITER'S COMPANION

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

One of America's most award-winning copywriters explains how to write great creative copy. Covers all traditional and digital media.

TOM ATTEA

ISBN: 978-0-9821218-3-2

"For those mystified by advertising copywriting or anyone who hopes to enter the profession, this book is sure to fit the bill."

"... he has won the ad industry's most prestigious awards, worked with top agencies, and written for stellar clients."

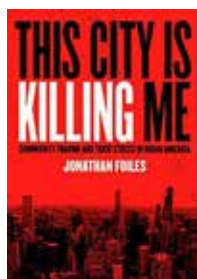
"Included are chapters about exploring the creative process, writing for traditional and digital media..."

"He writes eloquently and wisely...a highly instructional guide to the creation of effective advertising."

"Brimming with wisdom and good-natured copywriting guidance."

—Kirkus Reviews

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THIS CITY IS KILLING ME Community Trauma and Toxic Stress In Urban America

Foiles, Jonathan

Belt Publishing (176 pp.)

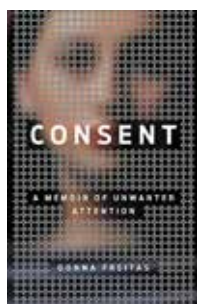
\$16.95 paper | Aug. 21, 2019

978-1-948742-47-4

Chicago-based mental health clinician Foiles looks at the many ways in which urban poverty, crime, violence, and other socio-economic factors can destroy a life.

"We diagnose people, not cultures or neighborhoods," writes the author. If neighborhoods were to be diagnosed, some might be sociopathic—but seldom through any fault of their own. For example, he writes of the Cabrini-Green housing project that sprang up in the 1950s and '60s, providing poor African Americans with public housing in neighborhoods in which they were then not the majority. "To live in Cabrini-Green or any of the other housing projects was to be constantly reminded that you didn't matter," writes Foiles: You were surrounded by rats, barbed wire, garbage, warring gangs, and indifferent police and public agencies whose attitude was that the people who lived there were on their own. Small wonder that those in such environs experience trauma, manifested in many ways. The author offers five such case studies. In the case of "Robert," who grew up in Cabrini-Green, the trauma manifests in PTSD accompanied by literal delusions of grandeur, all of which "read like a novel." Another patient is categorized as a "frequent flyer," someone without regular access to medical services so that she must resort to emergency services for every medical encounter, at tremendous cost. The whole enterprise, Foiles writes, is wrapped up in white privilege. The white power structure of Chicago has steadily whittled away services in poor, minority neighborhoods, from public schools to hospitals and mental health clinics. There is seldom any opportunity to intervene at early signs of trauma and illness and seldom much official interest shown in doing so. The author closes with the exhortation that what is needed is "a modern-day Poor People's Movement to aid those who by circumstance of their birth are at a higher likelihood of experiencing suffering in all its forms."

An urgent call for reform worthy of serious consideration.



CONSENT A Memoir of Unwanted Attention

Freitas, Donna

Little, Brown (352 pp.)

\$28.00 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-0-316-45052-2

The acclaimed writer and campus lecturer shares a secret, revealing a story of stalking lurking just beneath her success.

In her latest, Freitas (*Consent on Campus: A Manifesto*, 2018, etc.) exposes the psychological havoc caused by her stalker and navigates the complex terrain of structural sexism and double standards involved with trusting in authority, academia, and the Catholic church. Silenced first by self-doubt and later by confidentiality agreements, the author provides a harrowing narrative of the detachment and disconnection often felt by harassment survivors. In her painstaking account, imbued throughout with alternating senses of self-awareness and doubt, Freitas reviews her choices as if constantly scanning for fault or responsibility even as she unfolds the layers of lies that protected an influential professor. Her smooth storytelling skills translate this nightmare to the page with emotionally wrought insights. "If I named this thing it would stick to me, sink into me, become me," she writes. "Not only would it rot me from the inside but now the rot would be visible. It would cling to me, mark me, become my scarlet letter." Whether caught in a monster's trap or the victim of a foolish old man's misguided and inappropriate affections, Freitas manages to refrain from judgment without shielding her discomfort with either option.

A Dream for Peace

By Ghoulem Berrah

Berrah's debut memoir offers a history of the struggle for self-rule by North African nations and a vision of a peaceful world.

Dr. Ghoulem Berrah

A MEMOIR

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"...he made a scientific breakthrough involving the inhibition of DNA synthesis..."

"...accepted a professorship at the Yale...became President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's closest counselor..."

"...he met with world leaders, including several American presidents, Charles De Gaulle, Fidel Castro, and Golda Meir."

"A detailed book about an extraordinary man..."

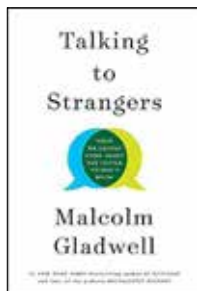
—Kirkus Reviews

Readers expecting another everything-you-think-you-know-is-wrong page-turner will not be disappointed, but they will also encounter some unsettling truths.

TALKING TO STRANGERS

She discusses life after a trauma as a victim and survivor while delivering an unforgettable analysis of a devastating ordeal. As she interrogates womanhood, professional success, and expectations about protection when such behavior is reported, the author's attention to the institutional response in light of current trends makes this an urgently vital perspective. Her excavations of victim-blaming and institution-protection actions are stark, and her sharing of this long-silenced story adds to the current social reckoning with unequal power dynamics on college campuses and elsewhere. A groundbreaking resource for educators, administrators, students, and survivors, the book explores an issue many would prefer to ignore.

A potent memoir of stalking with special resonance in the era of #MeToo.



TALKING TO STRANGERS What We Should Know About the People We Don't Know

Gladwell, Malcolm
Little, Brown (400 pp.)
\$30.00 | Sep. 10, 2019
978-0-316-47852-6

The latest intellectually stimulating book from the acclaimed author.

Every few years, journalist Gladwell (*David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*, 2013, etc.) assembles serious scientific research on oddball yet relevant subjects and then writes a bestseller. Readers expecting another everything-you-think-you-know-is-wrong page-turner will not be disappointed, but they will also encounter some unsettling truths. The author begins with a few accounts of black Americans who died at the hands of police, using the incidents to show how most of us are incompetent at judging strangers. Countless psychological studies demonstrate that humans are terrible at detecting lying. Experts such as FBI agents don't perform better. Judges interview suspects to determine if they deserve bail; they believe it helps, but the opposite is true. Computers, using only hard data, do much better. Many people had qualms about Bernie Madoff, but interviewers found him completely open and honest; "he was a sociopath dressed up as a mensch." This, Gladwell emphasizes, is the transparency problem. We believe that someone's demeanor reflects their thoughts and emotions, but it often doesn't. Gladwell's second bombshell is what he calls "default to truth." It seems like a university president resigns in disgrace every few months for the same reason: They hear accusations of abusive behavior by an employee—e.g., Larry Nassar at Michigan State, Jerry Sandusky at Penn State—conduct an investigation, but then take no action, often claiming that they did not have enough evidence of deceit. Ultimately, everyone agrees that they were criminally negligent. Another example is CIA official James Angleton, who was convinced that there was a Soviet mole in the agency; his decades of suspicion and search ruined careers and crippled American

intelligence. Gladwell emphasizes that society could not function if we did not give everyone the benefit of the doubt. "To assume the best of another is the trait that has created modern society," he writes. "Those occasions when our trusting nature is violated are tragic. But the alternative—to abandon trust as a defense against predation and deception—is worse."

Another Gladwell tour de force but perhaps his most disturbing.



BEATEN DOWN, WORKED UP The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor

Greenhouse, Steven
Knopf (416 pp.)
\$27.95 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-101-87443-1

The subtitle says it all in a powerful book from an author who is "deeply concerned about what is happening to many

American workers."

Former longtime *New York Times* reporter Greenhouse (*The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker*, 2008) offers a combination of labor union history in America, investigative reporting about how rapacious employers and Republican governance have diminished labor unions, and an agenda for the revitalization of unions across the country. Throughout the narrative, the author circles back to the puzzle at the foundation of the book: Given how clearly labor unions improved employment conditions for hundreds of millions of laborers, why did those benefitting surrender to the corporate-government plan to eliminate those unions? With copious evidence, Greenhouse demonstrates that unionized workers received—and still receive from existing unions—not only improved wages, but also safer work conditions, predictable schedules, more comprehensive insurance, improved retirement benefits, increased paid vacation periods, and much more. As he notes, while it's true that some union leaders were guilty of corruption and/or indifference, for the most part, they have protected workers more avidly than corporate executives, who are more beholden to stockholders than employees. In many cases, corporate lobbyists prevail; as a result, the negotiating arena is no longer equitable for unions. Before a closing chapter recommending numerous alterations in laws and regulations, the author demonstrates how other nations, especially in Europe, have instituted much more equitable systems. "Europeans," he writes, "often deride America's \$7.25-an-hour minimum wage as McJobs, while McDonald's workers in highly unionized Denmark average more than \$20 an hour." Greenhouse's message is unambiguous: "In no other industrial nation do employers fight so hard to defeat, indeed quash, labor unions." Throughout the book, the author interweaves positive examples of labor-management collaborations that lead to a more productive workforce. These bits of hope come from anecdotes about culinary workers unionizing in

Las Vegas, fast-food workers advocating for an increased minimum wage, and public school teachers going on strike.

A clearly written, impressively researched, and accomplished follow-up to *The Big Squeeze*.



INTO THE PLANET *My Life as a Cave Diver*

Heinerth, Jill

Ecco/HarperCollins (352 pp.)

\$29.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

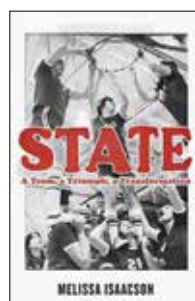
978-0-06-269154-5

Enchanting tales of “swimming through the veins of Mother Earth.”

Heinerth (*The Scuba Diver's Guide to Underwater Video*, 2016, etc.), an award-winning Canadian filmmaker and pro-

fessional cave diver, delivers an exhilarating, deeply personal memoir about her career as a woman in a male-dominated profession. In spare, crisp prose, she chronicles a “life immersed in a relationship with this element that nourishes and destroys, buoys and drowns—that has both freed me and taken the lives of my friends.” She has learned to “accept and welcome fear” because, as she notes, “more people have died exploring underwater caves than climbing Mount Everest.” Heinerth recounts fighting sudden, torrential underwater cave streams, developing new diving equipment, and suffering decompression illness. She began with diving lessons and got hooked. At 27, she left a lucrative job in Toronto to work at a dive resort in Grand Cayman, guiding visitors through long, sinuous tunnels. On a solo dive, she discovered her first cave, filled with ornate stalactites. The author got certified as a cavern diving expert, later making a name for herself with underwater photography and articles in diving magazines. She chronicles her adventures exploring Florida's vast network of caves and, in Mexico, a six-hour round-trip swim into the world's deepest cave. Next up, in 1995, she helped survey the world's longest underwater cave. A few years later, she was one of the divers to make the first 3-D imaging of an underwater cave. In 2001, with support from National Geographic, she embarked on one of her most incredible adventures. A massive iceberg in the Antarctic Circle had broken off the Ross Ice Shelf, and Heinerth and her crew battled 60-foot wave peaks and ice floes on a Shackleton-esque journey to explore a part of it. Deep within, they found an “ecosystem living in total isolation, an undiscovered world thriving in darkness.”

Told with sensitivity and joyful enthusiasm, this is an inspiring story that will appeal to many, especially adventurous young women.



STATE *A Team, a Triumph, a Transformation*

Isaacson, Melissa

Agate Midway (320 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-57284-266-3

The unknown story of a high school girls' basketball team in “a monumental place in our nation's history.”

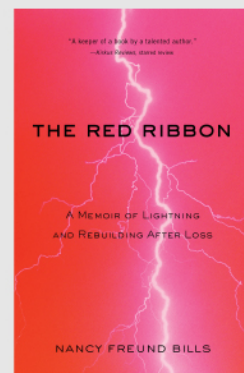
Sportswriter Isaacson (Journalism/ Northwestern Univ.; *Transition Game: An Inside Look at Life With the Chicago Bulls*, 1994), who has worked for ESPN and the *Chicago Tribune*, mixes her personal experience on Illinois' 1979 state championship team with a chronicle of the implementation of Title IX, which “prohibited sex discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving...federal financial aid.” The author attended Niles West High School, which had no tradition of female interscholastic sports when she entered. The

THE RED RIBBON

A Memoir of Lightning and
Rebuilding After Loss

by Nancy Freund Bills

“Memoirs of loss and survival are rather common, but what sets this one apart is Bills' extraordinary perceptiveness and writing talent. . . . **A keeper of a book by a talented author.**”—*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**



“**A must-read** for anyone dealing with loss.”
—**Hollis Gillespie**, a best-selling author and award-winning syndicated humor columnist

“**I highly recommend this book**—it is both heartbreaking and uplifting....a real tour de force!”—**Christine Linnehan**, M.S., LCPC, FT, Psychotherapist, Riverview Counseling (specializing in grief and bereavement), Consultant, Center for Grieving Children

www.nancybills-memoir.com



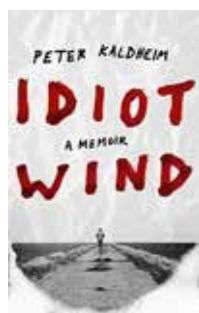
Memoir; ISBN 978-1-63152-573-5; 5.5 x 8.5;
\$16.95; E-book ISBN 978-1-63152-574-2

Despite the familiar story arc, Kaldheim's voice is fresh and honest, and the redemption and grace feel real.

IDIOT WIND

female teacher who agreed to coach the nascent girls' basketball team knew almost nothing about the game, so she listened carefully week after week as the male coach of the boys' team tutored her. Isaacson and most of her teammates came to idolize their coach, and they respected the boys' coach, too, for his patient role. This coming-of-age memoir, informed by a larger social history, alternates among biographical profiles of the coaches, the author's basketball-playing classmates ("after the passage of Title IX, tennis and badminton were clearly not enough"), parents and siblings of the students, and school administrators. As the narrative progresses and the girls turn into a winning team, Isaacson provides detailed accounts of the frequent victories and occasional losses, sections that may not interest nonfans. An irony of the narrative is that the much-loved female coach departed the high school for personal reasons after inspiring the girls for three seasons, and her replacement was a male teacher/coach. Under his guidance, the girls' team won the state championship during Isaacson's senior year despite numerous rocky moments caused by the coach's awkwardness in dealing with teenage girls. By her senior year, Isaacson no longer played a key role on the team, but she learned how to adjust and take significant joy in the success of the team.

An intimate, at times inspiring account.



IDIOT WIND A Memoir

Kaldheim, Peter
Canongate (352 pp.)
\$24.00 | Aug. 1, 2019
978-1-78689-736-7

A drug addict loses everything and then hits the road to find himself.

This engaging memoir borrows its title from Bob Dylan and its road map from Jack Kerouac. Kaldheim, fearing for his life after a Manhattan drug scam

went awry, boarded a bus to get as far away as he could afford (Richmond, Virginia), with nothing but regrets to accompany him. He had once been a seminarian and was working his way up the ladder in the publishing industry, and he had been married twice. He'd gotten reckless and careless in his downward spiral, but the one thing he had apparently never squandered was his literary aspiration. So, from the start of his journey, he began taking notes, hoping "that the uncertain road ahead would provide me with the Kerouacian adventures I'd been longing to experience ever since I first read *On the Road* as a high-school sophomore. *Who knows?* I thought. *There might even be a book in it.*" Almost three decades later, this is that book, drawing from some 50 pages of notes Kaldheim had taken on his trip from coast to coast. He mainly hitchhiked and hopped freights, learning the ins and outs of homeless shelters and their free meals, picking up a few bucks here and there at a "Stab Lab" where he sold blood. Early on, a waitress struggling with addiction complimented him as "a good listener," and what he has assembled here are the stories from others he met within

the "brotherhood of the road," the cautionary tales from those who would give him a ride or some other necessity. He discovered generosity on a level he had never expected from those who didn't have much to give, and he also found a wellspring of empathy within himself, "a heart willing to reconnect with the world, if only I had the sense to let it."

Despite the familiar story arc, Kaldheim's voice is fresh and honest, and the redemption and grace feel real.



THE GREAT PARTNERSHIP Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and the Fate of the Confederacy

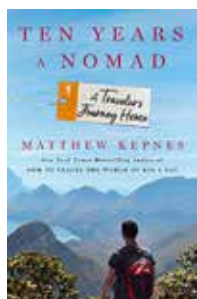
Keller, Christian B.
Pegasus (456 pp.)
\$28.95 | Jul. 2, 2019
978-1-64313-134-4

A study of the working relationship between Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, masters

of strategy.

"His equal can never be found for fighting; for planning, Genl Lee stands unsurpassed; for both, I place Genl Jackson at the head of any list." So noted a Virginia cavalryman in his diary after Jackson died as a result of wounds suffered under "friendly fire." The Army of Northern Virginia consistently fought against the odds, almost always outnumbered and outgunned by Union forces. Even so, thanks to strategic innovation and a certain derring-do—to say nothing of a willingness to expend lives for their cause—that force's chief generals managed to outfight their opponents. Jackson and Lee, writes Keller (History/United States Army War Coll.; *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 2010, etc.), were friends who relied on each other for advice and leadership, Jackson taking the role of the chief strategic adviser who executed Lee's orders even when he disagreed with them. (In this respect, Jackson was much different from James Longstreet, who, Keller notes, always believed that his own strategic ideas were best and sulked when Lee overrode them.) Jackson had no shortage of ideas and plans, even venturing policy suggestions that led to such things as the "first national draft in American history." Together, Lee and Jackson developed early plans that would take the war north to such battlefields as Gettysburg, a battle that might have turned out much differently had Jackson not died in 1863. With Jackson's death, a partnership of near equals ended, and Lee reorganized his army while facing what Keller considers a thorny dilemma: "how to 'build' another Jackson-type subordinate in [Richard] Ewell and [A.P.] Hill within an extremely time-constrained and pressure-filled environment." He could not, and even though the Army of Northern Virginia managed to fight on until 1865, Jackson's loss was a critical turning point.

Students of strategy and tactics, as well as of the Civil War, will find this a useful look at a storied partnership. (16 pages of b/w illustrations)



TEN YEARS A NOMAD A Traveler's Journey Home

Kepnes, Matthew
St. Martin's (240 pp.)
\$27.99 | Jul. 9, 2019
978-1-250-19051-2

How and why wanderlust kept a man traveling around the globe for a decade.

At age 23, Kepnes (*How To Travel the World on \$50 a Day*, 2013) was on the conventional track—he graduated from college and got a steady job in the real world “at the bottom of the middle-class corporate ladder.” However, he found that he was dissatisfied: “The real world had things that college lacked: a place of my own; money; a steady relationship; the ability to go where I wanted; to do what I wanted; freedom. It was where I could finally start *my* life. Except the real world turned out to be as boring as hell.” He had reached a junction: Should he continue with the status quo or throw it all away and travel the world?

Despite his introverted nature, Kepnes chose travel—and never looked back. In this candid memoir, the author examines how he was completely changed by the decade he spent on the road, living in hostels, working in foreign countries, and making friends in hundreds of cities and towns. He discusses how all his experiences—good and bad—have helped him be more in tune with others and become a better listener and friend. He emphasizes the importance of listening to your inner self rather than the skeptics and naysayers, both of whom he encountered often. Throughout his ruminations on how travel affected him, Kepnes interweaves his tales of friends, girlfriends, and great loves discovered among exotic backdrops and how starting a blog (nomadicmatt.com) about his adventures altered the way he traveled. His story is one of heartbreak, self-discovery, and the constant travel itch he had to scratch in order to become the man he was supposed to be.

An entertaining, quick read by a man who did what many of us only dream about.

The Amazing Life of Johnny Saint Gold

By Robert Santoro

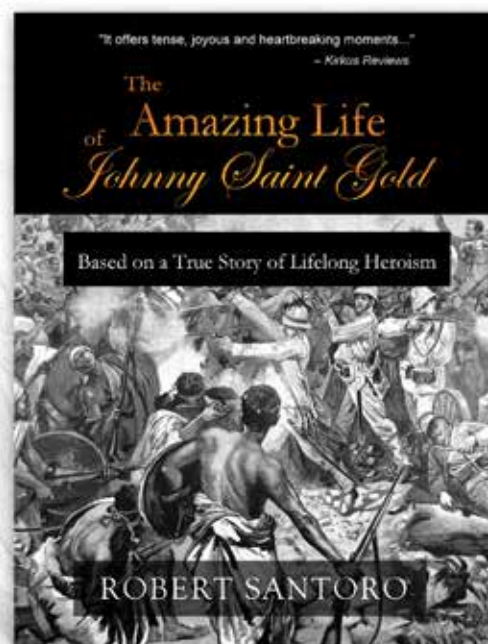
In this debut historical novel, Santoro recounts the sensational life of his father, an Italian immigrant at the turn of the 20th century.

“... tense, joyous, and heartbreaking moments...”

“He breathes life into the story through small details...”

“A heartfelt...tribute to a man who encountered considerable adversity.”

—Kirkus Reviews

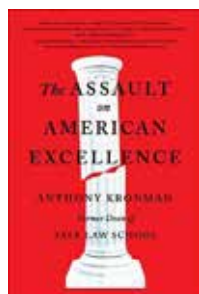


ISBN #: 978-1794098756

For general inquiries or agent representation, email bob901711@gmail.com

A dense but expert history of human behavior beginning at the beginning.

THE DEEP HISTORY OF OURSELVES



THE ASSAULT ON AMERICAN EXCELLENCE

Kronman, Anthony
Free Press (288 pp.)
\$27.00 | Aug. 20, 2019
978-1-5011-9948-6

A defense of academic elitism by a former academic at an elite institution.

Former Yale Law School dean and longtime professor Kronman (*Confessions of a Born-Again Pagan*, 2016, etc.) takes a

jaundiced view of the underlying sentiments that have lately manifested in a series of events at that university and others: the abandonment by one college “master” of that term to avoid causing offense to those who might connect it to “the racism and hierarchy of the antebellum South”; the censure of two other masters for supposedly denigrating minority students by not issuing explicit instructions on what costumes students could wear on Halloween; the rise of “trigger warnings”; and so forth. An erstwhile anti-war activist and student radical whose “politics have mellowed since,” the author counters that college is necessarily an elite institution, that there is a hierarchy of values and ethics in the pursuit of knowledge and the ancient Greek ideal of excellence, and that democratization taken to extremes can only destroy those “islands of excellence in a democratic sea.” Kronman sees the most extreme damage as falling on the humanities, which “sound in an aristocratic register that today one is ashamed to acknowledge, yet alone proclaim.” One aspect of that aristocratic register is the distinction in accomplishment and rank between master/professor and student and the Socratic notion that there is a “rank order of human greatness”; another is the thought that tolerance of ambiguity and dissonance is part of the academic experience; still another is that academic institutions are “a community of conversation with a special ethic of its own,” not a haven for retreat from uncomfortable thoughts or a safe space against microaggressions. Invoking Arendt, Orwell, de Tocqueville, and others, Kronman delivers a coherent, provocative case for a return to traditional academic values—though it’s one that is not likely to sway those who adhere to modern/postmodern mores.

Certain to cause more arguments than it settles and likely to appeal most to the Allan Bloom/Jacques Barzun wing.



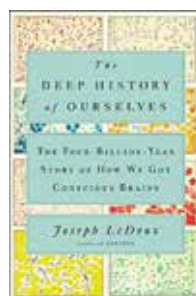
DOWN ON BOTH SIDES Growing Up in Ethiopia and America

Kurtz, Caroline
Catalyst Press (302 pp.)
\$16.00 paper | Jul. 15, 2019
978-1-946395-15-3

A Presbyterian missionary’s daughter tells the story of the life-changing years she spent growing up in Ethiopia.

In the mid-1950s, Kurtz’s father took his family to live in East Africa. They eventually landed in Maji, a small, remote Ethiopian village that became the author’s “Camelot” of peace and stability. There, the author grew up in a cheerfully chaotic household with three sisters. She passed her days learning Amharic and being home-schooled by a mother who led Bible study classes for local women. Her adventure-loving father sometimes took the family on mule or Jeep treks deep into the Ethiopian outback, which Kurtz came to love for its untamed beauty. In 1960, her parents sent her to a Christian boarding school in Addis Ababa that became the vantage point from which she witnessed the attempted coup against Emperor Haile Selassie. Her teenage years marked the beginning of a more peripatetic life. She began high school in Alexandria, Egypt, then returned briefly to the U.S., where her father went to earn a master’s degree in Pasadena. There, her father resigned his post in Maji out of despair for not being able to “grow the church,” but he was reassigned to Addis Ababa, where Kurtz finished high school. She returned again to the U.S. for college and discovered that her years in Africa had made her a permanent outsider. She married a fellow student from her years in Addis Ababa, and together, they “wandered in [an] American wilderness” until the early 1990s. Eventually, both decided to return to Ethiopia only to find their adopted homeland embroiled in a civil war that would see it “[ricochet] from feudalism into communism.” Though the narrative sometimes reads unevenly, with sections that are either over- or underdeveloped or not integrated into a smooth arc, the book still offers a unique, historically informed perspective on a fascinating nation.

A flawed but warmly remembered memoir.



THE DEEP HISTORY OF OURSELVES The Four-Billion-Year Story of How We Got Conscious Brains

LeDoux, Joseph
Viking (432 pp.)
\$30.00 | Aug. 27, 2019
978-0-7352-2383-7

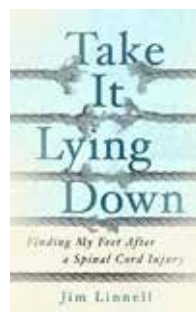
An in-depth examination of “the place of human beings in the nearly four-billion-year-long history of life.”

Humans are the only creatures that talk, reason, and reflect on who we are, but all organisms do many of the same things we do to survive, writes LeDoux (Science and Psychiatry/New York Univ.; *Anxious: Using the Brain To Understand and Treat Fear and Anxiety*, 2015, etc.). Plenty of popular authors describe the history of life, but LeDoux wants readers to remember as well as enjoy, so he divides his book into short, pithy chapters, each explaining a single evolutionary advance. Four billion years ago, something acquired the ability to extract energy from its surroundings and to reproduce, so it fit the definition of “life.” To continue living, it had to survive by avoiding dangers and pursuing necessities. The author emphasizes that action and even learning and memory



don't require a nervous system. "Behavior is not...primarily a tool of the mind but of survival," he writes, continuing, "the connection of behavior to mental life, like mental life itself, is an evolutionary afterthought." Creatures without nerves did fine for several billion years. Primitive hydra evolved a simple nerve net that enabled much quicker responses, but since the net was generalized, hydra behavior is identical no matter what part of its body is stimulated. Its close kin, jellyfish, developed the first concentrated collections of neurons to control specialized actions such as swimming and prey capture. Nervous systems and then brains gradually grow more complicated, and LeDoux delves into the nature of awareness, perception, deliberation, memory, language, emotion, and, finally, consciousness. Like all good educators, the author begins simply. The first half of the book is a superb overview of evolution; the second half gradually focuses on brain structure and function. Readers will learn a great deal of deep neuroscience, although, despite a generous stream of illustrations, they will need to pay close attention.

A dense but expert history of human behavior beginning at the beginning.



TAKE IT LYING DOWN *Finding My Feet After a Spinal Cord Injury*

Linnell, Jim

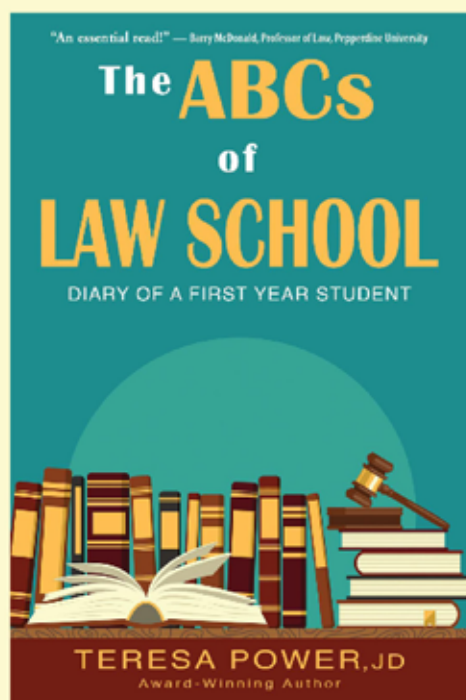
Paul Dry Books (200 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Aug. 20, 2019

978-1-58988-135-8

"Being paralyzed was a fact I couldn't deny but didn't let my mind admit." A powerful exploration of navigating physical disability.

In this lyrical account, Linnell (Emeritus, Theatre and Dance/Univ. of New Mexico; *Walking on Fire: The Shaping Force of Emotion in Writing Drama*, 2011) examines the seemingly mundane accident that rendered him a quadriplegic at age 70—and the aftermath of coping and rehabilitation. The author opens with a family vacation in remote Baja, Mexico, in 2012, when he was in his final year as a professor. Stepping off a porch at their rental house, he fell down and destroyed his body.



ISBN#: 978-0-9981070-7-3

The ABCs of Law School

By Teresa Power, JD

An attorney, international educator, and bestselling author offers a guide to law school success.

"Worthy tips, tricks, and tools for prospective law students delivered in concise prose."
—Kirkus Reviews

"...an essential read for any person thinking about going to law school, or desiring to be prepared to excel in law school once he or she gets there...an outstanding job capturing the important basics of the first year law school experience, and communicating them in a very clear and engaging way."

—Barry P. McDonald, Straus Research Professor of Law,
Pepperdine University School of Law

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INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

ROBERT MACFARLANE

IN UNDERLAND, THE EXPLORER GOES UNDERGROUND AND FINDS STRANGE, HIDDEN WORLDS

By Gregory McNamee



Photo courtesy Bryan Appleyard

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, if you were to go in search of the noted British explorer and nature writer Robert Macfarlane, you would have done well to look in two places: in the wildest mountain ranges on the planet, where he can often be found wandering, or in the deepest stacks of the library at Cambridge University, where he teaches. The former venue has given him the stuff of numerous books and essays, the latter a rich trove of poetic language, much of which he has been pleased to rescue from oblivion: Words such as nailbourne, which is what a Kentish

farmer might call an intermittent stream, and swang, what a Yorkshire orchard keeper might call a low-lying, flood-prone piece of land, dot his pages like crystalline mountain lakes.

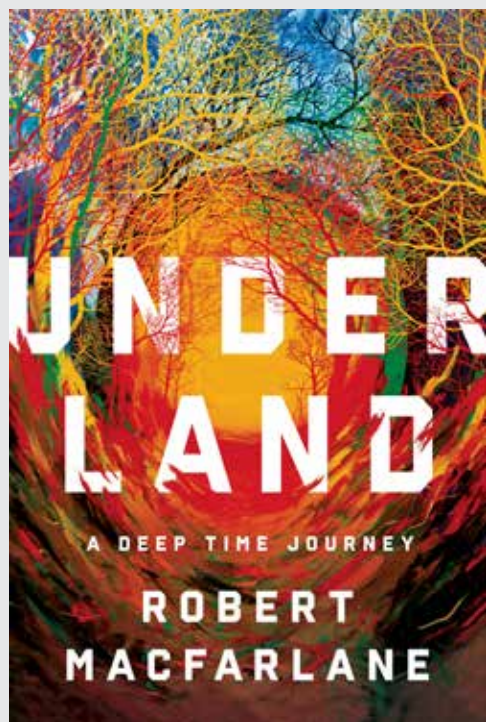
But his new book finds him in a different milieu entirely: the dark, dank spaces of the underworld, where humans have feared to tread but have trod nevertheless for thousands of years, hiding treasure, burying the dead, making shrines. The subtitle of Macfarlane's new book, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (June 4), suggests the ancientness of our fascination with the hidden worlds beneath our feet—worlds to which he transports readers with the most elegant of prose surrounding the most imponderable of mysteries, such as the staggering diversity of subterranean fungi, about which he writes, “All taxonomies crumble, but fungi leave many of our fundamental categories in ruins.”

Macfarlane roams the world to find unusual places, such as a vast network of caves in southern China that “was found to possess its own weather system” and the Iron Age mines of southern England. The place that perhaps made the biggest impression on him, he says from his English home, is what he calls “the humming, roaring blue tube of a glacial moulin on the vast Knud Rasmussen glacier in East Greenland.” He rappelled into the vertical shaft left by melting ice to experience what the world is like from the underside of a slowly moving river of ice, and not without fear. “I remember thinking,” he continues, “as I lowered down into the glowing blue

of the moulin meltshaft, that I felt as if I were dropping into a pore in the skin of an immense creature, possessed of a pliant, patient liveliness."

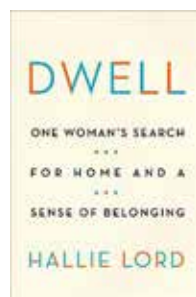
Underland is a book that has been nearly 10 years in the making, inspired by three subterranean events that occurred at roughly the same time: the underground imprisonment of the 33 Chilean miners deep below the Atacama Desert, the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano, and the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico. That the three events happened in such quick succession seemed a sign to get into the bowels of the world for a good look. As he was finishing his text, he recalls, a team of Thai soccer players was rescued from a cave after having been lost in the underworld for two weeks, a sign that it was time to leave such venues behind. "I had no idea when I began it almost a decade ago," he says, "that *Underland* would become the longest, darkest, strangest, most wondrous and 'deepest' book I've written, and possibly ever will write."

Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor. *Underland* received a starred review in the May 1, 2019, issue.



Drama builds early as the family tries to locate an ambulance, arranges an airlift to Albuquerque, and then maneuvers him to a spinal cord rehabilitation center in Denver. The positioning of the broken bones meant that he would likely remain a quadriplegic. However, Linnell also learned that he had an approximate two-year window during which he might regain some of his mobility. Any reader who has experienced protracted therapy for a paralyzing injury, or has watched somebody else experience such an ordeal, will recognize the universality of Linnell's saga even if the particulars differ. Understandably alternating among determination, hopelessness, optimism, and depression, the author rejects the label of courageous. The real heroes, he writes, are his wife and the doctors and therapists who assisted him. Every chapter is filled with memorable analogies and metaphors, making Linnell's journey to partial recovery a pleasurable intellectual experience for readers despite the horrors, fears, and winding mental path through rehab. "I fear I will be cut loose," he writes. "This fear grows from a train of thought that says accident is punishment. I will be discarded; every face will greet me with a dismissive pity." Because the author was able to visit with other patients in the rehab division, readers will also learn about the variations in spinal cord trauma. Following his departure from the hospital, the narrative focus shifts toward his wife, who battled the daily challenges of helping him at home.

A stunning account.



DWELL
**One Woman's Search
for Home and a Sense of
Belonging**

Lord, Hallie

Howard Books/Simon & Schuster
(240 pp.)

\$26.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5011-9807-6

A radio host examines her journey toward the realization that home doesn't necessarily mean a beautiful house where one lives forever.

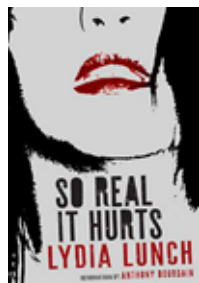
When SiriusXM radio host and writer Lord (*On the Other Side of Fear: How I Found Peace*, 2016) got married, she wanted a dream home where she and her husband, Dan, could raise their children and settle down. But as she writes, God had other plans for her, as she moved 11 times in 15 years and had eight children along the way. A woman of deep religious convictions, Lord explores what home really means to her. The dream may be of a place of permanence, but the reality is often much different. Furthermore, that reality involves more than just a physical space where we store our belongings; it includes our relationships with our family, friends, neighbors, and, most importantly to the author, God. Lord's tale is clearly directed at Christian readers, as she constantly questions the directions, obstacles, and blessings God has brought to her. She chronicles her struggle with a miscarriage but mostly embraces both the good and the bad, taking it all in stride when she finally

A vigorously told story of environmental activism that has succeeded despite the odds and an engaging journey into some of the planet's wilder places.

STRONGHOLD

relinquishes control to God. With honesty and a bit of humor, Lord discusses her loneliness and depression as well as how she overcame her introverted nature to embrace a man who became godfather to one of her children. Throughout the narrative, we see her pushing against what she perceives as God's path for her, but she always comes back to him. For Christian readers, the book will reinforce the concept that God is divine and knows far more than we do, so it's best to release control into his hands. Nonbelievers, however, should look elsewhere for a meaningful definition of home.

For Christian readers, a serviceable exploration of the process of finding "a beautiful and deep sense of rootedness."



SO REAL IT HURTS

Lunch, Lydia

Seven Stories (112 pp.)

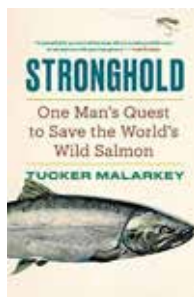
\$15.95 paper | Jul. 9, 2019

978-1-60980-943-0

In her latest, singer, writer, and performer Lunch (*The Need to Feed: Recipes for Developing a Healthy Obsession With Deeply Satisfying Foods*, 2012, etc.) offers her unique blend of raw humor and uncompromising observations.

Buoyed by indignant anger and outrage, these cultural critiques function best when viewed as performance pieces that vary between scathing indictments and rambling rants. Maintaining a deliberate defiance in tone and style, the author covers broad topics, from wildly intimate experiences to coarse opinions and razor-sharp social insights. As usual, Lunch holds nothing back, providing rebellious, raunchy personal stories, scorching perspectives on the notion of mandatory motherhood, a purging glimpse at the nightmare of insomnia, and other themes. Amid these punchy personal revelations, the author layers honed essays with a broader scope. The topics include a reflective interview with Hubert Selby Jr., an in-depth profile of poet Herbert Huncke ("short shift hustler, petty thief, con artist, convicted felon, parasitic hustler, life-long junkie...whose collected memoirs, beautifully rendered, are infused with heartbreaking detours, detailing life lived to the extreme"), a gritty history of No Wave in New York, and a blistering criticism of recent environmental degradation, pollution, and political abuses of power for economic gains. In the ambitious "Slobathon," Lunch tackles fashion trends and the commodification of style from James Dean to the death of glam and beyond. Pulling attention to corporate greed and consumer accountability, this explosive essay seethes with the kind of urgency that reflects Lunch at her strongest. Together, these reactions to consumerism, global economic exploitation, hypocrisy, militarism, environmental destruction, and other social failures of modern American society are fervent, bordering on virulent. Consistent with her other work, the author's voice may be faulted as uneven but never tamed; it's not a book for the easily offended or faint of heart.

Lunch fans will enjoy her unleashed musings and the healthy rage that abound in these fierce essays.



STRONGHOLD

One Man's Quest to Save the World's Wild Salmon

Malarkey, Tucker

Spiegel & Grau (368 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jul. 23, 2019

978-1-984801-69-2

Novelist Malarkey (*Resurrection*, 2006, etc.) turns to nonfiction in this account of a single-minded cousin who's bent on saving salmon and their habitat from humankind.

Guido Rahr was always a little odd, writes the author. As a very young child, for instance, "he had an aversion to reading, and to any book that didn't involve pictures of reptiles." He was diagnosed as dyslexic but, after memorizing a vast academic tome on North American reptilia, overcame it—and, though never particularly numerate, he went on to devour whole libraries of science writing while making it clear that he didn't have much use for civilization. Yale wasn't easy, though in an early encounter with the institution, he produced a faunal map that a visiting professor spirited away; other people weren't easy, though he did find a "near perfect alignment" with a kindred spirit; nothing came easily to Rahr except the desire to slip away into the woods and wetlands and commune with nature. It seems almost inevitable, then, that he should have cast his lot with the wild. In this eminently inspirational story, Malarkey chronicles how his battle settled on the anadromous salmon and the places where it was most in danger of disappearing. The contours of this battle shift to the north and west as the story progresses, crossing the Bering Sea to Kamchatka, and encompass unlikely alliances with oligarchs such as the steel magnate Alexander Abramov, who, Malarkey writes, "conveyed the power of an apex predator" while scorning the thought that things like treaties and regulations mean anything to the commercial fisheries that seem bent on reducing the salmon to a memory. Yet Abramov joined in, spending \$45 million to remove poachers from a single wild river that now stands at the heart of the work of Rahr's Wild Salmon Center—work, Malarkey writes, that has hinged on "raising the issue of conservation above geopolitics."

A vigorously told story of environmental activism that has succeeded despite the odds and an engaging journey into some of the planet's wilder places. (maps)

MARKETING IN THE #FAKE NEWS ERA

By Peter Horst



ISBN # 978-1599329260

Horst, a Fortune 500 chief marketing officer, addresses the marketing challenges posed by a fractious political climate. Named by Forbes as one of the World's Top 50 Most Influential Chief Marketing Officers, Horst led teams at Capital One, Hershey, TD Ameritrade and others.

"An unusually timely and fresh look at a very complex marketing issue that is relevant for every CMO and CEO."

—Rob Malcolm, Senior Advisor, Boston Consulting Group

"Marketing in the #FakeNews Era is a must read for any marketer today."

—Paul Gunning, CEO, DDB Chicago.

"The playbook for anyone responsible for a firm's performance."

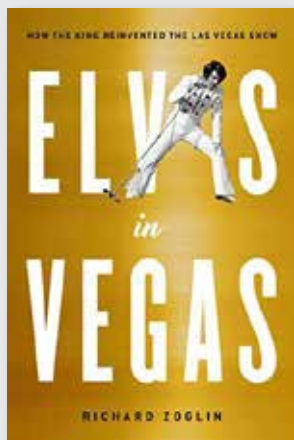
—Kevin Lane Keller, E.B. Osborn Professor of Marketing, Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth

"Timely, smart, and stimulating; should provoke a re-evaluation of brand marketing strategy."

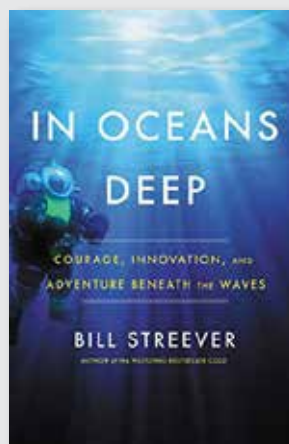
—Kirkus Reviews

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10 GREAT SUMMER READS



ELVIS IN VEGAS
by Richard Zoglin



IN OCEANS DEEP
by Bill Streever



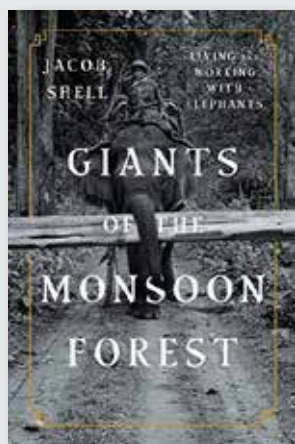
BUZZ, STING, BITE
by Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson



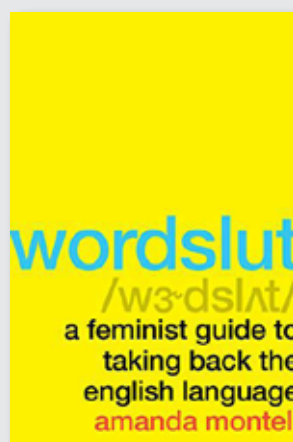
OUTPOST
by Dan Richards



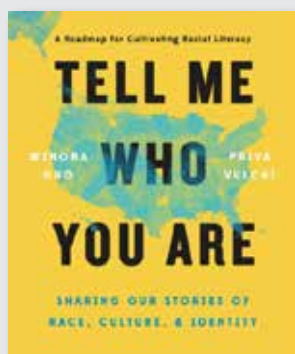
HUNGRY
by Jeff Gordinier



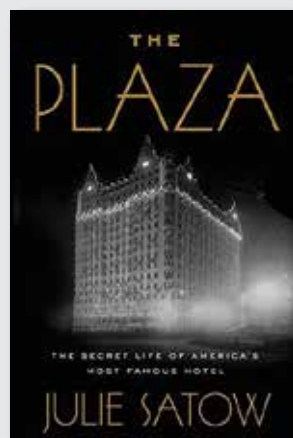
GIANTS OF THE MONSOON FOREST
by Jacob Shell



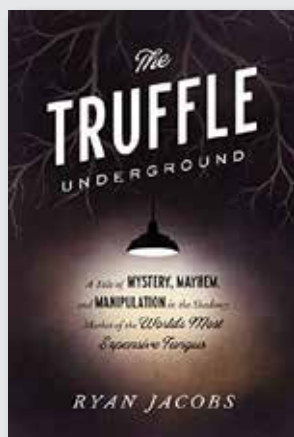
WORDSLUT
by Amanda Montell



TELL ME WHO YOU ARE
by Winona Guo



THE PLAZA
by Julie Satow



THE TRUFFLE UNDERGROUND
by Ryan Jacobs

THIS ACCOUNT OF AN AMERICAN IN THE WWII FRENCH RESISTANCE IS A PAGE-TURNER

EVERY FAMILY HAS SECRETS. Mine, yours, Daniel Guiet's. But I can pretty much guarantee that Guiet's family secrets are more explosive than ours. Guiet, along with Timothy K. Smith, explores his father's covert missions during World War II in *Scholars of Mayhem: My Father's Secret War in Nazi-Occupied France* (June 4).

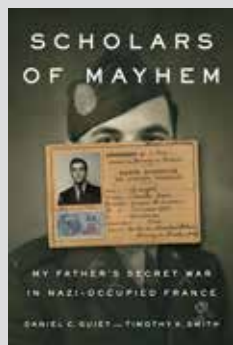
In 1943, at barely 19 years old, Daniel's father, Jean Claude Guiet, was plucked out of U.S. Army Airborne School. Before his paratrooper boots were even issued, he found himself in the lobby of the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C. When a military truck pulled up, Jean Claude and a few other people in civilian dress climbed in. He didn't quite know what he was getting himself into, but he had just joined the Office of Strategic Services, the wartime precursor to the CIA.

But as a kid in the 1950s, Daniel Guiet didn't know any of this. All he knew is that his family moved around a lot—Washington, D.C., Saipan, Manila, and more—and his parents didn't seem to have a lot of friends. Also, his father had a tin bread box that almost never left his side.

Years later, Daniel gave Jean Claude a computer for his 74th birthday and said, "Write your story." He

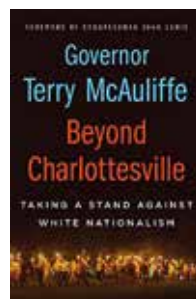
could have written half a dozen memoirs about his adventures. "As he was writing, it triggered some kind of increased comfort," Daniel says. "So I started drawing him out. Sometimes he'd smile and not answer. Other times he would give a six- or 10-word answer. Other times he would open up and start talking almost like he was teaching himself how to verbalize what he'd compartmentalized." —R.Z.S.

Richard Z. Santos is a writer and teacher in Austin. Scholars of Mayhem received a starred review in the May 1, 2019, issue.



Daniel Guiet

Photo courtesy Carol Guiet



BEYOND CHARLOTTESVILLE Taking a Stand Against White Nationalism

McAuliffe, Terry

Dunne/St. Martin's (176 pp.)

\$24.99 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-250-24588-5

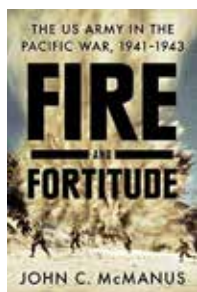
The former Virginia governor looks back at the tragedy in Charlottesville in August 2017, which showed that "we are a divided nation today stuck in the past."

McAuliffe (*What a Party! My Life Among Democrats: Presidents, Candidates, Donors, Activists, Alligators and Other Wild Animals*, 2007) briefly recounts his time as the chair of the Democratic National Committee before devoting most of the book to his term as governor and especially the events in Charlottesville. A native of upstate New York, the author struggled to win election in a tradition-bound Southern state. After winning the governorship, he acted quickly to enhance democracy by resisting a Republican-dominated legislature and a state Supreme Court dominated by justices seeking to maintain the status quo. McAuliffe's most substantive early accomplishment involved restoring voting rights to more than 200,000 felons, many of them people of color, who had completed their prison sentences. The governor's determination to remove statues honoring leaders of the Confederacy played a role in white nationalist demonstrations that threatened to turn into race-based violence. During the most publicized of these demonstrations, on August 11-12, 2017, in Charlottesville, McAuliffe had hoped that officials in the iconic college town would listen to advice from the governor's security experts about minimizing violence. However, local police tactics proved ineffective, resulting in a death and many injuries. The author offers a detailed account of what went wrong during those two days, and he provides additional perspective on what he considers a shameful response by Donald Trump, in which the president once again relied on "his all-sides-are-to-blame nonsense." Until Trump ran for president as a Republican, McAuliffe had always known him as a Democrat. As the narrative progresses, the author's lack of respect for Trump becomes abundantly clear. After Trump fanned hatred following Charlottesville, McAuliffe spoke forcefully and repeatedly about the cancer of white nationalism—and continues to do so.

A straightforward mix of inspiration and concrete action items for fighting white supremacy.

Exceptionally written and scripturally loyal, this is a fine achievement.

JOSEPH AND THE WAY OF FORGIVENESS



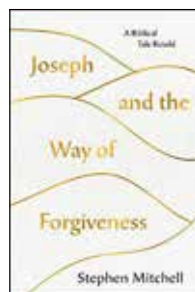
FIRE AND FORTITUDE *The US Army in the Pacific War, 1941-1943*

McManus, John C.
Dutton Caliber (640 pp.)
\$34.00 | Aug. 1, 2019
978-0-451-47504-6



An expert, opinionated World War II history with some unsettling conclusions. McManus (U.S. Military History/Missouri Univ. of Science and Technology; *Hell Before Their Very Eyes: American Soldiers Liberate Concentration Camps in Germany, April 1945*, 2015, etc.) points out that Marines received almost all the glory during the war, a fact still resented by the Army, which did “the vast majority of the planning, the supplying, the transporting, the engineering, the fighting, and the dying to win [the] war.” Unlike most histories that move quickly from Pearl Harbor to the gratifying mid-1942 victories in the Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal, half of this book covers the painful earlier months. Japan invaded the Philippines two weeks after Pearl Harbor. The commander in the Philippines, Douglas MacArthur, considered himself a warrior. Warriors attack, so he discarded the long-planned retreat to the Bataan peninsula and announced that he would defeat the Japanese at the beaches, an impossible task. By the time MacArthur, seeing his forces in full retreat, reinstated the Bataan plan, it was too late. The troops made it, but most supplies remained behind. Despite outnumbering the enemy, starvation, disease, and shortages doomed them. Evacuated to Australia, MacArthur directed the reconquest of New Guinea, where, despite a better outcome, troops suffered the same miseries as they had on Bataan. McManus moves on with gripping accounts of campaigns in China, Burma, the Solomons, and the Gilberts. Readers may learn more than they want to know about Japan’s vicious treatment of POWs and flinch at the author’s low opinion of Gen. MacArthur. Military historians rarely share the worshipful view of civilian colleagues, who give him a pass on the Philippine debacle, brush off the fact that his troops disliked him, and happily pronounce him a military genius with an inflated ego. McManus’ MacArthur comes off as an arrogant self-promoter with modest military skills and no rapport with fighting men, routinely sacrificing their lives (and the careers of subordinate commanders) to burnish his image.

A moderately revisionist, entirely engrossing WWII history.



JOSEPH AND THE WAY OF FORGIVENESS *A Biblical Tale Retold*

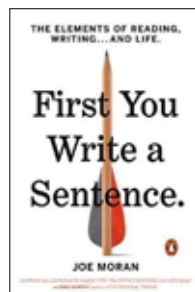
Mitchell, Stephen
St. Martin’s Essentials (272 pp.)
\$21.99 | Sep. 17, 2019
978-1-250-23752-1



An imaginative retelling of the biblical story of Joseph.

In his latest, Mitchell (*The Frog Prince: A Parable of Love and Transformation*, 1999, etc.)—who has translated *Beowulf*, *The Odyssey*, *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Tao Te Ching*, among many other significant works—re-creates the story of Joseph into a novelistic tale of self-discovery, tragedy, love, and reconciliation. Joseph, the most beloved of Jacob’s 12 sons, was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, but he eventually became a powerful leader in Egypt and saved his family and many others through his wisdom during a major famine. Mitchell approaches this ageless tale with tact and respect, adding to it through his artistic, sensitive retelling. Whereas the Bible’s language is spare and to the point, Mitchell’s prose is rich with imagery and reflection. Because of his thorough understanding of the time period, the author is able to provide, or create, authentic details that flesh out the Joseph story for all readers. At the same time, he manages to slyly squeeze in anachronistic details that add to the richness of the story. In one scene, for example, Mitchell writes, “Joseph leans back in his adjustable chair and puts his feet up on the mahogany desk that was last year’s birthday present from his boss.” The author also draws on the understated sexual details of the biblical account and portrays scenes of lust and longing, sometimes shocking in their context yet also very human. He creates vivid psychological portraits of the characters, as well, portraying a broken-hearted Jacob, a rough yet ethical Judah, a bumbling but amiable Potiphar, and a saintlike Joseph. Mitchell presents Joseph as he is in the Bible: a man of imperfections as well as great wisdom and restraint, favored by God. In keeping to the scriptural ideal of Joseph, the author provides authenticity to a bold work of creative storytelling.

Exceptionally written and scripturally loyal, this is a fine achievement.



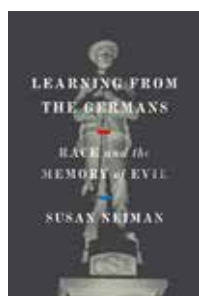
FIRST YOU WRITE A SENTENCE *The Elements of Reading, Writing...and Life*

Moran, Joe
Penguin (240 pp.)
\$16.00 paper | Aug. 13, 2019
978-0-14-313434-3

A dense yet splendid “style guide by stealth” that reads like a two-semester course in English composition distilled into a two-week treatise.

The question is how, apart from multiple readings, one might *absorb* all the wisdom in a single gulp. Moran (English and Cultural History/Liverpool John Moores Univ.; *Shrinking Violets: The Secret Life of Shyness*, 2017, etc.) believes that by “mastering” one of the fundamental building blocks of language—the sentence—we learn not merely about writing, but about everything. It’s a sweeping claim, but Moran backs it up, giving us mostly trenchant sentences on the art of creating them. A sultan of syntax, he wants to show rather than teach, and he generally succeeds. He likens good prose to good poetry, both taking wing on the rhythm, meter, and music of language. Writing is an artisanal craft, or should be, employing meticulous care and execution. Moran extols the virtues of the plain style—like cooking, “a sentence should rely more on quality ingredients than baroque artifice”—but cautions against fetishizing the unadorned, introducing ways to make more elaborate sentences work. Whatever the style, good sentences give order to our thoughts and clarity to the reader, but they must also sing on the page *and* in the reader’s mind. Moran links themes with illustrative asides, as in his short history of writing, but mainly, he critiques the common novice mistakes and veteran’s misjudgments, demonstrating skillful alternatives. At times, the author will make even experienced writers feel inept, especially in his discussions of arcane grammatical terms. Still, his tone is comradely, not chiding. Oddly, one point Moran does not address is the element of talent. Everyone’s writing can be improved, but all the technique in the world won’t make a mediocre talent an exceptional one.

Moran writes fluidly and elegantly, offering practical advice on giving one’s writing texture and verve.



LEARNING FROM THE GERMANS *Race and the Memory of Evil*

Neiman, Susan

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (432 pp.)

\$28.00 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-0-374-18446-9

A pointed demonstration of how Germany offers lessons for attending to polarizing issues of the past and present.

“It cannot be too much to expect the U.S. Congress to do in the twenty-first century what the German parliament did in 1952,” writes Einstein Forum director Neiman (*Why Grow Up? Subversive Thoughts for an Infantile Age*, 2015, etc.), in favor of legislation that would create a commission to investigate the possibility of reparations for the pains suffered by African Americans under slavery and by other populations, such as Native Americans in the way of so-called Manifest Destiny. In recognizing the necessity of making real amends for the crimes of the Third Reich, Germany has paid just such reparations in many ways—even though, as the author notes, most Germans opposed such payments in the years immediately following World War II, just as it seems that most white Americans oppose reparations today. The issues extend:

Germany bans expressions in support of Nazism even though extreme right-wingers have been recently emboldened by the widespread controversy over immigration, another topic familiar to Americans today. Even with such outbursts, Germany holds a lead over the U.S. in dealing with errors of the past. Where the wartime generation tried to brush aside the legacy of Nazism, the present one exemplifies “how far Germany has come in taking responsibility for its criminal history.” While direct equations between, say, the American secessionists and the Nazis are problematic, there are plenty of points in common. Interestingly, it took the unification of Germany to arrive at full acknowledgment of past wrongs: The East took one view, the West another, each accusing the other of complicity. Today, Neiman writes, quoting a German scholar, “Germany is one of the safest countries for Jews in the world.” Neiman’s account is long and at times plodding, but her examination of how that situation came about serves as an important lesson for those who seek to face up to the past wrongs in this country.

A timely, urgent call to revisit the past with an eye to correction and remedy.



ARCHAEOLOGY FROM SPACE *How the Future Shapes Our Past*

Parcak, Sarah

Henry Holt (288 pp.)

\$30.00 | Jul. 9, 2019

978-1-250-19828-0

A renowned space archaeologist gives readers an insider’s look at her field, which is basically Indiana Jones meets cutting-edge satellite technology. It’s every bit as exciting as it sounds.

Discovering ancient civilizations by digging them up has always had grand romantic appeal. Parcak (Anthropology/Univ. of Alabama, Birmingham; *Satellite Remote Sensing for Archaeology*, 2009), the president and founder of GlobalXplorer and winner of the TED Prize, was among a generation of kids wooed by archaeology in movies like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. But unlike most of us, she followed through on her passion, committing early to archaeology and pioneering the use of advanced technologies as a means to significantly improve the chances of the discovery of a lost site. Such excavations offer much more than just a cache of dusty loot; as she writes, “that dirt contains nothing less than the clues to who we are, how we got here, and how we might thrive in the future.” In this fascinating adventure memoir, the author describes how remote sensing technology powered by orbiting satellites has transformed archaeologists’ ability to locate and verify sites that might otherwise never have been discovered. As the lead in many big discoveries around the world, from Egypt to Newfoundland, Parcak has a lot of great stories to tell, and she tells them with clarity, enthusiasm, and humor. She also looks into the future, explaining that artificial intelligence and DNA analysis could further push the field into

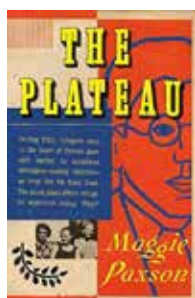


An elegant, intensive study that grapples with an enormous idea: how to be good.

THE PLATEAU

territory that only recently would have been considered sci-fi. And then there is crowdsourcing: The author is optimistic that regular people have the power to “find and protect the world’s hidden heritage” through the online mapping of millions of undiscovered sites. Us, space archaeologists? There is no doubt that she will have no shortage of volunteers.

Exciting and futuristic, this book elicits that anything-is-possible feeling—a must-read. (8-page color insert; b/w photos throughout)



THE PLATEAU *Field Notes in a Place of Refuge in a World Adrift*

Paxson, Maggie
Riverhead (368 pp.)
\$28.00 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-59463-475-8



A multilayered, intimate look at what creates a “peace enclave” amid terrible violence.

Pursuing her research into how “even powerless-seeming people can find ways to resist the will of a violent state,” anthropologist and essayist Paxson (*Solovoyovo: The Story of Memory in a Russian Village*, 2005) delved into Holocaust studies and ultimately focused on one peculiar region in France, Plateau Vivarais-Lignon. From the early centuries of religious war, when the region protected Protestants, to World War II, when there was a school of refugees sheltering hundreds of Jewish children, to today, when a thriving center for asylum-seekers houses innumerable refugees from places like Congo, Rwanda, and Chechnya, the cluster of villages possesses a remarkable history of “heroic altruism.” In order to tell the story of this extraordinary community, the author immersed herself in the history of the small rural area, somewhat isolated at 3,000 feet, full of farmers and sheep herders. Specifically, she absorbed the tragic wartime fate of Daniel Trocmé, who arrived to run a home for refugee children in the French backwoods in the fall of 1942. As he wrote to his parents, he wanted “to be part of the reconstruction of the world. I...wish not to be ashamed of myself.” Paxson is meticulous in her attention to fieldwork detail: the way people live, their language, the choices people make in times of violence when communities tend to close doors and “act in such a way as to maximize the best outcomes for ourselves.” Yet the opposite happened on the Plateau, where people sheltered the strangers as the Nazi occupiers made strangers enemies to be annihilated. The many layers in this engrossing, almost suspenseful work involve the author’s evolving relationships with the current refugee families at the asylum center, the revealing letters Trocmé sent to his family delineating his blooming personality and sense of purpose, and the author’s own growing determination in her research. Throughout, Paxson keeps asking questions and probing, never settling for assumptions.

An elegant, intensive study that grapples with an enormous idea: how to be good.



STRANGE HARVESTS *The Hidden Histories of Seven Natural Objects*

Posnett, Edward
Viking (336 pp.)
\$27.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-0-399-56279-2

Posnett scours the globe for natural commodities that sustain a balance in which consumption doesn’t lead to destruction and harvesting involves

replenishing and renewal.

It is a challenge to categorize both the book and its author, a former financial investigator born in London and based in Philadelphia whose interest in markets and trades piqued his interest in writing about the natural world. In his first book, he pleasingly evokes an era in which “the object from the wild often performed an important literary function in a specific popular genre, the Victorian quest romance.” Each of the seven chapters details such a quest into the exotic and the wilderness in search of some organic golden fleece that has been commodified for luxury consumption. Each has its own fascination: There’s the down from the eider, a “fat seabird, more penguin than duck,” which sheds feathers that are then gathered by harvesters in Iceland with no apparent harm to the duck, though luxury profit ultimately compromises the process. When a single down jacket can retail for \$8,000, there is plenty of incentive to take the birds out of their natural habitat, increase their number and their production, and thus risk killing the golden goose. A local compares eiderdown to cocaine, which is worth much more on the street than at its source, a comparison that does not lend itself to purity of process. In other chapters, the author explores the trade in bird guano (for fertilizer), sea silk (spun by mussels and other mollusks to anchor them), and the tagua nut, which had been used for buttons and carvings and is biodegradable where plastic is not. The most strangely exotic story may be that of civet coffee: The catlike animal digests only the finest coffee beans, flavors them with its enzymes, and then excretes them for harvesting, adding digestive enzymes to the coffee’s distinctive flavor. Throughout the book, the author’s writing derives less from naturalists and environmentalists and more from the likes of Borges and Calvino.

An engrossing tale of wonder.



BURN THE PLACE *A Memoir*

Regan, Iliana
Agate Midway (250 pp.)
\$25.00 | Jul. 16, 2019
978-1-57284-267-0

A chef tells how she overcame family dysfunction and substance abuse to become the proprietor of a Michelin-starred restaurant.

Regan grew up a tomboy on an Indiana farm “dropped smack in 10 acres of cornfields, wild edibles, and Native American burial grounds with pulsating ghosts.” From a mother who saw “food [as] love,” she learned how to cook and can from scratch. From her father, whose mother owned a small cafe, she learned how to roast meat on homemade grills and forage for wild mushrooms. For most of her childhood, she lived with her colorful, raucous family, watching her parents grow apart, threaten divorce, and then come back together again. Relief at having her family back came at the cost of leaving the farm she loved but that her mother no longer wanted to maintain. Adolescence proved to be as painful as it was forgettable: “High school sucked a small flaccid dick.” At first, Regan, who questioned both her gender identity and sexuality, tried to fit in. Then she rebelled, drinking, crashing cars, and going to jail twice before graduating high school and eventually going to live in Chicago. Up-and-down relationships and a string of restaurant jobs helped her survive the difficult years after her parents’ divorce and her alcoholic sister’s untimely death in a Florida jail. Wanting to do more with her life than “[wake] up in cells or beds or other places I didn’t want to be,” the author launched a successful restaurant business that she initially ran from her own home, featuring dishes she not only created, but for which she also foraged ingredients. The basic narrative elements that comprise Regan’s story—a misfit hero fumbling and bootstrapping her way to culinary fame—are compelling. However, the temporally fractured nature of the story makes it difficult to follow, and the unevenness of the writing—sometimes lively, sometimes messy and unconsidered—makes for less than satisfying reading.

An interesting life rendered in a flawed manner.



THE GOD GROOVE A Blues Journey to Faith

Ritz, David

Howard Books/Simon & Schuster

(256 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jul. 16, 2019

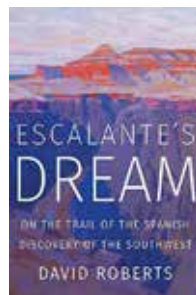
978-1-5011-7715-6

The ghostwriter of autobiographies by Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, and numerous other musical greats tells his own story of faith and recovery.

In this winning, remarkably candid memoir, Ritz (co-author, with Jessi Colter: *An Outlaw and a Lady: A Memoir of Music, Life with Waylon, and the Faith That Brought Me Home*, 2017, etc.) turns the table on himself. At 75, after capturing some three dozen voices for celebrity autobiographies, he recounts his life and career as a freelancer, songwriter, and author; his personal struggles with multiple addictions; and his eventual acceptance of Jesus, whose spirit he encountered over the past 45 years through the voices of musicians. “The divinity in music...has sustained me,” he writes. Born into a turbulent New York family (his blue-collar father, an outspoken Marxist intellectual and

music lover, confided that he was cheating on David’s mother), Ritz flirted briefly with academia (the critic Leslie Fiedler was a grad school mentor), worked in advertising, and then, in his early 30s, convinced singer Ray Charles to collaborate on a memoir. Ritz continued to co-write books with musicians he admired, mainly African Americans raised on gospel music—many were preachers’ kids—and found himself gaining “Christ consciousness” in conversations with devout performers like B.B. King, Etta James (she asked Ritz to pray with her), Smokey Robinson, and others. Bored by his parents’ Judaism and grappling with bisexuality, a pot habit, and a speech impediment, the author gradually found self-acceptance through his “rapport with Jesus.” Ritz captures all of this in vivid, deeply felt prose that traces dysfunctions in his birth family and marriage, his work with blues and country singers, his pursuit of therapy and 12-step programs, and his present belief that “God *is* the groove.”

An inspiring, satisfying book affirming the author’s “immense” debt to African American music and how it changed his life.



ESCALANTE’S DREAM On the Trail of the Spanish Discovery of the Southwest

Roberts, David

Norton (288 pp.)

\$26.95 | Jul. 16, 2019

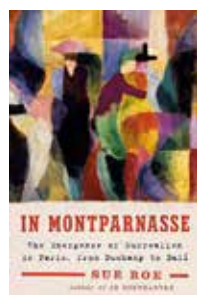
978-0-393-65206-2

Journalist, mountaineer, and popular historian Roberts (*Limits of the Known*, 2018, etc.) ventures deep into the rugged country of the Colorado Plateau in this tale of its earliest European explorers.

It was a flash of inspiration on the part of a California-based prelate that sent Francisco Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante—in Roberts’ shorthand, “D-E”—riding from Santa Fe westward in late July 1776: It stood to reason that by doing so, they would end up at Monterey Bay. Things weren’t quite so clear-cut; as Roberts recounts, they went without much preparation and with little idea of what awaited them, and, he adds, “To plunge into wilderness virtually unarmed and untrained for war would have seemed suicidal to most Spanish officials in New Mexico.” D-E bumbled about, making contact with Native peoples unknown to the Spanish administrators but eventually learning that impediments such as the great deserts and canyons of the Colorado Plateau country ruled out an easy route connecting Spain’s colonial provinces. While traveling their route, Roberts, ill with a recurring but for now manageable cancer and all the more intrepid for it, pays homage to his own partner of many years while recounting some of the more modern dangers that await in the form of camo-clad hunters and survivalists. Anthropologically inclined readers will note that some of Roberts’ book learning is well out of date, with ethnic designations such as Papago and Anasazi long since supplanted; and though he critiques

William Least Heat-Moon's travel writing in passing, there are more than a few of the same genre conventions at work here. Readers looking for a comprehensive account of the expedition will find too much Roberts in it, and readers eager to read Roberts' travelogue will find the Spanish colonial history laid on too thickly. Readers with a sense for both history and a living narrator, though, will find it just right, and they'll be glad that Roberts has lived to tell the tale.

Armchair travelers looking for transport into difficult places will find this an engaging companion. (16 pages of photos; map)



IN MONTPARNASSE
The Emergence of Surrealism in Paris, from Duchamp to Dalí

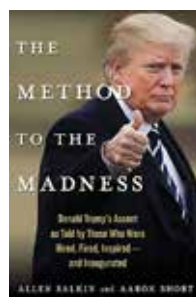
Roe, Sue
Penguin Press (320 pp.)
\$30.00 | Aug. 20, 2019
978-1-101-98117-7

The legacy of surrealism continues to affect how viewers see art.

Biographer and art historian Roe (*In Montmartre: Picasso, Matisse, and Modernism in Paris, 1900-1910*, 2014, etc.) follows her account of the titans of modernism by documenting the lives and works of artists and writers who invented, promoted, and reimagined the anarchic movement they called surrealism. Their goal was to produce art that "extended beyond the limits of realism" by juxtaposing elements of the real world in new and shocking ways, illuminated the workings of the unconscious, and aimed, explicitly, "to jar the relationship between artist and viewer." The Parisian neighborhood of Montparnasse thronged with surrealists: the imperious André Breton, the "Pope of Surrealism," whose strident manifestos laid out the principles of the movement; poets Louis Aragon and Paul Éluard; German artist Max Ernst, creator of shocking collages—one featuring "part of a hand emerging through a trap door, the index finger pierced with a steel implement"; the flamboyant poet, filmmaker, artist, and opium addict Jean Cocteau; the young Salvador Dalí, enthusiastically celebrating his own inner world; Marcel Duchamp, who famously submitted a urinal as a sculpture to a major exhibition and eventually gave up art for chess; photographer Man Ray; and scores of other men and their many idealized, exploited, and betrayed lovers, wives, and mistresses. Surrealists treated women badly, Roe concedes, explaining their misogyny as consistent with the times. Surrealist artists, she adds, "were baffled by women and wanted in their work to dissect and inspect the female." As noisy revolutionaries, they exhibited "myriad contradictions": for example, managing to be "both trenchantly anti-establishment and sartorially dapper." Drawing largely on memoirs, biographies, and histories of the period, Roe reprises events and personalities that readers may find familiar from works such as Ruth Brandon's *Surreal Lives* (1999) and Desmond Morris' *The Lives of the Surrealists*

(2018). Nevertheless, she renders with deftness and precision the strange and disturbing works surrealists produced by tapping into their emotions of "terror, horror, disgust, or fear."

A thorough, well-informed survey of an art revolution. (two 8-page color inserts)



THE METHOD TO THE MADNESS
Donald Trump's Ascent as Told by Those Who Were Hired, Fired, Inspired—and Inaugurated

Salkin, Allen & Short, Aaron
All Points/St. Martin's (352 pp.)
\$28.99 | Jul. 9, 2019
978-1-250-20280-2

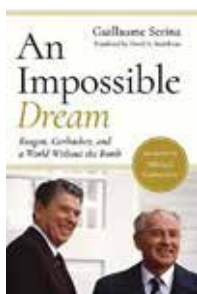
Two journalists team up, conduct more than 100 interviews with key figures in (and out of) Camp Trump, and conclude his decision to run for president was far from impulsive.

In *Hamlet*, Polonius said of the prince's psychological state, "though this be madness, yet there is method in't." Salkin (*From Scratch: Inside the Food Network*, 2013, etc.) and Short, both of whom have written for the *New York Post*, set out to prove that the same is true of President Donald Trump. The text comprises snippets of interviews with a variety of sources, from Al Sharpton and Gloria Allred to Anthony Scaramucci and Steve Bannon. (The entire list of contributors, which includes journalists, political figures, and advisers, consumes eight pages.) The authors also chime in continually throughout the 32 chapters. They endeavor to show a different Trump than the one many imagine. Here is a man who takes notes during meetings (!), is a sharp questioner, often displays a long attention span, was willing to alter his positions to appeal to his base, and flirted with running for political office any number of times (including governor of New York) but who always changed his mind. The authors elicit praise from those who are/were close to him, such as Bannon and Tucker Carlson. Not every interview subject, of course, has fond memories, and readers with Trump fatigue should stay away. Some contributors comment about his arrogance (taking credit for "Make America Great Again"—a slogan Ronald Reagan had used), fondness for attractive women, and thin skin. He was, for example, friendly with the Clintons until candidate Hillary seemed to blame his positions for the 2015 South Carolina church shooting. So the escalator ride down to his announcement was thoroughly planned, even inevitable. Other contributors include Katie Couric, David Cay Johnston, Glenn Beck, Ralph Nader, and Roger Stone.

A more positive view of Donald Trump than most Americans have—though the text ends with the election.

Exhilarating, groundbreaking essays that should establish Tolentino as a key voice of her generation.

TRICK MIRROR



AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM *Reagan, Gorbachev, and a World Without the Bomb*

Serina, Guillaume

Trans. by Andelman, David A.

Pegasus (256 pp.)

\$25.95 | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-64313-084-2

A Los Angeles-based French author looks back at the 1986 negotiations between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev about eliminating nuclear weapons from the arsenals of each nation.

In a book translated from the French, Serina, who authored the first French-language biography of Barack Obama, writes mostly in the present tense, attempting to give the historic summit a you-are-there feeling. His research covers a preliminary meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, followed by a more detailed examination of a second meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland. Details about the negotiations seemed scarce at the time, and the author claims his research uncovered many previously undisclosed aspects of the meeting. It may be difficult for general readers to discern whether Serina's sources, recalling their presence at the summit decades later, are spinning the details to make their respective governments look better. In a brief foreword, Gorbachev writes that the negotiations led to some progress that all parties could endorse, but he blames Reagan for impeding further progress due to his insistence on a space-age plan known as the Strategic Defense Initiative. "To agree on the elimination of weapons on Earth while at the same time opening an arms race in space was not acceptable to me," he writes, sensibly. Gorbachev credits Reagan to the extent that five years later, President George H.W. Bush built on the limited Reykjavik accord to sign an initial Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, known as START I. Serina's research becomes particularly revelatory as he explains the immediate aftermath of the Reykjavik summit, as American officials transmitted pessimistic signals about the outcome while the Soviet public relations effort seemed more optimistic. The author brings the saga somewhat up to date by explaining 2010 negotiations regarding nuclear arsenals, with President Barack Obama and Soviet leader Dmitry Medvedev as the main actors, as well as a few comments on the Trump administration.

A historical account that feels refreshing because of the author's neutral perspective as neither American nor Russian.



TRICK MIRROR *Reflections on Self-Delusion*

Tolentino, Jia

Random House (304 pp.)

\$27.00 | Aug. 6, 2019

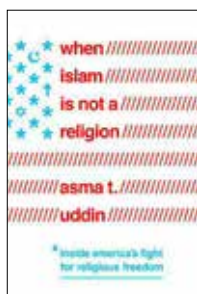
978-0-525-51054-3

A popular young writer tackles a host of cultural movements in her debut collection of essays.

In these nine stunning pieces, *New Yorker* staff writer Tolentino seamlessly melds together journalistic social criticism and revealing personal essays. To varying degrees of intimate context, she places herself within each narrative, reporting on broad social currents while revealing very specific encounters. Among the many topics the author explores: the expansive influence of the internet and social media; the increasing social pressure to optimize our interests and aspirations at all times (especially for women); the alarming proliferation and increased tolerance of spamming; societal, somewhat idealized traditions such as marriage and, more specifically, weddings. Tolentino recounts her experience with reality TV and reflects on her teenage identity when she appeared as a contestant in *Girls v. Boys: Puerto Rico*. "Reality TV had not yet created a whole new type of person," she writes, "the camera-animated assemblage of silicone and pharmaceuticals; we hadn't yet seen the way organic personalities could decay on unscripted television, their half-lives measured through sponsored laxative-tea Instagrams and paid appearances at third-tier regional clubs." She also recalls favorite literary books from her past, assessing the heroines' varying plights in guiding her current feminist leanings. While offering razor-sharp commentary on the underbelly of our culture, she can also appreciate its attraction. Furthermore, she acknowledges her particular conundrum, having established her niche as a writer by staying in tune with cultural trends: "I don't know what to do with the fact...that my career is possible in large part because of the way the internet collapses identity, opinion, and action—and that I, as a writer whose work is mostly critical and often written in first person, have some inherent stake in justifying the dubious practice of spending all day trying to figure out what you think." Tolentino offers a millennial perspective that is deeply grounded, intellectually transcending her relative youth. She brings fresh perspective to current movements in a manner similar to that of Joan Didion in the 1960s and '70s.

Exhilarating, groundbreaking essays that should establish Tolentino as a key voice of her generation.





**WHEN ISLAM IS NOT
A RELIGION**
*Inside America's Fight for
Religious Freedom*

Uddin, Asma T.
Pegasus (336 pp.)
\$27.95 | Jul. 9, 2019
978-1-64313-131-3

A reasoned yet impassioned argument for religious liberty for all.

Religious liberty attorney Uddin works from the concern that many Americans do not consider Islam to be a religion worthy of normal liberties or, worse, not a religion at all but an ideology or radical movement. Her overarching argument is that in treating Islam differently from other religions, the courts endanger religious rights for all Americans. While acknowledging that radicals in other nations have adversely affected the opinions of many Americans against Muslims, the author counters with various statistics that most American Muslims are not only law-abiding citizens, but also patriotic and increasingly progressive in their worldviews. Despite this, they continue to be targets of bullying, hostility, and organized opposition. From slurs and attacks on the street to broad-based movements to stop the construction of mosques and other Islamic centers, Muslims, and their liberties, are at constant risk. In dedicated chapters, Uddin tackles such particular issues as Sharia and the use of hijab, and she decries anti-Sharia legislation as adding "no value" to the legal system because they misinterpret Sharia. "Even in states where Muslims want a sharia-based legal code," writes the author, "what they are asking for is not beheadings and amputations, but justice and fairness." Similarly, she defends the hijab as a form of self-expression and not a symbol of oppression against women. Throughout, Uddin points to political conservatives as the enemies of American Islam and, unwittingly, as the potential undoing of all religious liberties. Nevertheless, she does not spare from criticism progressive voices who, while defending Muslims, actually hope to reform and Westernize the religion and see it as peopled by "good" or "bad" Muslims. The author laces her work with personal stories of growing up and living as a Muslim in America, explaining it as a source of empowerment despite the prevalence of bigotry and suspicion from fellow citizens.

An intriguing and heartfelt read.



THE OPTIMIST'S TELESCOPE
Thinking Ahead in a Reckless Age

Venkataraman, Bina
Riverhead (336 pp.)
\$28.00 | Aug. 27, 2019
978-0-7352-1947-2

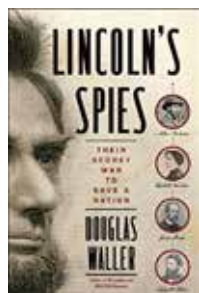
A former Obama administration senior climate policy adviser urges that we adjust our sights to take in a longer view.

"A good forecast, it turns out, is not the same as good foresight," writes Venkataraman (Science, Technology, and Society/MIT), who observes that modern humans do not often take the time to look at the ramifications of the decisions we make outside of their immediate effects. So it is that corporations look to the next quarter and not the next century and retirement catches so many people financially unprepared. And so it is, in a pointed lesson that the author offers early on, that we continue to build our homes and cities in hurricane- and flood-prone areas without adequately preparing for the eventuality, underinsured and underprotected. "The choices we make today shape tomorrow's so-called natural disasters," adding that it might drive the point home better if weather forecasters would include images of the effects of past disasters when they're predicting a storm. It's understandable that we have a bias for the present, or what the film director Wim Wenders calls the "monopoly of the visible," but our failure to examine the implications of our actions is having all kinds of effects. One is the near collapse of our fisheries, which is one of Venkataraman's case studies, and the persistent eruptions of the Ebola virus, which the author considers a prime example of what historian Barbara Tuchman called "marches of folly," on a par with the Trojan horse and the American misadventure in Vietnam: "Societies and leaders of each era knew better but acted as if ignorant." Habitat destruction, extinction, continuing climate change leading to an uninhabitable Earth—such are the results of the short term. To counter our patterns of thinking and doing, the author closes with prescriptions including such things as finding "immediate rewards for future goals" and weaning ourselves from the desire for instant gratification in favor of "fighting for greater foresight in society."

A timely reminder that time is not on our side without long-term thinking.

An expansive, well-tempered profile of our most metaphorical organ.

STATE OF THE HEART



LINCOLN'S SPIES *Their Secret War to Save a Nation*

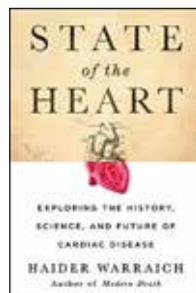
Waller, Douglas
Simon & Schuster (624 pp.)
\$35.00 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-5011-2684-0

A detailed, chronological look at the work of a handful of spies in President Abraham Lincoln's network and the extent to which they helped defeat the

Confederacy.

While both the North and South used spies, writes Waller (*Disciples: The World War II Missions of the CIA Directors Who Fought for Wild Bill Donovan*, 2015, etc.), Lincoln was able to employ those sources more efficiently, using such methods as tracking changes in enemy numbers and using hot air balloons. The author focuses on the work of "Allan Pinkerton, Lafayette Baker, George Sharpe, and Elizabeth Van Lew—important Union agents who operated mainly in the Civil War's Eastern Theater," which "became a crucial region for the war." Pinkerton, of the National Detective Agency, had infiltrated Confederate plots on the Northern railroad system before the time of Lincoln's inauguration. Having unearthed assassination threats to the president-elect, he helped sneak him through Baltimore and into Washington ahead of his announced travel schedule. He would serve as Gen. George McClellan's intelligence chief, and not always skillfully—e.g., he inflated the numbers of Confederate troops. Despite the cultivated image of a "simple frontier 'rail-splitter,'" Lincoln was a keen observer of political intelligence. As the author writes, "he would assume the presidency not totally unfamiliar with the dark arts of subterfuge and intrigue that Pinkerton practiced." Eventually, the administration would "ratchet up police state tactics," such as those used questionably by their strong-armed agent Baker. While Lincoln was anguished over finding a general who would actually challenge Robert E. Lee, Richmond society lady Van Lew, disgusted by slavery, covertly supplied information to Union officials while maintaining her Southern good standing. Waller shows how these quiet workhorses toiling in the shadows—including Sharpe, who became "the Union Army's preeminent spymaster"—would make all the difference in winning the war. Helpfully, the author includes a timeline of major events and a categorized cast of characters.

A meticulous chronicle of all facets of Lincoln's war effort. (16 pages of b/w images; maps)



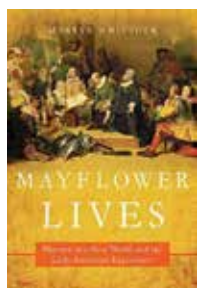
STATE OF THE HEART *Exploring the History, Science, and Future of Cardiac Disease*

Warraich, Haider
St. Martin's (352 pp.)
\$29.99 | Jul. 23, 2019
978-1-250-16970-9

A deep immersion in the world of cardiac disease.

"More people die of heart disease than any other disease in the world, including even cancer," writes Warraich (*Modern Death: How Medicine Changed the End of Life*, 2017, etc.), a fellow in cardiology at Duke University Medical Center. Given that it is also on the rise, the time is ripe to look at "the doctors and nurses who treat it, the patients and caregivers who live with it, and the stories they hold close to their chests." It is those stories that carry the narrative. The author begins with a history of heart disease recognition by the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, through the four humors, to the religious impulse that overwhelmed the sciences during the Dark Ages, when the Arab civilization rose to the challenge of advancing scientific knowledge. Warraich does a yeoman's job explaining the various physiological aspects of the heart and its many influences—the role of salt in blood pressure, the role of blood pressure in hypertension, the role of hypertension in heart disease, or the place of atherosclerosis as the root cause of heart attacks—but where he shines is in introducing anecdotal evidence and vivid stories to add color to the raw data. Not that the anecdotal material commands the whole stage. There is plenty of hard science to ponder, such as the shift in recognizing pain as "a natural and physiological sensation rather than a metaphysical instrument of justice and heavenly intervention" or the woeful state of research in women's cardiac health, with abiding "hegemonic gender roles...preventing many women of caring for themselves rather than others." Warraich occasionally brings a dark humor to the proceedings—"this infarcted tissue is no better than dead meat, and 'dead meat don't beat.'"—and only rarely, thankfully, turns overly casual: "Lydia was, of course, gonna have none of that."

An expansive, well-tempered profile of our most metaphorical organ.



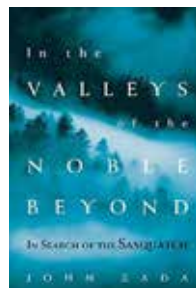
MAYFLOWER LIVES
Pilgrims in a New World
and the Early American
Experience

Whittock, Martyn
Pegasus (416 pp.)
\$28.95 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-64313-132-0

A prolific British historian explores the makeup of the motley crew—both “Saints” (Puritan separatists) and “Strangers” (economic migrants)—who ventured by sea to a foreign American land four centuries ago.

Whittock (*When God Was King: Rebels & Radicals of the Civil War & Mayflower Generation*, 2018, etc.), an engaging writer who uses (sometimes overly) exclamatory prose, discusses the lives of 14 of these extraordinary characters, out of the original 130 *Mayflower* travelers, each in their own chapter. Throughout, the author emphasizes the stunning hardship of that first voyage as many of the English separatists, then living in the Netherlands, left everything behind to plunge into the unknown. Moreover, the crew was originally headed to Virginia on a different ship whose chronic leaking forced them to delay for months before setting out in the *Mayflower*, and then they were driven by severe storms back up the Atlantic coast to present-day Plymouth in November 1620. Fully half of the total died within a year in America, unable to survive the cold and meager provisions of the first winter. Whittock examines each of his chosen’s backstory and upbringing in England, such as the Puritan leader William Bradford, radicalized as a teenager and one of the community in Leiden, who, with his wife, left their small son to sail to America—tragically, as his wife died shortly after arrival. The author’s female stories prove especially poignant—e.g., Susanna White, the mother of the first child born in America; and Mary More, the orphaned, indentured 4-year-old servant and child of an adulterous father; she died shortly after arrival, probably from neglect. Whittock also includes a fantastic biography of so-called Squanto (Tisquantum), who had been kidnapped by Englishmen earlier in his life, spoke English, and was returning to his native land, which was denuded of population due to the devastation of European-spread disease.

Stories full of faith and struggle lose none of their mythological quality.



IN THE VALLEYS OF THE
NOBLE BEYOND
In Search of the Sasquatch

Zada, John
Atlantic Monthly (336 pp.)
\$26.00 | Jul. 2, 2019
978-0-8021-2935-2

Bigfoot lives—maybe, as this *X-Files*–worthy tale reveals.

Toronto-based journalist Zada, who has written for the *Globe & Mail*, the CBC, the *Toronto Star*, and other publications, goes a touch out on a limb to ponder sights seen but not proven: namely, sightings of the Sasquatch, or Bigfoot, a kind of half-human, half-ape that inhabits the ancient woods of the Northwest. Traveling deep into the old-growth forests of British Columbia, he had a look for himself, and it’s not too much of a spoiler to say that he adds to the seen/unproven inventory. The fact that no definitive evidence has ever been produced, admits the author, puts the Sasquatch in a category of critter “considered by most people to be no more real than fairies or gnomes.” Bigfoot believers, he adds, explain the lack of evidence by the rarity and shyness of the creature, who knows better than to get too close to humans—even though some of the people Zada talks with, locals and visitors, claim to have seen the giants lurking at the edges of forest hamlets. Having been spooked by a sighting in a dark, dense patch of woods, Zada is inclined to believe, though he’s a good enough journalist to know that assertion without evidence isn’t likely to sway skeptics. As for true believers, well, there are plenty, many of them telling secondhand stories, such as one of a hunter who had Bigfoot in his sights but didn’t pull the trigger “because it was too human-looking.” Human, yes, and not bear, as so many claim, nor Yeti, maybe, Zada concludes, it’s not provably seen because those who are looking for it are just trying too hard. “As soon as you stop trying,” he writes, “your odds suddenly change.” Believe or don’t, the author writes nimbly and well, and his story is modest and evenhanded even as he lets us know just where he stands.

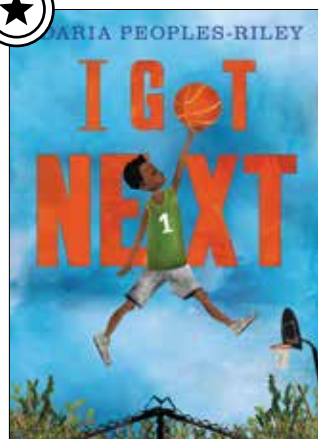
An entertaining, provocative exercise in cryptozoology, best read with a modicum of suspended disbelief.

CHILDREN'S

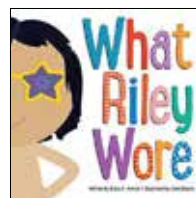


These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- DANCING HANDS** by Margarita Engle; illus. by Rafael López..... 98
- HOW DO YOU DANCE?** by Thyra Heder.....102
- GHOST** by *Ilustrátus*..... 104
- EMMY IN THE KEY OF CODE** by Aimee Lucido..... 110
- I AM A TIGER** by Karl Newson; illus. by Ross Collins 113
- I GOT NEXT** by Daria Peoples-Riley..... 116
- RUBY FINDS A WORRY** by Tom Percival..... 116
- PENNY AND PENELOPE** by Dan Richards;
illus. by Claire Almon 118
- WHO WET MY PANTS?** by Bob Shea;
illus. by Zachariah OHora..... 120
- THE KING OF KINDERGARTEN** by Derrick Barnes;
illus. by Vanessa Brantley-Newton 127
- UNICORN IS MAYBE NOT SO GREAT AFTER ALL** by Bob Shea... 132
- LILI MACARONI** by Nicole Testa; illus. by Annie Boulanger 133
- THE PIGEON HAS TO GO TO SCHOOL!** by Mo Willems..... 134
- SO BIG!** by Mike Wohnoutka 134



I GOT NEXT
Peoples-Riley, Daria
Illus. by Peoples-Riley, Daria
Greenwillow (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jul. 30, 2019
978-0-06-265777-0



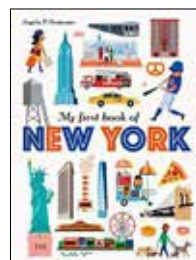
WHAT RILEY WORE

Arnold, Elana K.
Illus. by Davick, Linda
Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | Aug. 27, 2019
978-1-4814-7260-9

Is Riley a girl or a boy? Riley decides to answer an entirely different question through the creative self-expression of their clothing.

Each day of the week, Riley invents a new outfit to wear to school, around the house, and to the park. The tan-skinned, dark-haired protagonist has clothing for every mood and occasion: a bunny suit for first-day-of-school shyness, “a superhero cape to the dentist’s because teeth cleaning is scary,” and a tutu, perfectly mismatched with a dinosaur hat, for the weekend. Instead of making Riley a target of bullies, the gender-fluid ensembles draw their classmates in. Heartwarming, Arnold and Davick depict the spectacularly nongendered protagonist in positive connection with the people around them. Children are at the center of this colorful story: Adults, when they appear, mostly line the periphery of Davick’s double-page-spread illustrations while classmates of various skin tones are featured in cheerful detail. In the growing landscape of children’s books that explore gender, this offering beautifully normalizes the multifaceted gender expressions people can have, demonstrates the support adults can provide to nonbinary children, and models how easily young ones can relate to one another without having to choose between two gender options. Though Riley’s gender identity is never explicitly stated in the narrative, Arnold and Davick’s entertaining tale speaks volumes about the creativity of nonbinary kids.

Riley’s courageous vulnerability is refreshing, fun, and worthy of celebration. (Picture book. 3-9)



MY FIRST BOOK OF NEW YORK

Arrhenius, Ingela P.
Illus. by the author
Walker US/Candlewick (32 pp.)
\$18.99 | Sep. 10, 2019
978-1-5362-0990-7

A scan of landmarks, neighborhoods, food, and other attractions in the Big Apple.

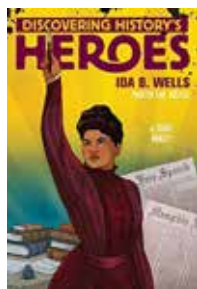
Perfunctory efforts to give this tour at least a pretense of geographic or thematic unity only add to its higgledy-piggledy

Extensive use of Wells' diaries allows an intimate look at her feelings and experiences.

IDA B. WELLS

character. Arrhenius (*City*, 2018, etc.) opens with a full-page view of the Brooklyn Bridge soaring over an otherwise-unidentifiable cityscape opposite a jumble of eight smaller images that are, for all that one is labeled "Brooklyn Academy of Music" and another "Coney Island," are likewise so stylized as to look generic. From there, in the same one-topic-per-spread format, it's on to Manhattan uptown and down for "Rockefeller Center," "Shopping," and other random bites. The "Harlem" spread features a fire hydrant, a mailbox, and the (actually distant) Cloisters museum, for instance, and a glance into "Queens" offers glimpses of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, a "Greek restaurant," a "Mexican restaurant," and "marathon runners." The large trim size and aesthetic mimic M. Sasek's perennial *This Is New York* (1960, revised edition 2003) while adding much-needed updates with both more diverse arrays of dress and skin hues for the stylized human figures as well as the addition of sites such as the Stonewall Inn, the 9/11 memorial, and the Fearless Girl statue.

Prospective younger visitors can do better than this bland mush. (*Informational picture book. 5-7*)



IDA B. WELLS *Fighter for Justice*

Bailey, Diane

Aladdin (160 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$6.99 paper | Aug. 27, 2019

978-1-5344-2485-2

978-1-5344-2484-5 paper

Series: Discovering History's Heroes

The "Princess of the Press" gets carefully researched treatment in this narrative biography.

Born in 1862 to enslaved parents, Ida B. Wells became a teacher, a journalist, an activist, and a speaker, and her words carried far and influenced and educated many about the evils of racism. The book's opening scene throws readers into Wells' decision, at the age of 16, to brave travel from her grandmother's home where she was staying back to her hometown of Holly Springs, Mississippi, to take care of her younger siblings, newly orphaned by yellow fever. As her determination to fulfill her duty to her family is illustrated in this scene, so her other character traits are illustrated throughout the book in detailed, well-written scenes: her outrage at being treated unjustly when a train conductor and bystanders forcibly removed her from a railroad car; her determination to speak the truth in the face of injustice even though it might be dangerous or alienate others, as when she publicly criticized Booker T. Washington; her stage fright when speaking to a crowd about lynching. Extensive use of Wells' diaries allows an intimate look at her feelings and experiences, and other primary sources offer humanizing peeks at her faults and quirks. Despite some abrupt transitions throughout, the text moves forward quickly and sustains interest. Potentially new vocabulary words are set off in bold and defined in a glossary.

A fascinating subject and good storytelling combine for a winning text. (glossary, endnotes, bibliography) (*Biography. 9-12*)



THE RHYTHM OF THE RAIN

Baker-Smith, Grabame

Illus. by the author

Templar/Candlewick (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 20, 2019

978-1-5362-0575-6

A small boy imagines the travels of water from a jar through steps of the water cycle and around the world.

When a rain shower interrupts Issac's play, he empties a jar of water into a mountain pool. He runs downhill, following his water into a river that goes by his family home. Continuing in a small boat, he sails through an idealized countryside and a curiously empty city (the single human empties a bucket out a riverside window) as far as the ocean. The boat vanishes from the story as readers see the water encountering a whale, icebergs, ocean deeps, and a lightning storm. The water becomes mist, a cloud over faraway African countries, and life-giving rain. After one more cycle through the ocean, it finally becomes rain falling on Issac's pool again. Watery digital paintings of a dreamlike landscape provide pictorial reinforcement. Issac appears white. The art is lovely, but the exposition is awkward in this British import. Readers will struggle with long sentences where the meaning is not immediately clear: "He followed them to the river that / ran past his home and then plunged down a waterfall." There are factual errors. Whales don't spout swallowed water through their blowholes; that's warm air from their lungs. Water doesn't rise from the ocean as steam; that's vapor. For an equally child-friendly and more accurate account of this often described process, choose Miranda Paul and Jason Chin's *Water Is Water* (2015).

This exploration of water just isn't solid enough to merit purchase. (*Informational picture book. 4-7*)



BRINGING DOWN

A PRESIDENT *The Watergate Scandal*

Balis, Andrea & Levy, Elizabeth

Illus. by Foley, Tim

Roaring Brook (240 pp.)

\$19.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-17679-0

President Richard Nixon's downfall as a result of the Watergate scandal is vividly recounted in a screenplay-style

narrative.

In Balis and Levy's narrative, contextual paragraphs identified as "Fly on the Wall" are separated from direct quotes taken from Nixon, his administration, the Watergate burglars, reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, and members of Congress. The purpose of choosing this narrative format is never explained, nor is it readily apparent. Many of Nixon's lines and those of his staff come from transcribed Oval Office recordings. It's inventive all right, but there are some odd inclusions.

THE 2019 KATAHDIN AWARD



Photo courtesy Leah Overstreet

JUST A FEW WEEKS from now, on June 23 and 24, the children's-book world will celebrate its award winners at the American Library Association's annual conference in Washington, D.C. The venues will be banquet halls; the speeches will be heartfelt.

But in Augusta, Maine, on April 25, a significantly more homespun awards ceremony took place in a dingy arena.

In addition to the two student-choice

awards and the Lupine Award, given to the best Maine-related books of the year, the Katahdin Award was presented. Honoring the body of work by a Maine author or illustrator, it's been presented since 1999 to such luminaries as Robert McCloskey, Ashley Bryan, Phillip Hoose, and Melissa Sweet. Here in Maine, children's-book talent is as thick on the ground as wild blueberries.

The honoree in 2019? Photographer Dwight Kuhn.

Unlike many other Katahdin winners', Kuhn's name is not widely recognized even though his photographs grace some 140 children's books about science and nature. The vast bulk of his catalog consists of books published directly for the school and library market, books such as *Animals With Backbones* and *Animals Without Backbones* and a four-book series about the ecosystems of a fallen tree, a stream, a milkweed patch, and an apple tree. These books are the workhorses of many a children's room.

Kuhn has crossed over from the institutional market with his recent titles, including *Where in the Wild*, a book of poems about animal camouflage by David M. Schwartz and Yael Schy, and its two sequels and the stunning *Rotten Pumpkin*, also with text by Schwartz, which documents the decomposition of a jack-o'-lantern. As our review notes, Kuhn's photos of "fuzzy *Penicillium*, slime mold, and spore cases 'that look like tiny red balloons' all gruesomely impress."

Kuhn's commitment to helping children encounter the natural world through books is abundantly clear. Like slime mold, his output may not be glamorous, but his body of work has made a difference. I am so very glad it's been recognized. And his speech was heartfelt. — V.S.

Vicky Smith is the children's editor.

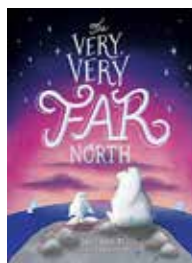


Photo courtesy Dwight Kuhn

Dwight Kuhn with Abby and Tucker

Is it necessary to know that Howard Hunt urinated in a whiskey bottle while hiding in a closet? What use is it to know what John Dean's wife wore on each day during his weeklong testimony before Congress? Why do the authors need to identify who ate what when Nixon, John Mitchell, and Bob Haldeman met for lunch? Perhaps worse are the exclusions. In recounting Nixon's political career, the authors note he made a name for himself "fighting communists with Senator Joe McCarthy," but there is no explanation of how fraudulent and destructive McCarthy's anti-communist crusade was, nor that it was specifically Nixon's role in the Alger Hiss trial that got him noticed. In lieu of photographs and archival material are Foley's interpretive black-and-white illustrations, which bring a graphic-novel-esque flair to the design.

An intriguing but flawed attempt at narrative innovation. (timeline, source notes, bibliography) (Nonfiction. 10-14)



THE VERY, VERY FAR NORTH

Bar-el, Dan

Illus. by Pousette, Kelly

Atheneum (272 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 10, 2019

978-1-5344-3341-0

Friendly curiosity and a gift for naming earn a polar bear an assortment of (mostly animal) friends, adventures, mishaps, and discoveries.

Arriving at a northern ocean, Duane spies a shipwreck. Swimming out to investigate, he meets its lone occupant, C.C., a learned snowy owl whose noble goal is acquiring knowledge to apply "toward the benefit of all." Informing Duane that he's a polar bear, she points out a nearby cave that might suit him—it even has a mattress. Adding furnishings from the wreck—the grandfather clock's handleless, but who needs to tell time when it's always now?—he meets a self-involved musk ox, entranced by his own reflection, who's delighted when Duane names him "Handsome." As he comes to understand, then appreciate their considerable diversity, Duane brings out the best in his new friends. C.C., who has difficulty reading emotions and dislikes being touched, evokes the autism spectrum. Magic, a bouncy, impulsive arctic fox, manifests ADHD. Major Puff, whose proud puffin ancestry involves courageous retreats from danger, finds a perfect companion in Twitch, a risk-aware, common-sensical hare. As illustrated, Sun Girl, a human child, appears vaguely Native, and Squint, a painter, white, but they're sui generis: The Canadian author avoids referencing human culture. The art conveys warmth in an icy setting; animal characters suggest beloved stuffed toys, gently reinforcing the message that friendship founded on tolerance breeds comfort and safety.

Quirky and imaginative—postmodern storytelling at its best. (Animal fantasy. 8-12)



WHAT MISS MITCHELL SAW

Barrett, Hayley

Illus. by Sudyka, Diana

Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)

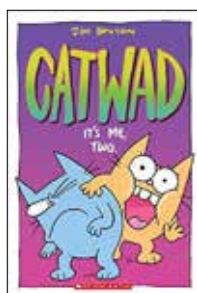
\$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-4814-8759-7

A tale of astronomical accomplishment.

Born on the island of Nantucket, Maria Mitchell grows up among the dunes and knows the local whaling vessels and shopkeepers by name. Illustrations rendered in gouache, watercolor, and ink initially depict her island world and move on to the endless sky she later studies. Because of her hardworking nature—she perseveres at school despite finding it challenging—her mother suggests her father take her on as an astronomy assistant. This leads Maria to learn the stars, planets, and celestial events by name as well, as she begins to “sweep the sky” with her telescope. Later on, she notices a new glow—a comet! At the advice of her father, she reports her discovery, which earns her a gold medal from the king of Denmark and worldwide recognition. While the text has a nice flow and a poetic feel, the meaning of the specialized vocabulary introduced is not always evident. Though the illustrations of an all-white cast in old-fashioned garb set the story squarely in the past, the time frame is not presented until the final notes, and readers unfamiliar with women’s history may be unaware of how unusual Mitchell’s accomplishments were if they miss them. Still, this is an engaging story of women’s history and astronomy that may inspire readers to further biographical research and exploration of STEM.

An involving addition to the women-in-STEM shelves. (Picture book/biography. 5-8)



IT'S ME, TWO

Benton, Jim

Illus. by the author

Graphix/Scholastic (128 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | Sep. 17, 2019

978-1-338-32603-1

Series: Catwad, 2

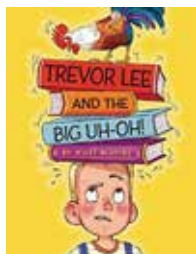
It's take two for Catwad and Blurmp, along with more giggles, grossness, and exaggeration.

Blue-gray Catwad hates everything except torturing his painfully naïve and pathologically happy orange roommate, Blurmp. Across 25 named episodes ranging from three to seven pages of brightly colored comic panels, the two cats play pranks and toss out one-liners at each other's expense. In “Gaming,” Blurmp is really enjoying his video game even after Catwad points out that the controller is not connected...and the game is actually a commercial for a diarrhea remedy. In “Salad,” Blurmp makes Catwad a salad that Catwad does not want to eat. Catwad points out that koalas, cows, manatees, and pandas all eat nothing but salad and are “slow

and lazy.” Blurmp realizes that Catwad doesn't want to eat the salad because (poking Catwad's flab) Catwad must eat a lot of salads already. In “Dumb,” Blurmp is patient zero in a dumbness epidemic that destroys the world—thankfully it's only Catwad's nightmare, but it prompts Catwad to take Blurmp to “save the world.” Fans of Benton's first collection will probably enjoy this one even more (and hope for a third). The target audience won't know Ren and Stimpy, but they may see Squidward and Sponge-Bob in this feline friendship. A couple of puzzles round out the collection at the close.

Probably not to everyone's taste—but sure to be popular with the fart and barf set. (Graphic short stories. 7-11)





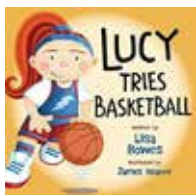
TREVOR LEE AND THE BIG UH OH!

Blevins, Wiley
 Illus. by Kissi, Marta
 One Elm Books (160 pp.)
 \$14.99 | Sep. 1, 2019
 978-1-947159-06-8

Third grader Trevor Lee makes every effort to avoid revealing that he still can't read.

Educator Blevins directly addresses the shame of reading difficulties in this middle-grade novel. Trevor Lee is "as good at reading as a fish is good at climbing a cactus," but his teacher, Miss Burger, wants every child to read aloud at the upcoming Parents' Night. To help readers understand the challenge Trevor Lee faces, the author includes the story they'll perform: "The Little Red Hen and Her Lazy-Butt Friends." The humor of the narrative extends beyond the many references to body parts: Trevor Lee's fear of reading in public is matched by his fear of the wrath of his farming family's rooster. Both lead him to ridiculous actions. Further, his best friend, Pinky, is always at hand to add more trouble—as when they fail to follow field-trip rules and end up stuck in a tree. Happily, some extra instruction from the teacher and the support of his parents and nonreading Mamaw help him rise to the big occasion. Each short chapter is illustrated with grayscale drawings, often a head shot of the freckle-faced white boy, and ends with a comment in Trevor Lee's own words: "Some days lay a big rotten egg." His folksy language reflects his rural Tennessee origins, but his repeated expressions of distaste for girls limit the book's appeal. Pinky is depicted as a child of color; Miss Burger presents white, and his classmates are diverse.

This sympathetic portrayal of a boy struggling with school has an audience. (Fiction. 6-8)



LUCY TRIES BASKETBALL

Bowes, Lisa
 Illus. by Hearne, James
 Orca (32 pp.)
 \$12.95 paper | Sep. 3, 2019
 978-1-4598-1697-8
 Series: Lucy Tries Sports

Lucy discovers that the way to learn to play basketball is with friends on a neighborhood court.

Lucy loves playing in the park, and one day she and her friends join their friend Ava and her cousin in their new favorite sport: basketball. Pro player Jermaine, aka "Coach J," teaches all the basics—footwork, quick passes, dribbling, and a variety of shots. But he also encourages the players to keep trying when they miss, stresses the value of teamwork, and focuses on fun as they learn and later play a practice game. At the end of the workout, Coach J invites the young players to watch him and his team play. Written in loose rhyming couplets, the text has many near rhymes and inconsistent meter. While the storyline

is predictable, the book is a good introduction to basketball terms, and young basketball players and fans will appreciate reading about themselves. Vivid silhouetted figures against a white background portray male and female players of several races; Lucy herself is white while Ava and Coach J are black. One young player competes from a wheelchair. A half page of backmatter explains the history of basketball, the NBA and its players, and wheelchair basketball, and one entry also explains the three-on-three basketball that the children play. The book publishes in a simultaneous French edition translated by Rachel Martinez.

It's a slam dunk. (Picture book. 5-8) (Lucy joue au basketball: 978-1-4598-2338-9)



THE SQUIRRELS WHO SQUABBLED

Bright, Rachel
 Illus. by Field, Jim
 Scholastic (32 pp.)
 \$14.99 | Sep. 17, 2019
 978-1-338-53803-8

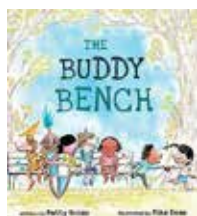
A race to the final pine cone leads to a great friendship.

"Spontaneous Cyril" lives in "the now and the here," but as winter approaches, his cupboards are bare. When he spots a pine cone with the last nuts of the season, he sprints for it. But so does "Plan-Ahead Bruce," and so the "wild, nutty" race begins. Of course, the pine cone falls. It "boing[s] over bushes... bing[s] on the nose of a slumbering bear," and "bounce[s] over boulders" before coming to a stop, poised on the edge of a cliff. After close encounters with a pine cone-stealing bird and a waterfall, is it possible that "their nutty young hopes [might] simply end in despair?" Luckily, Cyril pulls Bruce to safety. "Bruised and bedraggled" both, Bruce and Cyril look at each other and burst into giggles over how silly they've been and declare a lasting friendship. Energetic word choices and funny, exciting illustrations make this a great read all the way to the clear, satisfying moral. While it's debatable if "Cyril" and "squirrel" rhyme, the rest of the text definitely does, and it has a natural meter. Descriptive, often alliterative verb choices add to the fun. Richly colored artwork in a lively mix of compositions and perspectives captures the action of the bouncing pine cone and the squirrels' wild water ride. Low contrast between text and background on a few pages makes prereading a must before a read-aloud.

A wild, rewarding ride. (Picture book. 3-6)

This brief sojourn in an alternative 18th-century France is an unexpectedly rich one.

NEVERS



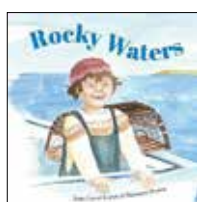
THE BUDDY BENCH

Brozo, Patty
 Illus. by Deas, Mike
 Tilbury House (36 pp.)
 \$17.95 | Aug. 12, 2019
 978-0-88448-697-8

A story inspired by a real-life effort to achieve social inclusion.

Rhyming text enriched by energetic, cartoon-style illustrations follows the diverse students in Miss Mellon's class at recess. Most of the children dive into play with peers, but some feel timid or excluded. Those at play are initially oblivious to the discomfort of the others, but then a child named Jake notices someone using a crutch and hanging back from play. "It's my leg," said Gabe. "I can't run in a cast, / so I never get picked, not even last." Affable Jake responds, "Come play with us anyway. There's time to spare," causing Gabe to reply, "Wait a minute ...I'll be right there." This interaction creates a compassionate domino effect of inclusion, with Gabe reaching out to another kid on the sidelines, and so on. When the children (and, oddly, an elephant and dragon) go inside after recess they ask, "how could we say, / without using words, that we all want to play?" Miss Mellon says they need "a seat / to wait for a friend or a buddy to meet." It's unfortunate the solution—the eponymous buddy bench—originates with an adult rather than the compassionate children themselves, especially since the author's note reveals that it was a first grader who proposed the first one in the United States, but the generosity on display is heartening.

Inviting. (Picture book. 5-7)



ROCKY WATERS

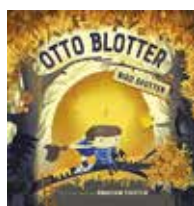
Carter, Anne Laurel
 Illus. by Dumas, Marianne
 Groundwood (32 pp.)
 \$17.95 | Sep. 3, 2019
 978-1-77306-097-2

Based on the history of a real Acadian fishing family who settled on Prince Edward Island in 1799, this picture book, set in the 1970s, tells the true story of Rocky, one of 13 children, who loved to fish.

Young Rocky feels confined and bored at school, but Dad won't let the boy come on the boat with him until his feet can fill the family boots. The day finally comes for him to join his father and big sister on the lobster boat. Rocky has the "salt bad in [his] veins," as his father says, and when he's finally on the boat sailing out of the harbor, he "feels as free as a seagull." He learns all the tricks of the trade from Dad and sister Patsy, and he even gets to steer the boat. At the end of the day Rocky falls asleep and dreams of "a world where there are no walls, and he feels free." Seasoned author Carter's imaginative text captures the simplicity and wonder of maritime life as seen through the eyes of a child, not unlike Robert McCloskey in his classic *Time of Wonder*. Dumas' soft watercolors paint an authentic picture of hard island life, where families are at the mercy of the sea

and the fishing trade. The cast is all evidently white, but the centering of French-Canadian characters adds pleasing ethnic diversity.

A charming introduction to a life that will be unfamiliar to most readers. (author's note, glossary) (Picture book. 5-8)



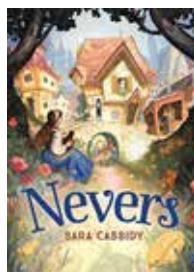
OTTO BLOTTER, BIRD SPOTTER

Carter, Graham
 Illus. by the author
 Andersen Press USA (40 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019
 978-1-5415-7762-6

Otto belongs to a family of obsessed bird-watchers so besotted with birds that they have turned their home into an elaborate and fanciful bird blind.

Otto, however, prefers exploring the world to sitting at home in the blind. One day he finds a massive bird footprint, an even larger pile of "poo," and finally an unusual little bird, best described as a yellow blob. Otto scoops it up and keeps it at home in spite of a family ban on pets. The bird begins to grow rapidly, and Otto is unable to conceal it any longer. Oddly, the bird can camouflage its burgeoning self in any setting, and so the pair continues on its travels, unobserved by the public. When a trip to the zoo makes the bird sad, Otto realizes that it is missing its family. Constructing "the tallest bird-spotting tower ever built," Otto's family soon locates the missing bird parents, who are large yellow blobs, similar to their offspring. Bird-watching theme notwithstanding, this wacky, visually exuberant offering is not hampered by connections to the real world; although many birds, real and imaginary, are pictured, not one is ever identified. Carter's multihued illustrations have an intriguing amount of detail and make the most of varied perspectives, helping to compensate for the rather lackluster plot. Otto and his family present white.

Silly fun for fans of whimsy if not for budding bird-watchers. (Picture book. 4-8)



NEVERS

Cassidy, Sara
 Orca (240 pp.)
 \$10.95 paper | Sep. 3, 2019
 978-1-4598-2163-7

In the chaotic countryside of post-Revolutionary France, Odette and her flighty mother, always on the move, try to make a home in the town of Nevers.

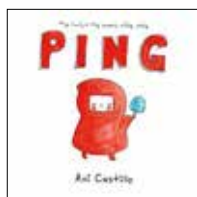
Fourteen-year-old Odette's always had to care for her mother, Anneline, who is gorgeous, selfish, and accident prone. When people in Anneline's vicinity (usually one of the many husbands she's had) end up dead, it always is, truly, completely by chance. Yet after each such incident, Anneline and Odette take to the roads seeking safety. In Nevers,

Castillo's debut employs a playful metaphor to explore socioemotional skills.

PING

Odette scrubs and gardens, cooks and schemes, crossing her fingers that maybe this time they'll find stability. Though she keeps to herself, Odette's drawn to the fascinating sights of Nevers, and readers will be as well. There's M. Mains, a former scholar who smells people's hands to learn about them, Mme. Genevieve the inventor, and M. Gustave, their landlord, who secretly wishes he were a chicken. There's a piglet and a new-hatched chick who are BFFs and a donkey who brays in Latin that only Odette hears. And best of all, there's Nicois, who rapidly becomes like the brother she's never had. Together, dark-skinned Nicois and light-skinned Odette try to solve a puzzle that might connect Odette's history to secrets here in Nevers. Gay and intersex representation fits smoothly into the historical setting, meshing neatly and naturally with these charmingly odd characters living their everyday lives in the aftermath of massive social upheaval.

This brief sojourn in an alternative 18th-century France is an unexpectedly rich one. (historical note) (*Historical fantasy*. 9-12)



PING

Castillo, Ani

Illus. by the author

Megan Tingley/Little, Brown (48 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 24, 2019

978-0-316-42464-6

Castillo's debut employs a playful metaphor to explore socioemotional skills, addressing readers directly with tender, encouraging language.

Minimalist, lightly textured ink-and-watercolor illustrations depict adorably blobby humanoid figures wearing hooded bodysuits in a range of colors. The primary figure, a short blob, has round red cheeks and wears what looks like a red, hooded snowsuit. Each figure has round black eyes and a red dot of a nose on a white face while ink linework carefully denotes the figures' expressions so that even the youngest readers may decipher them. The accompanying text uses "ping" to explain and promote each figure's ownership of their feelings and actions, while "pong" clearly and simply demonstrates that one cannot control others—one can only control one's response to others. "Time to listen! The pong is giving you something // Is it something to learn? / Something to think about? / ... / Something to challenge you? / Something to keep?" While most spreads have plain white (usually) or black backgrounds, one spread depicting "taking a pause" after receiving a "pong" utilizes a richly illustrated page of lush green leaves to illustrate how the pause can be "as long as you need." Overall, the book's design and deliberate pacing support its message; however, much of the text is printed in an unnecessarily large font that competes with, rather than complementing, the illustrations. This is most problematic in several visually busy spreads that include text in multiple point sizes, "pinging" unevenly from one spot illustration to the next.

A sweetly articulated and socially valuable message for readers of many ages. (Picturebook. 4-8)



THE GREEN CHILDREN OF WOOLPIT

Coats, J. Anderson

Atheneum (272 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 10, 2019

978-1-5344-2790-7

Agnes' hopes for adventures beyond her little village of Woolpit come terrifyingly true.

Raised by her loving, adoptive ma and da after being left in their cottage by a mysterious woman, Agnes chafes at the ordinariness of peasant life. Her late, beloved grandmother filled her eager imagination with stories of Those Good People of the Otherworld, but her only real human friend, Glory, is growing up and becoming impatient with Agnes' dreamy ways. Fortunately, she has Mother, her loyal pig, for company. When Agnes hears crying from the wolf pits one harvest day, she discovers two green children, a boy and a girl, who speak a strange tongue. Persuaded that they have come to return her to her true parents, the king and queen of the fairies, Agnes is initially desperate to believe that she is "finally the girl in the story." But her dreams are soon dashed, and she must remember all she learned from Granny if she is to save herself. The settings—both on Earth and below—are rendered with skill and care, but most characters are not well developed, resulting in a story with less emotional impact than might be expected. Initially heavy in internal monologue, it picks up considerably in pace in the second half. Human characters, when not green, default to white; two particularly unpleasant fairies have brown skin.

For patient readers, a medieval English legend cleverly infused with the supernatural. (historical note) (*Fantasy*. 10-14)



STORM BLOWN

Courage, Nick

Delacorte (352 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Jul. 16, 2019

978-0-525-64596-2

978-0-525-64599-3 PLB

Three young people experience the devastating path of a superstorm that wreaks havoc on Puerto Rico and New Orleans.

In New Orleans, even now that Emily's older brother has come back from the hospital, her family is struggling. Their mother can barely go outside because of her anxiety, and their father is working on a Gulf Coast oil rig trying to make ends meet. And then the storm closes in. In Puerto Rico, Alejo is working at a resort not too far away from his godfather, near the often overlooked town of La Perla. As the storm hits, the boy tries to reach the elderly man even as others begin to evacuate. Reminiscent of high-stakes blockbusters, the intense, time-stamped scenes switch back and forth

between settings, trying to capture the overwhelming power of the natural world and the futility of humanity's attempts to control it. Unfortunately, young readers will not be blown away by this plot-driven, extreme weather-focused middle-grade debut. With a mix of too many underdeveloped characters and awkward transitions between perspectives and settings, this narrative becomes a jumble of daring feats and clumsy exposition. Not enough time is given to any of the protagonists, and the short additional musings from the birds and other creatures experiencing the megastorm will distract readers.

Only avid and loyal fans of survival fiction will slog through this lengthy tale. (*Adventure. 9-12*)



NOUNS SAY "WHAT'S THAT?"

Dahl, Michael

Illus. by Lowen, Lauren

Picture Window Books (32 pp.)

\$7.95 paper | \$27.99 PLB | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-5158-4058-9

978-1-5158-3869-2 PLB

Series: Word Adventures: Parts of Speech

Anthropomorphized representations of a person, a place, and a thing introduce readers to nouns.

The protagonists are Person, a green, hairy, Cousin Itt-looking blob; Place, a round, blue, globe-ish being (stereotypically implied female by eyelashes and round pigtailed); and Thing, a pink cloud with limbs, a porkpie hat, and red glasses. They first introduce the word "noun" and then start pointing out the nouns that fall under each of their categories. In their speech balloons, these vocabulary words are set in type that corresponds to the speaker's color: "Each **w**heel is a *thing* noun," says Thing, and "wheel" is set in red. Readers join the three as they visit a museum, pointing out the nouns they see along the way and introducing proper and collective nouns and ways to make nouns plural. Confusingly, though, Person labels the "bus driver" a "person noun" on one page, but two spreads later, Thing says "Abdar is a **g**uard. Mrs. Mooney is a **t**icket taker. Their jobs are things that are also nouns." Similarly, a group of athletes is a person noun—"team"—but "**f**lock" and "**p**ack" are things. Lowen's digital illustrations portray a huge variety of people who display many skin and hair colors, differing abilities, and even religious and/or cultural markers (though no one is overweight). Backmatter includes a summary of noun facts, a glossary, an index (not seen), critical-thinking questions, and a list of further reading. Books on seven other parts of speech release simultaneously.

This ambitious introduction to an important concept tries too hard to pigeonhole people, places, and things. (*Informational picture book. 5-8*)



LIKE A GIRL

Degman, Lori

Illus. by Penny, Mara

Sterling (40 pp.)

\$16.95 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-4549-3302-1

Twenty-four women leaders are pictured as models of working "like a girl" in this rhyming inspirational poem.

The endpapers present the multicultural roster of talented, hardworking women and girls, all apparently cis, depicted in grayscale portraits with their names below their pictures. Each page holds one line of a rhyming couplet with one woman at work in illustrations composed of strong shapes and vivid colors. "Stand up like a girl, by refusing to stand"—Rosa Parks sits calmly on an (empty) bus, looking out at readers; "Stand up like a girl, by extending your hand"—Mother Teresa offers a bowl of rice to three children of different races. Malala Yousafzai raises a fist in the air, holding a "Resist" sign and surrounded by other feminist signs at a protest march; the young Ruby Bridges stands facing a crowd with calm dignity, with the text "keep on going; persist." Leaders who overcame challenges, such as Hellen Keller and Tammy Duckworth, "prevail like a girl." Artists, architects, and writers like Frida Kahlo and Zaha Hadid all "create like a girl." Pilots and astronauts "soar," athletes "train," philanthropists and activists "change the world like a girl." Minibiographies at the end of the book introduce the major accomplishments of each featured leader, helping this book to double as a fun read-aloud and an informative lead-in to further research.

As an introduction to women's power and possibilities, this choice rises above the rest. (bibliography) (*Informational picture book. 4-12*)



LLAMA LLAMA MESS MESS MESS

Dewdney, Anna & Duncan, Reed

Illus. by Morrow, JT

Viking (40 pp.)

\$18.99 | Aug. 20, 2019

978-0-670-01644-0

Series: Llama Llama

Llama Llama learns why tidying is important.

In yet another highly familiar childhood drama, Llama Llama does not want to clean up his toys. He's having fun playing; why should he stop? Isn't it Mama Llama's job to clean up? Mama poses the question: "What if Mama *never* cleaned? / Imagine that! / What would that mean?" Mama zooms off on her roller skates, with a sheet for a cape, crunching snacks and dropping everything on the floor. Soon the house is strewn with toys, dirty dishes, and trash. "Crumbs and clothes and peanut shells... / What's *this* thing? What's *that* smell?" Llama Llama can't take it anymore. "No more Llama / MESS / MESS / MESS!" Perhaps it is a good idea for Llama Llama to lend a

hand. Helpful hints for youngsters are slipped inside: Every toy should have a place, and when making your bed, don't forget to look underneath. This second collaboration between Duncan and Morrow since Dewdney's passing feels more complete than *Llama Llama Loves to Read* (2018), with snappy rhythms and a twinkle in Mama's eye. Returning to Llama Llama and Mama's relationship feels like home.

Cooperation makes cleaning go much faster—particularly with friendly, rhyming llamas to show the way. (Picture book. 2-6)



BEVERLY, RIGHT HERE

DiCamillo, Kate
Candlewick (256 pp.)
\$16.99 | Sep. 24, 2019
978-0-7636-9464-7

The friendship of strangers helps a 14-year-old runaway realize that there are important connections to be found at home as well.

It is 1979, four years after the events that bound together the Three Rancheros, Raymie, Louisiana, and Beverly, in *Raymie Nightingale* (2016). Buddy, the dog they rescued, has died, and Beverly Tapinski can think of no reason to stay home, so she hitches a ride to Tamaray Beach, Florida. Lying about her age, she finds a job in Mr. C's restaurant and a place to stay in elderly Iola Jenkins' trailer. In this third book about the girls, DiCamillo mixes familiar ingredients: absent parents, disparate friends, the ability to drive a car, the power of generosity, and the satisfaction of a big celebratory meal. Beverly is the focus here; her old friends appear only as memories or a voice on the telephone. At 14, she's on the verge of finding herself, and she's newly seeing herself through others' eyes. As always, secondary characters (likely white, like Beverly) are interestingly drawn: the lonely older woman; acne-faced and college-bound Elmer, who draws her picture and teaches her to dance; ambitious Freddie the waitress and her unsuitable boyfriend. But in this immediate narrative, simply told and progressing in real time, readers encounter this world through Beverly's eyes and mind, finding pleasure in small things, appreciating friends of all sorts, coming to terms with losses, and moving on.

A satisfying read that stands alone but is richer for its company. (Fiction. 10-14)



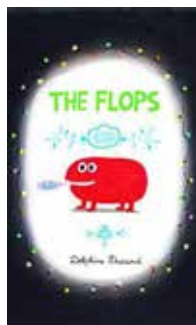
MORE THAN A GAME Race, Gender, and Politics in Sports

Doeden, Matt
Millbrook/Lerner (64 pp.)
\$34.65 PLB | Sep. 3, 2019
978-1-5415-4094-1

Sports, race, and gender have often clashed in American life and created greater impact than any individual game's outcome.

NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick's decision to sit and then kneel during the national anthem in 2016 was certainly not the first time sports and race appeared to be on a collision course in America. This volume explores some of the chapters in this saga. African American heavyweight boxer Jack Johnson offended the racial sensibilities of the early 20th century simply by seeking a chance to become boxing's champion. The struggles to integrate baseball and the challenges faced by African American athletes as they traveled during the Jim Crow era are described. Protests about the use of a team name considered to be a racial slur and the triumph of a female fencer who wore a hijab during the 2016 Olympic Games demonstrate how often societal concerns bleed into athletic events. Gender issues and sexual orientation in sports are addressed in the explosive case of sexual abuse in gymnastics and when gay athletes come out. This slim volume skims the surface of these complex topics, and young readers will need additional information to gain deeper understanding, although the large number of photographs is worth noting.

Young readers will find intriguing—if only surface-skimming—historical context for today's controversial sports headlines. (source notes, glossary, select bibliography, further reading, index) (Nonfiction. 10-18)



THE FLOPS And Their Fabulous Adventures

Durand, Delphine
Illus. by the author
Trans. by the author & Klinger, Sarah
Enchanted Lion Books (64 pp.)
\$17.95 | Jul. 16, 2019
978-1-59270-260-2

From France, an introduction to the amorphous species *Flopus classicus* and some of its blobby relatives.

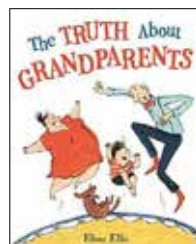
Much of the fun here is in the wordplay, and Durand and Klinger plainly had a ball converting Durand's original French text (2015) into English. It's arranged as a series of labeled thematic views, vignettes, and galleries done in cartoon styles ranging from rough-looking sketches to daffy blends of paint and photography. Durand presents an array of invented folk—most of whom resemble chubby beans with four stubby limbs and googly eyes. Flops, it seems, come in diverse types ("Fat-Nosed Flop," "Zombie Flop," "Dumb Flop," "Really Dumb Flop") and

Though they may look over the hill, this set of grandparents is anything but.

THE TRUTH ABOUT GRANDPARENTS

temperaments (from "Flippant" to "Unflappable"). They live in subterranean "Flop Houses," will sometimes say silly things like "BUBBA LUPA" (or even "Tidy your room!"), and if kept as pets will overeat until they can no longer...flip. Along with answering such pressing questions as whether Flops talk out of their bottoms ("Usually not"), this comprehensive guide offers ways to distinguish Flops from their cousins Flumps and Tuffs, not to mention non-Flops like cats and yetis, plus savvy guidelines for proper care and feeding.

Fans of counterfactual flights will flip for this flamboyant fancy. (Informational picture book. 6-8)



THE TRUTH ABOUT GRANDPARENTS

Ellis, Elina

Illus. by the author

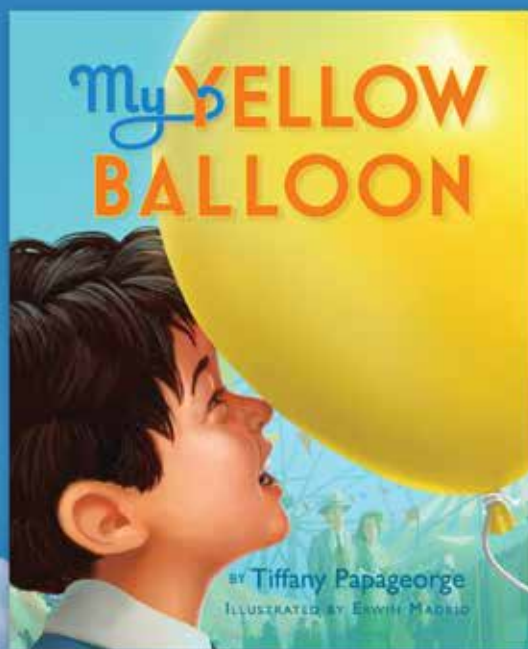
Little, Brown (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-0-316-42472-1

A child narrates the stereotypical view of grandparents as boring old people opposite a very different visual portrayal.

Though they may look over the hill, with "wrinkly faces, a little bit of hair, and funny teeth," this set of grandparents is anything but. They are far from "not much fun," "slow," "clumsy," and "not bendy"; rather, with their grandchild, they go on daring roller-coaster rides, enjoy the roller rink, do yoga, play in a lively jazz band, dance, and take part in nighttime stargazing. Instead of being set in their ways, they embrace technology. While the child's words state the negative, unflattering assumptions about their elderly status, the comical cartoon illustrations



My Yellow Balloon

By Tiffany Papageorge
Illustrated by Erwin Madrid

This award-winning masterpiece helps guide children through the complicated emotions of grief.

A must-have book for any child dealing with loss.

"The sensitive, expressive illustrations partner well with the text, especially the remarkable gatefold spread..."

Available in Spanish • Mi Globo Amarillo
ISBN: 978-0-9903370-0-3

"An effective and moving approach to understanding sorrow that children should understand."

—Kirkus Reviews

For general inquiries, email info@minoanmoon.com

Engle's free verse whirls and twirls, playful and vivacious.

DANCING HANDS

reflect quite the reverse. After the child states, "Someone told me grandparents are SCARED of new things," readers see the threesome on the couch, each enjoying their own screen time. An energetic boogying scene follows a declaration that grandparents don't dance, and the couple's loving smooch squashes the statement, "they definitely don't care for ROMANCE." A lanky, jovial grandpa parallels his plump, equally happy wife, demonstrating life in hip and creative ways. Both grandparents and grandchild are white. The endpapers tell a nostalgic story of today's boomers with a pen-and-ink sketch of a cluttered garage filled with travel and sporting mementos.

Contemporary grandparents may enjoy this positive read even more than the children they read it to. (Picture book. 5-8)



DANCING HANDS **How Teresa Carreño** **Played the Piano for** **President Lincoln**

Engle, Margarita

Illus. by López, Rafael

Atheneum (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-1-4814-8740-5



Venezuelan pianist Teresa Carreño performs for President Abraham Lincoln amid a raging Civil War in Engle and López's portrait of an artist.

Thanks to parental encouragement, Teresita learned about "all the beautiful / dark and light keys / of a piano" at an early age. By the age of 6, she composed original songs. Revolución in Venezuela soon drove an 8-year-old Teresa and her family to sail across the stormy sea to the United States, but the Carreño family arrived only to find another violent conflict—"the horrible Civil War"—in their adopted country. Despite the initial alienation that comes from being in an unfamiliar country, Teresita continued to improve and play "graceful waltzes and sonatas, / booming symphonies, and lively folk songs." The Piano Girl's reputation spread far, eventually garnering the attention of Lincoln, who invited the 10-year-old to perform at the White House! Yet the Civil War festered on, tormenting Teresita, who wished to alleviate the president's burdens for at least one night. "How could music soothe / so much trouble?" Half biographical sketch, half wide-eyed tribute, Engle and López's collaboration endearingly builds to Teresa's fateful meeting with Lincoln like a gravitational pull, with bursts of compassion and admiration for both artist and public servant. Engle's free verse whirls and twirls, playful and vivacious, while López's vivid, colorful artwork elevates this story to heavenly heights.

Like a concerto for the heart. (historical note) (Informational picture book. 4-6)



A TIGER LIKE ME

Engler, Michael

Illus. by Tourlonias, Jöelle

Trans. by Watkinson, Laura

Amazon Crossing Kids (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 1, 2019

978-1-5420-4456-1

This playful poem of a picture book captures a child's wildness and warmth as he pretends to be a tiger.

From the moment he wakes up and roars for his breakfast, his tiger alter ego gives him permission to safely test the boundaries of family life. Whether growling for food, upsetting his father's coffee cup, or cuddling with his parents, the tiger-child dances in hairy spatters across the page. The book's dynamic, often busy illustrations and shadowy, hinted-at junglescapes communicate myriad rapidly changing childhood feelings and identities. While preschoolers will appreciate the wily tiger-child protagonist, the story's poetic text might be a challenge for the younger range of the audience, as the unusual word choices, punctuation, and sentence structure in this translation from German are more sophisticated than typical American texts for this age group. However, child readers (and certainly adult caregivers) will identify with the book's central messages: Children can experience a wide swath of feelings, everyone makes mistakes, and everyone has complicated ways of interacting with the world. This little tiger is by turns loud, fast, greedy, clumsy, wild, wary, clever, creative, grumpy, quiet, and loving. The final quiet pages offer a peaceful conclusion to the wild narrative ride, creating a soothing finish for younger children who might be both thrilled and perhaps alarmed at the antics and naughtiness of the tiger-boy.

Wildness is part and parcel of everyday childhood, embraced here with a roar. (Picture book. 4-8)



THE SCARECROW

Ferry, Beth

Illus. by the Fan Brothers

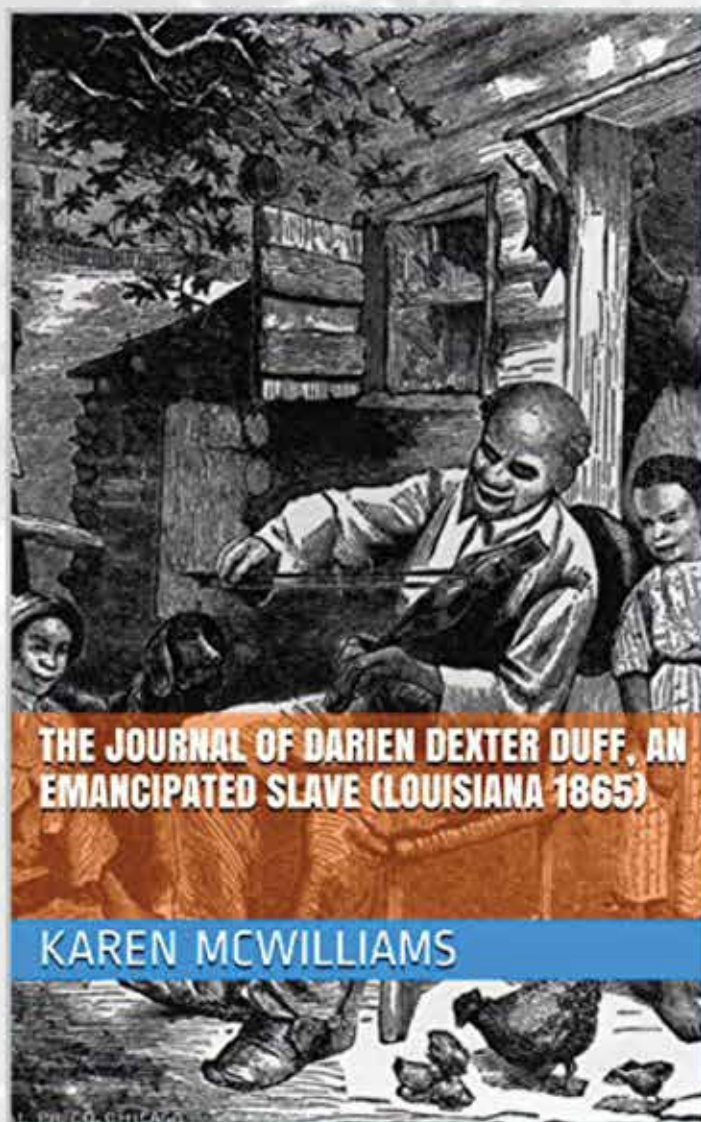
Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$18.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-0-06-247576-3

Ferry and the Fans portray a popular seasonal character's unlikely friendship.

Initially, the protagonist is shown in his solitary world: "Scarecrow stands alone and scares / the fox and deer, / the mice and crows. / It's all he does. It's all he knows." His presence is effective; the animals stay outside the fenced-in fields, but the omniscient narrator laments the character's lack of friends or places to go. Everything changes when a baby crow falls nearby. Breaking his pole so he can bend, the scarecrow picks it up, placing the creature in the bib of his overalls while singing a lullaby. Both abandon natural tendencies until the crow learns to fly—and thus departs. The aabb rhyme scheme flows reasonably well, propelling the narrative through fall, winter, and spring, when



B0184BZMPO

"An exuberantly told tale of one family's efforts to craft their own destiny."

—Kirkus Reviews

Darien Dexter Duff won **FIRST PLACE**
for the Young Adult Royal Palm Award!



ANOTHER GREAT YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY KAREN MCWILLIAMS
Journal of Jack Black, a Fugitive Slave
(1718 North Carolina, Tortuga, Jamaica, St. Croix)

With her brother and a black cat, a young slave escapes her plantation for a seafaring life in this fictional diary.

For agent representation, please contact KSophiedog@aol.com

the mature crow returns with a mate to build a nest in the overalls bib that once was his home. The Fan brothers capture the emotional tenor of the seasons and the main character in their panoramic pencil, ballpoint, and digital compositions. Particularly poignant is the close-up of the scarecrow's burlap face, his stitched mouth and leaf-rimmed head conveying such sadness after his companion goes. Some adults may wonder why the scarecrow seems to have only partial agency, but children will be tuned into the problem, gratified by the resolution.

A welcome addition to autumnal storytelling—and to tales of traditional enemies overcoming their history. (Picture book. 4-6)



TRUMAN THE DOG

Florence, Debbi Michiko

Illus. by Demmer, Melanie

Picture Window Books (72 pp.)

\$7.95 paper | \$23.32 PLB | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-5158-4560-7

978-1-5158-4475-4 PLB

Series: My Furry Foster Family

A rescue dog gets into some silly hijinks with his foster family.

Eight-year-old Japanese American Kaita Takano and her family have decided to foster a black Lab named Truman. When Truman arrives, he's a little shy, but it doesn't take long for him to get comfortable with the Takano family and their dachshund, Ollie. Fostering brings new challenges and lessons, especially when Truman finds trouble, like eating a whole box of treats or rolling in the trash. Kaita grows to love Truman and learns fostering an animal is difficult when you have to say goodbye. Florence's first in a new chapter-book series is divided into five chapters meant for readers making the transition from early readers. The focus on fostering animals rather than adopting them brings the topics of caregiving and sacrifice to light. Demmer adds fun, full-color illustrations, bringing the lovable Truman to life. The characters are culturally diverse, and cultural customs are reflected in the illustrations—characters go barefoot inside the Takano house, for instance. Based on a real-life Kaita, the book offers a backmatter section with photographs comparing the real and fictional Kaitas. It also provides discussion questions, activities, and a glossary. *Buttons the Kitten* releases simultaneously, and the Takanos will foster hamsters and a bearded dragon in future outings.

An adorable first book in a new series for animal lovers. (Fiction. 6-9) (*Buttons the Kitten*: 978-1-5158-4562-1 paper; 978-1-5158-4474-7 PLB)



KONDO & KEZUMI VISIT GIANT ISLAND

Goodner, David

Illus. by Tsurumi, Andrea

Disney-Hyperion (80 pp.)

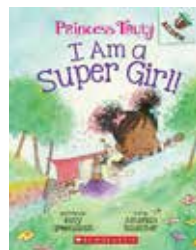
\$14.99 | Sep. 17, 2019

978-1-368-02577-5

Two friends embark upon a high-seas adventure.

Kondo, a large lemon-colored creature with wide round eyes, spends his day on his island home with his best friend, tangerine-hued Kezumi. Together, they frolic on their idyllic isle picking berries (tall Kondo nabs the higher fruit, while Kezumi helps to retrieve the lower) while surrounded by tiny "flitter-birds" and round "fluffle-bunnies." One day, Kezumi finds a map in a bottle that declares "WE ARE NOT ALONE." Inspired by visions of a larger world, Kondo and Kezumi fashion a boat from a bathtub and set sail. The pair visits fantastical islands—deliciously cheese-laden Dairy Isle, the fiery and fearsome Fireskull Island—until they eventually settle upon the titular Giant Island, where they meet Albert, a gigantic gray talking mountain who is—obviously—unable to leave. Enthralled by his new friends, Albert wants them to stay forever. After Albert makes a fraught decision, Kondo and Kezumi find themselves at a crossroads and must confront their new friend. Goodner and Tsurumi's brightly illustrated chapter book should find favor with fans of Kate DiCamillo and Chris Van Dusen's similarly designed Mercy Watson series. Short, wry, descriptive sentences make for an equally enjoyable experience whether read aloud or independently. Episodic chapters move the action along jauntily; the conclusion is somewhat abrupt, but it promises more exploration and adventures for the best friends.

A story of friendship that is both lively and lovely. (Fantasy. 6-8)



I AM A SUPER GIRL!

Greenawalt, Kelly

Illus. by Rauscher, Amariah

Acorn/Scholastic (48 pp.)

\$4.99 paper | \$23.99 PLB | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-338-33998-7

978-1-338-33999-4 PLB

Series: Princess Truly, 1

Princess Truly returns...to save the day.

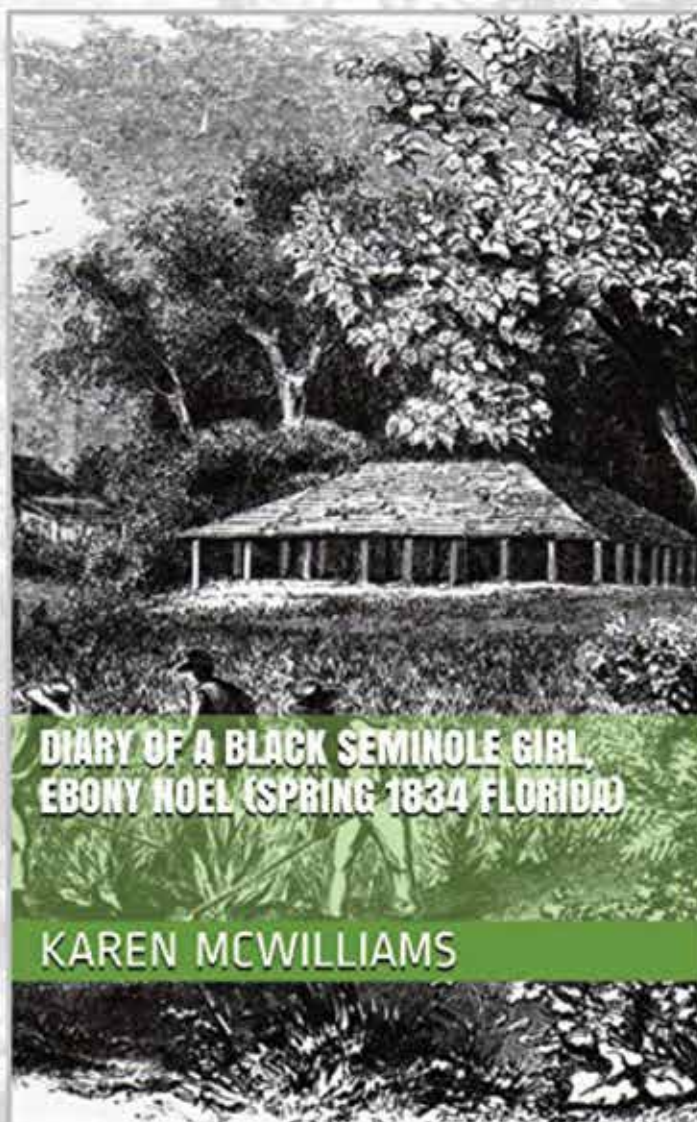
In this third book about Princess Truly—and the first chapter book—the brown-skinned protagonist, who wears a red cape, a purple tutu, and magical white buttoned boots, attends the first-birthday party of her friend Lizzie's cat, Waffles. When the exuberant Waffles crashes into the fish-shaped cake, Princess Truly calls on her "magic curls," (styled into two sparkling puff-balls) to make a beautiful new one. During the party, Waffles gets tangled in the balloon strings and floats out the window, with Noodles, Truly's trusty pug, holding on. Truly can save the pets, but only with Lizzie's help. Lizzie panics, knowing she has

Diary of a Black Seminole Girl, Ebony Noel (1834 Florida)

by Karen McWilliams

This fictional diary, seventh in a series of children's books, explores the life of black Seminoles as the Indian Removal Act begins to take effect.

"As in other series entries, the voice is exuberant—many capitals and exclamation points—and written in lively dialect..."



B01ASPU000

"An unusual setting adds interest to this energetic account."

—Kirkus Reviews

ANOTHER GREAT YOUNG ADULT NOVEL BY KAREN MCWILLIAMS

The Diary Of A Slave Girl, Camellia Cassandra

Fifth in a series of children's books, this fictional diary recounts how a widow's mystical sessions affect a 13-year-old slave girl's family.

For agent representation, please contact KSophiedog@aol.com

Heder perfectly captures the joy each figure finds in dance.

HOW DO YOU DANCE?

no magic or extraordinary strength, but Truly convinces her that her smarts, bravery, and belief in herself are enough to do the job. Young readers who admire Black Panther but need to see superheroes as young as they are will enjoy not only Princess Truly's magic hair and flightworthy boots, but also her confidence, creativity, and supportive attitude toward others. Rauscher's pastel-colored watercolor images give readers plenty of details to find—especially animals behaving uncharacteristically. A page in the backmatter provides brief directions for readers to draw Princess Truly and write their own adventure stories.

Readers will respond to this confident, can-do girl who demonstrates that magical adventures are easy to create. (*Fantasy*. 4-6)



REMARKABLES

Haddix, Margaret Peterson
Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins
(304 pp.)
\$17.99 | Sep. 24, 2019
978-0-06-283846-9

Eleven-year-old Marin discovers her “new” neighbors are from 20 years ago.

Light science fiction and plenty of mystery abound when her mother's job takes Marin and her family from Illinois to small-town Pennsylvania. The preteen worries about losing old friends and making new ones, but not for predictable reasons. An unexpected opportunity allows Marin—and readers—to learn how fear, bullying, and secrets poisoned her former friendships. The second and larger mystery, which also drives the plot, occurs when Marin, scouting out her new neighborhood, notices several teenagers appear and suddenly vanish. Charley, who's lived next door with his grandmother since his parents' substance use made it hard to care for him and his brothers, has seen them, too. Dubbing these mysteriously vanishing teens the Remarkables, Charley believes that they are time travelers from the past and include his father and the girlfriend his father may have accidentally killed. In this tightly woven, stand-alone story, Marin and Charley set out to identify the Remarkables, stop the accident that claimed one of them, and hopefully keep Charley's father from succumbing to addiction. In the process, the author seamlessly combines elements of both mysteries while also raising ethical dilemmas about changing the past. Most characters, including Marin and Charley, are default white, but some of the Remarkables are kids of color.

Blending issues that matter to young adolescents with intrigue and a surprise ending, Haddix proves why she's a master of middle-grade fiction. (*Suspense*. 8-12)



GUEST

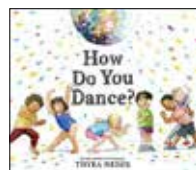
A Changeling Tale

Hahn, Mary Downing
Clarion (224 pp.)
\$16.99 | Sep. 3, 2019
978-0-358-06731-3

Hahn, that master of middle-grade horror, turns her attention to the fairy folk.

Mollie Cloverall loves her baby brother, Thomas. Despite her community's warnings and customs, she can't help but tell him what a good baby he is and how beautiful he is. The Kinde Folke, who are anything but kind, overhear her praise and wait for Mollie to borrow Thomas' iron locket, the only thing keeping him safe. Within moments Thomas has been replaced with a changeling, an ugly, ill-tempered creature who soon wears out Mollie's mother and drives her father away. Mollie decides to take the changeling, whom her mother calls Guest, back from whence he came and bring the real Thomas home. With the help of a mysterious man named Madog, this somewhat-unlikable heroine battles Pookas and other creatures of Celtic lore to win back her brother in spite of her growing affection for Guest. Readers hoping for the chills of *Wait Till Helen Comes* (1986) will not find them here, but this is a fast-paced, suspenseful, surprising tale of evil fairies and family loyalty. “Travelers” are portrayed as slightly ominous, part-fairy figures despite their status as an actual and marginalized community in Ireland; Mollie's village of Lower Hexham doesn't seem to be based on any real place, but Hahn's afterword places the story within an older, presumably all-white Irish context.

A fun and creepy read. (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



HOW DO YOU DANCE?

Heder, Thyra
Illus. by the author
Abrams (40 pp.)
\$16.99 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-4197-3418-2



A simple question—“How do you dance?”—meets resistance from one bespectacled youngster, who's surrounded by a diverse, exuberant cast of characters displaying their signature moves in a range of settings and scenarios.

Heder perfectly captures the joy each figure finds in dance with muted watercolor-and-pencil illustrations against a white background. The serif typeface lends an authoritative air to the narrative voice's descriptions of movement while playful hand-lettered text is sprinkled throughout to indicate characters' responses to the “official” text. The typography also works with the book's landscape format to emphasize the ways in which one might move—“*EAST EAST FAST*” in blurred italics and a drawn-out “sloooo o o o w w w”—across a horizontal axis. The text's organic, encouraging flow pauses at an official-looking chart that demonstrates such moves as “the swivel,” “the toodle,” and “the scoot” before

taking an unexpected and delightful pirouette into the surreal: A full-bleed spread shows humans, including a dancer in a wheelchair, sharing a dimly lit dance floor (complete with disco ball) with dinosaurs, a robot, and horses. The reluctant dancer, who is not named or gendered by the text, has short dark brown hair and peachy tan skin and wears a green pullover with purple shorts and sneakers.

A gleeful, tender celebration of self-expression through movement, destined to become a favorite read-aloud. (*Picture book*. 3-8)



THE TROLL HEART

Henseleit, Jack

Illus. by Andrews, Ryan

Little, Brown (272 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-0-316-52472-8

Series: The Witching Hours

Sibling heroes take on a sinister river troll. But will they live to tell the tale?

A month after their run-in with a vampire in Transylvania (*The Vampire Knife*, 2018), Anna, Max, and their father arrive in foggy England at the Goat's Beard Hotel. Max's bloodless, lifeless hand is a gray-white memento of the dangers that come with their newfound knowledge of "fairy-monsters" that exist alongside humans. Mystery soon finds the family again as they learn of a missing boy. Local nursery rhymes warn of a child-snatcher named Mr. Shellycoat, a clear clue that something monstrous is afoot. With Anna's magical knife at the ready, the siblings trudge toward Mr. Shellycoat's river, where their curiosity leads them to a troll's bridge. The toll to cross: blood or gold—or else become the next kids to disappear. In a clear homage to "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," Australian author Henseleit weaves a new spin on the trend of modern Brothers Grimm series. The fast pace and plenty of cliffhanger chapter endings will keep readers invested in the story. Though few in number, Andrews' detailed, scratchy-lined ink illustrations evoke animated cinema with a gothic twist. Italicized Norwegian phrases appear untranslated in a few conversations; the text offers context clues to help unfamiliar readers decode. The cast is presumed white by default.

Trip-trap. This excellent, eerie folkloric fare will thrill young readers. (*Fantasy/mystery*. 8-12)



ANIMAL SKINS

Holland, Mary

Photos by the author

Arbordale (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | \$11.95 paper | Aug. 10, 2019

978-1-64351-339-3

978-1-64351-340-9 paper

Following *Animal Noses* (2018), Holland's latest looks at the various coverings for animals' skin.

Hair, feathers, and scales may look different one to the other, but they serve largely the same purposes: camouflage, protection from predators and the weather, warnings to keep away, and aids to attracting a mate. Spots on a moth's wings that look like eyes fool predators. A skunk's black-and-white pattern acts as a warning. Fawns' white spots help camouflage them, and a bird's feathers trap air, helping the animal stay warm. Holland also looks at insects; their exoskeletons cannot grow. Instead, they grow a new skin under the old one and then shed the one that's too small. Snakes do the same. (Holland missteps a bit with her statement that "If you look closely at a shed snake skin you can see the scales." Those are not the actual scales but are made of something similar—keratin, which is in our nails and hair.) As in the whole *Animal Anatomy and Adaptations* series, the close-ups of the creatures are the big draw. Highlights are the frog peeking out of the water and the close-up of a fluffed-up bluejay amid falling snow. Backmatter includes some matching activities and more information.

A solid addition to the series and a great compare/contrast exercise for classrooms. (*Nonfiction*. 3-9)



SILENT SWOOP

An Owl, an Egg, and a Warm Shirt Pocket

Houts, Michelle

Illus. by Hoeffner, Deb

Dawn Publications (32 pp.)

\$8.95 paper | Sep. 1, 2019

978-1-58469-647-6

A wildlife rehabilitator rescues eggs laid under a coal conveyor belt at a power plant, hatches them, and raises great horned owls to be public ambassadors for their species.

Houts pens a graceful, straightforward account of the rescue of a pair of eggs, carried to safety in Walter Crawford's shirt pocket. One hatches. "And that's the way it goes, sometimes," he says. The survivor is named Coal for his origins and raised by bird sanctuary caregivers to help others learn about owls. Surprisingly, a year or two later, yet another egg appears under the conveyor belt in the power plant. Similarly rescued and hatched, Junior also becomes an owl ambassador. Softly realistic watercolor-and-pastel illustrations accompany the story, accentuating the mystery of the owl's visits to the coal yard in the night as well as depicting Walter Crawford's attentive care in the sanctuary. One spread features the owl showing off for a diverse group of schoolchildren sitting at the knee of the trainer, a woman of color. Crawford himself presents white. An author's note explains the genesis of the story in the history of the World Bird Sanctuary in St. Louis, Missouri, and the details she had to fill in, including Crawford's dialogue. That fictional memorable line helpfully reminds readers and listeners of the chance of such rescues and, appearing twice, nicely ties the narrative together.

An engaging animal-rescue tale, smoothly told and pleasingly illustrated. (explore more, activities) (*Informational picture book*. 4-8)



ANIMAL HABITATS Search & Find Activity Book

Hutchinson, Sam

Illus. by Dennis, Sarah

Princeton Architectural Press (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-1-61689-849-6

The focus is on food chains in this follow-up to the dazzling *Animal Camouflage* (2017).

Once again Dennis' precise, realistic cut-paper illustrations command attention. Labeled silhouettes of individual plants and animals are color coded to show their predator-prey relationships within seven marine or terrestrial habitats; these are followed by intricate, full-page monochrome scenes in which the flora and fauna are artfully incorporated, to be picked out by the sharp of eye. The accompanying observations and infographics offer a light wash of general observations, questions ("Which creature is the apex predator?"), and repetitive instructions to seek producers and consumers in each large picture. Hutchinson properly develops the notion of "web" along with "chain" from the outset. Unfortunately, he places the selected wildlife into "trophic levels" without clearly defining the term, inconsistently identifies some figures by name but others only by function ("insect-eating bird" for example), and includes "decomposers" only in the "Woodland" food chain. But there's room for delight: For an array of woodland creatures that includes an earthworm, the author asks which can climb trees... and even confirmed young naturalists may be astonished at the (correct) answer at the end: "All of them!"

The art is a bigger draw than the text, but both reward close looks. (*Informational picture book. 6-8*)



GHOST Thirteen Haunting Tales to Tell

Illustratus

Illus. by the author

Chronicle (160 pp.)

\$21.99 | Aug. 12, 2019

978-1-4521-7128-9

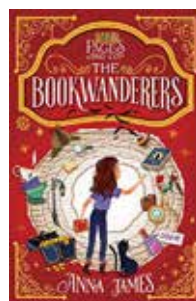


Readers may not wish to read this chilling collection of stories and poems alone at night.

A frame story begins and concludes this collection, with a haunting twist. Two young boys sneak out of their camp cabin late at night to seek out Old Man Blackwood, the keeper of the 13 true ghost stories. Blackwood begins with the story "Reflection," about a haunted mirror that looks back at the viewer, the reflection tapping while the hapless viewer peeks at it from beneath the covers. The short vignettes continue with "The Old Pond," a grief-laden tale of a haunted sibling who becomes the victim of the vengeful dead. The seemingly innocent poem "The Doll" leaves a young girl motherless while "Depth" takes readers to the eerie corridors of a sunken submarine. With further stories such as "Widow in Black"

and "The Boy in the Basement," even the titles themselves may cause readers to wonder if they should keep the lights on. *Illustratus* is a design collective including authors Blaise Hemingway and Jesse Reffsin and illustrators Chris Sasaki and Jeff Turley. The latter perfectly punctuate this book of horror with wild apparitions, dark woods, and creepy dolls, the chill of the unknown brought to life by their haunting images. The inclusion of characters of multiple races makes these tales shiveringly accessible.

Ghastly and imaginative storytelling for the young—and not-so-young. (*Horror. 10-14*)



THE BOOKWANDERERS

James, Anna

Illus. by Escobar, Paola

Philomel (288 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 24, 2019

978-1-9848-3712-7

Series: Pages & Co., 1

This debut is the first in a new series about an English girl with a special ability.

Matilda Pages' mother disappeared without a trace when she was a baby, and her father died before she was born. The 11-year-old bibliophile has been raised by her maternal grandparents, proprietors of Pages & Co., a cozy north London bookshop. The school holidays stretch out before her, and Tilly wants some excitement, but, as she laments, "No one has *proper* adventures in real life." Tilly gets the adventure of a lifetime when Anne Shirley and Alice, her favorite book characters, appear in the shop. Visits to Avonlea and the famously wacky Wonderland tea party lead Tilly to the truth: She comes from a family of bookwanderers, people who use the "natural magic of books" to travel inside works of literature and bring characters into the real world. Inquisitive and intelligent, Tilly is exceptional among bookwanderers: Some of the rules don't apply to her, but why? Tilly's literary adventures thrill, and Anne's characterization in particular is pleasingly congruent with the original character. Escobar's literary-themed silhouettes, reminiscent of Arthur Rackham's, add whimsical flourishes, although the few full-page illustrations do little. Its premise makes it an obvious, wonderful choice for book-loving readers who aren't quite ready for *Inkheart*'s heft. Characters default to white.

A loving testament to the powerful magic of books and imagination. (*Fantasy. 8-12*)

Backdrops brim with nimble details.

LOOKING FOR YESTERDAY



LOOKING FOR YESTERDAY

Jay, Alison

Illus. by the author

Candlewick (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 20, 2019

978-1-5362-0421-6

A young tot wishes to relive a favorite day instead of looking ahead toward new ones.

"Yesterday was the best day," declares the child narrator (a youngster with close-cropped brown hair, white skin, and thin-rimmed glasses). "I wish I could go back and do it all again." The gentle background shows a carnival adventure with Granddad—including a river of lemonade, a towering mountain of ice cream, and a carousel with animals that seemingly come to life. But how does one go back in time? The child muses about superluminal speed ("one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second... over seven and a half times counterclockwise / around the earth every second...to get back to yesterday"), time machines, and wormholes. But none of that seems feasible. Granddad has a different perspective. He opens a photo album to show all of his favorite days—and there are many, not just one. The past can contain happy memories, but the present is just waiting to turn into something fun. Jay limits her signature crackle glaze to only the nostalgic parts, but all of the oil paint backdrops brim with nimble details, her inclusion of the surreal giving some paintings a gently Bosch-like air.

This contemplative blend of philosophy, science, and whimsy will get readers thinking. (*Picture book.* 3-7)



LIFE

The First Four Billion Years: The Story of Life From the Big Bang to the Evolution of Humans

Jenkins, Martin

Illus. by Baker-Smith, Grahame

Candlewick Studio (80 pp.)

\$24.99 | Sep. 10, 2019

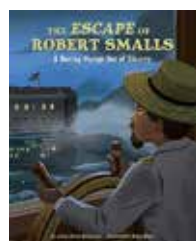
978-1-5362-0420-9

Grand in scope, art, and trim size, a panoramic survey of this planet's residents from earliest prokaryotes to our species' first direct ancestors.

Opening with an enormous double gatefold headed "Here Comes the Sun," Jenkins' account begins at the beginning (when, as he puts it, "something happened") and ends with the split 5 or 6 million years ago that led to chimpanzees down one line and humans down the other. In between, it presents the history of living things within a framework of extinction events, ice ages, and other climate-related shifts. Into this admirably coherent view of current thinking about our planet's deep past he also crams technical nomenclature ("Among the new kinds of animals on land were different synapsid and sauropsid amniotes"), which, along with all the equally polysyllabic identifiers accompanying the illustrations, should delight young sesquipedalians.

Baker-Smith's paintings, a gore-free mix of full-spread color scenes and sepia or graphite galleries of individual figures, show off his versatility—some exhibiting close attention to fine detail, others being nearly abstract, and all (particularly an armored marine Dunkleosteus on the attack and a Tyrannosaurus that is all teeth, feathery mane, and wild eyes) demonstrating a real flair for drama. Design trumps legibility for a few passages that are printed in smaller type on dark or variegated backdrops.

A family story over 4 billion years in the making in a suitably ambitious format. (glossary, timelines) (*Nonfiction.* 10-14)



THE ESCAPE OF ROBERT SMALLS A Daring Voyage Out of Slavery

Jones-Radgowski, Jehan

Illus. by Kang, Poppy

Capstone Editions (40 pp.)

\$18.95 | Sep. 1, 2019

978-1-5435-1281-6

The true story of an unsung African American hero who deserves to be remembered.

Born a slave in Beaufort, South Carolina, in 1839, Robert Smalls began working on the Charleston waterfront at 12 and convinced his master to allow him to keep some of his earnings. In 1861, Smalls became a crew member on the *Planter*, which transported supplies, personnel, and artillery to the Confederate forts. Eventually becoming wheelman—the crew member who steers—Smalls learned all the necessary skills for navigating the ship. One night, when the captain was on shore visiting family, Robert steered the *Planter*—loaded with supplies, weapons, the other enslaved crewmen and their families—out of the harbor, past the heavily armed Confederate forts Johnson and Sumter to Union-controlled waters, where the crew raised a white sheet and surrendered to the Union. "Freedom, at last." The illustrations, primarily in browns, greens, and blues to evoke the nocturnal and maritime setting, will help readers envision the time and place of Smalls' escape. The informative backmatter, including a photograph of Smalls, offers an overview of his life and later career as a U.S. congressman and a landowner (of his former master's home). The glossary and bibliography identify other good sources of research on Smalls.

Ideal for piquing readers' interest in a determined and inspiring historical figure. (*Picture book/biography.* 7-11)

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

RICHARD MAURER

THE MEN WHO OFTEN DIDN'T GET CREDIT FOR APOLLO 11'S SUCCESS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN *DESTINATION MOON*

By Gordon West



LIKE THE OPENING TITLES of a motion picture, Richard Maurer's new book, *Destination Moon: The Remarkable and Improbable Journey of Apollo 11* (June 11), lists a cast of characters in order of appearance. But Alan Shepard, John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, and Buzz Aldrin aren't featured as box-office draws. They're cataloged as supporting players while six other men are hailed as Apollo's headliners.

"They're the heroes of my book," says Maurer in reference to Maxime A. Faget, Thomas O. Paine, Deke Slayton, Sam Phillips, Wernher von Braun, and James E. Webb. "The astronauts are heroes. But these guys are also heroes. In fact, most of these six guys had faced dangers far surpassing those of astronauts riding rockets."

A swashbuckling spirit, the innovations of scientists and engineers, and technology that inspired space travel all have a strong tether to World War II, which is why Maurer begins recounting the race to space then.

But like the moon-bound goal, there's not a linear simplicity in how this book came to be. A few years ago, Maurer was at his childhood home in West Texas when he unearthed letters his uncle had written to his aunt during WWII. The content was all news to Maurer.

Many WWII veterans didn't talk about their wartime experiences. But Maurer discovered from his uncle's letters that he was involved in Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France that happened two months after D-Day. "So I started looking into it and it was fascinating: the speed with which it was put together, the logistical difficulties, the number of people involved, the whole efficiency of throwing together this mammoth invasion of troops and supporting personnel in a matter of months," Maurer says.

"And it reminded me—the scale of the thing—of nothing so much as Project Apollo," he adds. "And it got me thinking that Apollo drew on skills and attitudes developed during the national emergency of WWII, which was only two decades before the moon race."

The more Maurer researched, the more he was able to make the parallels between these crash-program mentalities. After all, in quoting Faget, an engineer instrumental in Apollo ship designs, "a spacecraft is just a type of submarine."

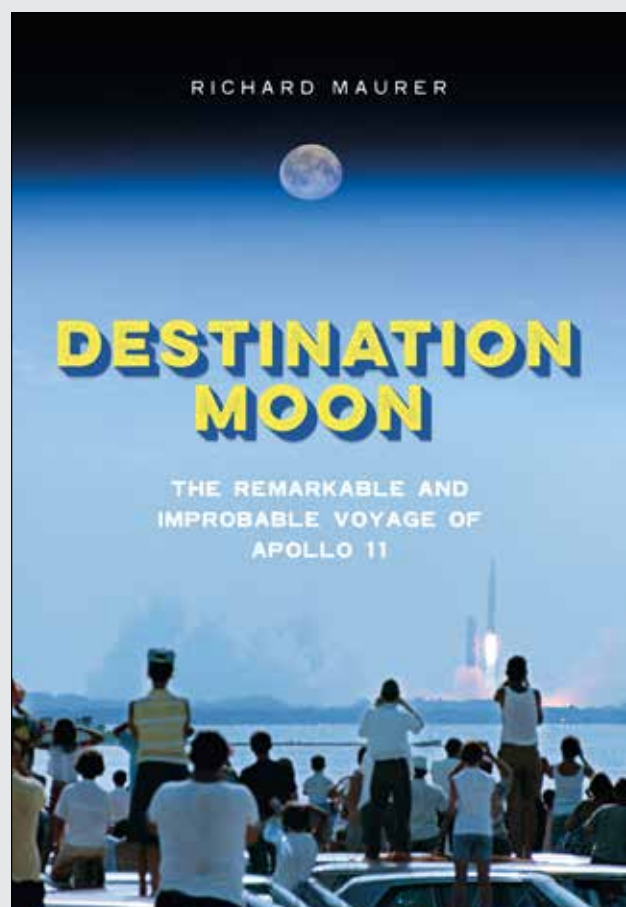
Before he ever knew of these letters, Maurer's keen interest in lunar learning was born from his curiosity as an undergrad at the University of Texas at Austin circa 1969. Majoring in European literature and working in the rare books department, by happenstance Maurer became privy to photographs, maps, and 16mm film covering the Apollo missions thanks to an advisory geologist for the Apollo program who was writing a book at the time about lunar geological features.

Media during the Apollo program favored the fanfare of showcasing astronauts. But what really struck Maurer wasn't a faceless man in a puffy white suit waving a flag in zero gravity. It was the background lunar landscape.

Maurer would visit the geologist's office every day after work and stay until 11 or 12 o'clock at night. Those visits were "my education in Apollo, lunar science, lunar mapping," Maurer says. "I guess you could say I was obsessed—I became an expert on lunar photography, and I talked a curator friend of mine into doing an exhibit of these lunar landscapes. It was like Ansel Adams for the moon. And the Smithsonian picked it up as a traveling exhibit."

Not bad for an obsessed bachelor burning the candle at both ends.

Gordon West is a writer, illustrator, and shark enthusiast living in historical and ridiculously adorable Salem, Massachusetts. Destination Moon received a starred review in the April 1, 2019, issue.



THE BONE GARDEN

Kassner, Heather

Illus. by Saunders, Matt

Henry Holt (272 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-29689-4

A girl conjured from bone dust longs to be real—and loved—in Kassner's debut.

Eleven-year-old Irréelle doesn't believe in ghosts, though she spends her days beneath a cemetery—the titular "bone garden"—extracting bone dust for her sinister creator, Miss Vesper. But she is haunted. Miss Vesper constantly criticizes Irréelle's "mismatched" and "muddled" white hair, multicolored eyes, and crooked limbs; worse, she reminds Irréelle that she's "a figment of [her] imagination, tethered here by the finest thread." Terrified of being wished away, Irréelle vows to complete an "impossible" task in hopes that Miss Vesper will make her "normal" and "fully real. Maybe then she would be worthy of love." As Irréelle and her somewhat one-dimensional fellow creations—wisecracking Guy, fearless Lass, and the mischievous, disembodied Hand—search for "the unmarked grave that is very clearly marked" while dodging Miss Vesper's wrath, Irréelle learns that being "real" takes many forms. Many predicaments resolve with remarkable ease, diminishing suspense. However, the author perceptively depicts the confusion of living with an emotionally abusive caregiver; Irréelle's love for Miss Vesper despite her cruelty is painfully realistic. The ending feels a bit too tidy, but Irréelle's newfound self-confidence is rewarding. Saunders' dark, scratchy line drawings accent the lyrical prose. Miss Vesper and Irréelle present white; the Hand appears dark-skinned, Guy is racially ambiguous, and Lass appears to be a person of color.

A mildly creepy, ultimately comforting take on familiar themes of love, family, and identity. (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



MOST VALUABLE PUPPY

Kim, Carol

Illus. by Hanakata, Felia

Jolly Fish Press (48 pp.)

\$6.99 paper | \$16.99 PLB | Sep. 1, 2019

978-1-63163-340-9

978-1-63163-339-3 PLB

Series: Doggie Daycare, 1

This opening title for a chapter-book series follows Korean siblings Shawn and Kat Choi as they petsit for Bouncer, an active Jack Russell terrier who loves kimchi.

As the story opens, these characters bound on the scene with a ready-to-play attitude. When the siblings decide to start a doggie day care business, Bouncer is their first customer. Living up to his name, the high-energy pup leaves

chewed-up shoes and a half-eaten chicken in his wake. Focusing on his personality, the siblings determine that exercising him at a nearby park curbs his bad behavior. Using kimchi as a reward, they train Bouncer to fetch balls on the tennis court, the baseball field, and the soccer pitch. Each book in this series highlights a different dog breed and the unique care and training required to bring out their best behavior. Publishing simultaneously are *Blue Ribbon Pup*, about a bichon frisé; *Dog Sled Star*, about a Siberian husky; and *Library Buddy*, about a goldendoodle. Set in large, easy-to-read type, the vocabulary is useful and simple, with just a few reach words like “obstacle” and “occasion.” Hanakata’s illustrations, well balanced with the text, depict Bouncer as a cheerfully playful puppy, propelling the action forward with his antics; Shawn and Kat are supported by a diverse cast in which readers of many colors can see themselves reflected.

Problem-solvers and dog lovers alike will pounce on this series. (Fiction. 5-8) (*Blue Ribbon Pup*: 978-1-63163-328-7 paper, 978-1-63163-327-0 PLB; *Dog Sled Star*: 978-1-63163-332-4 paper, 978-1-63163-331-7 PLB; *Library Buddy*: 978-1-63163-336-2 paper, 978-1-63163-335-5 PLB)



THUNDER TRUCKS

Klein, Cheryl B. & Beebe, Katy

Illus. by Boldt, Mike

Disney-Hyperion (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 10, 2019

978-1-368-02460-0

A major nighttime storm begins in a cloud-filled sky, with a group of sky-rolling trucks behind this rumbling, thundering event.

A young child just going to bed hears a grumbling, tumbling sound outside the window and imagines the noise is triggered by different work trucks. Bulldozer and Crane Truck stack the clouds high, Tanker Truck brings the rain, Fire Truck and its hoses splatter the raindrops, Dump Truck pours down hail stones, and finally Big Rig hauls “THUNDER with a BOOM BOOM BOOM!” Revving their motors, the trucks divide the thunder among themselves, doing their jobs to fill the sky with noise as the storm comes crashing down. “THUNDER TRUCKS LOUD! / THUNDER TRUCKS STRONG! / THUNDER TRUCKS THUNDERING ALL NIGHT LONG!” Once the storm settles down, the trucks line up and roll away. A satisfied child settles in for the night while toy trucks stand at attention atop the dresser. A jaunty, animated, rhyming text takes listeners through the various stages of a storm while an addendum provides basic scientific explanations of each phase. An added delight is that female trucks are equal partners in the affair, with nary an eyelash in sight on any of the digitally rendered, smiling trucks, done in primary colors that pop against the midnight blues of a dark, turbulent sky. The child presents black.

These trucks are just the ticket to chase away storm-generated nerves. (Picture book. 4-7)



SUPER POTATO'S MEGA TIME-TRAVEL ADVENTURE

Laperla, Artur

Illus. by the author

Trans. by MacTire, Norwyn

Graphic Universe (56 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | \$27.99 PLB | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5415-7287-4

978-1-5124-4023-2 PLB

Series: Super Potato, 3

Superhero stories can easily break your heart.

Batman has never found lasting love, and Bruce Banner has never been able to prevent himself from turning into the Hulk. In the third Super Potato graphic novel, the hero has a chance to go back in time and avoid the tragic circumstances that changed him into a potato in the first place. He's clearly doomed to fail, but he proves that he's not afraid of a time paradox. A group of scientists gives him access to a device called the small-time machine, teaching readers about the importance of hyphens. But he's distracted by mutant sewer reptile Archibald the Scaly and by his first ever love interest, Olivia Olson, who, in comic-book tradition, is immediately kidnapped. The artwork is as charmingly eccentric as ever. The characters look like the Rugrats, if the Rugrats had grown up to be superheroes and mad scientists. The new book doesn't add much diversity to the very white cast, but one of the scientists is a tall black woman. The jokes are slightly better than in the first two books, though, even if the humor relies a bit too much on vomit jokes. No spoilers are required. Super Potato doesn't change his destiny or get the girl. But “the girl” is snarky enough to make readers love her, too.

Superhero fans won't be surprised once, but they'll laugh many times. (Graphic humor. 7-11)



THE KEY FROM SPAIN

Flory Jagoda and Her Music

Levy, Debbie

Illus. by Wimmer, Sonja

Kar-Ben (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-5415-2218-3

Immigrant musician Flory Jagoda preserved a repertoire of Ladino and Sephardic songs learned from her Bosnian Jewish family.

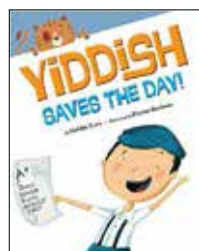
A descendant of the Altaras family forced to leave Spain during the Inquisition, Flory and her family must now escape from the Balkans during World War II. Crucial to the story of the Altaras' 16th-century exodus are the two symbols of their heritage: a key for their original home in Spain and Ladino, the traditional language of Spanish Jews. In the 20th century, Flory's childhood is filled with the stories Nona tells about their ancestors and the music played and sung in Ladino by her talented family. Living in peace and harmony among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, their happy life is threatened as the perils of

A natural for grandparents who would like to share their Yiddish with their kinder.

YIDDISH SAVES THE DAY

World War II approach. Fortunate to escape the death the rest of her family suffers, Flory eventually sails to the U.S. without the important key but with her own three significant symbols: her accordion, her Ladino, and her music. Levy gently weaves the history of the Sephardim into the story of Flory's specific Balkan Jewish life, also blending in some italicized Ladino phrases and words (rendering "grandfather" as "Nonu" rather than the traditional "Nono"). Lovely mixed-media illustrations limn several scenes across the centuries, adding perspective to an element of Sephardic culture that is mostly unknown today in American Jewish circles.

Based on a true story, an inspirational reclamation of history. (author's note) (Picture book/biography. 6-10)



YIDDISH SAVES THE DAY

Levy, Debbie

Illus. by Borlasca, Hector

Apples & Honey Press (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-68115-544-9

Toss some Yiddish words into your everyday conversation and all will be well.

In singsong rhyming couplets, the author encourages readers not to fret ("Oy vey!") over everyday "tsuris," because a sampling of Yiddish words will bring "mazel." The protagonist's teacher has asked the "kinder" to compile a list of words "that show spirit," and the child is distressed at having lost the notebook with the words to study. The whole "mishpocha"—parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.—reassures him as they "schmooze." Over dinner that evening with the mishpocha, the child eats like a "chazzer," piling the plate with a "knaidel," a "kugel," and a "knish"—to the point of "plotzing." "Feh!" The child's tummy may be in bad shape, but the resultant list of words is long—"like jewels in a vault!" Happiness is achieved! The Yiddish words incorporated into the verse are capitalized in boldface type, and at the bottom of the page a decorative box provides an English pronunciation and a translation. Borlasca's illustrations, using digital tools, pencil, and acrylic paint, depict an early-20th-century urban setting and family, all of whom are round-faced and white.

Old-fashioned nostalgia—a natural for grandparents who would like to share their Yiddish with their kinder. (note for families) (Picture book. 3-5)



TAMING OF THE SHOE

Littman, Sarah Darer

Aladdin (240 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-1-5344-3157-7

As she did with *Fairest of Them All* (2017), Littman takes on the "ever after" of fairy-tale characters and their offspring.

In this outing, readers get to know Cinderella and Prince Charming's daughter, Araminta Robicheaux. Minty is trying to forge her own identity, but she's feeling uncertain about where she fits after her family moves from their home kingdom to New York City. In her new middle school, which seems to teem with other fairy-tale progeny, there is a hierarchy. Students at the top are treated like royalty, but Minty isn't automatically among them. Add to that, she's feeling overshadowed by her mother and the evil stepsisters. They have all become famous for their respective business ventures: Ella for her cleaning products (Soot Slaughterer, Dust Decimator, and Crud Crusher) and the stepsisters for their brand of Comfortably Ever After shoes. With this lineage, Minty is self-conscious about her passion for shoe design. She thinks it's too predictable! But after a new acquaintance dupes her in an important shoe-design contest, Minty is ready to prove herself. Cheeky, over-the-top riffs on the familiar tales make this a breezy read with deeper messages that are easily absorbed. Were the evil stepsisters ill-advised and groomed for bad behavior by their own mother? Can people change their behavior? How do we gain the confidence to make dreams reality? Minty and her family present white, and the book assumes a white default.

This untraditional fairy tale will inspire young fashionistas. (Fantasy. 8-12)



FOR BLACK GIRLS LIKE ME

Lockington, Mariama J.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (336 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-0-374-30804-9

A transracial adoptee navigates a new school, a mentally ill parent, and questions about her identity.

Eleven-year-old Keda, who is black and was adopted as an infant, has just moved to Albuquerque with her parents and older sister, Eve, leaving her best friend (and fellow black adoptee), Lena, behind. At school and around town, Keda knows she sticks out like a sore thumb next to her white family. When her musician father leaves for a world tour, Keda and Eve are left with their mother, whose undiagnosed, unmanaged bipolar disorder is spiraling out of control. The portrayal of their mother's disability is moving, but stylistic choices make the novel a difficult one to navigate, particularly for a middle-grade audience.

As Emmy learns Java, the language and structure of programming seep into her poems.

EMMY IN THE KEY OF CODE

Letters between Lena and Keda (both handwritten and in the form of Tumblr posts) and sporadic free-verse chapters break up Keda's first-person account, but the latter have an arbitrary rather than organic feel. On a sentence level, Lockington has such an aversion to commas that dialogue tags appear not to be attached to the speech they reference; asides, addresses, and appositives feel jumbled inside sentences; and list items aren't separated. An overreliance on sentence fragments causes them to lose any dramatic effect. From a characterization standpoint, aside from family members, too many others come across as straw men, walking onstage to hurl a racist slur and then vanishing from the narrative.

The myriad themes explored are compelling, but the execution gets in the way. (*Fiction. 8-12*)



EMMY IN THE KEY OF CODE

Lucido, Aimee
Versify/HMH (416 pp.)
\$16.99 | Sep. 24, 2019
978-0-358-04082-8



A 12-year-old whose dreams of musicianship are shattered discovers a passion for code.

Emmy's lonely at her new San Francisco school. When her pianist dad got a dream job at the symphony, the family moved from Wisconsin—her mom's opera career is portable—but Emmy's miserable. Devastated she doesn't have the talent to follow in her parents' footsteps, she ends up in computer club instead of choir. And it's there, learning Java, that Emmy makes friends with Abigail—and discovers that coding gives her a joy she'd believed came only from music. Free-verse chapters are conventional at first, drawing poetic structures from musical metaphors. But as Emmy learns Java, the language and structure of programming seep into her poems. Music and code interweave (one poem presents Emmy and Abigail's pair-programming as a musical duet). Typeface changes have myriad effects: showcasing software and musical terms, mirroring the way formatting helps programmers understand software, and reflecting Emmy's emotional state. As she becomes more comfortable in her own skin, she grows aware of the many traumas that affect her family, classmates, and teachers, and readers will cheer to see them work collectively—like an orchestra or like software developers—to create something beautiful. Characters' races are unspecified, but on the cover Emmy presents white and Abigail (whose braids are referred to repeatedly) as black.

Never didactic, these poems interweave music, programming, family drama, and middle school as interconnected parts of Emmy's life. (*glossary*) (*Verse fiction. 9-13*)



IT'S GOOD TO HAVE A GRANDMA

Macdonald, Maryann
Illus. by Burris, Priscilla
Whitman (32 pp.)
\$16.99 | Aug. 1, 2019
978-0-8075-3676-6

This exploration of relationships between grandmothers and their grandchildren focuses on the extra time and patience grandmas have in abundance.

Each smiling grandma is shown interacting with one or two grandkids, enjoying quiet activities at home such as baking or observing flowers or reading books in the backyard. Outside activities include shopping, outings to the beach and swimming pool, and a roller-coaster ride at an amusement park. The first-person text describes each type of activity in a calm, quiet style, reflecting the theme that time and patience are gifts of love. Each page or spread features a changing cast of grandmas and grandchildren, including many different racial representations. The grandmother in the cover illustration presents Asian while her grandson has light skin and blond hair and her granddaughter has brown skin and dark hair in afro puffs, opening the way for discussions about diverse family configurations. Some of the grandmas seem quite young, some have gray hair, and none appear to be slowing down in their physical abilities. Soft-focus illustrations do a fine job of creating personalities for the large cast of characters. A companion title, *It's Good To Have a Grandpa*, follows a similar structural pattern, although the focus is on having fun experiences with grandfathers.

Though the word "love" is never used in the text, readers will see that these grandmas have it in abundance. (*Picture book. 3-6*) (*It's Good To Have a Grandpa: 978-0-8075-3675-9*)



THE 47 PEOPLE YOU'LL MEET IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Maboney, Kristin
Knopf (304 pp.)
\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-5247-6513-2
978-1-5247-6514-9 PLB

Augusta is starting middle school—and dealing with her parents' recent divorce as well.

Gus tells the story as a letter for her younger sister, Louisa, to read later. This useful narrative tool also enables her to gradually discover and reveal that Lou is having lots of trouble coping with the parental breakup too even though Gus is initially too wrapped up in herself to notice. Gus encounters lots of new people in middle school, as well as some whom she previously knew but who have remade themselves in not-always-pleasant ways. Among these are her former BFF, Layla, who's attending a different school, and the previously annoyingly clingy Marcy, who has now attached herself to a couple of unkind and remarkably condescending other girls. From

the Binaca breath spray-addicted Mr. Smeed to Nick, whom Gus has known for years but who is now becoming interesting in a novel, unexpected way, characters are believably well drawn, as are the humiliations and the ultimate redemption that Gus discovers. Some of the episodes, like Gus' Binaca-based gambling pool, are laugh-out-loud funny. While Mahoney's road map to middle school won't become required reading, it's a fine and highly recommended travelogue for those just entering that uncharted territory. Gus presents white on the cover; though she's surrounded by a multiracial cast there, descriptors within are few.

Amusing, enlightening, and ideal for a final read just before middle school. (*Fiction. 9-12*)



SIMONIE AND THE DANCE CONTEST

Matthews, Gail

Illus. by Hinch, Ali

Inhabit Media (30 pp.)

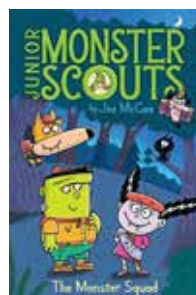
\$10.95 paper | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-77227-224-6

The community of Taloyoak, Nunavut, hosts an annual Christmas dance, and this year Simonie wants to compete.

Simonie loves to read, but he also loves to dance. When he reads a poster advertising an upcoming jigging dance contest, he asks his father for help; later, his mother offers more advice. Simonie practices his dance steps daily, but Ataata suggests that his son also add emotion to his performance: "You have to feel the movements in the music. They go together." At school, he asks his friend Dana to partner with him, and together they practice, but though his dancing improves, Simonie still doesn't understand how to feel the music. At the hockey arena, Simonie catches up with another friend, David, who has won competitions before and asks his advice. "I just dance the way the music feels," says David. Aha! On the day of the contest, Anaana reminds her son, "Whatever's in your heart, express it!" Simonie is ready to do his best. Matthews' simple text presents a likable character in Simonie, and his determination to succeed should inspire young readers to persevere when learning any new skill. Hinch's lively cartoon illustrations portray the Inuit characters as modern upper-elementary-age students who are also actively involved in their families' cultural traditions.

The protagonist's good cheer and determination will strike chords in like-minded readers. (*Picture book. 5-8*)



THE MONSTER SQUAD

McGee, Joe

Illus. by Long, Ethan

Aladdin (112 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$5.99 paper | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-5344-3677-0

978-1-5344-3676-3 paper

Series: Junior Monster Scouts, 1

Junior Monster Scouts to the rescue! Monster pals Franky Stein, Vampyra, and Wolfy are out practicing howling—well, Wolfy is practicing for his merit badge as the others coach him—when they hear someone crying. It's Peter the piper, a human child who has lost his kitten, Shadow. After the monsters convince Peter that they are nice, helpful monsters and not scary ones, the four head into the Gloomy Woods and work together to find and rescue Shadow. Meanwhile, the mean, rotten Baron Von Grump and his crow, Edgar, have hatched a plan to clear the nearby village of noisy, happy, gum-chewing villagers and put a stop to their cheese festival. (It involves rats.) Can the Junior Monster Scouts and their new friend foil Baron Von Grump's dastardly plan and convince all the villagers that the calumny that monsters are bad and scary is just propaganda? With this title, McGee kicks off a new series of monster-positive early chapter books, releasing it simultaneously with Book 2, *Crash! Bang! Boo!* both amiably illustrated by Long with his signature cartoons in black and white. Repetitive language and short chapters married with a positive can-do attitude make this a good choice for little monsters just jumping the gap from easy readers to chapters. Excerpts from the Junior Monster Scout manual and an extensive author's acknowledgments appear at the close. Characters (other than monsters) appear white.

Readers who like to cuddle up to their monsters will respond to this one. (*Fantasy. 7-10*) (*Crash! Bang! Boo!*: 978-1-5344-3680-0, 978-1-5344-3679-4 paper)



DUCK!

McKinlay, Meg

Illus. by Eckstrom, Nathaniel

Candlewick (32 pp.)

\$15.99 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-5362-0422-3

Fun with homonyms, misapprehension, and playful art defines this barnyard tale.

No one will listen to Duck's repeated cries of "DUCK!"—not the horse, nor the cow, nor the pig, nor the sheep. In fact, they all take offense at the duck's exclamations, misunderstanding them as self-referential and narcissistic. After each animal separately berates the duck for seeming to confuse them for one of its kind, they glare at the duck (now placing a bucket over its head like a helmet) and say, "Now listen. You need to stop this nonsense right now"; "You have to understand that everyone is different"; and "Some are ducks and some are not." The poor duck, cowering in the lower-right corner of the recto,

protests, “BUT—” and a page turn reveals the punchline: The duck *wasn’t* confusing the other animals for itself; it was issuing a plaintive, well-meaning homonym as a command. Alas, the animals don’t *duck*, and they’re squashed like the Wicked Witch of the West beneath a farmhouse that falls from the sky. A back-matter copyright page underscores the intertextual reference to Baum’s classic with a signpost labeled “KANSAS” and newspapers headlined “Tornadoes Hit Kansas” and “Batten Down the Hatches” amid the wreckage. Eckstrom’s cartoon-style art enhances the humor at every turn, even including tiny, distant images of the house hurtling through the sky on pages before its crash-landing.

Wonderful—sure to beckon repeat reads. (*Picture book.* 3-7)



THE FOREST IN THE TREES

McLennan, Connie

Illus. by the author

Arbordale (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | \$11.95 paper | Aug. 10, 2019

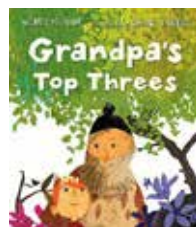
978-1-64351-350-8

978-1-64351-351-5 paper

High among the coast redwoods, there exists a world within a world.

These towering giants known as redwood trees, which line a stretch of land that hugs the Pacific Ocean, hold various other plant and animal life “high in their branches, hundreds of feet above the ground.” Called a canopy, this secluded world is home to shrubs such as elderberry and gooseberry and ferns mats “soggy and heavy,” as well as sow bugs and pill bugs, “the only crustaceans that live on land,” and Humboldt flying squirrels. McLennan’s trunks-to-lichens tour of the redwoods takes readers on a vivid voyage of discovery. Two narrative threads compete for readers’ attention throughout the book, co-existing on the same spread. One narrative thread is carried in “House That Jack Built”-like verse that grows the further readers delve in; each page turn brings in a new image to name, a new shade of color to the hidden world. The other narrative, meanwhile, offers up facts for readers, interpreting each pictorial scene in reader-friendly scientific terms. However, both verse and facts fail to jell well on the page, with the informational bits often disrupting the poetic flow. Thanks to the vibrant, earthy pictures, the redwoods’ immensity and swarming life of the canopy are the highlights. Backmatter aimed at sparking “creative minds” adds opportunities to consider further.

A busy redwood outing that will nevertheless stir readers’ curiosity. (activities, bibliography) (*Informational picture book.* 3-8)



GRANDPA’S TOP THREES

Meddour, Wendy

Illus. by Egnéus, Daniel

Candlewick (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-5362-1125-2

A gentle look at grief.

This quiet picture book starts with Henry, a little chatterbox, talking in a garden shed crowded with plants and implements. “But Grandpa was gardening. Again.” Grandpa doesn’t want to play trains or tell anyone what he wants for lunch. “Just give him time,” Mom says, hinting at something deeper. Henry engages his otherwise-mute grandfather by asking him about his “top three” sandwiches and jellyfish, generously offering his own opinions first. Slowly Grandpa comes out of his shell, a smile peeking out from behind his bushy beard. After a top-three day out (to the zoo, swimming pool, *and* park), Henry asks, “Who are your top three Grannies?” and goes on to answer: “Mine are Granny who is dead,” followed by his living grandmother and a fictional one. Readers thus finally learn the reason for Grandpa’s sadness and withdrawal as he shares more about his late wife, connecting with his grandson in the process. Well-paced and closely structured, this story works on every level, with Egnéus’ watercolors showing a range of emotion and activity, balancing clutter with space. It’s not quite a story for children processing grief, as Henry seems fairly unaffected, but it may help families explain to children why the grown-ups in their lives are behaving differently after loss. Henry and his family present white.

Peaceful and heartfelt. (*Picture book.* 3-7)



GROWING UP GORILLA

How a Zoo Baby Brought Her Family Together

Meeker, Clare Hodgson

Millbrook/Lerner (48 pp.)

\$31.99 PLB | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-5415-4240-2

Readers learn about gorillas in general and also how staff at Seattle’s Woodland Park Zoo managed two rare coups: getting a mother gorilla to bond with her rejected baby and incorporating baby Yola into the zoo’s existing gorilla family.

The layout, charts, and colorful photographs are enticing. A bright table of contents establishes six chapters, which hint of the story to come, starting at “Firstborn” and ending with “A Family at Last.” Nadiri, the 19-year-old gorilla who gives birth to Yola, was herself raised by humans in a sterile nursery, so it is no surprise to staff when Nadiri gives birth and walks away. Judy, Harmony, and other staff members have come to understand in the interim that “mothering is a learned behavior.” The text gives many examples of the ways that these dedicated people work to teach Nadiri mothering skills, including providing dolls to hug during pregnancy and tempting her with sweet treats to get her closer to her baby. Readers become familiar not only

Newson's fearless tone and Collins' humorous illustrations are a winning combination.

I AM A TIGER

with Yola and Nadiri, but also with family members Akenji—an extroverted female—and Leo, a shy silverback male. Although slim and full of pictures, the book demands fairly able readers. There is a great deal of text—albeit with simple syntax—and many detailed explanations, not only of the changes in Nadiri's family, but of several related topics.

Will provoke “content grunts” in nature lovers. (end-notes, glossary, index) (Nonfiction. 8-12)



I AM A TIGER

Newson, Karl

Illus. by Collins, Ross

Scholastic (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-338-34989-4



This mouse has moxie.

The titular “tiger” of Newson and Collins’ imaginative tale may have been born a mouse, but it’s a mouse made up of equal parts imagination and chutzpah. As the story begins, the unnamed, ungendered mouse proclaims proudly: “I am a tiger.” As a series of woodland animals begin to argue with the mouse, its claims of tigerhood grow more and more outlandish (and more humorous). When the expected tiger makes its appearance, the mouse doesn’t bat an eye as it declares, “You’re not a tiger. You’re a mouse!” And so begins the second half of the book as the mouse uses its zany logic to define the other animals in the story. The conclusion is open-ended, and readers hungry for more will extend the silliness on their own and hope for a sequel. Newson’s fearless tone and Collins’ humorous illustrations are a winning combination. The bold cartoons, set against bright, solid-colored backgrounds, are vibrant enough to be seen from the back of the classroom or storyhour room, and the expressions of each animal will definitely inspire rounds of giggles. Fans of David LaRochelle and Mike Wohnoutka’s *Moo!* (2013) and Kevin Sherry’s *I’m the Biggest Thing in the Ocean* (2007) will add this title to their list of favorites.

This is one terrific book. (Picture book. 5-8)



ON THIN ICE

Northrop, Michael

Scholastic (240 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-0-545-49590-5

A boy with a rare spinal deformity makes a desperate bet to keep his home.

“[E]verything you subtract adds up,” 12-year-old Ked Eakins—aka “Freak-ins”—remarks, summarizing his life till seventh grade. After Ked was diagnosed

with kyphosis, his mother left—taking her good job and health insurance with her—and his friendships dwindled like “a game of musical chairs.” Now, Ked lives on “the edge of the edge” of “failing mill town” Norton, Maine, with his dad, who’s had his

factory shifts cut in half—and gambled two months’ rent away. Frantic, Ked himself gambles on restoring and selling a minibike in time to avoid eviction, but roadblocks abound. Northrop depicts the everyday realities of poverty in unvarnished detail: Ked digs through trash cans for redeemable bottles, maximizes half-hour public-library computer sessions, and buys his “good” clothes on sale at the outlet stores. But Ked’s pragmatism and determination keep bleakness at bay, and kindness comes from unexpected people. Like Ked’s run-down hometown, his frank, introspective narration offers some beautiful moments; a car-buretor, for instance, is “small and self-contained, like a heart.” The author’s portrayal of Ked’s dad’s gambling addiction and its toll on Ked is unflinching but not without hope. The ending is realistically satisfying, and readers will appreciate Ked’s realization that his back is “what [he looks] like,” but “[he’s] what [he does.]” Most characters appear white; Ked’s friend Nephi is a Somali immigrant.

A sharp, sympathetic insight into poverty, family, friendship, and forgiveness. (Fiction. 8-12)



AT HOME WITH THE BEAVER The Story of a Keystone Species

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw

Photos by Runtz, Michael

Web of Life (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-970039-00-9

Up-close and personal with a critically essential wetlands animal.

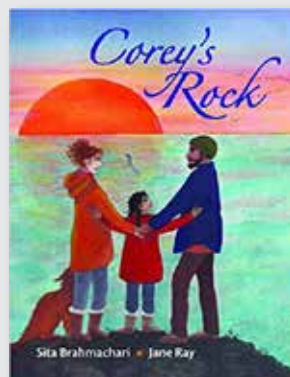
Beavers are known as a “keystone species” because the dams they build from logs, sticks, and mud create ecosystems—ponds—that provide habitats and sustenance for a vast variety of life forms that dwell in and around the ponds, including plants, insects, fish, snakes, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and other mammals. These sturdy rodents’ gifts keep on giving even beyond the ponds: Pond water irrigates surrounding vegetation, and the spaces left by trees beavers cut down with their strong, sharp teeth allow for more sunlight to pour down on the greenery. How important are beavers? This biodiversity likely wouldn’t exist without their hard labor. The author offers up these and other fascinating facts in clear, pithy, accessible prose, expressed in a conversational tone, including the tidbit that other animals may help themselves to beavers’ own lodges—sometimes even when the beavers are still living in them. The well-written, economic text, presented on the recto of double-page spreads, is handsomely supported by excellent, high-quality color photos on facing pages; these feature close-ups of some of the plants and wildlife that inhabit a pond and its idyllic surrounding landscape.

A fine browse for young animal lovers and a good, basic choice for report writers. (author’s note, websites) (Informational picture book. 6-9)

10 GREAT SUMMER READS



THIS WAS OUR PACT
by Ryan Andrews



COREY'S ROCK
by Sita Brahmachari;
illus. by Jane Ray



REACHING FOR THE MOON
by Katherine Johnson



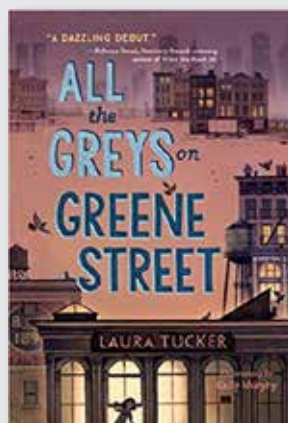
MIDSUMMER'S MAYHEM
by Rajani LaRocca;
illus. by Rachel Suggs



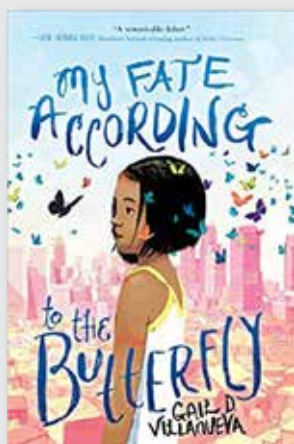
QUEEN OF THE SEA
by Dylan Meconis



DUGOUT
by Scott Morse



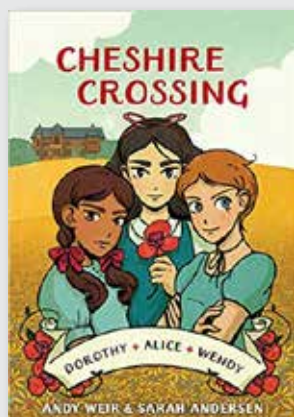
**ALL THE GRAYS
ON GREENE
STREET**
by Laura Tucker;
illus. by Kelly
Murphy



**MY FATE
ACCORDING TO
THE BUTTERFLY**
by Gail D. Villanueva



**OTHER WORDS
FOR HOME**
by Jasmine Warga



**CHESHIRE
CROSSING**
by Andy Weir;
illus. by Sarah
Andersen

A priceless lesson conveyed in a beautifully child-friendly manner.

RUBY FINDS A WORRY



LIONEL AND THE LION'S SHARE

Peacock, Louise

Illus. by Sheehan, Lisa

Nosy Crow/Candlewick (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 20, 2019

978-1-5362-0592-3

Lionel the lion always takes the lion's share by force—until his disappointed friends teach him that sharing is caring.

Lionel simply does not like to share. In the music shop on Monday, in the hat shop on Tuesday, at the balloon cart on Wednesday, Lionel can't decide among all the tantalizing options. Just as a friend is about to choose an item, Lionel snatches it and adds it to his large collection. When his friends object that he can't possibly use all those instruments, hats, or balloons, Lionel responds, "But I am a lion....And I get the lion's share." His poor, sad friends (all anthropomorphic animals) just wish he weren't so selfish. On Thursday, at Chloe's birthday party, Lionel takes it too far when he decides that the "lion's share" is the whole cake! The birthday kitten cries, and his friends tell him he has been mean. He stomps off angrily, but by the time he gets home, he is sad, and he knows what he has to do to make amends. The mixed-media illustrations use a combination of soft hues and primary colors, with curving lines and simple expressions, to convey emotions. The triumph of kindness over selfishness is a lesson that never gets old.

From outrage to regret, amends, and forgiveness, the drama between friends makes the moral an easy pill to swallow. (Picture book. 3-8)



I GOT NEXT

Peoples-Riley, Daria

Illus. by the author

Greenwillow (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-0-06-265777-0

With a pep talk from his shadow, a young black boy learns to wear his "game face" and give his all at the neighborhood basketball court.

The boy is at the barber shop when his shadow calls to him from outside, "It's game day!" He arrives at the fenced-in basketball court, where other kids greet one another. His shadow tells him, "Time to put your game face on!" It takes a few tries—a smile, a frown, and finally, a mean mug. Now that the boy's got his game face on, his shadow says, "show me what you know." In rhythmic verse like a bouncing ball, the boy plays: "In. Out. / I cross 'em. / Ankles. / I break 'em." The boy is all over the court, his face sometimes hard and sometimes not so sure. Finally, boy and shadow float below the hoop as the ball goes in. "We won!" After a bit more coaching ("Work hard.... Don't quit") and a promise to "never give up," the boy brings his game face to the whole group of kids, declaring, "We. GOT.

NEXT." The inner-city neighborhood is lovingly portrayed, with soft watercolors creating swaths of concrete and sky, spare natural elements, and the black of the broken chain-link fence echoed in the black of the shadow that gets the boy psyched. A vibrant mural on the endpapers pays tribute to black leaders and community.

Important, beautiful, and full of heart. (Picture book. 4-9)



RUBY FINDS A WORRY

Percival, Tom

Illus. by the author

Bloomsbury (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-5476-0237-7

Ruby is an adventurous and happy child until the day she discovers a Worry.

Ruby barely sees the Worry—depicted as a blob of yellow with a frowny unibrow—at first, but as it hovers, the more she notices it and the larger it grows. The longer Ruby is affected by this Worry, the fewer colors appear on the page. Though she tries not to pay attention to the Worry, which no one else can see, ignoring it prevents her from enjoying the things that she once loved. Her constant anxiety about the Worry causes the bright yellow blob to crowd Ruby's everyday life, which by this point is nearly all washes of gray and white. But at the playground, Ruby sees a boy sitting on a bench with a growing sky-blue Worry of his own. When she invites the boy to talk, his Worry begins to shrink—and when Ruby talks about her own Worry, it also grows smaller. By the book's conclusion, Ruby learns to control her Worry by talking about what worries her, a priceless lesson for any child—or adult—conveyed in a beautifully child-friendly manner. Ruby presents black, with hair in cornrows and two big afro-puff pigtails, while the boy has pale skin and spiky black hair.

A valuable asset to the library of a child who experiences anxiety and a great book to get children talking about their feelings. (Picture book. 4-6)



CODE LIKE A GIRL Rad Tech Projects and Practical Tips

Peskowitz, Miriam

Knopf (208 pp.)

\$21.99 | \$24.99 PLB | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-5247-1389-8

978-1-5247-1390-4 PLB

This beginners-oriented book from the co-author (with Andrea J. Buchanan) of *The Daring Book for Girls* (2007) guides readers from basic programming concepts to DIY computerized crafts.

The instruction starts with an efficient chapter on programming in Scratch, which is a good way to get used to working with programming concepts without getting bogged down in

typing code. Next, the book jumps to hardware in a chapter on setting up a Raspberry Pi computer. Then it's back to code for a healthy dose of functional training in Python via writing a Mad Libs-style game. The fourth chapter jumps back to hardware for tinkering in electronics—while some projects here may disappoint, some are cool and useful (e.g., taking apart old earbuds to make smartphone gloves). The fifth and final instructional chapter culminates the lessons by combining all of the skills learned for the big project of setting up a bedroom motion detector that sends email alerts when tripped (although, if readers use Gmail as instructed, this may trip Google's security features and require adjusting account settings to be *less* secure). The conversational, generally positive tone stresses perseverance and that mistakes are OK; however, the repeated reassurances sometimes cross over into condescension or even socially conditioned female self-deprecation, which seems the opposite of the book's goal. Full-color screenshots throughout provide clarity.

Effective skills progression conveyed in an irritating tone. (glossary, acknowledgments, index) (Nonfiction. 10-14)



THE TASTE OF RAIN

Polak, Monique
Orca (224 pp.)
\$10.95 paper | Sep. 3, 2019
978-1-4598-2026-5

Gwen and her Girl Guides group fight for survival during the Japanese occupation of China during World War II.

The daughter of American Christian missionaries, Gwen has lived in boarding schools in northern China. For the last two years, the Weihsien mission school has been used as an internment camp by the Japanese, who closely guard the students and staff. Gwen's teacher, Miss E., has taken it upon herself to buoy her students' morale. Gwen complies with Miss E.'s efforts, repeating her Girl Guide rules to mitigate the effects of the harsh living conditions. Tensions arise with the death of one student and the escape of two others, and all the while Gwen questions her complex feelings toward her parents. Gwen's first-person narrative unfolds in the present tense with limited description and ends with the arrival of American troops, leaving the conditions of the school and Gwen's ultimate fate to readers' imaginations. Gwen, Miss E., and the other primary characters present as white with diversity limited to the Japanese guards, a kindly Japanese officer, and Chinese laborer Lu (referred to as a "coolie," acknowledged as a slur in the author's note but in line with the era). The italicized Japanese dialogue tends toward one- or two-word commands.

Although based on true accounts, this story does not quite match the gravitas of this fascinating piece of history. (resources) (Historical fiction. 11-14)



A DREAM OF FLIGHT Alberto Santos-Dumont's Race Around the Eiffel Tower

Polivka, Jef & Polivka, Rob
Illus. by Polivka, Rob
Farrar, Straus and Giroux (40 pp.)
\$18.99 | Jul. 30, 2019
978-0-374-30661-8

An account of how Brazilian aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont won the prestigious Deutsch Prize at the turn of the 20th century.

Alberto Santos-Dumont grew up in Brazil, the son of a coffee-plantation owner. As a boy, he "dreamed that one day, he would fly," and added to this dream was a fascination with machinery. As a young man and going by Santos, he left for France to study science. There, inspired by his first hot air balloon flight, Santos dedicated his life to designing an airship that would be propelled by its own power. Author/illustrator Rob Polivka—whose style is somewhat reminiscent of Belgian cartoonist Hergé's—provides sketches of the various prototypes as well as scenes of the different flight attempts—illustrating them with a touch of humor—and of Santos' much admired and written-about life in Paris. When the 100,000-franc Deutsch Prize was announced, challenging members of Paris' Aero Club to fly from the club to the Eiffel Tower and back (a distance of a little over 7 miles) in 30 minutes, Santos was ready for the challenge. On Oct. 19, 1901, Santos won and so "played his part in the world's dream of flight." Although well-known in Brazil and in France, Santos is largely unfamiliar to American audiences, particularly children, making this a good complement to other picture books. Santos is depicted with black hair and olive skin; Paris crowd scenes include a few people of color.

An engaging book about a larger-than-life character. (author's note, bibliography, fun facts, and a timeline of aeronautics invention) (Picture book/biography. 5-9)



THE SPINNER OF DREAMS

Reynolds, K.A.
Harper/HarperCollins (416 pp.)
\$16.99 | Aug. 27, 2019
978-0-06-267395-4

"Cursed" Annalise journeys through a labyrinth to reverse it.

A fairy tale-esque preface chronicles the birth of twin princesses in the Mazelands: the hated, pale-skinned Fate Spinner and the beloved, dark-skinned Spinner of Dreams. The story proper opens with the birth of Annalise Meriwether. Her "cursed" left hand, twice as large as her right, bears a broken black heart—the Fate Spinner's mark—that occasionally shoots fire and is blamed for the town's persistent miseries. Though her parents are incredibly loving and supportive, the townsfolk are abusive. Understandably traumatized, Annalise uses such mechanisms as counting to cope.

Refreshingly, Annalise's anxiety and coping strategies aren't portrayed as obstacles or deficits. Hoping for "a normal left hand," Annalise travels to the Mazelands to face the perils of the Fate Spinner's labyrinth—and her misbeliefs about herself and her "wicked" hand. The plot itself is labyrinthine and its exploration of fate uneven. Moreover, the Fate Spinner's evil comes across as simplistic, in contrast to the story's other, more fully developed villains. The tiresome convention that equates dark with evil is turned on its head with the Spinner sisters' skin colors, but most everything else, disappointingly, aligns with it. Annalise's mother has brown skin, but Annalise herself is described only as having straight black hair and purple eyes. Mental health resources are provided in the backmatter.

An interesting if imperfect story commendable for its portrayal of a protagonist suffering from anxiety and possibly PTSD. (author's note) (Fantasy. 10-14)



THE BATTLE

Riazi, Karuna

Salaam Reads/Simon & Schuster

(304 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-1-5344-2872-0

Following *The Gauntlet* (2017), Riazi once again offers a fast-paced story in a changing game world with floating skyscrapers, flying cars, flavorful food and sweets, and a giant talking mouse.

It's been a few years since Pakistani American Ahmad Mirza, now 12, entered Paheli. After his sister, Farah, now at Princeton, sends a mysterious package to his school instead of home, Ahmad finds himself in Paheli again with classmate Winnie Williamson, who's black. He does not remember the time spent in Paheli, but everything seems familiar somehow: "Something about the Minaret...reached inside and scratched its nails over old scars in his heart in the worst kind of way. It brought up memories of pain and panic without him even being able to identify what those memories were." The evil Architect has a new partner, the MasterMind; Madame Nasirah, the Gamekeeper, is back to guide the players, providing them with spinach pies, desserts, and tools. T.T., a 6-foot-tall talking mouse, provides additional support. Ahmad and Winnie must stick together and trust each other if they are to defeat the Architect and MasterMind in the requisite three rounds, solving a puzzle in each timed challenge. Ahmad, who has ADHD, struggles with making friends and discovers more about himself through his game adventure. Through the tight third-person narration, Ahmad comes into his own, but Winnie's character is not as fully developed.

An exciting return. (Fantasy. 8-12)



PENNY AND PENELOPE

Richards, Dan

Illus. by Almon, Claire

Imprint (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-250-15607-5



On their first play date, two girls have vastly different ideas about what their dolls can and should do.

The hostess, a brown-skinned girl with puffy red hair whose "perfect" bedroom is princess themed, owns a Princess Penelope doll that wears an evening gown and "real glass slippers." The guest, an Asian girl wearing a dinosaur T-shirt, brought her Penny doll too—only hers wears a black motorcycle jacket, boots, and sunglasses. Readers will note that each doll resembles her owner. The dolls take over in the illustrations, with alternating black and purple text showing the girls' suggestions for play. Princess Penelope wants to host a tea party and ride ponies. But Penny "isn't a princess" and doesn't have a pony. She's a secret agent with a racing bike. Their ideas of fun clash, but when a werewolf appears in the kingdom, Penelope shows that she's not "just a princess." The two team up, using the Princess' resourcefulness and Penny's skills to save the day. The watercolor illustrations move from a pastel-dominated palette interrupted by Penny's black suit to a green countryside and back again, skillfully transforming characters, expressions, and settings. The theme of merging girly things with smarts and power is rightly popular right now; this action-packed romp through two girls' imaginations is a fun addition to the collection.

Delightfully clever. (Picture book. 4-9)



ONCE UPON AN APPLE CAKE A Rosh Hashanah Story

Rubinstein, Elana

Illus. by Naalchigar, Jennifer

Apples & Honey Press (112 pp.)

\$16.95 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-68115-549-4

Ten-year-old Saralee must save the Siegel House restaurant from disaster.

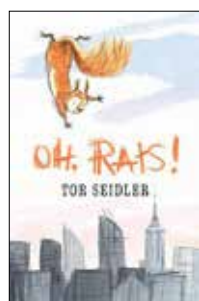
Zadie is the chief cook, and granddaughter Saralee is his executive assistant. She has an amazing superpower; she can identify even the subtlest of ingredients by smell. Rosh Hashanah is only a few days away, and Saralee's family is already taking orders for their famous apple cake, made from a recipe with a secret ingredient, one that Saralee has never been able to identify. A rival restaurant is offering an apple cake as well, and they are prepared to go to any lengths to acquire the Siegels' secret recipe. Watch out for new classmate Harold Horwitz! When Zadie has an accident that affects his memory, Saralee must use her ingenuity and her powerful sense of smell to discover that elusive ingredient. Saralee narrates her own tale in lively, direct language that emphasizes her kind, pragmatic, and earnest nature. Her multigenerational family (Zadie, Bubbie, aunts, uncles, and cousins, but evidently no

Reminiscent of mid-20th-century classics.

OH, RATS!

parents for Saralee) is secure in their Jewish traditions, accepting of one another's eccentricities, and genuinely loving. There is no intimation that the Siegels are outsiders or any sense of "otherness." Her multiracial school seems to have an all-Jewish population; perhaps it is a yeshiva or Jewish day school. Humorous cartoon illustrations are interspersed throughout.

A bit of magic and a happy ending make for a sweet New Year story. Delightful. (recipe) (Fiction. 7-10)



OH, RATS!

Seidler, Tor

Illus. by Evans, Gabriel

Caitlyn Dlouhy/Atheneum (192 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-1-5344-2684-9

After being kidnapped by Walter, a chatty red-tailed hawk, a spunky New Jersey squirrel needs to adjust to life with wharf rats on a Manhattan pier.

When a violent encounter with hot tar and then a dunk in the Hudson leaves red squirrel Phoenix without his signature dashing fur and adrift in the middle of a dizzying city, sister and brother rats Lucy and Bennett (who also reads and writes) take him in. Soon their community of wharf rats discovers that an odious New York developer (ahem!) named P.J. Weeks is tearing down their beloved pier to build tennis courts. Unlike squirrels, wharf rats are highly organized in their resistance to human encroachment. Phoenix is enlisted to sabotage the electrical grid, surprising even himself with the results. When Walter eventually returns and offers Phoenix a ride back to his original home, a moment of truth allows Phoenix to choose the life that feels most relevant to his newer self. Veteran author Seidler sets just the right pace, with a skillfully drawn handful of characters and an adept rendering of Phoenix's transformation from squirrel to rat. The novel's ambience, allegory, and illustrations are more reminiscent of mid-20th-century classics than recent anthropomorphic animal fare despite the very current theme.

A charming tale of identity, migration, gentrification, and organized resistance. (Fantasy. 8-12)



BOONOOONOUS HAIR!

Senior, Olive

Illus. by James, Laura

Tradewind Books (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | Jul. 15, 2019

978-1-926890-07-4

Jamilla's mom has many reasons why Jamilla should not hate her hair in this lively Canadian import.

It's time to do her hair before school, and Jamilla hides the comb inside her puffy hair. She hates her hair; "It hurts. It's a pain." She wants to know why she has "bad" hair instead of "good hair" that's "long and soft and pretty" like her classmates'.

Her mother tells her it's silly to want their hair when "the most fantabulous, splendiferous, boonoonoonous hair in the world is right here." They agree that if she doesn't cry or hide the comb anymore, Jamilla can wear her hair in a different style every day of the year. A week's worth of hairstyles is pictured—including puffs, braids, cornrows, twists, a "wild" Afro, and, for Sunday, in ribbons as "Grandmother's child." James' illustrations use strong lines, stylized facial features, and bold colors, with backgrounds of turquoise and yellow. They show the young black girl in various settings—a park, an art museum, a playground. The titular adjective will require translation for those unfamiliar with Jamaican patois, and the idea of changing hairstyles daily overlooks the effort that goes into each. Still, the energy between mother and child is infectious, and the rhythmic text is great fun to read.

This girl's road to self-acceptance is playful, easy, and filled with love. (Picture book. 5-9)



YOUR AMAZING DIGESTION FROM MOUTH THROUGH INTESTINE

Settel, Joanne

Illus. by Björkman, Steve

Atheneum (112 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-4814-8688-0

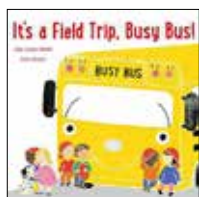
What happens to food / once it's been chewed.

There's plenty of attention to chemical interactions and anatomical detail in these poems for all that they are cast in iambic couplets. They begin with the internal odyssey of a pizza slice, then go on to answer a number of pressing questions, from "Why Does Chili Make Me Sweat?" to "Why Does My Urine Come Out Yellow?" Breaking into prose for side comments and "Cool Facts" as she goes, Settel also covers such tasty topics as how laughing can make milk come out one's nose, why garlic breath is so hard to get rid of, the ins and outs of farts and burps, the many uses of saliva, and the roles of various organs in digestion: "The liver's bile is needed too, / as small intestines do not do / too well digesting fat without / a squirt of bile to help them out." Björkman's cartoons, all bright colors and loose, fluid lines, add a diversely hued cast of young folk exuberantly chowing down, throwing up, looking amazed or grossed out, and posing as models for labeled internal views. The bulky glossary and equally dense bibliography piled up at the end aim high; younger readers may find the five-item list of online animations and videos more palatable.

From plate to poop, / the inside scoop. What's not to love? (index) (Informational poetry. 6-10)

It is not an accident that there is more here than meets the eye.

WHO WET MY PANTS?



IT'S A FIELD TRIP, BUSY BUS!

Shaffer, Jody Jensen

Illus. by Messer, Claire

Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-5344-4081-4

Will an earnest school bus get the recognition it deserves?

Colorful, digitally enhanced lino prints and clear, minimal text tell the tale of a yellow bus, aka Busy Bus, on his first field trip. Unfortunately for Busy Bus, the trip is to a fire station to visit a fire truck. To the bus, the fire truck seems superior in every way; it is red, shiny, and huge, with hoses, a ladder, and a siren. Busy Bus looks close to tears—until the station's captain mentions that there are some things the fire truck can't do that Busy Bus can: protect children with a stop arm, carry students to and from school, bring kids on trips. An accessible tale of the pitfalls of invidious comparison and the importance of appreciating differences, this deceptively simple description of the ups and downs of new experiences, first field trips, and the characteristics of different vehicles will especially appeal to toddlers and young preschoolers who love buses and trucks. The children are a diverse crew, and their teacher is a black man—a welcome sight, as is the fact that the (light-skinned) firefighter captain is a woman.

Caregivers will find this to be a good conversation starter on topics such as strengths and weaknesses, insecurity, differences, and competition. (Picture book. 4-8)



WHO WET MY PANTS?

Shea, Bob

Illus. by OHora, Zachariah

Little, Brown (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 17, 2019

978-0-316-52521-3

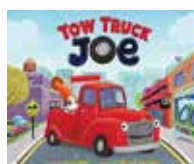


Kindness is revealed to be the best answer to embarrassment and anger in this funny take on peeing in your pants.

"Somebody better come clean about my wet pants." Reuben, a bear in a scouting uniform, interrogates the whole forest troop to determine who wet his pants. He even holds the doughnuts hostage until he can flush out the guilty party and get what he wants: justice and dry pants. The animals of Troop 73, all blushing with blame (or perhaps embarrassment for their friend?), are dressed in khakis and kerchiefs and sit around a warm campfire. "I'll get to the bottom of my wet pants if it's the last thing I do!" yells Reuben. The illustrations are as insistent as Reuben. OHora's pink, brown, and green-dominated color scheme gives the pages an indie vibe; they're full of cool things that catch the eye: a potable-water pump, the string-tied doughnut box, and plenty of perfect mushrooms. The scout badges—on both the uniforms and the endpapers—delight in their quirky charm. But this is more than a potty book for scouts. With each accusation, it becomes clear that Reuben will do anything to avoid

blame—a character trait familiar to readers, no doubt. Luckily for Reuben, his empathetic friends treat him with kindness, and forgiveness ultimately leaks from the pages.

It is not an accident that there is more here than meets the eye. (Picture book. 5-8)



TOW TRUCK JOE

Sobel, June

Illus. by Corrigan, Patrick

HMH Books (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

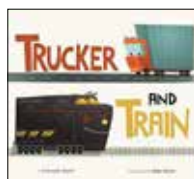
978-0-358-05312-5

Series: Tow Truck Joe

Don't cry over spilled milk. Add crumbled cookies and freeze to make Cookie Crunch ice cream with your friends instead.

Tow truck Joe and his pup, Patch, roam Drivedale honking "Hello!" and helping vehicles (all are anthropomorphic) in trouble. They charge batteries and replace flat tires until "SCREECH! BANG! CRUNCH! CRASH!" An accident! It appears the milk truck was going too fast and hit a cart full of cookies. What a mess! Traffic is at a standstill, but Joe, Patch, and all the other trucks help out. The cement mixer is ready. The bulldozer cleans up the cookie crumbles, and the grocery truck supplies sugar and vanilla. Patch adds milk from the milk truck, and the mixer stirs everything up. An ice cream truck offers to freeze the mixture. Voila! Cookie Crunch ice cream! Slowly and carefully, all the vehicles follow Joe and Patch to the garage to end the busy day with scoops of their delicious ice cream creation. Related in an easy, conversational rhyme with clear and bright illustrations, this story is a good read-aloud, but it's an even better one-on-one read. Children and adults need to pore over the written puns in the illustrations. Signs such as "BIG WHEEL COOKIES—THEY TASTE WHEELY GREAT" and "KNEAD FOR SPEED BAKERY" are too good to miss.

A delight for car and truck fans young and old. (Picture book. 4-8)



TRUCKER AND TRAIN

Stark, Hannah

Illus. by Kolar, Bob

Clarion (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-544-80181-3

A semi experiences a dark night of the soul when he discovers he's second rate.

Imbued with a mighty engine, massive tires, and a healthy sense of his own superiority, Trucker rules the road. But the 10-wheeled narcissist experiences a swift kick to the gut the day he catches a glimpse of Train. Painfully aware of his relative inadequacy, the truck is taken down a further notch when he discovers that all traffic stops for trains. Not trucks. Fortunately

ego takes a back seat to heroism when Trucker observes a broken gate at the next train junction and risks unpopularity to save his fellow road warriors. Judging by the title, readers would be forgiven for thinking this a buddy book, but Train remains utterly unaware of Trucker's very existence throughout, even while his presence eclipses Trucker's very sense of self. The lesson to be learned is one of grounded self-esteem; while it's familiar, its expression here feels fresh. Kolar's digital art will feed directly into any young vehicular enthusiast's yearning for cars and trucks and things that go.

Grab your CB radios and hold onto your whistle. In this battle of truck vs. train, the true winners are the readers. (Picture book, 3-6)



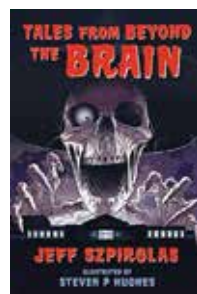
THE OKAY WITCH

Steinkellner, Emma
Illus. by the author
 Aladdin (272 pp.)
 \$20.99 | Sep. 3, 2019
 978-1-5344-3146-1

It is Halloween when Moth Hush finds out she is descended from a line of witches.

Her mother reveals the story of their witch origins going back to 17th-century Europe, which Moth's maternal grandmother, Sarah, fled along with her order for supposed safety in Founder's Bluff, Massachusetts, only to find persecution there. Led by Sarah, the witches escaped the wrath of the Puritans through a blood ritual that opened a portal to Hecate, a spiritual realm that provided safety. Moth's mother rebelled and broke away from the coven to live in the real world, ultimately as a single parent to Moth in the 21st century. After a talking black cat (the spirit of a deceased neighbor) appears and befriends Moth, Moth peeks at her mother's diary—which opens a portal to Hecate, and Moth secretly begins to practice spells unsupervised and to connect with her family there. Moth and family sort through a complicated lineage whose legacy reveals itself to be very much alive in present-day Founder's Bluff. In Steinkellner's graphic panels, Moth and her family have brown skin and puffy dark hair, and the 17th-century coven is shown to be multiracial. The complex history provides a mechanism through which Moth sorts through her own coming-of-age as a modern girl of color, and it's the loving, oftentimes humorous rapport among the Hush women that grounds this graphic novel.

This winning paranormal uses witchcraft to explore adolescent rebellion. (Graphic fantasy, 10-14)



TALES FROM BEYOND THE BRAIN

Szpirglas, Jeff
Illus. by Hughes, Steven P.
 Orca (192 pp.)
 \$12.95 paper | Sep. 3, 2019
 978-1-4598-2079-1

Thirteen short stories to creep out kids.

Fans of *Scary Stories To Tell in the Dark* looking for a modern spin will find exactly what they want in this offering. Typical trials and tribulations in children's lives are twisted toward the uncanny, as when a popcorn kernel lodged between Jamie's teeth turns into a mouthful of twisted fangs with minds of their own. Or when a paper airplane accidentally cuts a hole in reality. Hughes' moody black-and-white illustrations highlight disturbing moments in each story, drawing easy parallels to Stephen Gammell's nightmare-inducing artwork that accompanies Alvin Schwartz's classic. Each story is between 10 and 20 pages, making the volume easy to put down at bedtime or pick up in the light of day, though this brevity means that characterization and emotional depth are sacrificed in exchange for action and chills. None of the characters are explicitly racialized, implying the white default, and all of the scenarios feel firmly and nondescriptly middle-class. Readers will get an additional thrill when they realize that many of these stories don't have endings, and they may find themselves looking askance at the next stray cat or grumpy bus driver.

A good choice for middle-grade readers looking for something smart and scary. (Horror, 8-13)



GUTS

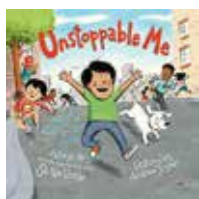
Telgemeier, Raina
Illus. by the author
 Graphix/Scholastic (224 pp.)
 \$24.99 | \$12.99 paper | Sep. 17, 2019
 978-0-545-85251-7
 978-0-545-85250-0 paper

Young Raina is 9 when she throws up for the first time that she remembers, due to a stomach bug. Even a year later, when she is in fifth grade, she fears getting sick.

Raina begins having regular stomachaches that keep her home from school. She worries about sharing food with her friends and eating certain kinds of foods, afraid of getting sick or food poisoning. Raina's mother enrolls her in therapy. At first Raina isn't sure about seeing a therapist, but over time she develops healthy coping mechanisms to deal with her stress and anxiety. Her therapist helps her learn to ground herself and relax, and in turn she teaches her classmates for a school project. Amping up the green, wavy lines to evoke Raina's nausea, Telgemeier brilliantly produces extremely accurate visual

representations of stress and anxiety. Thought bubbles surround Raina in some panels, crowding her with anxious “what if”s, while in others her negative self-talk appears to be literally crushing her. Even as she copes with anxiety disorder and what is eventually diagnosed as mild irritable bowel syndrome, she experiences the typical stresses of early adolescence, going from cheer to panic in the blink of an eye. Raina is white, and her classmates are diverse; one best friend is Korean American.

With young readers diagnosed with anxiety in ever increasing numbers, this book offers a necessary mirror to many. (*Graphic memoir.* 8-12)



UNSTOPPABLE ME

Verde, Susan

Illus. by Joyner, Andrew

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 23, 2019

978-0-374-30738-7

Readers follow a preschool-age child through the day, watching the child take on the world as “movement,” “heat,” and “powered by PLAY!”

The nameless child runs through the day with the kind of energy that only small children can really muster. This Everykid plays, loves, and laughs, affirming not just unstoppable, but an unapologetic love of self. The child and a diverse cast of friends “bounce,” “spin,” “tumble,” and “dig” themselves into oblivion and bedtime. Joyner’s vivid colors give the book and text a feeling of energy and highlight the diversity of the characters on the pages. The brown-skinned protagonist’s parents are an interracial couple, and the children at school display a wide variety of skin colors, hairstyles, and textures—some girls wear hijab—ensuring that many children will be able to see some of themselves in the story. The illustrations are appropriately filled with movement, and their busyness really captures what it is like to be a kid. Although the text is spare—more a sequence of phrases than complete sentences that connect to one another—its profusion of exclamation marks and subtle cadences make it a delightful read-aloud that kids will enjoy and parents will get a chuckle out of as they see themselves in the book as well (bleary-eyed morning phone check while kid bounds through the room, anyone?).

Bound to provoke many cries of “Again!” (*Picture book.* 3-6)



WHY DON'T CARS RUN ON APPLE JUICE? *Real Science Questions from Real Kids*

Vermond, Kira

Illus. by Ogawa, Subaru

Annick Press (88 pp.)

\$16.95 | Sep. 10, 2019

978-1-77321-302-6

Clear evidence that there’s no such thing as a silly question. Even the titular query gets a serious answer here (it has to do with the amount of stored energy that can be harnessed). It appears along with 49 more gathered at the Ontario Science Centre, including “Where does wind come from?”; “Why do we die?”; “What is time?”; and “If I were to sneeze in outer space, would my head blow up?” (Answer: no, but according to those “astro-snots...who have sneezed in micro-gravity, the force gently propel[s] them in the direction opposite to where their noses [are] pointing.” Emphasizing the efficacy of the scientific method (“Ask. Test. Repeat. It works”), Vermond draws from cited expert sources to explain in simple language a wide range of biological, geological, and astronomical phenomena—at least as currently understood—while not shying away from admitting that mysteries aplenty remain. Ogawa furnishes cartoon illustrations featuring a physically and racially diverse array of children as well as the odd smiling animal, rock, or nose-picking ET. A final question, “What hasn’t been invented?” prompts the author to open the floor to readers.

A breezy compendium for STEM-winders and casual browsers alike. (*sources, index*) (*Nonfiction.* 8-11)



THE HUMILIATIONS OF PIPI MCGEE

Vrabel, Beth

Running Press Kids (384 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 17, 2019

978-0-7624-9339-5

Humiliations? Eighth grader Pipi has suffered through almost any that you could (cringingly) imagine. But now she’s resolved to find redemption—or revenge.

From drawing her kindergarten self as a strip of bacon with breasts (a picture later exhibited to the entire eighth grade) to wetting her pants as a fourth grader, waxing off one eyebrow as a sixth grader, and having her period overflow into her white pants (and desk chair) in seventh grade, Pipi’s been there and done that. She’s also been the pariah of her class forever. Mean girl Kara has frequently stage-managed her misery—one way or another. Now Pipi’s made a list of people she’s going to humiliate. Unfortunately, her narrow focus on revenge threatens her few friendships, particularly with BFF Tasha and with Ricky, who, it turns out, has admired her all along. When Pipi finds that Kara’s joined-at-the-hip cousin, Sarah, is actually quite a nice girl who’s dealing with coming

Watson seamlessly explores issues of identity, self, and family acceptance.

SOME PLACES MORE THAN OTHERS

into her own despite Kara's ire, Pipi finally begins to develop a believable maturity. The suspense is nicely sustained, and the characters, if a bit archetypal, are nonetheless plausible enough. Tasha presents black while Pipi and most of the rest of the cast adhere to the white default.

Painful though they are, Pipi's trials neatly convey an authentic flavor of the commonplace agonies of middle school. (*Fiction. 10-12*)



IF THE HAT FITS

Waters, Erica-Jane

Illus. by the author

Whitman (128 pp.)

\$14.99 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-0-8075-5157-8

Series: Miss Bunsen's School for Brilliant Girls

In this series opener, Pearl, Millie, and Halinka have taken on the charge to come up with an invention that will save Miss Bunsen's School for Brilliant Girls.

Housed in a rotting building and led by quirky Miss Bunsen, the school is on the brink of financial collapse. The school's only hope is to win an interschool competition for the best invention, which comes with a large cash prize. The invention must be one that's perfect for the "youth of today." The girls design the Best of Yourself Hat, which, when worn, will "help you be the best version of yourself." When their rivals from the glitzy Atom Academy steal the hat-invention idea, Pearl, Millie, and Halinka must prove whose idea it truly was to save their chances of winning. What's oddly missing in the plot is that the girls on both sides never seem to consider that maybe another school might win, which dampens suspense somewhat and turns the story from one of invention to one of espionage. Diversity is conveyed primarily through visuals; the jacket image depicts Pearl, the leader of the team, with brown skin and curly hair, and Halinka and Millie present white, although in interior illustrations, Halinka appears to be a girl of color as well.

Although the plot loses focus, it is empowering to see schoolgirls master STEAM. (*Fiction. 7-10*)



SOME PLACES MORE THAN OTHERS

Watson, Renée

Bloomsbury (208 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

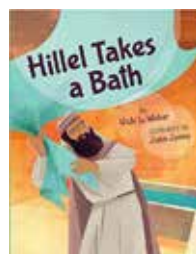
978-1-68119-108-9

On a birthday trip to New York City, a girl learns about her roots, Harlem, and how to stay true to herself.

Eleven-year-old sneakerhead Amara is struggling to feel seen and heard. A new baby sister is on the way, her mom still wants to put her

in dresses, and that birthday trip from the Portland, Oregon, suburbs to New York City that she so desperately wants feels out of reach. When Amara gets a family-history assignment, she is finally able to convince her mom to say yes to the trip, since it will allow Amara to meet her dad's side of the family in person. In addition to the school project, her mom gives Amara a secret mission: get her dad and grandpa to spend time alone together to repair old wounds. Harlem proves unlike any place Amara has ever been, and as she explores where her father grew up she experiences black history on every street. Watson is a master at character development, with New York City and especially Harlem playing central roles. Through her all-black cast she seamlessly explores issues of identity, self, and family acceptance. Although the ending feels rushed, with no resolution between Amara and her mom, Amara's concluding poem is powerful.

A moving exploration of the places we come from and the people who shape us—not to be missed. (*Fiction. 9-11*)



HILLEL TAKES A BATH

Weber, Vicki L.

Illus. by Joven, John

Apples & Honey Press (24 pp.)

\$17.95 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-68115-546-3

A Jewish sage confounds his students with his surprising teaching methods in this story based on a midrash.

Brandishing a "large linen cloth," Hillel announces he will show how "to do a mitzvah." His students know some of the 613 mitzvot, Torah commandments that teach people how to act. They remember how Hillel ingeniously taught the Torah to a man who wanted to learn the whole thing while standing on one foot: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.... That is the whole Torah. Now go and study." Guessing at the rabbi's intentions, the students suggest possible mitzvot: giving the cloth as tzedakah (charity), using it as a Sabbath tablecloth, or shading his parents with it. To demonstrate his lesson, Hillel shows them workers cleaning the king's statue. The king's image should be respected, but his students must understand something more important: that they "are made in God's image." He says: "When we keep ourselves clean, we honor God. And that is why taking a bath is an important mitzvah." The digital illustrations have an animation aesthetic, and the people represented have diverse skin colorings and dark hair, realistic for the ancient Middle Eastern setting. The active-learning approach will engage young readers at home or in religious classes.

An appealing and effective age-appropriate introduction to some of Hillel's teachings. (author's note) (*Picture book. 4-7*)

White hits just the right balance of humor, mystery, and scariness.

ARCHIMANCY



PEOPLE SHARE WITH PEOPLE

Wheeler, Lisa

Illus. by Idle, Molly

Atheneum (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 10, 2019

978-1-5344-2559-0

A first lesson in the finer points of sharing.

"People share with people," asserts the titular refrain, and several kewpie-doll-like children displaying an array of skin colors and hairstyles engage in various activities that depict how easy or difficult it can be for young children to share toys and treats. A secondary refrain is puzzling: "what's mine is mine, / what's yours is yours, / but I'll share mine with you"—shouldn't the sharing be mutual? Despite an explanation that children are human and not animals and therefore should share, the underlying logic ("Selfish isn't cute!") seems quite abstract for a young child. Moreover, "I'll share when I am done" (depicted by a child slurping from a water fountain while another waits) seems to belie the altruistic premise of the book. Though Wheeler and Idle's first collaboration, *People Don't Bite People* (2018), was good fun, this one feels a little too preachy for this young audience, however praiseworthy the messages of respect and kindness. Friendly illustrations feature cheery colored-pencil scenarios on alternating white and colorful backgrounds. However, the children lack distinctive features that would enable young readers to identify and learn about difference and instead come across as cookie-cutter depictions. Some children of color are rendered in such a way that their noses and mouths are difficult to make out.

Like the paper dolls depicted on the endpapers, the characters in this story lack individuality. (Picture book. 4-8)



ARCHIMANCY

White, J.A.

Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins

(304 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-0-06-283828-5

Series: Shadow School, 1

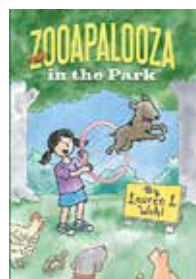
It's hard enough for sixth grader Cordelia Liu to be the new girl at Elijah Z. Shadow Middle School, and that's before she even realizes she can see the

ghosts there!

Luckily, another boy has the same ability, and together with another scientifically minded classmate, the three new friends set out to help the ghosts find peace. Little do they know that they are up against forces (both solid and spectral) with less-than-good intentions, dating back to Mr. Elijah Shadow himself, the African American architect of the creepy old New Hampshire mansion that houses the Shadow School. As they explore the mansion and the ghosts' needs, the three encounter more and more questions as well as opposition: Why are there so

many ghosts in one building? And who is trying to stop the kids from helping them? White hits just the right balance of humor, mystery, and scariness for a preteen audience, and what seems at first to be a straightforward ghost story takes several exciting turns with new revelations. The ultimate conflict may be a bit far-fetched, but a healthy suspension of disbelief and emotional connection with one of the ghosts make for a satisfying resolution nonetheless. Cordelia is biracial (Chinese/white); of her two friends, Benji is implied Latinx, and Agnes presents white.

A fun addition to the growing genre of scary books for middle graders; readers will be eager to see more of this smart and spunky trio in further spooky adventures. (Paranormal adventure. 9-12)



ZOOAPALOOZA IN THE PARK

Wohl, Lauren L.

Illus. by Tuchman, Mark

Persnickety Press (88 pp.)

\$14.95 | Sep. 5, 2019

978-1-943978-43-4

Series: Raccoon River Kids Adventures, 3

The can-do kids of Raccoon River help find a home for a stray dog.

First grader Lili Tucker has found a dog—or as she puts it to third grader Brandon, who walks with her to elementary school each morning, "a dog found me." Not telling her parents, because her mother doesn't like dogs, Lili hides "Spunky" in the shed and asks Brandon to help her figure out what to do. Brandon enlists the help of his friends, the very competent Hannah and Nico, and another Raccoon River adventure begins. As in *Blueberry Bonanza* (2017) and *Extravaganza at the Plaza* (2018), the children brainstorm to achieve a goal—this time to find Spunky a home. There are setbacks, but the kids persevere with spirit and determination, involving their community, and eventually all turns out even better than they'd hoped. Newcomer Lili joins Hannah, Nico, and Brandon, whom readers are familiar with from previous books. Earnest and plucky, Lili is a treasure—a perfect fit for author Wohl's direct, uncomplicated, dryly funny writing. Illustrator Tuchman's black-and-white spot illustrations are straightforwardly just right, breaking up the text visually for young readers. Hannah, Nico, Brandon, and Lili are shown as white, while other people illustrated have darker skin tones, and one mother-daughter pair are shown wearing hijab.

With pluck and community spirit, the Raccoon River Kids get it done—another winner. (Fiction. 7-10)



DUCK AND PENGUIN ARE NOT FRIENDS

Woolf, Julia

Illus. by the author

Peachtree (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | Sep. 1, 2019

978-1-68263-132-4

Can these toys get along? Not if they can help it.

Duck and Penguin—the toys in question—are the beloved stuffed-animal pals of BFFs Betty and Maud, respectively. The two love playing together and are convinced their cloth companions are equally enamored of their activities—swinging, building sandcastles, baking, painting, and playing baby dolls. However, the girls are so caught up in their own enjoyment that they're oblivious to the enmity between the plush animals. When Betty and Maud briefly leave Duck and Penguin on their own, the toys seize the chance to escape being “itty-bitty babies” and do the things they testily endured earlier—but this time, they've chosen to do so; unsurprisingly, they have fun. Trouble was, the toys disliked having friendship and games imposed on them. Children will likely get this unoriginal message, but there's also a cautionary note for well-meaning caregivers who overenforce togetherness on kids. The energetic, expressive, and childlike illustrations will elicit chuckles as spreads portray how much Duck and Penguin initially oppose each other; incorporated onomatopoeic words reinforce their displeasure. The toys are depicted the worse for wear: Duck trails a thread from an unraveling seam, Penguin's losing stuffing. The ever smiling, brown-haired girls are appealing: Betty is white and bespectacled; Maud is black and wears her hair in two afro puffs.

It's not the freshest take on friendship, but the toys bring the point home. (Picture book. 4-7)



LASTING LOVE

Wright, Caroline

Illus. by Heath, Willow

Rodale Kids (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Aug. 20, 2019

978-1-9848-5014-0

978-1-9848-5015-7 PLB

A child loses their mother, but part of her spirit stays, colorfully embodied.

“Something very beautiful and strange happened when Mama was told she was sick. She came home from the hospital with a magical creature.” The creature's huge and calm, with floppy ears, a soft texture, and comfortingly unruly fur. Pinks and yellows color its body; tidbits of various hues twinkle around it like stars. Mama's type of “sick” isn't defined, and the text says only that she “slips away” and “is gone”; some readers may need help understanding that she dies. The creature—who lives on with the family post-bereavement—is somehow part of Mama, though the equation's not made specific. The cover tagline (“Losing a loved one doesn't mean losing their love”) and author's note convey that the creature

is Mama's love, but the text is cryptic: “The creature is strong, like the strongest part of her. The part that loves me so much.” What's abundantly clear, though, is that this creature brings warmth and color to a mourning household. Aside from the creature, Heath's small, gentle drawings are mostly black and white except when the creature's colors flow onto other beings and objects. Copious white space surrounds the illustrations, showing that nothing matters here except loving Mama, losing her, and finding beauty again afterward. Child, Mama, and the remaining parent all have pale skin.

Enigmatic—but warm and almost oddly optimistic. (Picture book. 3-8)



FOOTPRINTS IN THE CLOUDS

Xing, Zhiwei

Illus. by the author

Starfish Bay (40 pp.)

\$16.95 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-76036-055-9

A boy who believes his magic socks are the reason for his grand adventures learns the real magic lies within.

Perched in the treetops, a bespectacled boy in red socks travels to faraway lands, where he climbs mountains, swims rivers, and plays with animals among the clouds. To him, his socks make it all possible, and without them there would be no journey, no return home. But when he finds himself barefoot midadventure, the black-haired, light-complexioned Tom realizes his imagination is the real key to his travels. Densely textured backgrounds done in watercolor, acrylic, gouache, and paper collage stand in contrast to the simplified human protagonist. The vibrant palette and kinetic flurry of energy on the spreads make each vignette a fascinating stand-alone piece. While much skill is applied to the texturing and design of the creatures, however, at times there is so much layering of color and contrast of textures that details are lost and images almost appear neutral—although close inspection can unearth hidden treasures in the art, suggesting that this title will work better one-on-one with a reader in a lap than in a group.

Simple, almost folktalelike text celebrates the imagination in this visually dense offering. (Picture book. 4-7)



OWL'S OUTSTANDING DONUTS

Yardi, Robin

Carolrhoda (232 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 3, 2019

978-1-5415-3305-9

Trouble abounds when shadowy figures dump mysterious gloop near Owl's Outstanding Donuts.

While the neighborhood sleeps, an owl named Alfred notices the white

truck as it stops and two scoundrels discard the gloop into the creek before leaving again. Worried about the pollution, Alfred alerts a local girl named Mattie Waters. At first, Mattie's slow to act. The recent death of her mother plagues the young girl, who's moved to Big Sur to live with Aunt Molly, owner of Owl's. Summer's ending, fifth grade approaches, and Mattie is finding it hard to move on. She knows, though, that the gloop-pollutant spells trouble for her aunt's renowned doughnut shop. Together with the Little sisters (7-year-old ball of fun Beanie and the older, skeptical Sasha), Mattie must unmask the culprits behind the gloop. Again blending realism with talking animals, Yardi (*The Midnight War of Mateo Martinez*, 2016) devotes a significant number of pages toward unpacking Mattie's grief in her latest novel, a narrative that shuns action in favor of introspection. This tendency mostly works thanks to a robust cast of winning characters and a satisfying emotional arc. The third-person narration sticks to Mattie for the most part, with some excursions into Alfred's amusing point of view. Except for a few peripheral characters, a white default is assumed.

Doughn't miss this earnest tale. (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



MY LIFE AS AN ICE CREAM SANDWICH

Zoboi, Ibi

Illus. by Piper, Anthony

Dutton (256 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 27, 2019

978-0-399-18735-3

Twelve-year-old aspiring astronaut Ebony-Grace Norfleet Freeman is lonely and homesick in New York.

When trouble hits her family like an asteroid, Ebony-Grace, aka Cadet E-Grace Starfleet, is forced to leave her beloved grandfather and her hometown of Huntsville, Alabama, to spend a week with her father in Harlem, New York—or as she calls it, “No Joke City.” Determined to ignore what she calls the “Sonic Boom,” New York’s hip-hop revolution in the early 1980s, Ebony-Grace rejects the people, music, and movements of Harlem, instead blasting off in her mind aboard the Mothership Uhura to save her grandfather, Capt. Fleet. Stuck, Ebony-Grace works to navigate a new frontier where she is teased and called “crazy” because of her imaginative intergalactic adventures. Ostracized as a flava-less, “plain ol’ ice cream sandwich! Chocolate on the outside, vanilla on the inside,” Ebony-Grace tries her best to be “regular and normal,” but her outer-space imaginings are the only things that keep her grounded. The design includes images that sho nuff bring the ’80s alive: comic-strip panels, inverted Star Wars scripting, and onomatopoeic graffiti-esque words. Unfortunately, these serve to interrupt an already-crowded narrative as readers hyperjump between Ebony-Grace’s imagination and the movement of life in the real world, transmitted via news reports and subway memorials.

This middle-grade read is heartfelt, but nostalgia that’s a bit too on the nose makes it hard to follow. (*Historical fiction*. 10-12)

BACK-TO-SCHOOL PICTURE BOOKS



BACK TO SCHOOL A Global Journey

Ajmera, Maya & Ivanko, John D.

Charlesbridge (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 4, 2019

978-1-58089-837-9

Across the globe, schools and the children that attend them are similar and different in so many ways.

Organized by simple statements regarding what, where, and how children study, the book offers photos featuring a wide range of children, from Indigenous children in Brazil to children of multiple races in the United States. Although the pictures and their clear, informative captions are grouped according to commonalities, they also accurately represent how class, culture, and faith influence everything from school uniforms to what it means to be a good citizen. The final pages contain longer, more detailed text that caregivers can use to supplement the facts that are already presented in the book. The book’s illustrations are carefully curated to represent a wide range of regions, faiths, and skin colors, all within an age range that seems to be middle elementary. Laudably, the children pictured in the photos span economic strata as well as geography: The book shows children of different class levels studying in the global south as well as more developed countries. It is refreshing to see images of students studying in a night school in India and a UNESCO-funded school in Rwanda juxtaposed with photographs of what appear to be private school students in India and South Africa. This edition updates a 2001 volume of the same name with a preponderance of new photos, a colorful design, lightly massaged text, and an expanded trim size.

This simple, informative photo essay realistically portrays children’s experiences of schooling around the world. (*Informational picture book*. 3-8)



DRAGONS FROM MARS GO TO SCHOOL

Aronson, Deborah

Illus. by Jack, Colin

Harper/HarperCollins (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 18, 2019

978-0-06-236851-5

Nathaniel and his friends Fred and Molly, the eponymous *Dragons From Mars* (2016), are back, this time attending school on Earth.

Molly and Fred aren’t too sure about going to human school, but Nathaniel assures them they’ll be treated like stars. Molly still worries, and her fears turn out to be well grounded even though they stem from something the dragons have no control

Playful illustrations use texture and shadow to great effect.

THE KING OF KINDERGARTEN



over: their size. The school doors are a problem that some breath-holding and gut-sucking solve, but no one can reconstruct the chair that Fred smashes into pieces, and the kids start to tease him. Molly will have none of it. She quickly launches into a lecture of all the “remarkable stuff” dragons can do, and just like that, the children are friends instead of bullies: “We just didn’t know that you guys were so cool.” Aronson’s verses scan well enough, but there’s nothing inspired in them, and the rhymes are lackluster. While bright, Jack’s digital illustrations fail to make up for the text. Facial expressions are a particular weakness, with the dragons often appearing vacuous. Nathaniel is a white redhead; his classmates are diverse.

Another bullying book that resolves with the bullies’ targets proving their usefulness. Skip. (Picture book. 4-8)



TAKE YOUR PET TO SCHOOL DAY

Ashman, Linda

Illus. by Kaufman, Suzanne

Random House (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-5247-6559-0

978-1-5247-6560-6 PLB

Devious pets change the school rule that bans them and experience a day of chaos and animal love.

The opening spread shows a child holding a letter stating pets will be welcome at school on Friday in one hand, a hedgehog in the other. Turn the page, and every student is arriving with an animal in tow (what about those without pets?). After each class with the animals, the teachers declare the rule change a disaster. Indeed, chaos reigns in the music room, the library, and the art studio. The principal, a brown-skinned woman with short, dark hair, agrees—she didn’t do it. But then, who did? “Meeoowwww.” A neatly printed letter reads: “We do not like your ‘No Pets’ rule. / We miss our kids when they’re at school.” The note is signed “Pets.” The hopeful, pleading faces of the kids win the day—as long as the pets clean up their messes and behave—and the day is a success. But that doesn’t mean the pets’ plan to declare that every day be pet day will fly! Ashman’s verses are bouncy, and Kaufman’s brightly colored artwork will have readers poring over the details in her busy scenes and laughing at all the mischief. The people and their pets are diverse, especially the latter, which include an entire ant farm pulled in a red wagon, a hamster in a ball, a large snake, and a horse.

This will certainly have readers yearning for pet days at their own schools. (Picture book. 4-8)



THE KING OF KINDERGARTEN

Barnes, Derrick

Illus. by Brantley-Newton, Vanessa

Nancy Paulsen Books (32 pp.)

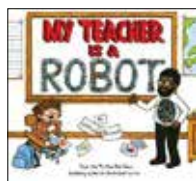
\$17.99 | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-5247-4074-0

Newbery honoree Barnes (*Crown*, illustrated by Gordon C. James, 2017) shows a black boy what to expect on his first day as “king” of kindergarten.

A young boy greets the reader with a sweet smile. “The morning sun blares through your window like a million brass trumpets. / It sits and shines behind your head—like a crown.” The text continues in second person while the boy gets ready for his first day—brushing “Ye Royal Chiclets,” dressing himself, eating breakfast with his mother and father before riding “a big yellow carriage” to “a grand fortress.” The kind teacher and the other children at his table are as eager to meet him as he is to meet them. Important topics are covered in class (“shapes, the alphabet, and the never-ending mystery of numbers”), but playing at recess and sharing with new friends at lunch are highlights too, followed by rest time and music. The playful illustrations use texture and shadow to great effect, with vibrant colors and dynamic shapes and lines sustaining readers’ interest on every page. Text and visuals work together beautifully to generate excitement and confidence in children getting ready to enter kindergarten. The little king’s smiling brown face is refreshing and heartwarming. The other children and parents are a mix of races; the teacher and staff are mostly brown.

Necessary nourishment, infectiously joyous. (Picture book. 3-6)



MY TEACHER IS A ROBOT

Brown, Jeffrey

Illus. by the author

Crown (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jun. 25, 2019

978-0-553-53451-1

978-0-553-53452-8 PLB

In this graphic-novel-style picture book, Fred seeks to add excitement to a boring “robot” teacher’s school day.

Fred’s bedroom wall is plastered with drawings of robots, dinosaurs, and planets; the rug is covered with toy dinosaurs, and a model robot made of recycled materials sits on the floor. At the kitchen table, Fred’s mom, dressed for the office, says goodbye as Fred’s eyes roll. Fred looks warily at Mr. Bailey after being dropped off at school by Dad, who pushes Fred’s baby sibling in a stroller. “Class is SO boring. Everything Mr. Bailey says is robot talk!” While the other students work out their math problems, Fred spots a spider. On the next spread, the spider is shown as the size of the classroom, and Fred leads the class in excited spider talk. At recess, Fred and friends run around as superheroes, battling mud monsters. Thus also pass history and lunch, with the illustrated school scenes seamlessly

It's a great day for Groot and for readers who are fans.

FIRST DAY OF GROOT!

representing the world of Fred's imagination even as Fred complains about Mr. Bailey's lack thereof. The day's climax is a test—creative writing becomes a wordless spread filled with robots, swords, characters in medieval garb, dinosaurs, and unicorns. The vivid illustrations feature strong lines with the look of carefully colored marker-style shading in bright hues. The classroom is racially diverse; Fred is white, the teacher is black. A child named Miriam appears to be gender nonconforming, and another uses arm braces.

An entertaining romp through the mind of a child who refuses to settle for boring. (Picture book. 5-9)



FIRST DAY OF GROOT!

Deneen, Brendan

Illus. by Atkinson, Cale

Marvel Comics (32 pp.)

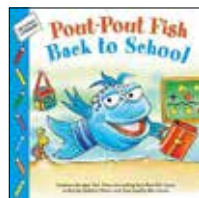
\$12.99 | Jul. 2, 2019

978-1-368-00069-7

Groot and Marvel fans have a new picture book to add to their first-day-of-school shelves.

Rhyming text leads readers through Groot's first day of school. He wakes up at home in his flowerpot, eats breakfast ("It gives you the strength / to run and play," though it appears to be sugary cereal), and boards the spaceship bus with Rocket Raccoon. The tongue-in-cheek lessons the pair learn are similar to those readers will experience in their own classrooms (in content though not in the look of the school), albeit injected with a heavy dose of Marvel violence and bad-guy vanquishing. Sharing, counting, and spelling are all learned before lunch, when friends gather. Teamwork is tackled afterward, when Thanos attacks, and the last lesson involves music. It's a great day for Groot, and for readers who are fans, this will certainly hit the spot, though the draw will surely be the bright, cinematic illustrations that are full of details to delight those familiar with the Marvel Universe; much is lost for those not in the know, and the text is lackluster.

A back-to-school book solely for Marvel fans. (Picture book. 4-7)



POUT-POUT FISH BACK TO SCHOOL

Diesen, Deborah

Illus. by Hanna, Dan

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (24 pp.)

\$5.99 paper | May 14, 2019

978-0-374-31047-9

Series: Pout-Pout Fish

Mr. Fish provides a glimpse of a substitute teacher's first day of school.

Though it's not the official first day of school for everyone, it is the first day Mr. Fish will be a sub. At the school entrance, he meets a small, nervous little fry wearing glasses who is just starting school. Pout-Pout Fish tells him they will have to help

each other, and they do, each one drawing on his own confidence and skills when the other is lacking. Mr. Fish remembers where the classroom is, and the fry breaks the ice for the nervous teacher by asking him to tell the class about his own school days. Mr. Fish shares his lunch when the little fish realizes he's forgotten his, and the fry invites Mr. Fish to play with the students at recess (their ball is the clam they all recently sat with at lunch). It's a successful day for everyone. Hanna's cartoon illustrations share the same animation aesthetic that marks the series. This is meant for a younger crowd than the original Pout-Pout Fish books, and this title includes sheets of stickers in the front and back (evidently for general decoration, as there is no indication they should be applied to the book).

Fans of Pout-Pout Fish will get a new perspective in this back-to-school title that shows even adults get nervous when facing the new and unknown. (Picture book. 3-5)



SORRY, GROWN-UPS, YOU CAN'T GO TO SCHOOL!

Geist, Christina

Illus. by Bowers, Tim

Random House (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jul. 16, 2019

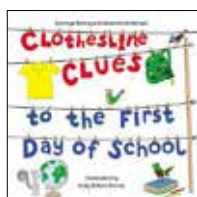
978-1-5247-7084-6

978-1-5247-7085-3 PLB

In a reverse of the back-to-school books featuring teachers reluctant to face the first day, this one spotlights some grown-ups who long to head back to the classroom.

Buddy is back (*Buddy's Bedtime Battery*, 2016), joined by his sister, Lady, and the two are getting ready for school, but first they have to dissuade some overeager adults. Mom is thrilled with her new backpack; she's wearing it to school, but: "You can't go to school. / Only kids and teachers. / Only kids and teachers." Dad's got new high-tops. He hears the same refrain, as do Grandma, Grandpa, and their dog. Then come the wheedling and whining: "It's not fair." The grown-ups want to play alphabet games, do science experiments, have recess, etc. The kids are apologetic and try to sweeten the disappointment, promising they can go to the playground on the way home. A parting shot raises the adults' eyebrows and may hint at another book: "Don't forget—tomorrow we get to go to work with *you*!" This topsy-turvy plot may get readers pumped about school, but the funny premise and humor are eroded by the refrain, which gets old long before it stops. Bowers' bright illustrations delight with the characters' expressive faces. Buddy and Lady's family is white; other students are diverse.

While the premise beckons, it may not sustain repeat readings. (Picture book. 4-8)



CLOTHESLINE CLUES TO THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Heling, Kathryn & Hembrook, Deborah

Illus. by Davies, Andy Robert

Charlesbridge (40 pp.)

\$14.99 | Jun. 11, 2019

978-1-58089-824-9

Series: Clothesline Clues

Following *Jobs People Do* (2012) and *Sports People Play* (2015), Heling, Hembrook, and Davies are back with another Clothesline Clues book, this time focusing on the different roles people might play in a school.

As with the earlier books, a short stanza sets up the scene: "High on the clotheslines / hang clue after clue. / It's the first day of school! / Who wants to meet you?" The two spreads that follow first encourage readers to guess whose belongings are hanging on the clothesline and then reveal the answer. A coat; yellow hat, gloves, and safety vest; and a hand-held stop sign must belong to "your crossing guard." A classroom teacher's things include a button-down shirt, bow tie, sport coat, book bag, and a class roster. The other jobs include cafeteria cook, custodian, and gym and art teachers. The final clothesline holds myriad pants, shirts, dresses, scarves, coats, and backpacks that belong to the new friends anxious to meet readers. Davies' people are diverse in race and ability (several wear glasses, and one uses a wheelchair), and one girl wears hijab. Most of the adults are the opposite gender of the typical stereotype: Both the classroom teacher and the cafeteria worker are brown-skinned men, and the gym teacher and custodian are brown-skinned women. Davies' bright pencil, mixed-media, and digital illustrations feature white backgrounds to help readers focus on the clues and on the things they will notice in their own classrooms.

Another solid entry. (Picture book. 3-7)



THE BEST SEAT IN KINDERGARTEN

Kenah, Katharine

Illus. by Carter, Abby

Harper/HarperCollins (32 pp.)

\$4.99 paper | Jun. 18, 2019

978-0-06-268640-4

A beginning reader introduces readers to one little boy and his method for making new friends.

It's the first day of kindergarten, and none of the nervous kids know where to sit. Ms. Tate bypasses this problem by taking them all out for a nature walk: "Find something interesting. Then show us what you found." Each of Sam's classmates is looking for a different item to add to their bag: Sophie seeks rocks, Miguel's collecting bugs, Lily wants pine cones, Ollie's picking flowers, and Nina is bagging acorns. Sam adds to each of their collections, but his own bag remains empty. So when it's time to share what they found, Sam's response is "Friends!" Meant for shared reading between an

experienced reader and a new learner, this My First level title in the I Can Read! line features lots of repetition, patterned text, and short sentences (though the vocabulary poses an appropriate challenge). One niggling detail is the inapt title of this book. When the kids reenter the classroom, they all suddenly know where to sit without instruction. Carter's watercolors provide context clues and depict a diverse classroom; Sam presents white while Ms. Tate has pale skin and straight, black hair.

Young readers may well be spurred to use Sam's methodology on their own first days. (Early reader. 3-7)



YOUR FIRST DAY OF CIRCUS SCHOOL

Lazar, Tara

Illus. by Crowton, Melissa

Tundra (40 pp.)

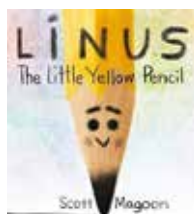
\$17.99 | Jun. 4, 2019

978-0-73526-371-0

In this feel-good story, an older brother helps his younger sibling navigate the first day of circus school.

Even at regular school, the first day can seem very chaotic, and for this dark-skinned, Afro-haired sibling duo, it is no different at circus school. Beginning with choosing the right clothes (the child tries on a daredevil suit, a ringmaster's outfit, a cat costume, and several types of clown suit) and eating a balanced breakfast (literally—it's a teetering tower of bowls and plates), the first day is made easier for the unnamed protagonist thanks to this big brother who declares he will "show you the ropes." With a limited palette of bright yellow, turquoise, fuchsia, and gray, these retro-flavored digital illustrations are playful and inviting, providing details that expand on the text and make literal what could be read as metaphorical. "The bus has an ENDLESS number of seats," declares the big brother, and the illustration depicts a smiling multitude of child clowns piling out of a yellow VW Beetle. Similarly, the "tall kid" the big brother warns his sibling "not to sit behind" is an elephant. Both adults and children depicted in this unusual school are racially diverse.

Whether getting ready for school themselves or relating to the comfort of having a loved one as a guide, young readers will enjoy this upbeat twist on the genre. (Picture book. 4-8)



LINUS THE LITTLE YELLOW PENCIL

Magoon, Scott

Illus. by the author

Disney-Hyperion (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jun. 4, 2019

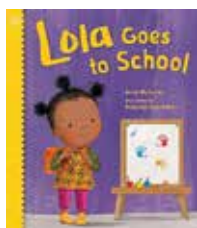
978-1-368-00627-9

A pencil goes through an existential crisis when his eraser criticizes his art.

The upcoming art show and its attendant grand prize have got Linus, a little yellow pencil, and all the other art supplies

(crayons, a paintbrush, and a ruler, among others) very excited. But at the other end from Linus' point, eraser Ernie is extremely critical of Linus' drawings. Ernie moves from embarrassment at their quality to outright anger, and he takes it out on Linus. The pencil's cheerful expression soon morphs from worry through sadness and shock to depression as Linus watches the other supplies creating beautiful work. Then, "feeling dull," Linus meets Smudge in a "cave" (a pencil sharpener) and gets some solid advice about using the talents you have when you are able: "Find your path by drawing it." And Linus does just that, finding a way for him to draw and for Ernie to erase that creates something totally new and different. Readers will notice that although their work attracts a crowd at the show, no grand prize is awarded, which makes the ending more of a fizzle than a finale. Magoon's digital artwork uses scanned paper textures manipulated in Photoshop, with color used masterfully—the result emphasizes the different looks achieved by using the various art supplies. The simple but expressive faces on the implements are standouts.

Magoon gets his message across: Be the best you you can be. (Picture book. 4-8)



LOLA GOES TO SCHOOL

McQuinn, Anna
Illus. by Beardshaw, Rosalind
 Charlesbridge (32 pp.)
 \$15.99 | Jun. 11, 2019
 978-1-58089-938-3
 Series: Lola & Leo

After years of everyday joys with McQuinn and Beardshaw's Lola, readers now watch her start school.

It "will be a bit like story time at the library, but Lola will stay by herself." The little black girl "knows what to expect" because she's visited the school with her mom. She is prepared with gifts from loved ones—"fun pencils" from Nana, a water bottle from Ty. The night before her "big day," Lola lays out her outfit. In the morning, she tucks her stuffed kitty, Dinah, in her bag and poses for a snapshot. In the classroom, Miss Suzan, a white woman, shows her where to put her things. Lola spends time reading with her friend Julia, who has pale skin and black hair, and then they play dress-up. Her mom sits for a while before saying goodbye. After snack time and more play, there is circle time. Of course, "Lola knows the song and all the motions." Picking Lola up at the end of the day, Mommy hugs her daughter. Beardshaw's soft, slightly smudgy illustrations allow young readers to focus on one cozy moment at a time. Even at this milestone, Lola still appears quite tiny, and the text is no more complex than in previous books, making this a seamless transition from Lola's younger days to her new life in school.

Both perfect for Lola fans and likely to earn her ever more readers. (Picture book. 3-5)



HANNAH SPARKLES Hooray for the First Day of School!

Mellom, Robin
Illus. by Brantley-Newton, Vanessa
 Harper/HarperCollins (32 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jun. 18, 2019
 978-0-06-232234-0

A girl with enthusiasm to spare has some trouble making new friends at school, just as she did with a new neighbor in her eponymous debut (2017).

The first few spreads showing Hannah with her family demonstrate that Hannah can be a bit much to take. She "hugs" the mail carrier around the neck from behind, and her glitter bomb doesn't go over well with her grandmother, who uses a walker. Hannah has strong opinions, and she shares them, often neglecting to listen to others. This means her first day of first grade doesn't go as she imagined. In fact, it's pretty miserable. Then Hannah's teacher encourages her to visit the "refill station," where she can have some quiet time to "Sit. Think. Refill. Then come try again." Without classmates to talk to, Hannah is forced to watch and listen, and soon she's ready to try using those skills with her new friends. While it's hard to swallow that Hannah shifts modes so easily, the idea of a refill station is one that readers can try on their own or with teacher help. Brantley-Newton's hand-sketched digital illustrations keep the focus on the characters' emotions, their faces and body language spot-on. Hannah presents white with brown hair, her class is diverse, and her teacher has light-brown skin and brown hair.

Personalities don't usually change as quickly as Hannah's does, but the strategy introduced that prompts it is a sound one. (Picture book. 4-8)



IF ANIMALS WENT TO SCHOOL

Paul, Ann Whitford
Illus. by Walker, David
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux (32 pp.)
 \$16.99 | May 14, 2019
 978-0-374-30902-2
 Series: If Animals

Paul and Walker continue their If Animals series with this look at animals attending school.

Just what would an all-animal school look like? How would students and teachers behave? Previous series outings each had their strengths and weaknesses, and this one, unfortunately, seems to combine all of the latter. While the array of fauna is a plus, the students are just labeled with the adult name—Beaver, Lemming, etc.—missing the opportunity to teach kids the names for animal young that made *If Animals Kissed Good Night* (2008) stand out. Worse, though, is the fact that many of the animals don't stand out as exemplifying their behaviors, instead merely highlighting what happens at school: Elephant stacks cardboard blocks in a tower, Mouse plays with shapes, Bear "hog[s] the triangles," and Beaver is the reluctant student

Slack deftly portrays Fang's every emotion.

NUGGET & FANG GO TO SCHOOL

whose parent drags him to school. "Fox would rush to the story nook, / and bark-bark, 'Goat! Stop eating that book.' " Well, at least Goat is doing what goats often do, even if Fox is acting a lot more like a herd dog than a predator. Onomatopoeia is emphasized throughout, and young listeners will likely enjoy chiming in on the sound effects, though the rhythm and rhyme are inconsistent. Walker's illustrations are softly colored and delightfully adorable.

Lacking the perfect pairings of animal and behavior, this one just doesn't stand out. (Picture book. 3-6)



PIRATES DON'T GO TO KINDERGARTEN!

Robinson, Lisa

Illus. by Kaban, Eda

Two Lions (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-5420-9275-3

An imaginative pirate preschooler has a hard time adjusting to a new captain in kindergarten.

Not only is beloved preschool teacher Cap'n Chu not the captain of the kindergarten ship, but it doesn't even sail the seas—it's a spaceship! This is too much for pirate Emma to take, and she falls back to reboarding the preschool ship: "Pirates don't go to kindergarten!" Despite repeated efforts on the parts of Cap'n Chu, new teacher Cap'n Hayes, and a fellow kindergartener, Emma continues to cling to Cap'n Chu until she gets the reassurance she needs that her former teacher will miss her too but will always be available for a visit. With that, space pirate Emma finally reports to her new ship. Kaban's digital illustrations go to town with the metaphor, depicting school as a mix of reality and imagination: Emma swims, wooden cutlass in her teeth, back to the preschool room. Emma's portrayed with a peg leg in one picture, and the kindergarten guinea pig's fur makes it look like it wears an eye patch. Otherwise, the pirate trope is limited to bandannas and striped shirts. Emma presents white; the other students are diverse; Cap'n Chu presents Asian; and Cap'n Hayes has brown skin and white hair. Unfortunately, awkward renderings of her head and face may remind readers of a monkey's.

It's tough to walk the plank and leave beloved captains behind; this may make the transition a little easier. (Picture book. 4-8)



NUGGET & FANG GO TO SCHOOL

Sauer, Tammi

Illus. by Slack, Michael

Clarion (32 pp.)

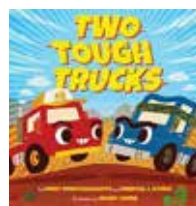
\$17.99 | Jun. 25, 2019

978-1-328-54826-9

A shark attends Mini Minnows Elementary with his best bud, a minnow, but his day is not a smooth one in this return for *Nugget & Fang* (2013).

Nugget and Fang are best friends, a relationship facilitated by the shark's vegetarian diet. Though most other sea creatures panic and flee the *extremely* toothy Fang, the mini minnows are an exception; in their previous outing, Fang saved them from being a menu item. To thank him, they invite Fang to school. The shark is excited, but anxiety hits on the first day, and the giant shark is plagued by questions and what-ifs that his tiny friend just takes in stride. Nugget's mantra is "You'll be fine." But Fang is decidedly not fine: He struggles in every subject and suffers through many mishaps. The final straw lands at the end of the day, when all the fish are expected to share something with the class. After flailing and flopping his way through the school day, Fang doesn't want to present. When it's finally his turn, his anxiety has his fins and his tongue tied in knots. But then he spies Nugget, his best friend, and he has no doubt about what is most important for everyone to know. The Photoshop illustrations are bright and colorful. Slack deftly portrays Fang's every emotion, his toothy frowns and worried eyebrows complementing his slumped body and dorsal fin. Readers will no doubt feel empathetic.

Yes, Fang, you'll be fine with your fishy friend by your side. (Picture book. 4-8)



TWO TOUGH TRUCKS

Schwartz, Corey Rosen & Gomez, Rebecca J.

Illus. by Leung, Hilary

Orchard/Scholastic (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 17, 2019

978-1-338-23654-5

They are both trucks, but diametrically opposing personalities make them a mechanized odd couple.

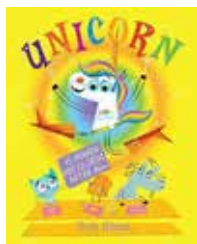
New-school jitters may render some trucks wobbly in the gears, but for others it's an opportunity for fun. Outgoing Mack is a go-getter who loves to take risks while quiet Rig is eaten up with anxiety. When their bespectacled teacher, a semi named Miss Rhodes (what else?), pairs them up on a twisty track, the two have a hard time finding their groove. Mack is constantly leaving Rig in his dust, but when the time comes for some tricky backward driving, the speedster discovers that sometimes having a patient friend is worth more than getting ahead. Evoking a dry and dusty Western landscape rife with cactuses and roadrunners, Leung manipulates his digital art to make his vehicular characters as demonstrative as possible. The little Rig

Details in the cartoon illustrations will keep readers coming back.

UNICORN IS MAYBE NOT SO GREAT AFTER ALL

in particular has expressive eyebrows that knot into a perfect curlieue when worried and slope and dip with every disappointment. Refreshingly, the authors do not dodge the truth that sometimes you will finish last. But while tears may be shed, it is by no means the end of your race.

Looks like the first-day-of-school genre just got a high-octane upgrade. (Picture book. 4-6)



UNICORN IS MAYBE NOT SO GREAT AFTER ALL

Shea, Bob

Illus. by the author

Disney-Hyperion (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 9, 2019

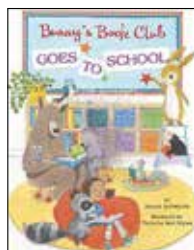
978-1-368-00944-7



Following *Unicorn Thinks He's Pretty Great* (2013), the extra-special equine is back for the first day of school, and he's having trouble with the fact that he doesn't stand out in the crowd.

Thinking quite highly of himself, Unicorn is confident on the first day while best friend Goat suffers from "contractually obligated first-day jitters." But later, their situations are reversed. Unicorn is chagrined that all anyone can focus on are "rubber bands that look like other things" (Shea skewers the decade-old Silly Bandz craze). Unicorn decides to regain the spotlight with a new, improved version of himself: He'll be a "new-nicorn," complete with rainbow wig and fake tail, colored contacts, "horn enhancer," and an attitude and personality to match. His friends' reactions don't faze him in the slightest: "Why are you drawn like that?" a pig speculates metafactively. But his narcissism and lack of respect for other people's space and boundaries mean he tromps (sometimes literally) all over his peers. "Go home, Unicorn!" A depressed and depressing day at home ends with the doorbell: Unicorn's friends have missed him even though he's "been super-annoying." Hysterical side commentary and even funnier details in the cartoon illustrations will keep readers coming back again and again for more of Shea's irreverent, tongue-in-cheek humor.

And if readers learn a lesson about humility along the way? That's just the icing on Unicorn's flaming birthday cakes. (Picture book. 4-8)



BUNNY'S BOOK CLUB GOES TO SCHOOL

Silvestro, Annie

Illus. by Mai-Wyss, Tatjana

Doubleday (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jun. 18, 2019

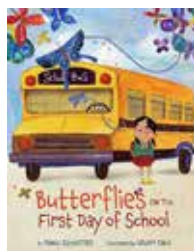
978-0-525-64464-4

978-0-525-64465-1 PLB

Bunny goes to school to accompany his book buddy from the library.

Now that Bunny and his friends have library cards (*Bunny's Book Club*, 2017), they meet every Saturday to enjoy all that the library has to offer: audiobooks, the computer, arts and crafts, puzzles, and, of course, books. For Bunny, Saturdays mean spending time with his new book buddy, Josie, who recommends and helps him read new books. But one fall day, Josie isn't herself. She's worried about making friends in her new school. Bunny's solution? Why, to be her friend at school, of course. Monday's parade to school grows and grows until all nine animal book-club friends are at the school searching for Josie... and then, one by one, the animals are distracted by all the new places and interesting things going on: basketball, a computer room, the science lab. Only Bunny is left to find Josie. And then he enters the library. Will he remember his goal? Friendship wins out in the end, and everyone finishes the school day with new pals. Mai-Wyss' animals are endearing and full of curiosity, kindness, and caring. Josie and the librarian have brown skin and Afro-textured hair; the schoolchildren are diverse.

Silvestro and Mai-Wyss make plain the joys of intellectual curiosity and exploration, and their message is clear: Libraries and schools are wonderful places to learn, grow, and seek your joy. (Picture book. 4-8)



BUTTERFLIES ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Silvestro, Annie

Illus. by Chen, Dream

Sterling (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | May 7, 2019

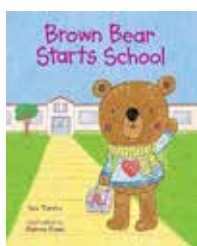
978-1-4549-2119-6

Rosie has been looking forward to the first day of school for a month, practicing writing her letters and raising her hand. But the night before the big day, she begins to have second thoughts.

"I don't feel well," she says the next morning. "You just have butterflies in your belly," her mother replies with a hug. And sure enough, when a girl on the school bus asks her name, a butterfly escapes from Rosie's mouth along with the answer. Rosie's trepidation about new experiences tugs on readers' hearts, but as the butterflies that only she can see are released every time she participates in class, her expressions grow more confident and joyful. Finally, Rosie uses her new confidence to help another classmate who looks like she has a belly full of butterflies as well. Colorful illustrations depict children

of varying skin tones with surprisingly expressive round black eyes; Rosie and her family present subtly Asian. Young readers who are worried about school will find a reassuring way to put their feelings into words, and the warm ending gives a wink to caregivers who may also find themselves feeling nervous about the first day of school.

Silvestro and Chen take a common figure of speech and transform it, literally, into a lovely expression of a universal experience. (Picture book. 4-6)



BROWN BEAR STARTS SCHOOL

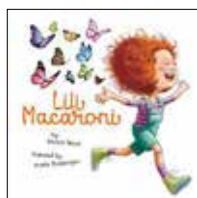
Tarsky, Sue
Illus. by Aizen, Marina
 Whitman (32 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Aug. 1, 2019
 978-0-8075-0773-5

Despite some jitters, Brown Bear not only survives his first day; he helps others

succeed as well.

Brown Bear and his family have done everything they can in preparation: goodbyes from his father and older brother, lunch-box packed, money for milk, and a new sweater, scarf, and book-bag. But still, he's worried: What if the other students don't like him? What if he can't hear the teacher? What if he's not wearing the right clothes? His mother talks him through each worry: Many of his friends will be at school; he will hear her even if she whispers; and if his clothes aren't right, they'll go shopping. Sure enough, his friends are at school, and they are all dressed similarly. More importantly, though, Brown Bear keeps his friend safe when their ball goes over the fence and is welcoming when Baby Bunny, who's new to the area, needs a friend. Troublingly, a major focus seems to be on material things and fitting in. Baby Bunny is quick to explain that while her lunch is in a paper bag, she and her mother are going shopping after school. This will exclude kids who can't afford the typical back-to-school shopping trip as well as those who march to a different drummer. Aizen's illustrations are charming, the simple backgrounds and scribbly style reminiscent of a child's artwork.

The materialistic focus limits the audience for this title. (Picture book. 4-6)



LILI MACARONI

Testa, Nicole
Illus. by Boulanger, Annie
 Pajama Press (32 pp.)
 \$17.95 | Aug. 15, 2019
 978-1-77278-093-2

Self-confidence is hard to come by when classmates make fun of the things that make Lili Macaroni herself.

Butterfly-loving Lili opens by telling readers where her signature traits came from: She's got Mom's red hair, Dad's freckles,

Grandma's eyes, and Grandpa's "magical laugh." She proclaims: "I am the way I am." But when Lili starts school, not only does she learn the three R's, she learns "that a heart can ache" when her new friends tease her for those very special family traits. Lili tries to become a new girl, renaming herself Sophia, but how will her family members feel if she erases their parts? Luckily, Lili's wise father has a suggestion for easing the ache that also taps into her passion. He doesn't solve the problem for her; Lili herself takes the next step to let her class know why she has been so sad. And the next school day, everyone sports a polka-dot butterfly on their shoulder to help with their own heart-aches. The tale ends with an older Lili, her bedroom ceiling a mass of butterflies. "My name is Lili Macaroni, and I am who I am." Boulanger's changing perspectives and use of shadows to stand in for other kids' teasing set the mood, Lili's exuberant brightness changing to more somber tones with her sadness. Lili and her family are white; there is one black classmate.

From Québec, a wonderfully empowering message to be yourself, with a strategy to ease heartache added for good measure. (Picture book. 4-8)



EVEN MONSTERS GO TO SCHOOL

Wheeler, Lisa
Illus. by Van Dusen, Chris
 Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (32 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jun. 18, 2019
 978-0-06-236642-9

A grown-up monster describes in rhyming verse how monsters of all types go to school, and so must this child monster, no matter how glum about the prospect.

The copyright page and first spread show a very reluctant monster coming down the stairs, dragging a bouncing backpack, to a breakfast of mush. No text sets up this situation. Instead, the text reads "When Bigfoot wakes, he combs his hair..." which is confusing since none of that is shown. The page turn then syncs text with image, showing Bigfoot jumping out of a tree to catch the bus: "and steps out in the morning air. / Yellow bus is waiting there. // Even Bigfoot goes to school." The rhyming, smartly scanning stanzas continue, showing that Frankenstein (the monster, wearing Converse-like shoes), dragons, Yeti, bridge trolls, the Loch Ness Monster, Jack's giant, and aliens all go to school. The last few spreads return to the titular monster, blue-furred with yellow horns and purple stripe and sporting a pink dress and purple backpack, getting ready and then happily waving goodbye while headed to the bus. Van Dusen's gouache illustrations are spring-bright and cheerful, every (nonscary) imaginary beast delighting in some aspect of school. Once past the opening narrative hiccup, young readers will delight in the premise and in the myriad visual details, which do include gender-binary restrooms in one scene.

Every monster, imaginary or not, will enjoy this and hopefully also find something to enjoy about school. (Picture book. 3-7)





THE PIGEON HAS TO GO TO SCHOOL!

Willems, Mo
Illus. by the author
 Hyperion (40 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Jul. 2, 2019
 978-1-368-04645-9
 Series: Pigeon



All the typical worries and excuses kids have about school are filtered through Willems' hysterical, bus-loving Pigeon.

Told mostly in speech balloons, the bird's monologue will have kids (and their caregivers) in stitches at Pigeon's excuses. From already knowing everything (except whatever question readers choose to provide in response to "Go ahead—ask me a question. / Any question!") to fearing learning too much ("My head might pop off"), Pigeon's imagination has run wild. Readers familiar with Pigeon will recognize the muted, matte backgrounds that show off the bird's shenanigans so well. As in previous outings, Willems varies the size of the pigeon on the page to help communicate emotion, the bird teeny small on the double-page spread that illustrates the confession that "I'm... / scared." And Pigeon's eight-box rant about all the perils of school ("The unknown stresses me out, dude") is marvelously followed by the realization (complete with lightbulb thought bubble) that school is the place for students to practice, with experts, all those skills they don't yet have. But it is the ending that is so Willems, so Pigeon, and so perfect. Pigeon's last question is "Well, HOW am I supposed to get there, anyway?!" Readers will readily guess both the answer and Pigeon's reaction.

Yes, the Pigeon *has* to go to school, and so do readers, and this book will surely ease the way. (Picture book. 3-6)



SO BIG!

Wohnoutka, Mike
Illus. by the author
 Bloomsbury (32 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jul. 2, 2019
 978-1-5476-0079-3



Using just six words, Wohnoutka manages to spin a complete school story.

The shiny gouache illustrations do the heavy lifting, supporting the words "so," "big," "not," "too," "just," and "right" that are repeated throughout. The first spread shows Bear waking up in a sunny bedroom. A red star marks Sept. 4 on the wall calendar, and there's a backpack on the floor: "So big." Bear continues to feel capable and confident while dressing, eating breakfast, packing a bag, tying shoes, and standing at the bus stop (there is nary an adult in sight) next to a nervous elephant and squirrel. Then the bus arrives, dwarfing Bear, and this contrast and the font indicate a change: "SO big." The other students on the bus (rhino, hippo, giraffe...) are "So BIG," and the school is "SO BIG!" Bear is suddenly "Not so big." But then Bear spies Squirrel, who is crying and feeling even smaller and less ready than Bear. Wordlessly, Bear, a model of empathy,

holds out a hand, and together, the two brave the hallways, which are "Not *so* big..." meet their teacher, and find that their classroom is "Just right!" Wohnoutka's animal cast is beautifully expressive, and his use of relative size within compositions is masterful, easily getting across to readers how the world feels to Bear and Squirrel.

Even the most school-ready kid can have doubts, but with a friend, nothing will seem too big to handle. (Picture book. 3-6)



CODZILLA

Zeltser, David
Illus. by Chapman, Jared
 Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jun. 11, 2019
 978-0-06-257067-3

A big cod's struggles with bullying come to an end when he saves the school from a shark.

Bertie is one huge cod, towering over every other student in his school. Because they fear him and his strength, they side with Maxwell in his bullying of Bertie, chiming in when Maxwell asks, "Hey guys, what's this beast's name again?" "CODZILLA!" Bertie might be a bit clumsy, but he is a gentle cod who loves to read about sharks in the school library. But even mild-mannered fish can get pushed too far, and when running, hiding, and playing dead don't alleviate the bullying, Bertie takes care of Maxwell by eating him...and all the witnesses. Their racket drives Bertie to sneeze them out again, but the bullying gets worse until the day Bertie turns hero by putting all his shark knowledge (and his huge stomach capacity) to good use. While it's refreshing to see the reversal of size stereotypes, with a small bully and a large target, it's unfortunate that the bullying only ends when Bertie becomes useful. The fish in Chapman's Photoshop illustrations are shaped like bullets with various colored and shaped fins and remarkably expressive, rather goofy faces. All "walk" upright on their fins, and the atmosphere is extremely dry despite the presence of watery plants and the occasional bubble. Don't miss the titles of the library books.

This fish tail is amusing, though it won't help kids who find themselves in Bertie's shoes. (Picture book. 4-8)

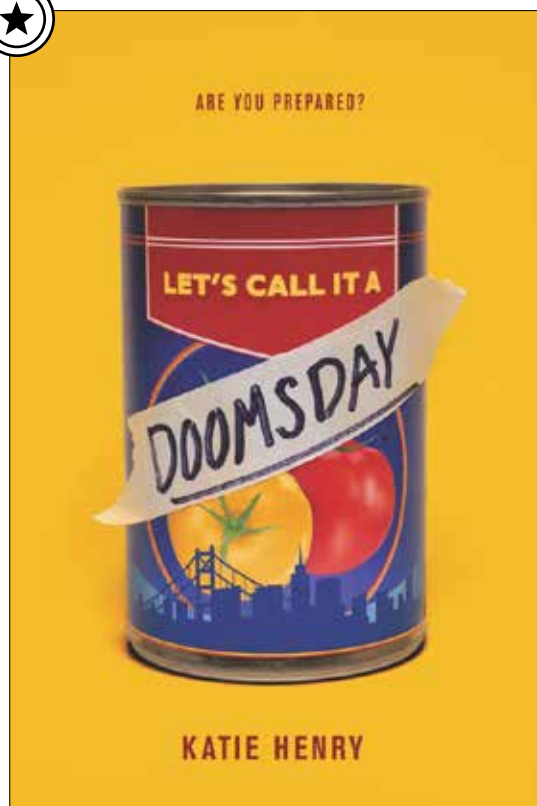
YOUNG ADULT



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

LET'S CALL IT A DOOMSDAY by Katie Henry 139

THE MERCIFUL CROW by Margaret Owen 146



LET'S CALL IT A DOOMSDAY

Henry, Katie

Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins (400 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-06-269890-2



HERE THERE ARE MONSTERS

Bérubé, Amelinda

Illus. by McNaughton, Danielle

Sourcebooks Fire (352 pp.)

\$10.99 paper | Aug. 1, 2019

978-1-4926-7101-5

A creepy, insidious tale that shows how treacherous a sister's attachment can be.

After a move, two teenage sisters find themselves in a new home on the edge of the woods, where Skye branches out while introspective Deirdre finds solace playing games her sister no longer has patience for. When Deirdre vanishes, Skye is forced to reexamine the past choices she made to protect her sister and must decide if she will face the grim, irreversible consequences of saving Deirdre again. These memories form a haunting exposition that Bérubé (*The Dark Beneath the Ice*, 2018) uses in conjunction with the plot to covertly insert suspense. They are so seamlessly executed that readers can forget whether they are in Skye's past or present world. This does conjure up some confusion but also creates an immersive, nuanced world and characters who can't be labeled as merely "good" or "bad." Three section breaks named after different characters have lush illustrations of flora and fauna and lines quoting poet Gwendolyn McEwen that act as an aesthetic backdrop to the actual story; each is narrated from Skye's first-person perspective. All characters default to white.

For those who are not faint of heart, morally or otherwise, and who wish to sink into an intricate, subtle, and deeply unsettling read. (Horror. 14-18)



HELLO GIRLS

Cavallaro, Brittany & Henry, Emily

Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins

(336 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-06-280342-9

Two high school seniors escape their hostile homes in a stolen car, headed from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to Las Vegas on a crime spree that turns more dangerous as they rack up the miles.

Winona Olsen is a rich girl whose mother is dead and whose father, Stormy, a beloved local meteorologist, secretly and regularly abuses her. Lucille Pryce lives in poverty with her

#OWNVOICES FANTASIES WITH ASIAN SETTINGS



GOING BEYOND TALLYING the number of books with inclusive content, it is critical that we consider how certain groups are portrayed when they do appear. How often is a black girl the lead in a lighthearted romance? How often are Native characters professional, suburban, middle-class people?

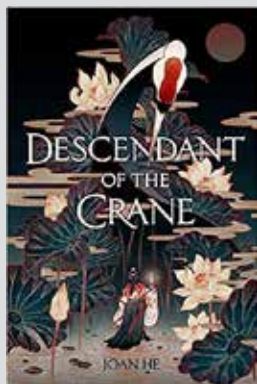
These gaps speak powerfully to deeply embedded limitations in our imaginations, with those who are unaccustomed to thinking about race and representation possibly never consciously grappling with these omissions.

When it comes to stereotypes of Asian Americans, it is still unfortunately common to encounter the conformist, conventionally overachieving type. Nothing could be more at odds with the spirit of adventure, exploration, and throwing off the shackles of the mundane that is integral to the fantasy world. Yes, Orientalist tropes creep into fantasies by white authors, but those are not depictions likely to resonate with young readers of Asian descent (apart from the fact that the “Asian” cultures in these stories are frequently presented as backward and inferior).

This spring and summer see the release of a cluster of #ownvoices fantasies infused with Asian elements. I do not want to label this a trend, as I hope it is a sign of the new normal that will

open the floodgates to fantasies drawing upon other underrepresented cultural backgrounds, further decolonizing young people’s imaginations.

Descendant of the Crane by Joan He (April 2) is an intricate and original fantasy that is an ideal read for those who appreciate the



twists and turns of courtly intrigue, set in a world inspired by the Chinese stories the author grew up with.

In a multicultural South Asian city once attacked by djinn, a diverse array of humans lives peacefully together. *The Candle and the Flame* by Nafiza Azad (May 14) is a lush, richly textured debut novel for readers who enjoy descriptive storytelling.

Those who like action-packed page-turners should pick up *Stronger Than a Bronze Dragon* by Mary Fan (June 11), a dramatic, Chinese-inspired fantasy in which the heroine embarks on a dangerous quest to recover a valuable pearl.

Wicked Fox by debut novelist Kat Cho (June 25) centers on a gumiho, a nine-tailed fox character popular in Korean folklore. An element of romance adds sweetness to this story of a teen who must kill to survive—but tries to do so mercifully.



With an East Asian setting, *Spin the Dawn* by Elizabeth Lim (July 9) follows a young woman who must complete a series of daunting tasks while disguised as a boy as she pushes back against gender limitations in palace culture.



Still missing are fantasies with Southeast Asian settings, especially important given that historical fiction about the Vietnam War forms the bulk of what is typically published about

this region, and we’re missing out on some incredible stories. —L.S.

Laura Simeon is the young adult editor.

struggling single mother and threatening, drug-dealing older brother, Marcus. The girls first meet one night outside the police station, bruised and hurt. Instead of reporting the familial crimes, they go to a bar and begin a friendship. It proves a lifeline when soon they are running for their lives: Winona from her father's rage when she uncovers proof of a lie he has told and Lucille from Marcus after she steals his stash to stop him dealing. As they drive off together, they reflect upon the ways in which their lives have been scripted by men—and experiment with taking their power back. The girls' voices are authentic, and readers will enjoy a feeling of female empowerment as they follow them on their road trip (Lucille turns out to be an accomplished card counter and Winona is a pool whiz). The book follows a white default.

Drawing inspiration from *Thelma & Louise*, this book provides a fun, fast-paced plot with resourceful feminist protagonists. (authors' note) (Fiction. 14-18)



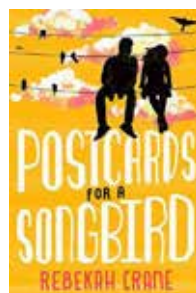
HOUSE OF SALT AND SORROWS

Craig, Erin A.
Delacorte (416 pp.)
\$18.99 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-9848-3192-7

Mysterious deaths plague an island dukedom in a loose retelling of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses."

Annaleigh Thaumass has spent the last few years mourning her mother and several sisters, who died in succession under increasingly eerie circumstances. Her remaining sisters chafe under the lifestyle restrictions of formal mourning on their small, isolated island home, especially their inability to wear pretty clothes and flirt with boys. When their young stepmother persuades their duke father to let them wear bright colors and start dancing again, Annaleigh and her sisters are relieved, especially when a mystical door in the family crypt conveniently transports them to glamorous ballrooms that provide venues to show off their new wardrobes. Annaleigh and her sisters read like interchangeable paper dolls, their painstakingly described gowns, jewels, and shoes the most distinguishing features about them; they spend their time screaming, swooning, and alternately competing for and cowering behind the men in their lives. The island setting is extremely one-note, as if an ocean-themed children's party became an entire culture, and there is no consistent interior logic to the rules of magic and gods that seem to shift, like the tides and the weather, according to narrative convenience. The writing is self-consciously stiff, and the story reads like a mood board, full of repetitively atmospheric images and scenes but never creating a substantive whole. All characters are white.

More about costume than character or story. (Fairy tale retelling. 14-18)

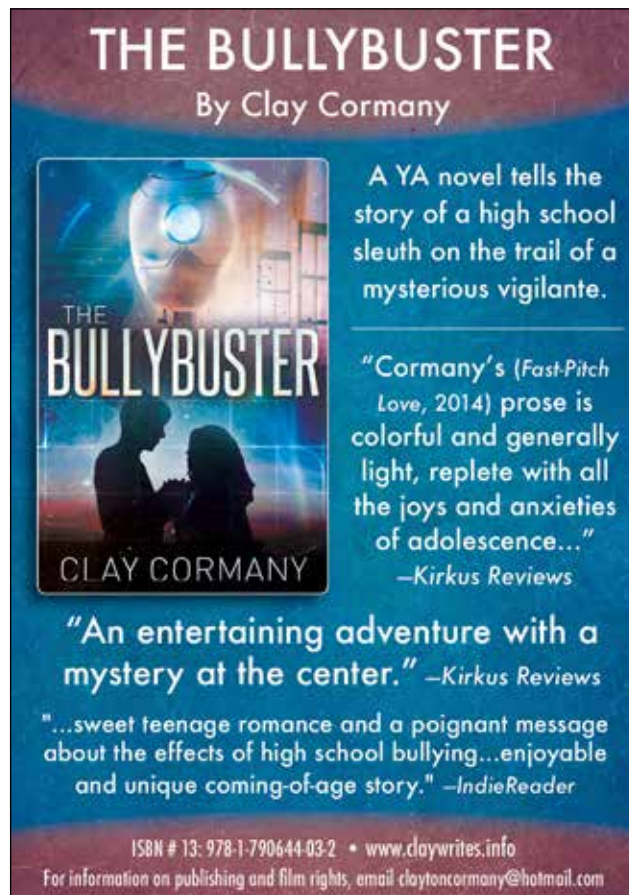


POSTCARDS FOR A SONGBIRD

Crane, Rebekah
Skyscape (266 pp.)
\$9.99 paper | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-5420-9298-2

Wren feels abandoned by those she loves: her mother, her sister, and her only friend.

Even her police officer father has left, in a way, though he still comes home after his night shift to drink beer and watch *Wheel of Fortune* with her. As Wren forms new bonds with people, including two queer young women and a boy who is open about his feelings of attraction toward her, she is nervous about trusting those relationships even as they grow stronger. What if everyone she cares for ends up going away? It's not until she starts questioning the past more carefully that she begins to learn the truth behind the disappearances of her mother and sister and is able to make decisions based on a far



THE BULLYBUSTER

By Clay Cormany

A YA novel tells the story of a high school sleuth on the trail of a mysterious vigilante.

"Cormany's (*Fast-Pitch Love*, 2014) prose is colorful and generally light, replete with all the joys and anxieties of adolescence..."

—Kirkus Reviews

"An entertaining adventure with a mystery at the center." —Kirkus Reviews

"...sweet teenage romance and a poignant message about the effects of high school bullying...enjoyable and unique coming-of-age story." —IndieReader

ISBN # 13: 978-1-790644-03-2 • www.claywrites.info

For information on publishing and film rights, email claytoncormany@hotmail.com

more complete family history. But change hurts as Wren comes to terms with the roles her parents played in dismantling the family unit. An earnest exploration of the demise of a family, this book captures the sense of disconnect a teen can feel when buffeted by changing winds. While the language tends toward the dreamy and dramatic ("I shouldn't let doubt creep up on me like the cold chill of a familiar ghost"), the characters are well-developed, complex, and intriguing. Main characters are assumed white apart from one of Wren's friends who is Latinx.

A finely crafted story of the healing that can happen when family secrets rise to the surface. (*Fiction. 13-18*)



BEASTS OF THE FROZEN SUN

Criswell, Jill

Blackstone (368 pp.)

\$26.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-9825-5627-3

Series: Frozen Sun Saga, 1

A girl falls in love with a warrior from a rival clan.

Lira of clan Stone is the granddaughter of the ruler of Glasnith and god-gifted with the ability to read souls. Soon she must choose between marrying a

highborn man from another clan or entering Aillira's Temple to study under the priestesses. Neither appeals to her—she yearns instead to travel. Sneaking out to wander the shore, she's confronted with a shipwreck; men torn to bits by the Brine Beast dot the harbor, all dead save one. Lira recognizes him, recalling that he saved her once, long ago, from being kidnapped by his people. Now she returns the favor. Reyker, the warrior, is a Westlander—what Lira's people call a beast of the Frozen Sun—and his people came to take her island. They were thwarted this time, but he warns her they'll keep trying. As romance blooms between Lira and Reyker, in-fighting broils between Lira's father and uncle, the god of death gains new power, and the powerful warlord who once controlled Reyker inches closer. Though tightly plotted, clichés abound, there is too much telling rather than showing, and the romance feels too prophetically forced to hold any tension. A hinted-at sequel will hopefully focus on the gods and magic, the strongest elements of the story. Characters seem to default to white.

A sprawling epic too reliant on clichés and stilted romance. (map) (*Fantasy. 14-18*)



CHARLOTTE BRONTË BEFORE JANE EYRE

Fawkes, Glynnis

Illus. by the author

Disney-Hyperion (112 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$12.99 paper | Sep. 24, 2019

978-1-368-02329-0

978-1-368-04582-7 paper

Series: Center for Cartoon Studies Presents

This graphic biography presents Charlotte Brontë and her family as they persist through abundant struggles.

Readers see Charlotte grow from a cynical child in a family of six to an adult writer searching for a publisher. In telling her story, Fawkes includes lighthearted moments, like the reading posture necessitated by her nearsightedness or the dramatic fantasy world she and her siblings collectively imagined over the years. These temper the predominant, unavoidable melancholy over things such as the deaths of her two older siblings and the indentured drudgery of time as a teacher. Most successfully, Fawkes communicates the threat of poverty should Charlotte and her sisters be unable to secure financial independence, with few options available for Victorian women. Fawkes deftly weaves narration from Charlotte's writings into appropriate biographical scenes. Despite setting notations, scene changes are sometimes jarring, and the ending is especially abrupt, cutting off at the moment of Charlotte's success, as the title suggests. Fawkes' illustrations appear as black-and-white, shaded pencil drawings in a style that cartoonist Alison Bechdel aptly describes in the introduction as "crisp and engaging." A postscript by Fawkes explains her artistic and textual choices and personal "love" for Charlotte's "persistence" and "imagination." Sources for much of the narration and selected bibliography close.

A biography that goes beyond static history, inspiring respect for Charlotte and encouraging writers and artists to defend their work through adversity. (*Graphic biography. 12-18*)



VOTE!

Women's Fight for Access to the Ballot Box

Frazer, Coral Celeste

Twenty-First Century/Lerner (120 pp.)

\$37.32 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5415-2815-4

A history of the struggle for universal suffrage in the United States.

Initially suffrage was reserved for white male property owners, and while the property ownership requirement had largely been eliminated by 1800, white women were still disenfranchised, with legal control of their bodies and possessions transferring to their husbands upon marriage. Frazer (*Economic Inequality*, 2018)

Witty dialogue, complicated characters: This one's a gem.

LET'S CALL IT A DOOMSDAY



details the events and people that brought about incremental change and the eventual passage of the 19th Amendment. Suffragists' advocacy of reform issues—abolition, free love, temperance—is also covered. Frazer does not shy away from naming the underlying racism, nativism, and elitism espoused by early suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the discomfort within the larger movement of black suffragists like Ida Wells-Barnett and Frances Harper, or the complacency of white suffragists in the implementation of Jim Crow laws instituting poll taxes and literacy tests on black men. Frazer ends with warnings about current attempts at voter suppression and calls for the protection of voting rights and the mobilization of female voters. As this is a brief overview, some topics could have benefited from additional nuance and exploration, such as historical shifts in the Republican Party and barriers to Indigenous people's suffrage. Informative sidebars break up the text and offer important context.

Offers teens a call to action to protect all voters from disenfranchisement. (glossary, source notes, bibliography, further information, index, photo credits) (*Nonfiction*. 12-16)



LET'S CALL IT A DOOMSDAY

Henry, Katie

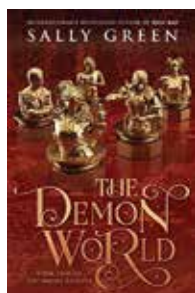
Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins
(400 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-06-269890-2

Ellis Kimball has faith in the imminent end of the world.

She's failed her driving test twice because fears of hitting elderly pedestrians prevent her from even starting the car. She stockpiles survival gear and spends lunch period in the school library, the perfect place for a mass shooter—or Ellis herself—to hide. She loves her family but neither understands nor is understood by them. In her therapist's waiting room, she meets Hannah, a girl from her class who says she knows when and how the world is going to end: on Dec. 21, during a freak San Francisco snowstorm, while Hannah and Ellis are holding hands. While Ellis



THE DEMON WORLD

Green, Sally

Viking (464 pp.)

\$18.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

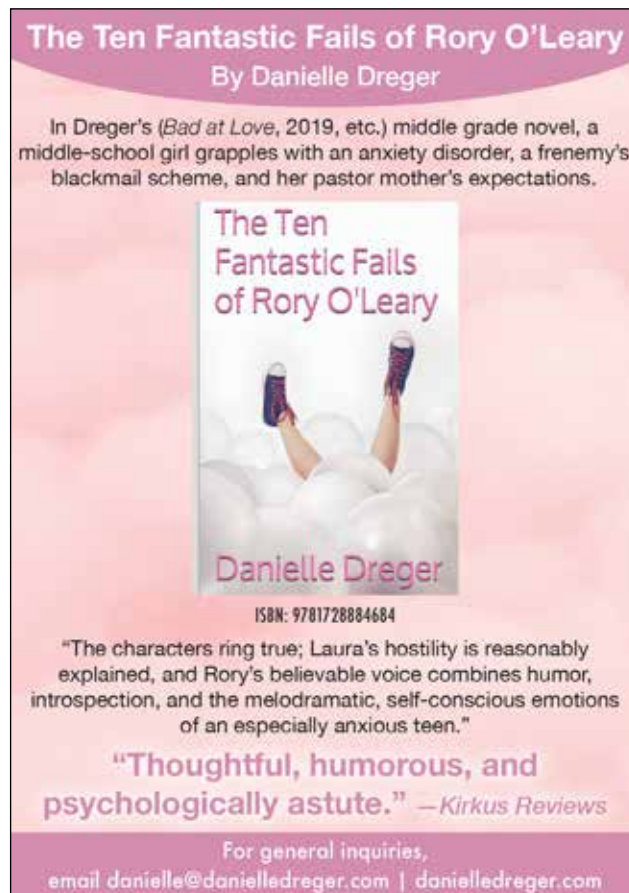
978-0-425-29024-8

Series: The Smoke Thieves, 2

An unlikely group of heroes must find a way to survive—and save a nation.

Picking up immediately after events in *The Smoke Thieves* (2018), the battle over Rossarb rages, and it quickly becomes clear that the city is lost and the only choice left is to flee to the Northern Plateau, into demon country. Catherine, a princess fighting against her own country; Ambrose, her knight, protector, and possibly more; Edyon, the illegitimate son of a prince; March, a servant with mixed allegiances; and Tash, a scrappy young demon hunter, along with a few loyal soldiers, run for their lives with the Brigantine army on their heels. Entering the demon world leads them into a lair of magic and violence that pushes each toward their own destiny. In this uneven book, some elements feel well thought out, particularly those relating to the construction of the demon world. However, the characters are mostly one-dimensional, making it hard for readers to feel invested in whether they live or die or even in their romances (which lack chemistry). Considering the length, there is very little progress or action, and showing often takes precedence over telling, making certain points feel heavy-handed.

A lot of creative ideas that don't quite come together, but fans of the first book will enjoy the continuation of the story. (map, places and characters) (*Fantasy*. 13-16)



The Ten Fantastic Fails of Rory O'Leary

By Danielle Dreger

In Dreger's (*Bad at Love*, 2019, etc.) middle grade novel, a middle-school girl grapples with an anxiety disorder, a frenemy's blackmail scheme, and her pastor mother's expectations.

The Ten
Fantastic Fails
of Rory O'Leary



ISBN: 9781728884684

"The characters ring true; Laura's hostility is reasonably explained, and Rory's believable voice combines humor, introspection, and the melodramatic, self-conscious emotions of an especially anxious teen."

"Thoughtful, humorous, and psychologically astute." —Kirkus Reviews

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INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

MARGARET ROGERSON

HER LATEST FANTASY IS AN ENTHRALLING ADVENTURE AND A WORLD WORTH STAYING LOST IN

By Alex Heimbach



FOR MOST BOOK LOVERS, there's no fantasy more alluring than that of the magical library. From "Beauty and the Beast" to Harry Potter, the massive roomful of books holding secret knowledge has an indelible place in our collective imagination. Margaret Rogerson is no exception: Her second novel, *Sorcery of Thorns* (June 4), concerns a murder committed in one such library and the intrepid librarian who sets out to solve it.

Abandoned on the steps of the Great Library as a baby, Elisabeth Scrivener grew up surrounded by books of sorcery but believing the knowledge they held was evil. When her mentor is murdered and she's the main suspect, Elisabeth is forced out of the library and into a world with very different beliefs about magic, knowledge, and polite behavior for young ladies.

Rogerson's library is a bit of a paradox. On the one hand, it's egalitarian and meritocratic, with people of all types rising to positions of power; on the other hand, many of those powerful people are clinging to outdated ideas about the world. As Elisabeth actually meets sorcerers and the demons who allow them to use magic, she finds that much of what she's been told about them is at least profoundly skewed if not entirely untrue. That journey mirrors Rogerson's own upbringing in a conservative Christian community. "As a teenager, I was discovering a lot of things about the world that were very contrary to what I had always been told as absolute truth," she says.

Unfortunately, not all of Elisabeth's realizations are pleasant ones—she also encounters sexism for the first time. Polite society is shocked by her physical strength, her forthrightness, and even her height. For the first time, her gender is used to undermine her. In the 19th century, Rogerson explains, "It was actually quite easy to get women committed and declared insane for absolutely ridiculous reasons like, 'Oh they read too many novels so their brain has become inflamed.'" Elisabeth is perfectly comfortable fighting off demons but is at a loss for how to counteract these more insidious threats.

She does, however, find two allies: sorcerer Nathaniel Thorn and his demon servant Silas. The relationships among these three characters—naïve but determined librarian, prickly but powerful sorcerer, and otherworldly demon—form the emotional center of the novel. "The message of [the book] is that nonromantic love can be just as powerful if not more powerful than romantic love," Rogerson says. The platonic bonds Nathaniel and Elisabeth have with Silas are just as important as the romantic bond between the two humans.

That message is an important one to Rogerson, who identifies as asexual and aromantic. “There’s a part of me that has always felt like I’m a different species from the world that I live in,” she says. Living in a society oriented around forming romantic partnerships can be alienating for someone who has no interest in those types of relationships, and it’s given Rogerson an interest in beings who live by very different rules than humans—the demons in *Sorcery of Thorns* and the Fae in *An Enchantment of Ravens* (2017).

Nonetheless, romance is a central aspect of Rogerson’s novels, and Elisabeth and Nathaniel make an endearing pair. “For me, writing about romance is almost like writing about magic in a way,” Rogerson says. “It’s something that I personally do not experience but is fun to imagine.”

Alex Heimbach is a writer and editor in California. Sorcery of Thorns received a starred review in the April 1, 2019, issue.



makes flyers to warn everyone, Hannah enlists her help to find a homeless psychic called Prophet Dan, who she is certain will be able to help them. Ellis is a Latter-day Saint; her faith is as important to her as her survival, and her belief in Hannah feels holy. But Hannah is neither a mystic nor a saint. Told from Ellis’ probing, intelligent point of view, the story reaches a lovely, surprising conclusion that offers respect and healing for all concerned. Henry (*Heretics Anonymous*, 2018) writes witty dialogue, creates complicated characters, and treats different religious beliefs with sincerity and respect. Ellis and Hannah are white, and Hannah is lesbian. Secondary characters are broadly diverse.

Don’t be put off by the canned tomato cover: This one’s a gem. (*Fiction*. 12-18)



**THE AMERICAN DREAM?
A Journey on Route 66
Discovering Dinosaur
Statues, Muffler Men, and
the Perfect Breakfast
Burrito**

Khor, Shing Yin
Illus. by the author
Zest Books (160 pp.)
Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-5415-7852-4

Artist Khor recounts their spring 2016 road trip from Los Angeles to Chicago in this graphic memoir.

Growing up in Malaysia, Khor knew two versions of America: “The first was Los Angeles, full of beautiful people and sunlight and open roads,” and the other was the America in Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, “filled with dusty roads and big hopes.” After living in the States for 10 years, they and Bug, their “tiny adventure dog,” embark on a journey along historic Route 66, hoping to better understand the American dream. Through bright, expressive watercolor illustrations, Khor portrays the memorable locations they pass through, including a former gold-mining town in Arizona where several Hollywood films were shot; Amarillo, Texas, which has become a haven for refugees; and kitschy attractions including dinosaur statues and the Blue Whale of Catoosa. They detail both the amusing (going to the bathroom outdoors) and emotional (loneliness and exhaustion) challenges of being a traveler. Khor’s pilgrimage is as much an exploration of themselves as it is of nostalgic Americana. Their travels inspire them to share insights into their path to atheism, their anger with xenophobia and racism—which are provoked when they find a motel labeled “American owned”—and the meaning of “home.” Many of Khor’s observations will resonate with those who have questioned national identity and the sense of belonging.

An informative graphic travel journal that offers important perspectives on being an immigrant and American identity. (*Graphic memoir*. 12-18)

An optimistic, sophisticated portrayal of one facet of American history.

THE DOWNSTAIRS GIRL



A DRESS FOR THE WICKED

Krause, Autumn
HarperTeen (400 pp.)
\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-0-06-285733-0

Victorian-esque *Project Runway* complete with absurd competitions and bonus instalove.

In Britannia Secunda, fashion is everything: The country's livelihood depends on the farmers who produce the raw materials, the factories that create the fabric, and the designers from the Fashion House. Fashion is also a bone of contention between the crown and the Reformists Party, whose members think it has become too elitist. Country girl Emmy Watkins, whose semidisgraced single mother runs a pub, is a born designer who loves fashion, so when it is announced that the Fashion House Interview will be open to a contestant from a rural area, she is determined to try out. The worldbuilding ranges from sloppy (cashmere from sheep?) to contrived (in a fashion-obsessed kingdom with a steady stream of accomplished designers churned out of the interviews, no other design houses exist, and Emmy is the first person to truly innovate). The girls competing in the interview lack substance (Ky is half Japanese and half white, making her stand out in this very white world; Alice is rich and mean; Kitty is rich and kind; Cordelia is unusual for wearing trousers) while Emmy is pure trope (plucky, innately talented, sharp enough to see that fashion is corrupt) and falls for the first pretty boy she meets. Props for lots of ridiculous fashion that seems insane enough to be couture, but that's about all that works.

A high-concept debut that needs much tighter stitching. (*Fantasy*. 12-16)



THE DOWNSTAIRS GIRL

Lee, Stacey
Putnam (384 pp.)
\$17.99 | Aug. 13, 2019
978-1-5247-4095-5

Jo Kuan leads a double life: a public role as a quiet lady's maid and a secret one as the voice behind the hottest advice column in 1890 Atlanta.

Chinese American Jo is mostly invisible except for occasional looks of disdain and derisive comments, and she doesn't mind: Her priority is making sure she and her adoptive father, Chinese immigrant Old Gin, remain safe in their abandoned abolitionists' hideaway beneath a print shop. But even if she lives on the margins, Jo has opinions of her own which she shares in her newspaper advice column under the byline "Miss Sweetie." Suddenly all of Atlanta is talking about her ideas, though they don't know that the witty advice on relationships, millinery, and horse races comes from a Chinese girl. As curiosity about Miss Sweetie mounts, Jo may

not be able to stay hidden much longer. And as she learns more about the blurred lines and the hard truths about race in her city and her own past, maybe she doesn't want to. In her latest work, Lee (*The Secret of a Heart Note*, 2016, etc.) continues to demonstrate that Chinese people were present—and had a voice—in American history. She deftly weaves historical details with Jo's personal story of finding a voice and a place for herself in order to create a single, luminous work.

An optimistic, sophisticated portrayal of one facet of Chinese American—and simply American—history. (*Historical fiction*. 13-18)



CONTAINMENT

Lix, Caryn
Simon Pulse/Simon & Schuster (496 pp.)
\$19.99 | Aug. 6, 2019
978-1-5344-0536-3
Series: Sanctuary, 2

The terrifying aliens from *Sanctuary* (2018) are tracking the stolen ship full of teenage superpowered former prisoners, forcing the teens to turn themselves in to their corporate overlords to protect

humanity.

After Kenzie translates alien transmissions and learns that the aggressive colonizers are actively looking for the missing (stolen) ship via a signal it sends out, they decide to surrender to a corporate rival of Omnistellar in exchange for the destruction of the ship. Kenzie, who is white; Chinese twins Cage (the sexy love interest) and Rune (the best friend); and company are quickly double-crossed and must try to avoid capture by a variety of dangerous parties while the alien threat closes in. Frequent bursts of (often repetitive) expository infodumps unrelated to the physicality of the settings are unwieldy and unpruned, distancing readers from the world instead of enhancing immersion. The storyline's logic induces some real head-scratching moments, punctuated by chase scene upon chase scene, possibly to distract readers from scrutinizing the motivations and general intelligence of the characters, especially the antagonists. These chases also allow glimpses into the lives and backgrounds of the secondary characters—Russian Alexei, Irish Mia, Jasper Many Chiefs (who has dark hair in a ponytail and high cheekbones), and Egyptian hijabi Imani. An unsatisfying climax sets up the next book.

This action-heavy story's execution is marred by an artless lack of strategy in the narrative techniques. (*Science fiction*. 12-adult)



#MURDERFUNDING

McNeil, Gretchen

Freeform/Disney (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-368-02627-7

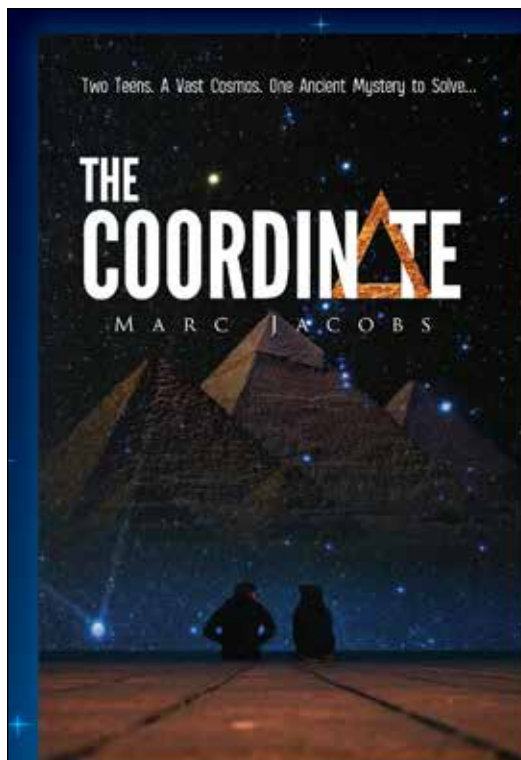
Series: MurderTrending, 2

Return to the frighteningly familiar world of violent entertainment—this time the murder is crowdfunded.

When she loses one of her moms in a car crash shortly after Dee Guerra and her friends killed *The Postman* and brought down the reality show-based death row *Alcatraz 2.0*, white 17-year-old Becca Martinello doesn't really care much about the resulting political and online fallout. That is, until a strange, attractive girl shows up claiming that Becca's mom lived a second life as Molly Mauler, one of the *Alcatraz 2.0* eccentric executioners. The only way Becca can prove her mom's innocence (or guilt) is to audition for a new, supposedly nonlethal serial killer reality show

"Who Wants to Be a Paniac?" and uncover its connection to *The Postman*—provided, of course, that she can survive long enough. With an established world to work with, McNeil (*#Murdertrending*, 2018, etc.) has eased up on the throttle with this sequel, letting elements such as political intrigue simmer effectively in the background and steadily integrating them to underpin the main action. Still heavily driven by fight and flight, the plot gains an extra layer of complexity as it alternates between Becca's investigation and Dee's continued crusade until the two collide. Inclusive efforts at representation continue here but are marred somewhat by "bury your gays" fallbacks.

Another gruesomely engrossing installment with the promise of more to come. (*Thriller*. 14-18)



Unpublished Manuscript

THE COORDINATE By Marc Jacobs

Two teenagers embark on a school project that turns into an exciting, dangerous, and globe-trotting adventure in this YA sci-fi novel.

"In his debut novel, Jacobs tells a Dan Brown-style adventure story for a high school audience—one that's full of puzzles to decode and bold, perilous actions."

"Jacobs keeps the plot moving throughout by introducing unexpected twists"

"Entertaining on several levels, and sure to win fans for a planned series."

—Kirkus Reviews

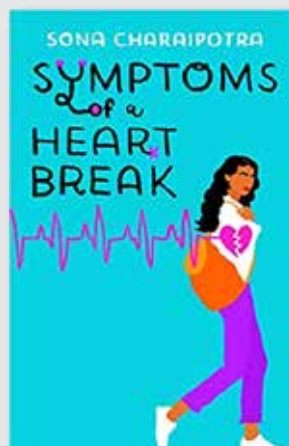
marcjacobsauthor.com

SEEKING AGENT REPRESENTATION. For agent representation and information on film rights, email marc@marcjacobsauthor.com

10 GREAT SUMMER READS



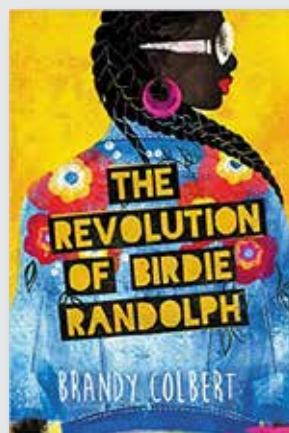
**LAST BUS TO
EVERLAND**
by Sophie Cameron



**SYMPTOMS OF A
HEARTBREAK**
by Sona Charaipotra



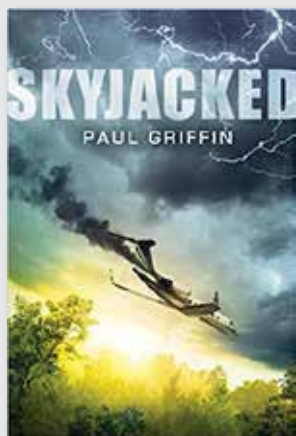
WICKED FOX
by Kat Cho



**THE REVOLUTION
OF BIRDIE
RANDOLPH**
by Brandy Colbert



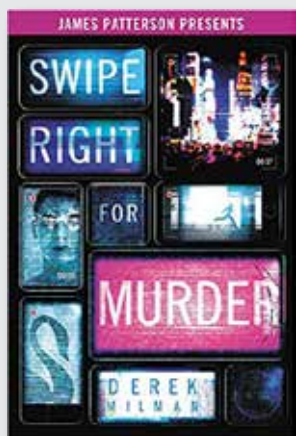
PAN'S LABYRINTH
by Guillermo del Toro
& Cornelia Funke



SKYJACKED
by Paul Griffin



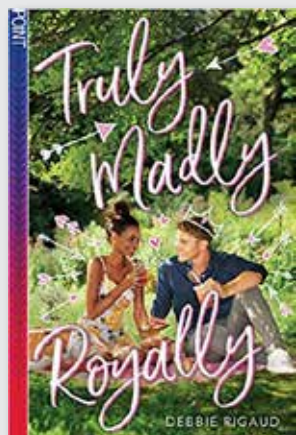
TEETH IN THE MIST
by Dawn Kurtagich



SWIPE RIGHT FOR MURDER
by Derek Milman



WILDER GIRLS
by Rory Power



TRULY, MADLY, ROYALLY
by Debbie Rigaud

Well-balanced worldbuilding and a propulsive plot.

THE MERCIFUL CROW



MARIE CURIE A Life Of Discovery

Milani, Alice

Illus. by the author

Trans. by Schwandt, Kerstin

Graphic Universe (208 pp.)

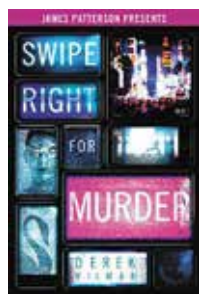
\$33.32 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5415-2817-8

The life of the first female Nobel Prize winner is told in flashback by her daughter Irène.

Marie's story picks up in 1889 when she worked as a governess for a Polish family. In the wake of a failed courtship, Marie moved to Paris, near her sister and her husband, to pursue a second degree, this time in mathematics. It was through her brother-in-law that she met Pierre Curie, who became a supportive friend, mentor, colleague, and, ultimately, a beloved spouse. Together they researched the nascent field of radioactivity, earning a Nobel Prize in physics in 1903. Along with her career ambitions and success, the book addresses struggles from the Russian occupation of her native Poland and Pierre's tragic death in a carriage accident to the scandal of her close relationship with fellow scientist Paul Langevin. Though largely a straightforward biography, Italian author and illustrator Milani (co-contributor: *Post Pink*, 2019, etc.) does take some poetic license in the dialogue, including a dream sequence in which Marie converses with Pierre after his death. The tender, loosely impressionistic colored pencil and watercolor illustrations add liveliness and warmth to this recounting of a remarkable life. Though Curie is one of the rare women in science to be a frequent biographical subject, this graphic novelization of her life is nevertheless a worthy addition to the canon.

An appealing volume for graphic novel and science enthusiasts. (biographical information, timeline, bibliography, source notes) (*Graphic biography. 12-adult*)



SWIPE RIGHT FOR MURDER

Milman, Derek

Jimmy Patterson/Little, Brown (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-0-316-45106-2

Seventeen-year-old Aidan Jamison stumbles into a terrorist plot in Milman's (*Scream All Night*, 2018) woozy page-turner.

Alone in New York for health tests, Aidan uses an app to hook up with an older gentleman at his hotel. Following the encounter and a brief siesta, Aidan wakes up to find his companion dead. A phone conversation with a mysterious man results in a case of mistaken identity, and Aidan must go on the run or else face the consequences for the death of his one-time lover. Even worse, he's now a target of the Swans, a domestic terrorist network targeting anti-gay groups and politicians. The Swans believe Aidan holds a key piece of code necessary for the group's cyberwarfare

efforts. As the body count ramps up, Aidan goes in deeper to uncover the terrorist plot, struggling to reconcile his mixed feelings over the Swans' actions. Things shake up when he meets Shiloh, an older man who offers help at suspiciously opportune moments. An addicting read, Milman's second novel interrogates the costs of political extremism as a tool for social change before curbing these efforts in favor of propping up a somewhat generic villain during the book's third act. The author nonetheless plumbs richer emotional depths via Aidan's struggles to make peace with his brother's unexpected death and a torturous affair with a former friend's father. A white default is assumed.

Don't swipe left on this one. (*Thriller. 14-18*)



THE MERCIFUL CROW

Owen, Margaret

Henry Holt (384 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jul. 30, 2019

978-1-250-19192-2

Series: Merciful Crow, 1



A low-caste girl takes on a high-risk quest in this series opener.

Only the Crows can dispatch and dispose of Sinner's Plague victims, but they are shunned, abused, and murdered by Sabor's other castes. A witch with "bone" (tooth) magic, 16-year-old Fie will one day succeed her Pa as chief of a band of itinerant Crows. But that day comes too soon when a rare retrieval from the royal palace delivers two corpses...who ain't dead yet. Often furious Fie instantly dislikes Phoenix Prince Jasimir and his Hawk bodyguard, Tavin, but soon finds herself head of the trio as they outrun and outwit ambitious Queen Rhusana and her night-riding Oleander Gentry—white-clad and masked (recalling the KKK)—relentless skinwitch trackers, and monstrous ghosts. Facing death and deprivation, Fie's companions also encounter Sabor's insidious violence toward Crows. Debut author Owen offers well-balanced worldbuilding and a propulsive plot and excels at tender, intimate moments and complicated, realistic romantic and familial relationships. Lacking an overt historical or geographic parallel, the tale instead features a cast spectacularly diverse in class, gender, sexual orientation, and race—Fie's skin is "terra-cotta," Jas' and Tavin's are "dark gold," while a villainous northerner is described as "pork-pink."

Rich, harrowing, and unafraid to tackle discrimination—perfect for fans of Leigh Bardugo and Tomi Adeyemi. (caste legend) (*Fantasy. 12-18*)



FAMILY TIES

Richman, Sarah
Darby Creek (112 pp.)
\$26.65 | Aug. 1, 2019
978-1-5415-5691-1
Series: AI High

Julie balks at working with android Leila as part of her high school's integration program.

When interacting with Leila reveals that androids might not be as bad as Julie's parents preached, Julie learns to use her human privilege to stand up for android rights. All books in the AI High series take place at Julie and Leila's high school, where tensions between humans and androids run high. In *Team Player* by Jeffrey Pratt (*The Prank*, 2019), the star quarterback finds himself replaced by the first android addition to the team. *Star-Crossed*, by Loren Bailey (*Becoming Prince Charming*, 2018, etc.), is a Romeo and Juliet story about human Alyssa and android Reid. Claire Ainslie's (*The One*, 2019) *Detained* profiles an android who vandalizes the school in retaliation for bullying from human peers. While the latter three titles balance storytelling with pointed lessons about prejudice, *Family Ties* reads like an oversimplified introduction to racial injustice. Humans represent a white community while negative stereotypes about androids echo real-world racial hostility. Though a couple of the other books feature ethnic diversity among humans and androids, in *Family Ties*, only android surnames indicate diverse backgrounds (Farid, Goldman, Kim). When Julie intervenes in an anti-android protest, victory is easily won. Ultimately, the topics of prejudice and bigotry deserve to be addressed with more nuance and less attempt at veiling the subject matter.

Didactic overtones and blatant real-world parallels spoil this reluctant reader series. (*Speculative fiction*. 12-16)
Detained: 978-1-5415-5692-8; *Star-Crossed*: 978-1-5415-5690-4; *Team Player*: 978-1-5415-5689-8



STANDING STRONG

Robinson, Gary
7th Generation (120 pp.)
\$9.95 paper | Jul. 30, 2019
978-1-939053-22-0
Series: PathFinders

Rhonda Runningcrane, a Blackfoot teenager, feels she has nothing to live for until she hears about a peaceful movement to preserve clean water for her community.

Set on a fictional reservation called Standing Stone, the novel borrows heavily from actual events surrounding the Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline protest. Suicide, sexual abuse, spousal abuse, alcoholism, diabetes, drugs, and murder appear in the first eight pages, and this bleak picture of life on the reservation is only partially addressed with the transformation of

the main character into an environmental activist. Robinson (Choctaw/Cherokee) (*Lands of Our Ancestors Teacher's Guide*, 2017, etc.) uses the presence of a female elder and a mechanically savvy uncle as role models for Rhonda, but her development is limited to her relationship to traditional ways. A bit too short to paint a contemporary picture of Rhonda or dig into the historic roots of the troubles Native youth face in America today, the novel relies on a cultural script with few surprises. Even so, the story is an important one as it highlights the relationship between Native oppression and the extractive industries in the United States. In acknowledging the non-Native allies who stood alongside the Native protesters, the novel builds a bridge between communities, reminding readers that we are all affected by the damage being done to the Earth.

A book for reluctant readers that highlights the heroism of young activists. (*Fiction*. 12-18)



THE ABLES

Scott, Jeremy
Illus. by Lawson, Callie
Turner (368 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Jun. 11, 2019
978-1-68442-336-1
Series: Ables, 1

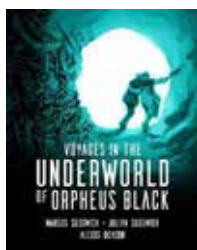
A congenitally blind boy discovers that he's a superhero.

When his dad took him aside for "the talk" when he was 12, wisecracking Phillip expected a humiliating lecture on sex. Instead, he learned that, like everyone else in their small town, he's a "custodian": a superhero. Phillip has inherited telekinesis, which his blindness complicates. Relegated to the special education class at Freepoint High School, Phillip befriends Henry, an overweight, telepathic wheelchair user; Bentley, who has cerebral palsy and a hypersmart mind; Freddie, whose asthma hampers his power of gigantism; and James, also blind, who teleports. When a mysterious villain appears, the friends—dubbing themselves "the Ables"—must combine their skills to save the town. Scott's debut squanders an intriguing premise in a cliché-riddled plot; fans of superhero fare will guess twists long before they're revealed. Preachy, expository dialogue and Phillip's summary-laden narration slow the pace, and weak character development renders even tragedy flat. Despite the (mostly) realistic portrayal of Phillip's blindness, stale disability tropes abound, including disability-negating superpowers, Phillip's "fantastic hearing," and the glaringly infantilizing portrayal of a teen with Down syndrome as a "big teddy bear" with "the mind of a young child in the body of a grown man." Most characters are assumed white; Henry is black. Occasional line drawings illustrate the text.

For an action-packed superhero tale sans egregious stereotyping, skip this and stick with Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief* (2005). (*Fantasy*. 12-15)

This empowering guide helps teens understand their minds.

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION



VOYAGES IN THE UNDERWORLD OF ORPHEUS BLACK

Sedgwick, Marcus & Sedgwick, Julian
Illus. by Deacon, Alexis

Walker US/Candlewick (320 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 13, 2019

978-1-5362-0437-7

An injured firefighter records eerie experiences as he searches for his brother during the London Blitz.

Following an earnest effort to restore sibling bonds sun-dered by his decision to register as a conscientious objector, Harry Black leaves his enlisted older brother, Ellis, in a pub that takes a direct hit only minutes later from a V-2. Waking up with head injuries, Harry woozily escapes the hospital to undertake the seemingly hopeless task of digging into the wreckage after his brother—describing his frantic efforts in disjointed note-book entries around prescient visions of future wars fought by machines that he illustrates with nightmarish views of hanging bodies and armies of shrouded figures in hazmat suits. Along with lurid details (notably a pocket full of glass eyes that Harry snatches from a warehouse fire which appear throughout as spot art) the authors, brothers themselves, add a mythic over-lay by interspersing extended verse (occasionally rhymed) com-ments by Orpheus as observer and psychopomp and extending Harry's quest into a dangerous, jumbled underworld that has its own king and pomegranate-eating queen. The attempt to shovel on another layer of significance by trotting in an other-worldly Kindertransport child and positioning her as symbolic of both true peace and a gender complement is ill conceived. Still, unlike his lyre-strumming alter ego, Harry does in the end bring off a rescue...albeit at a cost.

Atmospheric and provocative but hampered by a cacophony of messages. (*Historical fantasy. 14-17*)



THE EVIL QUEEN

Showalter, Gena

Inkyard Press (544 pp.)

\$19.99 | Jun. 25, 2019

978-1-335-54224-3

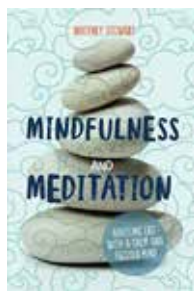
Series: Forest of Good and Evil, 1

A new take on "Snow White" in which fairy tales are prophecies.

Life in Oklahoma did not prepare 17-year-old Everly Morrow for the truths she comes to discover: that she is a princess from the realm of Enchantia; her stepfather, Nicolas, is an evil sorcerer; and her beloved twin, Hartly, is not actually her sister. Plus, they are all players in a developing prophecy connected to the "Snow White" tale—but none of them knows which part they will play. Everly crosses over to Enchantia to find the truth behind who she is, and there, she meets other potential players, including Prince Roth Charmaine (Prince

Charming, perhaps?), with whom she has an insta-connection. This is only the beginning of Everly's journey: With her new-found ability to communicate with mirrors, it seems fairly clear which character Everly is fated to be. The novel's conceit has a lot of potential with its deconstruction of a cherished fairy tale, an interesting take on good and evil as actions rather than fate, and a long cast of characters in ever evolving roles that will leave readers wondering who they are supposed to be. But cringeworthy dialogue and a convoluted, overlong execution let the premise down along with Everly's repetitive am-I-good/am-I-evil internal monologue. Everly is white; some secondary characters are described as having brown skin, and two major secondary characters are lesbians.

An intriguing but ultimately disappointing series opener. (*Fantasy. 14-adult*)



MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION Handling Life with a Calm and Focused Mind

Stewart, Whitney

Twenty-First Century/Lerner (120 pp.)

\$37.32 | Aug. 6, 2019

978-1-5415-4021-7

A guide to the history, methods, and benefits of mindfulness and meditation, which a growing body of research

shows can change brains in ways that reduce stress and increase happiness.

The book guides readers through many strategies for practicing mindfulness, such as meditation, movement, and the cultivation of mental attitudes like compassion and gratitude. Throughout this empowering guide, the author helps teens understand their minds and frequently reminds them to reach out for help if their stressors feel overwhelming or if they are concerned about their mental health. More than two dozen practice scripts are included that present a variety of traditional approaches—such as noticing the breath, labeling thoughts, and moving mindfully—as well as contemporary updates, such as setting limits on screen time and mindful use of social media. The lack of recorded audio companions is an unfortunate omission considering that the resource is otherwise respectful of the varied lives and learning styles of its intended audience. The shaded information boxes and stock photos of diverse teens result in a textbook feel that may limit appeal, but for readers genuinely interested in the topic, this book has much to offer as they begin their practice and as it grows over time.

A thorough and accessible resource for young people. (source notes, glossary, bibliography, further information, index, photo credits) (*Nonfiction. 12-16*)

SHELF SPACE

We talk with Greg Newton, Co-owner of the Bureau of General Services—Queer Division

By Karen Schechner



THE BUREAU OF GENERAL SERVICES—Queer Division first launched as a pop-up bookstore in an art gallery on New York City's Lower East Side in 2012. The opening was especially welcome after Manhattan lost two iconic queer bookstores—A Different Light and Os-

car Wilde Bookshop. Thanks to community love and support for the Bureau, co-owners and partners Greg Newton and Donnie Jochum have kept it running continuously since its pop-up opening and, in 2014, found a home for the bookstore at Manhattan's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. Here we talk with co-founder Greg Newton about a bookstore that doubles as a "queer church."

How would you describe the Bureau of General Services—Queer Division to the uninitiated?

The Bureau is a governmental agency for a government that does not yet exist. The primary service that the Bureau provides is holding space for queer people and queer culture. We are an independent, all-volunteer queer bookstore and event space located in the LGBT Community Center in Manhattan. The Bureau offers queer books, magazines, zines, art, and other cultural materials for all to explore, and we host all kinds of programs—from poetry workshops to film screenings and readings. We've hosted collage-making and puppet-making parties, zine fests, sex-magic workshops, and presentations by artists, activists, scholars, and other members of the queer community at large.

If the Bureau were a religion, what would be its icons and tenets?

We actually dreamed of having an icon wall when we were starting out. The icon wall would definitely have featured images of Grace Jones, Joan Jett, Freddie Mercury, Boy George, Madonna, and other beloved pop-culture figures who were important to Donnie and me as young queers finding our way in the world in the 1980s. We haven't made an icon wall yet, but who knows?

I survived growing up in a passionately evangelical Christian home, and I do sometimes feel like what Donnie and I have started is a queer church. Of course, this church radically differs from the churches of my childhood in that it embraces and lifts up queer people.

If the Bureau were a religion, our central teaching would be to love yourself and to love one another. As queer people, we know the pain of being demonized, pathologized, criminalized, and silenced. These experiences teach us about the dynamics of ostracism, of characterizing people as "others" not worthy of love and empathy. Our religion would cultivate empathy and compassion while exposing and confronting our fears of the unknown—both within ourselves and beyond—that lead us to falsely locate the source of our fears in other people, be they queers, women, people of color, the poor, the disabled, or anyone who is somehow deemed foreign.

Which was your favorite event and/or most memorable disaster?

One of my favorite events was the Bureau fundraiser that Justin Sayre hosted for us at The Pyramid Club in August 2013. The Bureau wasn't even one year old yet, but so many lovely and legendary artists joined in to support the project and make a very special event, including Penny Arcade, Jack Waters and Pee-wee Nyob, Earl Dax, Shane Shane, Max Steele, Nicholas Gorham, Karl Marks, Linda Simpson, M. Lamar, Dan Fishback, Gio Black Peter, Brett Every, and Mx. Justin Vivian Bond, among others.

How does the bookstore reflect the interests of your community?

Most of our events are initiated by queer authors, poets, performers, scholars, artists, filmmakers, healers, and activists. Our idea is to serve as infrastructure—the necessary bureaucracy—for the queer communities of New York and for queers visiting from all over the world. We maintain the space, the vehicle, while the community provides the content. Of course, we set the tone by establishing the space as a do-it-yourself queer cultural community center that embraces a utopian vision of queer liberation, and this attracts like-minded individuals and groups, but we say "yes" to all sorts of events and materials—for the most part it's the community that determines our programming and offerings.

What are your favorite handsells?

I love to share José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* with people—I fully embrace his vision of queerness: "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world." Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* is another staple I recommend to anyone seeking queer visions of liberation.

Karen Schechner is the vice president of Kirkus Indie.

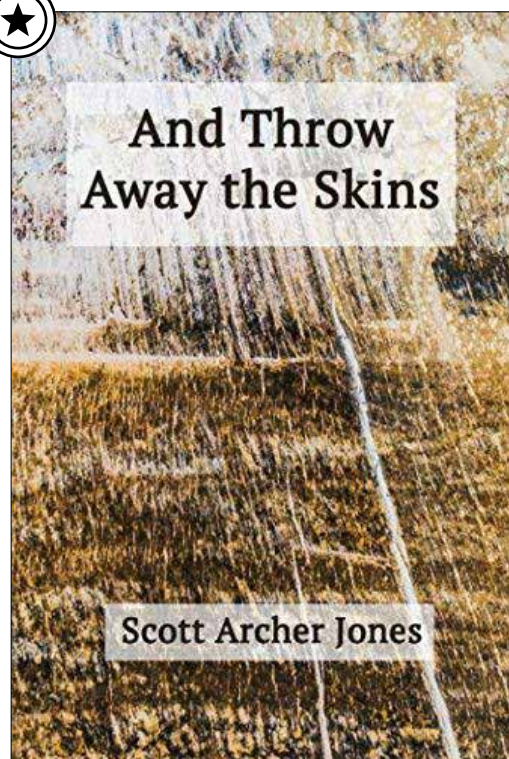
INDIE



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

AND THROW AWAY THE SKINS by *Scott Archer Jones* 161

DAHLIA IN BLOOM by *Susan Koebler* 164



AND THROW AWAY THE SKINS

Jones, Scott Archer

Fomite (312 pp.)

\$15.00 paper | \$4.99 e-book

Mar. 2, 2019

978-1-944388-61-4



OFFLINE

Adams, Brian

Green Writers Press (288 pp.)

\$12.99 paper | Apr. 22, 2019

978-1-73274-342-7

An internet-obsessed teenager discovers a new life offline in this YA romantic comedy.

Boston high school junior Meagan is always on her cellphone, texting or updating her profile on her favorite dating site, Passion. This leads to her share of troubles, like a doctor diagnosing her with radial styloid tenosynovitis, aka “texting thumb.” Things come to a head after Meagan texts during an exam; the teacher’s accusation of cheating results in a suspension. The teen’s parents respond by sending her to stay with her gay grandfathers in Haydenville, Massachusetts, for the summer. She helps her grandfathers do work around the house, where internet service is spotty. But when Meagan heads to town for some covert online surfing, she texts and drives her way into an accident. To regain car privileges, she temporarily gives up her phone and attends a local Netaholics Anonymous meeting. Surprisingly, it has perks in the form of a couple of hotties, Derek and Jonathan. Meagan likes them both, but her agreeing to a date with each guy for the NA potluck dinner is accidental thanks to unreliable cell service. To distract the boys, she invites her best friend, Sheila, to Haydenville. But Sheila only complicates matters, turning into a Mother Nature-embracing, anti-technology Luddite virtually overnight. In the meantime, Meagan may be falling for one of the two guys. As she’s long preferred online relationships, virginal Meagan, not quite ready for physical intimacy, is torn between eluding romance or surrendering to it.

Adams’ (*KABOOM!*, 2016, etc.) tale lambasts social media-crazed teens in often amusing ways. For example, Meagan, sans her cell, feels “the sensation of the phantom phone” in her hand and periodically moves her thumbs as if texting Sheila. Nevertheless, the author doesn’t completely condemn the internet, as it’s apparent Meagan may only be online to escape neglectful parents who are on their phones as much as she is. Consequently, her grandfathers, who express interest in her potential love life, are all the more endearing. One of them, Udder, even adopted his nickname from Meagan (her childish attempt to repeat her dad’s designation of “your other grandpa”). Equally memorable Sheila is abrasive but smart. She astutely questions a person’s ability to sustain an online presence with a life offline: “You can’t text the way you’re supposed to and hold hands at the same time, can you?” The story’s humor is predominantly

via dialogue, like Meagan's Gramps steering conversations to the sex lives of such things as worms and fireflies. But some of the comedy is slapstick: Meagan intermittently injures the guy she likes, including spilling hot coffee on his crotch. The narrative also comes courtesy of Meagan's first-person voice, which is descriptive and generally sarcastic. She says of her parents, "When it came to the issues that were driving me completely insane, they'd be about as helpful as a porcupine in a hot-air balloon." Romance, though more understated, is discernible, and Derek and Jonathan are both immensely likable.

A witty and tech-savvy love story with just the right amount of charm.



THE CREATIVE COPYWRITER'S COMPANION

Attea, Tom

Really Helpful Books (312 pp.)

\$34.95 | \$24.76 paper | \$15.99 e-book

Oct. 1, 2018

978-0-9821218-3-2

978-0-9821218-4-9 paper

A copywriting pro reveals all in this how-to manual.

For those mystified by advertising copywriting or anyone who hopes to enter the profession, this book is sure to fit the bill. The CV of Attea (*The Secrets of Successful Creative Advertising*, 2008, etc.) is impressive; he has won the ad industry's most prestigious awards, worked with top agencies, and written for stellar clients. Rather than rest on his laurels, the author chose to share his considerable knowledge in this eight-part opus that covers all the bases. Included are chapters about exploring the creative process, writing for traditional and digital media, brand positioning, solving problems, and making presentations. The author doesn't stop there: He also addresses ancillary subjects of use to a well-rounded copywriter, such as understanding how to test advertising and using the right media as well as developing brand names, a topic often ignored. In fact, Attea has become something of a naming expert, having conceived what he calls "the most acute approach to name development." The author has the right to be a bit self-congratulatory, but his tone throughout the book exudes confidence rather than arrogance. Attea acknowledges that "gigantic egos lumber about in advertising," but he claims "many of the most capable people...are actually pretty modest." In addition to recounting advertising war stories, this craftsman is willing to pass along a wealth of knowledge to the next generation. He advises wannabes to review winners of annual industry awards shows and includes fine commentary on timeless advertising books. He writes eloquently and wisely about the need for the industry to remain balanced. "The profession actually requires a combination of brash innocence and creative experience," asserts Attea; a well-functioning agency "maintains a balance between sophisticated veterans and young people." He also shares some of the harsh realities of the business, discussing, for example, the takeover of larger agencies by global conglomerates and the

continuous criticism leveled against ad claims. For the most part, though, Attea's comprehensive book is a highly instructional guide to the creation of effective advertising.

Brimming with wisdom and good-natured copywriting guidance.



BLACKQUEST 40

Bond, Jeff

Self (348 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book | Feb. 9, 2019

978-1-73225-522-7

A software engineer suspects the company overseeing mandatory corporate training harbors a nefarious agenda in this techno-thriller.

From the beginning, Deb Bollinger refuses to take part in Blackquest 40, the training exercise for Codewise Solutions in San Francisco. She's far too busy, having just launched her app, Carebnb, which she designed to help homeless individuals locate the nearest available "host bed." It's a personal project for Deb, as she spent a homeless childhood with her mother, who eventually developed schizophrenia. But Deb isn't able to verify Carebnb's functionality when Elite Development, which is running Blackquest 40, blocks data and cellphone traffic. She quickly learns how serious Elite is about ensuring that everyone stays for the entirety of the exercise's 40-hour duration. When Deb tries leaving the building, an Elite employee physically prevents her from departing. Deb is convinced her mentor, Codewise CEO Susan Wright, the person who hired her, will oppose Elite's paramilitary techniques. Unfortunately, Susan is currently out of the country on business. On site is Carter Kotanchek, CFO and company co-founder (with Susan and Paul Gribbe), who believes Elite's certification of Codewise will drum up much-needed revenue. But Deb has other plans: She looks for a way to bypass Elite's cyberobstructions. But with few friends at Codewise, she's largely on her own. Surprisingly, she finds indications that Elite is not only deceitful, but also considerably more dangerous than she initially surmised. Rather than searching for escape, Deb opts for sticking around to foil whatever sinister scheme Elite is cooking up.

Many readers will spot resemblances between this book and the popular 1988 action film *Die Hard*. Deb, for one, is a loner in a building filled with workers who are essentially hostages, and she stealthily crawls around HVAC ducts. But Bond's (*The Winner Maker*, 2018) twisty tale ultimately takes on a life of its own, especially as Deb gets closer to learning what exactly Elite is after. The novel is jampacked with coding jargon, most of which will make little or no sense to novices. Nevertheless, the tale is coherent, as it's clear, for example, that Elite wants Codewise employees to build software on a very strict deadline. Coupled with the author's intelligent prose is his visual storytelling: Elite employees wear yellow shirts, providing Deb (and readers) with a bright and simple way to identify villains. As a protagonist, Deb is resourceful and physically capable (in defiance

THE GAME IS AFOOT



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's consulting detective Sherlock Holmes was wildly popular in the author's lifetime, and he remains so. In the last decade, there have been two movies starring Robert Downey Jr. as the sleuth; two popular TV shows; and the 2015 film *Mr. Holmes*, based on Mitch Cullin's 2005 novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, which envisioned Holmes in his dotage. Here are a few other works, re-

viewed by Kirkus Indie over the last few years, which put their own spins on the investigator of 221B Baker St.:

In M.J. Downing's 2018 novel, *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Undead Client*, Holmes and his loyal biographer John Watson discover that a mad scientist and a voodoo priest are creating hordes of brain-eating zombies in 1888 London. There are considerably more references to violence and sex than ever appeared in Doyle's work, our reviewer writes, but "the brisk action and pitch-perfect Sherlock-ian aplomb make for a page-turner."



The 2015 novel *The Unlikely Death* by Niko Ford reimagines the characters in the far future. Watson is accused of killing Holmes—a stranger to him—although he has no memory of doing so. He's sentenced to share a cell with a holographic version of the dead man that has Holmes' memories and skills. Soon, they're both trying to solve the murder. Kirkus' reviewer calls the book "a rambunctious, intelligent read."

The Complete Diaries of Young Arthur Conan Doyle (2017) by John Raffensperger and Richard Krevolin goes even further afield, presenting the fictional adventures of Doyle and Dr. Joseph Bell—the real-life inspiration for Holmes. Their exploits in America and Russia, our reviewer says, feature "quotidian murders linked to grand political conspiracies, cameos by historical figures, and encounters with real-life writers," including Mark Twain and Oscar Wilde. It's an "entertaining, rollicking addition to the Holmes-verse," our reviewer writes. —D.R.

David Rapp is the senior Indie editor.

of her "hundred-odd pounds"), though her loner status seems self-imposed. But she's the first to acknowledge her flaws, and she reluctantly warms up to someone who becomes an unlikely ally. At the same time, Deb's first-person narration is brisk, gleefully snarky, and filled with indelible metaphors. "The relief that sweeps through me is water through a burning home," she muses, while later observing that a particular "noise is tin cans off the back of a *Just Married* car." There are several plot turns throughout the tale; readers will likely guess one well before it happens, but others are less predictable.

A clever, spirited story with a brainy, nimble heroine at the helm.



THE GIRL PUZZLE

Braithwaite, Kate

Crooked Cat Books (261 pp.)

\$10.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book | Mar. 6, 2019

978-1-79893-638-2

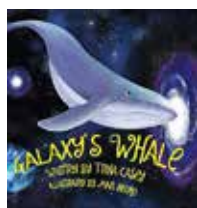
A historical novel about the 10 days that famed newspaper journalist Nellie Bly posed as a patient in a mental hospital.

The story opens in 1919 as narrator Beatrice Alexander performs menial tasks as Bly's assistant at the McAlpin Hotel in Manhattan. Now in her 50s, Bly maintains a makeshift office in a suite at the hotel, where she writes articles and arranges adoptions. She gives Beatrice some handwritten notes to type—pages that recount Bly's undercover stint in a mental institution decades before. As Beatrice works through these notes, third-person narration takes readers 30 years into the past. Desperate for her first break as a journalist, young Bly found work at a newspaper by agreeing to do an exposé on a women's asylum. After convincing medical professionals that she was mentally unstable, she was taken to Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum for Women, in the East River, where she was instantly subjected to miserable treatment. The conditions at Blackwell's Island couldn't have been worse, with its rancid food, "filthy bathwater," and abusive medical staff. Bly found only one genuinely altruistic doctor there, and his efforts had minimal impact on patient conditions. As Bly waited for her publisher to rescue her from the asylum, she worried that her suffering might cause her to lose her grip on reality. Novelist Braithwaite (*The Road to Newgate*, 2018, etc.) delivers a well-researched and engrossing tale that focuses on female empowerment. It's full of intriguing historical details about past medical practices and the abuses that wards of the state endured; it also features many real-life characters, including patients and doctors that Bly met in the asylum. Indeed, the scenes in the so-called "madhouse" are significantly more compelling than those set years later, but the latter-day happenings do serve to show how successful Bly became after her first assignment. Although readers know from the start that Bly escaped Blackwell's Island, the descriptions of her harrowing experiences remain captivating.

A story of grit and perseverance that will appeal to readers interested in the history of women in journalism.

Offers wonderful insight into the functioning of an elite Division I program that should be of interest to any college football fan.

FROM UNDERDOG TO BULLDOG



GALAXY'S WHALE

Casey, Trina

Illus. by Nkomo, Mari

This Real Life Books (116 pp.)

\$29.95 | \$24.99 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Aug. 31, 2018

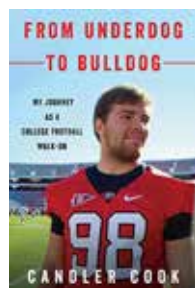
978-0-692-16484-6

978-1-71890-871-0 paper

A young princess discovers her true power in a colorfully illustrated self-esteem-building narrative for children who don't feel like they fit in.

Princess Safiya is bored by her classes on proper behavior and unsure of her place in her blended family. She's filled with contradictory emotions: She's saddened by the death of her mother, Lilia, and resentful about her father Cedric's quick remarriage. She loves her older sister Cissy but feels abandoned by her due to Cissy's focus on her upcoming wedding. She pretends to hate her little half brother, Sebastian, but "love[s] making him giggle with tickles and playing hide and seek." She's angry at her stepmother, Zerelda, but sympathizes with her because "she knew [her] marriage was out of convenience and not love." (Safiya and her older siblings are darker skinned, and Cedric, Zerelda, and Sebastian appear white.) To escape these confusing feelings, Safiya decides to run away, but she falls asleep before she can do so. In her dream, her guide is a talking unicorn named Galaxy, who takes the young runaway on a grand adventure. They travel inside a whale to the unicorn's home, where Safiya blossoms into her true self by learning to believe in her inner and outer beauty. Back home, she's able to speak the "heart of the truth" and weave her fragmented family together. Overall, Safiya's story, the first in a series, is a heartfelt one, and young readers will recognize many of the complications and contradictions in her life. Her longing to feel connected to her family, as depicted by debut author Casey, is particularly touching, as is her almost unwilling compassion for her father and stepmother, even when their choices adversely affect her. The wonder of Galaxy's magical home is charmingly vivid, although readers may wish that the story spent more time there and provided more detail about its whimsical inhabitants. The latter are enticingly portrayed in Nkomo's complex, apparently anime-inspired illustrations, but they're almost absent from the text.

An empowering and skillfully illustrated story of self-acceptance.



FROM UNDERDOG TO BULLDOG

My Journey as a College Football Walk-On

Cook, Candler

Lioncrest Publishing (202 pp.)

\$24.99 | \$15.99 paper | \$6.99 e-book

Mar. 26, 2019

978-1-5445-1381-2

978-1-5445-1380-5 paper

Cook describes his unlikely ascent from high school benchwarmer to walk-on athlete in one of the country's premier college football programs in this debut sports memoir.

Growing up watching University of Georgia football games with his father, Cook knew that he wanted to one day play for the team himself. He had no idea how difficult a dream that was to accomplish, however, even for a talented football player—which he was not. "I wasn't a standout on my high school football team," recalls Cook in his introduction, "in fact, I wasn't even a starter. I was a fourth-string linebacker and had recorded one tackle in my entire high school career." Most people would have seen the writing on the wall, but Cook would not let himself be deterred. After getting his acceptance letter from the university, he quickly Googled how to try out for the team, though even that information wasn't easily acquirable. The tryout process—which Cook literally snuck his way into under false pretenses—turned out to be a tiered, monthslong affair in which he competed against far more qualified athletes for one of the few open spots on the roster. Despite being small, slow, and weak by even the standards of his high school program, Cook began a Rudy Ruettiger-like rise. He showed that he could outwork any player he came up against, proving that his spirit and tenacity were enough to earn him the right to wear a Bulldogs jersey. Cook's prose is simple and clean, and it emanates the considerable regard he has for the University of Georgia and its storied program: "I went to every home game that fall, and they all held new meaning for me. I still got as excited about games as I had when I was a kid, but it was different. I knew those guys; I had trained with them and practiced against them. I understood what went on behind the scenes." While Cook's narrative doesn't have quite the same drama as that of Notre Dame's famous walk-on, it offers wonderful insight into the functioning of an elite Division I program that should be of interest to any college football fan.

An inspirational memoir that is ultimately more about fandom and drive than athleticism.



GOOD QUEEN ANNE
Appraising the Life and
Reign of the Last
Stuart Monarch

Cromwell, Judith Lissauer

McFarland (270 pp.)

\$55.00 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Mar. 5, 2019

978-1-4766-7681-4

A polished biography that illuminates the life and reign of Anne Stuart (1665-1714), queen of England.

Independent historian Cromwell (*Florence Nightingale, Feminist*, 2013, etc.) makes a convincing case for Queen Anne's shrewdness at navigating the political extremes of her time, calling her the "least known and most underrated" of England's female monarchs. Her father, King James II, was a Catholic who tried to pack Parliament with like-minded thinkers, but Anne resisted conversion attempts and remained a Protestant. In a highly polarized atmosphere, she formed a government, Cromwell notes, made up of moderate Whigs and Tories. After the reign of the Dutch-born William of Orange (who'd married Anne's sister, Mary), Anne, who married the Danish Prince George, "felt she must restore Englishness to the crown." The Duke of Marlborough was one of her key advisers during a war against France, and his wife, Sarah Churchill, was her particular friend. Cromwell pinpoints the three main issues of Anne's reign from 1702 to her death in 1714: war and domestic political strife; physical struggles, including painful gout and numerous miscarriages; and a troubled relationship with Sarah, whom Mary thought of as "Anne's evil genius." While estranged from Anne, Sarah spread rumors about Anne's supposed dalliances with women—and about the attention that the queen paid to Anne's favorite servant, Abigail Masham. Cromwell refutes this, citing Anne's letters to Sarah as proof of "passionate platonic love between women," but she fully explores the continuing controversy over Abigail's place at court. The book is thus well timed to capitalize on the recent success of the award-winning 2018 film *The Favourite*, which portrays Anne in a different way. The author's scene-setting comments about the weather don't always ring true ("a frivolous little breeze blew over London"), but her details regarding royal food, clothing, and gardens are vivid and sumptuous. A good number of quotes are taken from primary sources and supply the flavor of period speech. The intricacies of Whig and Tory machinations threaten to become tedious, but Cromwell wisely keeps the focus on the "extremely popular" monarch.

A fine blending of the personal and the political.



THE PAINTED CROSS

Dennis, Hunter

A-R-B Books (584 pp.)

May 14, 2019

978-0-9994936-5-6

978-0-9994936-4-9 paper

In this sequel, treasure hunters chase a MacGuffin for the ages: the Crimson Heirlooms.

This story about the heirlooms—the fabulous Cross of Nantes and "*the words of the devil's song*" at the carnage in the Vendée Militaire—toggles mostly between France and Hispaniola in the Caribbean from the late 1780s to the 1830s. The Guerrier twins, Estelle and Guillaume, aka Beau-Brave, are originally from Saint-Domingue on Hispaniola but now live in France. Beau-Brave is a charismatic figure determined to be a political playwright, advancing the Rousseau-ian ideals of the Enlightenment. Estelle has wound up in Nantes as a paid companion. She is almost too good for this world. She will fall in love with Xavier Traversier, the heir to his rich family's mercantile operation in Nantes; he spurned; and—well, it is just too tragic. She wears the Cross of Nantes around her lovely neck, the mystical object that will disappear. The searcher who finds the heirlooms will legally inherit the Traversier family's valuable holdings. Meanwhile, Jacob "Jake" Loring, an American student in France, battle-tested at the barricades, has been dragooned by his nemesis, Monsieur Tyran, into looking for the heirlooms in exchange for his life. Eventually, Estelle makes a fateful decision concerning the cross and her brother. Beau-Brave will surely play an important role in the French Revolution. Meanwhile—about 40 years hence—Jake runs into trouble in a supposedly safe haven. Dennis (*The Crimson Heirlooms*, 2018) is a talented storyteller and a sedulous student of history. The novel ranges from dramatic action to historical and philosophical exposition to a study of the often politically subversive theater of the time, with excursions into the lives of nightsoilers and the deadly combination of mobs and rumors. The author writes well: graceful, witty, imagistic. Here he discusses an associate of Xavier's named Rag: "Today, he sat slumped in his chair, his eyes downcast, his mien pensive. Rag's historical extroversion was so pronounced, his present demeanor was akin to his skull being inside out." This engrossing installment comes with stark, grainy black-and-white photographs, mostly interior or exterior shots by Dennis of locales mentioned in the text. In addition, there's a helpful list of main characters and a pronunciation appendix that offers much witty, snarky commentary.

Fans of epic sagas should be happy to lose themselves in this lavish book—and there's another volume to come.

Dunlap breathes life into the distant 13th-century setting by providing many everyday, textural details.

LISTEN TO THE WIND



DON'T FEED THE BEAR

Doherty, Katbleen

Illus. by Wass, Chip

Sterling Children's Books (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | Apr. 10, 2018

978-1-4549-1979-7

In this children's picture book, a park ranger and a bear each warn tourists not to feed the other.

Portly, brown Bear lives in a park and loves campers' leftovers. So when he discovers the park ranger installing a sign that reads "DON'T FEED THE BEAR," he's displeased and puts up his own: "DON'T FEED THE RANGER." As a result, campers with pie, ice cream, and soda feed neither one. Bear craftily disguises himself in a cap and T-shirt that claim that he's "not a bear." But it doesn't work, leading to a "war with words" as bear and ranger repeatedly vandalize each other's signs with spray paint, markers, and brushes. They finally come to an understanding, however, and revise the signs to encourage visitors to feed them both. Together, they enjoy a delicious picnic of campers' "goodies." In her debut, Doherty tells an amusing story with good sound effects ("SMACKITY! SMACK! WHOMP!") and vivid, compressed sentences perfect for reading aloud. Children will certainly appreciate the characters' love of treats. Wass' (*Monster Knows Shapes*, 2014, etc.) stylish, retro-feeling illustrations hilariously capture action and character, such as Bear's angry yet lovable stomping. However, kids should know that feeding wild animals is bad for them and can result in fines or jail sentences.

Delightfully funny, with much verve and style—but please don't feed the bears.



LISTEN TO THE WIND

Dunlap, Susanne

Bellastoria Press (388 pp.)

\$17.95 paper | \$8.99 e-book

Apr. 22, 2019

978-1-942209-58-4

In this historical novel, set in the Languedoc area of France, two young orphans try to forge their own destinies amid many dangers.

In tumultuous 13th-century France, political ambitions and crusades against heretics—presumably Cathars, although the term is never used—have brought much warfare and upheaval. When the orphaned Azalaïs, a girl, and Azemar, a boy, flee charges of witchcraft, they hastily agree to split up and meet in Bésiers. A kindly forest anchorite helps Azalaïs disguise herself as a boy, and over several years the recluse teaches her herbal medicine, reading, writing, and Latin. But Azalaïs must go on the run again when she makes an unexpected enemy, and she finds shelter with Domna Jordane de la Moux d'Aniort, who takes Azalaïs into her household. Jordane's wealthy father is planning his daughter's marriage to a French-allied noble, but she's in love with a rebellious knight named Raimon

de Berenger. After finding out about Azalaïs' true sex, Jordane insists that the young woman disguise herself and take her own place as the noble's bride while Jordane pursues Raimon. The disguised Azalaïs must prove herself in a perilous situation that she doesn't fully understand. Meanwhile, Azemar finds a patron and receives training in commerce and war. It's nine years before the two orphans briefly find each other again. In this well-researched novel, Dunlap (*The Academie*, 2012, etc.) breathes life into the distant 13th-century setting by providing many everyday, textural details, such as the uncomfortable realities of wearing jousting armor. Poetry and music are as essential to the plot as warfare, with engaging glimpses of troubairitz (female troubadours). Necessary exposition is well integrated into the story, although the closing author's note would likely have worked better as a preface, and a glossary would have been useful. The characters are generally believable, although Jordane is implausibly headstrong for a young woman of her era, and Raimon doesn't seem to be worth so much plotting and difficulty.

A complex, absorbing, and dramatic start to a planned series.



BEEP! BEEP! SPECIAL DELIVERY

Ferreri, Della Ross

Illus. by McEachen, Pete

Spork (36 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 9, 2019

978-1-946101-96-9

In this picture book, a creative little boy rides his truck, overcoming all obstacles to deliver an important letter.

Boarding his red toy truck with a determined expression, a boy with pale skin and brown curly hair clutches a letter. "Beep! Beep! Hurry! Clear the way! / I have a special job today," he announces. Through many incidents (a bad traffic jam, a short-cut through the zoo, a broken bridge, a jungle with snakes and an alligator, gloppy mud), the boy and his truck prevail. The vehicle turns into a little red airplane or a boat or sprouts a plow to get through the mud. On every spread, a little brown monkey can be spied who, unknown to the hero, watches him carefully and often helps save the significant letter—a sweet love note to Mom. Ferreri (*Huggle Wuggle, Bedtime Snuggle*, 2019, etc.) gives readers a well-balanced mix of inventive escapades with the welcome reassurance of returning home to a warm cuddle. The story is told in rhyming, well-scanning couplets, compressed and powerful, often with effective sound effects: "Ka-splish, ker-splash"; "Glub glub, vroom vroom." The expressive illustrations by McEachen (*Plugged In*, 2009) expand the tale with thoughtful details; for example, the monkey gives the boy a 10 for sticking the final landing. In a lovely touch, the boy's backyard play area includes all the elements from his journey of the imagination, such as a sand mountain, toy alligator, plow truck, and airplane.

A charming adventure and excellent read-aloud tale—delightful.

18 GREAT INDIE BOOKS WORTH DISCOVERING

[SPONSORED]

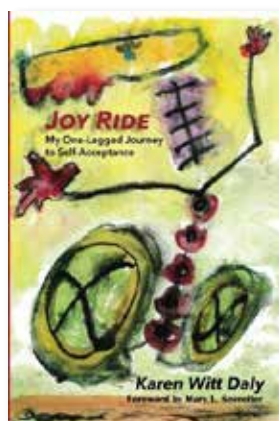


LIFE STRINGS

by Bruce Borgos

"In Borgos' (*Holding Fire*, 2016) novel, a man travels to war-torn South Sudan in search of a cancer patient's biological daughter."

An impressive novel full of action, politics, and emotion.

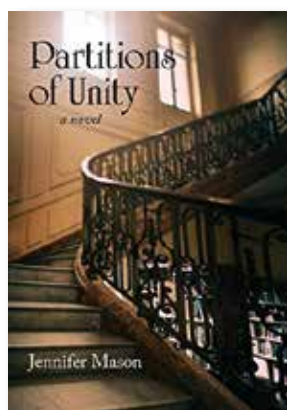


JOY RIDE

by Karen Witt Daly

"A woman who had her right leg amputated as a child addresses her compulsions and her relationship with her body."

Sharp, courageous writing in a powerful memoir.



PARTITIONS OF UNITY

by Jennifer Mason

"Mason (*Tor's Lake*, 2015) brings back an engaging protagonist in this serpentine mystery about an obsessed estate owner and a murdered professor."

For readers up to the challenge, this mystery is a curious, gilded oddity that's well worth the time and effort.

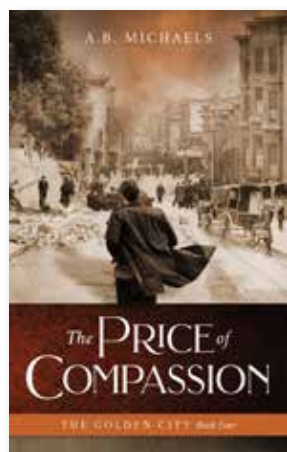


MARKETING IN THE #FAKENEWS ERA

by Peter Horst

"Horst, a Fortune 500 chief marketing officer, addresses the marketing challenges posed by a fractious political climate."

Timely, smart, and stimulating; should provoke a reevaluation of brand marketing strategy.

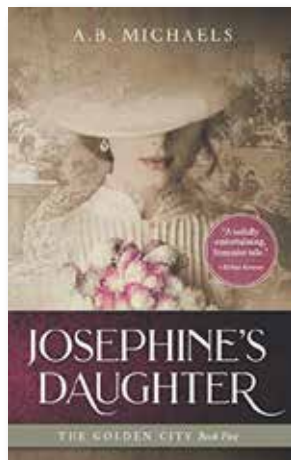


THE PRICE OF COMPASSION

by A.B. Michaels

"Michaels (*The Promise*, 2016, etc.) offers a historical novel about a surgeon who's accused of murder after mysterious events at a medical clinic leave a man dead."

A well-thought-out legal drama, full of intrigue and duplicity.



JOSEPHINE'S DAUGHTER

by A.B. Michaels

"In this fifth novel in Michaels' (*The Price of Compassion*, 2018, etc.) Golden City series, set in 19th-century San Francisco, an intrepid young woman rebels against her parents and refuses to conform to high society's expectations."

A solidly entertaining, feminist tale that's also well-suited for medical-history buffs.



PAINT YOUR HAIR BLUE

by Sue Matthews with Andrea Cohane

"A debut memoir chronicles a girl's battle to survive—and her joy, despite the odds."

A moving, bittersweet account of enduring love.

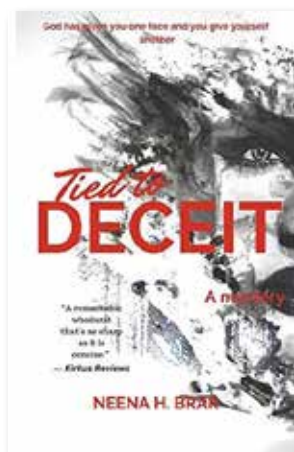


MY YELLOW BALLOON

by Tiffany Papageorge
illus. by Erwin Madrid

"A young boy who loses his treasured balloon illustrates the stages of grief in this debut picture book."

An effective and moving approach to understanding sorrow that children should understand.

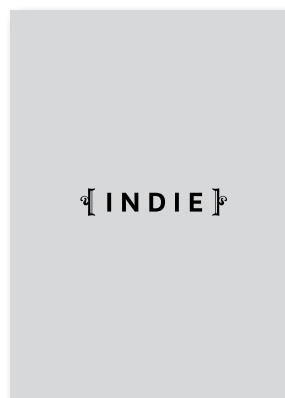


TIED TO DECEIT

by Neena H. Brar

"In Brar's debut mystery, a detective uncovers secrets surrounding a murder in 1970s India."

A remarkable whodunit that's as sharp as it is concise.

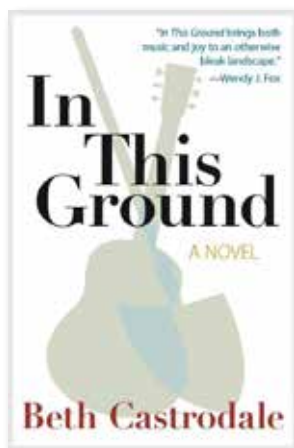


BAKERSFIELD BOYS CLUB

by Anne Da Vigo

"A mother desperately tries to protect her teenage son from a powerful ring of pedophiles."

A sensitively intelligent dramatization of the abuse of power.

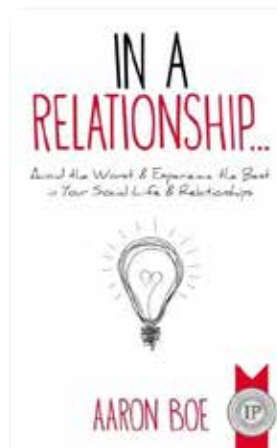


IN THIS GROUND

by Beth Castrodale

"A retired rock star finds work in a cemetery in this morosely intriguing novel by Castrodale (Marion Hatley, 2017)."

Sharp writing and an unconventional plot make for a darkly enjoyable read.



IN A RELATIONSHIP...

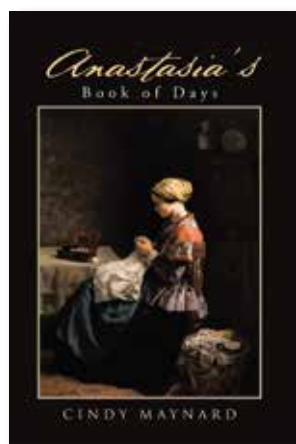
by Aaron Boe

"A manual explores the complications of interpersonal relationships."

A thorough, all-purpose guide to managing relationships—how to create good ones, avoid bad ones, and escape from harmful ones.

18 GREAT INDIE BOOKS WORTH DISCOVERING

[SPONSORED]

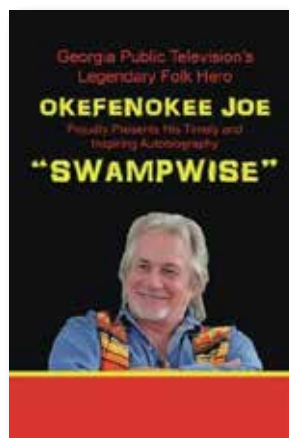


ANASTASIA'S BOOK OF DAYS

by Cindy Maynard

"A woman chronicles political events and her diverse relationships in 19th-century Germany."

An engaging historical novel starring one of the author's ancestors.

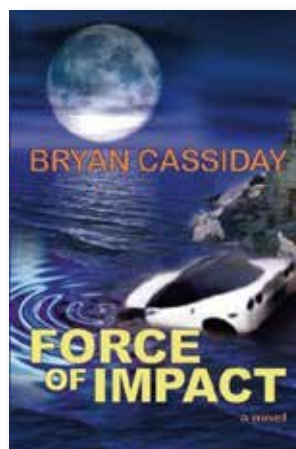


SWAMPWISE

by Okefenokee Joe

"In this debut guide, a longtime swamp master explores nature, life, and himself."

An anecdotal and highly enjoyable visit with a local folk legend.

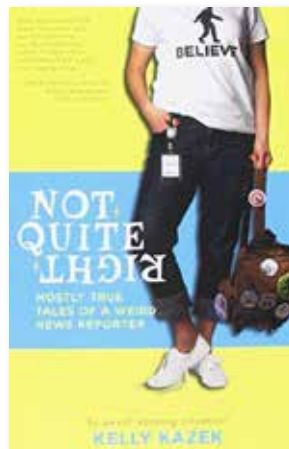


FORCE OF IMPACT

by Bryan Cassiday

"A California private eye's investigation of a questionable suicide leads to a clandestine club and a series of murders in Cassiday's (*Wipeout*, 2017, etc.) mystery-thriller."

A fast-paced detective novel enhanced by exceptional characters and a striking ending.



NOT QUITE RIGHT

by Kelly Kazek

"The self-proclaimed Southern queen of 'weird news' reporting offers a collection of dispatches."

Fans of Fannie Flagg should be overjoyed to discover the rustic, lighthearted musings of this Southern writer who enchants with keen, droll observations and needle-point wisdom.

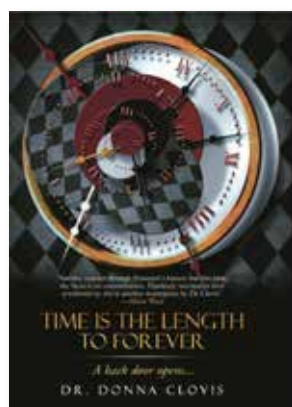


EVE OF SNOWS

by L. James Rice

"In Rice's fantasy series launch, an island ruled by seven clans faces body-possessing demons and a threat of a Holy War."

Brimming with well-defined details and characters; augmented by bountiful enthusiasm and spirit.



TIME IS THE LENGTH TO FOREVER

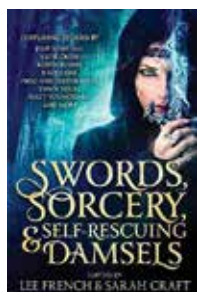
by Donna Clovis

"Clovis' (*The Future Is My Past*, 2017, etc.) memoir, filled with personal tales and accounts of different social justice issues, considers Princeton University and its city."

An inspiring, lyrical fusion of pertinent social issues and the writer's own experiences.

The diversity of premises and worlds makes for a delightfully unpredictable reading experience.

SWORDS, SORCERY, & SELF-RESCUING DAMSELS



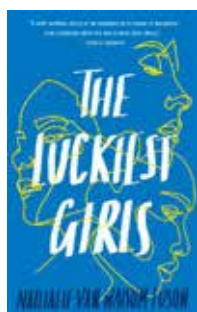
SWORDS, SORCERY, & SELF-RESCUING DAMSELS

Ed. by French, Lee and Craft, Sarah
Clockwork Dragon (266 pp.)
\$16.19 paper | \$4.99 e-book
Mar. 19, 2019
978-1-944334-26-0

French (*Space Angel*, 2019, etc.) and debut editor Craft bring 17 fantasy tales with feminist twists in this sword and sorcery anthology.

A spy in the service of the king returns to her old mercenary guild in order to solve the murders of four female warriors...and to confront her own troubled past. A mute slave working in the dungeons of a shadowy keep meets a priest and agrees to take the condemned man's sword to his lover, though it means risking her life to cross a vast wilderness. A disabled girl is always the last one picked for games, despite the fact that she is the local princess, until some magic intervenes that turns the tables on all. In this collection of fantasy stories, the old archetypes are inverted and the women and girls who normally lack agency are placed center stage. The tone ranges from light to dark, and some entries even lean toward the hard-boiled-detective genre. One standout is "The Princess and the Dragon" by Robyn Benis, which concerns a princess trapped in a tower who is conspiring with her dragon guard to win back her kingdom. "If one of those knights realizes it's all a front," warns the princess, "they could expose the whole operation." Another is "Aptitude" by Matt Youngmark; the daughter of servants sneaks into the lord of the manor's library to read his books only to stumble upon an attempt by a magical elf to rob it. The volume includes work by seasoned fantasists like Jody Lynn Nye, Raven Oak, Connie J. Jaspersen, and Katie Cross as well as emerging talents like Edward J. Knight. Not every story is a home run, but the diversity of premises and worlds makes for a delightfully unpredictable reading experience. Though each interprets the anthology's theme a little differently, this sentiment from Jaspersen is representative of the volume's self-assured, spellcasting ebullience: "Three weeks ago, I was a slave, afraid of shadows. Now I am Thorn Girl, friend of minotaurs and mages. Kerk was right. Inside of me is a woman who can do anything."

A hoard of fantasy tales that proves damsels can be as dangerous as dragons.



THE LUCKIEST GIRLS

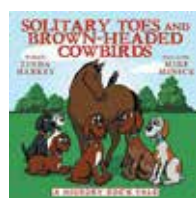
Fuson, Nathalie van Walsum
Self (132 pp.)

An orphaned teenager moves into her grandmother's model-filled town house.

In this debut YA novel, newly orphaned Jane Archer moves to New York to live with her grandmother Gigi Towers, founder of a modeling agency. Several of Gigi's young models live in her

house, and the narration rotates among Jane, who has trouble adjusting to upper-class life and Gigi's high standards; Maya, whose prominent family's disdain for her modeling career only exacerbates her eating disorders and cutting; and Campbell Tucker, a Southerner who sees her status go from bottom of the heap to it girl over a few months. The models face professional challenges, drug problems, harassment from men in the industry, and tough love from Gigi while Jane slowly settles in and finds her place with the "weirdos" at school and discovers a passion for filmmaking. Tensions increase as Campbell lands her first movie role, and Jane eventually solves the mystery of who in the house has been threatening the model's career. The book takes a dark turn in the final pages, but by the end, all three protagonists have grown emotionally. Fuson has created an engaging world in Gigi's town house, with well-developed main characters and a strong supporting cast. Jane's relationship with Gigi, which begins with open hostility and evolves into mutual respect, is plausible and compelling. The author is clearly knowledgeable about the modeling industry, with its "go-sees" and bookers—and the particular problems that Maya faces as one of the few black models. Although the plot is slow to develop in the opening chapters—in which the audience is reminded several times that Jane is distinctly not the model type—the pacing soon establishes itself, and readers will be turning pages quickly by the midpoint. The prose is solid, and if the theme of models who are more than just their looks is not entirely original, it is still well presented in an enjoyable narrative that will easily hold readers' attention.

A well-written story of an outsider in a house of beauties and problems that are more than skin-deep.



SOLITARY TOES AND BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS

Harkey, Linda

Illus. by Minick, Mike

Archway Publishing (48 pp.)

\$17.45 paper | \$3.99 e-book | Feb. 5, 2019

978-1-4808-7316-2

The hunting dogs at Lazy Dog Hacienda deal with an interloping horse in this children's book.

Chicoree's Hickory Doc, a shorthaired pointer dog, his brother Zeke, and Deacon, another dog, feel threatened when a horse named B.J. arrives at their hacienda. The dogs inform her that her physical traits, such as her "solitary toes," aren't conducive to hunting. B.J. and the dogs swap insults, and Zeke and the horse get into a physical altercation, causing Zeke to stumble into a garden, where he gets bitten by a turtle. The dogs are jealous that B.J. receives extra attention, but Doc reassures the others that their canine assistance is still necessary. He tells Zeke that "B.J. can't creep through the tall grass and find quail. Why, she would scare them off!" Angry after he spots B.J. snacking on dog food, Zeke proposes that they race, with the winner getting to eat all the chow in the barn. On race day, Zeke feigns illness, requiring Deacon, who has three legs, to compete instead. B.J. falls while attempting to nip Deacon's

nonexistent back leg. Deacon wins and shares his prize with the others—including B.J. (Doc reveals that their owner later sent B.J. to a new home because she “took a bite out of upholstery in his old red truck.”) Although this story features characters from Harkey’s (*The Remarkable Story of Willie the Crow*, 2018, etc.) other books, it works well as a stand-alone title, as it includes introductory details, such as the dogs’ pedigree names, family history, and physical descriptions. A subplot about a cowbird who takes up residence in a dove’s nest feels underdeveloped, and it detracts from the main storyline; it might’ve been better as the focus of another book. The resolution of the main plot is also easy to predict, but this doesn’t detract from the book’s overall appeal. Returning illustrator Minick’s colorful, cartoonish images provide additional context; for example, the dogs’ owner is referred to only as “The Great One,” but the images clarify that he’s human.

Fans of Harkey’s previous works will enjoy this adventurous story of silly animal antics.



BONJOUR, MY FRIEND

Helene, Diane

Outskirts Press (420 pp.)

\$29.95 | \$19.95 paper | Oct. 4, 2016

978-1-4787-6888-3

978-1-4787-6661-2 paper

In this debut novel, a young American singer discovers romantic intrigue and danger in Paris in 1960.

At age 19, Alycea Androvna is ready to pursue a career in music, a dream she nurtured throughout a childhood marked by tragedy and poverty. Born and raised in New York, she helped raise her siblings after the death of her alcoholic father. Following the death of her grandmother, she takes her inheritance and leaves New York for Paris, where she plans to spend a year establishing her singing career. A dedicated activist, she joins the Paris-based organization Belief in Animal Rescue Causes. She is hired as a singer at Le Restaurant Ledoyen and catches the eye of Andre Moreau, the owner, and his best friend, Marcus, the place’s business manager. Andre’s business interests also include his family’s cosmetics company, Chez Beauté. She develops a friendship with Marcus and his son, Henri, and discovers the warmth and stability of close family ties. At the same time, she is seduced by Andre’s charm and magnetism. After Alycea is injured in a bombing at BARC headquarters, Andre proposes marriage and she accepts. Andre hopes to start a family as soon as they marry, but Alycea wants to continue her singing career. As their wedding approaches, secrets about Chez Beauté threaten to destroy Alycea’s Paris dream. Helene’s novel is a sweeping romance with dynamic, multilayered characters and vivid settings that moves with the fast pace of a thriller. The story focuses on Alycea’s efforts to establish a singing career in Paris and the complex relationships she develops with Marcus and Andre. Alycea is a winsome heroine whose passion for music is matched by her love for animals and her commitment to their safety and protection.

Her involvement with BARC establishes the groundwork for a well-developed subplot involving the group’s efforts to expose companies that engage in product testing on animals. The gripping narrative is told through chapters that alternate between the first-person perspectives of Alycea, Marcus, and Andre as well as several supporting characters, including Andre’s sister, Deirdre, and the heroine’s friends at BARC, Netty and Warren.

An engaging and often riveting story of love, idealism, and betrayal.



GREETINGS!

Howell, Raven

Illus. by Pilicer, Ann

Michelkin Publishing (36 pp.)

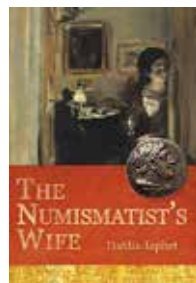
\$12.95 paper | May 3, 2019

978-1-949967-01-2

Two siblings enjoy a year of seasons in this poetic concept book full of detailed digital paintings.

“Goodbye, winter / Hello, spring!” A brown-haired sister and her spectacled younger brother, both nature lovers, say goodbye to each season as they move into the next one. On the spread that features the farewell to winter, the left-hand page depicts the two siblings and their dog bundled against the snow, watching a sleeping nest of bunnies. On the facing page, they observe three bears greeting spring. Howell’s (*My Community*, 2018, etc.) inventive rhymes correspond with the seasons, with a few phrases for each. Various familiar activities—eating ice cream, going to the beach, trick-or-treating, and sledding, among them—help highlight each season. The white siblings encounter plenty of human friends with varying skin tones as well as a number of animals: geese, robins, otters, turtles, and more. Some of the creatures are very realistic in Pilicer’s (*Morten and Gordon*, 2017, etc.) illustrations while others have cartoonish features to make them look more human. The innovative rhymes and the clear flow of one period into the next make the concept of seasonal change easy for young readers to grasp.

With action-packed illustrations and a repeating refrain, this nature tale is sure to become a favorite read-aloud in preschool classrooms.



THE NUMISMATIST’S WIFE

Japhet, Dablia

Archway Publishing (194 pp.)

\$30.95 | \$14.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Feb. 19, 2019

978-1-4808-5802-2

978-1-4808-5804-6 paper

Japhet tells the story of a German Jewish woman’s search for love and God during World War I in this debut historical novel.

Dana Newman discovers an ancient Roman coin at a Stormville, New York, flea market in 1999, which reminds her husband’s relative of an old family story from Germany.

A nuanced and thoroughly believable portrait of a cancer patient's everyday life that offers hope and sadness in equal measure.

AND THROW AWAY THE SKINS

Ilse Ehrenkrantz, who was 17 in 1912, fell in love with her step-cousin Georg, a skilled fencer and womanizer who decided to join the Prussian Army. He was also a numismatist—a coin collector—and he sent Ilse a necklace made from a Roman denarius that bore the image of Apollo. Ilse's father, a Jewish publisher, was doing well, but some of his friends complained about persistent anti-Semitism. Ilse, meanwhile, felt confined by her life in Munich's middle-class Jewish community. Her interest in religious-themed art led to curiosity about Christianity itself, and she began to associate more with the Christian girls at her school. "I want God to enlighten my heart," she told her sister. "I want faith, perhaps faith in Jesus as Savior and Redeemer, as Messiah. I want to understand the religion which inspires artists so powerfully." Georg, too, thought of converting—a necessity for becoming a Prussian officer. However, Ilse risked losing the love of her family if she turned her back on Judaism. As war loomed on Germany's horizon, Ilse had to decide whether her infatuations—with Georg and with Jesus—could sustain her through what was to come. It was a decision that would reverberate through the rest of the century.

Japhet's prose skillfully evokes the early-20th-century period, from the diction of the characters to the details of their clothes and furniture. The novel's depiction of upwardly mobile Jews in prewar Munich and Berlin opens up a world that one rarely sees portrayed in fiction, and one gets the sense of what assimilation meant to some of the members of Ilse's generation. It's a mannered novel about wealthy people, calling to mind the work of such authors as Edith Wharton or E.M. Forster, and its pace mirrors the literature of the time in which most of it is set. For all the talk of art and aspiration, however, the author ensures that history's horrors are never far below the surface: "When I came to Germany, there was a famine in Berdichev," recalls Sara, a poor immigrant who would later become the wife of a wealthy businessman and take Ilse under her wing. "Starving villagers stole bread from the children of others, and especially from poor Jewish children...be glad you have never seen hunger, and mothers watching their children die." Japhet manages to weave the histories of the Jewish people, Germany, socialism, and art into the narrative, providing context that makes the actions of the characters feel tragically inevitable. The frame narrative, set in 1999, feels largely unnecessary, as the primary plot builds toward a conclusion that's mostly satisfying, if slightly predictable.

A finely crafted novel about family, identity, and the precariousness of comfort.



AND THROW AWAY THE SKINS

Jones, Scott Archer

Fomite (312 pp.)

\$15.00 paper | \$4.99 e-book

Mar. 2, 2019

978-1-944388-61-4

A cancer patient searches for direction and fulfillment in Jones' (*A Rising Tide of People Swept Away*, 2016, etc.) novel.

In 2008, following a breast cancer

diagnosis, Rebecca "Bec" Robertson undergoes a double mastectomy and begins aggressive chemotherapy. Her husband, William, is a chaplain in the U.S. Army serving in Afghanistan. Near the start of the novel, William boards a plane from Dallas to begin a journey back to Kabul, leaving his sick wife behind. As they part, there's the sense that an emotional chasm is opening between them. Ever since Bec became ill, William has taken to treating her with excessive caution, and she senses his relief as they bid farewell to each other. Bec, meanwhile, feels a growing sense of detachment from him and a nagging suspicion that her recovery may be "Easier alone." Furthermore, the couple is in dire financial straits; Bec chooses not to burden William with the knowledge that their money has "bled away" and that the bank is foreclosing on their house. Soon, she relocates to a cabin in New Mexico. There, she meets an oddball set of locals—the first of whom, Marcus, she finds sitting in her truck, expecting her to drive him somewhere. The narrative also looks back over Bec's grueling childhood, her courtship with William when they were both teenagers, and her stoic efforts to carve out a life for herself after cancer—part of which may involve a relationship with an unpredictable former Marine named Michael.

Some readers may be unnerved by Jones' unflinching descriptions of the physical realities of cancer treatment: "Tribal marks, two slices of purple thread ruled out in straight horizontal lines below her chest....At least they had left the muscles underneath, so she didn't have craters." These graphic revelations of the treatments' brutal violence can be difficult to read; in Bec's case, surgeons are said to have "Cut away hunks of her body to fend off death." Along the way, Jones vividly captures the character's sense of emotional torment: "Sometimes she wanted something to blame, someone to scream at." In her struggle for survival, Bec lives on a razor's edge, and Jones subtly charts her progress and psychological shifts—which, the author points out, are also affected by medication: "At first, the steroids drove her crazy and the anti-coagulants left her so vulnerable she feared to touch anything. When her desire for intimacy returned, she couldn't find William." As the story progresses, readers will be drawn ever closer to Bec—they'll gain a profound understanding of the challenges she faces and be awed by her spirit of survival. But there are also feelings of joy in this harrowing novel, as Bec's newfound conception of self arises from her sense of loss and despair. Overall, this novel offers a nuanced and thoroughly believable portrait of a cancer patient's everyday life that offers hope and sadness in equal measure.

A deeply affecting and fearlessly descriptive story that charts the complexities of life with a potentially fatal illness.

PROSE AND CONS

Katz, Chuck & Starr, Alison

Self (337 pp.)

{ INDIE }

A stimulating spectacle of crime and interpersonal melodrama in which two very different writers' paths cross with unexpected results.

Brooklynite co-authors Katz and Starr conjure the thrills and machinations

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

ADAM BENDER

REALITY DEEPLY INFORMS FICTION IN THIS WRITER'S NOVELS

By Rhett Morgan



IN HIS JOB as a journalist, Adam Bender reports on technology and politics, but since self-publishing 2010's *We, the Watched*, he has used insight on those subjects to create award-winning speculative fiction. Last year's *The Wanderer and the New West* earned a starred review from Kirkus and was named one of our best books of 2018 for bending genres and its inventive inversion of the standard dystopian narrative. The book is set in a near-future America where Wild West-style gunfights and lawlessness coexist with smartwatches and autonomous vehicles, offering some intriguing commentary on contemporary gun control debates. Bender spoke with us about creating and publishing fantasies that explore the very real issues he reports on in new ways.

How does journalism complement your fiction writing?

Writing news and fiction complements each other very well. This might sound cynical, but covering tech and politics informs my fiction about humanity's fraught future. Also,

many of the writing skills I learned while training to be a journalist, such as using concise language and making sure that I "show, don't tell," have made me a better writer overall.

What attracted you to the dystopian genre?

I've always loved stories that make a statement about society, whether it be darkly humorous satire or more serious dystopian fiction. I like imagining worlds that are not that far from what we are today but where something is just a little bit off. In a good dystopian story, the most disturbing part doesn't seem like much of a stretch from where we are today.

How does *The Wanderer and the New West* break away from the usual dystopian narrative?

Dystopian stories are often about totalitarian authorities, but the government in *The Wanderer and the New West* has pulled out of people's lives. It's a lawless near-future America where individuals are empowered to take the law into their own hands. I thought this genre reversal would be a great way to take a dystopian look at the gun debate, in which some seek more regulations while others see the Second Amendment as critical to protecting their individual liberties. The best dystopian stories are about current issues....Presenting them as fiction makes them more accessible to all perspectives. Many of the same people who react negatively to a lecturing politician on the "other side" will keep their minds open when they read a novel.

What made you decide to self-publish?

I'd rather have my writing out in the world than keep it to myself. What literary agents and publishers think will sell commercially is subjective and in constant flux. I would welcome the right opportunity to publish traditionally, but I also want to be true to myself and get my work out there for readers to judge.

What have been some approaches to self-publishing that have worked best so far?

The great thing is self-publishing nowadays doesn't mean you have to compromise on quality. I worked with freelancers throughout the process, including two editors, a cover designer, and an interior layout whiz, to ensure a professional product. Marketing is the toughest thing as an indie author.

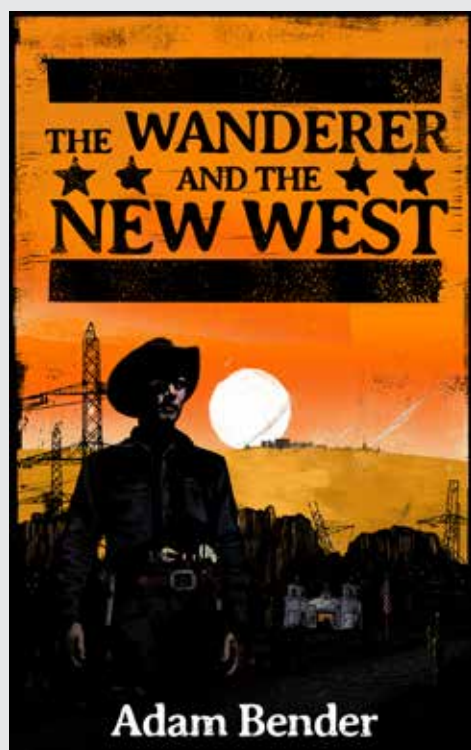
Do you think speculative fiction works particularly well in the self-publishing sphere?

The speculative genre is a great genre to be in right now given the success of recent books like *The Hunger Games* and TV shows like *Westworld* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. And perhaps by owning my own work I can be just a little more controversial than someone who is traditionally published.

What are you working on next?

My next novel, *Utopia PR*, is a satire about a public relations crisis manager who seeks greater work-life balance in his job spinning the news for a dystopian government. I've always tried to include some comic relief in my books, but this time I wanted to write a straight-up comedy. It's been a lot of fun!

Rbett Morgan is a writer and translator living in Paris.



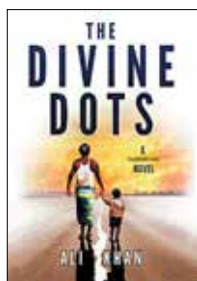
of the writing life in a story of two characters who collaborate and commingle their talents and aspirations. The story opens in 2010—a time of war, soaring unemployment, and a crumbling housing market. Young writer and former Californian Kia Kuniya navigates Manhattan's unforgiving job market, hunting for gainful employment, while also taking care of a pet bunny named Monsieur Floppy. With the determination of a true city slicker (“My unlimited MetroCard is the closest thing I have to a superpower”), she manages to land a job in a coffee shop, but she's assaulted by a diminutive, gap-toothed attacker on her way to her first shift. Kia's knight in shining armor materializes in the form of Dylan Miller, who swoops in and rescues her from being beaten up on the sidewalk. Dylan is a writer, as well, and he and Kia quickly hit it off despite the unconventional circumstances of their meeting—and the fact that he might have killed her attacker after fending him off. Dylan proves to be a marijuana-smoking egocentric whose love-hate rants about the city are as epic and unbelievable as his history as a multiple widower. Still, he and Kia share a jovial attraction, particularly after Kia returns to Dylan's basement apartment, after recuperating, to show him the illustrated story that she wrote about the shocking ordeal.

Katz and Starr show how each character recognizes the drive, creativity, and true talent in the other. Kia and Dylan soon become “partner[s] in prose” and begin penning new stories as romantic sparks fly between them. Kia eventually moves into Dylan's subterranean abode, and their cohabitation inspires an exchange of personal histories, including Dylan's admittance of residual psychological trauma from the events of 9/11. Over the course of the novel, both characters play off each other well, and their personalities amiably suit the narrative tone; also, both become engrossed in the many pleasures and pains of the creative writing process, which will delight readers who are also authors. Throughout the book's second half, as Kia and Dylan's quirky story matures, Dylan's past cruel shenanigans and untruths are exposed, which leads to unpleasant consequences for the hopeful scribe. Katz and Starr's collaborative prose is fast-paced throughout the novel—wonderfully character-driven and consistently clever. They also offer memorable descriptions, such as of eager baristas approaching with “double espresso enthusiasm” or of someone ranting with the “lung capacity of a scuba diver.” The authors know New York well, and they describe its percolating energy, rushing street traffic, and weathered population with gritty realism. In the novel's conclusion, the law catches up to Dylan, leading to a confession of intent to pen a multivolume series of sequels, which should please readers who aren't quite ready to say goodbye to this dynamic duo.

A kaleidoscopic escapade with a resilient and uniquely addictive pair of characters.

LaHines' tale paints a robust picture of a suffering neurotic stuck in his sorrow.

SOMEDAY EVERYTHING WILL ALL MAKE SENSE



THE DIVINE DOTS

Khan, Ali

AuthorHouse (230 pp.)

\$26.99 | \$11.99 paper | \$0.99 e-book

Nov. 19, 2018

978-1-5462-6815-4

978-1-9994326-0-7 paper

A Bangladeshi father sets his son on a path to achievement in this debut novel that doubles as a self-help manual.

Mired in generational poverty that seems inescapable, Sukkur, an agricultural day laborer in rural Bangladesh, is determined that his beloved son, Bijoy, will break their family's cycle of privation by getting an education and perhaps one day becoming the village teacher. When Sukkur dies suddenly, Bijoy's financial future looks grim. But the boy's mother, Jorina, finds ways to advance Bijoy's prospects, even when it means placing him in an orphanage. Nurtured by his mother's love and resilience, Bijoy not only survives his institutionalization, but learns lessons of self-reliance, assertiveness, and cooperation. The determination born of his parents' sacrifices buoys him while his open nature leads him toward mentors along the way, from a college friend who shows him how to get over a broken heart to a dorm cook who inspires a career-changing love of music. Although Bijoy's journey is sometimes painful, the "divine dots" of his life crises guide him forward. Khan's novel serves as an extended consideration of human psychology and emotional awareness; the author frequently peppers the narrative with quotes from a variety of thinkers, from Gandhi and Rumi to J.P. Morgan and Norman Vincent Peale, as the philosophical Bijoy struggles to make sense of his experiences. Often these detours include scientific research and expert opinion, such as a reference to psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's work on the connection between creating meaning and surviving horrific circumstances. Only occasionally does the tone lapse into didacticism or triteness, as with a comparison of life to a garden which must be prepared and watered, but the humanity of Bijoy's story pulls the reader through those sections to rewarding insights.

An affecting bildungsroman grounded in principles of emotional intelligence.

DAHLIA IN BLOOM

Koehler, Susan

Turtle Cove Press (152 pp.)



{ INDIE }

A young girl in Appalachia during the Great Depression copes with her family's move to a new farm in Koehler's (*The Complete K-5 Writing Workshop*, 2013, etc.) novel.

Dahlia Harrell is an 8-year-old girl in a family of tenant farmers in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It's the 1930s, and though Dahlia is in a loving family, not everything is quite right. She

has recently recovered from a case of diphtheria. Money is tight. The family can eat what they grow and rely on the chickens and cow, Ol' Rosie, but having cash in hand is rare. Dahlia thinks: "With enough money, a person could buy away any reason they ever had to feel afraid." Though Dahlia's world is small, her life on Harrell Mountain is full of wonder, mystery, and big dreams. Her brother Charlie believes there is buried treasure on the property that will make them as rich as the Rockefellers. Grandpa talks of the family's history in the area as he and Dahlia lie on the ground gazing at stars. But her father breaks the news that the family will be moving to a new farm, one owned by another family. He hopes it will improve their circumstances, but to Charlie, it means giving up on the buried treasure, and Dahlia can't imagine living far away from her grandfather. But they do move—the girls in flour-sack dresses with cornhusk dolls—and a relief society steps in to give the kids new clothes for school. Nervous about her skills and fighting with her sister, Dahlia worries about her grandfather and wonders if she'll ever be able to return to Harrell Mountain. Koehler's Depression-era novel is concise but effective and weighty. In a time of great change for Dahlia, Koehler paints a clear portrait of this family and their circumstances with writing that is subtle and strong. Dahlia's world has just gotten much bigger, and her increasing awareness of herself as compared with others is thoughtfully described. Rich details abound on everything from meals to economics to a precious missing doll, but it's the author's gift for making a specific story so universal that stands out.

A well-crafted, beautiful novel about a fraught childhood moment.



SOMEDAY EVERYTHING WILL ALL MAKE SENSE

LaHines, Carol

Adelaide Books (220 pp.)

\$19.60 paper | \$7.99 e-book

Feb. 4, 2019

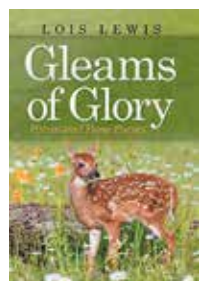
978-1-949180-91-6

A professor struggles with grief after his mother dies in front of him.

In this debut novel, Luther van der Loon is the very definition of an eccentric. He's a failed harpsichord virtuoso-turned-Renaissance music professor in his 40s who, save for a single year abroad, has lived quite happily under the watchful eye of his mother, the two caring for each other. When she chokes to death on a bit of wonton takeout from the Seven Happiness Chinese restaurant, his world is suddenly thrown into upheaval. Not only has the cord finally, irrevocably been cut, but his own inability to save her with the Heimlich maneuver haunts him. His girlfriend of 15 years, Cecilia, seems well positioned as a therapist and thanatologist to aid him. But he treats the lessons about the stages of grief she has impressed upon him as trite, grappling with his loss under her watchful assessment. Suffering from insomnia and barely able to eat for fear of choking, Luther hides his anxiety in

fits of musical intellectualism on hertz and ratios while looking for someone to blame as he pursues hollow monetary damages from *Seven Happiness*, a move he hides from Cecilia. LaHines' tale paints a robust picture of a suffering neurotic stuck in his sorrow, her protagonist recalling a Laurence Sterne character. Luther lives in a world defined narrowly by his musical hobby horses. He is far from charming, at times approaching pathetic, but his character is so fully rendered in his overly verbose narration and melancholy that he becomes impossible to dismiss. And while the story takes turns that range from the very dark to Old World melodramatic, there is a great deal of humor present. Some of this comes from simple wordplay: a therapist named Dr. Fein, a medication called "Soliloquil," and Luther's academic papers "Pre-Mensural Notation." Other moments, like his shocking confrontation with an ill-advised one-night stand caught eating the frozen remnants of the murderous soup, bring lots of laughs—and, most importantly, not at the expense of the stricken oddball.

Not the first novel to find humor in loss but an admirable addition to that venerable category.



GLEAMS OF GLORY

Lewis, Lois

Westbow Press (134 pp.)

\$28.95 | \$11.95 paper | \$0.99 e-book

Nov. 6, 2018

978-1-973644-15-6

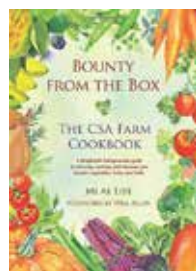
978-1-973644-13-2 paper

A volume of verse sings of nature's beauty and praises the divine Creator.

Most readers probably know the first lines of Joyce Kilmer's famous poem, "Trees": "I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree." Fewer, perhaps, are familiar with the last couplet: "Poems are made by fools like me, / But only God can make a tree." Lewis (*The Hummingbirds Will Return*, 2017, etc.) credits Kilmer with first inspiring her to write, and from her new collection, one can see why. Throughout, the poet follows her mentor in marveling at the beauty of God's creations and celebrating all the things that he makes. Readers can see a very direct line of influence in "Oak Trees": "Dear Lord, / I think I may understand why / oak trees hold onto / dead brown leaves all winter—... But this is a puzzle, Lord: / how did it ever come to you, / to tuck a giant oak tree / inside a tiny acorn?" Here, nature is not only an inspiration, but also a source of awe. Readers will hear a similar note of inquisitive wonder (in a decidedly different key) in "Pink Flamingos": "But why do flamingos stand / on one leg? / Scientists say, / it may be to conserve / body heat. / I propose / a yoga pose. / Do you suppose?" Would that everyone could approach this divine mystery with such a light heart. But one suspects that for the poet, doing so is easy because the globe is simply chock-full of miracles. In a late piece, "Divine Art Gallery," she writes: "Living in this world / is like being in the midst of a / divine art gallery, / showcasing the omni-creative talents / of the Master Artist." The world is a museum brimming with treasures that

reflect the majesty of God. To quote the famous hymn, how can Lewis keep from singing?

In this heartwarming poetry collection, religious devotion remains a joy and a pleasure.



BOUNTY FROM THE BOX The CSA Farm Cookbook

Lipe, Mi Ae

Twisted Carrot Publishing (712 pp.)

\$35.00 paper | Oct. 13, 2015

978-0-9905011-0-7

A cookbook offers a cornucopia of organic farming information, stories, recipes, tips, and culinary methods.

Seattle-based book editor and designer Lipe (*Tastes From Valley to Bluff*, 2008) always considered herself "a far more dedicated eater than a cook of any merit." But this revised and expanded version of her debut cookbook virtually doubles the amount of food items profiled and delivers more than 300 recipes organized around the four seasons and tailored to please an assortment of palates. She notes that part of the purpose of the work is to present "more than a passing glimpse into what it actually takes to get food from seed to plate" through community-supported agriculture initiatives, a model whereby consumers buy local seasonal items directly from farmers, typically through a subscription. These CSA farms, Lipe writes, supply much more than just food for the communities they serve; they inspire educational, outreach, employment, and fellowship opportunities as well. Fronting each season in the volume is a beautifully written featurette detailing the history, function, and the resourceful, dynamic people of a farm selected by the author for its sustainability and success in the organic arena. Sprinkled throughout are many gray sidebars dispensing practical particulars on topics like nutrition, food politics, organic farming rituals, gardening (for example, "The Journey of an Asparagus Stalk" by Sarah Stone), and many more. Each is written by experienced cultivators who are eager to steer consumers toward achieving the best outcomes when visiting farms for organic produce.

Lipe is also well aware that CSAs are not ideal arrangements for everyone and is happy to extoll their usefulness within communities and how they operate. One sidebar weighs the pros and cons of CSAs, particularly when factoring in the issues of cost, availability, and, perhaps most importantly, what percentage of produce obtained through the food subscription will become stale and discarded before it can be enjoyed. Other useful tidbits include how to cool the burn of peppers, how to safely employ organic pesticides in one's own garden, how to reduce food waste, and the wonder and increasing popularity of "agrihoods." Black-and-white photographs and illustrations from various sources; intriguing recipes; and graphics enhance this comprehensive volume and provide easily accessible dinner menus for both classic Americana dishes and those with a more international flair. In addition, the cookbook presents complementary side dishes featuring an endless variety and

Slams home an environmental lesson in a manner that few novels attempt.

MYTHICALS

combination of herbs, spices, and preparatory options. Unusual ingredients like edible flowers (77 varieties) dazzle as much as the sweet recipes for Real Basil Cheesecake, gluten- and dairy-free Dark Chocolate Avocado Cookies, and Cantaloupe Pie. Alongside these delights are more common items like artichokes, mushroom varieties, strawberries, and kale. Lipe has crafted an essential resource for anyone concerned with the origins of their food and how sustainable the items are. Readers simply eager to test fresh cooking techniques, new ideas, and unique ingredients and learn captivating pieces of agricultural trivia should treasure this inspiring guide as well.

An impeccably produced gastronomic feast for the senses and a pleasure to read.



THE COMYN'S CURSE

MacKinnon, M.

DartFrog Books (356 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Mar. 25, 2019

978-1-73383-840-5

A novel that mixes Scottish history, an ancient curse, and a hint of romance.

After her fiancé breaks up with her via text, Aubrey Cumming finds herself at a loss. After all, she moved from Pennsylvania to the town of Harrington, New Jersey, for him. After a pity party with two of her friends, she returns to work at her bookstore job. There, her Scottish boss, Angus MacKintosh, offers her a trip to Scotland to visit the land of her ancestors and get over her ex. Her boss even found her a place to stay for free, with just one catch—she'll have to find a way to break a curse placed on the MacKintosh family back in 1442: "*none shall be loved truly, but always in vain.*" To break it, a Cumming must fall in love with a MacKintosh. In Scotland, Aubrey takes her time enjoying life as a tourist, but it isn't long before she meets two strapping Scottish gentlemen, Finn Cameron and Connor MacConnach. But in the wake of Brexit, Scotland is still fighting for its independence from the United Kingdom, and the Caledonia First campaign has powerful enemies as well as a traitor in their midst. Author MacKinnon (*Whiskey Dreams*, 2018, etc.) offers a little something for everyone in this novel, including a love triangle, supernatural elements, political intrigue, dramatic history, and beautiful scenery in a truly epic tale. Aubrey's time in Scotland is broken up by glimpses of the past, which show how the family curse came about. The well-developed main characters are backed up by a host of entertaining and lovable secondary players. It's clear the author did her research about the country, history, and landscape, which may cause some readers to do further research, if not book tours of their own. This novel is also highly recommended for fans of Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series, as its fans will find many hidden and not-so-hidden references to it in the text.

A pleasing cross-genre novel.



MYTHICALS

Meredith, Dennis

Glyphus (372 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | \$0.99 e-book

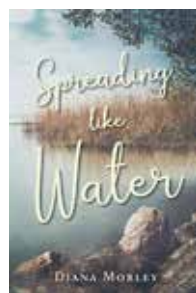
Nov. 14, 2018

978-1-939118-29-5

A novel sees a reporter trying to uncover the truth about his planet and its many secret inhabitants.

Aeio and her husband, E'ioy, are fairies. They've been exiled by intergalactic Wardens to a planet where they don flesh suits to hide among the locals. Tonight, they're attending an award ceremony at the Congress of Nations building in their guises of Sen. Deborah Bright and her husband, Marc. But before the senator can receive her award for saving children in conflict zones, a waiter accidentally hits her face with a tray. Her disguise rips, and she flees to a secluded room. As she spreads her wings to escape from a window, a drunken guest spots her. The man, Jack March, is a recently laid-off reporter for the *Capital Herald*. Deborah and Marc do what any Mythical must in this situation—neutralize the witness. They call in Sam, an irresistible pixie, to seduce and discredit Jack. Meanwhile, Sen. Warren F. Lee, secretly a werewolf, pressures Deborah to support increased military spending. Yet she knows that this won't help the Mythicals' ultimate goal: "to guide the planet toward a lasting, planetary peace." But military aid may be a moot point if the Wardens declare the Mythicals' hosts to be a "terminal species," too destructive to continue. In this wickedly clever adventure, Meredith (*The Neuromorphs*, 2018, etc.) adds political and environmental savvy for good measure. While the Mythicals—including Mike the ogre and Steve the troll—are exiles from various home worlds, each race (except the werewolves) has triumphed over its worst tendencies. As Lee tells the humans, "Many of your signal technological achievements...enhance your ability to kill." Fans should delight in the author's genre subversion, like his elves, which are really the bulb-headed aliens of modern folklore. There's also a randy sense of humor in the Mythicals' commitment to nudity. Plot points like the Genetic Fitness Law, which would place women in charge worldwide, will stir healthy debate. Best of all is the twist involving a hidden race of Pilgrims, which slams home an environmental lesson in a manner that few novels attempt.

A meticulously orchestrated genre mashup with an urgent, heartfelt message.



SPREADING LIKE WATER

Morley, Diana

Luminare Press (50 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | \$3.95 e-book | Mar. 5, 2019

978-1-64388-081-5

A chapbook offers poems on the stages of life, the arts, and nature.

Morley's (*Something To Howl About*, 2014, etc.) collection presents 35 short poems. The first group is about her

mother, starting with "Back Then," which includes the author's own birth: "The nurse held / her legs crossed / to keep me in / till the doctor came." "Circles" seems like a meditation on the death of a parent: "Earth works hard now to get our attention, to keep circles / going as my mother taught." Some poems reflect on the life cycle, as evidenced by "Carried by the Current": "We come into life through / the birth canal, fearful, crying; / let's leave gently, carried by / the current." Other pieces focus on the creative process, whether it be poetry or music. In "A Cello," Morley explores the instrument's sound: "Listen to how low a cello note can go, how far down / underground, yet never risk the earth shifting." Another prominent theme in the chapbook is nature, such as rain, hail, birds, and other wonders. In "A Duck," she captures this image: "A mallard stands / feet firm / neck lustrous / done preening / head up straight." These poems are elegantly written and provide beautiful meditations. The author effectively uses the device of concentrating on a single moment or image, such as an irrigation canal or a chair, to reflect on life's big issues. Some lines are transcendent, such as this one from "Given," about Morley's elevation of mud pies: "Others said the world / was sung into being (and here I thought it was dancing!)." The poems do not have a huge single theme that ties them together as in some chapbooks, but the pieces work as a cohesive whole.

A graceful collection of poetry that provides quiet moments of contemplation.



10/10

Mott, Gordon

Val de Grace (345 pp.)

\$24.95 paper | Jun. 1, 2019

978-0-9976405-7-1

In this thriller, a group of strangers find themselves bound together in the aftermath of a catastrophe that's reminiscent of the 9/11 attacks.

Caleb Drake takes the train from his residential suburb to Manhattan for work each day—a routine that's typically uneventful. But on Oct. 10, he notices two small planes flying uncommonly low over the Hudson River, which turns out to be a harbinger of trouble. The train suddenly stops, and the frazzled passengers quickly discover that almost no one has cellphone service—and they're certain that something terrible has happened when the train's conductor, Charlie Murray, announces an order from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for everyone to remain on board. Unconfirmed rumors swirl like swarms of bees—maybe there was an explosion, there are evacuations underway—sending the train's passengers into a spiraling panic. James Roth, one particularly agitated man, flees in defiance of the lockdown, intent on closing a billion-dollar deal in the city. Others quickly follow his lead, including Caleb and Rachel Silver, a real estate agent who seems to have the only working cellphone. Debut author Mott impressively unfurls a complex, suspenseful plot that launches with what turns out to be a terror attack. Caleb

and Rachel are later drawn toward each other romantically, as both feel stuck in marriages that have lost their luster. Also, the death of Charlie's father—who has a heart attack after someone steals his car—pulls the characters into what's effectively a murder investigation. The author cleverly braids the lives of the various players into a coherent narrative tapestry, and he astutely dramatizes how crises can inspire promises that are abandoned later on. Caleb is tortured by his failure to fulfill his own pledges ("Don't be trapped inside a haphazardly built life, a mind-numbing routine scraped together with bits and pieces of detritus from other people's lives"), and Mott movingly depicts his struggle. However, Roth comes off as more of a cartoonish caricature—pure hubris incarnate—and readers may find his shallowness hard to believe.

A gripping and psychologically sharp crime drama.



REUNION

Mulkern, Michael

Manuscript (239 pp.)

A mindless clone space pilot, destined as a fighter for an interstellar war, unexpectedly discovers his individuality and—with some surprising allies—tries to reverse the cycle of destruction.

In Mulkern's debut sci-fi novel, a nameless man whose uniform bears the number 3302JJ26H9S375 suddenly awakens in a giant, labyrinthine factory with no memory of how he got there. Surrounded by identical-looking, unresponsive warriors, the amnesiac "33" (later he settles on the name Rob) comes to the unsettling conclusion that he belongs to a vast, preprogrammed clone military, split between pilots (like him) and soldiers, grown and conditioned in vats and deployed endlessly. Using trial and error in navigating around the complex (and avoiding cleanup robots, the only other signs of "life"), Rob ultimately learns his fellow clones are automatically dispersing through the galaxy, continually fighting wars of conquest and extermination against helpless alien races on multitudinous worlds. This pointless, rapacious operation has been going on, by itself, for a long time. A flaw in Rob's cloning grants him self-awareness and an ethical conscience to rebel and do something about it. But can he? Well, yes—and readers might quibble that, after a cool opening (with a parallel narrative about military-industrial corporate skulduggery among elites of an Earth-like world that ends abruptly and jarringly), the hero's cosmos-traversing path to halt the gears of cruel total war is rather simple considering the monumental stakes. Still, it's a nimble, fast-moving narrative even as it echoes other star wars sagas, such as Fred Saberhagen's Berserker series and, well, Star Wars, with its storm troopers and resistance fighters (Rob acquires an alien ally resembling an inventive mix of Wookiee, Klingon, and one of author Larry Niven's feline Kzin). Even the daughter of a "lord" enters for an endearing, old-fashioned, chaste romance. While modern concepts such as software viruses and nanotechnology get thrown into the mix, this tale

has the companionable feel of a shipshape yarn from sci-fi's golden age.

One not-so-tin soldier rides away from an apocalypse in a sci-fi adventure wrapped in a neat, compact package.



THE SECOND COMING *The Arrival*

Perez, Alberto

Aristo's Publishing (434 pp.)

\$19.99 paper | \$6.99 e-book

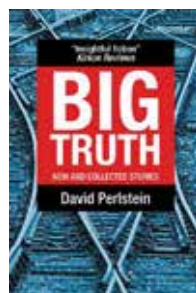
Mar. 24, 2018

978-1-73217-180-0

This dramatic Christian fantasy novel, set after the rapture, alternates between heaven and Earth to tell a story of the battle for the souls of humanity.

The well-known prophecy of the second coming of Jesus Christ gets a completely new twist in this text, which follows multiple groups of characters. First, the author pulls back the curtain on Harem, the realm of angels who plan to rescue “the righteous” in an invasion of Earth that humans will perceive as a mass alien abduction. Later, brilliant but nonbelieving medical researchers Yvette Milagro and Wen “Winnie” Chow Lee, along with Yvette’s 10-year-old daughter, Mia, wake up and find the injured Hoshea (aka Jesus) when the rapture occurs. The story bounces between Harem and Earth with additional subplots that follow 13-year-old Artemis and her family, who are raptured in North Carolina and begin the process of becoming full-fledged angels, as well as the first rumbles of the Antichrist coming to power. Meanwhile, a New York City police detective named Reynolds and National Security Agency operative Akachi Ihejika pursue the researchers and Hoshea in the post-rapture world. Readers of high fantasy will recognize the in-depth worldbuilding in debut author Perez’s descriptions of the technology and mystical powers of Harem, which include time- and space-traveling devices and celestial weaponry for fighting the Helem, or demons. The journey of the humans in Harem is particularly compelling, drawing out deep philosophical insights. The dialogue-driven story focuses on how demonstrations of love are capable of changing hearts, but at its core, it aims to offer nothing less than a tale of an epic struggle between good and evil. This Christian novel showcases human emotions and sacrifice without preaching or out-of-place spirituality; even divine beings are portrayed as experiencing something new during this era of history. The novel is also action-packed, offering harrowing helicopter travel, devilish enemies, and gut-wrenching losses of innocence. The author helpfully outlines the dizzying array of characters in a “Character Key” at the end, and the story clearly hints at a sequel.

A complex tale of the end times with skillful worldbuilding.



BIG TRUTH *New and Selected Stories*

Perlstein, David

iUniverse (270 pp.)

\$13.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Mar. 27, 2019

978-1-5320-7145-4

The characters in Perlstein’s (*The Odd Plight of Adonis Licht*, 2017, etc.) short story collection endure tragedy and betrayal in a generally gloomy world.

The book opens with “Beautiful” in which Californian and former astronaut Hunter celebrates his 80th birthday. Since his celestial voyage long ago, he’s been depressed, as humanity seems insignificant compared to the vast galaxies. Now he hopes to make a difference in the world with a charitable act, but it may not be enough. Numerous other tales, most of which are also set in the Golden State, are likewise grim. Some characters merely recall a sordid past; in “Two Suitcases by the Side of the Road,” for instance, the narrator, a writer, invents a fictional backstory for the owner of the titular, abandoned suitcases, which evoke memories of his own failed relationships. Other stories involve people deceiving friends or lovers. In the title tale, pals Jeffrey Hyer, Gary White, Arnie, and Steve have a road trip reunion and discover that their shared history is filled with disloyalty. In the standout “Really, Do We Have to Know Everything?” Scott, a stay-at-home dad, puts a tracking app on his children’s phones as a precautionary measure in case of kidnapping—but then he considers using it to investigate his wife’s suspected infidelity. Perlstein occasionally links his stories together with allusions to earlier events as well as recurring characters, including all four friends in “Big Truth”; the most memorable of these is White, a successful, pompous painter/sculptor who often refers to himself in the third person.

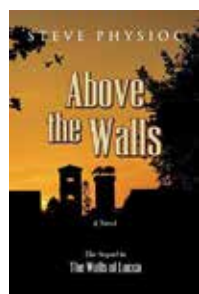
Readers will breeze through Perlstein’s relatively short tales, some of which are only a few pages long. Despite the collection’s somber characters and plot turns, it’s more engaging than it is dismal, as it offers fables with clearly discernible morals. Californians Liz and Mel of “Taj Mahal” can’t escape constant reminders of their deceased son even when they’re in India; it’s a sad but profound revelation that makes it clear that mourning requires time and patience. The author also incorporates myriad biblical references, most notably a contemporary update on the story of Job (“The Satan and God Go Double or Nothing”) and an Adam and Eve parody (“The First Fashionistas”). The latter is indicative of the author’s sense of humor, which is even present in stories that ultimately turn dark—such as “Twins Under the Skin,” which begins with an employee and a manager at a 24-hour Biggie-Mart debating the definition of the term “Friday night” during a Thursday overnight shift. Perlstein also mutes the few instances of violence; a father in “Prescribed Burns” searches for an outlet for his son’s aggressive tendencies, and in “Medium-Boiled,” a man tries to subdue his “dark side” after his girlfriend leaves him. The author consistently offers meticulous, indelible descriptive passages. In “Max,” for example, the young narrator aptly illustrates the carefree nature of

Whimsical and warmhearted.

DOGS IN TOPANGA!

childhood: "When you're ten, the world of adults is as complex as a cobweb and just as weightless."

Sometimes dour but insightful fiction that will spark readers' emotions.



ABOVE THE WALLS

Physioc, Steve

Self (471 pp.)

\$18.00 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Jan. 29, 2019

978-1-79312-876-8

A sequel dramatizes the conflict between fascism and its opponents in Italy and North Africa.

In 1938, Giovanni and Susanna Martellino's vineyard is foundering, and Alfredo Obizzi, her former lover and a prominent Fascist legislator, gets revenge by blocking potential loans. Isabella Carollo, the wife of the couple's winemaker and the series' spiritual guru, encourages Susanna to ask her sister and brother-in-law for assistance. They agree to fund the vineyard—if the Martellos will hide Jewish refugees. In the nearly eight years that follow, the events that befall these two central families reveal the breadth of Italy's reach and the variety of World War II experiences. The Martellos' son, DeAngelo, travels to Benghazi, Libya, to compare techniques at the Romero family's vineyard. The Romeros praise Il Duce's modernization of North Africa, but DeAngelo points out that Mussolini's latest manifesto has robbed Jews of their jobs and property. When the war heats up, DeAngelo helps Italian families escape Libya and later joins the Resistance. Meanwhile, his half brother, Pietro, Susanna's son by Obizzi, is engaged in trench warfare in Albania and suffers temporary amnesia after a mortar attack. Back home, Susanna and Isabella volunteer at a prison hospital. In a touching second-generation romance, DeAngelo falls for Isabella's daughter, Lily. As the Nazis ramp up their campaign against the Italian partisans, the stage is set for a gripping finale and a twist ending. Once again, Physioc (*The Walls of Lucca*, 2018), an Emmy Award-winning sportscaster for the Kansas City Royals and Fox College Basketball, brings wartime Italy to vibrant life. With the Libya material, he adds a layer of interest, bravely tackling colonialism alongside the many other social issues. The book languishes in the middle and could stand to lose 100 pages, but a pacy final third makes up for it. Isabella remains a mostly credible spokeswoman for mindfulness and forgiveness (as in *The Walls of Lucca*): "Enjoy right now" and "Don't give anyone power over your thoughts. Don't let the Fascists...or anyone take your peace."

Convincing historical fiction with a spiritual slant.



LOSING LEAH HOLLOWAY

Regan, Lisa

Thomas & Mercer (382 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | \$5.99 e-book

Oct. 17, 2017

978-1-5039-4299-8

Novelist Regan (*Finding Claire Fletcher*, 2017, etc.) is back with the second thriller in her series starring Claire Fletcher and Detective Connor Parks. Again we have a psychopath, and this one's a very busy

serial killer.

Leah Holloway, a middle-class mom, drives her SUV full of kids through a guardrail and right into the American River. She wills herself to drown, though Claire, fishing nearby, manages to rescue the kids, Leah's three and her neighbor Rachel Irving's twins. This is against the backdrop of what the press is calling the Soccer Mom Strangler murders. While most of the Sacramento PD is on the Strangler case, Connor and his partner, Detective Jade Webb, are assigned to figure out why Leah Holloway—a woman with no obvious stressors—would off herself. Bit by bit they uncover threatening ugliness (the Holloways' dog was poisoned, there was broken glass in the kids' sandbox, the car-seat straps were cut), DNA tests that don't make sense, and other disturbing or curious things. And then, through flashbacks, we learn of D.J. North, a hunky young creep, supposedly Rachel's nephew from back East, who may have been involved with Leah. Much more terrifying developments ensue. Regan's writing always impresses. For D.J., "reality became a vague, easily discarded, suggestion." And her insight into character runs from Leah's having several different drawers in her mind where bad stuff can be stowed (e.g., the "Did Not Happen" drawer) to the snarky depiction of Leah's hapless husband, Jim, who is so clueless and helpless that he doesn't even realize what a selfish jerk he is. And the final revelations are properly ingenious.

Layered characters perpetrate diabolical deeds under the sunny facade of a Mayberry-esque town in this clever thriller.



DOGS IN TOPANGA!

2000-2018

Robbins, Jane Marla

Shining Tree Press (69 pp.)

{ INDIE }

A free-spirited California dog lover celebrates the joyful, healing presence of canine soul mates in 38 affectionate poems.

Robbins' (*Poems of the Laughing Buddha*, 2015, etc.) verses depict the delight that a slobbering, grinning, tail-wagging mutt can bring into a person's life—even while shredding car upholstery and leaving tooth and claw marks everywhere. The title poem is a concise introduction to the seductive contradictions of "These spirits, these fakers, / adventurers out to filch / a bone" who "can charm you to death with their / playfulness, coyness, flirting, / their wisdom." Some of the works that follow, in four chronologically

arranged sections, are portraits of individual dogs, such as Pele, aka “Mr. Mudmouth, Slime Face, Saliva Head,” who’s “silly and magnificent.” Others present a deeper homage to a special companion dog, a “little ragamuffin” named Camella who injured her spine in a fall but later walked again. “Guitarist” uses animal metaphors to describe a flirty man, initially scolding him as “O that dog!” but eventually calling him a “pussycat.” Other verses touch on the celebrity-tinged counterculture of Southern California’s Topanga Canyon; “At Café Mimosa,” for instance, casually name-drops that “I’m at a table...with Daithi, an acupuncturist from Ireland / who used to tour with the Beatles.” Throughout the collection, the author skillfully evokes dogs’ personalities, and her enjoyment of their virtues and foibles is childlike and visceral. The short poem “Dancer” is a marvel of economic imagery in such lines as “he fluffies toward me, his / laugh face breathing words.” However, in “Lynn Redgrave, 1943-2010,” Robbins extols the late actor for ignoring park rules to allow her dog to roam freely but without mentioning how the canines could possibly disturb wild-life and delicate ecosystems. However, the overall tone of the book is whimsical and warmhearted, perhaps best encapsulated in a line from “My Dog is Crazy”: “And still, like most of us, / I know my dog means well.”

A touching, poetic tribute to the irrepressible nature of man’s best friend and to a rapidly disappearing bohemian culture.

This Issue’s Contributors



ADULT

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INDIE

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THE RETIRED DETECTIVES CLUB: SEE NO EVIL

Scuefield, Sharon

Manuscript (165 pp.)

{ INDIE }

In Scuefield’s (*Short Days, Long Nights*, 2018) mystery, two Chicago private eyes find that a missing girl in Louisiana may be connected to a string of disappearances.

After retiring as a Chicago homicide detective, 63-year-old Robert Raines has been determined to focus on his wife, Elena. However, he can’t stop trying to solve old, unsolved cases, so the couple separates after 42 years of marriage. Soon, Raines and fellow 60-something retiree Dale Gamble manage to close a few cold cases, which leads the pair to open RDC Private Investigations along with Cendalius Ashe, a combat veteran whose possible PTSD may have been why he left the force at the age of 44. Less than a month after they open the new business, Raines agrees to help out the McAllisters, his brother-in-law’s friends, in Alexandria, Louisiana. They say that their granddaughter, Cecilia, has been missing for three weeks, so Raines and Gamble head south, where the Alexandria police are surprisingly accommodating. The local cops arrest someone who’d threatened Cecilia, but the PIs think they’ve got the wrong man. Their investigation soon takes them to tiny Pollock, Louisiana, where the sheriff is less friendly than Alexandria law enforcement. Pollock police officer Dakota Quinn, however, has connected three missing person cases in town. All of the missing had responded to ads via a trading app, which Cecilia had also used. Raines, Gamble, and Quinn look into the app further, which makes someone nervous enough to fire a gun at them. Meanwhile, a serial killer from one of Raines’ unsolved cases may be stalking people in Alexandria.

The story introduces the kidnapper to readers early on, but Scuefield still keeps the tale shrouded in mystery. For example, readers only gradually learn about the abductor’s connection to numerous women who disappeared over an eight-year period; they also find out about someone who’s providing the kidnapper with assistance. The villain’s perspective provides some unsettling, occasionally violent sequences. Meanwhile, Raines is shown to be a cool, appealing protagonist who admits his faults—perhaps rightly blaming himself for his marriage’s dissolution. His similarity to Gamble curiously highlights Raines’ shortcomings: They’re both former cops and often think alike, but the still-married Gamble, who’s three years older, looks considerably younger than Raines. Nevertheless, Ashe and Quinn prove to be far more intriguing characters; Ashe, who joins the investigation later, is able and shrewd but has a more flexible moral code than his partners do, and Quinn, who gets no respect from her boss and her peers, ultimately uncovers the case’s most substantial pieces of evidence. Readers learn relatively little about Gamble’s background, but the author may explore it in future, planned series installments. Scuefield’s sharp prose smoothly shifts through various first- and third-person perspectives, including Quinn’s, Raines’, and even those of a few victims and victims-to-be. He

A well-researched, intricate, and nuanced account of the kaleidoscopic conflict.

CALIFORNIA STANDOFF

also manages to skillfully incorporate Robert's unsolved cold case, and although the story's wrap-up feels hasty, it still offers readers a satisfying resolution.

Readers will surely welcome a series that features these whip-smart sleuths.



CALIFORNIA STANDOFF Miners, Indians and Farmers at War, 1850-1865

Shover, Michele

Stansbury Publishing (432 pp.)

\$24.95 paper | \$19.99 e-book

978-1-935807-15-5

978-1-935807-16-2 paper

Desperate Native Americans and settlers fight bloody battles for land, vengeance, and acorns in this historical study.

Shover (*Exploring Chico's Past and Other Essays*, 2005, etc.), a former political science professor, examines the violent clashes in Northern California's Butte and Tehama counties between Maidu bands and whites flooding into the area after the gold rush. Underlying the bloodshed was a dynamic of dispossession. White farmers excluded the Maidu from the Sierra Nevada foothills and Sacramento River Valley, denying them access to oak groves where they harvested their crop of acorns and forcing them to winter in the barren mountains. Meanwhile, white miners built dams in mountain streams, ruining the fishing the Maidu relied on. The Maidu responded with raids on white settlements to steal food, rustle cattle, burn houses, and, on occasion, murder families. Settlers retaliated tenfold with expeditions that led to massacres that killed hundreds of Maidu over the years, many of them innocent of any offense, culminating in forced removals to reservations under appalling conditions in which numerous people died of hunger and disease. Within this broader narrative of racial strife, the author paints a fine-grained, engrossing portrait of a more complex reality of mixed motives and shifting alliances. Different Maidu "tribes" fought one another, with Mountain Maidu attacking Valley Maidu, who worked peacefully on white ranches and fought alongside settlers (and sometimes betrayed them). White miners, some of whom had children with Native American women, often collaborated with the Maidu and opposed farmers' retaliation. At the center of the action is the ambiguous figure of John Bidwell, a land baron who sheltered Maidu and opposed their transfer to reservations—mainly because he wanted their cheap labor for his operations.

There is enough real-life drama in this sprawling saga for a half-dozen anti-Westerns, with brutal violence on all sides, economic exploitation, political chicanery, treachery, and persistent uncertainty about who was a friend or enemy among suspicious factions who barely understood one another. The absorbing account reads as a more evenly matched contest than might be supposed. Compensating for their lack of numbers and modern weapons, the warlike Maidu deployed superb guerilla tactics, running circles around settler posses blundering

through their rugged canyons—until dedicated white trackers learned their methods and caught up with them in their mountain redoubts. Drawing on a wealth of documentary sources along with Native American oral histories, Shover provides a well-researched, intricate, and nuanced account of the kaleidoscopic conflict. She teases out the niceties of who killed whom and why, prunes exaggerations and misinterpretations of previous historians, and is clear-eyed but fair in her judgments. At times, her narrative is confusingly crosscut and fragmented, and her prose, while lucid and brisk, is somewhat dry and academic; it can seem a bit flat for the events described. (Bidwell's associate Harmon Good "made prisoners of a small" Native American "child and its mother whom...he intended to deliver to Bidwell's rancharia. However, when the woman refused to go with them, one of the men killed her, so they took the child.") Still, this is a fine addition to the scholarly literature on this epic of frontier injustice.

A richly informative investigation of a tragic episode.



THE LOST BONE

Smith, Margo

Illus. by Keijner, Derek

Westbow Press (38 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Oct. 4, 2018

978-1-973636-79-3

The loss of a favorite bone causes trouble between two canine siblings.

Poodles Mimi and Gigi are sisters with very different likes and dislikes. "Prim and proper" Mimi treasures her pretty hair bows; Gigi collects dog bones and loves the outdoors. Smith (*The Perfect Shade of Pink*, 2015) offers a vivid description of Gigi rolling in the snow until she looks "like a decorated Christmas cookie." When Gigi's most prized bone goes missing, she accuses Mimi of stealing it. Her sister tries to tell her that she saw the real thief, but Gigi ignores her—and soon, the two aren't speaking. Mimi confronts the true culprit and trades one of her favorite possessions for the bone. But no matter what Mimi does to make things right, Gigi continues holding a grudge—until she discovers the bone-stealer for herself. The author crafts a simple, charming tale that will encourage young readers to think about the importance of listening, how sincere apologies can make a difference, and how generosity of spirit is never wasted. Debut illustrator Keijner's portrayal of the poodles and their cozy world, which contains no humans, complements the text with its muted color scheme and gentle whimsy.

An appealing picture book with character-building themes.



THE ICE GIANT

Spudich, Giulietta M.

Handersen Publishing (156 pp.)

\$17.95 | \$8.95 paper | \$3.95 e-book

Feb. 9, 2018

978-1-947854-47-5

978-1-947854-46-8 paper

In this fantasy sequel, a mysterious stone leads a young girl from her quiet life in suburban Hartsdale, New York, to the Icelandic home of an ancient mythical being.

Elika is embarrassed by her Icelandic name, her yellow-green eyes, and, above all, her eccentric Aunt Caroline. In Spudich's (*The Amber Giant*, 2017, etc.) first novel in the series, Caroline befriended a yetilike creature in the Himalayas when she was a young girl; she's now a geology professor who still frequently visits her hairy friend. Just after Elika's 13th birthday, the girl begins hearing a high voice calling out in her dreams. When she wakes up in the middle of the night, she notices that the Fire and Ice quartz that her mother brought her from Iceland is glowing. She consults with Caroline, who thinks that the crystal may have a connection to another mythical creature. With her family's support, she and her aunt travel to Iceland to find it. Elika locates the Ice Giant, who immediately takes a liking to her, insisting that she stay in her frozen cave. The girl must figure out a way to return to her family without making her newfound friend feel abandoned. Although this story is closely connected to *The Amber Giant*, it can easily be read as a stand-alone. Spudich uses straightforward language that's well suited to young audiences. Her descriptions of Icelandic landscapes are filled with ethereal beauty, as when Elika marvels at how "Sunlight shone through the ice, filling it with turquoise light." Later, she writes: "They

stopped by a flow of ice that looked like a river frozen in time." Spudich's interpretation of the mythological Ice Giant will certainly pique readers' interest. However, the story is rather brief, and readers may wish that there were more material to explore. Still, considering the brevity of the book, Elika's character development is considerable; the journey to Iceland helps her overcome her insecurities and deepens her relationship with her aunt. Through conversation with the centuries-old Giant, she realizes the importance of her cultural heritage and hopes to learn more about her family's history.

A whimsical adventure that promotes individuality and self-acceptance.



SASHA AND THE DRAGON

Wolfe, Laura E.

Illus. by Malara, Nicholas

Ancient Faith Publishing (32 pp.)

\$19.95 | \$9.99 e-book | Sep. 23, 2017

978-1-944967-27-7

An immigrant boy calls on St. Michael to chase away his dragon-shaped fears in this picture book by debut author Wolfe and illustrator Malara (*A Child's Guide to Confession*, 2019).

In what appears to be the early 20th century, Sasha moves to a big city from a small village in Russia. It's a frightening place; his Baba (grandmother) is apparently sick, American boys make fun of him, and too-tall buildings hide the sky. At night, Sasha sees shadows of monsters, and one night, a shadowy dragon crawls out from under his bed. Sasha begs for help from St. Michael, the archangel, through the icon on his bedroom wall. At this point, Malara mimics the authentic style of Russian Orthodox icons, contrasting with the rest of the illustrations. The angel defeats the dragon—and Sasha's fears. When the boy awakens to a world filled with light, revealed dramatically in the hues of Malara's paintings, he confronts his fears of the mean kids, and his grandmother's sickness, with gestures of peace. Adults may wish to read this book together with youngsters due to its challenging vocabulary and sometimes-frightening images. However, Sasha's spiritual journey is sure to have strong appeal.

A beautifully poetic book about the immigrant experience, facing fears, and faith.

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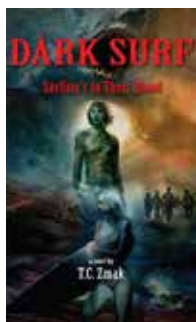
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Passionate, fun, and delightfully new.

DARK SURF



DARK SURF

Zmak, T.C.

Zmak Creative (422 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Aug. 23, 2014

978-0-692-25817-0

Zmak sets a vampire romance in the California beach community in this off-beat debut new-adult thriller.

When surfer Cody Hansen is killed in an apparent shark attack, it sends his best friend, Jake Ryder, spiraling. How could this have happened? Shark attacks are very uncommon, particularly on the California coast. As Jake seeks out another surfer—the last person to see Cody alive—to learn the truth about what happened, his quest leads him into dangerous waters. But it turns out that he's not alone in his investigation. The story gives the reader a variety of perspectives on that tragic night in short, sharp, and occasionally brutal chapters. What's more, the prose, while pithy, manages to give unique voices to characters with vastly different life experiences, providing the novel with a sense of depth. Among these characters is Lani Marley, a vacationing FBI agent looking into a rise in lethal, unpredictable shark attacks, which coincides with the movements of a surfer group called the Nomads. Both Jake and Lani find themselves drawn into the Nomads' web; Jake, by the jealous, beautiful Skylar and Lani, by the Nomads' darkly charismatic leader, Tristan. It turns out that the care-free night surfers are actually a cabal of shape-shifting vampires. As the romances between the Nomads and the outsiders intensify, all of their lives are threatened by the Nomads' enemies and the cabal's own bloody sense of justice. For the most part, the story flows quickly and smoothly. It sometimes takes abrupt turns, though, as in flashbacks to Tristan's vampiric origins, his and Skylar's first transformations, and the beginnings of the Nomads. At the same time, the story provides genuine depictions of the joy the characters take in surfing and the sea and the tribulations of love, guilt, and loyalty. It's all passionate, fun, and delightfully new.

An entertaining and emotional novel in which blood is thicker than salt water.

FIELD NOTES

By Megan Labrise



Photo courtesy Raul Remo

"I always tell my screenwriting students to pay attention if there's a personal story you can tell from the heart that addresses what you feel are the missteps of the moment and of tomorrow. That's something that can be helpful, but not told in a political way, told in a personal way. I had the story of me and my mom over decades, and my family over generations, and my relationship with my childhood church over many decades, all of which in their own way tie into this lesson that there is a higher plane than politics. That defines the book."

—Screenwriter and activist Dustin Lance Black, author of the memoir *Mama's Boy: A Story from Our Americas*, in *W Magazine*

Submissions for Field Notes?
Email fieldnotes@kirkus.com.



Photo courtesy Debbie Wagner

"Practically everything that I've written that is funny or joyful, I've probably lived through first with tears—and crying and bitching and moaning and carrying on. I mean, I am not your merry little lady bouncing chucklingly through life. But eventually I pull myself together. I'm hoping that I'm now doing it at a quicker pace."

—Legendary children's author Judith Viorst (*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day*), whose latest book of verse is *Nearing Ninety: And Other Comedies of Late Life*, on NPR

"I don't know if I can tell people anything about poetry that poetry can't tell them itself. I try as hard as I can to get poems in front of people because they do the work. It's not me....I can say, 'Hey, poetry's great. Anybody can write it. It's cheap to manufacture. All you need is a pencil and a piece of paper. It's amazing.' But that's not going to convince them to do it."

—Indiana Poet Laureate Adrian Matejka, author of *Map to the Stars*, in the *Indianapolis Star*



Photo courtesy Jüergen Frank

I remember the first time I wrote down the name 'Hadia.' I was 18 years old and wanted to write about a woman that could be me, my sister, or one of my cousins. Before that, I had only created culturally ambiguous characters, like Cory, Cody, or Charlie. I was mimicking what I was reading at that time. Characters that weren't Muslim, because I had never read about Muslims in stories and felt as though they didn't exist in them. Like there was no space for them. That was what prompted me to write this book: not a story or a theme, but a character that I could relate to."

—Fatima Farheen Mizra, author of *A Place for Us*, at Qantara.de

Appreciations: Maeve Binchy's *Tara Road* Winds Into Its Third Decade

BY GREGORY MCNAMEE



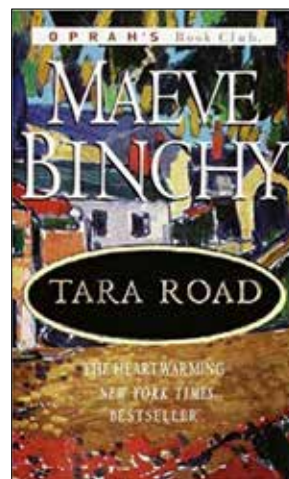
IF YOU ARE AN AMERICAN READER, then the word “Tara” may put you in mind of a certain Georgia mansion, one that Union soldiers tore apart during the Civil War and Scarlett O’Hara resolutely, even haughtily, puts back in order. If you are an Irish reader, then the word “Tara” will call up a hill in County Meath from which the high kings looked out over their domain. Either interpretation has meaning when it comes to Maeve Binchy’s *Tara Road*, a lively binational novel published in the U.K. in 1998 and here the following year, and soon after chosen by Oprah Winfrey for her book club and elevated to bestsellerdom.

The *Tara Road* that gives the book its title is a rambling street on the distant edges of Dublin, a city that Binchy once described as an overgrown village where everyone knows everyone else’s business. Ria Lynch has been living in a house with her husband, Danny, that he described on first seeing it as “falling down, damp, shabby now.” Ria reluctantly goes along with the purchase, one that, even though the ramshackle place is a great bargain, is still beyond their means, with its 15% down payment—“and nine thousand pounds was like nine million to them.” Somehow they scrape up the money, and the years go by: Children arrive, Danny’s career takes off, comfort and complacency settle in.

So do Ria’s friends, making a neighborhood hub of 16 Tara Rd. But something is missing—and it turns out to be her husband’s fidelity; he’s been having affairs right and left and now has produced a child outside the marriage. Shaken, Ria takes up an improbable coincidence, swapping houses and lives with an American academic who settles in at 16 Tara Rd. and soon learns the household’s secrets, including an act of betrayal on the part of Ria’s best friend, even as Ria comes to understand the grief that fills Marilyn’s heart.

It sounds heavy, but Binchy deftly spins the tale with exactly the right words and moods and with ample good humor. When Ria arrives in New England and falls in with a couple of Marilyn’s friends, she laughingly says, “I’m a sadder case than either of you....I’m a deserted wife from Ireland over here to sort out my head and on my first day in America I fall in with two luses and get pissed out of my brains.” Marilyn, for her part, learns a simple truth: “These things happen,” things that befall good and bad people alike.

Maeve Binchy, who died in 2012, has been described, dismissively, as a writer of “chick-lit.” But though it has elements of the bodice-ripper, her work goes far deeper: Her protagonists are women, usually of a certain age, who discover that they can live on their own, and more happily than before. Binchy herself considered her novels to be “airplane reading,” noting happily that she’d seen people buy them, start to read them in flight, and nod off. Job done, then—but those who stick with *Tara Road* and its kin will find her books to be entertaining, expertly written portraits of changing times and changing lives.



STAFF Picks

from



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Random House
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Lara Prescott **The Secrets We Kept: A Novel**

A thrilling tale of secretaries turned spies, of love and duty, and of sacrifice—inspired by the true story of the CIA plot to infiltrate the hearts and minds of Soviet Russia, not with propaganda, but with the greatest love story of the twentieth century: *Doctor Zhivago*. It's *Mad Men* meets *Hidden Figures*... with a twist of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*.

Jen's
Staff Pick



978-0-525-65615-9
\$26.95 | 200,000
Knopf | HC | September
978-0-385-69326-4
\$29.95C | Bond Street Books
eBook: 978-0-525-65616-6
AD: 978-1-9848-8593-7
LP: 978-0-5931-6814-1



Erica's Staff Pick



Jacqueline Woodson **Red at the Bone: A Novel**

An extraordinary new novel about the influence of history on a contemporary family, from the *New York Times* bestselling and National Book Award-winning author of *Another Brooklyn* and *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Two families from different social classes are joined together by an unexpected pregnancy and the child that it produces. Moving forward and backward in time, with the power of poetry and the emotional richness of a narrative ten times its length, this new novel uncovers the role that history and community have played in the experiences, decisions, and relationships of these families, and in the life of this child.

978-0-525-53527-0
\$26.00/\$35.00C | 125,000
Riverhead Books | HC | September
eBook: 978-0-525-53529-4
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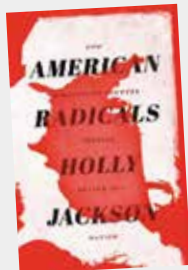
Kelly's Staff Pick



Brian Allen Carr **Opioid, Indiana: A Novel**

With amazing directness and insight, Carr explores what it's like to be a high school kid in the age of Trump, a time of economic inequality, addiction, confederate flags, and mass shootings. A work of empathy and insight, *Opioid, Indiana* pierces to the heart of our moment through an unforgettable protagonist.

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Soho Press | TR | September
eBook: 978-164-1-29079-1



Miriam's Staff Pick



Holly Jackson **American Radicals: How Nineteenth-Century Protest Shaped the Nation**

How did networks of agitators shape America's national consciousness? This panoramic narrative captures the immersive stories of nineteenth-century activists, including Frances Wright, William Lloyd Garrison, and Martin Delany. Recommended for readers of Jill Lepore, Eric Foner, and Elaine Weiss.

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eBook: 978-0-525-57311-1
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Elizabeth's Staff Pick



Ta-Nehisi Coates **The Water Dancer: A Novel**

In his boldly imagined first novel, Ta-Nehisi Coates, the National Book Award-winning author of *Between the World and Me*, brings home the most intimate evil of enslavement: the cleaving and separation of families. This propulsive, transcendent work restores the humanity of those from whom everything was stolen.

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