

Featuring 319 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction, Children's and YA books

KIRKUS

VOL. LXXXVIII, NO. 18 | 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

REVIEWS

Laila Lalami

The author confronts
American inequities in
Conditional Citizens
p. 58

Also in this issue:

Sigrid Nunez,
Daniel Nayeri, and
Amra Sabic-El-Rayess



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: The Way I Read Now

BY TOM BEER



John Parascas

Tom Beer

AMONG THE MANY changes in my daily life this year—working from home, wearing a mask in public, watching too much TV—my changing reading habits register deeply. For one thing, I read on a Kindle now, with the exception of the rare galley sent to me at home and the books I've made a point of purchasing from local independent bookstores or ordering on Bookshop.org. The Kindle was borrowed—OK, confiscated—from my boyfriend at the beginning of the pandemic, when I left dozens of advance reader copies behind at the office and accepted the reality that digital galleys would be a practical necessity for the foreseeable future. I can't say that I love reading on my “new” Kindle—I'm still a sucker for physical books after all these years—but I'll admit that it fulfills its purpose efficiently. And I do rather enjoy the instant gratification of going on NetGalley or Edelweiss and dispatching multiple books to my device in one fell swoop—a harmless

form of bingeing that affords a little dopamine rush.

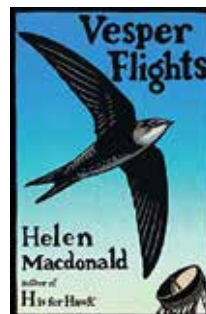
Another change in my reading habits has been a dramatic uptick in my nonfiction consumption. Sure, I've always read nonfiction—memoirs and narrative nonfiction in particular—but fiction was always my go-to for pleasure reading, especially in the summertime. This summer has been different. Partly because of the requirements of my job and partly because of this exceptional moment in history, I've been reading a lot of nonfiction, especially essays, trying to grapple with what we're living through.

One of the books that has helped to illuminate the current situation for me was written by the author on the cover of this issue, Laila Lalami. You probably know Lalami as the author of novels such as *The Moor's Account* (2014) and *The Other Americans* (2019), both nominated for major literary prizes. Her new book, *Conditional Citizens: On Belonging in America* (Pantheon, Sept. 22), is a collection of eight essays about those citizens that America includes or excludes from the full privileges of citizenship because of race, gender, religion, or national origin. Like some of the other nonfiction I've admired in recent months—including Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (Random House, Aug. 11) and Claudia Rankine's *Just Us: An American Conversation* (Graywolf, Sept. 8)—Lalami's book helped me to reframe my understanding of dynamics at work in American society. And

because it is so lucidly written, I feel that I could hand *Conditional Citizens* to almost anyone I know; it would make a great book club pick. My interview with Lalami appears on page 58.

Other essay collections that have kept me company this summer: Zadie Smith's *Intimations* (Penguin, July 28) is a slender volume containing six brief essays, all written since the pandemic struck, and they're enthralling. I love Smith's novels, but she has an extraordinary facility for essay-writing, as evidenced in her previous collections, *Changing My Mind* (2009) and *Feel Free* (2018). The new book offers a glimpse of Smith's limber mind at work, observing with a novelist's eye and attempting to make sense (good luck!) of life in lockdown. (Proceeds from the

book benefit the Equal Justice Initiative and the Covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund for New York.) Helen Macdonald's *Vesper Flights* (Grove Press, Aug. 25) serves up more captivating nature writing from the author of the memoir *H Is for Hawk* (2015)—except to call it “nature writing” is to diminish the glorious sense of human wonder that Macdonald brings to her subjects—birds' nests, a favorite meadow from childhood—and prose that absolutely sings. These books make our narrowed world feel a little larger.



KIRKUS REVIEWS

Chairman
HERBERT SIMON

President & Publisher
MARC WINKELMAN

Chief Executive Officer
MEG LABORDE KUEHN
mkuehn@kirkus.com

Editor-in-Chief
TOM BEER
tbeer@kirkus.com

Vice President of Marketing
SARAH KALINA
skalina@kirkus.com

Managing/Nonfiction Editor
ERIC LIEBETRAU
elibetrau@kirkus.com

Fiction Editor
LAURIE MUCHNICK
lmuchnick@kirkus.com

Young Readers' Editor
VICKY SMITH
vsmith@kirkus.com

Young Readers' Editor
LAURA SIMEON
lsimeon@kirkus.com

Editor at Large
MEGAN LABRISE
mlabrise@kirkus.com

Vice President of Kirkus Indie
KAREN SCHECHNER
kschechner@kirkus.com

Senior Indie Editor
DAVID RAPP
drapp@kirkus.com

Indie Editor
MYRA FORSBERG
mforsberg@kirkus.com

Associate Manager of Indie
KATERINA PAPPAS
kpappas@kirkus.com

Editorial Assistant
JOHANNA ZWIRNER
jzwirner@kirkus.com

Mysteries Editor
THOMAS LEITCH

Contributing Editor
GREGORY MCNAMEE

Copy Editor
BETSY JUDKINS

Designer
ALEX HEAD

Kirkus Editorial Production Editor
ROBIN O'DELL
rodell@kirkus.com

Kirkus Editorial Associate
Production Editor
STEPHANIE SUMMERHAYS
summerhays@kirkus.com

Website and Software Developer
PERCY PEREZ
pperez@kirkus.com

Advertising Director
MONIQUE STENSRUDE
mstensrud@kirkus.com

Advertising Associate
TATIANA ARNOLD
tarnold@kirkus.com

Graphic Designer
LIANA WALKER
lwalker@kirkus.com

Controller
MICHELLE GONZALES
mgonzales@kirkus.com

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE
or subscription questions,
please call 1-800-316-9361

Print indexes: www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/print-indexes
Kirkus Blog: www.kirkusreviews.com/blog
Advertising Opportunities: www.kirkusreviews.com/about/advertising-opportunities

Submission Guidelines: www.kirkusreviews.com/about/submitting-guidelines
Subscriptions: www.kirkusreviews.com/subscription
Newsletters: www.kirkusreviews.com/subscription/newsletter/add

Cover photo by
April Rocha

YOU CAN NOW
PURCHASE
BOOKS ONLINE
AT
KIRKUS.COM

CONTENTS

FICTION

INDEX TO STARRED REVIEWS.....	4
REVIEWS.....	4
EDITOR'S NOTE.....	6
INTERVIEW: SIGRID NUNEZ.....	14
MYSTERY.....	40
SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY.....	47
ROMANCE.....	48

NONFICTION

INDEX TO STARRED REVIEWS.....	50
REVIEWS.....	50
EDITOR'S NOTE.....	52
COVER STORY: LAILA LALAMI.....	58

CHILDREN'S


INDEX TO STARRED REVIEWS.....	91
REVIEWS.....	91
EDITOR'S NOTE.....	92
INTERVIEW: DANIEL NAYERI.....	98
BOARD & NOVELTY BOOKS.....	126
CONTINUING SERIES.....	132

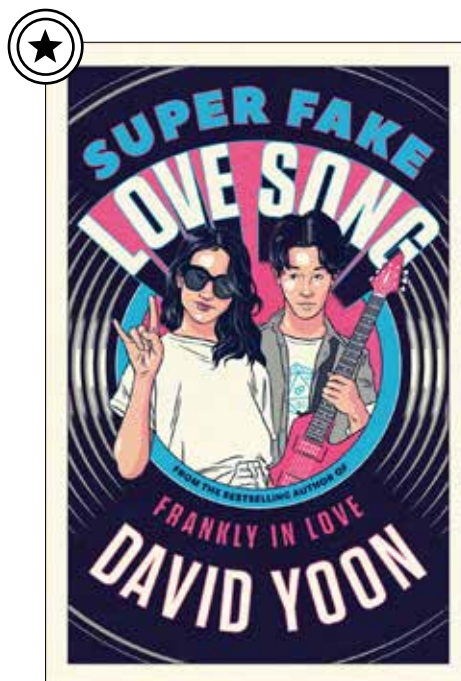
YOUNG ADULT

INDEX TO STARRED REVIEWS.....	133
REVIEWS.....	133
EDITOR'S NOTE.....	134
INTERVIEW: AMRA SABIC-EL-RAYESS.....	138

INDIE

INDEX TO STARRED REVIEWS.....	146
REVIEWS.....	146
EDITOR'S NOTE.....	148
INDIE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.....	165
SEEN & HEARD.....	166
APPRECIATIONS: <i>THE LABYRINTH OF SOLITUDE</i> BY OCTAVIO PAZ.....	167

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



To impress the girl he has a crush on, Sunny goes along with her mistaken assumption that he's a guitar-playing rock 'n' roller rather than a guy who is bullied for his love of Dungeons & Dragons. **David Yoon** explores love and identity in his sophomore novel. Read the review on p. 145.

Don't wait on the mail for reviews! You can read pre-publication reviews as they are released on kirkus.com—even before they are published in the magazine. You can also access the current issue and back issues of Kirkus Reviews on our website by logging in as a subscriber. If you do not have a username or password, please contact customer care to set up your account by calling 1.800.316.9361 or emailing customers@kirkusreviews.com.

FICTION



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

THE SUN COLLECTIVE by Charles Baxter 4

THE OFFICE OF HISTORICAL CORRECTIONS
by Danielle Evans 9

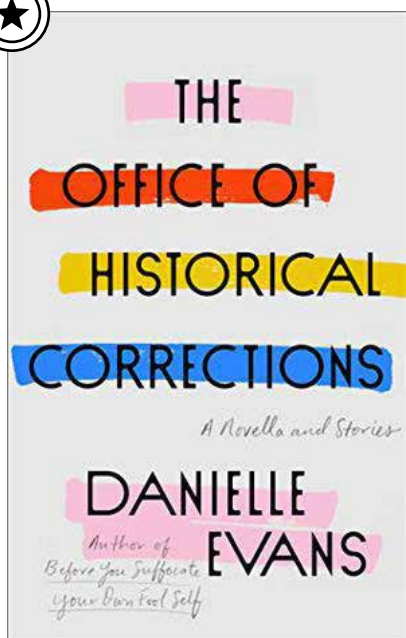
THE RUSSIAN PINK by Matthew Hart..... 9

THE LAST DAYS OF ELLIS ISLAND by Gaëlle Josse;
trans. by Natasha Lebrer16

TO BE A MAN by Nicole Krauss..... 20

THE AWKWARD BLACK MAN by Walter Mosley..... 26

THE DIARIES OF EMILIO RENZI by Ricardo Piglia;
trans. by Robert Croll.....32



THE OFFICE OF HISTORICAL CORRECTIONS
Evans, Danielle
Riverhead (288 pp.)
\$27.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-59448-733-0



THE SUN COLLECTIVE

Baxter, Charles
Pantheon (336 pp.)
\$26.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-524-74885-2



In his sixth novel, Baxter looks into the timely question of how we might help ourselves and others in need.

As the book opens, Harold Brettigan, a retired bridge designer, boards a light-rail train to the Utopia Mall in Minneapolis, where he regularly exercises with a group of walkers. He is “shadowed” onto the train by a young couple, who sit across from him but keep to themselves, and he meets a man in a trilby who recommends a healing ritual involving a hand mirror. Harold’s wife, Alma, begins talking to their cat and dog after she has a small stroke. Their son, Timothy, is missing, maybe living on the city’s streets. The young couple on the train are Ludlow, who belongs to a local activist group called the Sun Collective, and Christina, who often takes a hallucinogenic called Blue Telephone. Some time later, Alma also meets the man in the trilby, who recommends a wish-fulfilling ritual involving two of her eyelashes. The Brettigans and the young couple are drawn together by accident and then by possible links to Timothy. It’s an uneasy relationship, which Baxter signals by using the word *shadowed* during that first encounter on the train. The prose throughout is graceful, the writing perceptive, resonant, and deeply sympathetic. With his small cast, Baxter explores gurus and charlatans and other responses to hunger, homelessness, destitution, and simpler woes. Skepticism vies with hope, fanaticism with fantasy. A Trump-like President Thorkelson and his Cabinet embrace the ideas of an Ayn Rand–like writer for whom “charity was a sin...because it encouraged losers.” A group of rich young fellows called the Sandmen are rumored to be killing homeless people. The Sun Collective provides clothes, food, and shelter, but it may be fueling terrorism. There are no easy answers, but there’s promise, even respite in the quasi-magical, the nearly miraculous.

An exceptional work.



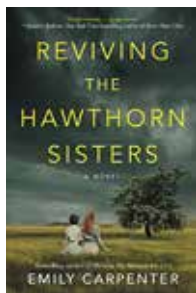
DOUBLE AGENT

Brabby, Tom
Atlantic Monthly (368 pp.)
\$26.00 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-0-8021-5764-5

Kate Henderson returns, still on the trail of a high-level traitor in British government.

Henderson, head of MI6's Russian desk, has reason to believe James Ryan, the British Prime Minister, is a Russian sleeper agent, but she has been unable to prove it. In her investigation of him, however, she does discover that her husband, Stuart, is a Russian agent who's betrayed her as well. Stuart has escaped to Russia, and Henderson's world has suffered mightily: She can't sleep, and even her subordinates are urging her to get therapy; her children are manifesting behavior disorders, and she's been saddled with a new assistant who may be spying on her for MI5, the British security service. When she arranges a trip to Venice so her kids can briefly visit with their father, she is secretly contacted by Mikhail Borodin, who claims to be seeking to defect. Borodin explains that he and his father, Igor, former chief of Russia's foreign intelligence service, are victims of a GRU power grab and are at risk of death or imprisonment. He offers to exchange a kompromat video of Ryan in the company of underage girls for refuge in England. From that point onward, Kate oscillates between mental and familial crises at home and her need to convince her government to accept Borodin's deal at work. There's a nice set piece in Berlin when a planned defection fails, or perhaps was never meant to succeed, but this installment of Kate's quest is largely lacking in kinetic energy, though there's much discussion and political maneuvering. How a modern intelligence service could permit an employee so clearly in crisis to continue to make momentous decisions is not addressed, and overall there's a sort of shaggy imprecision in Kate's MI6, so it's not a big surprise that the evidence of Ryan's guilt is suppressed or corrupted, and Kate's quest has plenty of scope for a third volume.

Brabby's fans will welcome his heroine's return even though this installment is a little flat.



REVIVING THE HAWTHORN SISTERS

Carpenter, Emily
Lake Union Publishing (331 pp.)
\$14.95 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-5420-1619-3

After Eve Candler is roughed up in a cemetery, she has only three days to prove that her grandmother wasn't a thief and a murderer.

Before she was Dove Jarrod, one of the most famous traveling faith healers of the 1930s and '40s, Eve's grandmother was a scrappy orphan surviving by her wits and luck. By the time she was 13, she had escaped not only an asylum, but

also a creepy, predatory minister. After landing a job taking care of an elderly man named Steadfast Coe, Dove is drawn into the world of itinerant preachers. She pairs up with Steadfast's granddaughter Bruna as the Hawthorn Sisters and discovers a startling talent for faith healing. Decades later, Eve has been working with a film crew to create a documentary commemorating Dove's life. Eve is eager for its release, hoping it will help ensure the financial footing of Dove's charitable foundation, which will support her mentally fragile mother and recovering addict brother. But a text during the dedication of the Dove Jarrod wing of a hospital lures Eve outside, where a man shoves her face into a sack of bones he claims are the remains of Steadfast Coe. He alleges that Dove killed Steadfast, stole a rare coin worth millions of dollars, and left behind a signed confession. He's got the bones and the note, and he gives Eve just 72 hours to play detective. Deftly shifting back and forth between Eve's and Dove's perspectives, Carpenter slowly connects the dots between the two women as each in her own time conquers conniving men and finds a little romance, too.

An exciting, gothic-tinged quest sure to delight fans of women-driven mysteries.

"riveting journey about finding faith and new beginnings through a life that explores the wonder of youth, the joys of love, the effects of war, the grief of loss and the emotional discovery of life's blessings." —BookTrib

"The prose is gorgeous, the plot strong and the storytelling craft so refined"
—Reader's Favorite

"incredible, phenomenal and breathtaking" —RedHeadedBookLover

"The fine emotional gradations in the deepening friendship between the two women are smoothly handled and boldly venture into dramatic territory seldom dealt with in contemporary fiction."
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN 978-0997698640

For information on publishing and film rights, email
Chuck@AuthorChuckMiceli.com • www.woundedangelsbook.com

TAKE A CHANCE ON TRANSLATION



It's a truth universally acknowledged that Americans don't read books in translation—but that might be changing. Ferrante Fever is back as *The Lying Life of Adults* (Europa, Sept. 1) hits the bookstores, and I hope Elena Ferrante's engrossing story and Ann Goldstein's fluid translation will convince readers to take

a chance on more translated fiction. There are plenty of great choices coming out this month, most of them, like Ferrante, published by independent presses.

High as the Waters Rise by Anja Kampmann; translated by Anne Posten (Catapult, Sept. 15): German poet Kampmann's fiction debut is set on an oil rig in the Atlantic Ocean as one of the workers tries to come to terms with the death of his best friend, who fell off the rig. "This is a highly interior novel," our review says, "with Kampmann laser-focused on Waclaw's grief, which is portrayed with compassion and honesty....A thoughtful, unsparring look at loss."

The Death of Comrade President by Alain Mabanckou; translated by Helen Stevenson (The New Press, Sept. 1): Novelist and poet Mabanckou teaches at UCLA but here returns to his native Congo to tell the story of a young teenager exposed to the world through the stories of his adopted father, who works at the fancy Victory Palace Hotel in the late 1970s. "The assassination [of President Marien Ngouabi] upends Michel's world, and in the ominous atmosphere that ensues, he comes to understand his country's politics, and his own family's involvement, in disquieting new ways," according to our review.



Igifu by Scholastique Mukasonga; translated by Jordan Stump (Archipelago, Sept. 15): Mukasonga was born in Rwanda and has lived in France for many years, writing both memoirs and fiction about the genocide of her fellow Tutsis and her experience as a refugee. Her latest is a collection of "elegant and elegiac stories that speak to loss, redemption, and endless sorrow."

That Time of Year by Marie NDiaye; translated by Jordan Stump (Two Lines, Sept. 8): NDiaye is a well-known

French novelist and playwright; some of her earlier books, including *Ladivine* (2016), have been published in the U.S. to excellent reviews. Her latest follows a Parisian family that spends every summer in the same small village only to learn the first time they stay past the end of August that they haven't exactly been welcome. Our review says, "Part ghost story, part satiric horror, this gorgeously eerie book will keep you holding your breath even past the end."



The Memory Monster by Yishai Sarid; translated by Yardenne Greenspan (Restless Books, Sept. 8): This is



the first book to be translated into English from Israeli novelist Sarid, and it's written in the form of a report to the chairman of the board of Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust memorial. The narrator, a historian, is trying to explain how his life became consumed by studying the Holocaust and why he's currently in disgrace. Our review calls it "a bold, masterful exploration of the banality of evil and the nature of revenge, controversial no matter how it is read."

A Country for Dying by Abdellah Taïa; translated by Emma Ramadan (Seven Stories, Sept. 15): Moroccan writer and filmmaker Taïa lives in Paris, as do the women at the center of his latest novel. Zahira and Zannouba are prostitutes "dream[ing] of a future that is very different from their present, and their accounts are intertwined with those of the men and women they meet....In these vignettes and monologues, Taïa offers American readers glimpses of lives few of us are likely to see outside of this book," our review says. "Lyrical and impassioned."



Laurie Muchnick is the fiction editor.



HERE IS THE BEEHIVE

Crossan, Sarah
 Little, Brown (288 pp.)
 \$26.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
 978-0-316-42858-3

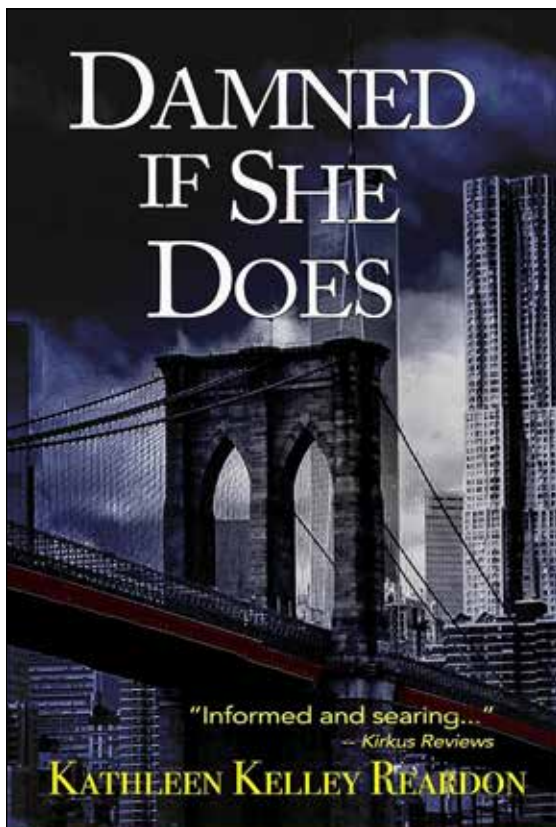
A married woman mourns the loss of her lover.

Crossan, Ireland's fifth children's laureate, explores the unexpected end of an extramarital affair in her first adult novel.

Estate lawyer Ana deals with death daily but still finds herself wholly unprepared when she learns Connor—her client and lover of three years—has died suddenly: "We plan for death, / make sensible decisions while gorging on life. / But no one intends to die." Ana learns of Connor's passing from his widow, Rebecca, who knows nothing about their relationship. Written in verse, the novel weaves past and present together as Ana tries not to succumb to grief while looking back over the good (and bad) of their relationship. Married with two

children herself, Ana finds herself ensconced in a unique kind of grief; she must mourn in private because their relationship was a secret and mourning properly could cost her everything. While coping with Connor's death, Ana becomes increasingly erratic: She ignores her family, falls behind at work, and tries to befriend Rebecca. As the two women become closer, Ana begins to reevaluate what Connor has told her about his wife and his life. It's only after he's gone that she begins to see him and their relationship for what it truly was. Crossan's writing helps underscore the novel's themes of memory, time, and the manifestation of grief. The fragmented style mirrors Ana's scattered thoughts and memories, and the white space on the page feels like a physical embodiment of their affair—which took place in the found stretches of their lives. At one point, Ana thinks: "We were never forever. / Always in a place of / passing. / Everything that mattered happened in locked rooms. / Nothing came out of them." As she exits that locked room for good, Ana must step fully into her messy life—whatever the outcome.

A fresh, affecting take on a tale as old as time.



DAMNED IF SHE DOES
 BY KATHLEEN KELLEY REARDON

Is there really a right time to speak up about harassment?
 Or even in this #MeToo era are women damned if we do and damned if we don't?

Siblings Meg and Shamus Doherty return in Reardon's (*They Don't Get It, Do They?*, 2015, *Shadow Campus*, 2013 etc.) second mystery set in the world of academia.

"informed and searing"

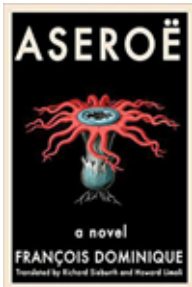
"page-turning scenes."

"A well-paced, enjoyable whodunit that leaves just enough plot threads dangling for a potential sequel."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN-10: 1945917512 • ISBN-13: 978-1945917516

For information on publishing and film rights, visit www.kathleenkelleyreardon.com



ASEROË

Dominique, François

Trans. by Sieburth, Richard & Limoli, Howard

Bellevue Literary Press (176 pp.)

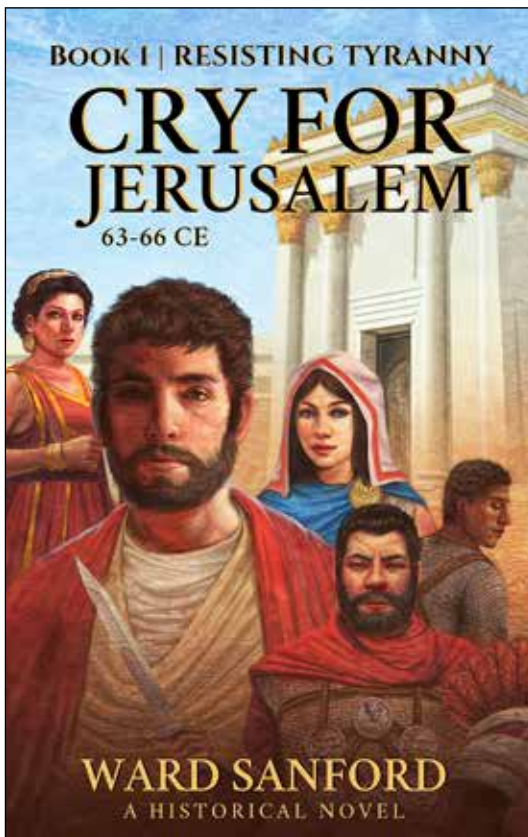
\$16.99 paper | Sep. 15, 2020

978-1-942658-78-8

Scholarly fictions which explore the limitations of language in the face of the limitless scope of existence.

Published in 1992 in French, this is the first of celebrated author Dominique's works to be translated into English. Though billed as a novel, it resists all expectations of what a novel should do in terms of narrative cohesion, plot development, or character dynamics. Instead, the author renders his narrator François' sensory perceptions and their attendant philosophic connotations with a precisely articulated language that calls to mind other continental authors, like Maurice Blanchot or Antoine Volodine, and their attempts to merge

the theoretical realm of ideas with the poetic language of the lived life. Separated into 12 sections, the book begins with an homage to its namesake, a type of stinkhorn fungus with "an odor so unbearable and so persistent that even the most distracted passerby cannot fail to notice it." Upon this unlikely subject, François attempts an esoteric experiment aimed at studying the "power of attraction" an object may have over the language used to describe it. As any amateur mycologist will know, the common names of mushrooms take full advantage of the organisms' "fundamental character," which, François remarks, "insidiously invite[s] organic, libidinous metaphorization" of every extreme. Indeed, the narrator's delight in the rills of language that compose the lists of mushroom names and the funk of their description makes for enthusiastically engaged reading. Each of the remaining 11 sections is a separate, only loosely connected exploration of the inevitable failure of language as a tool of communication. The reader travels through scenes of Rimbaud's death and meets an "idiot girl" in a cafe, among other vignettes. Though each section contains an element of the startling vulnerability François displays as he falls



Four lives fortuitously intersect in this historical novel that focuses on the tension between Jews and their Roman oppressors in the first century.

"An impressive blend of historical portrayal and dramatic fiction."

—Kirkus Reviews

"diverse, gritty, and laced with tension. Majestic and colorful landscapes such as Jerusalem, Rome, and the many places in between, both on land and sea, are richly detailed...incredibly researched foundation..."

Sanford is a talented author with an exciting new series to get lost in."

—Historical Novels Review



COMING SERIES TITLES:

Book 2 *Against All Odds* 66-67 CE, July 2020

Book 3 *Facing Anarchy* 67-69 CE, 2021

Book 4 *Final Siege* 69-70 CE, 2022

ISBN 9781950645015 Amazon • 9781950645008 Ingram Spark

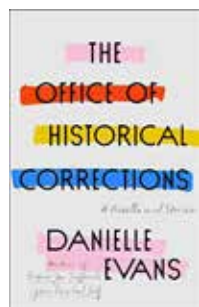
For information on publishing and film rights, email ward@cryforjerusalem.com

Necessary narratives, brilliantly crafted.

THE OFFICE OF HISTORICAL CORRECTIONS

victim to the stinkhorn's lingual mutability, there is an unhappy tendency for the narrator to facilitate his philosophical swoons through other characters' objectification. This is most apparent in the case of the intellectually disabled girl in the cafe but is also evident in the repeated use of the trope of a sexually available female character who appears solely in order to expedite a revelation on the part of the narrator. The use of a character as a prop to exemplify a philosophical condition is, of course, an ancient one, and no one expects these characters to be fleshed out beyond this role in a philosophical screed. In a book that claims to be novel first, though, one cannot summon characters into being only to so casually dismiss them, particularly when these characters are so uniformly of a type—vulnerable, strange, and female.

Plenty of fiercely original thoughts within a book that suffers from a tendency to use stereotypes as their vehicles.



THE OFFICE OF HISTORICAL CORRECTIONS

Evans, Danielle
Riverhead (288 pp.)
\$27.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-59448-733-0

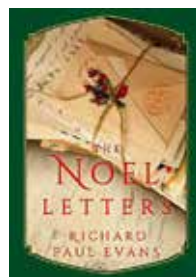


The author of *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self* (2010) looks at loss, relationships, and race in America in short fiction and a novella.

A summary of the first story in this collection might go like this: Lyssa, a woman working in the gift shop of a *Titanic*-themed attraction, gets a small part in a music video. That covers the bare bones of the plot, but it offers no insight into what “Happily Ever After” is really about: It’s Lyssa losing her mother to cancer, and it’s how being Black shapes—and con torts—experiences in which race most likely seems irrelevant to people who aren’t Black. Most of the pieces in this volume have a similar shape. Regardless of what the story is ostensibly about, it’s also about race because there is no escaping or eliding race. Evans writes about injustices large and small with incredible subtlety and, often, wry wit. “Boys Go to Jupiter” is a standout, largely because it feels so timely. When a boy she’s hooking up with posts a photo of her wearing a Confederate-flag bikini on social media, Claire becomes a viral villain and a pariah at her small Vermont college. On the defensive, Claire goes from being clueless to willfully obtuse and ignorantly hurtful. Scenes from her past add depth and complexity while leaving the reader to decide how these revelations affect their understanding of this character. The eponymous novella that closes the book is a stunner. Cassie works at the Institute for Public History, a federal agency designed to address “the contemporary crisis of truth.” It’s her job to correct the historical record, whether that means correcting a tourist who’s getting their facts wrong or amending a bakery’s advertisement for a Juneteenth cake. When her boss asks her to look into the work of another field agent, Cassie steps back into her own past and

into a murder mystery that might not involve a murder. To say much more would only detract from storytelling that is gripping on every level.

Necessary narratives, brilliantly crafted.

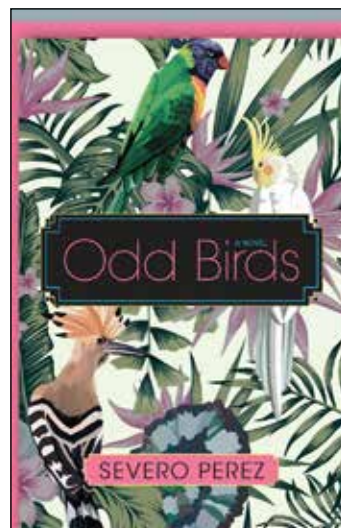


THE NOEL LETTERS

Evans, Richard Paul
Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster
(304 pp.)
\$21.99 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-1-9821-2960-6

The latest addition to the author’s Noel Collection is chock-full of holiday spirit.

Noel Book is a New York City book editor who’s named after her birthday. She flies to Salt Lake City to visit her estranged father, Robert Book, before he dies of cancer and stay with him until his passing. Sadly,



A tragic twist of fate leaves a revered artist destitute in Texas...

“A pitch-perfect picaresque tale”
—John Phillip Santos,
Texas Monthly

“Judge this book by its cover. It’s a stunning...captivating read.”
—Alice Embree, *Rag Radio Blog*

“An elegantly conceived tale—boasting a culturally and historically astute plot—that demands to be read.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*

ISBN #: 978-0-87565-729-5

For general inquiries, email rebecca.a.allen@trc.u.edu

he dies hours before her arrival. “He tried to hold on for you,” her father’s friend says. “His last words were ‘Tell Noel I’m sorry.’” She desperately wants to return to New York, but then she’s fired from her job while still in Utah. Meanwhile, she inherits Dad’s beloved bookstore and \$1 million of life insurance along with his house and everything in it, “including all his personal belongings, which includes his automobile, his Lladró and rare book collection.” Now “he’d created roots to keep me here. Roots or chains?” She is an angry woman who thinks God (if such there be) hates her. She’d rejected her father’s love after her mother’s death in a car accident years earlier, and in “the last two months I’d lost my marriage, my apartment, my father, and now my job.” Next, she breaks off a budding romantic relationship and alienates Dad’s devoted friends. “You spread pain everywhere you go,” she’s told. In a word, she’s being a jerk. Luckily, Dad’s love was unconditional. He’d had a thriving business, a life surrounded by the books he loved, and friends who loved him deeply. In his final days, he wants his daughter to be happy. Throughout the story, she receives a series of wisdom-filled anonymous letters, handwritten in feminine script and signed “Tabula Rasa.” Who could

be sending them? The reader will guess, but Noel guesses wrong. There’s a Dickensian arc that will make readers break out the eggnog and Christmas cookies. It evokes Tiny Tim’s exhortation: “God bless us, every one.”

This enjoyable Yuletide tale deserves a place under many a Christmas tree.



THE FORGOTTEN DAUGHTER

Goodman, Joanna
Harper/HarperCollins (416 pp.)
\$17.99 paper | Oct. 27, 2020
978-0-06299-831-6

Goodman explores the lingering trauma of Canada’s mid-20th-century Duplessis orphan scandal, in which children in Quebec orphanages were declared mentally ill so the province could collect more money from the

DIXIE DISTLER
MARY'S SONG

A sequel to
Charles Dickens'
A Christmas Carol

Distler offers a sequel to Dickens' famous Christmas story.

"warm, inviting narrative voice that skillfully captures all of Dickens' characters"

DIXIE DISTLER
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BOB CRATCHIT

A background story to
Charles Dickens'
A Christmas Carol

A pastiche novel dramatizing the life of the harried clerk from Charles Dickens' beloved 1843 novella.

"Distler has crafted a note-perfect companion volume to the well-known tale."
—Historical Novel Society

"A welcoming, consistently interesting exploration of the world of A Christmas Carol."
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #: 978-1732969551

"A well-drawn exploration of the untold stories of A Christmas Carol."
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #: 978-1732969520

For information on publishing and film rights, email DixieDistler@gmail.com • www.DixieDistler.com

A diamond is no one's best friend in this fast-paced debut novel.

THE RUSSIAN PINK

Canadian government, against the 1990s backdrop of the Quebecois struggle for independence in this sequel to *The Home for Unwanted Girls* (2018).

In the previous novel, after getting pregnant at 15, Maggie was forced to give up her baby to an orphanage run by the Catholic Church, and when she later came looking for the child, she was told her daughter was dead. It took more than 10 years for her to finally track down Elodie, whose childhood was a nightmare of abuse and neglect at the hands of the nuns and doctors. Now, nearly 20 years after Elodie was reunited with her family, she is grateful every day. At the same time, she feels like there is, and always will be, a hole in her life forged by the terrible treatment she suffered as a child in the orphanages. James, her younger brother, is fiercely mourning their father's death; one night, after some heavy drinking, he makes a pass at Véronique Fortin, daughter of an infamous Quebecois separatist imprisoned for murdering a government official in the 1970s. James and Véronique quickly fall in love. Véronique has always struggled with her father's legacy. As a young woman, she finds herself drawn to danger, earning money by smuggling illegal cigarettes and selling stolen CDs. And she's a staunch separatist while James' sympathies lie with Canadian unity. As a referendum draws near to determine Quebec's future, their relationship will be sorely tested. While James and Véronique's story unfolds in the foreground, Elodie and her fellow Duplessis orphans—the ones who survived—begin to fight for legal reparations from the church and government. Goodman explores two major events in recent Canadian history and how each of these expose deep wounds in the country and its people. The characters, complex and flawed, love and fight so fiercely that it's hard not to be drawn into their passionate orbits and to feel, even slightly, a glimmer of hope as they refuse to give up on the ideal of happiness.

Resonant and relevant at a time when so much of the world seems irretrievably rent by the past and politics.



THE RUSSIAN PINK

Hart, Matthew
Pegasus (272 pp.)
\$25.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-64313-550-2



A diamond is no one's best friend in this fast-paced debut novel filled with greed, violence, and politics.

"All diamonds are blood diamonds," begins the tale. "It's just a question of whose blood." The 1,512-carat pink rock

is barely off a Congo riverbed when the killing begins. Worth hundreds of millions of dollars, the "savage, unconquerable" stone eventually ends up adorning the neck of Honey Li, the wife of billionaire and U.S. presidential contender Harry Nash. Alas, "the man who tries to master this...will never know peace." Meanwhile, protagonist Alex Turner is a Treasury agent working for Special Audits on illegal gem trading by Russian organized crime. He gets help from Slav Lily, an independent diamond

trader/thief simultaneously "working for the bad guys, the good guys, and herself." She believes in God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ, and her fully-loaded slimline subcompact Glock. In fact, all the characters are well drawn: "Honey oozed from the car as if she had been squeezed from a tube, lithe and smooth as paste." A police commissioner who sounds suspiciously like Bill Bratton has "street smarts so sharp you could shave with them." "Chuck was seduced by his own imagination, a fertile garden that he'd never learned to weed." And the narrative is chock-full of memorable lines: "It's true that she wore a Kevlar vest, but, fatally, not a Kevlar hat." *Ouch!* Bad guys home in on Turner's daughter and ex-wife as a way of stopping him, which naturally pisses him off—but will he be able to protect his family? Early on in the story, the Russian mob's brutality becomes crystal clear, with the torture and murder of a woman in Brighton Beach. The author writes with skill, wit, and evident knowledge about the diamond industry—who knew there were such things as diamond pipes?

Top-quality storytelling for thriller fans.

UNLEASHED

BY E.L. JEFFERSON



E. L. Jefferson delivers in his signature no-holding back style and still manages to dodge the clichés that often plague the genre.

"Maryland surgeon's experimental, potentially revolutionary treatment sparks unexpectedly violent results in this novel."

"An edgy, terrifying, and shocking tale for hardcore horror fans."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN 978-1-4834-8508-9

For information on publishing and film rights, email jeff2601@verizon.net • www.eljefferson.net



BRING ME THE HEAD OF QUENTIN TARANTINO

Herbert, Julián
Trans. by MacSweeney, Christina Graywolf (192 pp.)
\$15.99 paper | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-64445-041-3

A gathering of often loopy, sometimes Rabelaisian stories by Mexican postmodernist Herbert.

Herbert, lead singer in a rock band in Saltillo, Mexico, is a deft explorer of the darker corners of Mexican society: His characters smoke crack, have unprotected sex with HIV-positive partners while making “gonzo porn movies,” drink far too much, exhibit poor manners. One even throws up on Mother Teresa, “a thick stream of puke composed of partially digested clams and wine that falls onto the extended hand and spotless headdress of the damned old witch crammed to the brim with lepers.” It’s decidedly not the polite, elevated world of Carlos

Fuentes, and its layerings are less those of social class, as with Fuentes, than of degrees of criminality. In one story, for instance, a journalist seeking a source of funding for his crack habit of “between twenty and thirty rocks a week” engineers a speaking gig in a border town in a scheme that comes to involve the Secretariat of Public Education, the mayor, and a host of other figures—and, in the end, a lot more money than the journalist ever dreamed of. The story ends in a spasm of violence, the journalist in hiding, living with “a toothless junkie twenty years my junior.” The title story is a tour de force of unlikely circumstance in which a hapless film critic is press-ganged into a mission to decapitate the famed director for an inadvertent error involving the doppelgänger of a fearsome cartel boss. Punctuated by passages in which the critic spins out a theory of parody that involves such highbrow figures as Hermann Broch and Harold Bloom, the yarn eventually finds that boss, Jacobo Montaña (think *Scarface*), in jail and his henchmen Rosendo and Gildardo (think Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) dead. As with a Tarantino film, the explanation for how all that has come about is serpentine, goofy, and good fun, if spattered with blood, all pushing the envelope of probability.

A writer worth seeking out, even for Tarantino aficionados.

An Indie Best Book of the Month, August 2020

“what I love about them is how much of the world—how much of a life—Natchez conjures in the space of a few lines. This is a brilliant book.”
—Jericho Brown, Pulitzer Prize winner

“...caused me to fall in love with poetry all over again.”
—Terry Lucas, author of *The Widening Spell*

“Outstanding poetic musings that strike at the very core of human connections and contradictions.”
—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) ★

ISBN # 978-0-578-64422-6

Order from www.longshippress.com or on Amazon, email lawrence.tjernell@longshippress.com • www.merylnatchez.com



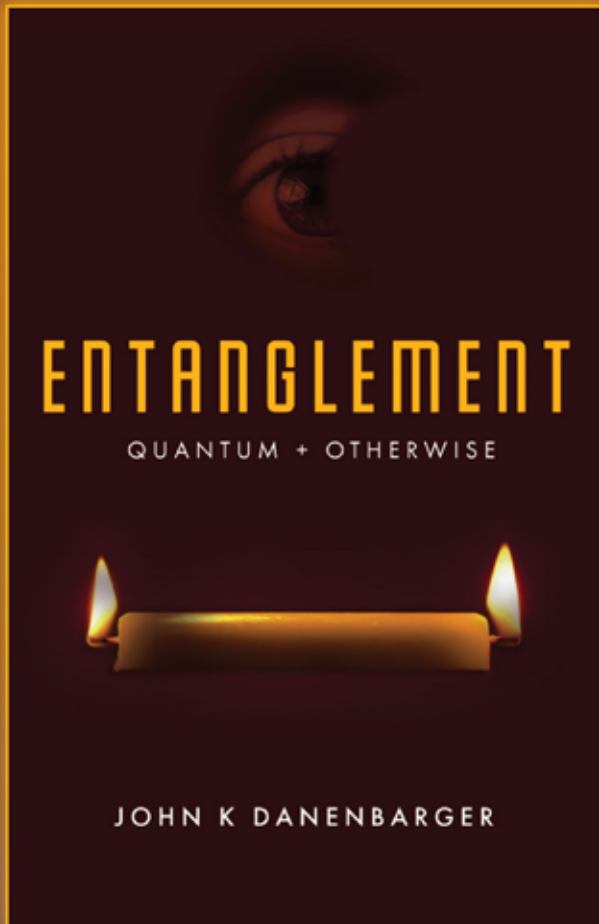
COLLISION COURSE

Hilton, Matt
Severn House (240 pp.)
\$28.99 | Dec. 1, 2020
978-0-7278-9046-7

The title Hilton saved for this seventh adventure of private eye Tess Grey and her fiancé, Nicolas “Po” Villere, would have suited any of the first six but is even more appropriate here.

After telling off her adoptive mother, Jessie Cameron, and dumping her boyfriend, bar busboy Jacob Doyle, Hayley Cameron has gone the extra mile by running away from home. Jessie acknowledges that her wild child is 21 but still wants Tess to find her, assure her of her mother’s love, and plead with her to come home. The complication, to use one of those understated words that rarely comes up here, is that Madison Toner, who’s Tess and Po’s most likely lead to information about Hayley’s whereabouts, is busy working an insurance scam together with her father, lobsterman Mike Toner, and that Kelly Ambrose, the imperious wife of major player Blake Ambrose, has just sent a trio of hirelings to muscle in on their operation, skimming 50% of their receipts off the top. So Hayley’s resolve to put her mother in the rear-view mirror is exceeded only by everyone else’s determination to keep this interlocking criminal directorate under wraps. The moments when Tess and Po catch up with Hayley and Tess gets to make her speech on behalf of Jessie are only the signals for further developments that include kidnapping, extended scenes of torture, a fatal car crash, and a finale in which the malefactors, outwitted and outmuscled by Tess and Po, turn on each other.

Action galore. The circular firing squad that ends the tale and several characters is a particularly nice touch.



ENTANGLEMENT

QUANTUM + OTHERWISE
BY JOHN K DANENBARGER

A blood-stained piano becomes an heirloom. A picture-perfect family. Beth divulges an ignominious past to her loving husband--who has deadly secrets. Mistakes are fatal. An intricate literary crime story.

"Danenbarger excels at developing characters, which considerably benefits a story of intersecting lives. Some backstories as well as the players themselves are unsettling or unsavory, though they never fail to engage."

"Gritty characters solidify an intelligent story and an abstract concept."

—Kirkus Reviews

"I really enjoyed the story, the characters and the narration very much and can recommend this book, but especially the audiobook, to anyone looking for a good mystery drama."

—The Audiobook Blog

"The author is masterful in his descriptive powers."

—Sheldon Greene, author of *The Seed Apple*

ISBN # 978-0-578-45037-7

For information on publishing and film rights, email info@StormBlockPublishing.com • StormBlockPublishing.com

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

SIGRID NUNEZ

THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD–WINNING NOVELIST ON PANDEMICS, SUICIDE, AND FEMALE FRIENDSHIP

By Laurie Muchnick



Nancy Crampton

SIGRID NUNEZ HAS BEEN writing precise, brilliant, subtly funny novels for 25 years, beginning with the autobiographical *A Feather on the Breath of God*, about a woman trying to understand her Chinese Panamanian father and German mother. She earned glowing reviews and devoted readers but was still not widely known outside the literary world when she won the National Book Award for *The Friend* in 2018. Her new novel, *What Are You Going Through* (Riverhead, Sept. 8), finds the unnamed narrator sequestered in a New England Airbnb with a terminally ill friend who's preparing to end her own life. Our starred review calls it "short,

sharp, and quietly brutal." Nunez spoke about her work over Zoom from her home in Greenwich Village; the conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Ten years ago you wrote a book about a flu pandemic, *Salvation City*. What did you know that we didn't?

I was always fascinated by the 1918 great flu, and I happened to know there were a lot of orphans. Mary McCarthy lost both her parents, and that was not uncommon. She had to go live with her grandmother, and she wrote this fabulous memoir called *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. And William Maxwell's mother died in that flu when he was 10—and it's in every book he ever wrote. It colored every day of his life. And I knew about Dr. Fauci from the AIDS epidemic, and I really admired him. I saw that all the science said it's not a question of *if*, it's a question of *when*, so I've always lived with the dread that I was not going to get out of life without living through another flu—I always thought of it as flu—pandemic. When all this began, I said to my agent, I wrote a book about this, and it did not end well.

You wrote *What Are You Going Through* long before the pandemic began, but the narrator and her friend are in a kind of quarantine together. So many of your books are about friendship.

That was never planned. Just before I wrote *The Last of Her Kind*, I met a writer at a residency who said there were two big things missing from fiction. One of them was work. This thing that we all do every day—everybody has a job. But unless it was being a writer, there was no novel about it. And the other thing he said was that there were no novels about friendship. And I remember mentioning that to my students: Why is there so little fiction about friendship? And the way we answered the question was that people think there's less at stake with friendship than with a family or a mar-

riage or even a romance. But I think maybe there's something in the culture that has changed, that that isn't really true anymore.

Your books are always in conversation with other books. In your latest, you mention *Three Paths to the Lake* by Ingeborg Bachmann, and in relation to that book, you write, "If you put a group of women in a book, you have 'women's fiction.' To be shunned by almost all male readers and no few female ones as well."

For pretty much my whole writing life, I always felt—as did every woman writer I know—we lived in a world where if you heard “women’s fiction,” you heard “lesser fiction.” Not just male readers and male editors. Women also felt that a thing made by a man was superior to that made by women. Look at publishing—it was dominated by women. Most of the editors and agents were women, and the books that were admired most and given the most attention were by men. That’s changed. But to be honest, with books written by a woman, an older woman in particular, I’m still surprised when a man says he loves the book. I would feel like it was a hard sell.

Has winning the National Book Award changed that?

I don't think it made that much of a difference for me, since it came so late in my career.

***What Are You Going Through*, like many of your novels, involves a suicide.**

That wasn't planned. With *The Friend*, I knew it was going to be about suicide because I had discovered that among my friends, people had this idea that this was how their lives were going to end. They weren't crying out for help or saying, “I think I’m going to kill myself within the next year.” It was more like in a calm way, they thought, “It might be when I’m 80, but this is how I think my life will end.” And then one of them did commit suicide, and he was one of those people who had quit talking about it, so it was on my mind. Now it’s even more on my mind because of what’s going on in the world. I can imagine it always being something I want to write about. And of course, there are different kinds. In *What Are You Going Through*, I don't really think of it as suicide, I think of it as euthanasia. It's different. But I've always thought writers have one or two obsessions, one or two ideas. And then they write book after book about the same thing. Virginia Woolf, for example—the same book all the time, the same idea. So, again, suicide is definitely one of mine.

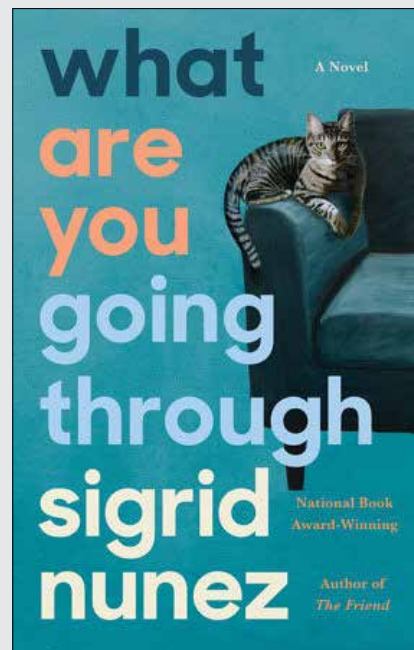
What are your others?

Well, friendships, as we've already established, particularly women's friendship. And I think I've always been interested in writing about people who are in some kind of extreme situation, because that's what brings out your most essential self. Then the literary life. Solitude is certainly important to me. And memory, and imagination, how whatever happened to you as a child forms who you are as an adult, based on how you remember it. I'm often looking back or having the character look back, because their memory might not be totally accurate, but people are always composing a narrative of their life.

For all these heavy topics, your books are very funny.

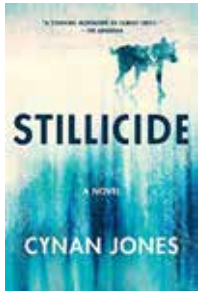
Like most people, I really do love when books have humor in them. Comedy is part of every human experience, and when it's left out of a work, something essential is missing. If you read Primo Levi writing about being in a concentration camp, there is some humor. Even if it's not funny ha ha, there's a warmth there.

What Are You Going Through received a starred review in the July 1, 2020, issue.



A grim vision of near-future Britain as climate change increases its grip.

STILLICIDE



STILLICIDE

Jones, Cynan

Catapult (176 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Nov. 17, 2020

978-1-64622-013-7

A grim vision of near-future Britain as climate change increases its grip.

Welsh novelist Jones' latest isn't so much an apocalyptic novel as an apocalypse-in-progress one: Britain isn't yet in tatters due to global warming, but it's rapidly getting there. In desperation, an iceberg is being hauled from the Arctic to bring fresh water, bolstering what's already being distributed via a "Water Train" that can carry 10 million gallons at 200 miles an hour. The precious cargo is well protected against monkey-wrenchers: There are weapons onboard, and guards are stationed along the tracks. But anxiety is high, symbolized by one of those guards in the early pages investigating an anomaly while stressing over his dying wife and the

general sense of impending calamity. Jones shifts this brisk story across a variety of perspectives: a journalist skeptical about the iceberg scheme; protesters at risk of displacement from the construction of the Ice Dock; the journalist's wife, a nurse pondering an affair; a scientist who discovers a protected dragonfly, which threatens to halt the Ice Dock plan; a boy chasing his dog into a guarded area; a father distressed at his son's work for the Water Train, which is under seemingly constant threat from saboteurs. In prior novels, Jones has proven masterful at spare, aphoristic sentences that create a sense of foreboding, whether his subject was drug trafficking or hard-luck rural hunters. There are glimpses of that here. But though Jones' long-running concern with nature makes climate change a natural theme for him, this novel lacks the earthy grit of his earlier work and the kind of clarity a thriller demands, even an ersatz one.

Jones finely captures the mood of a country nearing collapse, but his plot threads are loosely woven.



THE LAST DAYS OF ELLIS ISLAND

Josse, Gaëlle

Trans. by Lehrer, Natasha

World Editions (208 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | Nov. 24, 2020

978-1-64286-071-9



A man looks back on his long tenure at America's former entry point.

Already the winner of the European Union Prize for Literature after its publication in France, Josse's slim novel contains the somber reflections, in diary form, of one man's 45 years of service as a gatekeeper at what once was the door into the United States for millions of immigrants. John Mitchell, who began working for the Federal Immigration Service at Ellis Island as an immigration inspector and eventually rises to the position of commissioner, finds himself the only remaining employee at the deserted complex, but the ghosts of its many temporary inhabitants and his former colleagues remain intensely real. Nine days before its closure on Nov. 12, 1954, he sits down to record his memories—mostly painful and deeply regretful—of his long tenure. In spare, but at times poetic, prose, Mitchell describes his brief, almost impossibly happy marriage to his late wife, Liz, a nurse who also worked on the island. Mitchell is a man of orderly habits and obvious rectitude, but he's haunted as he recalls the stories of several immigrants, all of them cases in which he's guilty of serious, but totally human, lapses in judgment. The most troubling involves Nella, a beautiful young woman from Sardinia, who arrives with her younger brother, Paolo. After Paolo is marked for exclusion because of a mental deficiency, Mitchell allows his emotions to overcome his professional obligations in his relationship with Nella. When he permits, against his better judgment, another Italian immigrant with an anarchist past into the country, Mitchell overcompensates during the Red Scare of the 1920s by excluding a couple from Hungary with vaguely communist leanings. In the tale of

SNATCH 2&20
A SATIRICAL ROMP THROUGH THE WALL STREET AND SILICON VALLEY SWAMPS
LUKE E. FELLOWS

"A raucous story told by a brilliant mind...a satirical sword cutting through the worlds of finance and the realms of human folly"
—Self-Publishing Review, 4 stars out of 5

"Complex, witty, dramatic, thought-provoking... hard to put down..."
—Midwest Book Review

"remarkable debut novel"
—Reader Views

**"gloriously sardonic book...
Fast-paced and often
hilarious fiction"**
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN 979-8639785795 • B087KYDPPY • ASIN: B087KP7511

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

Neil Perry Gordon
NOVELIST

FICTION

NONFICTION

CHILDREN'S

YOUNG ADULT

INDIE



ISBN # 978-1732667792

A Cobbler's Journey into the Dreamworld and Beyond

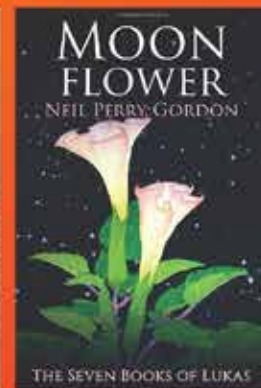
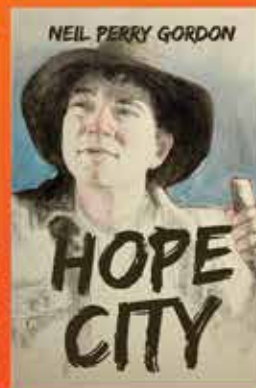
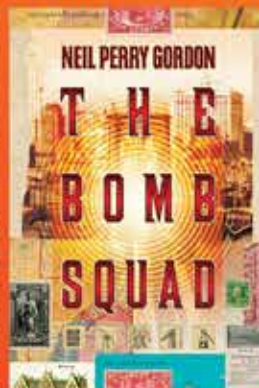
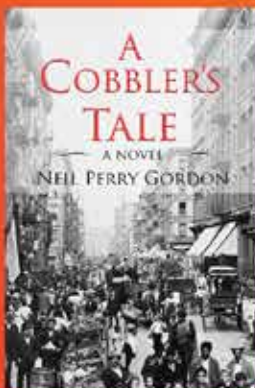
"Gordon writes all of this in a smoothly controlled narrative that's equally adept at both the small, personal details—each main character is well shaped and the bad guys are every bit as three-dimensional as the good guys—and the larger philosophical tapestry inscribed with the minutiae of the cabala."

"Throughout the enjoyable sequel, the author playfully overlays the quotidian New York reality onto a dramatic supernatural backdrop whose existence most ordinary people never suspect. This second volume can easily be read independent of the first."

"An entertaining, thought-provoking fantasy in which a plainspoken protagonist is enlisted in a war."

—Kirkus Reviews

Check out Neil Perry Gordon's other books:



For information on publishing and film rights, email neilperrygordon@gmail.com • www.neilperrygordon.com

this fictional bureaucrat, Josse powerfully evokes the spirit of the “huddled masses” who landed on America’s shores while creating a memorable portrait of a man torn between his commitment to his difficult job and the longings of his heart.

Duty and desire clash in the melancholy reminiscences of a former Ellis Island immigration officer.



THE AMERICAN GRANDDAUGHTER

Kachachi, Inaam

Trans. by Yousif, Nariman

Interlink (192 pp.)

\$15.00 paper | Oct. 1, 2020

978-1-62371-868-8

Originally published in Arabic in 2008 and short-listed for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, Kachachi’s war novel follows the internalized musings of an Iraqi-born American working as a translator for U.S. military forces after Saddam Hussein’s fall.

When the Iraq War begins, 30-ish Zeina has been living in Detroit for 15 years. Her Eastern Orthodox family emigrated from Baghdad after her father’s arrest and torture when she was a teen. Although her well-educated parents have never fully adjusted to their less privileged lives in exile, Zeina feels at home as an Arab American: Her father instilled in her a love and knowledge of Arab literature and her friends are mostly Arab; but her beer-loving boyfriend, Calvin, is White and Zeina is steeped in American pop culture, using movie titles to define specific moments in her tale. Zeina signs up as a translator for reasons patriotic—despair over 9/11—as well as financial—up to \$186,000 per year in salary. But returning to her homeland and reuniting with her fiercely nationalistic, anti-American maternal grandmother, Rahma, make Zeina question her divided loyalties. She feels kinship with other American soldiers on the various bases where she’s posted, willingly accompanying them on raids. Yet she falls passionately in love with Muhaymen, an active member of a Shiite militia group fighting the Americans. Although sharpened memories pull her toward her Iraqi roots, Zeina returns to Detroit between her two tours of duty only to feel like a “dog with two homes.” During her second tour, she realizes the divide between her and Muhaymen, a newly devout Muslim, is unbreachable. The novel’s narration, in part by Zeina and in part by a writer-self “sitting shoulder to shoulder by my side” who wants to villainize Zeina on Rahma’s behalf, represents her existential struggle as an American, an Iraqi, an Eastern Orthodox Christian, and a woman.

There are no heroes here, but even possible enemies are portrayed with compassion and complexity.



FERDINAND, THE MAN WITH THE KIND HEART

Keun, Irmgard

Trans. by Hofmann, Michael

Other Press (256 pp.)

\$17.99 paper | Dec. 8, 2020

978-163542-035-7

Satirical novel of postwar Germany, written in 1950 by a writer little known outside her native country.

Ferdinand Timpe is a “returnee,” a Wehrmacht veteran who lives in a Cologne hovel. He doesn’t

VALADORY
by
Richard DeRobertis

“rousing epic”
—Kirkus Reviews

(Manuscript)

What was Scandinavia before Ragnarok? It was called Valadory. The Ice Giants devised a plan to destroy the gods without bringing the doom foreordained to kill them all.

“The novel’s action is unstinting...in fight scenes that are well choreographed and suspenseful”

“DeRobertis turns his story’s mythic sensibility into beguiling poetry.”

“An entertaining sword-and-sorcery fable with intriguing characters and cosmic gravitas.”

—Kirkus Reviews

Read the full review in the 9/1 Kirkus Reviews Magazine

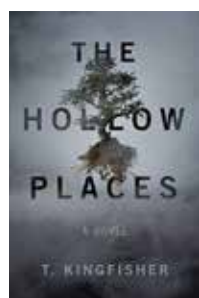
For agent representation and information on publishing rights, email Rick.DeRobertis@gmail.com

A door to another world appears in a museum of oddities, but it's no gateway to Narnia.

THE HOLLOW PLACES

like the designation: "It sounds a bit like the name of a vacuum cleaner or something," he grumbles. He wasn't much of a soldier, he allows, though he keeps running into old comrades, such as a sergeant who saved his life but then bored him with "the stupidest and nastiest jokes I've ever heard in my life." In a Germany divided in a Cold War world "ajangle with weaponry," a shopkeeper opines that because the Americans won, they must really be Germans, since the Germans are supposed to win in any martial encounter. That's just one example of the strange logic Ferdinand meets with, his neighbors filled with superstition, glad to spend freely on things occult while awaiting the world's end; one of Ferdinand's employers is a neighbor who "now has departments for podiatry, charms, talismans and scents, departments for magical cloth, for clairvoyance and crystallography and the interpretation of dreams, departments for color, astrology, chiromancy, and graphology." Ferdinand would prefer to drink, smoke, and wander the streets dressed in a homemade jerkin, which his bohemian cousin Johanna says makes him "look like a hurdy-gurdy man's monkey." He lacks all ambition, evident when, in a case of mistaken identity, he's commissioned to write an article for a new magazine, requiring him to think, fruitlessly, of a subject ("I was Hitler's pest control guy" is one idea quickly discarded). His family, as we learn episode by episode leading up to a reunion, is just as confused, and so is everyone else. Keun, banned during the Nazi era and all but forgotten afterward, paints with a broad brush, but it's a decidedly unusual and often quite funny picture of a defeated people about to dust themselves off and become an economic power.

Fans of Günter Grass will find Keun a kindred spirit in the meeting of the picaresque and the cynical.



THE HOLLOW PLACES

Kingfisher, T.
 Saga/Simon & Schuster (352 pp.)
 \$16.99 paper | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-5344-5112-4

A door to another world appears in a museum of oddities, but it's no gateway to Narnia.

Rudderless after her divorce and terrified at the prospect of moving back in with her parents, 34-year-old Kara returns to where she grew up, quaint Hog Chapel, North Carolina, to stay with her beloved, kindly Uncle Earl, who calls her Carrot and owns the Glory to God Museum of Natural Wonders, Curiosities and Taxidermy. The museum is chock full of taxidermic animals (and more fantastical creatures) and an assortment of other strange and wondrous items, including a grizzled tabby cat named Beau, who keeps the mice from ravaging the exhibits. It doesn't take long for Kara to settle in, and she earns her keep by cataloging the museum's collection. After hours, she enjoys hanging out with the gregarious (and often top-hatted) Simon, who works at the Black Hen coffee shop next door and regales Kara with outrageous stories from his Florida childhood. When Earl is hospitalized for knee surgery, Kara happily takes over

the day-to-day work at the museum and enlists Simon's help in patching a significant hole in the building's drywall. Curiosity gets the best of Kara and Simon when they discover a dark corridor behind the hole, which leads to a door to an otherworldly place where willows whisper with the promise of horrors that soon threaten to spill out into Kara's world. Luckily, Kara has Simon and maybe even a bit of help from some of the museum's inhabitants. There are no cheap scares here, and while a few are Lovecraft-ian in flavor, they're entirely of the author's wonderfully twisted and endlessly fertile imagination, and readers will have no trouble rooting for the instantly likable Kara, who narrates, and the delightfully offbeat Simon.

The perfect tale for fans of horror with heart.

A hearing-impaired teenager's connection to a recent murder makes him a target for a nefarious and lethal cult in this debut thriller.

"This story boasts a splendid protagonist."

"There are effective plot turns, such as dissension within the cult and a surprise member or two."

"An appealing hero stars in this engrossing...mystery."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN 978-1-09830-285-6

For general inquiries, email paularamouni@hotmail.com
www.store.bookbaby.com/profile/PaulAramouni

A tremendous collection from an immensely talented writer.

TO BE A MAN



TO BE A MAN Stories

Krauss, Nicole
Harper (240 pp.)
\$26.99 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-0-06243-102-8

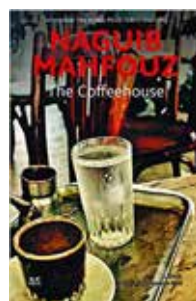


Stories about women and men and the daily urgencies inherent to living more or less in the present.

The latest collection of stories from Krauss is a wonder, with the author's signature straddling of the tragic and the absurd, her particularly Jewish frame of reference, and the extraordinary range of her narrative voice. One story traces the erotic awakenings of three young women; the next follows an older man named Brodman as he emerges from surgery to find his brand-new grandson about to undergo his bris. These stories are remarkable enough, but deep in the book, Krauss departs, ever so subtly, from a strict allegiance to realism. In the unsettlingly prescient "Future

Emergencies," New York City residents are urged to wear the gas masks being distributed at designated centers. Nobody knows why, but the evening news is also providing instructions on how to safely seal windows and doors. "Amour" is set in a near future where whatever has happened to the world—war? devastating climate change?—goes unstated, but the main characters find themselves, as a result, in a refugee camp. And yet in both stories, the futuristic or, as it is sometimes called, "speculative" aspects are quietly located in the background. At the forefront of each is the relationship between a couple. In the end, perhaps that's what makes these tales so moving and so disconcerting. Brodman, out of surgery, realizes that "his life had floated on a great ocean of understanding, and he'd had only to dip his cup. He had not noticed the slow evaporation of that ocean until it was too late. He had ceased to understand. He had not understood for years."

A tremendous collection from an immensely talented writer.



THE COFFEEHOUSE

Mahfouz, Naguib
Trans. by Stock, Raymond
American Univ. in Cairo (122 pp.)
\$14.95 paper | Oct. 13, 2020
978-977-416-999-1

Nostalgic roman à clef by the Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian novelist and secularist.

As it opens, the characters of Mahfouz's novel, first serialized in a Cairo newspaper in 1988, are young boys who meet in 1915 in elementary school and who, years later, "will all be buried in the Bab al-Nasr Cemetery." Five at the core of the group "have never left each other" while others will move away, fall out of touch. Some are rich; some aspire to wealth and influence in a time when young Egyptians are increasingly insistent on independence from Britain. A couple are faithful observers of Islam—one is Ismail, a boy who "never stopped imagining God in a majestic form whose grandeur had no limit"—while others are "without any sort of religion at all." Yet all harbor the same enthusiasms, eagerly watching Tom Mix cowboy movies at the local movie parlor, fighting the neighborhood bullies and getting trounced in the bargain. As they grow into adolescence, the boys find a second home in a coffeehouse far enough away from their homes that they won't be seen smoking and whiling away the hours playing dominoes and talking politics, as they will do for years to come even as they come of age, marry, struggle, and try to cope with onrushing events to greater or lesser degrees of success: "Hamada al-Halawani's life continued between the palace, the houseboat, and Khan al-Khalili, while he added the Allies and the Axis to his vacillation between schools of thought," writes Mahfouz of one at the outbreak of World War II. Covering a broad sweep of nearly a century of history, Mahfouz's last novella is a single narrative, not broken into chapters but flowing like the Nile and time itself. Writes the translator in a welcome afterword, while Mahfouz and his generation are

This powerful historical novel of loss and resilience set mostly in Vienna takes us from 1934 through the tumultuous years of war and occupation to 1961

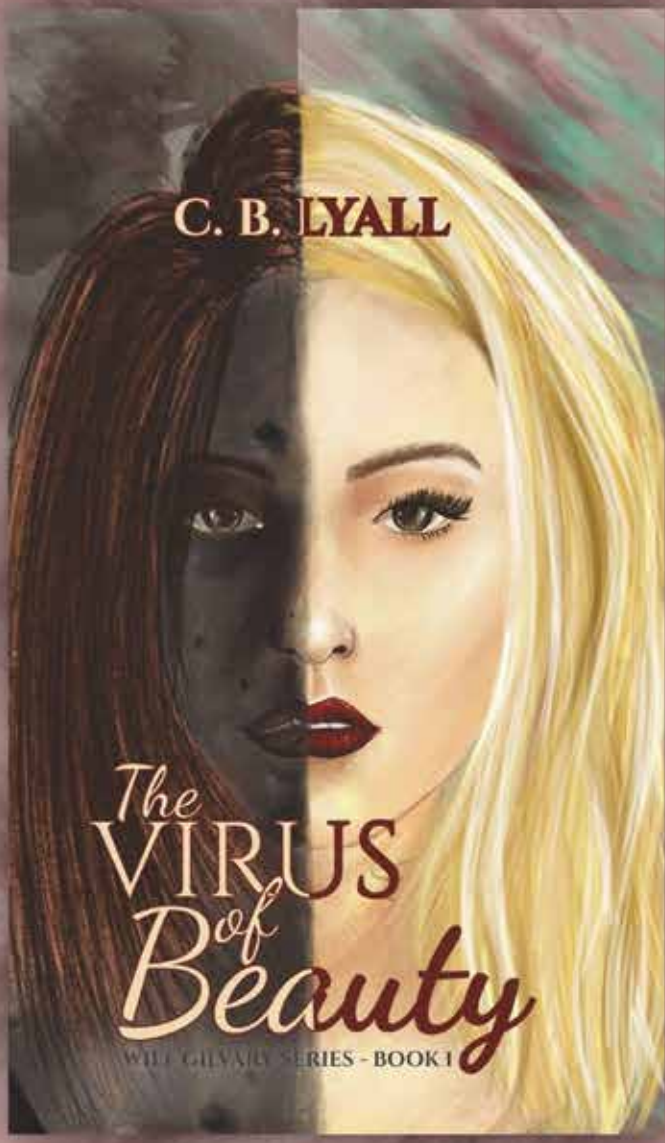
"Novelist Wittig has a gift for character development and for pacing. She takes her time, raising this story to the deserved level of saga."

"A standout among the many novels set in this world-changing era."
—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) ★

The author's memories of her Viennese family and fellow refugees and people displaced by war lie at the core of this novel.

ISBN: 979 8623796721 • Audiobook Coming Soon

For information on publishing and film rights, email irenewittigauthor@gmail.com • www.all-that-lingers.com



The Virus of Beauty

By C. B. Lyall

Witches are falling victim to a magic-killing virus, and their only hope for a cure is to convince a teenager to accept his wizard heritage.

“An engaging fantasy with creative worldbuilding and authentically conflicted teen characters caught in a magical power struggle.”

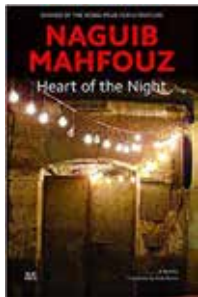
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN # 9781643780658 (paperback) • 9781643780665 (hardcover) • 9781643780672 (ebook)

For agent representation and information on publishing rights, email cb@cblyall.com • www.cblyall.com

gone, the coffeehouse still stands, full of “old men from the surrounding neighborhood playing dominoes and drinking tea long into the evening.”

An affectionate evocation of lost youth and life’s passage by a seasoned storyteller.



HEART OF THE NIGHT

Mahfouz, Naguib

Trans. by Bamia, Aida

American Univ. in Cairo (90 pp.)

\$13.95 paper | Oct. 13, 2020

978-977-416-998-4

Enigmatic story by the Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian novelist Mahfouz.

“Al-Rawi. I am Jaafar al-Rawi, Jaafar Ibrahim Sayyid al-Rawi.” The pride in which the protagonist of Mahfouz’s novella takes in giving his name is about the only moment in

which he is able to take any pride at all. His grandfather has left his fortune to a waqf, a kind of charitable trust, and not a cent to him. Thinks the narrator, “I was convinced that no one rejected his heirs for no reason. What had you done, Jaafar?” What had he done, indeed? The unstated question, prelude to the narrator’s suggestion that he try talking to his grandfather rather than filing a lawsuit, takes Jaafar deep into his past: He tells of a father who died young, a mother who “talked to the jinn, the birds, inanimate beings, and the dead,” and a grandfather who doesn’t seem such a bad guy and who encourages Jaafar’s religious leanings by saying, “You will find out that every book is a book about religion and every location is a place of worship, whether in Egypt or in Europe.” Ah, but then the secular enters, and things begin to sour: Jaafar marries a woman who “was only a sexual provocation; not a housewife, a mother, or a woman in the true sense of the word” (it’s to be remembered that Mahfouz, though politically progressive, was born in 1911), divorces, remarries, then lands in jail for having killed a frenemy who objected to Jaafar’s quest to found a political party based on a concocted ideology that was “the logical heir of Islam, the French Revolution, and the communist revolution.” There’s an awful lot going on in all that, and Mahfouz, an anti-Islamist, seems to be subtly criticizing events of his time. Whatever the case, now Jaafar is left to wander in the ruins of his grandfather’s villa, broke and perhaps insane: “Let life be filled with holy madness to the last breath” is his last utterance.

An elegant if perplexing tale by one of modern Arabic literature’s greatest voices.

“Beautiful, psychic Atlantean science graduate Ithyanna foresees an upcoming apocalypse...she puts her faith in rationalism and technology, plotting a starship escape of the planet’s best and brightest before it’s too late.”

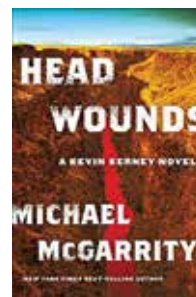
“In this engrossing tale, treachery, arrogance, violence, nonbelief, and selfishness beset the eponymous hero’s plans and illuminate God’s true path.”

“An engaging, offbeat, and Bible-inspired apocalyptic tale.”

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN 978-1-5255-5913-6 (HC) • 978-1-5255-5914-3 (PB) • 978-1-5255-5915-0 (eBook)

For information on publishing and film rights, email doncook01@rogers.com • www.donnyverse.com



HEAD WOUNDS

McGarrity, Michael

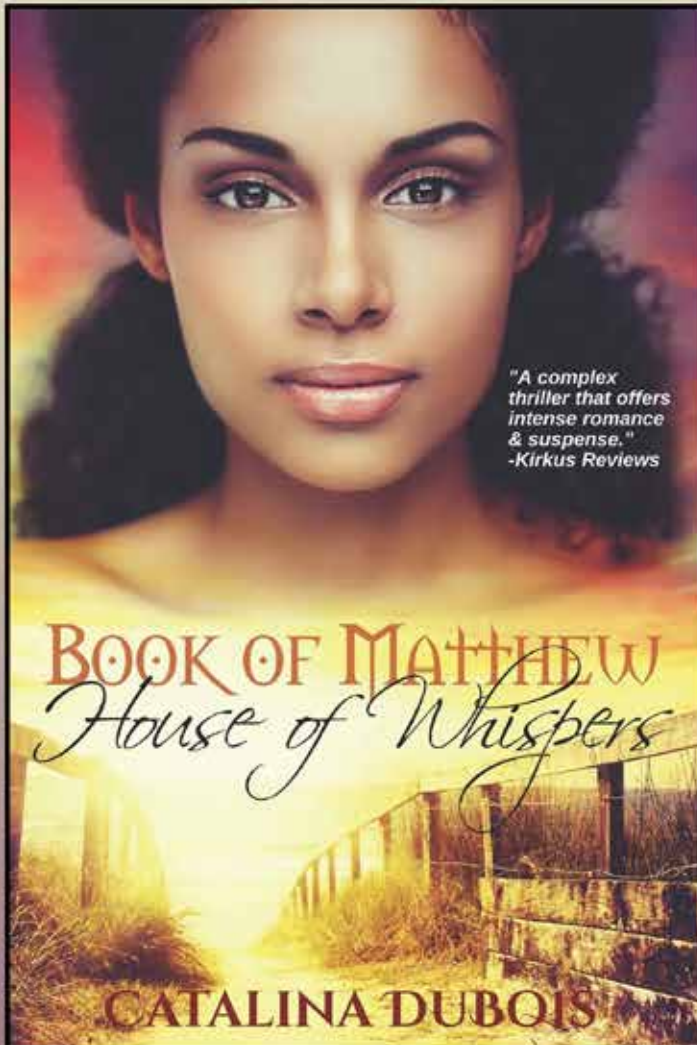
W. W. Norton & Company (320 pp.)

\$26.95 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-324-00285-7

Retired Santa Fe police chief Kevin Kerney gets only a minor role in his 14th appearance. Considering what the leading characters are up to, that’s a lucky break for him.

It all begins at a motel where James Goggin and Lucy Nautzile have been scalped after their throats were surgically cut, presumably by Estavio Trevino, a professional assassin who prefers to be called El Jefe. As if the carnage isn’t disturbing enough, John Cosgrove, the night clerk who reports discovering the bodies to Kerney’s son, Deputy Clayton Iste, of the Doña Ana County Sheriff’s Office, vanishes and promptly turns up with his own throat cut. It’s the beginning of a pattern that plays out all over the tribal lands of New Mexico and environs: First characters are introduced by name, placed in a thickly imagined web of relatives, and given a backstory, then they’re violently dispatched. Ever since stealing \$200,000 from a tribal casino, the first two victims had been on the run—not from the law, to whom the theft was never reported, but from a mélange of gangsters, hirelings, informants, and paid killers who now all come rushing into Clayton’s ken. Soon after agreeing to join undercover



ISBN-13: 9781987088939

When a serial killer strikes a Missouri plantation, a slave and her lover discover they must outwit a cunning and devious psychopath in this historical novel.

"The author successfully balances the romance with a gripping murder mystery that, while violent, is never gratuitous."

"This series opener from DuBois (*A Tale as Old as Time*, 2018, etc.) is a richly detailed historical thriller brimming with intriguing, well-developed characters and a fast-paced plot that offers a plethora of surprising twists and turns."



"A complex thriller that offers intense romance and suspense."
—Kirkus Reviews

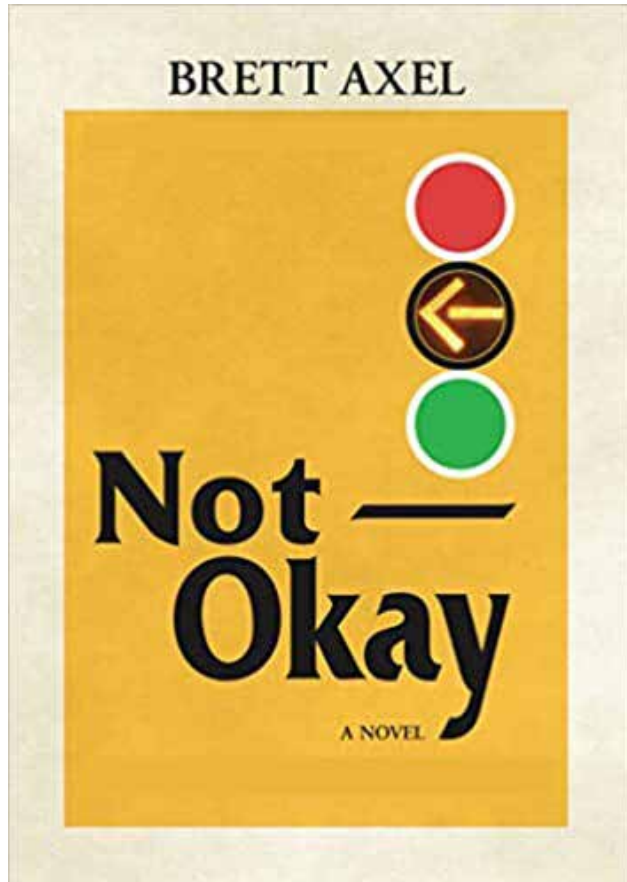
For information about agent representation or film rights,
email catalinadubois.novels@gmail.com • www.catalinadubois.com

BRETT AXEL

Brett Axel discusses his new novel and running a small press

[SPONSORED]

By Walker Rutter-Bowman



IN THE WRITING WORLD, Brett Axel wears several hats. He's written collections of poetry, a children's book; now he's running a small press. His new novel, *Not Okay*, is a deeply personal, often funny, often disturbing story of childhood trauma and sexual abuse. Axel calls it fiction, "but it is very, very real," he says.

Axel acknowledges that some readers might object to serious subject matter coexisting with beats of comedy. But as he's grappled with his own traumatic experiences for years, humor has offered inroads to greater healing. Axel was abducted when he was 12 and freed at 18. "This book is...about the difficulty of finding normalcy after being the victim of horrendous abuse," he says.

Having missed years of school, Axel often felt he was playing catch-up in his education. But in college

he discovered that he was an excellent student. He studied psychology and learned about how others cope with trauma. "[Some people] use comedy to make it possible to survive," he says. "Many of the world's greatest stand-up comedians—the pain of their childhood and pasts drove their comedy."

Though *Not Okay* demonstrates Axel's funny bone, he says writing was his first refuge. "I didn't think I was going to make a career as a writer...I was doing it as a survival mechanism."

Not Okay begins in jail, where Peter Wilson is being held for murder. As he consults with his lawyer, their conversation prompts Peter to recall his agonizing past: how a man known as "Uncle Will" abducted Peter at the age of 12 while he was hitchhiking. Though the book painfully expands upon and enumerates Uncle Will's depravities and cruelties, it's Peter's voice that's truly expansive: chatty, intelligent, haunted, and wisecracking.

At one point, still in Uncle Will's captivity, Peter stumbles into a Department of Social and Health Services office. The woman working the desk asks him if his visit is an emergency. Peter doesn't know where to begin, so he verbally explodes:

"Isn't life just one long emergency? Like Bruce Springsteen says, come on, Greetings From Asbury Park, it's a fucking classic. No, forget that, life is really a series of small emergencies strung together like cranberries on a Christmas tree, we step from one to another to another until we find one we can live with or one that fails to support our weight. No, this isn't an emergency. This is an average day for me. Oh, I know what you mean, like an emergency, like a time when someone could intervene and save the mother fucking day, is that what you mean?"

I paused to take a breath. She tried to interject but still wasn't fast enough.

"Lady, my emergency came and went. I'm what is left when there was an emergency, and no one came to the rescue. The damage is done here."

The novel is a barrage of voice, humor, and pain. It feels like a single eruption, but Axel's been working on it for 25 years. In fact, "the first version of the book was nonfiction," Axel says, and it was too "dark and unpleasant." In writing about child sex trafficking, Axel wanted to capture the aftereffects—how challenging it is for someone who's been treated as an object to rejoin the world as a self-determining person.

"That first version was so depressing, such a downer," Axel says. "It didn't civilize the horror. The next version, about seven years later, started to fictionalize it." Axel got good advice from Naomi King, the minister of a Universalist church and the daughter of Stephen King. She told him the "only way to make this readable is to sprinkle humor into it," Axel recalls.

Axel says what happened to him is even worse than what happens to Peter in *Not Okay*. But over the years, Axel has learned that while his own experiences inform the book, this is Peter's novel. "The hardest part was cutting out the [portions that are] true to my story," Axel says. "As interesting as they were, they were not part of Peter's story."

Now that it's out in the world, his production has ground to a halt. "I haven't written anything in a year," he happily admits. A lack of output usually drives a writer up the wall, but Axel seems terribly



content. He's busier than ever, sporting his new publishing hat. In 2019, Axel partnered with Jeanne Vinal to run Vinal Publishing, an independent publisher based in Buffalo, New York. It was Axel's writing that initially caught Vinal's attention. She'd read a couple of his books, and when Axel shared his new novel with her, she decided it should be the flagship release of the new publishing house.

"I love working with 10 different books at a time," says Axel. His goal is to turn very good books into great books. But finding the very good books isn't always easy, and Axel's up to his ears in submissions.

"I read about 750 submissions a month," he says. It's an arduous process, but he says it's worth it, mostly because of how much the writers appreciate the attention and care the publisher gives their work.

Axel reports that Vinal's editing process has been a story of success. "In every case so far, the author is happier with the new draft," he says. The key has been "not forcing them to do something that compromises the book or the author's integrity."

"The...problem in publishing today is that writers are not pushed to get their best possible work out," Axel laments. "They're pushed to get volume out. It really shows that the publishing industry has narrowed down to the topics, themes, and styles that sell really well, then turns out the carbon copy of the latest 10 books."

For now, Axel's own writing is on the back burner as he prioritizes Vinal's latest offerings. The publisher is planning to release six books this year, then work its way up to 12 per year. About half of those will be children's books; the rest will mostly be novels. Axel's especially excited about *Narcotic Field Theory*, the forthcoming debut novel of Saint James Harris Wood. The book was submitted when the author was still incarcerated; he's since been freed and will see the book published in November 2020.

Praising the book, Axel reveals he still thinks like a writer. "I wish I'd written that," he says.

Walker Rutter-Bowman is a writer and teacher living in Washington, D.C.



The range and virtuosity of these stories make this Mosley's most adventurous and, maybe, best book.

THE AWKWARD BLACK MAN

DEA agent Bernard Harjo in a journey to El Jefe, an encounter the all-knowing killer plans to end by ransoming his visitors, Clayton shoots El Jefe's adopted son, Fernando Olguin, in self-defense, putting himself squarely in the assassin's crosshairs, where he's got plenty of company. Gang leaders fight rival gang leaders, dirty cops go up against even dirtier cops, and it all ends with the 70th birthday party of Kevin Kerney. Remember him?

Underneath all the chaotic plotting and crossplotting, McGarrity's New Mexico seethes with life.



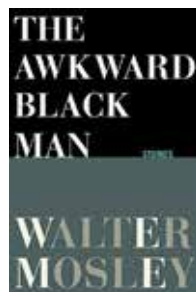
FROM THESE BROKEN STREETS

Merullo, Roland
Lake Union Publishing (364 pp.)
\$14.95 paper | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-5420-1896-8

A vigorous fictional account of the popular uprising that threw the Nazis out of Naples in 1943.

Mussolini has been deposed, Italy has signed an armistice, but the Germans still occupy Naples. Arrogant Nazi Col. Scholl anticipates no problem in carrying out his orders to "reduce the city to ashes and mud" in order to slow the imminent Allied invasion. He reckons without the people of Naples, whose rule-breaking, life-embracing spirit Merullo captures in a vivid narrative centered on five principal characters (in addition to the odious col-one!). Street kid Armando sabotages Nazi trucks with his fellow homeless urchins. National Archives curator Giuseppe draws a detailed map of the city that will aid the Allies. His lover, Lucia, dresses as a nun to smuggle the map to Rita, a devoutly religious practitioner of the world's oldest profession who can get it to the monastery sheltering an Allied intelligence officer. Meanwhile, Lucia's father, Aldo, reluctant subordinate of the local Camorra, helps the mobsters steal Nazi weapons and equipment. The Camorristi have financial reasons for wanting Naples free of Germans, but Merullo's nuanced portrait acknowledges that sometimes criminals do good, that there are a few decent Nazis among the vicious majority, and that Neapolitans' generosity, bravery, and resourcefulness spring from an oppressive social system that mires many in dire poverty. The gripping climactic account of the widespread revolt that forces the arrogant Nazis to abandon the city may surprise readers who know Merullo as the author of unconventional spiritual fiction (*Breakfast With the Buddha*, 2007) or probing novels of American working-class life (*In Revere, in Those Days*, 2002), but this multifaceted writer always surprises and entertains. He finds time among the mayhem for a few poignant human dramas, brought to satisfactory conclusions along with the uprising.

Stirring and moving: more fine work from a versatile, gifted writer.



THE AWKWARD BLACK MAN

Mosley, Walter
Grove (336 pp.)
\$26.00 | Sep. 15, 2020
978-0-8021-4956-5


A grandmaster of the hard-boiled crime genre shifts gears to spin bitter-sweet and, at times, bizarre tales about bruised, sensitive souls in love and trouble.

In one of the 17 stories that make up this collection, a supporting character says: "People are so afraid



Emerald

By Rev. Larry L. Hintz



Rev. Larry L. Hintz

A sentimental novel about small-town life in Iowa.

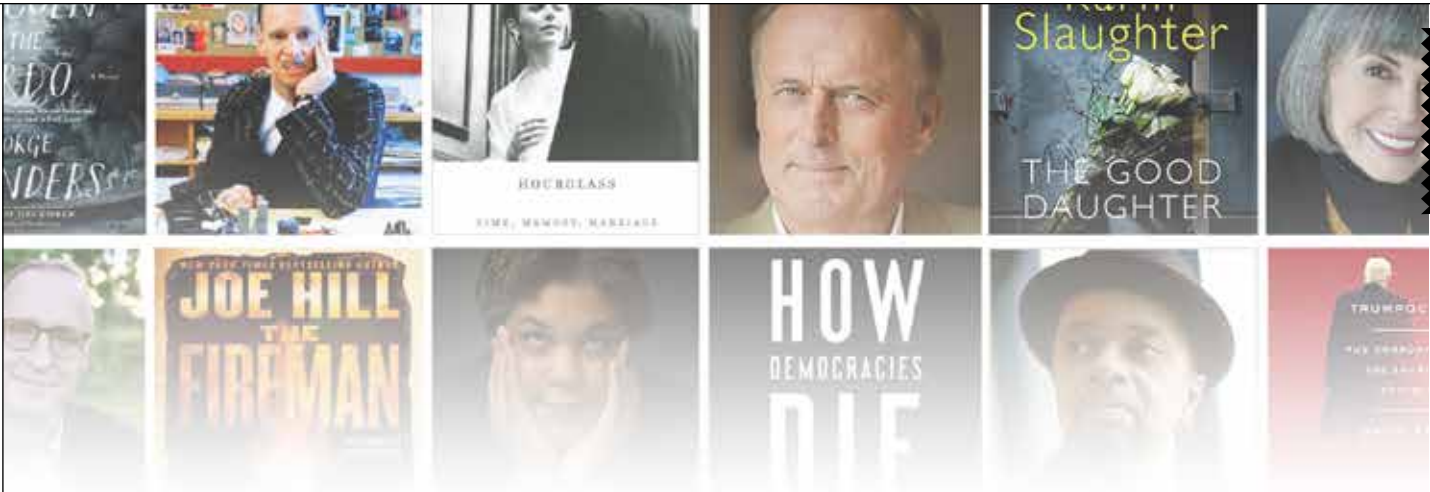
"This book by Hintz, a former Lutheran pastor and native Iowan, is the first in a series that focuses on a small cast of characters in the fictional Iowa town of Emerald."

"Readers who grew up in small towns will particularly appreciate Hintz's straightforward presentation."

"A warm and inviting historical novel featuring well-developed characters."
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #9781980396468

For information on publishing and film rights, email hintz2@hotmail.com • www.RevLarryLHintz.net



**Get the ultimate inside scoop
on the best new books.**



New episode every Tuesday

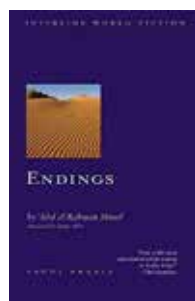


**KIRKUS
REVIEWS**

of dying that they don't even live the little bit of life they have." She casually drops this gnomic observation as a way of breaking down a lead character's resistance to smoking a cigarette. But her aphorism could apply to almost all the eponymous awkward Black men examined with dry wit and deep empathy by the versatile and prolific Mosley, who takes one of his occasional departures from detective fiction to illuminate the many ways Black men confound society's expectations and even perplex themselves. There is, for instance, Rufus Coombs, the mailroom messenger in "Pet Fly," who connects more easily with household pests than he does with the women who work in his building. Or Albert Roundhouse, of "Almost Alyce," who loses the love of his life and falls into a welter of alcohol, vagrancy, and, ultimately, enlightenment. Perhaps most alienated of all is Michael Trey in "Between Storms," who locks himself in his New York City apartment after being traumatized by a major storm and finds himself taken by the outside world as a prophet—not of doom, but, maybe, peace? Not all these awkward types are hapless or benign: The short, shy surgeon in "Cut, Cut, Cut" turns out to be something like a mad scientist out of H.G. Wells while

"Showdown on the Hudson" is a saga about an authentic Black cowboy from Texas who's not exactly a perfect fit for New York City but is soon compelled to do the right thing, Western-style. The tough-minded and tenderly observant Mosley style remains constant throughout these stories even as they display varied approaches from the gothic to the surreal.

The range and virtuosity of these stories make this Mosley's most adventurous and, maybe, best book.



ENDINGS

Munif 'Abd Al-Rahman

Trans. by Allen, Roger

Interlink (160 pp.)

\$15.00 paper | Sep. 16, 2020

978-1-62371-882-4

A struggling community battles the elements in this unpredictable novel.

Finding a balance between the conscious use of narrative archetypes and a more experimental structure can be difficult for most novelists. In his terse and often harrowing novel, the late Saudi Arabian writer Munif finds a surprising way to keep the two in sync. In the beginning, the novel focuses on the rural village of al-Tiba. "Al-Tiba also had its share of weddings, joys and sorrows too," Munif writes. "More often than not, the weddings came after the harvest. When there was no rain and the ground became parched, the sad times came." Munif starts by focusing on the life of the community as a whole, as al-Tiba contends with a drought that threatens the lives of all its residents. An outspoken man named Assaf emerges as the center of the narrative, urging a risky venture to go into the desert in search of food. The man-versus-nature setup feels timeless, but the presence of Jeeps begins to root the story to a particular time. The trip into the desert ends with a surprising fate for one of the men involved, and before long, the narrative itself has taken another turn. In the wake of death, the survivors gather and begin telling stories, which fill the rest of the book. It's an abrupt shift, but it's also one that links up with a motif about storytelling and traditions that runs throughout the book. Here, what had been a fairly straightforward narrative transforms and takes on new gradations; the result is unpredictable but also deeply compelling.

A risk-taking novel that offers a comprehensive portrait of a community.

In this domestic novel set in 20th-century Nigeria, Oyinsan tells the story of Oyinkan and Kole, their troubled marriage, and Oyinkan's relationship with the grandmother who raised her and the mother who largely abandoned her.

Bunmi Oyinsan

"Oyinsan is a strong writer, presenting a well-developed voice and inventive descriptions"

"A solid, well-written novel of relationships and growth."

—Kirkus Reviews

ASIN: 1461002982

For information on publishing and film rights, email olubunmiyinsan@gmail.com • bunmiyinsan.com



Prose and Cons

a novel by

Chuck Katz

Miller Award Winner Novel of the Decade

"Fast-paced, wonderfully character driven and consistently clever ... a kaleidoscopic escapade with a resilient and uniquely addictive pair of characters."

Kirkus Reviews
(featured review)

"Make room on your bookshelves, folks. Take the thickest tome from your literary pantheon, this reviewer parted with Dreiser's *American Tragedy*, and toss the damn thing in the shredder. Trust me, you're gonna need the space. With trembling hands, I proclaim *Prose and Cons* the next great literary masterpiece."

Kia Kuniya
Best Selling Author - *Unintended Consequence*

"A veritable blueprint for finding your muse, mastering the art of writing fiction, and acquiring a shiny MacBook Air for free."

Dylan Miller
Founder - *Academy for Radical Fiction*



Kia Kuniya is the pint-size gal with big-time dreams.

I'm a writer. Might not have heard of me yet. Trust me, you will.

Dylan Miller is the con artist from Brooklyn.

I don't offer my subway seat to preggos. I'm not shy about stealing from the dead.

Prose and Cons is the hilarious tale of intrigue as they pursue their passion for prose.

"consistently clever."

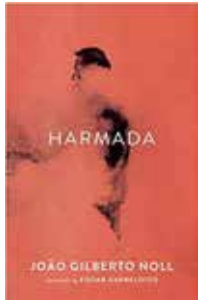
"A kaleidoscopic escapade with a resilient and uniquely addictive pair of characters."

— *Kirkus Reviews*

VISIT PROSEANDCONS.COM TO PRE-ORDER

ISBN 978-1-7355634-0-4

For information on publishing and film rights, email charlesevankatz@gmail.com • www.proseandcons.com



HARMADA

Noll, João Gilberto
Trans. by Garbelotto, Edgar
Two Lines Press (186 pp.)
\$14.95 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-949641-05-9

A stranger on a journey experiences much of life's bounties and disappointments.


Brazilian author Noll is a weird cat, as evidenced by previous work including *Lord* (2019) and *Atlantic Hotel* (2017), and there's not much variation from his usual *modus operandi* here. We meet a nameless, emotionally adrift narrator who seems to exist in his own constant fugue state and shows signs of being an unreliable narrator. He's looking for the titular lost city in an unknown nation, starting out as something of a vagrant, sleeping under a tree and fishing naked with a fellow traveler before wandering into a hotel straight out of Hotel California. There, he finds a poster

for a nearby play by a Russian author named Yuri Dupont, starring two spectacular women with whom he is immediately lured into a sexual threesome that turns quite unexpectedly into a foursome. Afterward, he flees the hotel and is offered a job facilitating cockfights by an old friend. He tries to explain what he used to be: "I was an artist, an actor. And since then, ever since I left the profession or was left by it, I don't know, since then I can't do anything else. It's not that I haven't tried, I have, but now I don't even try anymore; I'll explain why: everything I do is like acting, you see?" It doesn't make much more sense from here. He wanders into a church called the Temple of Gentleness, reunites with his uncle, Alexandre, takes a day job as a secretary, and marries a cipher of a woman named Jane who leaves him because he can't give her a child. He soon moves into a shelter, connecting with a young woman who may or may not be related to him. The writing is excellent and strange in the fashion of much of the Argentinian fabulists, but there's no real point to it.

Another somewhat mystic parable about middle-aged crazy and our search for meaning in a world that has lost its way.

WITHOUT WARNING

BY TERRY C. PIERCE



Between plans and their execution rage the winds of war.

A historical novel focused on the Battle of Gettysburg from the perspective of the North

"the novel delivers an astute angle...of those deadly days in July."

"This tale skillfully shows the complexities and bloodshed of three famous days in American history."

—Kirkus Reviews

The sequel *Fractured Pursuit* coming 2021

ISBN-13: (pub) 978-1-63107-026-6
(paperback) 978-1-63107-028-0 • (hardcover) 978-1-63107-027-3

For information on publishing and film rights, email
PierceTerryC@gmail.com • www.TerryCPierce.com



BAD TIMING

Oldham, Nick
Seyn House (224 pp.)
\$28.99 | Dec. 1, 2020
978-0-7278-8960-7

The brutal consequences of white-collar crime in the wrong hands.

A hit man drives north from London, savoring the delights that await him when he finds his victims. Perhaps raping the wife in front of her husband before killing them both? But his pleasure is cut short when he arrives to discover John and Isobel York already dead and the piles of money midlevel crook Brendan Quant gave them to launder nowhere to be found. Now Quant is dead, too, and his widow, Marcie, has partnered with his old bodyguard, Darren McCabe. McCabe needs to find the missing money fast because some of the loot Brendan placed with the Yorks actually belonged to crime boss Dunster Cosmo, and Dunster wants his dosh. Meanwhile, Henry Christie, mourning his lost love Alison Holt, wants to put police work behind him and spend his days helping Alison's daughter, Ginny, manage her pub, The Tawny Owl. But as his fling with police detective Diane Daniels turns more serious, Henry joins the chase for the Yorks' killer as a paid consultant, and soon the good guys are chasing the bad guys all over the Midlands, with both sides shooting at everything in sight. Oldham makes some pointed distinctions between the sadistic thrill-killing of the bad guys and the violence the police deem necessary to subdue them. Christie tears up, for example, when he and his team think they've located the loot and find instead a container truck full of dead refugees. But Oldham's detailed description of the cops imagining the last anguished gasps of the victims as they realize that their container's ventilation system has failed and they're going to suffocate makes you wonder: Isn't sadism the real point here?

A little over the line.



WISTWOOD

AMAZON BESTSELLING AUTHOR
JONATHAN KIERAN

One tormented guy
looking for a fresh start.

One charming little town
hungry for his pain.

WISTWOOD.

If you can get there...
it already owns you.

"detailed backstories ground the narrative...Crisp prose gives largely abstract occurrences a visual component...The final act is disturbing and decidedly more visceral, with a satisfying, open-ended denouement."

"AN OFTEN MYSTERIOUS BUT THOROUGHLY
HORRIFYING AND MACABRE TALE."

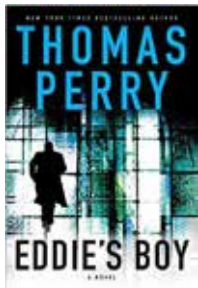
—KIRKUS REVIEWS

Wistwood is a novel about everyday, small-town people confronted by otherworldly forces lurking at the edge of nightmares—a work intended for readers who appreciate literary depth and brushstrokes of genuine beauty mixed with their unwavering terror.

—SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION COMPLETED AND AVAILABLE—

ISBN 978-0988568105

For agent representation and information on film rights, email JonathanKieranWriter@gmail.com • www.JonathanKieran.com



EDDIE'S BOY

Perry, Thomas
Mysterious Press (288 pp.)
\$26.00 | Dec. 1, 2020
978-0-8021-5777-5

Nine years after his comeback appearance in *The Informant* (2011), the Butcher's Boy returns yet again, and for the usual reason: Because somebody's trying to kill him.

Michael Schaeffer, as he's been calling himself now for many years, hardly breaks a sweat dispatching the four hit men who break into his aristocratic wife's Yorkshire home. But an old pro like him realizes they're only the tip of an iceberg, and when his flight to Australia merely makes him the target of a completely new crew of assassins, he realizes that the only way to end such a serpentine plot is to cut off its head. Breaking cover to drop in uninvited on Elizabeth Waring, the Justice Department Organized Crime official who

still dreams of turning him into an informant, he learns one fact that could explain why he's suddenly become a person of interest to both feds and organized crime once more: the impending parole hearing of Carlo Balacontano, a career criminal convicted in 1982 of the rare murder he didn't commit. The Butcher Boy, hired by Bala for a routine hit and then placed in the cross-hairs by his client because Bala didn't care to pay him, killed Bala's frontman, Arthur Fieldston, and then took exceptional pains to frame Bala for the crime. Has his former client been waiting all these years for revenge? Or are the folks at Justice taking advantage of his possible parole to turn up the heat on Michael Schaeffer? Either way, many more brutally efficient executions are guaranteed. The biggest surprise here is the number of extended flashbacks to the Butcher Boy's apprenticeship to (who else?) the Butcher.

Despite the valedictory elements, Perry makes the distant past as vivid and immediate as the relentlessly paced present.



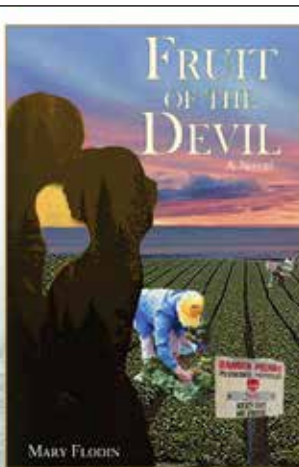
THE DIARIES OF EMILIO RENZI *A Day in the Life*

Piglia, Ricardo
Trans. by Croll, Robert
Restless Books (368 pp.)
\$22.00 paper | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-63206-047-1



The final volume in the trilogy devoted to Argentinian novelist and essayist Piglia's alter ego.

That Renzi's diaries are à clef is certain. Whether they're roman à clef or reportage is a question that only Piglia, who died in 2017, could answer. In whatever case, Renzi enters this third volume with presentiments of a vaguely defined illness that, over the course of the narrative, resolves into the neuromuscular disorder that ended Piglia's life: "I can no longer dress myself, so I've had to get a cape or rather tunic tailored for me; it covers my body comfortably, with two cords to fasten it," Renzi records at the end. "I have two outfits; while one is being washed, I wear the other, they're made from blue linen, I need nothing more." What's worse is a steadily diminishing ability to use his writing hand, and being a writer—no, simply one who writes—is all he ever wanted. The illness occasions his reminiscences of a long life of letters; whereas before Renzi had filled box after box with handwritten journals that went into every corner, now he has cause to revisit "the catastrophic stupidity of the way he lived." Well, not so stupid: Renzi is a careful observer of the small details around him, such as the disappearance of the white poles at bus stops, in the time of the military dictatorship, with signs that turned the whole city of Buenos Aires into "detainment areas" that Renzi fears are the vestibules of concentration camps to follow. What is one to do but reread *Don Quixote*, pretend that things are normal, and take note of things afar, such as the attempt on Ronald Reagan's life and the Janet Cooke affair? There are happy moments, too: seeing the great Gato Barbieri play his saxophone, going to see a Werner



Ms. Aurora Bourne will do anything to protect her students from harm—even if that means taking on the most powerful corporation on the planet.
...inspired by a true story from California's Monterey Bay.

"Mystical and romantic. A breathtaking read that will restore your hope."
—Nancy Lynn Jarvis, author of the *Regan McHenry Mysteries*

"... a clear and poignant example of the economic age that we live in, in which corporate profits are more important than human and environmental health and well-being."
—Dr. Ann López, Director - Center for Farmworker Families

"An environmental thriller...consistently entertaining..." —*Kirkus Reviews*

PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction Finalist

ISBN: HC (978-1-949139-75-4) • PB (978-1-949139-08-2) • (978-1-949139-44-0)
Kindle (978-1-949139-76-1) • e-pub (978-1-949139-77-8)

For information on publishing & film rights, email mary@maryflodin.com
www.MaryFlodin.com • www.paperangelpress.com/fruit-of-the-devil/

A valuable glimpse of Russia as seen in the years just before its 19th-century literary renaissance.

JOURNEY FROM ST. PETERSBURG TO MOSCOW

Herzog film. Alas, though, happiness must give way to Renzi's grim conclusion: "Genius is disability."

Filled with literary aperçus and fragments of history: an elegant, affecting close to a masterwork.



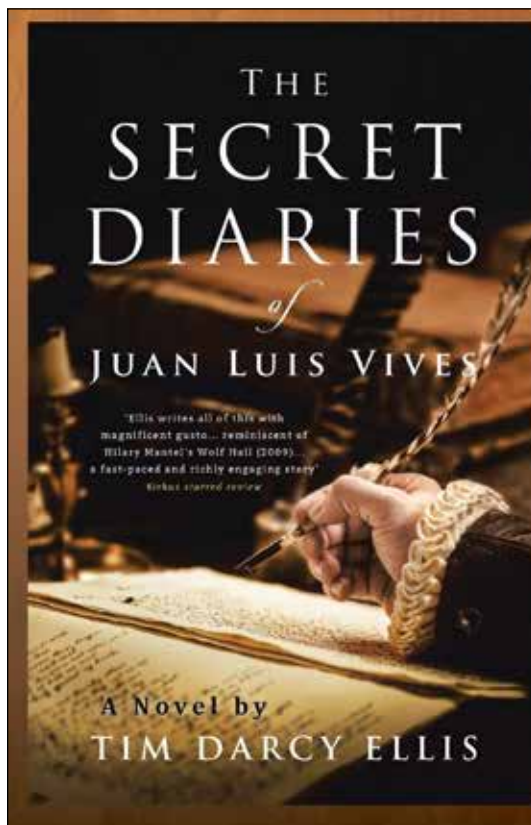
JOURNEY FROM ST. PETERSBURG TO MOSCOW

Radishchev, Alexander
Trans. by Kahn, Andrew & Reyfman, Irina
 Columbia Univ. (312 pp.)
 \$14.95 paper | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-0-231-18591-2

A satirical tour of the Russia of Catherine the Great's era by an author then considered a political radical.

Russian readers, write the translators in their detailed introduction; his works were often censored and printed in samizdat or

foreign editions, and in any event he wrote a kind of fusty prose that was common to his time, before modernism had broken through—which gave him a later reputation as a “bad writer.” His novel, though often entertaining, suffers from some of that old-fashioned feel: “At last the din of the postal carriage’s bell, grown wearisome to my ears, summoned beneficent Morpheus” is a characteristic phrase. The protagonist is on his way from the imperial capital to the most important city in the heartland, but not much of the action of the novel is set at either terminus. Instead, things occur inside a variety of conveyances, including boats (“At length, the second of these imitators of Moses in the crossing of depths of sea on foot without a miracle halted on a rock, while we lost the first from view altogether”) and the aforementioned postal carriage. That protagonist has a habit of asking pesky questions or venturing observances that cause his interlocutors to walk away or ride off in a huff: He wonders at the feudalism that binds serfs to their masters (“What a diabolical idea it is to lend one’s own peasants to another for work”), subtly criticizes the utility of political dynasties (“in this world everything reverts to its previous stage since everything has its



“Ellis writes all of this with marvelous gusto that’s more reminiscent of Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* (2009) than of a more traditional Tudor novel.”

“A fast-paced and richly engaging story about an intriguing historical figure.”

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) ★

“This enthralling story is sure to please lovers of high drama, international intrigue, momentous history and psychological thrillers”

“In this beautifully detailed, thrilling historical novel, author Tim Ellis brings back to life the largely forgotten Spanish Jew and Renaissance humanist, Juan Luis Lives”

—Blueink (starred review)

ISBN (PB) 978-0-2288-3436-6 • (HC) 978-0-2288-3437-3
 (E-book) 978-0-2288-3438-0

For information on publishing and film rights, email timdarcyellis@me.com • www.timdarcyellisauthor.com

Compelling and visceral.

EARTHEATER

origin in destruction”), twits literary critics (“What the iamb, trochee, dactyl, or anapest are everyone knows who has even the slightest understanding of the rules of versification”), and even sneaks in a few digs at the censors (“And now, without imposing censorship on the postal horses, I set off on my journey in haste”).

A valuable glimpse of Russia as seen in the years just before its 19th-century literary renaissance.



EARTHEATER

Reyes, Dolores

Trans. by Sanchez, Julia

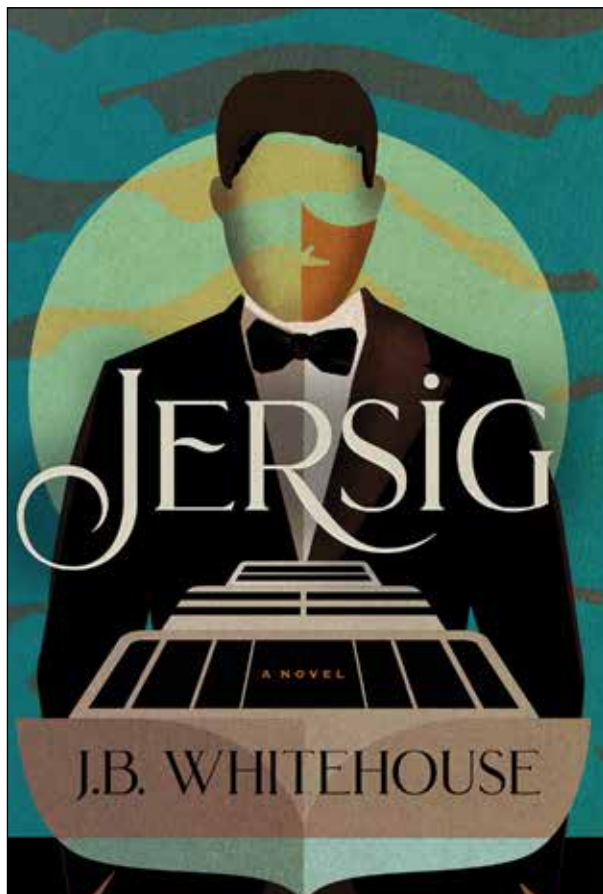
HarperVia/HarperCollins (224 pp.)

\$24.99 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-0-06298-773-0

In a violent Argentinian slum, a school-girl reckons with the clairvoyant experiences she has while eating earth: vivid visions of missing women and children.

When her mother dies, the unnamed narrator develops an unusual compulsion to eat dirt and discovers the truth of her mother’s killing, in all its betrayal and brutality. The earth, she finds, bestows her with visions of other people—murdered or missing, dead or alive—an ability that earns her the admonishment of her aunt, who grows crueler as word of the girl’s abilities spreads. When a young teacher disappears, the narrator eats earth from the schoolyard for answers, which are revealed in a drawing she makes depicting



Jersig

by J.B. Whitehouse

“The story is part mystery, part philosophical musing, and it explores what it means to get a second chance at life and to seize opportunity when it comes one’s way.”

“A thoughtful tale that explores a friendship between two men trying to live authentic lives.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“A wonderfully pleasing adventure with a poetic sense of nostalgia turning at every page. Whitehouse delivers a debut with a voice that is elegantly effortless; a truly enjoyable read”

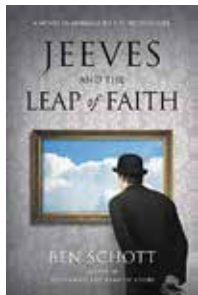
—M. Wednesday, Author

eBook ISBN - 9781087885568 • Hardcover ISBN - 9780578721255

For information on publishing and film rights, email
Inquiries@JBWhitehouse.com • www.JBWhitehouse.com

the teacher's naked body, tied to posts outside a warehouse. The body is discovered in the precise location of the drawing, and, fed up with the humiliation her niece has brought upon their family, the aunt leaves the girl and her older brother, Walter, to raise themselves. As she tries to live with some semblance of normality—dropping out of school, playing video games and drinking beer with Walter and his friends, experiencing first love—the young woman struggles with her earth-eating habit, craving it yet repelled by what it shows her. Out of need, though, she accepts money from people whose loved ones have gone missing, including a stoic and aloof police officer, in whom she unexpectedly finds an ally and romantic companion. In a voice that is terse, blunt, and biting, the narrator reckons with the impact of her visions on her health and relationships, as she witnesses more and more the ways fear and violence shape the experiences of the women in her community.

Compelling and visceral, Reyes' debut combines mystery and coming-of-age to evoke the stories of the victims of femicide.



JEEVES AND THE LEAP OF FAITH
A Novel In Homage To P.G. Wodehouse

Schott, Ben
 Little, Brown (352 pp.)
 \$28.00 | Oct. 13, 2020
 978-0-316-54104-6

A second Jeeves novel authorized by the Wodehouse estate.

What humorless monster doesn't love the Jeeves books? These confections feature the English aristocrat Bertie Wooster getting himself into the soup and Jeeves, his "gentleman's gentleman," fishing him out again. In a typical story, Bertie gets engaged to the wrong girl, offends a muscular and irascible gentleman, attempts to extricate a pal from a jam, steals a policeman's helmet or a piece of antique silver as ugly as it is valuable, runs afoul of a stern aunt, and insists on wearing an objectionable garment, and then, with a modest flick of the wrist, Jeeves sets everything right again. Only 11 Jeeves novels and a few dozen short stories are what Bertie might have called the genuine article—written by P.G. Wodehouse himself—but the estate has authorized Schott to expand the canon, and this is his second outing. True to form, Schott's Bertie spends his time dodging undesirable would-be fiancées, arriving late to meals with Aunt Agatha, masquerading as a clergyman, and climbing the walls of Cambridge University buildings while Jeeves manipulates everything and everyone toward a happy resolution. The greatest pleasure of Wodehouse's Jeeves books lay in his wordplay: the delicious contrast between Bertie's breezy Jazz Age slang and Jeeves' precise formality. Wodehouse's Jeeves knows more than you do about pretty much everything, but he never needs to show off; it's part of Wodehouse's genius to make the reader feel smart. Schott, alas, does the opposite. Unlike Jeeves, who appears at the narrator's elbow to supply the mot juste exactly—and only—when it's needed, Schott opens his reference

library and shakes it upside down over the text. Schott inserted an element of espionage into his first Jeeves novel, and he continues it here, raising the stakes slightly, which may or may not be what readers want from a Jeeves novel.

It's agreeable enough, but Schott is no Wodehouse.



OPEN HOUSE

Sise, Katie
 Little A (288 pp.)
 \$24.95 | Dec. 1, 2020
 978-1-5420-9265-4

Part murder mystery, part interpersonal drama, a serviceable whodunit (or did anyone?) with a host of compelling characters.

Waverly, New York, seems idyllic—but secrets, half-truths, and distrust run right beneath the surface of this pastoral college town. Ten

SHERLOCK HOLMES
& The Ripper of Whitechapel

BY M. K. WISEMAN

"Wiseman's language is reminiscent of that in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic stories and fully places the reader in the seedy surroundings of Whitechapel in the Victorian era."

"an absorbing read for Sherlock-ians and fans of true crime, and it will keep readers on their toes throughout."

"A thoroughly engrossing story that elegantly blends history and fiction."

—Kirkus Reviews

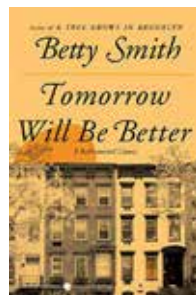
ISBN 978-1734464108 (HC) • 978-1734464115 (PB)
 978-1734464122 (epub)

For general inquiries, email
contact@mkwisemanauthor.com • www.mkwisemanauthor.com

years ago, art student Emma McCullough disappeared from a party and was never seen again, alive or dead. Her disappearance is widely believed to be the result of suicide; nevertheless, her family, and in particular her sister—medical student Haley—clings to the idea that there was foul play involved. When Emma’s bracelet is discovered in the cliffs behind campus, and later when Haley’s realtor—and Emma’s college bff—Josie Carmichael is attacked at an open house, the thin bandages covering a multitude of lies start to peel away. The narration cycles among the perspectives of Haley, who takes on her trauma with a mix of logic and compulsive rituals; Emma’s former art professor Priya, who deals with her troubled marriage with medication prescribed by her husband; and, most grippingly, the Emma of 10 years earlier, who navigates depression, sex, and uncomfortable relationships. All the while we are sent down paths of red herrings and false evidence as we bounce from one prospective adversary to the next. The plot is often driven by characters making decisions that dip into the less-than-believable (do people really send incriminating emails from accounts with their full names?), and Sise’s attempts at broaching her characters’

interiority can be awkwardly clichéd (“Haven’t you ever been with a bunch of people, and you still feel really lonely?”). But while it may lack the psychological intrigue of others of its genre, this novel has just enough twists to keep its readers along for the ride.

Sleuths will delight in piecing together clues and untangling lies alongside the protagonists.



TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER

Smith, Betty
Harper Perennial/HarperCollins
(336 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Nov. 24, 2020
978-0-06298-868-3

Smith’s second novel, originally published in 1948, returns to the author’s home territory, the tenements of pre-gentrified Brooklyn, with another young female protagonist trying to improve her

life.

Margy Shannon’s ambitions are more modest than those found in Smith’s earlier, openly autobiographical classic, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. At 17, Margy has limited expectations beyond the life she’s known. Having left high school, she is relatively happy with her job as letter reader at a mail-order business. She’s made friends there and has a crush on her boss, kindly Mr. Prentiss, whose genteel mother’s manipulative domination stops him from acting on his attraction to Margy—in today’s workplace, to act would be considered harassment, but the novel makes Mr. Prentiss’ mother the villain. Margy lives at home with her own dominant mother, Flo, who is too emotionally stunted to show her love for Margy. Flo’s marriage with Margy’s “shoved around” father is fueled by mutual unhappiness; yet Margy dreams of marriage and children. She is thrilled when halfheartedly asked on a date by Frankie, a messenger for a Wall Street brokerage company. The product of yet another domineering mother, Frankie wants to escape his rough family and is looking for a “sensible,” unflashy girl. He pushes Margy to marry but proves uninterested in physical intimacy, at least with her, and has no desire for children. Margy’s Protestant friend Reenie follows a livelier, if riskier, path, carrying on an open affair with her Catholic boyfriend. When she gets pregnant, he marries her despite parental concerns. Meanwhile, pregnancy leads to a crisis in Margy’s marriage, and her future takes an unexpected turn. Reading Smith today means acknowledging the shadow of homophobia hanging over Frankie and the demonization of “dominant” mothers while appreciating the multidimensional, nuanced portrayals of the working-class characters and a version of feminism that applauds both work and motherhood as valid choices.

Gritty yet generous slice of early-20th-century American life.

THE ROPES THAT BIND
Tracy Stopler

A novel, based on a true story, about Tali Stark’s struggle to overcome a trauma from her childhood.

“Throughout, [Tali] grows emotionally in ways that are believable, insightful, and tinged with sadness.”

“Rooting for her is easy and watching her mature is endearing... A realistic, touching account of a lengthy quest to move on.”
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN-13: 978-1533381118

“You can’t ‘not’ feel something when you read this book....The author did a great job balancing description and dialogue, statistics and research.”
—Judge #39 Commentary From the 27th Annual Writer’s Digest Self-Published Book Awards

A wild, compelling ride from beginning to end.

NEVER TURN BACK



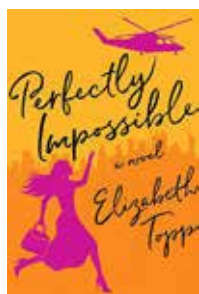
NEVER TURN BACK

Swann, Christopher
 Crooked Lane (288 pp.)
 \$26.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-64385-537-0

Swann presents a greased-lightning take on the hellish fury of a woman scorned.

If he thought about labels, Ethan Faulkner would probably call himself a survivor. As a child, he survived a home invasion that left both his parents dead and his older sister, Susannah, hospitalized; he received relatively minor wounds himself. He survived an apprenticeship to bar owner Gavin Lester, the uncle who took him and Suze in, that gave him and his friend Frankie Gutierrez, the son of Gavin's business partner, some dark glimpses into Gavin's side hustle and sent Frankie to prison. Now that he's teaching English at Georgia's Archer School, the closest he comes to adventure is a one-night stand at an academic conference—until his pickup, stunning Marisa Devereaux, turns up as a long-term substitute for Betsy Bales, Ethan's very pregnant co-teacher, and throws herself at him again and again in increasingly inappropriate times and places. The sex is great, but the boundary issues are seriously worrying—Marisa's out-of-the-blue claim, "I know who killed your parents," strikes Ethan dumb—and when Marisa crosses one line too many and Ethan ends their affair, she vows revenge. In no time at all she's used the wonders of social media to menace Ethan's teaching job and drive both Suze and one of Ethan's students to suicide attempts. Can things possibly get any worse? Let us count the ways: Swann shows impressive virtuosity in varying the pitches Marisa and eventually the Atlanta police throw at the lover who spurned her.

Even if you've seen this all before, Swann makes it a wild, compelling ride from beginning to end.



PERFECTLY IMPOSSIBLE

Topp, Elizabeth
 Little A (314 pp.)
 \$24.95 | Nov. 1, 2020
 978-1-5420-1867-8

The personal assistant to unfathomably wealthy Upper East Side socialite Kissy Von Bizmark keeps her boss's life in order while neglecting her own.

Anna, a 30-something Yale-educated struggling artist, spends most of her days not in the studio painting but in the home of Kissy Von Bizmark—Bambi to her husband, Mrs. Von Bizmark to her staff—taking care of all the minutiae that keep the family afloat. Secret plastic surgeries, splashy vacations on the private jet, a fancy personal chef flown in from Colombia—Anna finagles, finesses, and finds a way to fulfill her employer's every whim. But when the Von Bizmarks are to be honored at the New York City


Opera's opening night ball—following their financing of the entire production, to the tune of \$12 million—Anna must contend not only with the drama of planning an over-the-top pre-gala luncheon, but with the growing marital strife between the Von Bizmarks and her own identity crisis. Readers who enjoy a glimpse into the outrageous lives of the one percent will find plenty to enjoy in the deviously decadent characters, exorbitant displays of wealth, and tongue-in-cheek humor. But it's this flagrant privilege that also brings the novel down. Modern audiences are not the same readers who devoured *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003)—to which this book will no doubt be compared—almost two decades ago, and reading about \$4 million credit card charges, private helicopter rides to Hamptons mansions, and beleaguered assistants now feels more out of touch than ever. With its Cinderella-at-the-ball ending and "the wealthy are just like us!" ethos, the novel reads just a shade too sincere to be truly satirical, and the wasteful ways of the superrich are never deeply examined.

A fun, but ultimately forgettable, escape into moneyed madness.

My Brother Javi

A Dog's Tale

Tracy Stopler



"This enjoyable escapist read for dog lovers, dotted with canine factoids, should also delight youngsters ready to move up to storytime chapter books."

"The enchanting work delivers a welcome distraction from today's darkness and acrimony."

"A funny, poignant, and uplifting canine tale."
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN-13: 978-1541319431

"Tracy Stopler has written a compassionate, entertaining, and thought-provoking novel that pulled at my heartstrings. I'm hoping for a sequel."
—Linda Zagon, *Linda's Book Obsessions Review*



THE HAUNTING OF BRYNN WILDER

Webb, Wendy

Lake Union Publishing (287 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Nov. 1, 2020

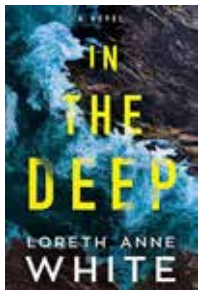
978-1-5420-2012-1

A woman takes the summer to heal in a small Minnesota town and discovers friendship, phantoms, and love.

Brynn Wilder has had a rough year.

She broke up with her long-term partner, her beloved dog died, and she took a sabbatical from her job at the university to care for her dying mother. When a friend invites her to spend the summer in a small town on the shores of Lake Superior, it's just what she needs. She finds herself sharing the small boardinghouse with a sociable older gay couple, a handsome and mysterious tattooed man, and something that might be the ghost of a woman who died in the house over the winter. Between the convivial small town, the chance at romance, and the unsettling presence that seems to be interested in her, Brynn's going to have a summer to remember. Setting her new novel in the same town as *Daughters of the Lake* (2018), Webb has concocted another tale of mystery, and, since Brynn is friends with Kate, the heroine of the earlier novel, there are plenty of familiar faces. The town of Wharton leaps off the page, full of kooky but kind townies who all befriend Brynn. Though the tone can be odd, slipping among a heartwarming tale of a woman finding herself, a whirlwind romance with hints of danger, and a haunting ghost story, all the characters are so likable and the mystery genuinely mystifying enough that the book somehow remains endearing and greatly readable.

An uneven but heartfelt tale that is both warm and poignant.



IN THE DEEP

White, Loreth Anne

Montlake Romance (367 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | Oct. 27, 2020

978-1-5420-1969-9

A troubled heiress is charged with the murder of her newlywed husband.

Two years after the drowning of her young daughter and the subsequent collapse of her marriage, Ellie Tyler is beginning to put her life back together.

She meets Martin Cresswell-Smith, a property developer, in the lobby of the hotel her family owns in Vancouver following a disastrous dinner with her father. Martin seems to offer all that Ellie needs: a second chance after years of self-medicating through her depression and a bit of romance. Ellie ignores slight indications that Martin might not be all he claims to be and offers to become an investment partner in his struggling plans for a resort development in Australia, which she can fund because of her father's wealth. The two marry quickly, but once

Ellie arrives in Australia, everything unravels. Death threats toward the couple signal the resort is clearly not wanted by the community, and Martin becomes abusive. Ellie suspects he might be drugging her to disorient her. But before she can determine what to do, Martin's brutally stabbed and tortured body is found floating in the marsh he owns, and Ellie becomes the prime suspect. In her latest thriller, White deftly shifts from the present-day murder trial to flashbacks of Ellie and Martin's relationship, as well as from Ellie's point of view to that of Lozza Bianchi, the local police officer investigating the murder. This page-turner is tightly written with a moody sense of place in the small coastal community, but it is the numerous twists that will keep readers thoroughly absorbed.

A satisfyingly creepy psychological thriller.



THE TALE OF A NIGGUN

Wiesel, Elie

Illus. by Podwal, Mark

Schocken (64 pp.)

\$25.00 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-0-805-24363-5

A narrative poem explores a ghastly dilemma faced by Jewish ghetto dwellers during World War II.

Written in the late 1970s and included in a long-out-of-print collection of Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Wiesel's essays, the poem is set on the eve of the Jewish holiday of Purim. That's when the "enemy" (the word "Nazi" is never used) announces they will massacre everyone in the ghetto unless 10 Jews are turned over for hanging—this to avenge the killing of the 10 sons of Haman, the anti-Semitic scourge of the Purim story. Overwhelmed by this unthinkable dilemma, the ghetto rabbi feels "his knees weakening, the blood rushing to his face." Searching for answers, he consults the great religious thinkers through their writings. Maimonides, the Rambam, states that a community should perish before handing over one of its members to the enemy, but pressed by the rabbi, his talking spirit concedes that he can't be of help because he never could have foreseen such a predicament. The Baal Shem Tov, or Besht, the founder of Hasidism, teaches the rabbi a special niggun, or song, that confers hidden powers "to break the chains of evil and malediction." But the Besht is so overcome by sadness that he can't infuse the song with the joy it needs. Ultimately, when the niggun is sung by the ghetto community, it conjures a miraculous coming together of Jews—not only from all over Europe, but also from the pages of the Talmud. Accompanied by Podwal's quietly haunting full-page illustrations, Wiesel's spare language cuts to the heart of human loss while the rhythms of the poetry capture the sad, endless march of inhumanity through history. At the same time, this poem sings out the power of belief and community and love.

A modest but affecting work with timeless relevance.



MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO PRAGUE

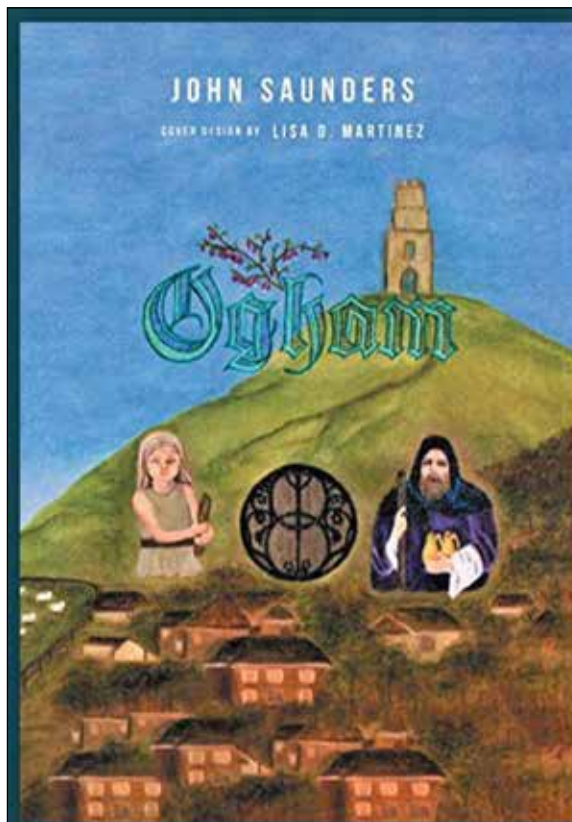
Windley, Carol
 Atlantic Monthly (352 pp.)
 \$26.00 | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-0-8021-1973-5

A 1927 train journey from Berlin to Prague becomes a pivotal life-changing experience for a wealthy German widow and her daughter in award-winning Canadian author Windley's first novel since *Breathing Under Water* (1998).

Sixteen-year-old Natalia Faber is pulled out of her convent boarding school to serve as her idiosyncratic and narcissist mother Beatriz's traveling companion. When their train to Prague is delayed by a flooded branch line, Natalia volunteers to watch the young son of Czech doctor Magdalena Schaefferová as she attends a sick passenger. Later, arriving at a spa on the shore of Lake Hévíz in Hungary, the Fabers meet Miklós Andorján, a Hungarian count and journalist, and his on-again, off-again love interest, Zita Kuznetsova, whom Natalia recognizes

as the occupants of a speeding blue car she had admired from the train. Not long after, the impulsive Beatriz takes off with Zita for the Dalmatian coast. Out of this inauspicious beginning, a romance between Natalia and Miklós eventually blossoms, and they marry, splitting their time between Berlin and a rural Hungarian estate. But World War II separates them when Miklós heads to Russia to report on the Eastern Front. Believing her husband's promise that they would reunite in Prague in the spring of 1942, Natalia goes there to wait for him and meets Anna, the 13-year-old daughter of Dr. Schaefferová. Both get caught up in the brutality of the Nazi occupation. Like Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*, Windley's ambitious novel, switching points of view among Natalia, Anna, and, briefly, Miklós, vividly captures the devastating losses that war inflicts on ordinary people. But in trying to cover so much history across three different countries, it also feels crammed with too many contrived coincidences and sketchily drawn people (a cast of characters to keep track of all these secondary players would have been helpful).

A flawed but haunting and beautifully detailed story of love, loss, and survival during some of history's darkest hours.



An intriguing novel weaving a yarn through ancient Celtic history, early Christian history, Spain, the New World and the Acadian migration from Nova Scotia to Louisiana. Keeps one guessing where the facts end and the fiction begins.

This creative and well-written book is intriguing, thoroughly researched to make plausible the well-developed characters, intrigues and locations.

“A historical novel explores the biblically undocumented years of Jesus’ life.”

“Saunders’ historical research is as impressively erudite as it is inventive—the highlight of the book is the attempt...to imagine the lost years of Jesus’ life.”

—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing and film rights, email morghall@cox.net

ISBN 978-1-64559-495-6

M Y S T E R Y



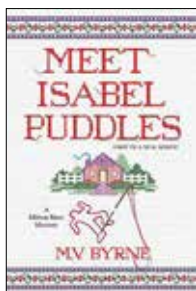
MURDER IS IN THE AIR

Brody, Frances
Crooked Lane (336 pp.)
\$26.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-64385-466-3

A muddle at a Yorkshire brewery in 1930 forces two private detectives to venture above and beyond their normal activities.

It's not immediately clear what William Lofthouse, owner of the Barleycorn Brewery, wants of Kate Shackleton. To be sure, his nephew James, groomed as his successor, has been away in Germany longer than he ought. What's really worrying William, though, is having the business in tiptop shape when James does return. To that end, he asks Kate's fellow detective Jim Sykes to come to the brewery and uncover the reasons for a lot of minor problems that add up to big trouble. The establishment is supporting wages clerk Ruth Parnaby, whose brother and troubled father also work there, in a Brewery Queen contest. William's secretary, Miss Crawford, knows everything there is to know about the business, but before she can disclose something important to William, she's run over and killed in a hit-and-run that's clearly no accident. Kate and Jim soon discover that someone's been working against the brewery's interests, and they fear that William will be shocked and disappointed. Taking over as mentor to Ruth after Miss Crawford's murder, Kate realizes that Ruth's mother has been hiding away from her husband for years in fear for her life. The murder of a second brewery employee starts to weave the strands that finally come together in a surprising denouement.

Britain between the wars provides the backdrop for murder and an engrossing look at women's place in society.



MEET ISABEL PUDDLES

Byrne, M.V.
Kensington (352 pp.)
\$15.95 paper | Nov. 24, 2020
978-1-4967-2831-9

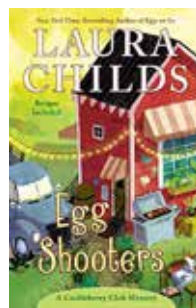
A Michigan widow with a strong sense of justice solves a series of crimes.

Famously frugal Isabel Puddles has lived in her family's Gull Harbor lakeside home for most of her life and intends to die there. Now that her children

are grown and gone, she struggles to pay for the extras in life, including taxes, in an area of summer homes owned primarily by wealthy outsiders. To keep up, she sells her popular pickles and pies, works at her cousin's hardware store, and reluctantly accepts a hairdressing job at a funeral home. That's how she

discovers a nail in the head of wealthy farmer Earl Jonasson. Isabel's call to her cousin Ginny, who's engaged to sheriff Grady Pemberton, kicks off an investigation that leads to the arrest of Earl's son, whose girlfriend, Tammy Trudlow, is more of a fighter than a lover, according to Isabel. Earl Jr. isn't the brightest bulb, and his sister, Meg, is furious that anyone would think he could kill his father—a judgment Isabel shares, although her loudmouthed bestie, Frances Spitler, voices an alternative opinion to a reporter. Although Isabel thinks Tammy had something to do with the death, Grady ignores her, forcing her to use her wide network to dig up clues that will prove her right. Her decision to take in Earl's lonely dog, Corky, as a companion for her dearly loved Jackpot leads to a breathtaking denouement.

A charming debut featuring a middling mystery, a captivating cast, and many spells of laugh-out-loud humor.



EGG SHOOTERS

Childs, Laura
Berkley (304 pp.)
\$26.00 | Nov. 24, 2020
978-0-425-28174-1

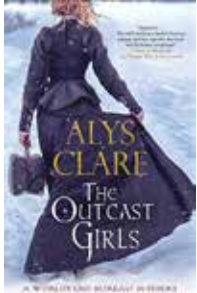
The three ladies of the Cackleberry Club cafe are involved in yet another Midwestern murder investigation.

Although Suzanne Dietz is happily engaged to Dr. Sam Hazelet, her obsessive curiosity plunges her into a dangerous murder investigation in which she's aided and abetted once again by Toni, her flamboyant partner in daring escapades, and Petra, the more conservative chef. While bringing Sam's dinner to the hospital, Suzanne walks into a robbery in progress. The security guard is dead, a nurse is attacked, and the receptionist is wounded by a masked, drug-stealing robber whom Suzanne alertly beans with a large thermos of hot chili before he vanishes into the night. Despite dire warnings, Sheriff Doogie has never really turned down Suzanne's help, and she's even more determined than usual to track down the killer she witnessed in action. To add to the excitement, there have also been a series of truck hijackings and the robbery of drugs from a pharmacy in a nearby town. Suzanne has plenty to keep her occupied with the success of the cafe, but a series of bad decisions in which she's egged on by Toni lead to them sneaking around and prying into the lives and business dealings of a roster of suspects. Although Suzanne manages to clear several of them of wrongdoing, the ones who remain on her list may have added her to theirs.

A meandering mystery targeting foodies who'll appreciate the many lovingly depicted meals and appended recipes.

Mystery and social commentary combine in a heartbreaking and sadly relevant tale.

THE OUTCAST GIRLS



THE OUTCAST GIRLS

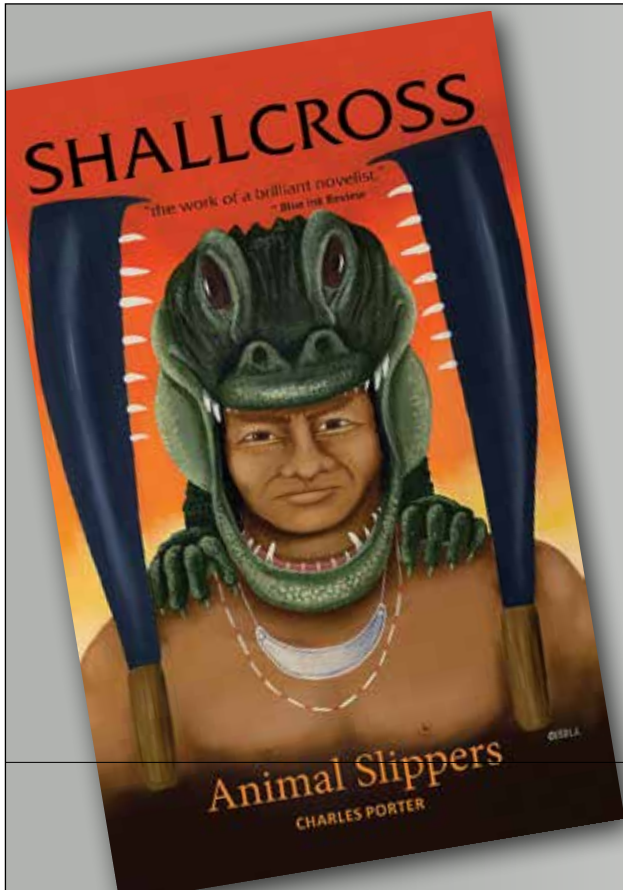
Clare, Alys
 Severn House (256 pp.)
 \$28.99 | Dec. 1, 2020
 978-0-7278-9045-0

Clare's second foray into the Victorian past discloses new information about her unusual heroine.

Private investigator Lily Raynor, who solved a complicated mystery in *The Woman Who Spoke To Spirits* (2019), is barely eking out a living for herself and her employee, Felix Wilbraham, when she's offered a job by Georgiana Long, a teacher at Shardlowes, a school for women in the Fens. The school is supported by the Band of Angels, a shadowy philanthropic organization founded by the MacKillivers, a pair of Scottish twins, one of whom has a mental illness. Several of the Shardlowes girls, many of them mentally or physically challenged, have gone missing from the school. Eager to avoid a scandal, Miss

Long asks Lily to pose as a nurse at the school. Lily trained as a nurse, a profession she loved yet left after a mysterious incident in India. She goes to Shardlowes feeling a good deal of trepidation, but she fits in easily and soon begins to uncover disquieting facts about the missing pupils while Felix, with the help of his journalist housemate, tracks down the first girl to go missing, Esme Sullivan, whose body turns up in the water in Portsmouth. Traveling to Scotland, Felix discovers things that make him fearful for Lily, who's uncovered information that puts her in grave danger when another child is stolen. The experience that formed her in India makes her determined to reveal the truth.

Mystery and social commentary combine in a heartbreaking and sadly relevant tale.



SHALLCROSS: Animal Slippers

By Charles Porter

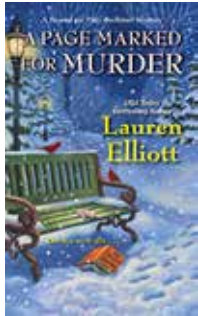
“YOU CAN’T OFFEND NATURE”

From the cloud lands of South Florida – from the novels, *Shallcross*, and *Flame Vine* comes another story in the life of Aubrey Shallcross. What happens when nature turns into super nature? In this eco-warrior tale, two bull alligators, The Dragon and Two-toed Tom, are formidable living vessels inhabited by the ghosts of Jules Verne and the famous Seminole, Osceola.

“An unforgettable tale, with rich poetic storytelling and an inimitable style.” —Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

amazon.com | CharlesPorterAuthor.com

ISBN: 978-0-9894256-4-3



A PAGE MARKED FOR MURDER

Elliott, Lauren

Kensington (304 pp.)

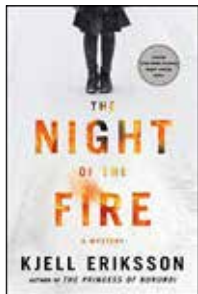
\$7.99 paper | Oct. 27, 2020

978-1-4967-2711-4

A bookseller investigates the murder of her assistant's baby daddy.

Take a woman not in her first youth but not yet middle-aged, recovering from a failed relationship, return her to the small town of her childhood after being left a property she could never afford on her own, giving her the financial freedom to open a shop selling rare, vintage, or artisanal goods, and murder is sure to follow. In this case, Addison Greyborne returns after the death of her fiancé to Greyborne Harbor, where her great-aunt Anita has left her a large, charming Victorian house she converts into the bookstore Beyond the Page. Addison soon develops a promising relationship with local physician Simon Emerson and strong friendships with fellow shopkeepers Serena Chandler, owner of SerenaTEA, and Martha Stringer, who owns the bake shop next door. She welcomes Martha's industrious daughter, Paige, to work in her store along with her own less diligent cousin Kalea, whom she also allows to live in her home. Her domestic tranquility falls apart when Brett Palmer, father of single-mom Paige's daughter, Emma, comes to town with a new girlfriend and his eye on joint custody. It isn't long before Brett's dead, Martha's behind bars, and Addison's confronting the obligatory admonitions from friends to leave it alone and let the police do their work. She doesn't, and her highly organized approach to sleuthing will be a hit with cozy fans who like a strong emphasis on the puzzle.

Formula fun.



THE NIGHT OF THE FIRE

Eriksson, Kjell

Minotaur (288 pp.)

\$27.99 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-1-25-076614-4

A pair of arsons and a handful of murders lead investigators into the dark world of young Swedish neo-Nazis.

Upon retiring from the Violent Crimes Unit, veteran detective Ann Lindell leaves Uppsala for a rural cottage where she plans to make cheese. But when an anonymous caller warns police that "someone may die," Lindell's successor, Sammy Nilsson, decides to consult her. In the interim, a rural school attended by many Afghan refugees is burned to the ground, and some students go missing. Was this the subject of the anonymous call? As usual, Eriksson folds the lives of his engaging detectives into the mystery. A disillusioned Sammy contemplates separation from his wife, Angelika, and

deals with his erratic new partner, Bodin, while Lindell rekindles a friendship with her ex, Edvard. Eriksson's nuanced portraits of suspects and witnesses add depth and texture. Villager Gösta Friberg recognizes one of the arsonists, and a couple of others have strong suspicions. Falsely telling Sammy that she can't identify the caller, Lindell decides to probe on her own. Soon after she questions Gösta and others, a dead badger is left gutted in her bed. When she goes to the city to question Justus Johsson, the man on the tape, he advises her to investigate young Swedish Nazis. Then there's a second fire at a farmhouse owned by suspected Nazi Daniel Mattsson. A female corpse is discovered inside the burned house, but where is Mattsson?

The heroine's eighth case uses a clever whodunit to treat contemporary issues with complexity and compassion.



MURDER, SHE WROTE *Murder in Season*

Fletcher, Jessica & Land, Jon

Berkley (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Nov. 24, 2020

978-1-984804-36-5

The arrival of Christmas cues a murderer to play Scrooge.

Jessica Fletcher is finally moving back to her home that was ravaged by fire in *Murder, She Wrote: The Murder of Twelve* (2020). The only last-minute glitch is the new septic system that's required. Unfortunately, the folks digging up her yard discover an old chest and two corpses. Without missing a beat, Jessica sets to work with her old partners in crime-solving, Sheriff Mort Metzger and Dr. Seth Hazlitt. One body is fairly recent; the other may be hundreds of years old. Both interest muckraking reporter Tad Hollenbeck, of the TV show *Stalker*, who's doing a long-overdue piece on Cabot Cove as the murder capital of the world. The chest holds papers relating to the town's five founding families, who made their fortunes in shipping and milling and still have descendants in the area. In addition to papers of interest to historians, it contains shocking information about the founders' slave trading. For Jessica, who wonders if the sins of the past are still causing trouble, the most important document is the diary of John Henry Cabot, which she expects she'll have to put aside once she's called on to solve the murder of Tad Hollenbeck. The story of stolen diamonds in the diary, however, leads her to a motive for murder as the founders' surviving relatives become suspects (the lucky ones) and corpses (those less lucky) in a complex investigation that threatens to spoil Christmas.

Cozy as a warm blanket as Jessica Fletcher hunts down yet another killer with her customary panache.

Like the heroines' favorite eggs Benedict, not hard-boiled but tasty.

MURDER AT VERONICA'S DINER



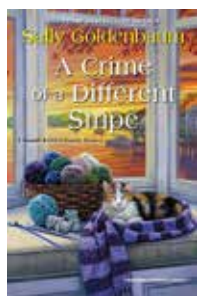
BRYANT & MAY: Oranges and Lemons

Fowler, Christopher
Bantam (464 pp.)
\$28.99 | Dec. 8, 2020
978-0-525-48592-6

A pair of resurrections as unlikely as they are obligatory kick off the 19th case for London's Peculiar Crimes Unit.

Ordinarily the Metropolitan Police would brush off a nonlethal attack on a man about to cross the Strand outside St. Clements Church. But since the victim is Michael Claremont, Speaker of the House of Commons, every resource must be expended to solve the case of "a very important political figure...buried under a pile of fruit." That means reviving the Peculiar Crimes Unit once more, this time as its furniture is being carted out of its Kings Cross headquarters. Fortunately, senior detective John May, left for dead at the end of *Bryant & May: The Lonely Hour* (2019), makes an equally miraculous recovery, and he soon makes peace with senior detective Arthur Bryant, whose memory for recherche trivia and lack of social graces are equally elephantine. PCU chief Raymond Land, long out of patience with Bryant and May, is further aggrieved when Home Office liaison Timothy Floris is seconded to spy on the unit. Egged on by the suicide of Cristian Albu, held in the custody of police officers convinced he burned the little bookstore he owned to the ground, Bryant quickly postulates that the attack on the Speaker is only the first in an unfolding pattern, and more victims follow with gratifying predictability, all meeting agreeably ghoulish ends to satisfy an unusually long-held grudge.

The mystery is so-so; the real star is London, reconfigured as the world's most frazzling amusement park.



A CRIME OF A DIFFERENT STRIPE

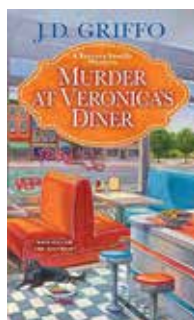
Goldenbaum, Sally
Kensington (304 pp.)
\$26.00 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-1-4967-2937-8

The crafty Seaside Knitters' latest case tests their skills to the max.

Very pregnant Cass Halloran's old friends Birdie Favazza, Izzy Perry, and Nell Endicott, who's Izzy's aunt, are awaiting Cass' first baby almost as eagerly as she is. Izzy's husband, award-winning photographer Sam Perry, has reluctantly invited his old mentor, Harrison Grant, to give a talk at the fall art series in Sea Harbor, Massachusetts. Grant seems to have changed from the brash womanizer Sam remembers to a kinder, gentler person, but evidently not enough to stop someone from murdering him. The morning after Grant fails to show up at the art center's welcome party, Izzy, who runs the local yarn shop, finds his body at the bottom of the rickety steps leading to the

home of Rico Silva and his dog, Frodo. Rico's an embittered man whose estate has slowly gone to ruin in the years since his wife ran off, leaving not a trace to this day. Despite their experience in crime-solving, the Knitters can't imagine who might have killed Grant, who has no obvious connection to the town. But when they get down to sleuthing, they turn up bombshells about Grant's odious treatment of women and his mission to travel far and wide apologizing to those he's wronged, including someone in Sea Harbor.

Endearing characters tackle a tangled case that leads to a sad but ultimately satisfying conclusion.



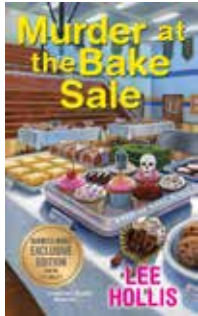
MURDER AT VERONICA'S DINER

Griffo, J.D.
Kensington (304 pp.)
\$7.99 paper | Dec. 1, 2020
978-1-4967-3093-0

Four feisty New Jersey women investigate the death of a waitress.

They have no office. They have no staff. They don't really have any clients. But none of that stops the ladies of the Ferrara Family Detective Agency from detecting their tiny town of Tranquility to within an inch of its previously quiet life. This time, a corpse turns up literally at their feet: As they munch their eggs Benedict (regular for sisters Alberta and Helen and their sister-in-law, Joyce Perkins Ferrara; vegan for Alberta's granddaughter, Jinx Maldonado) at Veronica's Diner, waitress Teri Jo Linbruck emerges from the rest room with a knife in her back. Local cop Vinny D'Angelo doesn't even bother warning them not to investigate, so the women go to town, again literally. After they discover that Teri Jo is actually Theresa Josefina Rizzoli, Helen hauls them all out to Brooklyn to see what they can find out about the late server at Rizzoli's Diner, her family's business. They find out enough to talk private pilot Owen O'Hara, who owns Tranqclockery, the clock-repair business next door to Veronica's, into flying them down to Henderson, Texas, where Teri's brother, Dominic, is engaged in some shady business for Third Wheel, Inc., the company that owns Godfather's Diner, the precursor to Veronica's. As the corpses pile up, Alberta keeps on the trail, eventually risking not only her own life, but that of her boyfriend, Sloan McLelland. But it's hard to get mad at Alberta or at any of the Ferraras, who are so game you can't help rooting for them.

Like the heroines' favorite eggs Benedict, not hard-boiled but tasty.



MURDER AT THE BAKE SALE

Hollis, Lee

Kensington (288 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Nov. 24, 2020

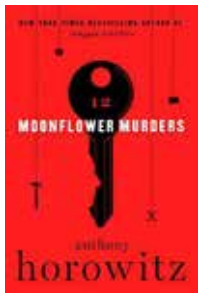
978-1-4967-3091-6

A private detective and her new partner work a murder much too close to home.

Maya Kendrick quit the force and went out on her own after she was harassed because her police-captain husband was sent to jail in *Murder at the PTA* (2020).

Wannabe detective Sandra Wallage is separated from a U.S. senator with a roving eye. Both have children whose high school activities suddenly turn dangerous. Sandra's son, Jack, is applying to college, as is the daughter of the other Maine senator, Elisabeth Dooley, a determined helicopter mom. At South Portland High School, Maya meets the new athletic director, Josh Kirby, and gets chatted up by attractive Spanish teacher Diego Sanchez, who plans a bake sale to raise money for a class trip to Spain. Sandra's visit to the sale lands her a date with tech millionaire Henry Yang, whose son also goes to SoPo High—her first since separating from the senator. Maya admits to being a terrible baker, but it's not her cookies that end up poisoning Diego. Maya, who's had divorce papers drawn up, had agreed to go out with Diego but thinks she was stood up until she checks his home and finds him dead among crumbled cookies. When the Spanish class hires the detective duo to solve the crime, the pair must deal with teenage angst, problem husbands, and a shocking motive for murder.

A most believable pair tackle a mystery ripped from the headlines.



MOONFLOWER MURDERS

Horowitz, Anthony

Harper (608 pp.)

\$28.99 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-0-06295-545-6

Susan Ryeland, the book editor who retired to Crete after solving the mind-boggling mysteries of *Magpie Murders* (2017), is enticed to England to try her hand at another Chinese box of a case.

Eight years ago, the wedding weekend of Cecily Treherne and Aiden MacNeil at Branlow Hall, the high-end Suffolk hotel the bride's parents owned, was ruined by the murder of Frank Parris, a hotel guest and advertising man who just happened to be passing through. Romanian-born maintenance man Stefan Codrescu was promptly convicted of the crime and has been in prison ever since. But Cecily's recent disappearance shortly after having told her parents she'd become certain Stefan was innocent drives Lawrence and Pauline Treherne to find Susan in Crete, where they offer her 10,000 pounds to solve the mystery again and better. Susan's the perfect candidate because she worked closely with late author Alan Conway, whose

third novel, *Atticus Pünd Takes the Case*, contained the unspecified evidence that convinced Cecily that Detective Superintendent Richard Locke, now DCS Locke, had made a mistake. Checking into Branlow Hall and interviewing Cecily's hostile sister, Lisa, and several hotel staffers who were on the scene eight years ago tells Susan all too little. So she turns to *Atticus Pünd Takes the Case*, whose unabridged reproduction occupies the middle third of Horowitz's novel, and finds that it offers all too much in the way of possible clues, red herrings, analogies, anagrams, and easter eggs. The novel within a novel is so extensive and absorbing on its own, in fact, that all but the brainiest armchair detectives are likely to find it a serious distraction from the mystery to which it's supposed to offer the key.

The most over-the-top of Horowitz's frantically overplotted whodunits to date—and that's no mean feat.



IN LEAGUE WITH SHERLOCK HOLMES Stories Inspired by the Sherlock Holmes Canon

Ed. by King, Laurie R. & Klinger, Leslie

Pegasus Crime (304 pp.)

\$25.95 | Dec. 1, 2020

978-1-64313-583-0

Fifteen new stories inspired by Sherlock Holmes in ways so inventively varied that Holmes and Watson appear in

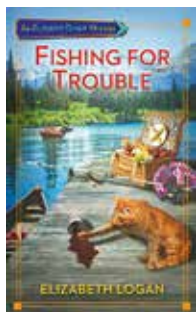
only one of them.

Introducing their fifth ever more wide-ranging collection, the editors indicate the principal originality of this one: The authors are all "not previously known to be friends of Holmes." This promise is paid off in spades. Who knew that Kwei Quartey had in him a Ghana locked-room murder deftly solved by retired Superintendent Mensah Blay? Or that Joe R. Lansdale and his daughter, Kasey, could turn Holmes and Watson into a pair of female ghost hunters? Or that Maria Alexander could dream up a bride's mother hopelessly smitten with Benedict Cumberbatch? Once the novelty of the concept has faded, the results are more inconsistent. On the whole, the entries that flaunt their cleverness—Lisa Morton's sending a skeptical young Arthur Conan Doyle to a séance, Derek Haas' rapid-fire deductions from a 19th-century printer's apprentice, Robin Burcell's investigation of whether Dr. John Watson was killed by his wife, Mary, or his partner, Dr. Joseph Bell, and especially Brad Parks' Jersey Shore girlfriend's alternating brainy explanations and, like, totally throwaway dialogue—come off the best. Martin Edwards' fictional review of the latest Sherlockiana by his jealous hero's rival, Tess Gerritsen's cheeky reevaluation of Holmes and Moriarty by their descendants, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's patient who believes he's Sherlock Holmes, and Joe Hill's graphic-fictional sleuth Shit-Talk Holmes all deserve honorable mention. Naomi Hirahara, David Corbett, and James Lincoln Warren update or deconstruct Holmes in ingenious ways, and James W. Ziskin features Holmes and Watson themselves.

No fewer than four of these tales are set in California. Will a surfer Holmes be next? Dude!

A diner owner with a sideline in investigations looks into some fishy business.

FISHING FOR TROUBLE



FISHING FOR TROUBLE

Logan, Elizabeth
 Berkley (304 pp.)
 \$7.99 paper | Nov. 24, 2020
 978-0-593100-46-2

A diner owner with a sideline in investigations looks into some fishy business.

When Ethan Johnson keels over in the Bear Claw, the only diner in Elkview, Alaska, and later dies, owner Charlie Cooke feels a responsibility to investigate even though there's no evidence that her food killed him. For one thing, her friend Trooper Cody Graham—just Trooper to most—is already swamped with work. Ethan was one of the college students earning large amounts of summer money working at the local fish processing plant. His distraught girlfriend, Zoe Michaels, is obviously hiding something. So Charlie gives her a shoulder to cry on while trying to worm out some of her secrets. The news that Ethan died from mercury poisoning spooks the management of the fish plant because of their possible liability. Their lawyer, Charlie's former fiance, shows up immediately and begins to stonewall the investigation. Although running her diner and spoiling her cat are already keeping Charlie busy, she teams up again with reporter Chris Doucette, whose stint in the military left him with many hidden talents. Charlie's sleuthing hits a nerve with someone who starts sending her threatening messages. Now she and Chris need to figure out whether Ethan was killed for love or money before she becomes the next victim.

Red herrings abound in a fishy tale featuring a determined sleuth and plenty of Alaskan traditions.



CONSPIRACY

Parris, S.J.
 Pegasus Crime (512 pp.)
 \$26.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-64313-544-1

In 16th-century Paris, a defrocked Dominican-turned-spy gets entangled in court intrigue in the process of exposing a complex and deadly plot.

Notorious real-life figure Giordano Bruno, last seen in *Treachery* (2014), returns to France in 1585, hoping to ingratiate himself with the church and return to the Brotherhood. He playfully surprises his old friend Père Paul LeFèvre in the confessional to plead his case. But shortly afterward, Bruno discovers Paul facedown in the Seine, clinging to life, the victim of an attack. Paul's dying word to his friend: "Circe." Bruno's arrival has clearly been noticed. King Henri, pilloried as an enemy of Catholicism and dubbed "King of Sodom" by his many enemies, brings Bruno to the palace. Blaming the Duke of Guise for the campaign against him, he asks Bruno to find the informants who are helping Guise. One of the likeliest is Frère Joseph de Chartres, who

writes pamphlets for the Catholic League excoriating the king. Bruno finds a letter in Peter's room describing explicit sexual acts. Could it have been planted by an enemy? Parris' overstuffed plot vividly dramatizes the vibrantly vicious world of the court in rich historical detail: tangled allegiances, back-stabbing, secret romances, and bizarre customs. (Bruno attends a court party where the king is in drag.) Newcomers to the series may be frustrated by the numerous references to events from previous books. A second murder complicates Bruno's task and raises the need for a solution. The discovery of a dance called The Masque of Circe signals a major break in the case.

Parris' fifth offers a credible depiction of period France, though sleuthing often takes a back seat to colorful subplots.



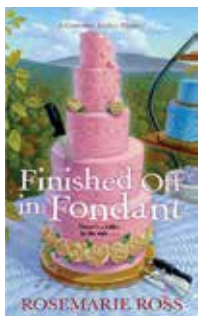
THE EGYPTIAN CROSS MYSTERY

Queen, Ellery
 Penzler Publishers (312 pp.)
 \$25.95 | \$15.95 paper | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-1-61316-177-7
 978-1-61316-178-4 | paper

Publisher Otto Penzler's fourth visit to the Queen vault resurrects a tale of four crucifixions originally published in 1932.

Ellery and his father, NYPD Detective Richard Queen, happen to be passing close enough to Arroyo, West Virginia, to merit a detour to the scene of the first crime: the beheading of schoolmaster Andrew Van, who's been celebrating Christmas morning by getting nailed to a T-shaped cross. Although circumstantial evidence casts suspicion on Harakht, a self-avowed Healer of the Weak, and Velja Krosac, a limping man, the local authorities, dismissing the first and unable to find the second, remain baffled by the outré savagery of the crime. So does Ellery, who's "never run across anything as baldly lunatic as this," until he runs into it again six months later, when professor Yardley, his old teacher, invites him to visit. Yardley's new home in Nassau County gives him a ringside seat to the Bradwood estate, whose owner, wealthy carpet importer Thomas Brad, has been beheaded and crucified across the bay from a nudist colony operated by Harakht and his chief disciple, Paul Romaine. Returning from a yearlong trip, Brad's partner, yachtsman Stephen Megara, immediately informs the police that the killer is Velja Krosac, who's still carrying a grudge over a family feud. A nationwide dragnet fails to capture the suspect or prevent two more crucifixions. Although Ellery and Yardley both display endless (and in the end irrelevant) erudition on Egyptology at the expense of the forgettable secondary characters, the canny inferences the hero draws from a pipe, a checker, and a bottle of iodine are still impressive.

The most extroverted of Ellery's early cases and the least dominated by the relentlessly brainy sleuth.



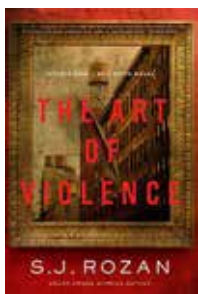
FINISHED OFF IN FONDANT

Ross, Rosemarie
Kensington (304 pp.)
\$7.99 paper | Dec. 1, 2020
978-1-4967-2277-5

A cooking show host's foray into detection runs into some technical challenges.

Courtney Archer's latest escapade begins with an apology: The host of *Cooking With the Farmer's Daughter* finally admits to her audience that she grew up not on a farm but in an affluent Chicago household. While she waits to see whether her viewers will forgive her ruse, Courtney busies herself on the set of *The American Baking Battle*, where she serves as celebrity judge. This season's theme is wedding fare, so it should surprise no one when Courtney stumbles across a corpse in a bridal gown facedown on a multitiered cake. Nor is it a shock when the deceased turns out to be the ex-girlfriend of Courtney's co-star, Skylar Daily, host of *Grocery Store Gambit*. And as naturally as dessert follows the main course, the police home in on Skylar as their chief suspect, sending Courtney into full-bore detection mode. Against the best advice of producer Eric Iverson, who Courtney kind of hopes will be her boyfriend, and the more urgent pleas of security chief Drake Nolan, who she also kind of hopes will be her boyfriend, the amateur sleuth questions suspect after suspect, with eminently predictable outcomes. What's harder to anticipate is the morass of misspellings, malapropisms, and grammatical glitches that confound the reader at every turn. One up-and-coming chef is described as ready "to climb one more rung" on the ladder to success. A stuffy producer "didn't look stiff or staunchly" after the show wraps. Has computer-generated prose come to the world of cozies?

Seriously.



THE ART OF VIOLENCE

Rozan, S.J.
Pegasus Crime (352 pp.)
\$25.95 | Dec. 1, 2020
978-1-64313-531-1

Whatever good feelings private eye Bill Smith may have about being back in New York after his recent trip to far-off Mississippi are muted by the fact that he's dealing with his honored series' most wacko client.

Six years ago, Bill did his best to round up evidence that Sam Tabor, who stabbed Amy Evans to death, was suffering a bout of temporary insanity. But Sam, ignoring the advice of everyone around him, pleaded instead to a reduced charge and went to prison, where he worked on his out-there paintings and his paranoia. Now that he's been discovered by the art world, more or less legitimized by imperious gallery owner

Sherron Konecki, and paroled, Sam, an alcoholic subject to regular blackouts, is convinced he's killed two other women whose murders coincided with big events in his life. Since "I can handle prison, Smith, but not the [looney] bin," he wants Bill to prove that he killed Annika Hausman and Tiffany Traynor, and he's willing to confess his presumptive guilt to Detective Angela Grimaldi, who really doesn't want to hear about it, and anyone else who's likely to help lock him up. As Bill and Lydia Chin, his professional and personal partner, make the rounds of witnesses who might clear Sam by serving as alternate suspects, two things gradually become clear. One is that Sam's relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and collectors seem hellbent on proving they're at least as neurotic, venal, explosive, and crazy as Sam. The other is that whoever's killing young women with short blond hair isn't done.

A rewardingly savvy tour of Manhattan's demented art scene with maybe one climax too many.



SNOWDRIFT

Tursten, Helene
Soho Crime (384 pp.)
\$27.95 | Dec. 8, 2020
978-1-641-29160-6

More than 14 years after DI Embla Nyström's best friend disappeared, she may have turned up again. Or maybe not.

The first phone call that rocks Embla's world is from Louise Lindqvist, whom she hasn't seen since Louise went missing from the Gothenburg nightclub La Dolce Vita when they were both students. The second, soon after the first is cut off, is from her Uncle Nisse's cousin Harald Fäldt, whose latest guest has been shot to death in bed—twice, so there's no question of suicide. Responding to Harald's pleas even though his guesthouse is outside her jurisdiction, Embla is both shocked and relieved to recognize the dead man as crime lord Milo Stavic, Lollo's abductor all those years ago, who threatened to kill Embla if she ever breathed a word about seeing him. Finally Embla can sleep better, as soon as she helps Inspector Olle Tillman, whom she meets at the murder scene, solve the mystery of which of Milo's hundreds of gangster enemies could have killed him. The case is both complicated and clarified by the murder of Milo's brother and partner, Luca Stavic, in La Dolce Vita's parking garage and the news that a third brother, Kador, vanished from his Croatian home two weeks ago. Before Embla can come to terms with the Stavic brothers' portfolio in narcotics, prostitution, and human trafficking, there's the matter of high school athlete Robin Pettersson's fatal stabbing outside another club. The leading suspects this time aren't professional criminals but other students whose passions run equally deep. Will Embla ever surmount the obstacles that stand between her and a possible reunion with her old friend?

"This is such a complicated case," notes the heroine. Amen. In fact, make that "cases."

Powerful magic, indulgent Victoriana, and a slow-burn romance make this genre-bending romp utterly delightful.

SPELLBREAKER

SCIENCE FICTION
AND FANTASY



SPELLBREAKER

Holmberg, Charlie N.
47North (303 pp.)
\$14.95 paper | Nov. 1, 2020
978-1-5420-2009-1

A plucky young woman with the ability to unknot and dispel magical runes finds herself in the middle of a trans-Atlantic conspiracy in this fantasy-mystery adventure.

By day, Elsie Camden works a mundane job in a stonemason's office, but by night, she carries out missions from the Cows: the secret order that once came to her rescue and now calls on her to use her anti-magic abilities in service of the greater good. As an unregistered spellbreaker, a person born with the power to unmake magic, Elsie lives her life in fear. Spellmaker Bacchus Kelsey has traveled from Barbados to London to be named a master of his craft, for which he will receive one spell of his choice as a reward. When the powers that be deny Bacchus his prize spell because of his Caribbean origins, he begins searching for an opus—the unique spellbook each magician leaves behind upon their death—containing the spell. After a mission from the Cows lands Elsie in Bacchus' debt, the winner of a recently auctioned opus becomes the latest target in a string of robberies and murders, all of which leaves Elsie to wonder whether her work for the Cows is truly a social boon. Timely discussions of race, class, disability, and gender turn up throughout Holmberg's magic-infused version of Victorian England. Although it's not immediately clear how the various plot elements will connect, readers will have trouble stepping away once the game's afoot.

Powerful magic, indulgent Victoriana, and a slow-burn romance make this genre-bending romp utterly delightful.



THE MINISTRY FOR THE FUTURE

Robinson, Kim Stanley
Orbit (576 pp.)
\$28.00 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-316-30013-1

This detail-heavy near-future novel offers a window onto the apocalypse looming just behind our present dystopia.

As Uttar Pradesh suffers from a crippling heatwave and blackouts, Frank May, an American aid worker in a small city, runs out of options to help the local residents stay cool and suggests that they go into

the lake, which unfortunately offers very little relief. He rouses from an uneasy night submerged in the water to discover that everyone is dead but him, a devastating outcome that leaves him with PTSD and a desire to do something, *anything*, to reverse climate change. But as Frank is the quintessence of the ineffectual White American savior—not equipped to save anything or anyone, even himself—he doesn't have the first idea about how to pursue his goal. His bumbling and his anger drive him to a failed kidnap attempt on Mary Murphy, head of the titular Ministry for the Future, a U.N. agency formed in 2025 to further the aims of the Paris Agreement. Frank drifts through years as a fugitive and then as a convicted felon, Mary works tirelessly through diplomatic and bureaucratic channels to save the planet before it's too late, and the Children of Kali, a group of eco-terrorists also inspired by the Indian heatwave tragedy, pursue more violent—and shockingly effective—methods of combating environmental destruction. These strands initially form the basis of a gripping story, but they're diffused by Robinson's determination to narrate a history of an alternate future timeline, one which naturally excludes our present pandemic and the latest crackdowns in Hong Kong but also apparently ignores the U.S. dropping out of the Paris Agreement and the implications of Brexit. That tale, or more often lecture, is conveyed through dry and snarky infodump essays and brief, punchy accounts from people, inanimate objects, and metaphorical forces. Perhaps the author is angry that though he's spent years writing novels exploring the dire results of climate change, the message doesn't seem to have gotten through; it's clear that he is unhappy at how politics and greed have obstructed opportunities for positive environmental action. At the same time, he seems hopeful that the world can still forge a path forward, if only we have the resolve.

High-minded, well-intentioned, and in love with what Earth's future could be but somewhat lacking in narrative drive.



THE PRESERVE

Winter, Ariel S.
Emily Bestler/Atria (256 pp.)
\$17.00 paper | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-4767-9788-5

In a world ruled by robots, a police chief races to solve a murder on a reservation set aside for humans.

Jesse Laughton is chief of police for the newly created SoCar Preserve, a designated area for humans spreading out from Charleston, South Carolina. After a plague almost wiped out humankind, highly sophisticated forms of AI took control. It's been nine months since the preserve was populated by people, and no one has been murdered. Until now. The body slumped in the alley behind a grocery store is that of Carl Smythe, who turns out to be a cyborg (a human with a robotic arm and leg) and a hacker who developed and sold something called sims. The sims are illegal programs that are

A meet-cute between a civil engineer and a land developer leads to a charming love story.

EVERYTHING CHANGES

the robot equivalent of heroin or hallucinogens—they provide a one-time thrill that can be addictive. The last thing the dedicated Laughton wants on his turf is robot interference with law enforcement, but now it's inevitable. He's not at all surprised when his former partner from the Baltimore police department shows up. Kir is a robot so finely designed he's barely distinguishable from a human, except when he does something like mend a shotgun wound by twisting a few wires in his shoulder back together. Kir is also probably Laughton's best friend. It turns out he's not even there about Smythe's murder, although it may be connected to five robocides he's investigating back in Baltimore. Winter does his worldbuilding gracefully, weaving the details of this future into the investigation as it builds rather than veering off into long blocks of exposition. He also grounds the story in Laughton's family life. His wife, Betty, is dedicated to two subversive causes: She helps run a school to educate human children and a fertility clinic to grow the population ("A Baby in Every Belly"). Laughton's relationship with his 8-year-old daughter, Erica, is a believable bond of loving exasperation. One quality humans and robots still share is prejudice toward each other, and Laughton and Kir must struggle with that to solve the case.

Robots may not be so different from humans in this fast-paced futuristic mystery.

close relationships with her brothers, their partners, and her parents play a large part in the book, and Dameon must prove his good intentions to her family. The sexual tension between Grace and Dameon is deliciously drawn out, and their relationship is wrapped up in a very satisfying way by the end of the volume. Readers will have to take coincidences on faith, and bad-guy motivations are left entirely unexplained, but neither truly detracts from the frothy fun of the love story at the center of this cozy romantic thriller.

This sweet, sexy book is just the escapism many people are looking for right now.



HOW TO FAIL AT FLIRTING

Williams, Denise

Berkley (352 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Dec. 1, 2020

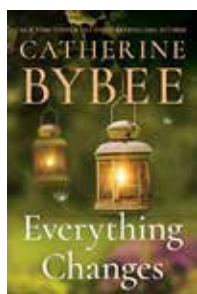
978-0-593-10190-2

An education professor falls in love with the consultant who holds the fate of her department in his hands.

Dr. Naya Turner is deeply fulfilled by her job as an education professor at Thurmond University in Chicago; unfortunately, her personal life is not so perfect. Three years earlier, she escaped an abusive relationship with a colleague who trashed her name and reputation in the university community, and she's been trying to recover ever since. Naya is determined to put her fears behind her and, on a rare night out, meets a handsome man in town for a work trip and family wedding. Their bar flirtation turns into a weeklong, no-strings affair. Naya is euphoric at her own daring and delighted with her new lover, so she is crushed when she realizes that Jake has been hired by her university to evaluate which departments can be restructured or eliminated. Unable to resist her attraction to Jake, she continues seeing him even though she fears it's a conflict of interest. Even more troubling, her ex is back on campus and has started to text her threatening messages that leave her feeling vulnerable and afraid. Williams' debut is a strong character study of Naya, a deeply sympathetic character who is worried about her professional future and personal happiness. However, the pacing is off-kilter. Although big conflicts are introduced, they stay on the back burner for most of the book. Naya worries about her job, perseverates about her decision to date Jake, and ignores the rising threats from her ex, but she doesn't take action until she has no other choice. Jake seems like a nice guy, but without his point of view, he's a cipher with less clear motivations and feelings.

Heavy themes and uneven pacing might surprise readers expecting a flirty rom-com.

ROMANCE



EVERYTHING CHANGES

Bybee, Catherine

Montlake Romance (317 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-5420-0989-8

A meet-cute between a civil engineer and a land developer leads to a charming love story overlaid on a quest to clear the engineer of bribery charges.

Grace Hudson, a civil engineer for the city of Santa Clarita, California, is very good at her job. She's strong and typically confident, but in this third book in the Creek Canyon series, that confidence has taken a knock and she hasn't dated for six months. When she spots Dameon Locke across the hotel gardens at her brother's wedding, the attraction is immediate. Sparks fly at their second chance meeting the next morning at a coffee shop as well, but then it turns out that Dameon is the land developer for the newest project that Grace has been assigned at work. Starting a romantic relationship with a client is a terrible idea, Grace knows, but their interest in each other is undeniable. When a meeting with another landowner goes poorly and Grace calls Dameon for help, their relationship—and the need to clear Grace's name from bribery accusations—kicks off. Grace's



ROOMMAID

Wilson, Sariah

Montlake Romance (303 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2020

978-1-5420-2380-1

A woman disinherited by her family tries to make it on her own.

Madison Huntington's father is a politician, businessman, and one of the wealthiest men in Houston. She knows it will disappoint her family when she decides to be a teacher rather than go into the family business; what she doesn't expect is to be disinherited, kicked out of the family home, and left to fend for herself. When Madison is unable to find an apartment to suit her needs, her aunt suggests a possible solution: Tyler Roth, a young financier with a busy travel schedule, is looking for someone to do cleaning and dogsitting in exchange for a free room in his penthouse apartment. Madison leaps at the opportunity even though she knows nothing about dogs and even less about keeping house. Madison is strongly attracted to Tyler, but she agrees to keep their relationship platonic as a condition of their arrangement. The book keeps a tight focus on Madison and her personal journey toward independence. While Tyler is away, Madison attempts basic household cooking and cleaning tasks. However, scenes that are meant to be comic—notable examples include her disastrous attempt to make macaroni and cheese or to use the dishwasher—only serve to make Madison seem clueless and silly rather than sympathetic. The plot is simple and conflict-free: She likes Tyler and desperately wishes he'd return her feelings. Madison's feelings and relationships with her friends are clear and fully developed, but her behavior toward her ex-boyfriend and her family veers from confusing to inexplicable. Eventually, her friendship with Tyler turns into a wan romance, but the late-stage crisis is manufactured and unsatisfying.

A cute premise is sunk by thin characterization and plotting.

NONFICTION



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

MY GAZA by Jehad al-Saftawi 50

BRITAIN AT BAY by Alan Allport 51

SEVEN AND A HALF LESSONS ABOUT THE BRAIN
by Lisa Feldman Barrett 51

CARVING OUT A HUMANITY Ed. by Janet Dewart Bell &
Vincent M. Southerland 54

CASSIUS X by Stuart Cosgrove 60

PAPER BULLETS by Jeffrey H. Jackson 69

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT by Melissa Maerz 75

A WEALTH OF PIGEONS by Steve Martin; illus. by Harry Bliss 76

BONES by Roy A. Meals 77

DOLLY PARTON, SONGTELLER by Dolly Parton with
Robert K. Oermann 80

FOSSIL MEN by Kermit Pattison 81

ATLANTIS by Renzo Piano & Carlo Piano 81

HOAX by Brian Stelter 85

THE LAST ASSASSIN by Peter Stothard 85

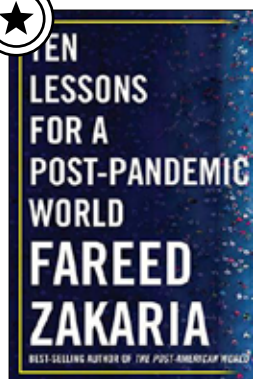
A QUESTION OF FREEDOM by William G. Thomas III 86

HOW TO MAKE A SLAVE AND OTHER ESSAYS
by Jerald Walker 88

THE STORY OF CHINA by Michael Wood 89

SOMEWHERE IN THE UNKNOWN WORLD by Kao Kalia Yang 90

TEN LESSONS FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD
by Fareed Zakaria 90



**TEN LESSONS FOR A
POST-PANDEMIC WORLD**
Zakaria, Fareed
Norton (320 pp.)
\$26.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-393-54213-4



MY GAZA A City in Photographs

al-Saftawi, Jehad
Photos by al-Saftawi, Jehad
McSweeney's (120 pp.)
\$35.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-944211-97-4



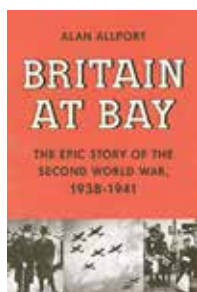
Striking photographs from a place “where on any night you could be awoken by a bomb exploding in your neighbor’s house.”

In 2016, al-Saftawi, a documentary journalist, photographer, and social justice advocate, was seeking asylum from Gaza after escaping to New York at age 25. He was given the opportunity to share his experience as a Palestinian youth through published photographs: a rarity afforded to few refugees arriving in America. In the candid autobiographical introduction, the author describes a cruel, restrictive childhood as “the son of a jihadist who killed and contributed to the killing of innocent Israelis. I condemn these actions.” That kind of violence, he notes, was revered as heroic by the Muslim Brotherhood, who heavily influenced his father (he was recently released from an 18-year prison sentence). Though al-Saftawi acknowledges that working as a journalist in overpopulated Gaza was “like walking barefoot in a field of thorns,” he vividly demonstrates his passion for his homeland throughout this moving pictorial tribute of “memories and dreams.” The book is unfiltered in its depiction of the realities of contemporary Gaza as a dusty city awash in exploding bullets, grief-stricken citizens, and crumbling infrastructure. Through al-Saftawi’s uncompromising lens, readers witness Gazans carrying war-wounded through the streets, the author’s wife framed by a night sky of exploding flares; a bleak view from the rooftop of his childhood neighborhood; and heartbreaking portraits of children shredded by the shrapnel of a drone attack and a close-up of a 7-year-old who witnessed the massacre of his family during Israel’s three-week assault on Gaza in 2008 and 2009. Atmospheric, visually moving, and dedicated to “all those who are trapped in the hardships of this life, surviving in the hopes of a better tomorrow,” this book shows a hellish landscape with bits of humanity and resilience beaming through. The author includes a contextual timeline and glossary.

Blistering portraits of a territory plagued by violence.

These are familiar events, but Allport's interpretation is superb.

BRITAIN AT BAY



BRITAIN AT BAY The Epic Story of the Second World War, 1938-1941

Allport, Alan

Knopf (608 pp.)

\$35.00 | Nov. 3, 2020

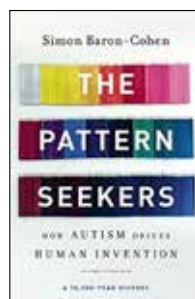
978-0-451-49474-0



The first of two volumes in which British historian Allport delivers his opinionated analysis that carries a modest whiff of revisionism.

Though Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sometimes gave the impression that he was “a weak and timid politician,” Allport emphasizes that he was a combative, dynamic prime minister who considered himself “an acute judge of character and a sharp negotiator.” The author condemns him for betraying Czechoslovakia to Hitler at the October Munich talks, but he adds that Britons dreaded repeating the slaughter of World War I. “Chamberlain’s error was not to hate war,” writes Allport, “but to assume that everyone hated it as much as he did.” In fact, Hitler yearned to invade Czechoslovakia and eventually considered the Munich agreement a defeat. The author, a fluid, incisive historian, reminds readers that Chamberlain returned from Munich to almost unanimous acclaim. Despite his early denunciation of Hitler, Churchill, in 1938 “was seen by the nation as a reactionary Tory turncoat...who was widely unpopular and roundly distrusted.” He was definitely not prescient in sharing (along with Chamberlain) the fantasy that mass bombing would determine a future war, so both starved the army to support the air force. The British look back on the “phony war” from September 1939 to June 1940 as a mistake—not of their own making—that concluded with the heroism of Dunkirk and then their “Finest Hour” while the French collapsed. Allport’s provocative view will intrigue American readers, if not his countrymen, as he maintains that France’s army was not demoralized, poorly equipped, or led by incompetents. French historians point out (to this day) that Britain intended for its ally to bear the brunt of the fighting and then held back its air force when the issue was in doubt, made the decision to evacuate without consulting them, and insisted that British troops take priority at Dunkirk. There followed a year of mostly defeats until Hitler’s June 1941 invasion of Russia relieved the pressure.

These are familiar events, but Allport’s interpretation is superb.



THE PATTERN SEEKERS How Autism Drives Human Invention

Baron-Cohen, Simon

Basic (272 pp.)

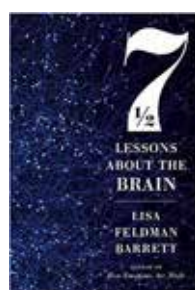
\$28.00 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-5416-4714-5

A thoughtful argument that creativity shares many of the same traits as autism.

Psychologist Baron-Cohen, director of the Autism Research Centre at Cambridge, begins with two case studies: a well-known genius and inventor who left home at age 16 and a genuinely brilliant man who lived with his mother into his 30s. The author maintains that humans alone possess a specific “engine in the brain,” the “Systemizing Mechanism,” which seeks out if-and-then patterns in the environment. Seeing one, it asks a question (“if”), considers how it might change (“and”), and then predicts a consequence (“then”). The best “systemizers” repeat this process dozens or even hundreds of times (i.e., experiment) to ensure that the pattern holds true. If confirmed, the result is a discovery or a creation. Though scientific, this process is also essential in mastering an art, craft, sport, or profession. Hypersensitive to patterns, autistic brains often get stuck in an if-and-then loop. Baron-Cohen adds “another game-changing mechanism,” the “Empathy Circuit,” which allows us to relate closely to someone else’s thoughts and feelings. Dealing with others is almost impossible without this “theory of mind,” which hyper-systemizers lack. The author participated in a large study that revealed five human brain types. About a third are mostly empathizers, a third systemizers, and a third show an equal balance between the two. At the extremes, a few percent are hyper-empathizers and hyper-systemizers, the latter dominated by geniuses and the autistic. Baron-Cohen also includes portraits of high-achieving autistics, both known (Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, and Albert Einstein) and anonymous. Readers curious about how they measure up can take a similar survey in the appendix. Although the author pleads for understanding, this is not a self-help book but rather an account of how systemizers drive human progress. He also briefly discusses how “we can bring hyper-systemizing into education.”

Insightful and mostly convincing.



7 1/2 LESSONS ABOUT THE BRAIN

Barrett, Lisa Feldman

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (192 pp.)

\$24.00 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-0-358-15714-4

An excellent education in brain science in seven short chapters and an introduction.

Barrett, a professor of psychology at Northeastern who also has appointments



CRISIS MODE IN AMERICA



Anyone who is not a Donald Trump devotee knows that our country is in trouble—and that the current administration is largely responsible for the illiberal atmosphere that is poisoning our democracy.

While countless books have attempted to diagnose the malady, few have been able to offer the range of viewpoints featured in *The American Crisis: What Went Wrong. How We Recover* (Simon & Schuster, Sept. 15) by the writers of the *Atlantic*. Other than the *New Yorker*, I can't think of a magazine that is more incisive about political and social issues than the *Atlantic*, and this collection includes a who's-who list of contributors: among them, Ibram X. Kendi, Anne Applebaum, Drew Gilpin Faust, Ed Yong, Franklin Foer, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Molly Ball, George Packer, James Fallows, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Mark Bowden.

In a starred review, our critic calls it “an illuminating collection of perceptive, well-argued, and compelling essays.” Edited by the magazine's editor at large, Cullen Murphy, the book features an introduction by editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, who takes Trump to task for his deceit, laziness, and divisive tactics, among other character flaws too numerous to count. “George W. Bush and Barack Obama each took the presidency seriously; each man was changed by the office; each viewed himself to be president of all the people,” he writes. “One of Trump's true innovations as president is to feel no responsibility for Americans who didn't vote for him. Unlike previous presidents, he works not for reconciliation but for division. On his best days, Trump is numb to the fault lines that run under America—fault lines of region and religion, of class,



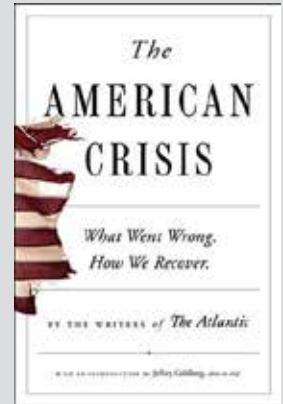
Cullen Murphy

ideology, and race. On his worst days, his presidency is an inversion of the motto of the United States.”

Divided into four sections—“Falling Apart,” “The Failure of Politics,” “The Age of Trump,” and “Becoming Citizens Again,” *The American Crisis* covers a lot of relevant ground, from politics and economic inequality to racism (as usual, Kendi and Coates knock it out of the park), health, and the importance of art in times of crisis. Regarding the last, Miranda makes a potent argument about how “all art is political.” In “What Art Can Do,” published in December 2019, he writes, “our job as artists is to tell the truth as we see it. If telling the truth is an inherently political act, so be it. Times may change and politics may change, but if we do our best to tell the truth as specifically as possible, time will reveal those truths and reverberate beyond the era in which we created them. We keep revisiting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* because ruthless political ambition does not belong to any particular era. We keep listening to Public Enemy because systemic racism continues to rain tragedy on communities of color. We read Orwell's *1984* and shiver at its diagnosis of doublethink, which we see coming out of the White House at this moment. And we listen to Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, as Lieutenant Cable sings about racism, ‘you've got to be carefully taught.’ It's all art. It's all political.”

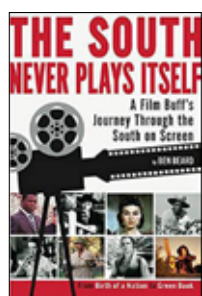
Even readers who have little interest in the mechanics of politics will find something instructive or eye-opening in this book. If nothing else, it will force us to break free of what Applebaum calls our “warm cocoon of self-congratulatory self-confidence” and find “a path between bravado and despair.”

Eric Liebetrau is the nonfiction and managing editor.



at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, clearly knows her neuroscience. However, like in *How Emotions Are Made* (2017), the author deftly employs metaphor and anecdote to deliver an insightful overview of her favorite subject. Until a few decades ago, scientists divided the brain into three layers. The core consisted of the “lizard brain,” controlling basic drives such as feeding, aggression, and mating. Around 100 million years ago, mammals evolved. A mammal experiences emotions, so evolution added a layer, the limbic system, to govern them. A few hundred thousand years ago, humans acquired an outer layer—the neocortex, or grey matter—that keeps lower levels in check and allows us to be creative, rational, and highly social. In reality, Barrett writes, our brain contains no new parts, and its neurons operate no differently than those of a fish or flea. It is not even the most highly evolved—only superbly evolved for what humans do. Humans are great thinkers, but the author maintains that brains did not evolve to think but to “control your body...by predicting energy needs before they arrive so you can efficiently make worthwhile movements and survive.” Readers will agree that our senses provide essential information for prediction but may be surprised when Barrett explains that experience (i.e., memory) plays an equally vital role. A glass of water relieves your thirst immediately, but it takes 20 minutes for the water to reach your bloodstream. Your brain, predicting correctly, turns off your thirst. The narrative is so short and sweet that most readers will continue to the 35-page appendix, in which the author delves more deeply, but with no less clarity, into topics ranging from teleology to the Myers-Briggs personality test to “Plato’s writings about the human psyche.”

Outstanding popular science.



THE SOUTH NEVER PLAYS ITSELF
A Film Buff's Journey Through the South on Screen

Beard, Ben
 NewSouth (544 pp.)
 \$28.95 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-1-58838-401-0

A wide-angle take on images of the American South in film.

Beard, who has written reviews for a variety of publications, aims to examine depictions of the South on film, but the resulting narrative is scattershot and cursory. Most fundamentally, for all of the many incidental comments about the South, the author never establishes a central, foundational thesis on the topic. Beard tosses about scores of adjectives, usually negative, about the South—for example, Tennessee Williams’ view of the region was “haunted, sybaritic, oppressive, and strange”—but does he agree with these depictions? Does Beard find the South a place of “heat, sex and languor” as depicted in *A Streetcar Named Desire*? Some of the author’s commentary suggests that he does, but he must state it more directly and cogently. Beard’s survey of relevant films is wide-ranging, moving from *Birth of a Nation* to *No Country*

for *Old Men* and beyond—but the analysis lacks insight. The author’s discussions of specific films lean heavily on plot summary, which often veers off topic. For example, a consideration of the James Bond film *Live and Let Die* wanders into general remarks about other 007 films. The tools and language of film criticism are largely absent, as Beard offers little detailed examination of shot composition, editing, scoring, direction, and performance to support his boldly stated opinions. However, some bright spots exist. A chapter on films set in Florida, where the author spent his formative years, has the detail and commentary other chapters lack. Some phrases hit the mark. As a Southern senator in *Advise & Consent*, Charles Laughton is “a slow-moving serpent, deadly, unforgiving, and always ready to strike.” Elsewhere, though, unnecessary profanity betrays a challenged critical vocabulary. Beard judges Oliver Stone’s *JFK*, certainly a highly flawed movie, as “a hot fucking mess” featuring “a shitload” of actors.

Wait for the remake.

Rebecca Anne Nguyen
 co-authors the
 award-winning story
 of her brother's epic
 journey to combat
 PTSD.

"A brave and beautiful book."
 —Michael Collins,
 award-winning documentary
 filmmaker and director of the Emmy-
 nominated film, *Almost Sunrise*

**"an unlikely look at the pain of
 everyday people in contemporary
 America...An offbeat and inspiring tale"**
 —Kirkus Reviews

- Featured on MSNBC, FOX News, and in the *New York Times*
- Emmy-nominated documentary film called *Almost Sunrise*
- Required reading at Michigan State University

ISBN-10: 1608685993 • ISBN-13: 978-1608685998

For agent representation, email
 RebeccaAnneNguyen@gmail.com • www.rebeccaannenguyen.com

FOREWORD
 INDIES
 WINNER

An erudite collection to alarm conservatives and gratify progressives.

CARVING OUT A HUMANITY



CARVING OUT A HUMANITY *Race, Rights, and Redemption*

Ed. by Bell, Janet Dewart & Southerland, Vincent M.

The New Press (368 pp.)

\$27.99 | Nov. 24, 2020

978-1-62097-620-3



Penetrating essays on race and social stratification within policing and the law, in honor of pioneering scholar Derrick Bell (1930-2011).

At the beginning, the editors explain the anthology's genesis: "Founded twenty-five years ago in 1995, the Derrick Bell Lectures were originally created as a birthday present from Janet Bell to her husband, and were designed to highlight not only Derrick Bell's legacy as the father of the legal studies movement, but also to give that movement exposure in the academy and beyond." Some speakers acknowledged Bell's outsized

personality; he'd repeatedly resigned from prestigious institutions to protest wan diversity efforts. Charles Ogletree notes, "the craziness is that he has such insight and foresight that it's unimaginable," before narrating the unequal legal landscape of Black America, even following Gunnar Myrdal's landmark 1944 examination of the U.S. Charles Lawrence discusses backlash against affirmative action even as recruitment of Black students plummeted at prominent law schools, a topic of concern to Bell. Richard Delgado considers Bell's research as a "toolkit" to address how each advance for racial justice "is cut back by narrow judicial interpretation, foot dragging, and delay." Patricia Williams anticipates current discourse in a frank reflection on the echo of sexual abuse in persistent racial archetypes, denoting society's refusal to acknowledge "the actual historical meaning of slavery as a system of human ownership." Bell himself contributes "Racism as the Ultimate Deception," in which he concludes, "the only defense against the racism phantasm as it operates in the real world is absolute honesty about our actions, our desires, our goals, or as close to that ever elusive dream as we can come." Other prominent contributors include Lani Guinier, Paul Butler, Stephen Bright, and Michelle Alexander. Many powerfully acknowledge the persistence of structural racism and offer in-depth discussion regarding particular aspects of the law's effect on marginalized communities, resonant in an era of White supremacy's bid for mainstream acceptance.

An erudite collection to alarm conservatives and gratify progressives.



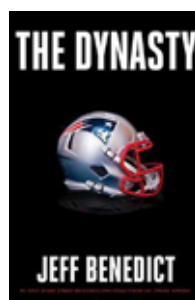
"Renowned experimental documentary filmmaker Lynne Sachs wrote one of 2019's best books of poetry...sensuous rhythms, telling visual detail, and gentle humor. This beautifully designed book...illuminates this artist's creative process."
—2019 Staff Pick, San Francisco Public Library, Poetry Librarian

"These poems are innovative. They invite us in, encouraging us to play along...to enter into our own retrospective lives...our most intimate moments."
—Cleaver: Philadelphia's International Literary Magazine

"Fifty poems and their drafts chronicle a lifetime of personal and public events."
—Kirkus Reviews

Published by Tender Buttons Press ISBN # 978-0-927920-20-9

For more information on this book, email
lynn Sachs@gmail.com • www.lynn Sachs.com



THE DYNASTY

Benedict, Jeff

Avid Reader Press (592 pp.)

\$30.00 | Sep. 1, 2020

978-1-982134-10-5

Action-packed tale of the building of the New England Patriots over the course of seven decades.

Prolific writer Benedict has long blended two interests—sports and business—and the Patriots are emblematic of both. Founded in 1959 as the Boston Patriots, the team built a strategic home field between that city and Providence. When original owner Billy Sullivan sold the flailing team in 1988, it was \$126 million in the hole, a condition so dire that "Sullivan had to beg the NFL to release emergency funds so he could pay his players." Victor Kiam, the razor magnate, bought the long since renamed New England Patriots, but rival Robert Kraft bought first the parking lots and then the stadium—and "it rankled Kiam that he bore all the risk as the owner of the team but virtually all of the revenue that the team generated went to Kraft." Check and mate. Kraft finally took over the team in 1994. Kraft inherited coach Bill Parcells, who in turn brought in star quarterback Drew Bledsoe, "the Patriots' most prized player." However, as the book's nimbly constructed opening recounts, in 2001, Bledsoe got smeared in a hit "so violent that players along the Patriots sideline compared the sound of the collision

to a car crash." After that, it was backup Tom Brady's team. Gridiron nerds will debate whether Brady is the greatest QB and Bill Belichick the greatest coach the game has ever known, but certainly they've had their share of controversy. The infamous "Deflategate" incident of 2015 takes up plenty of space in the late pages of the narrative, and depending on how you read between the lines, Brady was either an accomplice or an unwitting beneficiary. Still, as the author writes, by that point Brady "had started in 223 straight regular-season games," an enviable record on a team that itself has racked up impressive stats.

Smart, engaging sportswriting—good reading for organization builders as well as Pats fans.



**PREDICT AND SURVEIL
Data, Discretion, and the
Future of Policing**

Brayne, Sarah
Oxford Univ. (232 pp.)
\$29.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-0-19-068409-9

A scholarly examination of the nexus of law enforcement and big data.

Brayne, a professor of sociology at the University of Texas, combines data analysis and sociological and ethnographic research to explore some of the issues and controversies surrounding the country's police system. While noting that there are more than 2.3 million people incarcerated in the U.S., she also points out a similarly disturbing statistic: "a third of this country's adult population—over 70 million Americans—has a record on file with criminal justice agencies." She continues, "although the rise of 'mass incarceration' receives the most attention, no one

Paperback 978-1-949165-16-6 • Hardback 978-1-949165-17-3
Audiobook 978-1-949165-18-0 • Ebook 978-0-463721-98-8 • ASIN B085NDLYMP

For anyone seeking a clear-cut, entertaining, and relatable approach to self-improvement, *Hard Easy* will not disappoint!

A self-improvement theory that eschews instant gratification in favor of long-term comfort and accomplishment.

"*Hard Easy* is an uplifting and encouraging guide to self-improvement."
—Foreword Review

"...a thought-provoking, well-written book with intriguing and lively anecdotes. It will be useful anyone ready to take the plunge and commit to making the hard choices."
—BlueInk Review

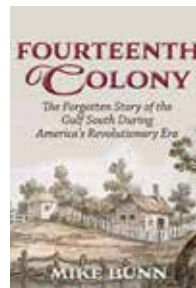
"Quick, clear anecdotes offer bold encouragement to take the 'hard-easy' road to success in life."
—Kirkus Reviews

For all inquiries, please contact, email artcoombsauthor@gmail.com • www.artcoombs.com

is incarcerated without first having contact with the police.” Though academic, this is a sharp book—and particularly timely given the current state of the public’s (dis)trust of police officers. Brayne explains the difference between “dragnet surveillance”—looking at everyone and deciding who is worth pursuing—and “directed surveillance,” in which investigators pick a target (a person or place) “deemed suspicious.” Either method uses tools that the police have adapted from the military or private companies, many of which stretch the boundaries of privacy laws. The author notes that the data brokering business is a \$200 billion industry, so it’s not surprising when some of the basic tenets of “law and order” go by the wayside. Brayne also breaks down the “stages of predictive policing...collection, analysis, intervention, and response.” If anything goes awry in one of those segments, innocent people could be punished and arrested—or killed. Although the prose is fairly dry, with a focus on algorithms and concepts like “suspicion calculus,” the book shines a fresh light on old problems while also taking into consideration the many complexities introduced by technology. Brayne’s conclusion is not only direct, but important, as she walks readers through

opportunities to craft change internally via institutions but also redefine what successful policing looks like.

A thoughtful consideration of modern policing.



FOURTEENTH COLONY
The Forgotten Story of the Gulf South During America's Revolutionary Era

Bunn, Mike
NewSouth (288 pp.)
\$27.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-58838-413-3

A history of a short-lived British colony on the Gulf Coast in the mid-to-late 1700s.

West Florida came into being in 1763 and lasted until 1781, when the Spanish captured it. Originally ceded to the British (along with East Florida) in the wake of the Seven Years’ War, the colony included parts of modern-day Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. From the beginning, its strategic location on the Gulf Coast outweighed its economic contribution to the empire. From there, “they facilitated control of the outlets of a number of major interior river systems and potentially important Gulf and Atlantic ports.” However, the fortifications left behind by the French badly needed upgrading, and many were ultimately abandoned. The British also faced the question of how to manage relations with the Native American inhabitants of the territory as well as the former French and Spanish colonists. Bunn, the author of several regional histories, outlines the struggles to set up a government, with regular clashes between the often overmatched royal governors and the colonists, most of whom were struggling despite receiving large land grants. Furthermore, writes the author, “a host of dangerous communicable diseases plagued the new colonists.” Attempts to find exportable commodities fell short of expectations except for trade with Natives for deerskins and fur. Bunn aptly summarizes the colony’s history, which really comes alive with the arrival of the Revolution. West Florida, isolated from the other colonies, remained officially loyal to the crown—“a lukewarm and conditional loyalty to say the least but a circumstance that, given the situation, Great Britain was happy to have.” A raiding expedition along the Mississippi by Philadelphian Thomas Willing and then a campaign by the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Galvez, brought the conflict to West Florida—and ultimately brought the colony under Spanish control.

A readable and illuminating exploration of a chapter of American history most readers haven’t previously encountered.

AN EPA VETERANS' GUIDE HOW TO JOIN IN SAVING OUR LIFE ON PLANET EARTH

FIGHTING POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RICHARD W. EMORY, JR.
ISBN # 978-1-64438-069-7

A former Environmental Protection Agency attorney delivers an impassioned plea to fight pollution and climate change.

“Timely and engaging; a heroic environmental story well told.”
—Kirkus Reviews

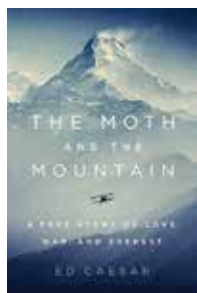
“Emory fought the good fight to protect the environment throughout his adventurous career, and his battle-tested insights are worth studying.”
—Durwood J. Zaelke, President, Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development

Author is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Yale University, addressing all readers including undergraduate college students in environmental studies and public policy.

For information on publishing and film rights, email rwemory2@gmail.com • www.fightingpollutionbook.com

A welcome addition to the library of oddball adventurers.

THE MOTH AND THE MOUNTAIN



THE MOTH AND THE MOUNTAIN A True Story of Love, War, and Everest

Caesar, Ed
Avid Reader Press (288 pp.)
\$28.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-5011-4337-3

The tale of an eccentric plan to be the first known European to scale Mount Everest.

“The idea was mad any way you looked at it,” writes *New Yorker* contributor Caesar of the plan British adventurer Maurice Wilson (1898-1934) cooked up to fly to Nepal and crash-land his plane at the foot of Everest, then climb solo to the summit. Never mind that Wilson, a shellshocked veteran of World War I and survivor of the Spanish flu, had no experience flying or climbing. He overcame those shortcomings by walking the 200 miles from Bradford to London in hobnail boots several times and, yes, learning to fly. “Wilson was preparing himself purely to endure,” writes Caesar, “as if toughness were the only quality required in the Himalayas.” It was not, and while it’s probably a spoiler to note that his expedition was spectacularly unsuccessful, it was an example of derring-do in the service of personal redemption—perhaps. Wilson was clearly in need of healing: He abandoned wives at the drop of a hat, gave little attention to the ordinary business of making a living, and may have been a transvestite. “If Wilson was a transvestite,” writes the author in this loopy, sometimes labored narrative, “he knew how to source a wardrobe.” He was also undeniably brave. Caesar has an unfortunate habit of addressing himself in the second person as he recounts how he came to the long-forgotten (though documented) story: “You read the literature on Wilson. It’s nowhere near satisfactory. He is dismissed by generalists as a crank, and by alpine historians as a reckless amateur—a footnote in the history of mountaineering.” Still, he turns in a multifaceted tale full of learned speculation—at least one climber claims that Wilson made the summit—and intriguing minor mysteries. It’s not *Into Thin Air*, but Caesar’s story has plenty of virtues all the same.

A welcome addition to the library of oddball adventurers.




AGAINST AMAZON And Other Essays

Carrión, Jorge
Trans. by Bush, Peter
Biblioasis (280 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-77196-303-9

A set of lively literary essays by Barcelona-based novelist and journalist Carrión.

Even though one of the essays is called “Against Bibliophilia,” this is just the sort of book that

bibliophiles—to say nothing of bibliomaniacs—will enjoy. By bibliophilia, the author, who picks up where he left off in *Bookshops: A Reader’s History*, means the sort of worshipful accumulation of the exotic and expensive—and not just the accumulation of books that forge a person’s soul, but also “a democratic library, ruled by a love of reading, a wish to escape or a desire for knowledge, beyond the masquerade of wrappings that may be a sign of artisanal craft, art, and cultural tradition, but are also a distraction from what really matters: content.” The title essay is suggestive of a different problem: the reduction of books to mere commodities, sold alongside laundry soap and TVs by “the world’s biggest hypermarket behind a huge smokescreen shaped like a library.” This would be OK if we were robots and books had no meaning. They do, of course. Carrión’s essays are broad-ranging and don’t always quite cohere, though if some seem to be padding, most contribute to an appreciation of books and literary culture as things quite unlike any other. Highlights include the author’s meditation, of a sort practiced by bibliophilic writers ever since Walter Benjamin, on how to organize a library (he proposes a trifold division into “friends, acquaintances, future contacts”); a



The Art of
Symeon Shimin

ISBN # 9780999034724

“An Amazing and Unsung Artist...A MUST for any art lover!”
—Ernesta Corvino, Master teacher of Ballet

“gorgeous book of the phenomenal art of this man
who had a most fascinating life journey.
I highly recommend it.”
—Claudia Hoag-McGarry, Author

2020 Distinguished Favorite Award in Fine Arts
from The Independent Book Awards.

For information on publishing and film rights, email
shimin@theaterdance.ucsb.edu • www.symeonshimin.com
available through: Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Ingram, Pathway Books

COVER STORY

LAILA LALAMI

IN A NEW ESSAY COLLECTION, THE ACCLAIMED NOVELIST EXPLORES THE LIMITS OF CITIZENSHIP FOR MANY AMERICANS DUE TO RACE, GENDER, AND NATIONAL ORIGIN

By Tom Beer



Jesse Dimnar

LAILA LALAMI BEGAN WORK on her new essay collection, *Conditional Citizens: On Belonging in America* (Pantheon, Sept. 22), in 2016, after Pakistani American Khzir Khan—father of a U.S. Army captain killed in the line of duty in Iraq—addressed the Democratic National Convention and pulled out a pocket copy of the U.S. Constitution as he criticized Donald Trump. “It was such an electrifying moment,” Lalami says, “and I knew the moment I heard it that he was going to be attacked.” Trump lashed out on Twitter, of course, and internet stories suggesting that Khan was a “stealth jihadist” confirmed Lalami’s fears. “Even when a family makes

the ultimate sacrifice, even when they are embracing America, what you get back [from some] is this rejection, this idea that you’re not really American,” she says. Lalami, who was born in Morocco and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2000, is the author of four novels, including *The Moor’s Account* (Pantheon, 2014), a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and *The Other Americans* (Pantheon, 2019), a finalist for the National Book Award and the Kirkus Prize. She discussed the new book over Zoom from her home in Los Angeles; the conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Could you explain the concept of conditional citizenship?

Conditional citizenship is the idea of unequal citizenship, where you’re never really quite the same as others, you’re not really an equal citizen. [Citizenship] is not something that you have and that is definite but is something that can be called into question. The book was basically my attempt to think through that from many different lenses.

Conditional citizenship does not just apply to immigrants. You identify race, religion, and gender, for example, as factors in who gets treated as a conditional citizen.

These ideas about who gets to be American and who gets to be an equal citizen have their roots in some of the foundational thinking about this country. One of the earliest laws that delineates the boundaries of citizenship—the Naturalization Act of 1790—basically limits citizenship to “free white persons.” Some of the rights that flow from that, like the right to vote, were further restricted to White male property owners. That system of unequal citizenship has been passed down, decade after decade, through the present moment. And it has been reformed at different moments in the nation’s history: The Emancipation Proclamation, the 19th Amendment, and the Civil Rights Act all made the privileges, the benefits, of citizenship available to a wider group

of people. There's never a moment in the last 300 or 400 years where those boundaries were not tested and contested.

You talk a little bit in the book about Obama and the "birther" conspiracy. And now we're seeing it again with Kamala Harris.

So many of us who do not live in positions of political power are familiar with having our Americanness questioned. Even people with power can have it happen to them, right? It happens to Ilhan Omar, to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, to Rashida Tlaib. Why? Because you dare to criticize, or because your politics are not to the taste of these people.

It's this notion of "America—love it or leave it."

It's a very toxic idea. I think that criticism can be an expression of love. I love my husband very much, but if I see that he's doing something that I think is wrong, am I supposed to just sit quietly?

You write, "Coexistence should not be a passive state.... Coexistence, rather, should be the active practice of becoming familiar...with people who are different."

There is a line from James Baldwin—I forget which essay it comes from—but he says something to the effect that it is the innocence itself that constitutes the crime. Meaning, ignorance—in some cases willful ignorance—about how other people's civil rights are being violated in fact threatens the fabric of the social contract.

Being a citizen is not an individual act; you're part of a community of other citizens.

I think of it as both a status and a relationship. You know what I mean? It's something that requires nurturing, just as you would nurture any other relationship in your life.

You dedicate one essay to the subject of assimilation. How do you, as an immigrant yourself, conceive of assimilation?

There's really no standard definition for what we mean by assimilation. Is it a question of language? Is it a question of knowing English? English is not the official language of the United States. Does it mean voting? Does it mean paying taxes? Does it mean serving on juries, serving in the military? Does it mean dressing a particular way? Does it mean eating a particular way? Any of these things can be used as criteria for including or excluding people.

For me, it was something that I never really gave much thought to until my first book came out, and I was at a party at some [literary] festival in New York, and somebody said to me, "If they were all like you, there wouldn't be a problem." The idea is that it's OK if you're a Muslim immigrant if you don't cover and if you're speaking [English]. Sometimes

people say things and it's so revelatory about how they view belonging and unbelonging. I never thought of myself as assimilated or unassimilated—I dressed like this before coming to the U.S. To me, I wasn't different.

A lot of people might not think of gender as affecting citizenship, but you argue that it does.

To me it's very much a citizenship issue because it is a civil rights issue. It's a question of how women don't have access to power. Congress is still for the most part White and male; by and large, the people who are ruling us are still not representative of what the country really looks like. And that's why you have a lot of concerns that are extremely relevant to women's lives not really taken seriously. Abortion is just one issue, where the control of a woman's body is something that is not fully her own in many, many states. And you look at the percentage of rape cases that ever get prosecuted, the number of rape kits that are tested. It really comes down to whether women are equal under the law to men. And I don't think that the answer is yes yet.

We're heading into a presidential election this fall. How much hope can we place in electoral politics to move us closer to equal citizenship for everyone?

Voting is just one part of it. And I certainly am trying to do my part, not just by voting or by donating to specific candidates or by writing postcards to get out the vote. More than that is getting involved in different grassroots organizations. It can be something as simple as your Parent Teacher Association or mutual aid organizations or food banks—but something that is outside of electoral politics that advances the cause of equal citizenship through community work. It's the combination of those two things that is going to move progress forward.

Conditional Citizens was reviewed in the Feb. 15, 2020, issue.

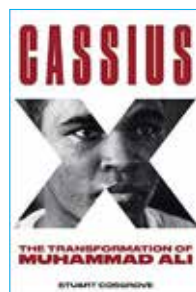


Sharp, thoughtful reflection on a long-reverberating moment.

CASSIUS X

somewhat gloomy visit with Argentine Canadian collector and librarian Alberto Manguel, whose 40,000 volumes were comfortably housed in a French farmhouse until he fell afoul of the Sarkozy government; and a scholarly detective story that hinges on the writer and book collector Curzio Malaparte's villa on the island of Capri, familiar to fans of Godard and Neruda and beloved of "writers, translators, and architects."

A subtle pleasure for lovers of the printed word, even if they order books from the leviathan.



CASSIUS X *The Transformation of Muhammad Ali*

Cosgrove, Stuart

Lawrence Hill Books/Chicago Review

(368 pp.)

\$18.99 paper | Oct. 20, 2020

978-1-64160-354-6



A vivid, knowing close-up of a crucial year in the life of boxing's most iconic figure.

Scottish music writer Cosgrove portrays the year of 1963-1964 as a brief period that reflected many fault lines of the American 1960s, with Cassius Clay's transformation into Muhammad Ali serving as one of the significant processes during that time. The author confidently connects Ali's tumultuous rise with broader themes of soul music, boxing, organized crime, and the struggle for civil rights, utilizing the social simmer of Miami, London, Detroit, New York, and Louisville for dramatic settings throughout. This book, he writes, "portrays a man in compression, in the days when the young fighter was exploring his identity, molding his image and forging advantageous friendships with Malcolm X, Sam Cooke and the media." Cosgrove also provides a thrilling narrative of a tattered sport battling intensifying racial cross-currents and involving Ali's conservative White backers, Black moderates, and emerging radical voices. "The politics of race was being played out in nearly every arena of American life," writes the author, "not least in boxing, where the heavyweight rankings were increasingly written about as a battle of perceived racial typologies." But boxing was seen as particularly flawed, with a backdrop of ring deaths and syndicate control of the athletes and their fights. Although Ali honed a public persona that captivated many, even releasing an album of music and poetry, "there was growing resentment towards the young contender who was seen by many [traditionalists] as flighty, opinionated, and insubstantial." Ali fitfully concealed his religious convictions, understanding that "his increasing closeness to the Nation of Islam posed a threat to his reputation and therefore his livelihood." These many narrative strands conclude with the controversial "Big Fight" with Sonny Liston, after which the new champion "finally announced his membership of the Nation." Cosgrove packs his lean account with remarkable characterizations and vibrant storytelling.

Sharp, thoughtful reflection on a long-reverberating moment.

STEALING HOME

How Artificial Intelligence Is Hijacking the American Dream

JAMES M. NELSON

ISBN 978-1-7346418-0-6

HUMAN RIGHTS, BEFORE PROPERTY RIGHTS

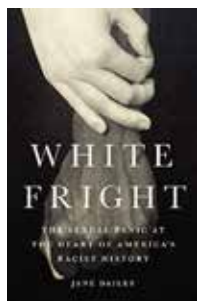
"illuminating portrait of today's housing crisis."

—Kirkus Reviews

"explosive new book about Artificial Intelligence technology...meticulously researched...justifies a thorough investigation by the responsible public officials of the RealPage platform's use of AI technology to hijack rents and contribute to homelessness and other social ills."

—Mike Withey, human rights Attorney and former President of the Public Justice Foundation

For information on publishing and film rights, email info@jamesmartinnelson.com • www.jamesmartinnelson.com



WHITE FRIGHT
The Sexual Panic at the Heart of America's Racist History

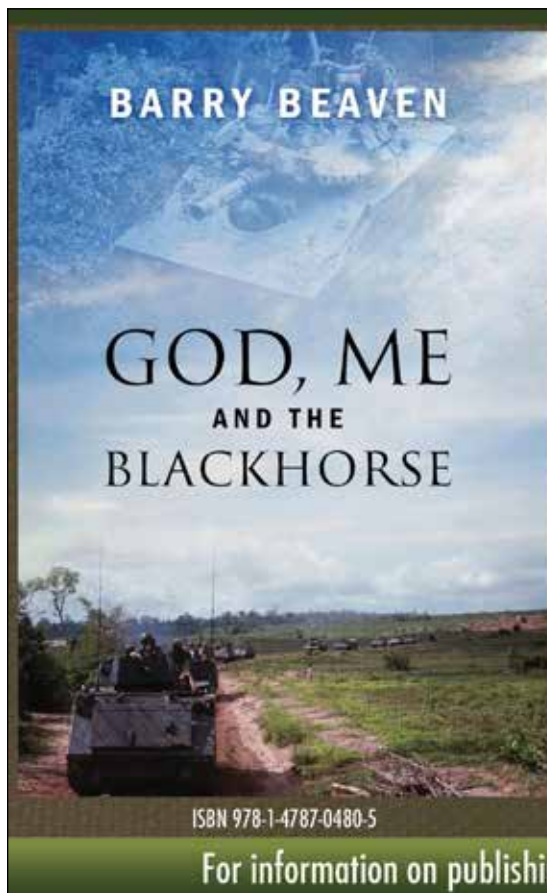
Dailey, Jane
 Basic (368 pp.)
 \$30.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
 978-1-5416-4655-1

A scholarly history of how “the civil rights movement was articulated against a white opposition that was explicitly and thoroughly sexualized.”

Historian Dailey, who has written extensively on the Jim Crow South, examines the era lasting roughly from Reconstruction until the 1960s, a time in which fears of interracial sex and biracial reproduction were widespread. Interracial marriage was prohibited in the majority of states until 1967, when the Supreme Court declared those restrictions unconstitutional in the landmark case of *Loving v. Virginia*. The author shows how maintaining “racial purity” became a fixation after the Civil War. “As practiced by those dedicated to the proposition, ‘white

supremacy’ was both a social argument and a political program designed to reestablish white men’s social and political dominance after the war and Reconstruction,” writes Dailey. She looks at the belief that in order to maintain White supremacy, White women had to comply by not engaging in voluntary sexual relations with Black men and that defending racial purity in the South was the same as defending the South “herself.” Dailey also systematically explores cases of lynching, specifically the Scottsboro cases of 1931, which involved the consideration of “the conventional Southern assumption that any sex between a white woman and a black man was ipso facto rape”; how the NAACP made a strategic decision to avoid cases of sex discrimination in favor of launching a vigorous assault on education issues; the treatment of Black soldiers abroad by the American military during the world wars; and various court cases that challenged miscegenation laws—e.g., *Perez v. Sharp* (1948). Though general readers may occasionally lose their way in the thickets of legal maneuvering, students of the civil rights movement and constitutional law will find plenty of useful information.

A methodical journey through significant legal questions involving racism in America.



Debut author Beaven opens his story with an in-depth account of his training at Fort Sam Houston and his subsequent deployment to Vietnam.

“A highly readable, boots-on-the-ground war memoir by a noncombatant.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“perfectly reconstructs both his world and the many personalities moving through it...good picture of the kind of emotional callouses combat medics have to develop in response to so much death.”

“knows how to let a story breathe...specificity of detail that those historical fiction authors who have not seen combat simply can't replicate.” —Self Publishing Advisor

ISBN 978-1-4787-0480-5

For information on publishing and film rights, email barrybeaven@cs.com

A valuable record of glitz and glamour at play.

FACE TO FACE



FLIGHT LINES **Across the Globe on a Journey With the Astonishing Ultramarathon Birds**

Darby, Andrew
Pegasus (336 pp.)
\$27.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-64313-576-2

A shy, elusive shorebird reveals secrets of avian migration.

Journalist and amateur birder Darby, a former correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, became fascinated by a particular migratory shorebird, the Grey Plover, a “dovish wallflower,” which flies thousands of miles each year from the southern tip of Australia to its Arctic breeding ground, and back. These birds, writes the author, “are driven to be restlessly, globally, mobile.” Through his travels, during which he joined research teams that catch, tag, and track the birds using satellite telemetry and traveled to many of the birds’ staging and breeding

sites, Darby discovered the particular traits that enable migratory birds to traverse a range of temperatures and winds, to survive predators, and to adapt to a changing environment. Because shorebirds find no useful food on land or at sea, they “make epic flapping flights,” up to 7,000 kilometers, “non-stop, without refuelling.” In these birds’ heads, writes the author, “probably in the eye, is an extraordinary sixth sense that gives it the means to know where it is, and the basis for it to navigate anywhere. Birds can ‘see’ earth’s magnetic field” as well as sense polarized light, barometric pressure, and low-level infrasound. Migration impels millions of shorebirds to fly northward through the Yellow Sea on a flyway from Pakistan to the Philippines and southern New Zealand to the Arctic Sea. They must arrive in the Arctic soon after snow has melted, allowing them time to court and mate. Darby notes that migratory shorebird populations have been declining globally, but he sees hope in environmental efforts to protect wetlands and prevent pollution. “The genius of migratory shorebirds,” he writes, “is that they have survived many ice ages, navigating their way around the edges of the possible. They are a reminder to us to measure our lives by the persistence of wildlife on the fringes of daily existence.”

A vividly detailed nature narrative.

JOURNEY OF THE SELF
BY RUTH PONIARSKI

Journey OF THE Self
MEMOIR OF AN ARTIST
RUTH PONIARSKI

A young woman struggles to find her place in the world while also grappling with her mental health in this debut memoir.

“Poniarski also offers clever insights into sexism, the high expectations of her affluent Jewish community, and changing attitudes toward mental health.”

“An engrossing and often beautiful portrait of living with mental illness.”
—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review) ★

ISBN 978-1-7347075-5-7

For information on publishing and film rights, email mindy@warrenpublishing.net • www.ruthponiarski.com



FACE TO FACE **The Photographs of Camilla McGrath**

di Robilant, Andrea
Photos by McGrath, Camilla
Knopf (352 pp.)
\$75.00 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-0-525-65646-3

A photographer chronicles her life among the famous.

Ever since he was a student at Columbia University, di Robilant was a welcome guest at Camilla (1925-2007) and Earl McGrath’s apartment in New York City. Camilla was an old friend of his father’s. She and her husband, who owned a gallery, loved art, and she loved to photograph people. This sumptuous collection of almost 700 photos from 1948 to 1999—now housed at the New York Public Library—forms an “extraordinary collection documenting behind-the-scenes moments in the lives of well-known artists, writers and musicians.” Camilla’s family was wealthy, and her marriage to Earl—whose friends included W.H. Auden and Frank O’Hara—in 1963 was “her ticket to a more unconventional life.” These mostly black-and-white, informal snapshots, some posed, most not, may seem ordinary, but the people in them are not. The first section, “Before Earl,” includes photos of Aristotle Onassis and artist Cy Twombly, among others. In “Marlia” (so named for the Italian estate owned by Camilla’s father), we see Jacqueline Kennedy, Audrey Hepburn, Princess Margaret, Nancy Pelosi, and Fran Lebowitz, who contributes some remembrances. Because Earl worked in the movie business and later at Atlantic Records with Ahmet Ertegun, their circle of famous friends grew. The “New York” section offers pictures of Leonard Bernstein with Richard

Burton, Andy Warhol and Allen Ginsberg. Among countless other notable photos in this appealing package: Samuel Barber and Stephen Spender together; artists Richard Diebenkorn and Jasper Johns “sketching each others’ portrait”; Linda Ronstadt hugging Jerry Brown; Mick Jagger (pictured often) with Norman Mailer, Warhol, Arthur Schlesinger, and others at Jagger’s 1983 Christmas party; architects Michael Graves and Frank Gehry with interior designer Kitty Hawks; Joan Didion with Terry Southern and Jean Stein; and Ezra Pound with Buckminster Fuller in Spoleto in 1971. And the list goes on.

A valuable record of glitz and glamour at play.



HOW TO BE A LIBERAL

Dunt, Ian
 Canbury Press (480 pp.)
 \$35.00 | Nov. 30, 2020
 978-1-912454-41-9

In an age of rampant nationalism and anti-intellectualism, this book urges us to celebrate complexity and diversity.

Dunt, editor of the website politics.co.uk, counterposes liberalism and nationalism, the latter of which, he writes, is based on a sixfold lie. Among

its elements are the thought that we can have only one identity at a time, which makes us “part of the mass: an undifferentiated component of the whole,” and the contention that any difference from that mass is bad. We see the sixth component, “there is no such thing as truth,” enacted with every Trump tweet. As Orwell knew, when politicians can get away with lies, lie they will; if the concepts of truth and falsehood disappear, then they will do as they please. Having established this sixfold premise, Dunt examines the evolution of the idea of liberalism, at least some of which he traces back to Descartes and his obsession with the “gap between dream and reality, the thin line between being awake and...the crazed world of dreaming”—i.e., the foundational stuff of truth and lies. While Descartes is seldom pressed into political work, Dunt makes a good case for doing so. Other figures in the battle against authoritarianism include some of the usual suspects, such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill—who was careful to give credit to his partner, Harriet Taylor, a woman who even so “was erased” from the historical record. The paucity of intellectualism on the far right, an ideology “pumped into the heart and pursued with the fist,” is as evident now as it was a century ago. In a book that makes a good companion to Adam Gopnik’s *A Thousand Small Sanities*, Dunt takes down a few politically correct absurdities, but most of his fire is aimed squarely at Trump, Theresa May, Marine Le Pen, and other enemies of freedom.

When in the course of human events it falls on us to resist, this makes a welcome guidebook.



THE LIGHT AGES
The Surprising Story of Medieval Science

Falk, Seb
 Norton (320 pp.)
 \$30.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
 978-1-324-00293-2

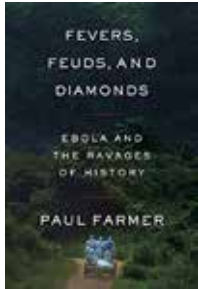
Expert account of the medieval era’s scientific developments.

A broadcaster, historian, and lecturer at Cambridge, Falk reminds us that scholars no longer consider the centuries after the fall of Rome as the Dark Ages. Rather, “the medieval reality...is a Light Age of scientific interest and inquiry.” The author concentrates on Europe, where literacy was a church monopoly largely confined to monasteries. The greatest of these were wealthy institutions with branches, libraries, and schools whose scholars took part in an international community, which also included Muslims and Jews. Eschewing historical superstars—Roger Bacon makes a few appearances—Falk builds a story around John Westwyk, an obscure 14th-century monk who composed (or most likely copied) manuscripts on astronomical instruments, designed and built others, and traveled widely, making observations along the way. The author makes a convincing case that medieval times produced major advances in technology, mathematics, and education as well as some correct but many more fanciful explanations of natural phenomenon. Important inventions included spectacles, the compass, and Arabic numerals, but almost all of what passed for research confined itself to a single field: astronomy, which had always included astrology and would do so well into the Enlightenment. Fascinated by the heavens, medieval researchers produced precise descriptions of its movements and detected the minuscule variations in the earthly day and year. Much of this was in the service of astrology and the timing of holy days, but it had genuinely practical use in the creation of calendars. Although lacking telescopes, they designed exquisitely complex clocks and astronomical instruments—astrolabes, armillary spheres, equatoriums—that were both impressively accurate and works of art. Falk excels at bringing alive the personalities, theological doctrines, cosmology, and often cutthroat monastery politics of the era, but most readers will prefer to skim the lengthy descriptions of the construction and operation of medieval astronomical devices.

An impressive chronicle of human progress.

Insightful, as always, but hardly encouraging.

FEVERS, FEUDS, AND DIAMONDS



FEVERS, FEUDS, AND DIAMONDS *Ebola and the Ravages of History*

Farmer, Paul

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (688 pp.)

\$40.00 | Nov. 17, 2020

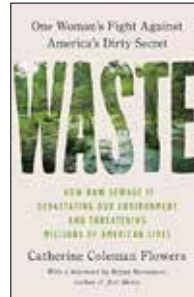
978-0-374-23432-4

This story of the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak by an expert lacks the media hysteria common at the time but

manages to be even more disturbing.

Farmer, the chair of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard and founding director of Partners in Health, has spent his life delivering medical care to undeveloped nations—and writing engagingly about his experiences. In his latest, the author describes the epidemic that likely killed many more people than officially reported. Readers will be surprised to learn that, despite lurid accounts such as Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone*, Ebola is not a death sentence. Treatment involves routine hospital care, especially the replacement of lost fluids intravenously. Deaths were rare in victims evacuated to Europe or America but more than 50% in Africa. Farmer reserves special ire for international organizations proclaiming that simply treating individuals would never defeat the epidemic. Aggressive control measures, including quarantine, contact tracing, and sanitation upgrades, were required. It's a no-brainer, Farmer points out, that sick people want care, and he continues his careerlong, morally sound argument that access to proper health care should be a universal right. Having recounted the epidemic in the first third of the book, the author steps back to describe how the region's history made disaster inevitable—and what the future may hold. Of the nations involved, Sierra Leone and Guinea were colonies until after World War II. Trade has always supported the economies, at first via the slave trade and then extraction—mostly lumber and mining—which benefits wealthy locals and foreign industries. Often kleptocratic governments have built little health infrastructure, and what they did create was often destroyed by vicious civil wars. A final chapter reveals that Farmer and colleagues are now dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, which many developed nations are handling more or less efficiently. Though not yet severely affected, many countries in Africa are unprepared.

Insightful, as always, but hardly encouraging.



WASTE *One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret*

Flowers, Catherine Coleman

The New Press (256 pp.)

\$26.99 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-1-62097-608-1

An environmental activist with the Equal Justice Initiative exposes an alarming rate of hookworm in an Alabama county with inadequate wastewater management.

Imagine that your septic system fails after you lost your job because of Covid-19 or another disaster. Your yard turns into a sewer, and you don't have thousands of dollars for a new tank. Flowers shows that if your state enforces laws that criminalize the failure to maintain a legal septic tank, you could also get arrested. She sees such tragedies frequently among the mostly poor, Black residents of Lowndes County, where “an estimated 90 percent of households have failing or inadequate wastewater systems.” In an imperfect blend of memoir and reporting, the author recalls her years of work to ease conditions so unsanitary a U.N. official said he hadn't seen them “in the first world.” With admirable tenacity, Flowers cultivated reporters; got help from Jane Fonda; took Cory Booker to visit a man whose backyard “held a pit full of waste piped straight from his toilet”; and persuaded Baylor doctors to conduct a study of the region, which found that 34.5% of tested residents had hookworm, a disease of poor sanitation that many people thought the U.S. had eradicated. Similarly dire sewage problems, she shows, exist in places from Appalachia to the San Joaquin Valley. In a largely chronological narrative, Flowers tends to present facts in the order in which she learned them—not when readers most need to know them—and slows the pace with overlong digressions into her earlier years and unedifying passages on topics such as “turning lemons into lemonade” and the effect of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* on her life. The urgent message of the book, however, transcends its writing lapses, and it should raise much-needed awareness of a public health catastrophe.

A useful primer on why America's treatment of raw sewage doesn't pass the smell test.



DOG'S BEST FRIEND *The Story of an Unbreakable Bond*

Garfield, Simon

Morrow/HarperCollins (320 pp.)

\$26.99 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-0-06-305224-6

A British journalist and nonfiction writer explores the “rich, diverse, perplexing and complicated” relationship between humans and canines.

Garfield wrote this book to answer one question: How did humans go from hunting with the wolf ancestors of modern dogs

to pampering them with everything from “furs and bejeweled collars” to “electrically heated daybed[s]”? The human-canine relationship began roughly 15,000 years ago when human beings “settled in permanent places and threw things out.” The bond between them grew so strong that scientists have hypothesized that certain dog features, such as expressive eyebrows, emerged as a result of “natural selection based on the preferences of humans.” Personalizing dogs was an accepted practice as far back as the ancient Greeks. But where the Greeks gave them names to describe “temperament or ability,” owners in modern European countries like Britain and France tend toward giving human names like Alfie, Bella, or Marcel, as though to emphasize their humanness. Cultures have long celebrated dogs in literature and art and made them the subject of spectacles like dog shows and track racing. However, such modern trends as breeding “designer dog[s]” and the penchant to anthropomorphize them—as suggested by William Wegman’s portraits of Weimaraner dogs in “all manner of human garb”—suggest a darker side to dog love: Human affection for canines may be “spilling over into disrespect...[and] exploitation,” and it may also be taking away from their animality, which is part of their appeal. In this well-researched and absorbing narrative, written with the same enthusiasm that characterized *Just My Type* and *On the Map*, Garfield explores the human-dog relationship with humor, intelligence, and warmth. The author also wisely reminds readers that it is the very “dogness” of canines that brings out the best in human beings and binds them to a “wider world...of responsibility and sociability.”

A dog fancier’s delight.



THE QUEER ADVANTAGE
Conversations With LGBTQ+ Leaders on the Power of Identity

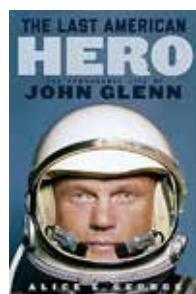
Gelwicks, Andrew
Hachette Go (368 pp.)
\$30.00 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-0-306-87462-8

Prominent queer voices discuss their lives and careers.

In this collection of 50 profiles, assembled by fashion stylist Gelwicks, the contributors explore the nature of identity and the “possibility of a precious, powerful edge” in queerness. Queer men and women spotlight their trailblazing careers across a variety of industries, including arts, social justice, marketing, entrepreneurialism, and sports. The generous Q&A sessions reveal unique perspectives, memories both fond and painful, and sage advice. Leading off is famed gay actor George Takei, whose time in the Japanese American internment camps as a youth and coming out publicly in 2005 shaped his life as a fierce social justice activist and LGBTQ+ advocate. “Being gay gives me another way of looking at people,” he writes. “Characters. Another sensibility.” Musician and actor Troye Sivan remarks about how his experience of coming out to his fans on YouTube at age 18 “felt comfortable and genuine,” a feeling that came about only after he felt he “had a strong enough foundation”

with his family and friends. Drag “superstar” DJ. “Shangela” Pierce credits her recognizable, lucrative persona to her resilience as a queer person as well as sheer determination and simple hard work. Writer Sam Lansky discusses his experiences as a former addict, his struggles with body dysmorphia, and why he feels being queer has both advantages and liabilities. Beth Ford, the first openly lesbian CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation (Land O’Lakes), offers crisp commentary on how her creativity and business acumen primed her for success. She also warns against self-limiting: “Just because you’re part of the queer community, don’t be afraid to build tight relationships with others outside the community. Really step into that because relationships are critical to career success. Careers are not a zero-sum game. When you enable others’ success, it helps develop your own career.” Other contributors include Michael Kors, Margaret Cho, Billie Jean King, Boy George, and Billy Bean.

Inspiring affirmations about queer identity and success.



THE LAST AMERICAN HERO
The Remarkable Life of John Glenn

George, Alice L.
Chicago Review Press (368 pp.)
\$30.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-64160-213-6

After the first manned orbital flight, an astronaut emerged as a star.

Although historian and news editor George says she does not aim to place astronaut and four-term senator John Glenn (1921-2016) “on a pedestal,” her admiring, often fawning, biography, drawn from oral histories with Glenn and his wife, among many other sources, portrays him unabashedly as an inspiring hero who “made Americans feel proud, honorable, invincible, united.” He was the hero, asserts the author, that the country needed to raise morale and inspire hope during the fractious 1960s. “His all-American good looks, his humility, and his virtuous outlook,” she writes, “combined to make him a heralded representation of clean living and American exceptionalism.” Born in a small town in Ohio, Glenn developed “a profound sense of right and wrong” that distinguished him from other young boys. In high school, “he embraced the ideal of public service,” and as a soldier in World War II, he saw himself as “a tough, self-sacrificing crusader for good in its holy war against evil.” The handsome aviator “who loved his wife, worshipped his God, and served his nation seemed perfect,” George writes, noting that other astronauts grew irritated with his “perfectly choreographed public appearances, his by-the-book behavior, and what they viewed as a ‘holier than thou’ attitude.” They called him “the Boy Scout.” The author recounts in (overly) dramatic detail Glenn’s first manned orbital flight, onlookers’ breathless responses, and the accolades that followed. Inspired by his friend Robert Kennedy, Glenn decided to enter politics, was elected to the Senate in 1974, was considered a possible running mate by Jimmy Carter and Michael Dukakis, and, in 1984, made a bid for the

Insightful psychological lessons of special interest to readers on therapeutic journeys of their own.

GOOD MORNING, MONSTER

presidency. A weak, disorganized campaign ultimately failed. At the age of 77, he gained a seat on the space shuttle.

A well-informed biography that presents its subject in a golden light.



GOOD MORNING, MONSTER A Therapist Shares Five Heroic Stories of Emotional Recovery

Gildiner, Catherine
St. Martin's (368 pp.)
\$27.99 | Sep. 22, 2020
978-1-250-27148-8

A Toronto-based clinical psychologist weighs the travails of mental illness on both sufferer and healer.

In addition to patient stories, Gildiner also recounts instances of her own Type A behavior, which leads to the tendency “to mow others down while driving toward our own ambitions.” In one case, she took a patient, to use her apt metaphor, above the depths of the unconscious so quickly that the result was akin to “psychological bends.” The power of the therapist can breed complacency, she notes, and, combined with years of experience, the feeling that one has seen it all. In Gildiner’s case, she certainly had not, and her book is full of self-discovery. One of the most affecting sections of her five-part case study concerns a Cree man who had weathered the death of a child, physical and sexual abuse, and depression. He also suffered from what she calls the “multigenerational trauma” of similar losses, a trauma resistant to treatment by psychotherapy, which “wasn’t designed to deal with cultural annihilation.” Another patient suffers not from multiple personality, as the common trope has it, but instead from dissociative identity, which “means that a fragmentation of the main personality has occurred.” Given that fragmentation refers to bits and pieces of missing psychological skills, it’s a wonder all of us don’t merit the diagnosis. In another instance, a woman was told daily by her grudging mother that she was a monster, “spoiled, grumpy, lazy, and fat,” when in fact she was none of those things. The brainwashing is just that practiced by narcissists at all levels—a valuable lesson for all readers, given how exposed we are to narcissists these days. Overcoming fear is no easy thing, writes the author, and her five patients as well as her own therapy lead her to the pointed conclusion that “all self-examination is brave.”

Insightful psychological lessons of special interest to readers on therapeutic journeys of their own.



THE FALL OF AMERICA JOURNALS, 1965-1971

Ginsberg, Allen
Ed. by Michael Schumacher
Univ. of Minnesota (400 pp.)
\$34.95 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-8166-9963-6

In the 1960s, the acclaimed poet saw America “teetering on the precipice of a fall.”

Ginsberg biographer Schumacher, editor of the poet’s *South American Journals* and *Iron Curtain Journals*, now presents material that provides context for the National Book Award-winning volume *The Fall of America* (1973) as well as insight into Ginsberg’s creative process. Covering the period from 1965 to 1971, the journals contain “auto poesy” meant for publication, notebook entries, and transcriptions from tape recordings made on a reel-to-reel recorder gifted by Bob Dylan. Containing dreams, observations, political commentary, first drafts of poems, and travel writing, the journals document a turbulent period in American life—war, violent protest, assassinations—in addition to personal loss, including deaths of friends and an automobile accident that left Ginsberg hospitalized. He recalls in vivid detail dreams—sometimes erotic, often surreal—populated by a surprising cast of characters: Marianne Moore, Eleanor Roosevelt, and poet Mark Van Doren, his former teacher. Among encounters in real life, one of the most interesting is his extended visit to Ezra Pound in Italy in the fall of 1967. Ginsberg notes Pound’s “tiny pupils” and “silent calm” even when Ginsberg treated him to some popular music: “‘Eleanor Rigby,’ and ‘Yellow Submarine,’ and Dylan’s ‘Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands’ and ‘Gates of Eden’ and ‘Where Are You Tonight, Sweet Marie?’ and Donovan’s ‘Sunshine Superman.’” Prominent among Ginsberg’s entries are sharp political critiques: “The newspapers are full of lies / Just like President Johnson’s eyes,” he wrote in 1967. In 1968, he grieved, “Kennedys dead, King dead, / Malcolm X Assassinated, / Andy Warhol lingering in hospital spleen / shattered by tiny bullets.” In another entry, Ginsberg decries the nation’s “vast police networks” and bellicose foreign policy: “Our quote ‘defense of the free world’ is an aggressive hypocrisy that has changed the very planet’s chance of survival.”

An effusive outpouring of reflections on a traumatic time, most appealing to Ginsberg fans.



THE CHEMISTRY OF FIRE Essays

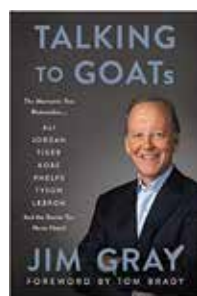
Gonzales, Laurence
Univ. of Arkansas (248 pp.)
\$22.95 paper | Nov. 20, 2020
978-1-68226-151-4

Reflective essays explore what it means to be human.

In the heartbreaking titular essay, Gonzales describes his ex-wife’s long battle with ovarian cancer, chronicling the

progression of her illness and reminiscing about their early days together: “We talked about literature late into the night. We were in our early twenties, dazzled by life. We were beautiful. We were immortal. We were heedless, burning the days.” In these wide-ranging, welcoming pieces, the author shows himself to be a caring, questioning man with a dry wit and big heart. He once played in a band with the “gentle” albino guitarist Johnny Winter, who had “an unearthly way of moving his fingers.” Visiting him years later, Gonzales saw a man who ruined his life with drugs and careless sex. One night, writes the author, Winter “laid open a medicine chest he carried with him. Inside were a paper of heroin, one of coke, some PCP, MDA, THC, LSD, weed, hash, ups, reds, and a few assorted devices for the administration of those potions.” In “The All-Seeing Eye,” Gonzales writes about his father, a scientist who “loved things with lenses.” While visiting Las Vegas with some friends and his movie agents, he saw a sign that read, “Change Redemption,” which “struck me as an oddly spiritual concept in the midst of all this avaricious compulsion until I realized that it was referring to coins, not souls.” In an essay about hiking Mount Washington, which “has the worst weather in America,” the author recounts the deaths of two lost climbers and confronts the “mystery of why rational people do irrational things.” Writing about motorcycles, Gonzales learned the hard way that riding one is “about the most dangerous thing most people can figure out how to do.” Whether he’s swimming in an underwater cave or touring a NASA center in Huntsville, Alabama, “a kind of hillbilly heaven,” these savvy essays are a pleasure.

An appealing collection about all the “rough and joyful realities” of life.



TALKING TO GOATS
The Moments You Remember and the Stories You Never Heard

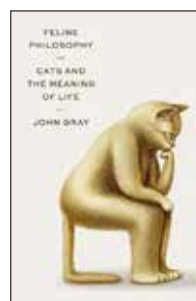
Gray, Jim
Morrow/HarperCollins (320 pp.)
\$28.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-06-299206-2

A Hall of Fame broadcaster takes us behind the scenes of his biggest interviews and stories.

Gray, recognizable to even casual sports fans, has had a front row seat to some of the most indelible games, fights, and moments in sports history. Here, he pulls readers aside to explain how it all came together, from his days as a wide-eyed college kid in Denver assigned to interview Muhammad Ali to his friendships with the likes of LeBron James, Mike Tyson, Jack Nicholson, and countless others. In a sense, there are versions of the author. One is a hard-nosed journalist who famously put the screws to Pete Rose before a World Series game about Rose’s gambling on baseball (an interview that earned Gray death threats). The other Gray knows that the best way to cultivate sources in his line of work is to form real relationships. “Over the years,” he writes, “I found that relationships and loyalty matter as much as ability—in my business and in almost

any endeavor worth doing.” Though the prose isn’t scintillating, Gray knows how to tell a story, and he’s wise enough to know that anyone who buys the book will be drawn to the cast of characters. The narrative abounds with fascinating tales: Gray watched boxing promoter Don King hand Tyson a \$30 million check only to see the fighter rack up an \$800,000 tab at Versace—a night before he stepped into the ring and bit off a chunk of Evander Holyfield’s ear. While wandering the Upper West Side in Manhattan, a limo pulled up, and Richard Nixon rolled down the window, invited Gray inside, and peppered him with sports talk for 45 minutes. Throughout, the author demonstrates his combination of knowledge, longevity, talent, and likability, with just a little pit bull thrown in for good measure. Tom Brady provides the foreword.

Gray has been there, done that, and taken excellent notes.



FELINE PHILOSOPHY
Cats and the Meaning of Life

Gray, John
Farrar, Straus and Giroux (144 pp.)
\$25.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-0-374-15411-0

Cats are not philosophers. However, as renowned philosopher Gray argues, they have plenty to teach us about how to live.

“Cats do not need to examine their lives because they do not doubt that life is worth living,” writes the author in this slim, striking book. “Human self-consciousness has produced the perpetual unrest that philosophy has vainly tried to cure.” Anyone who has spiraled into the depths of self-consciousness will recognize the truth in Gray’s position, even at its most forceful articulation: “Posing as a cure, philosophy is a symptom of the disorder it pretends to remedy.” Feline philosophy, such as it is, is a kind of anti-philosophy. Without the abstract fear of death, there is nothing to start them reflecting and philosophizing. Given the differences in nature between cats and humans, what can we learn from cats? In the final chapter, Gray offers “ten feline hints on how to live well” that are as likely as any philosopher’s maxims to offer value for general readers. For example: “Sleep for the joy of sleeping. Sleeping so that you can work harder when you wake up is a miserable way to live.” Sound advice, but how to put it into practice? Can we become more like cats just by deciding to be? These prescriptions, however, are not indicative of most of the book, which is curious and exploratory. Gray moves freely among writing modes, including several of the potted biographies that are common to popular works of philosophy. But he also tells stories of famous cats, dabbling in evolutionary history and showing a clear appreciation for his subject. Above all, the book is an ode to cats, and Gray gives the impression of having learned from them how to take pleasure where he finds it.

A playful philosophy encouraging us to philosophize less and play more. The paradoxes are only part of the fun.



PUNK, POST PUNK, NEW WAVE
Onstage, Backstage, in Your Face, 1978-1991

Grecco, Michael
Photos by the author
Abrams (240 pp.)
\$40.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-4197-4854-7

A photographic document of a critical pocket of the American punk scene in all its brash and seedy glory.

Boston—home turf for photographer Grecco, whose work from the late 1970s through mid-'80s is showcased here—was an underrated punk and new wave epicenter. It boasted its own top-tier acts—most prominently, the Cars and 'Til Tuesday—and was often where U.S. and U.K. acts kicked off their tours. So one pleasure of this collection is that it spotlights a host of major artists in the early stages of their careers: Elvis Costello, the Plasmatics, New Order, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Devo, and more. Because most of the venues they played were smaller clubs, Grecco captures a distinctly uninhibited, before-they-were-famous vibe, shooting his subjects goofing off in grimy dressing rooms, snorting cocaine, or lounging in radio stations. The concert photos show Grecco's knack for making his subjects look larger than life; shots of the Ramones and the Dead Kennedys have a live-wire energy, and Public Image Ltd's John Lydon looks at once manic and imposing. Somewhat oddly, Grecco chooses to arrange his photos by venue, which gives a sense of the size and relative sleaziness of each club but little other information. (Frustratingly, captions are largely absent, though presumably any interested reader would recognize most performers on sight.) In the later pages, Grecco captures the Clash at the height of their fame and David Bowie at Foxboro Stadium ("It was the only time I saw him, but it was still magical"). Introductory essays by the B-52's' Fred Schneider and longtime journalist Jim Sullivan set the scene well, convincingly positioning Boston as "a microcosm for a youthquake that was happening in cities across America, England, and Europe."

A ramshackle set of rock portraits, charming though stingy with context.



WHEN SUNDAY COMES
Gospel Music in the Soul and Hip-Hop Eras

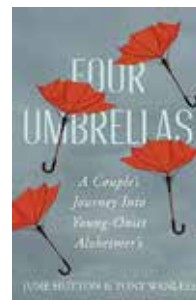
Harold, Claudrena N.
Univ. of Illinois (288 pp.)
\$22.95 paper | Nov. 16, 2020
978-0-252-08547-5

The latest in the publisher's Music in American Life series is a five-decade survey of the biggest luminaries in Black gospel music and their complicated relationships with the mainstream.

Despite claiming beloved acts like Kirk Franklin and platinum-selling performers like BeBe and CeCe Winans, who have

collaborated with Top 40 artists, contemporary Black gospel tends to get short shrift among pop-music historians. One reason for that is because "crossover" artists defy classification and are often treated as novelties or interlopers by secular listeners and apostates and by the churchy base. But within that tension, the music has been rich with "great artistic innovation and advancement," writes Harold, a professor of African and African American studies and history at the University of Virginia. To make that case, the author delivers brief biographies of more than a dozen influential artists. Andraé Crouch, for instance, infused the music with funk and soul in the 1970s and attracted masses of White listeners; Al Green bolstered the genre's credibility with mainstream critics by delivering gospel albums as accessible as his R&B classics; groups like Commissioned and the Winans rode New Jack Swing beats to the pop charts. Harold is clearly a passionate fan, and she conveys the passion of her fellow listeners; she recalls visiting gospel stores in her hometown of Jacksonville, where demand for John P. Kee albums outpaced supply. The author is correct in her argument that this is neglected history, but the book raises questions that deserve closer attention. Why did some artists face a backlash for crossing over but not others? How did their lyrics navigate secular liberalism and religious conservatism? What were the upsides and downsides of Black artists migrating to White-owned labels? Harold's artist-by-artist biographical structure limits opportunities for deeper synthesis and critical engagement with such questions.

A solid introduction to individual artists with plenty of room for further research.



FOUR UMBRELLAS
A Couple's Journey Into Young-Onset Alzheimer's

Hutton, June & Wanless, Tony
Dundurn (224 pp.)
\$18.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-4597-4779-1

A married Vancouver couple share their heartbreaking ordeal with Alzheimer's disease.

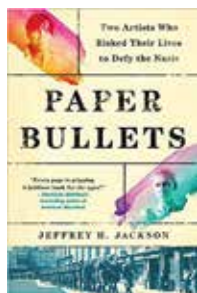
After Wanless, who had suffered from depression for most of his life, left his journalism career in 2002 to work as a freelancer, Hutton, a novelist and teacher, began to notice fissures in her husband's mental foundation. After filling in the details of their lives together as writers struggling through the recession of 2008, the authors move to 2011, when Wanless, in his 50s, was becoming increasingly forgetful, confused, and irritable after suffering a minor fall at home. Hutton suspected that he'd suffered a stroke, but scans and diagnostic tests showed only mild cognitive impairment. His condition deteriorated further as the years progressed, and Hutton discovered months of unpaid bills, appliances left on, and general disorientation. This situation caused a shift in her role to both wife and caregiver, an increasingly stressful pairing that coincided with her father's declining health (her mother

A unique WWII history and absorbing story of two bold, unconventional women.

PAPER BULLETS

died in 2006). Though predominantly written by Hutton, this is very much a joint debut memoir; Wanless offers a fresh perspective in the form of reprinted emails to his wife. They diligently piece together fragmented impressions about suffering with debilitating memory loss, depression, and the “long, slow fade” that Wanless believes began when he left the newsroom behind. Finally, in early 2018, after years spent yearning for a definitive diagnosis from gerontology scans, a battery of neurological memory tests confirmed early-stage Alzheimer’s disease. Throughout the text, Hutton is candid, openly admitting that a memoir isn’t the kind of book she’d envisioned herself writing. Earlier in her career, she published two novels, and she now teaches writing at an addiction recovery center. The authors present a harrowing, moving seven-year odyssey, rendered in heart-wrenchingly sad yet compassionate and loving detail. Near the end, Hutton offers informative personal thoughts on dealing with dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, which should be useful for readers encountering similar obstacles.

Intimate, poignant perspectives on a cruel malady of the mind.



PAPER BULLETS Two Artists Who Risked Their Lives To Defy the Nazis

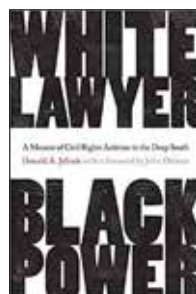
Jackson, Jeffrey H.
Algonquin (336 pp.)
\$27.95 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-61620-916-2

The story of two women artists who courageously resisted Nazi occupation of a small island.

Historian Jackson offers a fresh look at World War II resistance through the lives of Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe, lovers who lived on Jersey, part of the Channel Islands, throughout the Nazi occupation. The daughters of wealthy families in Nantes, the two had fallen in love when they were teenagers, thrived among the avant-garde in Paris in the 1920s and '30s, and moved to Jersey in 1937 to escape rising oppression and anti-Semitism—Lucy had Jewish heritage—in the French capital. As artists, Lucy took the moniker Claude Cahun and Suzanne, Marcel Moore, with which they signed their creative work: photographs, collages, drawings. “By choosing new identities but also keeping their given names, Lucy and Suzanne remained somewhere between masculine and feminine,” Jackson observes, “resisting either category fully and enjoying the freedom to float between the two when it suited them.” In Jersey, the women were determined to demoralize the occupiers, leaving notes, cartoons, and illustrations throughout the island where soldiers could find them. “Each message,” writes the author, “tried to convince soldiers to lay down weapons, desert, and go home.” With increasing German paranoia about spies and subterfuge, avoiding suspicion was difficult; but it was not until late in the war that the women were arrested, interrogated, tried, and sentenced to death—a sentence successfully appealed.

They were released after Germany’s surrender. For Lucy, who suffered many physical and mental debilities, the war “was the one moment in her life when she seemed to have the strongest sense of purpose and the most direct vision about who she wanted to be.” Drawing on archival and genealogical sources, the women’s own writings, and histories of the period, Jackson creates a vivid picture of the tense, fearsome atmosphere of Jersey under Nazi occupation and the perils of resistance.

A unique WWII history and absorbing story of two bold, unconventional women.



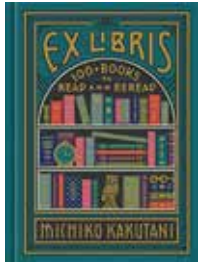
WHITE LAWYER, BLACK POWER A Memoir of Civil Rights Activism in the Deep South

Jelinek, Donald A.
Univ. of South Carolina (280 pp.)
\$29.99 paper | Nov. 23, 2020
978-1-64336-118-5

An autobiographical history clearly demonstrating how Black lives did not matter in the Jim Crow South.

In a disquieting and timely memoir, civil rights lawyer and activist Jelinek recounts candidly his experiences in the South, from 1965, when he arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, to work for the ACLU, until 1968, when he left for California to rethink his future. Intending to stay in Mississippi for only three weeks, Jelinek experienced what he calls “the ‘Mississippi High’: the intoxication felt by white middle class civil rights workers who suddenly found themselves thrust into the idealism of the civil rights cause.” Warmly welcomed by sharecroppers and the activist community, he was shocked by the racism and corruption among judges, lawyers, and all-White juries, and he recalls in chilling detail many instances of personal and professional peril. During the time Jelinek spent in the South, the civil rights community began to split between those who believed in slow, incremental change and those who advocated taking to the streets. “Militant Black Pride philosophy spread” after Stokely Carmichael—a man the author came to admire and respect—delivered his Black Power speech, drowning out “the sweet multi-racial sentiments of civil rights anthems,” and inciting “harsh separatist rhetoric.” In 1966, when Jelinek moved to Selma to head an ACLU office, he found deep rivalries: “[A] racial scorecard was needed to track all the players: Black v. Black, White v. White, Black v. White, SNCC v. SCLC and Sheriff Jim Clark’s people against just about everyone.” Finally, after being fired by the ACLU for tactics the organization deemed unprofessional, Jelinek founded the Southern Rural Research Project, focused solely on providing food to hungry, malnourished Black families. After he returned to California, he felt a profound loss of purpose and camaraderie until he found a like-minded community in the Bay Area Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement.

A sharply etched memoir of the struggle for civil rights.



EX LIBRIS
100+ Books To Read and Reread

Kakutani, Michiko
Illus. by Tanamachi, Dana
Clarkson Potter (304 pp.)
\$22.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-0-525-57497-2

A literary critic celebrates books that she has loved.

Pulitzer Prize winner Kakutani, former chief book critic at the *New York Times*, has been a capacious, eclectic reader since childhood. Aiming to encourage reading and rereading, she presents succinct essays on more than 130 books that she believes “deserve as wide an audience as possible,” ranging from the *Odyssey* to Ocean Vuong’s novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*, “an unsparing rumination on identity” published in 2019. In the introduction, Kakutani rehearses predictable assertions about the benefits of reading. Books, she writes, “can transport us back to the past” and “forward to idealized or dystopian futures,” take us to far-off places, and introduce us to beliefs different from our own. They “can surprise and move us, challenge our certainties, and goad us into reexamining our default settings.” The essays themselves are more perceptive, offering fresh, inspired assessments of a wide range of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry: memoir, biography, and history; social, political, environmental, and cultural analysis; nature writing; children’s books (she responds to six Dr. Seuss stories with her own, unfortunate, doggerel), and young adult fiction. Kakutani focuses on many canonical texts, including *The Federalist Papers*, *George Washington’s Farewell Address*, *Moby-Dick*, *Frankenstein*, *Winesburg, Ohio*, *The Waste Land*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Invisible Man*; and on canonical authors, such as Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, George Orwell, and Toni Morrison. But surprises abound, including four books by and about Muhammad Ali (“a larger-than-life figure: not just an incandescent athlete dancing under the lights, but a man of conscience who spoke truth to power”); Richard Flanagan’s “dazzling, phantasmagorical” *Gould’s Book of Fish*; Tommy Orange’s “fierce, sad, funny, and transcendent novel” *There, There*; the Harry Potter books (“one of literature’s ultimate bildungsromans”); two “heart-stopping books” about the war on terror (David Finkel’s *The Good Soldiers* and *Thank You for Your Service*); and a sprightly biography of Frank Sinatra.

A spirited, heartfelt homage to reading.



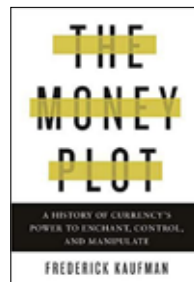
KNOCKOUT

Kang, Mia
Abrams (288 pp.)
\$26.00 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-4197-4332-0

The dramatic life trajectory of an international fashion model.

Kang’s story begins in Hong Kong in the 1990s, where she grew up with a host of stepsiblings within a familial “mixed bag of Asian and Caucasian lineage.” Though overweight and fat-shamed in school, she found solace traveling with her father while cringing from the cruelty of her Korean mother’s rampant alcoholic rages. Kang soon found motivation in a dangerous crash diet that shaved a third of her bodyweight in just four months. At the suggestion of her modern dance teacher, she approached modeling agencies and scored a lucrative contract at age 17 that took her around the world and garnered her long-awaited attention from men. Rushing in behind that sudden fame, however, came body-image issues and toxic relationships with drugs, transient friends, and a grab bag of potent laxatives and diuretics able “to get me to shrivel down to the smallest possible Mia I could be.” The author delivers the gritty details via a raw, street-wise narrative voice that feels engrossingly authentic. As her modeling career took off, the industry’s dark-sided pitfalls came into focus. “Everything about me was the same except that number on the scale,” she writes, “but that seemed to have determined my whole life.” She continued to struggle with eating disorders, drug addiction, and an obsession with maintaining the coveted “thigh gap.” During a vacation in Thailand, Kang accidentally discovered and fell in love with the martial art of muay thai, which eventually freed her mind and shocked her body into a healthier new direction that she believes saved her life and inspired the sobriety she enjoys today. A closing letter to her younger self reflects on her mistakes and the epiphanies that rescued her mind and body. Budding models and those who have ever battled weight issues or drug dependency will find Kang’s transformational narrative rewarding.

A vibrant, motivational debut memoir.



THE MONEY PLOT
A History of Currency's Power To Enchant, Control, and Manipulate

Kaufman, Frederick
Other Press (272 pp.)
\$27.99 | Nov. 24, 2020
978-1-59051-718-5

Harper’s contributing editor Kaufman looks at the hidden meanings of money and its uses in ancient and modern cultures.

The author trades the brisk, shoe-leather reporting of *Bet the Farm* for a dense, scholarly history of cash and its metaphorical

A powerful story of the right of children to live and thrive from birth.

A GOOD TIME TO BE BORN

significance. He posits that money is an allegorical “fiction” in which every element “corresponds to something other than itself and it is up to the reader to break the code and translate the meaning.” Drawing on disciplines such as narrative theory and cross-cultural anthropology, Kaufmann analyzes the messages latent in money or its stand-ins, which range from the ostrich-egg-shell beads of Neolithic Kenyans to bitcoin. “Currencies” have included slain warriors’ wives, who often became concubines of their husbands’ killers in ancient Greece, and Native American wampum, which served as a “historical record of treaties and transfers of property.” Tracing the impact of the rise of financial markets, Kaufman links events and ideas as disparate as Richard Nixon’s decision to untether the dollar from gold and Claude Lévi-Strauss’ concept of the “floating signifier.” The author is skeptical of newer, near-inscrutable tools like the Chicago Board of Exchange’s volatility index, or “the Fear Index.” If we can’t decrypt such innovations, we risk “becoming pawns and shells ourselves, other people’s money.” Kaufman’s prose is often turgid—one example: “The acolytes of Bachelier, Bhattacharya, Black, Scholes, and Natterberg live in a world only they can perceive; a world where a Delta hedge is simply one of a multitude of back spreads, front spreads, diagonals, Christmas trees, butterflies, condors, strangles and other baroque trading strategies”—but the book may interest readers with tastes broad enough to encompass ancient Greek philosophy, *The Golden Bough*, corporate strategy, *A Random Walk Down Wall Street*, cryptocurrency, and detailed discussions of literary theory and its relation to monetary policy or investment strategy. Others may wonder if its ideas, complex as they are, couldn’t have been more effectively presented in a long-form magazine article.

An erudite but sluggish overview of the role of money throughout history.



BEETHOVEN A Political Artist in Revolutionary Times

Kinderman, William
Univ. of Chicago (256 pp.)
\$35.00 | Nov. 18, 2020
978-0-226-66905-2

A study of how Beethoven responded artistically to chaos and disillusion.

Drawing on letters, sketchbooks, manuscripts, and abundant scholarship, concert pianist and music scholar Kinderman argues convincingly that Beethoven (1770–1827) was “far from indifferent” to political events that roiled Europe during his lifetime. Throughout his career, Beethoven “aimed to communicate teeming emotions in the here and now. The fervor of the moment, the snapshot of intense human feeling.” He was deeply influenced by the writings of poet and dramatist Friedrich Schiller, who urged artists to affirm freedom through their art and exhorted composers to imbue their music with “a sense of moral purpose.” Offering minutely close exegeses of Beethoven’s works—which assume the reader’s familiarity with the oeuvre as well as

with musical composition—Kinderman shows how the composer responded to the “tensions and contradictions” of the time: “the spirit of enlightened movements of the 1780s—Immanuel Kant’s critiques, liberal reforms, cultural activism” as well as the chaotic aftermath of the French Revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. Growing up under “patchwork German governments,” Beethoven settled in Vienna in 1792, where he experienced an oppressive, reactionary regime. Among many works discussed, Kinderman cites Beethoven’s opera *Fidelio* as one that conveys “a political theme of striking relevance” even today. Derived from “a gritty real-life drama from the Reign of Terror in France,” *Fidelio* expresses Beethoven’s disdain not for “authority as such, but the misuse of authority.” In *Fidelio*, explains the author, “themes of unjust imprisonment at the hands of a tyrant and heroic valor in the name of freedom are expressed in a way not merely realistic but deeply symbolic and archetypal in import.” In the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” based on a poem by Schiller, has been adopted as the anthem of the European Union, a piece that reverberates with idealism, affirmation, and hope.

Meticulous research informs a perceptive analysis.



A GOOD TIME TO BE BORN How Science and Public Health Gave Children a Future

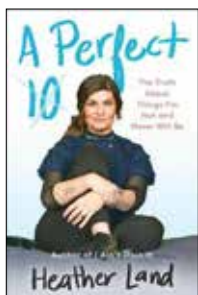
Klass, Perri
Norton (384 pp.)
\$28.95 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-0-393-60999-8

A history of the scientific discoveries and public health mobilizations that made the world safer for children.

As late as the beginning of the 20th century, writes NYU journalism and pediatrics professor Klass, “childhood death was always there, in the shadows at the edge of the family landscape.” Children would die, “regularly and unsurprisingly,” from a host of contagions and infections, often in the forms of epidemics such as typhoid, cholera, polio, smallpox, and diphtheria. The author, a smooth storyteller, traces the arc of medical advancement targeted at that vulnerable population, suggesting that no segment of society was exempt. However, it was also clear that the poor, immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and African Americans would suffer the most. In a remarkable fusion of science, public health, private institutions, and medicine, a slow but steadily growing movement brought necessary sanitation upgrades to cities and advanced understanding of bacteriology, virology, nutrition, and pharmacology. Klass effectively situates childhood deaths and the growth of pediatric medicine in both social and cultural contexts; one interesting section examines the subject via literature, including “sentimental poetry” and even gallows humor. “In that lost world in which dead children and mourning parents were routine and regular parts of life,” writes Klass, “morbid humor clearly had its place.” With steady narrative momentum, the author follows the long road that led to germ theory and the growing belief that it was

“not just a parental obligation to prevent [childhood death] but a social responsibility.” Klass also chronicles the egregious missteps: eugenics, social Darwinism, and the racist, classist beliefs that hampered treatment for the poor and people of color. The author completes the picture with a range of subjects, including the dangers of childbirth; ethical issues in the neonatal unit; parents who don’t believe in vaccinations; psychosocial problems, including the shaming of “refrigerator mothers”; and the scourges of measles, chickenpox, polio, and tuberculosis.

A powerful story of the right of children to live and thrive from birth.



**A PERFECT 10
The Truth About Things I'm
Not and Never Will Be**

Land, Heather
Howard Books/Simon & Schuster
(224 pp.)
\$26.00 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-982104-18-4

A comedian offers humor and wisdom from a life spent “trying to stay afloat.”

West Tennessee native Land grew up in a small town “where family and church were at the center of everything I knew” and women “learn to please [and] to agree.” She credits this seemingly wholesome background with teaching her “how to perform for God and everybody else around me.” Later, as a divorced single mother of two children, Land discovered what would become her trademark sarcasm. In grappling with the pressure society places on women to maintain a certain idealistic physical appearance, she came to the eventual conclusion that even though her body was “two parts Diet Coke, one part hot fudge sundae,” she was, of course, still worthy of self-love. Parenting children—especially teenagers—led to other revelations. Where once she thought that raising teens would be as fun and predictable as episodes of *That ’70s Show*, she later realized that being a mother to adolescents looked more like an episode of *Law & Order*, “except there is no law or order in the day-to-day interactions in my home anymore.” Life as a single woman looking for companionship brought its own lessons. Land, who posts popular comic videos on Facebook, became painfully aware that her proclivity to “fix people” had turned her into a “missionary date[r]” who sought to change the men in her life. When she later fell in love with an Indian man 12 years her junior, she regained her faith in good partnerships and also learned that love “may not come packaged the way you think.” Warm, funny and down to earth, this book celebrates how “being knocked around by [the] waves” of life is not only salutary, but also the source of the best, most engaging kind of humor.

A bighearted and candidly humane memoir.



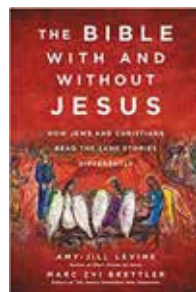
BLACK HOLE SURVIVAL GUIDE

Levin, Janna
Illus. by Halloran, Lia
Knopf (160 pp.)
\$22.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-525-65822-1

A short, lively account of one of the oddest and most intriguing topics in astrophysics.

Levin, a Guggenheim fellow and professor of physics and astronomy at Barnard College, knows her subject well, but her goal is appreciation as much as education, and there is much to admire in a black hole. Before Einstein, writes the author, scientists believed that the force of gravity influenced the speed of moving objects. They also knew that light always travels at exactly the speed of light. This combination made no sense until 1915, when Einstein explained that gravity is not a force but a curving of space (really, space-time) near a body of matter. The more massive the matter, the greater it curves the space in its vicinity; other bodies that approach appear to bend or change speed when they are merely moving forward through distorted space-time. Einstein’s equations indicated that, above a certain mass, space-time would curve enough to double back on itself and disappear, but this was considered a mathematical curiosity until the 1960s, when objects that did just that began turning up: black holes. Light cannot emerge from a black hole, but it is not invisible. Large holes attract crowds of orbiting stars whose density produces frictional heating and intense radiation. No writer, Levin included, can contain their fascination with the event horizon, the boundary of the black hole where space-time doubles back. Nothing inside the event horizon, matter or radiation, can leave, and anything that enters is lost forever. Time slows near the horizon and then stops. The author’s discussions of the science behind her subject will enlighten those who have read similar books, perhaps the best being Marcia Bartusiak’s *Black Hole* (2015). Readers coming to black holes for the first time will share Levin’s wonder but may struggle with some of her explanations.

An enthusiastic appreciation of a spectacular astrophysical entity.



**THE BIBLE WITH AND
WITHOUT JESUS
How Jews and Christians
Read the Same Stories
Differently**

Levine, Amy-Jill & Brettler, Mark Zvi
HarperOne (528 pp.)
\$34.99 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-0-06-256015-5

An ecumenical look at the Bible.

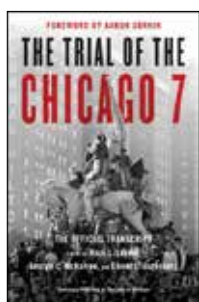
Biblical scholars Levine and Brettler, editors of *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, tackle the worthy

Given that 2020 is shaping up to be another 1968, this is an invaluable—and timely—historical document.

THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7

yet weighty task of examining the Jewish Scriptures through both Jewish and Christian eyes, seeking to promote further understanding between adherents of both religions. The authors make clear that while both Jews and Christians have similar beliefs regarding what is variously called the Tanakh, the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible, the lenses through which each religion views these Scriptures—as reflecting either the story of Israel or the story of Christ—are quite different. Additionally, the original hearers and readers of these Scriptures viewed the texts through yet a third type of lens. Demonstrating how these three views of Scripture differ from and interact with each other, Levine and Brettler hope “to foster a different future, where Jews and Christians come to understand each other’s positions and beliefs, and at the minimum, respectfully agree to disagree.” To perform this task, the authors present 10 passages or themes from the Tanakh and examine how each has been read in different eras and across various faith traditions. These passages all tie in closely with the Christian understanding of its own faith tradition, yet some may not be as essential to Jewish readers—e.g., the story of Adam and Eve, the priesthood of Melchizedek, the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, the story of Jonah. In each case, the authors provide context for the theme based on other Scriptures and on what scholars know of the language, culture, and events of the time. They go on to explain how the Scripture in question has been viewed by both Christians and Jews and why and how modern believers might be able to find a common ground of understanding and tolerance between these interpretations.

A thorough, readable addition to the consistently fecund Jewish-Christian conversation.



THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7
The Official Transcript

Ed. by Levine, Mark L. & McNamee,
George C. & Greenberg, Daniel L.
Simon & Schuster (384 pp.)
\$17.00 paper | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-982155-08-7

Thoughtfully assembled chronicle of the trial of seven anti-war activists in 1969 and 1970.

As Aaron Sorkin writes in the introduction to this new version, originally published in 1970 as *The Tales of Hoffman*, the real instigators of the riots in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic Convention were the police, who sent hundreds of protestors to the hospital with serious injuries, “many of them to the skull.” Still, the government decided to make a law-and-order lesson of eight radicals; Bobby Seale, the co-founder of the Black Panthers, was eventually given a separate trial, whence the Chicago 7. The judge, Julius Hoffman, was clearly not sympathetic to the accused, who, it is to be admitted from these transcripts, were bent on turning the trial into street theater, with a take-no-prisoners defense attorney in William Kunstler, who said, “the defense will show that the real conspiracy in this case is...the conspiracy to curtail and prevent

the demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and related issues.” The exchanges between judge and defense (and defendants) were often testy. Said Hoffman (no relation to Abbie, he hastened to observe) to Kunstler, “You know Mr. Mies van der Rohe designed that lectern for the use of counsel and I wish you would stay behind it, sir,” to which Kunstler replied, “Your Honor, sometimes for a free spirit, it is quite confining, so I move a little, and I am sorry.” Only two of the seven defendants were called to speak, but all of them had their moments, which earned plenty of jail time on contempt charges above and beyond the government’s charges against them. So did courtroom observers, such as the anonymous voice that warned the judge, “they will dance on your grave, Julie, and the graves of the pig empire.” The transcript, edited by three lawyers, gives a nearly blow-by-blow account of the principal moments in the proceedings, which are both entertaining and sobering.

Given that 2020 is shaping up to be another 1968, this is an invaluable—and timely—historical document.



ROLLING STONE
The Illustrated Portraits

Ed. by Levy, Joe & Fine, Jason
Rizzoli (256 pp.)
\$65.00 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-0-8478-6879-7

A coffee-table book visual history of *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Although the book, edited by *Billboard* editor-at-large Levy and *Rolling Stone* editor Fine, first appears to be another handsome edition to Rizzoli’s impressive catalog, this is more of a glitzy self-celebration. Following an introduction by Gus Wenner, the son of magazine founder Jann and COO of Wenner Media, the collection of illustrations reflects the life of a magazine whose cultural relevance (and page count) has been in steady decline for years. Though the illustrated portraits, extracted from their original contexts, are easy enough on the eyes, there is definitely an unpleasant air of gratuitousness and product packaging. No doubt there are some heavy-duty illustrators represented here, many of whom did some of their best work for the magazine: Milton Glaser’s early-1970s renditions of Stevie Wonder and Jerry Garcia epitomized an unmistakable urban style that would influence an entire decade of graphic design. Al Hirschfeld’s angle-heavy rendering of Madonna is stylish and inimitable but doesn’t quite resemble the Material Girl. Thomas Woodruff’s rendering of Jim Morrison is a welcome departure from the rampant *Rolling Stone* caricature style, as he skillfully transforms the Lizard King’s likeness into a mock Old Masters portrait. Fittingly, the book includes a Ralph Steadman portfolio section, which features the now-iconic illustrations that served as the perfect visual complement to Hunter S. Thompson’s acid-casualty flights of gonzo journalism. Unfortunately, the collection includes a number of duds that should have been left in the dustbin of history as the fashionable mistakes they were—e.g., Hanoch Piven’s ill-advised lightbulb-nosed portrait of Bob

Dylan and Christian Clayton's all-thumbs attempt at capturing the essence of the Clash. Overall, the book is a boutique sell that is sure to gather dust on plenty of fashionable bookshelves.

An intermittently interesting look at the illustrated history of an iconic consumer magazine long past its prime.



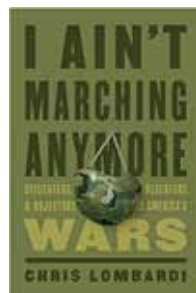
BRAVE NEW HOME
**Our Future in Smarter,
Simpler, Happier Housing**

Lind, Diana
Bold Type Books (272 pp.)
\$28.00 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-5417-4266-6

An urban policy specialist investigates housing choices in the U.S. and their economic, social, and environmental implications.

Much has changed in the housing picture since the rise in popularity of the single-family home, writes Lind, who tackles her subject with precision, on-the-ground reporting, and theoretical rigor. Just after World War I, the "Own Your Own Home" campaign arose in the wake of "a public health movement that was biased against the density of urban life, the family-centric approach to living, the creation of street-car transit, and the incentivizing of early suburbia." However, problems with this much-institutionalized ideal became evident early on: isolation, housing costs, household upkeep, environmental inefficiency, and racism in the form of redlining, exclusionary housing regulations, and restrictive covenants. The author, executive director of the Arts + Business Council for Greater Philadelphia, argues that a more flexible approach to housing would cure many of these ills. This would counter the stigmas and classism attached to densely occupied habitations and promote the affordability, community, and simplicity of co-living, micro-apartments, and tiny houses. Although Lind occasionally slides into the hazy territory of "paradigm shifts" and a "brave new world," she mostly works from steady ground. She proceeds from a history of housing modes in the U.S.—inns, boardinghouses, tenements, and apartments—to discussions of the streetcar suburbs and the more expansive sprawl that requires car travel. Not every reader will be enthusiastic about the concept of communal-style co-living arrangements (a tiny house may be more amenable), but the author delivers consistently solid arguments in favor of extended-family housing and other options outside the single-family paradigm. Humans, after all, are social beings and seek the comfort of a dependable community. "In co-living arrangements," writes Lind, "there's an open invitation to connect with people in common spaces."

A vibrant case for a host of viable alternatives to the single-family home.



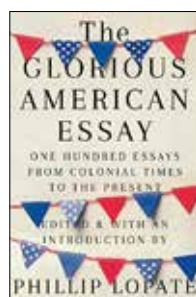
I AIN'T MARCHING ANYMORE
**Dissenters, Deserters, and
Objectors to America's Wars**

Lombardi, Chris
The New Press (320 pp.)
\$27.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-62097-317-2

An episodic account of Americans who, in times of war, have gone against the mainstream.

The title comes from Phil Ochs, and it's on the mark, since many of journalist Lombardi's subjects marched, fought, bled—and then resisted. One case in point is Daniel Shays, who fought bravely during the Revolutionary War but then, underpaid and with a family to support, had to sell the sword given to him by the Marquis de Lafayette. "The inadequate pay made soldiers like Shays...suspect that those in power, from state legislators to General Washington, saw them as somehow disposable," Lombardi writes. Thus Shays' Rebellion and other actions by veterans demanding compensation, a theme that would be picked up 150 years later with the Bonus Army. Some of the author's other subjects include Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who went against his superiors in objection to the terms of the "Indian removals" of the Jacksonian era; "after nearly a year of crossing the country and talking to tribal leaders," writes Lombardi, Hitchcock wrote a detailed report showing that, as he put it, "every conceivable subterfuge was employed by designing white men on ignorant Indians." That report was suppressed. The author also writes about the women who fought in disguise in the Civil War and Clara Barton, whose "gender-dissent lay in her creation of a formerly inconceivable all-female battlefield nursing corps." The definition seems stretched to the point of breaking before returning to familiar ground with such figures as Vietnam War fighter-turned-anti-war activist-turned-politician John Kerry, who "was among the eight hundred veterans on the steps of the Capitol who threw back their medals, ribbons, war memorabilia." The narrative often runs out of steam, and there's not much of a thesis—there are those who go along and those who don't—but Lombardi covers a lot of ground and chronicles events too little remembered today.

Anti-war activists and civil libertarians will find aid and comfort in stories of those who just said no.



**THE GLORIOUS AMERICAN
ESSAY**
**One Hundred Essays From
Colonial Times to the Present**

Ed. by Lopate, Phillip
Pantheon (928 pp.)
\$40.00 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-5247-4726-8

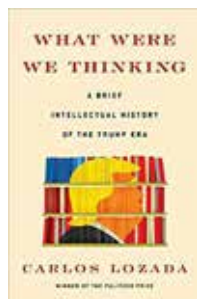
Four centuries of essays testify to the richness of the form.

Essential for fans of the film but also for anyone with ambitions to work in film on either side of the camera.

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT

In the first of a projected three volumes of collected essays, Lopate offers what he justifiably calls “a smorgasbord of treats, a place to begin to sample the endless riches of the American essay”: 100 essays from the 18th to the 21st centuries, from Cotton Mather to Zadie Smith. Volume 2, *The Golden Age of the American Essay*, will focus on the years 1945-2000, and Volume 3 will be dedicated to pieces from the 21st century. Many writers included here are likely to be familiar to readers but perhaps not to the students for whom this collection seems aimed, with its informative introduction, succinct headnotes, and contents organized by both theme and form. George Washington is represented by his Farewell Address; Emerson, by “Experience”; Margaret Fuller, by an excerpt from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Thoreau rings in, predictably, with “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For”; Henry James, with “The Art of Fiction”; Jane Addams, with a piece on settlement houses; William James, with “What Makes a Life Significant?” Some essays—such as Dorothy Parker’s musings on people notable for their goodness and James Thurber’s on men’s idealizing of women—seem dusty, if not dated, although Fanny Fern’s dryly satirical “Delightful Men,” from 1870, has lost none of its bite. Essays that consider race, ethnicity, disability, social justice, and sexual orientation make the collection timely. In “The Homosexual Villain,” written for a gay magazine in 1955, Norman Mailer candidly reveals the experiences and readings that transformed his bias against gay men. “My God, homosexuals are people too,” he realized suddenly. Among the many other notable contributors are Edgar Allan Poe, Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, M.F.K. Fisher, James Baldwin, Rachel Carson, and Jamaica Kincaid.

A thoughtfully edited volume that reflects America’s changing social, political, and cultural life.



WHAT WERE WE THINKING A Brief Intellectual History of the Trump Era

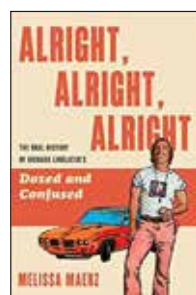
Lozada, Carlos
Simon & Schuster (272 pp.)
\$28.00 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-982145-62-0

A literary survey of the wreckage that is the Trump administration.

In 2015, Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* book critic Lozada carved out a special assignment: reading the books generated by the Trump White House years (and some earlier books, such as *The Art of the Deal*) to create an intellectual history of the era. “I’ve read some 150 of them thus far, and even that is just a fraction of the Trump canon,” he writes. “One of the ironies of our time is that a man who rarely reads, preferring the rage of cable news and Twitter for hours each day, has propelled an onslaught of book-length writing about his presidency.” The author serves up a readers’ guide to a literature that is ever growing—and that will grow further with future memoirs (“Don McGahn, Robert Mueller, Kirstjen Nielsen, and Anthony Fauci rank highest

on my wish list”). Some of the books are “insufferable” while others are essential. Lozada lists the top dozen at the end of his meta-analysis, one of them the *Mueller Report*. Some of the books are less about Trump than about the culture that produced him—e.g., J.D. Vance’s *Hillbilly Elogy*, Jennifer Silva’s *We’re Still Here*, and Jonathan Metz’s *Dying of Whiteness*. By Lozada’s account, *Hillbilly Elogy* is less important than Nancy Isenberg’s *White Trash*. There are books of worship and clubby belonging (“most Trump sycophants do not even pretend that Trump should be—or wants to be—a leader for all Americans”), books of qualified demerit (Mueller), books by apostates such as David Frum (who writes that Trump’s refusal to take any responsibility for the pandemic is “likely to be history’s epitaph on his presidency”), books by worshippers like Newt Gingrich, and, of course, books by Trump’s ghostwriters.

A nimble overview of the library of Trumpiana, which is likely to grow no matter what the outcome of the 2020 election.



ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT An Oral History of Richard Linklater’s Dazed and Confused

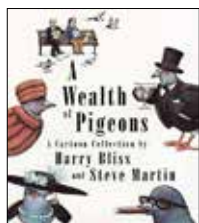
Maerz, Melissa
Harper/HarperCollins (464 pp.)
\$26.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-0-06-290850-6

A charming oral history of everyone’s favorite stoner film.

When 23-year-old Matthew McConaughey uttered the three words of the title, which weren’t in Richard Linklater’s shooting script, set decorator Deb Pastor knew that history was being made. “The minute he said that ‘alright, alright, alright’ thing,” she recalls for interviewer and archfan Maerz, “I just went, ‘Oh my god, for the rest of time, people are going to be saying everything this motherfucker says.’” As it turns out, McConaughey was an accidental addition of sorts, and his role expanded both when Linklater realized how good he was and when Linklater fired a couple of actors from the production, expanding the role of Wooderson. Joey Lauren Adams recalls of the director, “Rick always treated you in a nonsexual way, and for all of us women who had been treated in sexual ways for so long, to have a man who’s not like that? It’s weird.” Linklater’s film, like his debut, *Slacker*, tanked when it appeared in 1993, but it rode the first wave of commercial DVDs and is now a staple on cable TV. It also caused controversy during and after production: As the interviews make clear, some of the cast were resentful that Linklater didn’t use them in later films and were bitter that their careers didn’t advance further with the film. Meanwhile, three of Linklater’s high school classmates on whom film roles were modeled sued years after the fact, looking for a piece of the action. Some of Maerz’s interview subjects are regretful of behavior that was appropriate to high school but not to professional life, which just shows how far they sank into their roles. Says Linklater, who enshrined his high school years in the cult hit,

“Note to actors: Get along with people you’re in an ensemble with. Especially with the director. Don’t forget who edits and controls all this, you know?”

Essential for fans of the film but also for anyone with ambitions to work in film on either side of the camera.



A WEALTH OF PIGEONS A Cartoon Collection

Martin, Steve

Illus. by Bliss, Harry

Celadon Books (272 pp.)

\$28.00 | Nov. 17, 2020

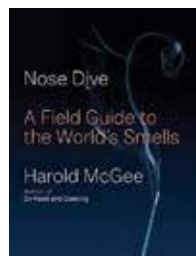
978-1-250-26289-9



The veteran actor, comedian, and banjo player teams up with the acclaimed illustrator to create a unique book of cartoons that communicates their personalities.

Martin, also a prolific author, has always been intrigued by the cartoons strewn throughout the pages of the *New Yorker*. So when he was presented with the opportunity to work with Bliss, who has been a staff cartoonist at the magazine since 1997, he seized the moment. “The idea of a one-panel image with or without a caption mystified me,” he writes. “I felt like, yeah, sometimes I’m funny, but there are these other weird freaks who are *actually funny*.” Once the duo agreed to work together, they established their creative process, which consisted of working forward and backward: “Forwards was me conceiving of several cartoon images and captions, and Harry would select his favorites; backwards was Harry sending me sketched or fully drawn cartoons for dialogue or banners.” Sometimes, he writes, “the perfect joke occurs two seconds before deadline.” There are several cartoons depicting this method, including a humorous multipanel piece highlighting their first meeting called “They Meet,” in which Martin thinks to himself, “He’ll never be able to translate my delicate and finely honed droll notions.” In the next panel, Bliss thinks, “I’m sure he won’t understand that the comic art form is way more subtle than his blunt-force humor.” The team collaborated for a year and created 150 cartoons featuring an array of topics, “from dogs and cats to outer space and art museums.” A witty creation of a bovine family sitting down to a gourmet meal and one of Dumbo getting his comeuppance highlight the duo’s comedic talent. What also makes this project successful is the team’s keen understanding of human behavior as viewed through their unconventional comedic minds.

A virtuoso performance and an ode to an undervalued medium created by two talented artists.



NOSE DIVE A Field Guide to the World’s Smells

McGee, Harold

Penguin Press (688 pp.)

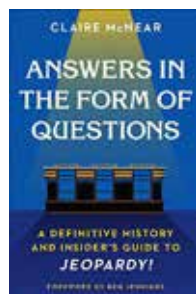
\$35.00 | Oct. 20, 2020

978-1-59420-395-4

The ultimate obsessive’s guide to all things olfactory.

If you’ve ever been curious as to why cat urine is so potent, why feet stink, or, more pleasantly, why flowers smell so lovely, then this is the tome for you. McGee, who has written multiple books about the science of cooking and displays an encyclopedic knowledge of the “wide world of smells,” invites readers to become “smell explorers.” The author seems equally fascinated by the smells of flowers, trees, plants, and other organisms as well as some of the foulest funks out there (human excrement, dead flesh). “Despite its longtime reputation as one of the lowest of human faculties,” he writes, “smell clearly has the power to engage us with the world around us, to reveal invisible, intangible details of that world, to stimulate intense feeling and thought: to nudge us into being as fully and humanly alive as we can be.” Throughout, McGee dives deep into the science and taxonomy of smells, and he augments the text with plentiful charts that provide visual demonstration of his discussions. As he reiterates continually across more than 600 dense pages, things smell the way they do thanks to specific combinations of microbes, molecules, and biological processes. Although the text is rigorous and likely too scholarly for some readers, McGee has a genial way with words that makes the hard science accessible to motivated general readers. Unfortunately, in his effort to be inviting, he makes excessive use of exclamation points (more than 200). For example: “So it’s ironic that they’re all such valued ingredients in the foods of people all over the world!” It’s difficult to say how many readers McGee will transform into bona fide “smell explorers,” but you have to give him credit: This is a unique project executed meticulously from beginning to end. The book’s ability to reach beyond a niche audience, however, remains uncertain.

Equips readers with all the science necessary for a life of heightened smell perception.



ANSWERS IN THE FORM OF QUESTIONS A Definitive History and Insider’s Guide to Jeopardy!

McNear, Claire

Twelve (288 pp.)

\$28.00 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-5387-0232-1

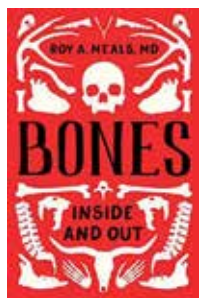
A guide to the popular game show. *Ringer* columnist McNear’s first book is an entertaining general overview of the popular “beacon of television stability.” All-time

An expansive and lively treatment of a material most of us take for granted.

BONES

Jeopardy! champion Ken Jennings notes in his foreword that the show has “been performed over eight thousand times...for the last three and a half decades.” After the debacle of the rigged *Twenty-One* show in the 1950s, writes the author, “knowledge-based game shows understandably faltered.” With its unique approach to the genre, the original version of *Jeopardy!* premiered in 1964 in a midday slot, with actor Art Fleming as host and Don Pardo as announcer; it ran for 12 years. Merv Griffin—who also wrote the show’s theme music—brought it back in 1984, with Alex Trebek as host, partly because of Weird Al Jankovic’s popular song, “I Lost on *Jeopardy!*” With behind-the-scenes access, McNear followed a group of hopeful contestants preparing for their show appearances, and she chronicles her interviews with past contestants and show staff. Trivia, no surprise, abounds. Fifteen staffers create 16,790 clues each season. Contestants cannot wager \$69 or \$666. After the show’s five-game limit was lifted, “cultural phenomenon” Jennings’ unbeaten streak lasted six months, winning him \$2,520,700. “Every year,” writes the author, “about eighty thousand people take the annual online *Jeopardy!* contestant test,” and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is one of the “most successful contestants in the history of *Celebrity Jeopardy!*” McNear also delves into “clue selection” and wagering strategies and the secrets of how to increase buzzer speed. Numerous sidebars throughout the text examine topics like “Contestant Skulduggery” and the famous 2011 match between past uber-champions Brad Rutter and Jennings vs. IBM’s Watson. She also discusses in funny detail the show’s impact on popular culture—and its popularity continues. The 2020 Greatest of All Time tournament “topped the viewership for nearly all television programming in the previous year.” *Jeopardy!* devotees will want to pair this with Trebek’s recent memoir.

Good reading for those who can’t get enough of the TV “juggernaut.”



BONES *Inside and Out*

Meals, Roy A.
Norton (256 pp.)
\$27.95 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-324-00532-2

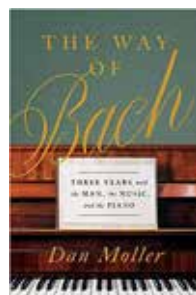


The story of bone, which is “ubiquitous and versatile” yet also “mysterious.” “I am an orthopedic surgeon. I’ve been one for 40 years. I love working with and talking about bone,” writes

Meals in this sprightly, occasionally droll overview. The author covers an impressive amount of territory in enthusiastic fashion. With bone, he has chosen a subject worthy of his ranging curiosity, for “not only is [it] the world’s best structural support”—light, durable, responsive, capable of growth, mending, and handling stress—“it is also the world’s largest import-export bank, a repository of vital elements—especially calcium—on which our lives depend.” Meals, a professor of orthopedic surgery at UCLA, accessibly explains the

science, from chemistry to mechanics, giving readers a thorough grounding without getting overly technical. Then he proceeds to what is clearly one of his favorite topics: bone failure, pathology, and the various treatments associated with each. After introducing the roles of the bonesetters of ancient Egypt, he looks at today’s rheumatologists, endocrinologists, rehabilitation specialists, diagnostic radiologists, and orthopedic surgeons. Many of these professionals have pioneered treatments for arthritic joint surfaces, viral infections, implants, fixators, and arthroscopy. Meals then shifts his attention to the art of viewing bones within the body—X-rays, CAT scans, bone density scans, MRIs—before moving on to the future contributions of stem cells, 3-D printing, plates and screws that dissolve, and the possibilities of countering the effects of osteoporosis: “Imagine the day when a 95-year-old tennis player falls and dents the court rather than breaking his hip.” In the second half of the book, the author digs into a host of intriguing bone-related topics, including paleoanthropology; bones in the making of trumpets, drums, and other instruments as well as tools, jewelry, turkey callers, adornments, and artwork (e.g., scrimshaw); and the use of bones in toys and games. An added bonus are the 150 illustrations scattered throughout the text.

An expansive and lively treatment of a material most of us take for granted.



THE WAY OF BACH *Three Years With the Man, the Music, and the Piano*

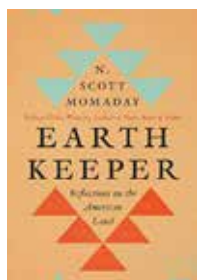
Moller, Dan
Pegasus (240 pp.)
\$27.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-64313-580-9

A philosophy professor chronicles his determined efforts to play Bach despite carpal tunnel syndrome and a disdain for teachers.

In his first memoir, Moller writes from “the point of view of someone who *loves* Bach with a completely unprofessional, undetached abandon.” However, he doesn’t love all of Bach’s work—e.g., “consider the *Brandenburg Concertos*, which represent everything most appalling about the Baroque, the age of the gaudy golden frill....To begin with, the concertos are almost always performed with a harpsichord, which is intrinsically offensive.” He clearly “hates” the harpsichord, whereas the piano has a “timeless quality...that Bach deserved.” Moller is consistently opinionated (“The classical repertoire was full of pompous nose-blowers like Beethoven...or lightweights like Rossini”) as he leads us through his three stormy years wrestling with the piano, without proper instruction. His ultimate goal was to play the Fugue in C Minor. In this richly detailed book, the author gives us that story and more. Though Moller’s frequent opining occasionally grates, he presents a superb biographical vignette of a man who was “proud, bitter, and desperate for money.” He walks us through *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, *The Goldberg Variations*, and

the “mesmerizing purity” of *The Art of the Fugue*, with commentary that is alternately scholarly and effusive. There’s an entertaining paean to the organ, “heavy metal before there was such a thing.” In an especially intriguing discussion, he sets the St Matthew Passion side by side with Wagner’s Ring cycle. “In the course of his anti-Semitic ravings,” writes the author, Wagner called Bach “a pedantic formalist who merely pointed the way to Beethoven and himself, the real geniuses.” When he set out on his journey, writes the author, “I would either play Bach or die trying.” Three years on, he’s alive and playing his fugue.

An eccentric, adoring tribute to Bach, suitable for classical music devotees and neophytes alike.



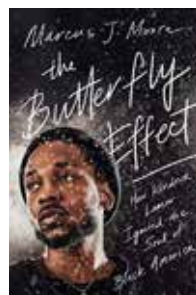
**EARTH KEEPER
Reflections on the
American Land**

Momaday, N. Scott
Harper/HarperCollins (80 pp.)
\$17.99 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-0-06-300933-2

A plea for the planet from the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, poet, and playwright.

Born and raised as a member of the Kiowa tribe, Momaday (b. 1934) has had a remarkably distinguished career, earning a National Medal of Arts and a lifetime achievement award from the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, among other honors. Here, the author follows the dictum of one of his own teachers: “Write little and write well.” Momaday distills age-old wisdom from the elders who came before him into a concise book featuring chapters no more than a paragraph in length. He evokes a world of natural connection, one that existed long before him and is now threatened, and he draws inspiration from Dragonfly, “a holy man” devoted to “a spiritual life of the mind.” Throughout the book, Momaday maintains a tension between the eternal spirit of the Earth, with the “Great Mystery” pervading it, and the threats posed by those infected with “the immorality of ignorance and greed, the disease of indifference to the earth.” While he notes the importance of studying history, he also argues that “it is the present and the possibilities of a future that must concern us. Ours is a damaged world. We humans have done the damage, and we must be held to account. We have suffered a poverty of the imagination, a loss of innocence. I would strive with all my strength to give [a] sense of wonder to those who will come after me.” Wonder abounds in these pages, and the author also touches on the passage of time and the many costs of supposed progress. Though brief, the book serves as a tight summation of many of the themes that Momaday has developed during his long career, and his fans will relish it.

Short chapters of prose that read almost like prayers to the natural world.



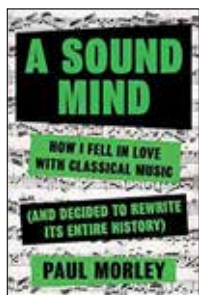
**THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT
How Kendrick Lamar Ignited
the Soul of Black America**

Moore, Marcus J.
Atria (288 pp.)
\$27.00 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-982107-58-1

The first book-length treatment of one of the decade’s most successful artists.

In July 2020, Kendrick Lamar achieved new headlines when it was announced that his 2012 album, *good kid, m.A.A.d city*, became the longest-charting hip-hop album in U.S. history, amassing over 400 weeks on the Billboard 200 album chart. That record crowned the Compton poet as fresh royalty in the hip-hop scene, which was further underscored by a fiery, confrontational verse on Big Sean’s “Control.” In 2015, Lamar released *To Pimp a Butterfly*, which struck a chord with a new generation of Black activists reveling in the international consciousness of Black struggle. Following the buzz surrounding *Butterfly*, Lamar was pushing into territory where only the timeless emcees live. In his first book, Brooklyn-based music journalist and cultural commentator Moore, who has written for the *Nation*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and the *Atlantic*, among other publications, shows that he’s been around the block, pulling together hundreds of sources from interviews and headlines over the years. He convincingly shows his subject’s transition from his first moniker, K-Dot, to Kendrick Lamar, as well as the development of the now-powerhouse label Top Dawg Entertainment. Early on, writes the author, “he rapped under the name K-Dot, his fire-spitting alter ego. K-Dot wasn’t about uplifting communities; he wanted to decimate everything in sight. The young man had all the technical prowess, the complex sentence structures, and the natural cadence, but he didn’t sound *free*.” Additionally, the author offers an insightful history of place, a narrative element that must inform any deep reading of hip-hop culture. Throughout his career, Lamar has set an impossibly high standard of confessional intimacy and passionate storytelling (his most recent album, *DAMN.*, won a Pulitzer). In this solid introduction, Moore uses a more general approach, a wise strategy since fans already know that Lamar is the most reliable narrator of his own story.

An effective biographical portrait that will serve well until Lamar writes his own retrospective.



A SOUND MIND
How I Fell in Love With Classical Music (and Decided To Rewrite Its Entire History)

Morley, Paul
 Bloomsbury (608 pp.)
 \$30.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-1-63557-026-7

A rock critic grows fond of classical music.

English music critic Morley, acclaimed in the 1970s and early '80s for his writings about rock, sees the current landscape of criticism vastly changed by the internet and streaming services, with little room for his talents. "The covering of music is all for the consumer now," he writes, rather than about "the nature and momentum, the wonderful warp and weave, of the culture." In a digressive memoir characterized by rhapsodic effusions of prose, the author recounts his ambitious search "to find out what might be the final piece of music I would ever listen to" as well as "to analyse the effects of streaming on the form and content of music" and to question "what it is, and how, to write about music, what the motivation is, and what the satisfactions are." With no training in music theory or composition, hoping to restyle himself as a classical critic, Morley took the opportunity to spend a year at the Royal Academy of Music, an experience documented for a BBC show. He wanted, he writes, "to find ways to demystify a vast, complex world" of music that to him had a "stuffy public image, as if it is a music that belongs only to a conscribed elite...fixed inside an ideologically suspect status quo, lacking the exhilarating suggestion of new beginnings, a pulsating sense of an exciting, mind-expanding tomorrow." After immersing himself in that vast world, however, he decided that classical music "is not all big, mighty orchestras and epic, overpowering, bloody-minded symphonies, or tarted-up operatic fussiness." It is "also filled with ravishing and sometimes deliciously haywire intimacy, the small, constantly varied combinations of instruments." Classical composers, he concludes, were as rebellious and innovative as the musicians he long celebrated. Though Morley's enthusiasm is convincing, the narrative could benefit from significant trimming.

A rambling memoir enlivened by spirited responses to classical works.



OPERATION MOONGLOW
A Political History of Project Apollo

Muir-Harmony, Teasel
 Basic (384 pp.)
 \$30.00 | Nov. 24, 2020
 978-1-5416-9987-8

The history of America's moon landing viewed through the lens of political propaganda.

Muir-Harmony, curator of the Project Apollo collection at the Smithsonian National Air and

Space Museum, writes that no one foresaw the worldwide acclaim that greeted the Soviet launch of Sputnik in October 1957. Within months, the world cheered a second, larger satellite containing a dog and then watched America's first satellite attempt explode on the launchpad. American media fumed, and polls revealed that nations throughout the globe considered the Soviet Union the leader in science and technology. By 1961, the Soviets had orbited a man, and newly elected President John F. Kennedy, reeling from the humiliation of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, proposed to send men to the moon. Innumerable books describe the technical details of Project Apollo, but the author maintains her focus on politics, which means that space buffs will find little new information. Emphasizing that the goal was restoring the United States' unchallenged world leadership, she delivers a knowledgeable, detailed, and overlong description of "the largest public relations campaign in world history." Muir-Harmony is clearly impressed with the effort, especially "the openness of the program, combined with the broad access afforded by television, radio, and newspaper coverage." All missions were broadcast live. Exhibits that toured the world featured the actual rockets, capsules, and technical specifics as well as films, pamphlets, photographs, and souvenirs. Foreign journalists received a VIP tour of American facilities and went home full of enthusiasm. The American plan, notes the author, eschewed flag-waving and sought to "treat the mission as an accomplishment of all humankind." Meanwhile, Soviet officials trotted out their cosmonauts but kept secret all of the details of their missions. In making her passionate case, Muir-Harmony devotes lengthy chapters to the minutiae of global astronaut publicity tours, sections that may overwhelm general readers but appeal to policy wonks.

How America won hearts and minds through space-flight—and succeeded, if only temporarily.



DARK DAYS, BRIGHT NIGHTS
Surviving the Las Vegas Storm Drains

O'Brien, Matthew
 Central Recovery Press (240 pp.)
 \$18.95 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-1-949481-42-6

A journalist and social worker shares stories of how a group of flood channel-dwelling homeless people found their way back to society.

In this oral-history follow-up to *Beneath the Neon*, O'Brien's examination of homelessness in subterranean Las Vegas, he chronicles how one group of homeless people were able to leave tunnel life behind. The author structures each of the chapters around a specific question, to which he elicited responses from men and women who had survived everything from poverty to substance abuse during their time underground. His subjects ranged from teenagers to people in their 60s and came from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds. They included drug addicts, military veterans, and ex-cons, many of whom

A splashy, entertaining guide to the lyrics of one of the most popular musicians of our time.

DOLLY PARTON, SONGTELLER

were survivors of dysfunctional or violent childhoods or some other traumatic or personally debilitating event. Two of the most intriguing figures O'Brien interviewed include Szmaz, a young musician from "a loving family in the mountains of southern New Hampshire," and Ande, "who has a doctorate in organizational behavior and human factors [and] lived in the drains for seven years, the last while battling breast cancer." O'Brien asked his interviewees questions that encouraged them to discuss such topics as their childhoods and adolescent and adult years; how they became homeless; and how they managed to navigate the "dangerous curves...hairpin turns...roadblocks and detours" that they faced on a daily basis. Without exception, each of the author's interviewees have faced significant obstacles. Many, like Becky, Iron, and Manny, backslid into self-destructive behaviors (notes Iron, "I do the least amount of wrong I can. That's the simplest way to put it"); one, Jazz, lost his beloved girlfriend to a tunnel flood. Against the odds, all found a way back to sobriety (or close to it) and a more secure life. Powerful and relentlessly honest, the interviews explode myths surrounding homelessness while promoting compassionate views of the growing number of homeless Americans.

Compelling reading about what is a depressingly ever-green societal ill.



THE CONNECTED PARENT *An Expert Guide to Parenting in a Digital World*

Palfrey, John & Gasser, Urs

Basic (304 pp.)

\$28.00 | Oct. 6, 2020

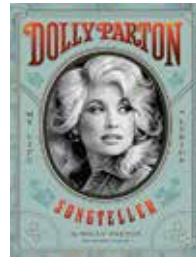
978-1-5416-1802-2

How to navigate one of the most challenging aspects of parenting: screen time.

"Today, virtually all children in well-off societies are growing up with a phone in their hand, access to much of recorded knowledge at their fingertips and a whole lot of questions in front of them about what life will be like," write Palfrey and Gasser. "While there are exceptions...the lives of children are increasingly mediated by digital devices around the world." The authors are well-situated to tackle the subject: Palfrey is president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and a former faculty director of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard, and Gasser is executive director at Berkman. Their philosophy is that parents must work to better understand how and why children use screen time in order to moderate the usage and help their children make healthy decisions. The authors suggest parents have open conversations about such topics as online safety and relationships established via social media, the dangers of sexting, and the importance of privacy. Other key areas of discussion include bullying and harassment; anxiety regarding one's online status compared to others; the balance between enjoying the interconnectedness of the internet and being addicted to it; diversity and civic engagement; and video games. Regarding the last, the

authors cite a 2018 Pew Research study: "Around 90 percent of American teens aged thirteen to seventeen say they play video games on a computer, game console, or cell phone." The authors effectively combine research and anecdote, and they carefully sum up their recommendations at the end of each chapter along with a list of common questions. Because the influence of technology will only grow in coming years, this thorough investigation is a welcome addition to the parenting shelves.

Solid scrutiny of the role technology plays in the lives of children and how parents can arbitrate their usage.



DOLLY PARTON, SONGTELLER *My Life in Lyrics*

Parton, Dolly with Oermann, Robert K.

Chronicle (380 pp.)

\$50.00 | Nov. 17, 2020

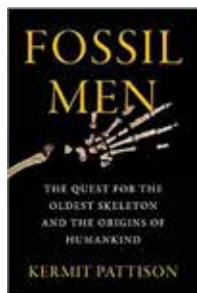
978-1-7972-0509-0



A hefty retrospective on the six-decade career of a country music superstar who tells stories in song.

Parton has been mining her East Tennessee roots for crowd-pleasing songs ever since she wrote her first tune, about a corn-cob doll, at around the age of 6. With Nashville-based music journalist Oermann, she serves up her highest-grade ore in a handsomely produced collection of the lyrics to more than 175 of her songs, some in print for the first time. All songs have brief introductions on topics such as when and how Parton wrote them, and longer pieces show her evolution from "a hard-core country artist" with a "girlish soprano tremolo" to a multifaceted star also at ease with pop, gospel, and bluegrass. Moving chronologically through the artist's life, the book reveals her abiding passions with thematic juxtapositions of songs, which range from "9 to 5" to the elegiac ballads "Jolene" (her song "most performed by others") and "I Will Always Love You" ("For what she did with that, I will always love you, Whitney Houston"). Hundreds of color and black-and-white photos of Parton and others display her over-the-top tastes in fashion and wigs faithful to her motto: "Leave no rhinestone unturned." Parton conceals more than she reveals about her 50-plus-year marriage to the reclusive Carl Dean and whether she's had affairs ("Well, I don't admit or deny anything"). She is frank, however, about professional setbacks. For example, when she was starting out in the industry, every major record company on Nashville's Music Row turned her down as a vocalist. In the final pages, Parton sounds a poignant note in the lyrics to a song written with Kent Wells and released during the pandemic. The song, "When Life Is Good Again," is the hymnlike lament of a repentant sinner who vows to change "when life is good again."

A splashy, entertaining guide to the lyrics of one of the most popular musicians of our time.



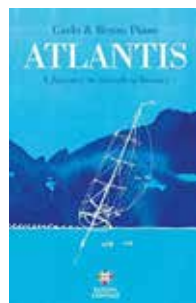
FOSSIL MEN
The Quest for the Oldest Skeleton and the Origins of Humankind

Pattison, Kermit
 Morrow/HarperCollins (544 pp.)
 \$32.50 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-0-06-241028-3



An entertaining update on a process as “red in tooth and claw” as nature itself. Perhaps once a decade, a journalist recounts the history and latest findings in human evolution, a subject of apparently endless appeal—Martin Meredith’s *Born in Africa* (2011) remains a page-turner. Pattison caught the bug in 2012 and devoted seven years to gathering material. The result is a satisfying education on the status of the human family tree over the past 5 million years, and the author provides detailed explanations of how anthropologists tease information from bones, teeth, and local geology. It’s a journalistic maxim that readers prefer personalities to events, and Pattison describes plenty of ambitious, media-savvy researchers whose often bitter hostility has stalled progress but makes for lively reading. He passes quickly over the father of African anthropology, the colorful Louis Leakey, spends more time on his wife and family and their pioneering findings, and gives a major role to Donald Johanson, whose 1974 discovery of a partial skeleton of “Lucy,” a small, primitive human ancestor, and the resulting bestselling books made him a familiar name. Mostly Pattison focuses on anatomist Owen Lovejoy and anthropologist Tim White, whose energy, work ethic, and opinions made him a lightning rod for controversy even before his team’s 1994 finding of “Ardi,” a skeleton older than Lucy whose age approaches the era when hominids and chimpanzees diverged from their presumed common ancestor. Colleagues fumed for 15 years as his team studied the bones, and the resulting massive 2009 report aggravated matters. The anthropological community learned that “they were looking up the wrong tree for human origins, and that their quest to link early humanity to modern apes was nullified by Ardi because the last common ancestor looked like *no* modern species.” Pattison delivers a gripping and reasonably balanced account of the predictably hostile reception, and this remains a controversial interpretation, although it has made some converts.

Big personalities, simmering turmoil, and fascinating popular science.



ATLANTIS
A Journey in Search of Beauty

Piano, Renzo & Piano, Carlo
 Europa Compass (320 pp.)
 \$24.00 | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-1-60945-623-8



A renowned architect reflects on his craft. Together on a round-the-world sea journey, journalist Carlo Piano and his father, Renzo, kept a diary of thoughts and observations as they pursued Renzo’s dream of finding Atlantis. Published as a kind of conversation, their alternating entries cohere into a luminous meditation on beauty, architecture, nature, and creativity. Though Carlo is skeptical, Renzo defends his goal: “I say Atlantis exists, Carlo, and even if it doesn’t, we should still look for it. Because it is a beautiful idea, the ideal destination no matter the journey.” Onboard a ship tasked with updating nautical maps, the Pianos set sail from Genoa, crossing roiling seas and dead calms, stopping at sites where Renzo has designed structures: an airport in Osaka Bay, the California Academy of Sciences, the *New York Times* offices, the new Whitney Museum, the Shard in London, the expansion of the Morgan Library, the Pompidou Center, Rome’s Auditorium (“a city of music,” Renzo says), and Potsdamer Platz, which Renzo describes as “a bit repetitive, monotonous”—one of several architectural mistakes. Throughout, Carlo dubs his father the Explorer, the Surveyor, the Constructor, the Old Man, and the Measurer, labels that speak to Renzo’s multifaceted interests. “To measure is to gesture towards knowledge, to attempt to understand,” Renzo explains. Besides surveying the land, “I also measure the many angles and points of the sea, too. I measure everything.” Beyond measuring, he notes that he learns about a place “by entering into dialogue with it, listening to it, conversing with it, walking it, exploring its terrain.” Music, art, film, literature, and science, as well as the needs of the community, all shape his work. The two men’s musings are interlaced with memories of their childhoods, professional collaborations, and personal friendships—such as Renzo’s with Italo Calvino, whose sensibility echoes in the volume’s radiant prose.

An intimate and insightful chronicle of exploration and revelation.



THE DEBT PROJECT
99 Portraits Across America

Powell, Brittany M.
Photos by the author
 Graphic Arts Books (216 pp.)
 \$34.99 | Oct. 27, 2020
 978-1-5132-6433-2

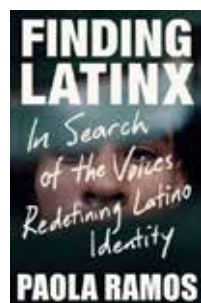
A photographic exhibit of the many faces of American debt. In a book version of an online photo series that Powell began a few months after she filed for bankruptcy in 2012, the author

A blend of alarmism, intrigue, and solid financial advice. Fans of Rickards will know just what to expect.

THE NEW GREAT DEPRESSION

collects raw imagery from a group of 99 contributors, across 17 states, diversified by racial, geographical, and educational backgrounds yet unified by the onerous experience of debt. For each of them, debt is a harsh and constant reality; many cite the common denominators of student loan debt, health care costs and lack of insurance, economic downturn, and sudden job loss as primary causes. The photos and accompanying personal testimonies—rendered in handwritten notes, a choice that makes the words feel immediate and urgent—work together to disarm the shame associated with debt. Pictured in cluttered studio apartments and makeshift corner offices, the profiles range widely across professions: hairstylists, teachers, architects, artists, entrepreneurs, professors, and the executive director of a cannabis cooperative who accumulated more than \$900,000 of debt after a federal tax audit and a 10-day stay in the intensive care unit after a brain aneurysm (he had no health insurance). The most heartbreaking profiles are those of nonprofit or care workers who make daily sacrifices for others while their personal finances suffer. For the most part, Powell allows her photographs to speak for themselves, illustrating the strife faced by many who pursued their dreams only to end up faced with insurmountable financial obligations. As one contributor laments, “I wake up everyday [sic] and try to be a person. To afford to be a person. Who feels like me. I am trying on empty.” Given the diversity of circumstances as well as levels of debt, this artistic project will resonate with any American who faces debt and any of the other injustices involved with income inequality.

A moving, humanitarian exposé on the isolation and despair of financial hardship.



FINDING LATINX *In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity*

Ramos, Paola

Vintage (336 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Oct. 20, 2020

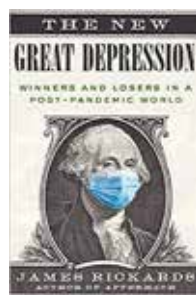
978-1-984899-09-5

A young, queer Latinx journalist travels the U.S. to find out exactly what the term means to those who use it.

Ramos has impressive credentials: The former deputy director of Hispanic media during Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, she is a Vice News host and correspondent and contributor to MSNBC and Telemundo. In her debut book, the author gives voice to a rapidly growing American demographic. Interviewing “the voices that are often neglected in the back of the room,” the author shows us a myriad of experiences that are often flattened in other portrayals. Many of the issues facing the Latinx community are the same as those that present challenges for other marginalized groups, including racism, colorism, gentrification, and sexual abuse. While the author does a good job informing readers about certain elements of the Latinx experience, the narrative sometimes bogs down in comparative statistics. Many of the numbers are helpful for context, but their abundance can detract from the power of the personal stories. Via these anecdotes, the author conveys both “the exceptionalism and the ordinary” in the Latinx community,

demonstrating attention to nuance and allowing her interviewees to express themselves freely. As much as this is an exploration of the Latinx movement—which “forces you to look at 60 million people in a different way [and] to reframe the country's own geography”—it is also a journey for Ramos. “I am queer; I am Latina; I am Cuban, Mexican and first-generation American,” she writes. “These are words I was not ashamed of saying out loud—but there's a difference between passive recognition and really owning one's identity.... Yet the truth is that, for years, I had either blindly danced around these identities or felt like I had to choose one over the others.” Though the narrative is sometimes choppy and lacks a coherent throughline connecting the chapters, it's clear that this was an important project for the author, and her passion is evident.

An inclusive look at the Latinx experience.



THE NEW GREAT DEPRESSION *Winners and Losers in a Post-Pandemic World*

Rickards, James

Portfolio (208 pp.)

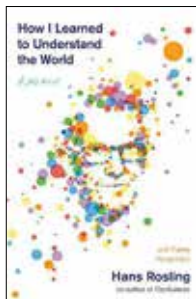
\$29.00 | Oct. 27, 2020

978-0-593-33027-2

An ambitious, eccentric look at the wreckage of the American economy in a time of pandemic.

In his latest book, investment guru Rickards has four goals: describe the origins of Covid-19, suggesting more than once that it's the product of a Chinese lab; contest the wisdom of the pandemic-triggered lockdown of America; show that the economy is crashing and won't recover for decades; and give investment advice that includes one of his favorite strategies, stocking up on gold. “If the United States decides to raise the price of gold, you win,” he writes. “If the United States does not raise the price of gold, it will go up anyway because of debt and lost confidence in the dollar. Again, you win.” With the possible exception of gold, about which no two financial counselors agree in every particular, his advice seems sound enough, especially when it comes to diversifying a portfolio across asset classes—and he advocates holding real things like cash and property along with intangibles. The first has more than a whiff of conspiracy theory to it, as if viruses, even novel ones, have to be engineered and don't just evolve. His account of the collapse of the economy owing to lockdown and fear would be more convincing if it allowed for the differential responses state by state, given that it wasn't a single fiat that plunged us into a financial spiral. The sometimes fatalistic pronouncements (“Once critical systems break down, civilized behavior lasts three days. After that, the law of the jungle prevails”) won't improve the reader's mood, but there are some good takeaways amid the swirl and mayhem, as when Rickards vigorously rejects the theory of efficient markets (“they freeze up at the first sign of trouble”) and advises investors to study history, which may not be quantifiable but offers actionable patterns all the same.

**A blend of alarmism, intrigue, and solid financial advice.
Fans of Rickards will know just what to expect.**

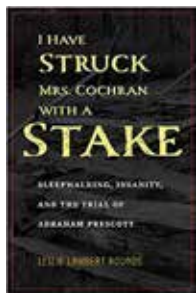


**HOW I LEARNED TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD
A Memoir**

Rosling, Hans with Hårgestam, Fanny
Flatiron Books (256 pp.)
\$27.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-250-26689-7

Swedish physician Rosling looks back on the surprising turns his life took. When he died of pancreatic cancer in 2017, Rosling was in the process of co-writing two books, the bestselling *Factfulness* (2018), with his son and daughter-in-law, and this one, with journalist Hårgestam, who recorded and gave form to his memories. In this English-language version of a book first published in Sweden in the year of his death, the author's widow writes, "some of the stories are left out, as we thought these would only be interesting in the Swedish context." Though the omissions will leave some wondering about gaps in the narrative, the text offers plenty of fascinating storytelling. With quiet humor and a bemused sense of amazement at the course of his life, Rosling describes his childhood, when he nearly drowned in a drainage ditch in his rural town; training as a physician, marriage, and the births of his children; years working as a physician in Mozambique; and transformation from clinical practitioner to researcher and academic. Most intriguing are accounts of the author's attempts to solve puzzles, as when he was confronted in Mozambique by an epidemic of patients whose legs were paralyzed, which he eventually realized was caused by cassava plants that had been too quickly and improperly processed, leaving toxins in the food. Also absorbing are Rosling's stories of his trips to Cuba, where he had an awkward encounter with Fidel Castro, and descriptions of multiple near-death experiences. The memoir, which includes many photos, stops abruptly just as Rosling was beginning to write *Factfulness*. While the volume stands on its own as a record of an unintentionally adventurous existence, fans of the author's previous book should be delighted to get to know the person behind the statistician and abstract thinker.

A good-humored, understandably truncated remembrance of an eventful life.



**I HAVE STRUCK MRS. COCHRAN WITH A STAKE
*Sleepwalking, Insanity, and the Trial of Abraham Prescott***

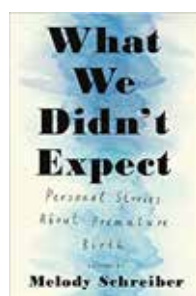
Rounds, Leslie Lambert
The Kent State University Press
(244 pp.)
\$24.95 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-60635-409-4

An account of an 1830s murder, the ensuing trial, and the social issues involved.

In June 1833, Abraham Prescott, an 18-year-old farmhand in Pembroke, New Hampshire, murdered his employer's wife,

Sally Cochran, by beating her in the head with a wooden stake. Afterward, Prescott explained that he had fallen asleep with a toothache and woke up to "discover the dying young woman in the brush." Even stranger, in January of that same year, Prescott had nearly killed both Sally and her husband, Chauncey, when, in the middle of the night, he used the blunt end of an ax to beat them in their beds. That time, too, Prescott claimed that he'd been sleepwalking and had no recollection of the events. His employers evidently believed him and kept him in their house. Rounds, a writer, historian, and executive director of the Dyer Library and Saco Museum in Saco, Maine, provides a meticulously researched account of the murder and trial. By no means is this a sensationalistic account. "It is the many interwoven social issues of Sally Cochran and Abraham Prescott's tragic tale that make it important to retell the story of the crime that ended her life," she writes. Prescott may have suffered from mental illness or some sort of cognitive impairment; however, as Rounds shows, his contemporaries didn't have a nuanced understanding of either possibility. The author is a compassionate and sympathetic narrator, and she combs painstakingly through the evidence of the murder and the records of the trial. Rounds occasionally embarks on an unnecessary tangent—e.g., in an early section that contains too much information on the history of schoolgirl embroidery (the subject of a previous book by the author)—and the chapters on Prescott's trial would have benefitted from more analysis and less summary. Still, the book is an intelligent, humane account of a horrific incident and its many consequences.

An occasionally long-winded but scrupulously researched, sympathetic true-crime tale.



**WHAT WE DIDN'T EXPECT
*Personal Stories About Premature Birth***

Ed. by Schreiber, Melody
Melville House (224 pp.)
\$18.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-61219-860-6

Parents share their emotional experiences of preterm births.

When her son was born at 29 weeks, journalist Schreiber yearned for stories about how other parents dealt with the frightening, disorienting event. Making her book debut, she collects 17 moving essays from mothers, fathers, and even one man who had been born a preemie. About 10% of babies are born prematurely for a variety of reasons, including preeclampsia (abnormally high blood pressure that threatens both mother and child), multiple births (a majority of twins are born early), and family history. For all the writers, preterm birth, sometimes by C-section, was a shock: Suddenly, they were confronted by a tiny, underdeveloped being who needed around-the-clock monitoring. "The responsibility of caring for someone so fragile and not knowing how long he'd have to be in the NICU alone was weighing heavily on me," writes "a broke, young African American woman

who was having her first child hundreds of miles away from her family and who was panicked at the idea of anything less than a perfect birth experience.” Some relied on faith to sustain them: “Just as I needed every mind and hand that played a role in caring for her in our tangle world, I needed the divine,” writes a mother whose daughter, born at 25 weeks, weighed 1 pound, 13 ounces. While fathers make up a minority of the contributors, their experiences are no less profound than those of mothers, but support could be lacking. “When a baby is born,” one father writes, “dads can be overlooked while mothers are showered with attention and praise.” Some parents felt overwhelmed by medical technology and the need to master protocols after they and their baby were discharged. When Washington Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal gave birth in Mumbai, India, though, she encountered a hospital with limited resources and knowledge about low-birthweight babies, which inspired her later to help design a comprehensive Medicare for All bill in the U.S.

Affecting essays reach out to new and prospective parents.



FINDING FREEDOM
Harry and Meghan and the Making of a Modern Royal Family

Scobie, Omid & Durand, Carolyn
Dey Street/HarperCollins (368 pp.)
\$27.99 | Aug. 11, 2020
978-0-06-304610-8

Two members of the royal press corps give a close account of the Windsor-Markle marriage.

Though royal family members cannot authorize a biography, it's hard to imagine a more supportive work than this. Scobie and Durand will convince readers that after what Harry and Meghan have been through at the hands of the press, the British people, and the rest of the royal family, they deserve a dose of compassion. Though there are no major bombshells, the authors add previously unknown nuances to what appeared to be a modern fairy tale. They offer details of Harry and Meghan's first date, many of their takeout orders, who said “I love you” first, Meghan's awkward early encounters with William and Kate, and their decision not to use a night nurse for baby Archie. Readers seeking dirt should look elsewhere. Here's what passes for a “confession”: “To this day, Harry doesn't like wearing a tie. He once confessed to the authors of this book, ‘We need to liven these things up, make them more fun and interesting.’” Some details are straight out of “Rumpelstiltskin”: Meghan's wedding veil was a “tulle-and-silk creation so delicate and of such pure white that workers had to wash their hands every thirty minutes over the five hundred hours it took to complete.” But fairy tales don't typically end with the prince and princess turning in their resignations. What went wrong? Race and class set the stage for failure as the senselessly cruel media wrestled the couple to the mat and made sure they could not get up. “My deepest fear is history repeating itself,” Harry said in a statement not long after his son was born. “I've seen what happens when someone I love is commoditized to the

point that they are no longer seen or treated as a real person.” As the story ends with the beleaguered couple fleeing to Los Angeles ahead of the pandemic travel shutdown, one can only hope they have found the freedom suggested by the title.

If you've ever thought being in the royal family sounds like a nightmare, this book leaves no doubt.



YELLOWSTONE WOLVES
Science and Discovery in the World's First National Park

Ed. by Smith, Douglas W. & Stabler, Daniel R. & MacNulty, Daniel R.
Univ. of Chicago (344 pp.)
\$35.00 | Nov. 13, 2020
978-0-226-72834-6

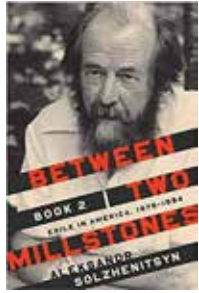
A gathering of scientific essays on the natural history of the reintroduced wolf population in Yellowstone National Park.

Wolves were long a key predator in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem before they were extirpated. In 1995, they were reintroduced in what the editors characterize as “a change of heart.” That change of heart is “the single most important fact of wolf recovery everywhere.” With the eminent wolf biologist L. David Mech, they raise the governing question of this book: Why are wolves important? Mech answers that in just the last 25 years, the Yellowstone population, which numbers about 500 individuals spread out over 19 million acres, have afforded scientists a greater understanding of wolf genetics, mortality, movement, diseases, “and several other topics difficult to study elsewhere.” Among the findings raised in this collection are that, unlike wolf populations generally, in which a single male and a single female found a new pack, in Yellowstone, “packs more commonly start from groups of individuals that leave their natal packs and find other wolves.” Another is that the wolves, their first generation raised in captivity and reintroduced, have figured out how to hunt and raise families in the wild. They have even evolved a complex geographical understanding by which they know “how to avoid dangerous geothermal areas, or where it is safest to cross the Yellowstone River, or where to find elk migrating over the Washburn Range after the first snows each winter.” Still another is that the Yellowstone wolf population hunt “eight large ungulate species,” seemingly selecting the ones that are most abundant in any specific season, given population dynamics. Overall, the contributors provide solid evidence for the editors' hopeful conclusion that the wolves of Yellowstone represent “a chance to create communities of coexistence with the full suite of America's wildlife.” Along with figures, maps, photos, and an appendix, “Species Names Used in the Text,” the book includes a foreword by Jane Goodall.

A welcome contribution to the conservation-biology literature on wolves.

Those inclined to scorn the sitting president will have all the more reason to do so after reading this seething book.

HOAX



BETWEEN TWO MILLSTONES, BOOK 2
Exile in America, 1978-1994
Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr
Trans. by Kitson, Clare & Moore, Melanie
 Univ. of Notre Dame (680 pp.)
 \$39.00 | Nov. 15, 2020
 978-0-268-10900-4

The second part of Solzhenitsyn's memoir of his time in the West, before he returned to Russia in 1994.

The author delineates his idyllic time in rural Vermont, where he had the freedom to work, spend time with his family, and wage a war of ideas against the Soviet Union and other detractors from afar. At his quiet retreat with Natalia, his wife and intellectual partner, and three sons, the Nobel laureate found what scholar Daniel J. Mahoney describes as "a happiness in free and uninterrupted work—conditions he could only dream of during the years of repression and harassment in the Soviet Union chronicled in *The Oak and the Calf*, perhaps the greatest of his literary memoirs." While Book 1 was devoted mostly to "speeches and interventions," these pieces demonstrate Solzhenitsyn's deep research and engagement in his life's work, as he struggled to navigate the "millstones" of criticism against his historical assessments of the Russian Revolution. One of his translators even criticized him for anti-Semitism and for "romanticizing prerevolutionary days and urging a return to the orthodox beliefs and chauvinistic traditions of the past," all of which the author addresses in his sage, deliberative way. Solzhenitsyn's experiences in the gulags led to the further development of his philosophical Christian beliefs, and he never shied away from his condemnations of Bolshevism, Communism, and the Soviet system as destructive to the "historical Russia." As he writes, "during my twenty years of exile the Communist government has never tired of sullyng my name either—indefatigably, in every way, and at every opportunity." Whether he is chronicling his assistance to others caught up in the oppressive Soviet society, engaging in an ongoing dialogue with fellow dissident Andrei Sakharov, or responding to the "blowing hot and cold" developments from the Soviet Union, the author leaves a riveting record of his work in the West.

Powerful intellectual arguments against a repressive regime interwoven with pleasant familial reflections.



HOAX
Donald Trump, Fox News, and the Dangerous Distortion of Truth
Stelter, Brian
 One Signal/Atria (368 pp.)
 \$28.00 | Aug. 25, 2020
 978-1-982142-44-5

A deep, dispiriting dive into the nefarious intersection of politics, conspiracy, lies, and money as served up by Donald Trump and Fox News.

There are moments when one feels almost sorry for Trump: His niece has spilled nasty beans about him, and his sister has chided him for lying. It's all in a day's work for him. The feeling sorry bit comes when CNN host Stelter suggests that Trump isn't smart enough to concoct his bizarre gibberish. Instead, it comes straight from the "lie-laundry" Fox News, courtesy mostly of Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, and Laura Ingraham—and even Hannity, according to one of Stelter's sources, says "that Trump is a batshit crazy person." Trump lives by the TV, tuned to Fox unless some now-departed *bête noire* like Shepard Smith appears, and it's from Fox that he takes his cues. All of them: a circus of disinformation about lab-hatched viruses, caravans full of terrorists from Guatemala, the "Mueller crime family" that engineered Trump's scarcely mentioned impeachment, and a host of other alternative takes on reality. Stelter provides genealogies for each of Trump's peevish prevarications, not least of them the insistence that the truth is a "hoax," a word that "was uttered more than nine hundred times on Fox News in the first six months of 2020." That numbing repetition, notes the author, erodes the truth with each mantralike utterance. Fox has needed Trump for ratings—its average viewer is 67, an obviously declining demographic—and Trump has needed Fox to serve as echo chamber and think tank. Each obliges the other: "Fox was the gas station where Trump stopped to fill up his tank of resentment," and Trump lends Fox influence over U.S. policy. In a long, sordid, cheerless, and endlessly dishy narrative, Stelter indicts all parties involved for leaving the country "without a properly functioning chief executive."

Those inclined to scorn the sitting president will have all the more reason to do so after reading this seething book.



THE LAST ASSASSIN
The Hunt for the Killers of Julius Caesar
Stothard, Peter
 Oxford Univ. (224 pp.)
 \$27.95 | Nov. 1, 2020
 978-0-19-752335-3

A thrilling account of the vengeful manhunt for Julius Caesar's assassins.

Most readers' knowledge of the assassination in 44 B.C.E. ends with the bloody deed, but Stothard brings its aftermath to pulsing

life. The last assassin of the title is Cassius Parmensis, the last of Caesar's killers to suffer the vengeance of Octavian, Caesar's great-nephew and successor. The author chronicles the development of the assassination plot, forged by men opposed to Caesar's grab for absolute power, then his murder and the ensuing brutal civil war. Several characters, notably assassins Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius, have been memorialized by Shakespeare and may be familiar to readers, as will the orator Cicero, Octavian's occasional ally Mark Antony, and Cleopatra. But other assassins get their moments as well: their lives, philosophies, and harrowing deaths, some on the battlefields of civil war, some by suicide, some slaughtered by Octavian's henchmen. Stothard, former editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, excels in bringing the ancient past to life. Here he is on the Roman festival of Lupercalia: "The men wore mud and goatskin loin cloths. The women bared their legs for the whips of the runners....It was a festival of breathlessness and nightmare, sex and myth, demons kept at bay by winter flowers." The author vividly shows Octavian destroyed communities thought to be friendly to the assassins' cause, seizing their valuable land and reapportioning it to his soldiers, slaughtering many, and sending others away as permanent refugees. One of Stothard's accomplishments is to sustain the suspense of the hunt, even though readers know the outcome. Those assassins who could flee dispersed to the furthest reaches of the Roman world, but Octavian, "judge, jury and relentless pursuer," ensured that they all died. Stothard writes as if he lives and breathes the air of this tumultuous time. His readers will feel, for a brief time, that they are there as well.

A deep immersion in a bloody era of ancient Rome, perfect for readers of Mary Beard and Tom Holland.



A QUESTION OF FREEDOM
The Families Who Challenged Slavery From the Nation's Founding to the Civil War

Thomas III, William G.
 Yale Univ. (432 pp.)
 \$35.00 | Nov. 24, 2020
 978-0-300-23412-1



A history of slaves who sought legal redress to obtain emancipation.

For historian and Guggenheim fellow Thomas, investigating suits brought by slaves against slaveholders from America's founding through the end of the Civil War had more than academic interest: His own ancestors, he was shocked to discover, included slave owners in Maryland and a lawyer who staunchly defended slave owners' interests. Interwoven with his compelling historical narrative, the author recounts conferences, meetings, and his attendance at the Summer Institute for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School, where he met descendants of slaves, pastors, community organizers, and others to examine the reality and consequences of racism. Drawing on long-buried

archival material—depositions, lawyers' notes, fragmentary case files—Thomas fulfills his goal of chronicling the lawsuits and vividly bringing to light the lives and experiences of the individuals involved, particularly the Queen family, which sought freedom from bondage, and his own, the slaveholding Ducketts. The freedom suits, writes the author "were, in effect, a public counterpart of the Underground Railroad," enacted across the country, in every court available—even up to the Supreme Court, which heard an appeal in 1813. Many of the suits were against the Jesuits, who, by 1767, "owned more slaves than any other person or organization in the Western Hemisphere." They predominated in the American Colonies, where Jesuit priests were major tobacco planters. In Maryland, enslaved families won hundreds of freedom suits; some who were emancipated were able to liberate other family members, and some were able to acquire property. But winning a suit did not necessarily mean liberation for all; for some, "freedom did not sever ties as much as strain, twist, and bend them into new configurations." Thomas reveals the deep-seated contradictions inherent in the slaveholding culture. Francis Scott Key, for example, a lawyer who represented more than 100 enslaved families, "also bought slaves and married into one of the largest slaveholding families in Maryland."

A fresh, disquieting look into America's traumatic past.



PAPPYLAND
A Story of Family, Fine Bourbon, and the Things That Last

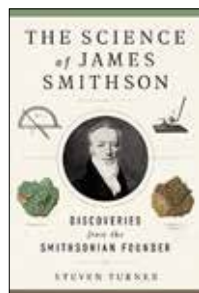
Thompson, Wright
 Penguin Press (256 pp.)
 \$27.00 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-0-7352-2125-3

An amiable journey, courtesy of ESPN sportswriter Thompson, into the arcana of American whiskey.

The author notes that he originally pitched this book as a biography of Julian P. Van Winkle III, a genial whiskey-whisperer whose wares are to booze as a Stradivarius is to violins. It morphed, however, into a blend of biography and meditation on any number of themes, including Southernness, or what musician Patterson Hood calls "the duality of the Southern Thing." Though a progressive, Thompson admits to a tear in the eye when hearing "Dixie" at the Kentucky Derby. "Being Southern means carrying a responsibility to shake off the comforting blanket of myth and see ourselves clearly," writes the author, a native of Clarksdale, Mississippi. There's not much better a comforting blanket, if one with undeniable consequences if too frequently applied, than a good slug of bourbon. That takes Thompson deep into the history of American whiskey, stuff that blends art and science but that has few firm rules. As he notes, for instance, American whiskey can be made with whatever grain grows best in a given place; in Kentucky, that means corn. Van Winkle is as steeped in that history as anyone alive (he also knows his wine and other forms of adult beverage), and through his lens Thompson informs us about the hard work and heritage that goes into a bourbon well and truthfully made, such as

the 23-year-old Pappy (about \$300 per bottle) that serves as social lubricant and social glue among the cognoscenti. Thompson is well versed in the history himself, and, like Van Winkle, he is quick with a delightful and spot-on opinion—e.g., “vodka is for the skinny and scotch is for the strivers and bourbon is for the homesick.”

If you're a fan of the magic that is an artful bourbon, this is just the book for you.



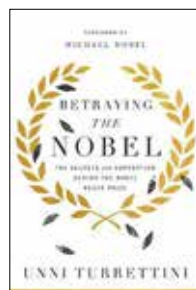
THE SCIENCE OF JAMES SMITHSON
Discoveries From the Smithsonian Founder

Turner, Steven
 Smithsonian Books (320 pp.)
 \$29.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-1-58834-690-2

An assessment of the scientific achievements of the man whose surprise, never-fully-understood benefaction to the government created the Smithsonian Institution, now “the largest museum complex in the world.”

Along the way offering a biography of James Smithson (1765-1859), about whose life scant evidence remains, Turner concentrates principally on the experimental contributions by this “accomplished analytical chemist.” During Smithson’s era, “natural philosophy,” the ordinary science of its time, was breaking apart into today’s more specialized disciplines of chemistry, geology, mineralogy, and botany, all of which Smithson helped move forward. A multifaceted figure educated in an older tradition, Smithson adjusted to the rapidly evolving world of deductive research and, via associations throughout his native Britain and Europe, significantly advanced a number of the emerging sciences. After rerunning Smithson’s experiments, a substantial feat in its own right, Turner, a historian of science and emeritus curator of physical sciences at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, convincingly refutes the charge that his subject was an “aristocratic science dabbler,” a charge largely based on his interest in practical applications, such as improving the process of coffee-making. While Turner’s experiment-by-experiment, article-by-article analysis can be tedious and principally of interest to historians of the sciences of Smithson’s era, the author makes a convincing case that his wide-ranging studies should be considered significant scientific achievements for their time. A never-married man, Smithson left his considerable fortune to his childless nephew. After that relative predeceased Smithson, upon his death, Smithson’s estate (worth a then-massive sum of \$500,000), by direction of his will, was transferred to the U.S., a country he had never visited. By decision of Congress, his gift created the institution that bears his name, one dedicated grandly to “the increase and diffusion of knowledge.”

Solid insight into the work of a man whose gift undergirds one of the most important U.S. institutions of learning.



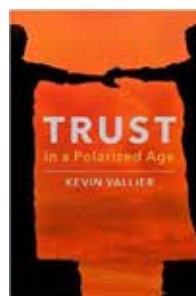
BETRAYING THE NOBEL
The Secrets and Corruption Behind the Nobel Peace Prize

Turrettini, Unni
 Pegasus (304 pp.)
 \$27.95 | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-1-64313-564-9

A complicated history of one of the world’s most prestigious honors.

Turrettini delves into the weird nebula of secrecy, dogma, politics, and pressure surrounding the Nobel Peace Prize, first awarded in 1901. Given the praiseworthy work of many of the laureates—e.g., Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King Jr., Linus Pauling, Jane Addams, Elie Wiesel, and Mother Teresa—one might think the honor is unassailable. But the author shows the controversial history of some of the prizewinners (see: Yasser Arafat, Henry Kissinger, or Aung San Suu Kyi) as well as the many deviations from the construct that its creator, Alfred Nobel, envisioned. Many still find it curious that Nobel was interested in awarding a prize for the amorphous concept of peace among other categories such as physics, chemistry, and medicine. Certainly, the awards have attracted much controversy, even in recent years—e.g., President Barack Obama’s 2009 award, given “in a hope for what he *might* accomplish.” The author, who is unafraid to point out the shortcomings of many of her subjects, admits that Nobel left significant flexibility for interpretation: The prize should go “to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.” In addition to examining some of the “tarnished” reputations involved with the prize, the author also explores the inherent sexism in the process—despite the fact that Nobel was influenced greatly by the peace activist Bertha von Suttner. Among the more intriguing tidbits: Five-time nominee Gandhi never won the award, and Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and Putin have all been nominees. Michael Nobel, the former chairman of the Nobel Family Society, provides the foreword, and the book also includes the text of Alfred Nobel’s will.

A technically accurate, opinionated accounting of unforgettable winners and losers.



TRUST IN A POLARIZED AGE

Vallier, Kevin
 Oxford Univ. (312 pp.)
 \$34.95 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-0-19-088722-3

A survey of a political and social landscape in which trust, a key element of democracy, is absent.

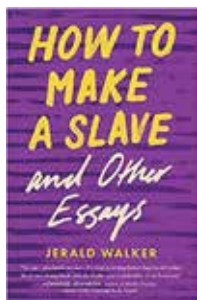
“In 2017,” writes philosophy professor Vallier, “around 70 percent of Republicans said they distrusted *anyone* who voted for Hillary Clinton for president; likewise, around 70

Crafted with honesty and wry comedic flair, these essays are both engaging and enraging.

HOW TO MAKE A SLAVE AND OTHER ESSAYS

percent of Democrats said they distrusted people who voted for Donald Trump.” Given those facts, “it is unclear how a democracy can remain stable under these conditions.” Furthermore, because the current president revels in the “deliberate erosion of norms” and that norm erosion is a key ingredient of mistrust, the instability is ever more obvious. The decline in trust leads to partisan division, which leads to a decline in trust, and income inequality has a decided effect as well. Uncomfortably, Vallier notes in this data-based treatise, there is also some suggestion that restricting immigration reinforces in-group trust among citizens of a given country, which “means we will have to choose between creating trust and mistreating people, which is unfortunate.” In the complex analysis that follows, the author suggests that promoting diversity and reducing segregation have positive effects on trust. To increase that trust, he writes, we must protect democracy, “which reduces corruption and enhances economic and institutional functioning broadly.” That democracy, Vallier adds, best takes the form of “modest welfare state capitalism,” a system that eschews the nationalism of the right and the socialism of the left to insist upon societal norms that inhibit corruption and protect property rights. Some of the author’s arguments are highly provocative, as when he suggests that lawsuits by the injured may be more effective than government regulations, that the right to unionize is a component of welfare state capitalism, and that higher taxes are acceptable as long as there is high “tax morale,” or the sense that tax revenue is not squandered or wasted.

An empirically grounded work of interest to political scientists and policymakers as much as social philosophers.



HOW TO MAKE A SLAVE AND OTHER ESSAYS

Walker, Jerald

Mad Creek/Ohio State Univ. Press

(152 pp.)

\$19.95 paper | Nov. 2, 2020

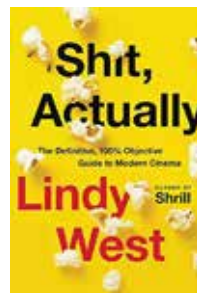
978-0-8142-5599-5

Powerful essays offers an incisive glimpse into life as a Black man in America.

In this collection, Walker demonstrates the keen intellect and direct style that characterized his acclaimed 2010 memoir, *Street Shadows*. In an account of how he was racially profiled by a security guard at Emerson College, where he teaches creative writing, the author deftly combines both humor and humanity without obscuring the impact of such experiences on him as a husband, father, son, and educator. “The stories I favor,” he writes, “are not only upsetting but also uplifting; they are rich with irony and tinged with humor; they are unique, in some way, and lend themselves to interesting digressions, and their protagonists always confront villains, even if not always with success—when I come into a race story with these components, I prefer to delay its telling, allowing it to breathe, so to speak, like a newly uncorked Merlot.” Walker candidly considers his

struggles discussing race with his children; clearly depicts the racism embedded in restaurant seating arrangements; and expressively recounts the terrifying spiral of fear, anger, and distress he experienced after seeking medical attention for his son, who had suffered multiple seizures. The author’s no-nonsense, few-words-wasted approach lends itself just as readily to an account of the exhilaration he and his siblings felt while watching the *The Jackson Five* cartoon in their family’s religious household in 1971: “Breaking the Sabbath was a violation of God’s law, pretty significant stuff, but then so, too, was an all-Negro cartoon.” In the moving “Dragon Slayers,” Walker shows how James Alan McPherson, an instructor at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, changed his outlook and approach as a writer. “My stories showed people being affected by drug addiction, racism, poverty, murder, crime, violence,” he writes, “but they said nothing about the spirit that, despite being confronted with what often amounted to certain defeat, would continue to struggle and aspire for something better.”

Crafted with honesty and wry comedic flair, these essays are both engaging and enraging.



SHIT, ACTUALLY The Definitive, 100% Objective Guide to Modern Cinema

West, Lindy

Hachette (304 pp.)

\$27.00 | Oct. 20, 2020

978-0-316-44982-3

Revisiting her early career as an acid-tongued film critic, *New York Times* columnist West deconstructs 22 blockbusters in this nostalgic, laugh-out-loud romp.

In the introduction, the author labels this collection “silly,” a frivolous work initially conceived as a ray of light for a fraught America. Despite being released into an irreparably altered world—not just due to the pandemic, but also “the demoralizing grind of public life under Donald Trump”—these breezy essays fulfill that promise. They are warmhearted, acutely self-aware, and surprisingly timely, providing insight into modern society through movies first sold on VHS. West rates each film against the Harrison Ford vehicle *The Fugitive* (“the only good movie”), leaping across genres, from *Jurassic Park* to *Garden State* to *The Shawshank Redemption*. Whether she is excoriating *Love, Actually* (“the apex of cynically vacant cash-grab sentimentality”), describing how the “best thing” about the Harry Potter series is that she loves to hate it, or discussing whether or not *The Lion King*’s Mufasa has any actual parenting skills beyond his deep voice, West uses hindsight to gain critical distance and set up her sidesplitting one-liners. The book’s breadth of targets allows for a wide canvas. For example, an essay on *Reality Bites* examines West’s own teenage lusts and the dearth of realistic female role models in film while a treatise on *The Santa Clause* looks at the 1990s humor triumvirate of “lawyer jokes, hatred for psychiatrists, and your divorced parents getting back



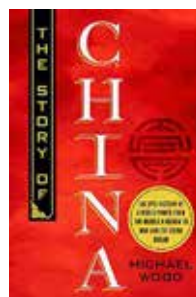
THE STORY OF CHINA
*The Epic History of a
 World Power From the
 Middle Kingdom to Mao and
 the China Dream*

Wood, Michael

St. Martin's (384 pp.)

\$32.50 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-1-250-20257-4



The eminent British historian, broadcaster, and filmmaker aims his wide narrative lens on the sweeping history of China.

“Writing on China’s past...is a daunting task, all the more so if one is not a sinologist,” notes Wood in the preface. “China is a huge and incredibly rich, indeed inexhaustible subject.... With more than three millennia of written records, it has a vast history—small libraries have been written about each of my individual chapters!” In this smoothly readable book, the author shows he is up to the task, presenting a useful one-volume study of Chinese history perfect for students and libraries. Though Wood concentrates on the main dynasties, he sometimes veers into micro-level, intricate family stories to create a sense of immediacy amid the far-reaching historical currents. He moves swiftly yet thoroughly, wisely using geography to ground and orient readers. Like the ancient inhabitants of the Tigris-Euphrates river system, the earliest Chinese communities were tied closely to the Yellow River. These first civilizations were not near the sea but resided in the central plain, close to where the river emerges from the mountains—hence, China’s early name as Zhongguo, the “middle land.” Wood traces the rise and fall of the great dynasties who received “heaven’s mandate,” from King Yu’s descendants (circa 1900 B.C.E.) to the Zhou, Qin, Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing. Throughout the book, Wood masterfully extracts real stories, including those by remarkable women writers and observers such as the Song poet Li Qingzhao and Ming poet Fang Weiyi. The author also gives attention to the many heartbreaking tales that emerged from the tumultuous Cultural Revolution. Scholars may debate some points, but Wood ably conveys the exciting Chinese saga through the ages in an accessible work that makes a massive historical narrative palatable to general readers.

Wood is a wonderful storyteller who captures the big picture without losing sight of the human detail.

together.” A number of the pieces were previously published online, and some of the jokes may seem crude to West neophytes. But the author uses frivolity and humor as entry points to discussions about racism, sexism, and our tendency to overlook the damage a story can do if it keeps us entertained. Other targets include *Rush Hour*, *American Pie*, *Titanic*, and *The Rock*.

Like catching up with a dear and funny friend, this insightful and irreverent book is a soothing balm for turbulent times.



THE LAST GIANTS
*The Rise and Fall of the
 African Elephant*

Wood, Levison

Black Cat/Grove (272 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Nov. 3, 2020

978-0-8021-5847-5

An award-winning photographer and explorer presents an introduction to elephants and their biology, psychology, evolutionary past, and environmental place.

In this good-natured, enthusiastic portrait of elephants, Wood delves into the creature’s history and present-day circumstances as well as their evolutionary success and societal tribulations. The author offers information on their physical specifications and needs; ecological effects on the savanna and forest habitats (“the sheer size of elephants and the amount that they need to eat has a profound impact on the landscapes they live in”); and cognitive abilities, including working memory, categorization skills, and what appears to be a capacity for empathy. Wood also does a good job describing elephant society, matrilineal family groups, sociality, and the passing of life lessons and guidance from one generation to the next. This synthesis of scientific material serves as a solid foundation on which the author recounts his experiences with elephants. This is where the book makes its original contributions—Wood’s particular encounters and observations—and allows him to make the case for their protection. Elephants are under serious pressure on a number of fronts, including the encroachment of humans, who use the land to grow both commercial crops, such as sugar cane and palm oil, and subsistence crops; ivory poachers, who target the elders with the longest tusks, destroying the family structure; and trophy hunters, who also seek out the biggest and oldest animals. Wood brings multiple perspectives to bear when grappling with the human-elephant connection. While noting that humans have been a thorn in the elephants’ side for centuries, he appreciates that humans have a place in the ecology, as well. The ability to find common ground depends on advancing education, fighting corruption, developing more effective poaching-mitigation methods, and making a determined effort to slow habitat loss and herd fragmentation.

A smart, inviting portrait of elephants from a keen-eyed observer.

A potent lesson in empathy that is all the more powerful for never presenting itself as a lesson.

SOMEWHERE IN THE UNKNOWN WORLD



SOMEWHERE IN THE UNKNOWN WORLD A Collective Refugee Memoir

Yang, Kao Kalia
Metropolitan/Henry Holt (272 pp.)
\$17.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-250-29685-6



A “collective refugee memoir” that serves as an object lesson in the utility of creative nonfiction.

In the prologue, Yang describes wanting to write this book years ago but feeling like she was not yet ready as a writer. Whether she was correct in her self-assessment then, she’s certainly up to the job now. This is a work of technical as well as empathetic mastery. The narrative consists of a series of stories of refugees who have ended up in Minnesota, Yang’s home state. (The author is a Hmong refugee who was born in a Thai refugee camp after her parents fled Laos.) Her subjects’ origins are global but cluster primarily in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. The stories are as powerful as they are unique, and Yang makes the wise decision to get out of the way and let her subjects express themselves. For example, Awo talks about her weekly calls home to Somalia: “Every Saturday, in those conversations, they become a full family: a mother, a father, and their children, voices celebrating their gratitude for each other’s safety and small successes. Each is reminded of the immense love in their lives, a love that survives unimaginable distance.” Throughout, the author’s straight-ahead, declarative sentences can’t conceal that her presence is all over this book. Her immersively descriptive language is reminiscent of her two previous memoirs, *The Latehomecomer* and *The Song Poet*, and her delicate touch allows us to see what is right in front of us: luck. If we are not refugees, we might have been. If our lives have been relatively stable, they may not remain so. “The people in this book are people going through this storm with us all on this very night,” she writes near the end. She is addressing her own children, but she is speaking to the rest of us as well.

A potent lesson in empathy that is all the more powerful for never presenting itself as a lesson.



TEN LESSONS FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Zakaria, Fareed
Norton (320 pp.)
\$26.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-393-54213-4



The CNN host and bestselling author delivers a pithy roundup of some of the inevitable global changes that will follow the current pandemic.

Examining issues both obvious and subtler, Zakaria sets out how and why the world has changed forever. The speed with

which the Covid-19 virus spread around the world was shocking, and the fallout has been staggering. In fact, writes the author, “it may well turn out that this viral speck will cause the greatest economic, political, and social damage to humankind since World War II.” The U.S., in particular, was exposed as woefully unprepared, as government leadership failed to deliver a clear, practical message, and the nation’s vaunted medical institutions were caught flat-footed: “Before the pandemic...Americans might have taken solace in the country’s great research facilities or the huge amounts of money spent on health care, while forgetting about the waste, complexity and deeply unequal access that mark it as well.” While American leaders wasted months denying the seriousness of Covid-19 and ignoring the advice of medical experts, other countries—e.g., South Korea, New Zealand, and Taiwan—acted swiftly and decisively, underscoring one of the author’s main themes and second lesson: “What matters is not the quantity of government but the quality.” Discussing how “markets are not enough,” the author astutely shoots down the myth that throwing money at the problem can fix the situation; as such, he predicts a swing toward more socialist-friendly policies. Zakaria also delves into the significance of the digital economy, the resilience of cities (see the success of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taipei in suppressing the virus), the deepening of economic inequality around the world, how the pandemic has exacerbated the rift between China and the U.S. (and will continue to do so), and why “people should listen to the experts—and experts should listen to the people.”

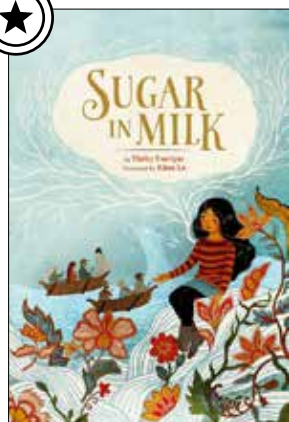
A clear-eyed, concise look at current and future affairs offering pertinent points to reflect and debate.

CHILDREN'S



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- ALL BECAUSE YOU MATTER** by Tami Charles;
illus. by Bryan Collier..... 101
- SERENA SAYS** by Tanita S. Davis..... 104
- WOODLAND DREAMS** by Karen Jameson;
illus. by Marc Boutavant..... 110
- A STORY FOR SMALL BEAR** by Alice B. McGinty;
illus. by Richard Jones..... 114
- ADDY'S CUP OF SUGAR** by Jon J. Muth..... 115
- BILL NYE'S GREAT BIG WORLD OF SCIENCE** by Bill Nye &
Gregory Mone; illus. by Matteo Farinella, Amelia Fenne &
Bill Nye..... 116
- EVERY COLOR OF LIGHT** by Hiroshi Osada; illus. by Ryoji Arai;
trans. by David Boyd..... 117
- ERIC** by Shaun Tan..... 121
- SUGAR IN MILK** by Thrity Umrigar; illus. by Khoa Le..... 122
- THERE MUST BE MORE THAN THAT!** by Shinsuke Yoshitake..... 124
- SEE-SAW** illus. by Ailie Busby..... 126
- DINOSAURS** by Ruth A. Musgrave; illus. by Franco Tempesta..... 130



SUGAR IN MILK
Umrigar, Thrity
Illus. by Le, Khoa
Running Press Kids
(48 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-7624-9519-1



THE EMPTY BOWL

Ai Wener & Xing Huo
Illus. by Xing Huo
Trans. by Wang, Helen
Cardinal Media (32 pp.)
\$9.99 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-64074-122-5

A stray dog fends for himself during a period of frightening disruption in this Chinese import.

As the story opens, a young girl and her grandmother bring the dog food regularly. The little girl enjoys playing with the dog, but her parents won't allow her to take him home. One day, his bowl is empty, and so are the streets. The pooch sees some people in masks but doesn't understand what's happening. As time passes, the dog grows hungrier and thinner. The girl reappears and brings him home—her parents, presumably medical workers, have been called away because people are getting sick. The child, via her smartphone, is finally given permission to keep the dog. They wait for the parents to return and for the day they can all go outside once again. Ai and Xing's rather flat and simplistic story of a pandemic is narrated by the dog protagonist, who varies between ignorance and omniscience. He seems to know why the girl's parents won't allow her to take him home and why the parents have to leave. Although a lockdown is implied, the girl and her grandmother go out to retrieve the dog anyway. Illness is only mentioned in passing but nothing about a quarantine or widespread contamination. The soft-edged illustrations add little, though the dog is cute; human characters throughout have pale skin, and the setting is ambiguous.

A disappointing story with a hopeful ending. (Picture book. 4-8)



ACCIDENTAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS

True Stories of Unexpected Discoveries

Albee, Sarah
Illus. by Hackett, Nathan
Scholastic Nonfiction (224 pp.)
\$9.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-338-57578-1

Sometimes ordinary people stumble onto something big.

Usually, Albee says, archaeology—the study of human history through artifacts—involves slow, methodical, exacting

PUPPY LOVE



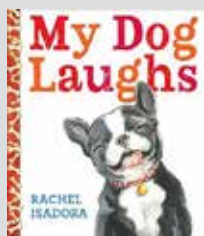
Leah Overstreet

THIS FALL SEES THE publication of a hilarious new graphic novel for middle graders: *Puppy Problems*, by Paige Braddock (Viking, Sept. 22). In this series kickoff, old friends Crackers, a dog, and Butter, a cat, find their comfortable routine thrown seriously out of whack by the arrival of puppy Peanut. Appalled, the two older pets hatch a scheme to get rid of the interloper, strategically leaving

the closet door open so Peanut will chew “our human’s favorite shoe” and refraining from intervening as the “tiny, furry land shark” makes merry mayhem.

It’s not news that dog adoptions have gone through the roof in this season of Covid, as recently reported in the *Washington Post*. With adults out of work and children home from school, Americans are welcoming puppies into their homes like never before. As the adults in these homes work to tame their growing, furry land sharks, the kids may want to get in on the process, and there are books all along the age ranges to give them pointers.

My Dog Laughs, according to author/illustrator Rachel Isadora (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018), in this primer aimed at very young listeners and dog owners. She introduces a series of dogs and the multiracial cast of children who love and care for them, helping readers understand how they can best love their dogs, from rubbing bellies to handling the occasional spot of naughtiness.



In *My Puppy Patch*, written by Theo Heras and illustrated by Alice Carter (Pajama Press, 2019), the titular pup is ready for her first walk—maybe. The narrator, a White child, has practiced “sit,” “down,” and “stay,” and Patch has performed well in the backyard, but there are distractions galore on their walk. The basics of puppy training underlie the narrative arc, making this a terrific picture book to help new dog owners learn the ropes.



Korean siblings Shawn and Kat don’t own neighbor pup Bouncer, but they do learn a lot about how to tame

his energy in *Most Valuable Puppy*, a chapter book for young middle graders written by Carol Kim and illustrated by Felia Hanakata (Jolly Fish Press, 2019). These young entrepreneurs—they run a doggie day care—use kimchi to channel the puppy’s energy and take him from chewing shoes to fetching balls.



Kody Keplinger’s *Lila and Hadley* (Scholastic, April 7) are two misunderstood waifs in this moving middle-grade novel. Lila’s a pit bull no one will adopt; legally blind 12-year-old Hadley’s been uprooted and must live with her estranged older sister, a dog trainer, due to their mother’s incarceration. Dog and girl bond and learn as the sisters (both are White) work to make

themselves a family.

Finally, in a book for older middle grades, Joan Bauer demonstrates how *Raising Lumie* (Viking, June 16), a guide-dog puppy, helps seventh grader Olive, a White girl, over her grief at her father’s death. Like Hadley, Olive’s had to move in with a sister she doesn’t know well, and like Hadley, working with the puppy is exactly what she needs.



Back at Crackers and Butter’s house, the older pets watch as Peanut shreds their toys (“Sacrifices must be made for our end goal,” explains Butter, before leaping to defend a catnip mouse) along with their humans’ belongings and wait gleefully for their human to come home. But all Peanut receives is a finger-wagging: “It’s like his cuteness is a super power,” marvels Crackers.

Children in families discovering that a puppy is both supercute and a furry land shark will find a lot to recognize in Peanut, Butter, and Crackers’ story—and a lot to learn in some of these others.

Vicky Smith is a young readers’ editor.

research. Here she recounts 17 instances of major, history-changing discoveries that happened entirely by accident, from the 1709 discovery of Italy's Herculaneum by workers digging a well to Johannesburg cavers coming across a trove of early hominoid remains in 2013. Many of them—the Lascaux cave paintings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, China's terra-cotta warriors—will be familiar to adult readers. Others—a first-century B.C.E. mechanical model of the Greek universe, considered the world's first computer, found in 1900 by Aegean sponge fishermen—are less well known. Albee describes each discovery, backs up to place it into historical context, and then moves forward to explain why each matters, writing throughout in clear, engaging, present-tense language. She points out the social inequities and ethical considerations that are part of the broader context of many discoveries: for example, how Black cowboy George McJunkin's 1908 discovery of extinct giant bison fossils, something that upended our understanding of human history in North America, was ignored for years because of his race and class; and why plundered and formerly colonized Egypt wants the Rosetta Stone back. She closes with speculation regarding the burial place of Genghis Khan, a fine reminder that more hidden discoveries await.

An engaging mixture of history and science. (glossary, author's note, selected bibliography, source notes, further reading, photo credits) (Nonfiction. 8-14)

tone taken by both teacher and narrator is removed, describing Jews and the Shoah as if they were subjects of a nature documentary. An afterword that separates fact from fiction reveals that significant liberties were taken. Baeza Ventura's Spanish translation is bound dos-à-dos with the English text.

A fascinating subject sadly mishandled. (Historical fiction. 8-12)



RAJA'S PET CAMEL
The Magic of Hope

Amin, Anita Nabta
Illus. by Singh, Parwinder
Cardinal Rule Press (32 pp.)
\$16.95 | \$10.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-73303-594-1
978-1-73303-595-8 paper

After school one day, Raja befriends a baby camel that follows him home.

THE NUMBER ON MY FATHER'S ARM / EL NÚMERO EN EL BRAZO DE PAPA

Alvarado, Rodolfo
Trans. by Baeza Ventura, Gabriela
Piñata Books/Arté Público (168 pp.)
\$11.95 paper | Oct. 31, 2020
978-1-55885-901-2

Mexican American 17-year-old Tomás is used to his father's nightmares about World War II, but that doesn't mean he

understands them.

Papi rarely talks about it, and Tomás suspects the number tattooed on his arm is not just his "lucky number"—it's just like those of concentration-camp survivors in the slides Mrs. Franklin shows at school. Tomás' secret search for the truth takes him through his father's war mementos, which leads him to a buried box in the family's garden. Later, Tomás and his mother connive to mind-trick Papi into admitting that he was a POW in a Nazi concentration camp and agreeing to speak to Tomás' class about his experiences. Still, it's a long while before he reveals the real reason for the tattoo. Alvarado bases his story on the experiences of the first Mexican American to register as a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, but the text fails as a novel. Tomás' voice sounds like a reflective adult's rather than a teen's; the plot is contrived; and the psychological trickery is unsettling to witness. California, the earliest adopter of Holocaust education and the setting of this novel, didn't start putting it into schools until 20 years after the story takes place, and, troublingly, the



Milo Does Not like Mornings
A Tiny Ninja Book

"A boy channels his inner Ninja for courage and motivation in this debut picture book."

"Entertaining writing and appealing illustrations encourage kids to tap into their resources."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN # 9781642374674

Spanish Language ISBN # 9781662901836

For information on publishing and film rights, email
Sasha@TinyNinjaBooks.com • www.TinyNinjaBooks.com

Colorful, comic illustrations add greatly to the humor and aura of absurd incompetence.

MOUSE IN THE HOUSE

A wary Bapu agrees to allow the camel to stay until they can find the animal a permanent home. Delighted, Raja is hopeful that he can convince his father to allow Kamal to stay with them forever. Unfortunately, however, Kamal is “a wild camel with wild ways” and becomes so destructive and disruptive that Bapu insists on selling the camel at an upcoming fair. In a last-ditch effort to keep Kamal, Raja tries to train his new pet to participate in the annual camel race, thinking that if Kamal wins the large cash prize, Bapu will change his mind and allow the animal to stay. But at the fair and the race, Kamal misbehaves again, making it impossible for Bapu to sell her. The book’s ending is more of a cliffhanger than a real conclusion to its meandering plot, and readers are left guessing whether or not Raja will keep Kamal forever. The illustrations are equally confusing, pairing mostly turbaned, traditionally dressed adults with a bareheaded protagonist clad in button-down shirt and shorts. The only women depicted appear in the occasional background. The book ends with “10 Facts About the Thar Desert in India” that are both exoticizing and overgeneralized, consistently referring to “Indian” practice and tradition despite the geographically specific heading.

Both disorienting and disappointing. (Picture book. 3-6)



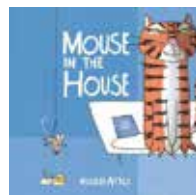
FRIEND ME

Averbuch, Sheila M.
Scholastic (272 pp.)
\$17.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-338-61808-2

The internet can be a dangerous place for young people in this cautionary tale.

The story begins with the sad tale of seventh grader Roisin, a recent immigrant from Ireland and the victim of bullying from Zara, a girl at her new school in Boston. The cruelty, which escalates quickly, takes place online and in person, and it doesn’t take long before Zara is making Roisin’s life unbearable. However, Roisin finds a lifeline in Haley, a girl whom she meets online. Haley seems like a true friend who gives Roisin a place to talk about her feelings, her struggles fitting in, and her need for connection. However, when Zara has a frightening and mysterious accident, and Roisin reflects on things she and Haley talked about privately, she feels a sense of dread and apprehension. Roisin begins to wonder if her supposedly best friend, Haley, might not be who she says she is after all. Readers will begin to put the mystery together just as they race toward the story’s climax. The story is a terrifying page-turner largely because its beginning premise is a real, everyday worry: Difficulty with friendships, bullying, and the amplifying and dangerous effects of the internet on relational aggression are part of tweens’ and teens’ lives and increasingly difficult to navigate. Main characters are White; there is some diversity in the supporting cast.

Readers will sleep with the lights on after consuming this fast-paced thriller. (author’s note) (Thriller. 9-12)



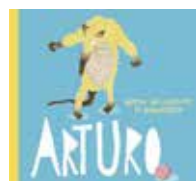
MOUSE IN THE HOUSE

Ayto, Russell
Illus. by the author
Andersen Press USA (32 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-72841-581-9

Hired to catch a mouse, Bosh & Bumble Mouse-Catchers take an improbable approach.

Big Chief Mouse-Catcher Mr. Bosh and his appropriately named Assistant Mouse-Catcher, Mr. Bumble, arrive in their van to remove a mouse at the request of a homeowner. Bosh dispatches Bumble with a stack of cheese-loaded mousetraps, instructing him to “go in and set the traps...and SNAP! *That* will be *that*.” Unfortunately, the mouse cleverly removes the cheese without triggering the traps. When Bumble returns, his squeaking shoes trip the traps, snapping him. Undaunted, Bosh orders Bumble to get a cat. Bumble produces a guard dog trained to protect homes from intruders, and it attacks Bumble instead of the mouse. Again, Bosh tells Bumble to get a cat. Bumble returns with a tiger, which predictably ignores the mouse and tackles Bumble. When Bosh’s final order for Bumble to get a cat sees Bumble leading in an elephant, the results prove catastrophic. Repetition in text and plot play a significant role in this ridiculous farce, with Bosh foolishly sending the obviously inept Bumble on the same errand with increasingly ludicrous results, dooming the enterprise. The colorful, comic illustrations, rendered in bold lines and simple shapes and featuring Bosh, Bumble, and assorted mousers with hilarious facial expressions and postures, add greatly to the humor and aura of absurd incompetence. Bosh has olive skin, and Bumble presents White.

A silly, rib-tickling comedy of errors. (Picture book. 4-9)

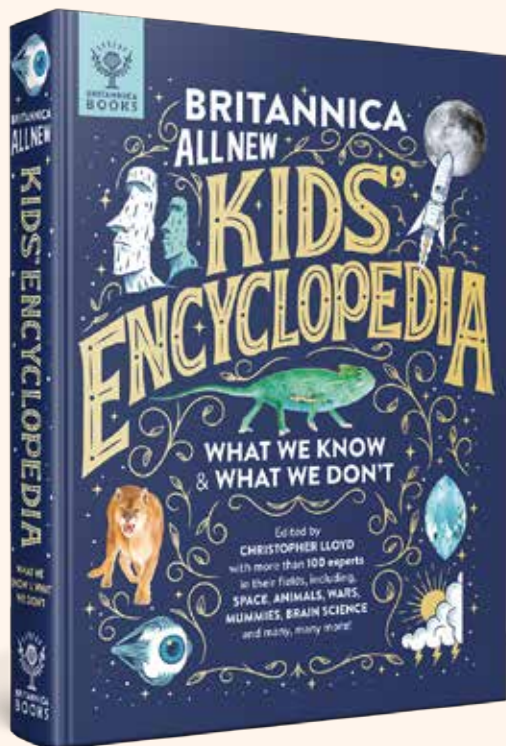


ARTURO

Beech, Hannah
Illus. by the author
Starfish Bay (36 pp.)
\$16.95 | Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-76036-087-0

An anteater is antsy for world fame.

Arturo craves acclaim and doesn’t sit idly by, waiting for the spotlight to claim him. He works at being the “centre of attention,” acting “cheeky” and striking rude poses. (This import from Australia and New Zealand has not been Americanized.) Disregarding warnings that “if the wind changes...you’ll stick like that,” Arturo keeps it up—until the wind *does* change, and he turns into a statue, frozen in a ludicrous posture with a rather daft facial expression. Efforts at unsticking fail; Arturo is used for utilitarian purposes, as coat rack, Christmas tree, and scarecrow. But could fame finally be within his grasp? “Chat shows,” celebrity soirees, and news articles attest to Arturo’s notoriety. His placement atop a pedestal proves he’s famous and loved! At story’s end, though, Arturo is inexplicably released from his immobile existence, and he realizes he’d rather be himself. Of



\$30 / ISBN 9781912920488



A book you can trust in an unreliable world, with experts behind every page.

A 424-page compellingly browsable kids' encyclopedia packed full of amazing facts about every aspect of knowledge!

This must-have family reference book brings home the joy of learning with over 1,000 illustrations, photographs and maps, and awe-inspiring information from more than 100 experts, and will provide hours of inspiration for every household.

"A book of wonders and a wonderful book."
Anthony Horowitz, author of the Alex Rider series



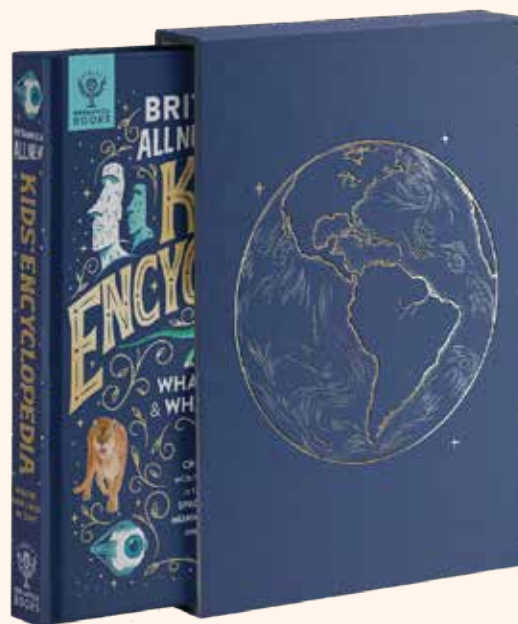
"Well-illustrated and info-packed, this is a wonderful encyclopedia for the curious kids in all our lives."

Mary Pope Osborne

BRITANNICA BOOKS COMPETITION

You could be one of 5 lucky winners to receive a free copy of the limited, luxury edition of the *Britannica All New Kids' Encyclopedia*. It features a slipcase, gold page-edges, two ribbons, and a numbered (out of 500) book plate signed by Christopher Lloyd.

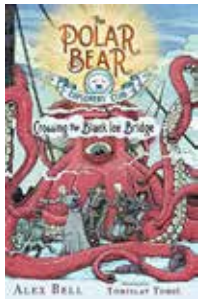
To enter, please email your name, business or institution name, and email address to matilda@whatonearthbooks.com, with Kirkus Competition in the subject line. Good luck!



\$150 / ISBN 9781913750039

course, “himself” isn’t famous but is still naughty. There’s an obvious illustrated hint that Arturo quickly returns to his former ways, having learned little except that fame is illusory. This humorous but thin story thus forgoes what could have been a pat lesson about improving moral character; it concludes realistically and accessibly: A pesky pain in the neck is likely to remain so. Comical cartoons feature lots of white space; Arturo’s exaggerated facial features enhance the fun.

A sly, winking acknowledgment that naughtiness is harder to root out than one might wish. (*Picture book.* 4-7)



CROSSING THE BLACK ICE BRIDGE

Bell, Alex
Illus. by Tomic, Tomislav
 Simon & Schuster (352 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-1-5344-0652-0
 Series: Polar Bear Explorers’ Club, 3

Four junior explorers brave the cursed Black Ice Bridge in this adventure-filled third book of the Polar Bear

Explorers’ Club series.

Stella Starflake Pearl and her adoptive father, Felix, are expelled from the Polar Bear Explorers’ Club for breaking club rules in their last expedition. On top of that, she is wanted for arrest for being an ice princess, something deemed a danger to society. But that doesn’t stop Stella and her three friends, Shay, Ethan, and Beanie, from setting out on a dangerous expedition. On their last adventure, Shay’s shadow wolf was bitten by a witch wolf, and it seems that Shay is slowly turning into a witch wolf himself. The only person who can save him is on the other side of the treacherous Black Ice Bridge. Encountering gargoyles, red devil squids, and a gentleman flamingo, Stella and her friends must travel the bridge that no explorer has ever successfully crossed. With magic, danger, and mythical creatures, this book is fast paced and full of action and adventure. Detailed black-and-white drawings scattered throughout the book give readers a tantalizing glimpse into this world. Powerful one-liners reinforce messages of not judging others for being born the way they are and not being defined by one element of your being. Characters are cued as White.

An exciting adventure. (*Fantasy.* 8-12)



STICK WITH ME

Blechter, Jennifer
 Greenwillow Books (256 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-0-06-274862-1

Two girls navigate the slippery ice of tween friendship.

Twelve-year-old Izzy is no longer best friends with Phoebe. Instead, Phoebe has attached herself to the popular (but mean) Daphne, and Daphne makes a point of excluding Izzy. To make matters worse, Izzy’s parents inform her that for financial reasons they will be moving to the apartment over their garage for a week because they’ve rented their house out to a family from out of town. This family also has a 12-year-old daughter, Wren, and they want to be close to the hospital where their 4-year-old is having surgery. At the book’s beginning, the girls’ stories are told in alternating third-person chapters integrated so well that when the two ultimately intertwine it is both natural and fresh. Wren, unlike Izzy, isn’t concerned with friendships or lack thereof. Wren has a focus and a passion: figure skating. And she is not happy to leave her practice rink four weeks before the sectionals competition to come with her family—though she feels bad about that. Wren and Izzy inevitably meet, but their budding friendship hits a snag, and it’s not certain if either girl can find the courage to make amends. Wren and Izzy have depth and nuance that give their stories vitality and believability, but the mean-girl storyline is run-of-the-mill (although the getting even part is fun). All characters read as White.

A pleasurable balance of original and satisfying. (*Fiction.* 9-12)



YOUR VOICE IS YOUR SUPERPOWER
A Beginner’s Guide to Freedom of Speech (and The First Amendment)

Bohrer, Jessica & Bohrer, Sandy
Illus. by Sanders, Jane
 City Point Press/Simon & Schuster
 (32 pp.)
 \$13.99 | Sep. 15, 2020
 978-1-947951-27-3

An enthusiastic invitation to understand and use our constitutional right to speak out.

Gliding silently over the real-world fact that First Amendment rights apply to minors only in qualified ways, two legal experts who specialize in defending journalists blithely assure young readers in rhyme that they are not only “free to be quiet and free to be LOUD,” but also to pray where they will, to “sign your name to a letter,” to march in protest, to join groups (or not), and to “talk and debate about people in power.” Many will note that a claim that “Freedom belongs to all—even when

The artwork beautifully captures messy, silly, and joyful family interactions.

FIVE ON THE BED

what we hear sounds icky” leaves an open door for bullying and even unprotected hate speech. (Christy Mihaly and Manu Montoya’s otherwise more nuanced and perceptive *Free for You and Me*, 2020, similarly overlooks this potential violation of equal protection under the law.) The illustrations collage together a small smiley-face character with arms and a tail with photos of bright-faced, diverse children posing in tights and capes and such iconic First Amendment images as protest marches and the Bill of Rights and other founding documents. They are more decorative than demonstrative, and the closing historical note is not only nearly illegible, being printed in tiny dark type on a blue background, but includes at least one defunct URL.

Worthy intentions squandered on simplistic exhortations.
(Informational picture book. 6-8)



THIS THING CALLED LIFE

Borstlap, Christian
Illus. by the author
 Prestel (56 pp.)
 \$17.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-3-7913-7443-7

A cast of lumpish imaginary figures demonstrate life’s ins, outs, and necessities.

Though he ends in a good place, in getting there Borstlap takes a rather jaundiced view of what life is all about. “Long, long ago, before little white wires started growing out of our ears...” he begins, text placed over an earbud-wearing blob intent on a small handheld screen. He goes on to recount how life arose from components “we don’t understand” before going on to reproduce, perceive, breathe, move, and, mainly, survive by either fighting or running. Occasionally he adopts a puckish tone—showing “giving” and “taking” in action with a flower growing from the poop of one animal and then being eaten by another (or perhaps the same one)—on the way to observing that life is unpredictable except for the part about how it all ends and, finally, the cogent insight that we can’t go it alone: “All of life is connected and dependent on the rest of life.” Cynthia Rylant’s lyrical, affirmative take on the topic, *Life*, illustrated by Brendan Wenzel (2017), will leave readers more emotionally invested, but the point here is well enough taken. The art in this wry French import has the cinematic air of an animated short, with a mix of clip art–style images and generic claylike organisms with tiny, comically wide eyes and stippled modeling suspended against monochrome backdrops.

Glib—but not entirely off the mark. (Picture book. 6-9)



FIVE ON THE BED

Boswell, Addie
Illus. by the author
 West Margin Press (32 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Oct. 13, 2020
 978-1-5132-6428-8

A counting book follows a family’s interactions on their shared bed.

At first, there is only one on the bed, the sleeping cat. Then there is one, the dog, below the bed as well. The text continues to count how many are on and below the bed as parents and a child join in. The child lifts the dog up, causing cat, then dog, then parent to leave the bed; the child begins to jump above the bed. Then suddenly, there are none on the bed, just a messy pile of sheets and blankets—maybe. As the family gets ready to sleep, one by one, they get on the bed until there are five on the bed. This is a fun, playful counting book. The text emphasizes the numbers by printing them in all capitals, contrasting colors, and larger font. With its many prepositions, this is a great

FRANKY THE FINICKY FLAMINGO
 BY WANDA LUTHMAN ; ILLUSTRATED BY MARA REITSMAN

Franky
 The Finicky Flamingo
 Author: Wanda Luthman
 Illustrator: Mara Reitsman

A flamingo finds his perfect food in this first installment of a picture-book series.

“Rhythmic expressions...fun to read aloud. The humorous twist at the end introduces a new problem that will spark giggles.”

“An entertaining bird tale for lap readers.”
 —Kirkus Reviews

• Mom's Choice Awards® Silver Recipient, 2018

• Top Shelf Finalist, 2018

• Reader's Favorite Honorable Mention Award, 2018

ISBN # 978-0-9981958-2-7

For information on publishing and film rights, email
wandalu64@gmail.com • www.wandaluthman.wordpress.com

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

DANIEL NAYERI

MIXING FACT, FICTION, AND MYTH IN AN IRANIAN IMMIGRANT BOY'S TALE

By Vicky Smith



LITTLE KHOSROU'S LIFE IN ISFAHAN, Iran's third-largest city, is upended when his mother abruptly and publicly converts to Christianity, prompting his parents' divorce and sending Khosrou, his older sister, and their mother to Abu Dhabi, then an Italian refugee camp, and, finally, Edmonds, Oklahoma. In *Everything Sad Is Untrue (A True Story)* (Levine Querido, Aug. 25), 12-year-old Khosrou, now Daniel, becomes a modern-day Scheherazade, weaving Persian legend, his family's history, and his own imperfect memory into an intricately layered, gorgeous work. It is not author Daniel Nayeri's memoir, but it is his story, and he talked about crafting it via Zoom from Nashville while on a family vacation. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

This book started out as a nonfiction essay for adults. How did you tame the story for a kid audience?

I was very worried when I pivoted to make sure I didn't unduly burden the child [reader]. The adult version was much more violent, but interestingly, it was also a bit removed. I'm not that sort of raw nerve that a 12-year-old is. So the adult version was actually fairly clinical, and yet the content was much more alarming. [When] you put it into the space of the child who is experiencing it [but] isn't equipped to process it, you're given two things. One is a whole lot more emotional honesty. The other thing was that the violence and the difficult topics were kept at the level of what [12-year-old Khosrou] was able to handle.

The way Khosrou keeps alluding to the abuse your mother experiences at the hands of your stepfather, Ray, drives it home in a way a graphic scene might not.

I actually thought a lot about that. What I wanted to jump to was the moment that you see in children—they're trying to address [trauma] in some way over and over again, like, Why did this happen? Do I have to hit him? The constant repetition is Khosrou trying to understand his place [in the] conflict. I actually think the last scene [when Ray breaks Khosrou's mom's jaw] is very difficult. I hope the reader is equipped [for it] by then.

And then there's the aftermath. Your mom, your fabulous, unstoppable, heroic mom, just doing what needs to be done, yet again.

I had been wanting to write [this] story since I was 10. It's the reason I became a writer. It's very much the thing I always wanted to build for my mom; I always wanted to tell people what I had seen: this extraordinary amount of heroism that you [would] never guess if you look at her.

How did you come to the way that you interleaved the Persian legends with the family legends with your own legend-making?

We went to Oklahoma and I was 8 or 9, [and I'd have to] explain, what [were we] doing there? The arc is really clear. My mother and father have a good life in Isfahan. We go to England, [where] inciting incidents occur in which my mother comes out as a convert. She goes back [and] runs afoul of the secret police. We have to escape. There is a really important second-act drop where my father chooses to stay. And [it becomes an] escape narrative. Boom, you've got Abu Dhabi and you have outside of Rome. And then you have a home.

And [Khosrou's] telling all of that in Oklahoma, right? When I would tell that story, I would always begin with, well, my mom converted to Christianity, right? And people go, OK, so...? And I'd say, let me go back and tell you a little bit about the history of Iran in the seventh century. And also, let me go back and give you a sense of our lives there. I said to myself, in order to fully comprehend this point, what are all the pieces of information you would need to have?

The structural metaphor for me became an accordion. I'm here. And I'm going to stretch the bounds of your interest as far out as I can by saying, OK, in order to understand Isfahan, you have to understand this, and you go back, and back and back, and finally, you've got to compress back into this point and take [your audience] forward. At each node, we're going to go all the way out to the moment of myth, the moment where history dilutes into [what] we don't actually know. And not only do we not know, but it's impossible to know. [Khosrou's] very, very worried when he gets furthest out [that] you're bored, like he'll check in with you and say, are you still listening? And so you're watching him struggle with the structure of the book itself. But he has to do it because he refuses [to let you] say, yeah, just give it to me quickly. He wants to be understood. He's begging for it. [He says we] have this rare opportunity, I'm going to "sit in the parlor of your mind," give you all the context. Just don't get bored. Some of it's boring, because some context is boring. Look, it just is. But if you have all of it, then you'll understand the magnitude of my mother.

I expected to be moved, but I did not expect to find myself laughing out loud.

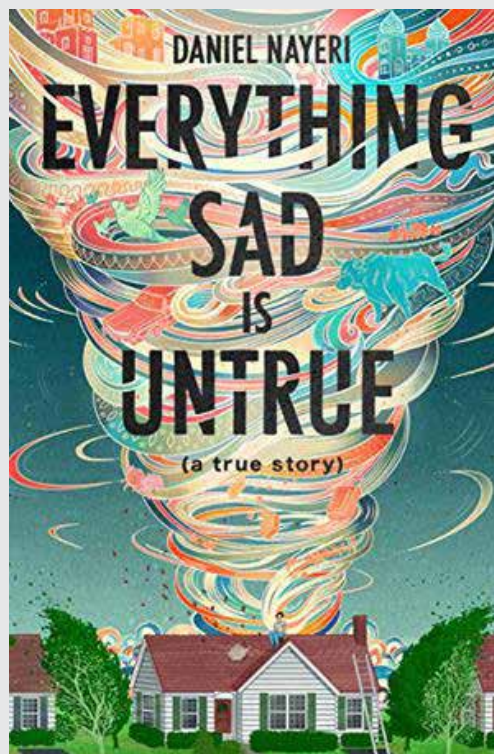
I will tell you the biggest, most chest-wracking laughs I have ever had in my life were in those moments, where something horrible has happened and someone will have the wherewithal to have a bit of gallows humor when you need it desperately. The curative properties

of laughter are never more obvious than when you're all standing there and a great deal of damage has just happened. It's like a human repair mechanism.

What have I not asked you that you are dying to tell me?

I think a lot about the fact that for a very brief window of time I have been given the opportunity to speak to people who have these big platforms and to say something. I beg anybody who [is] listening to remove, for just the slightest of moments, the geopolitical ramifications of any political stance on refugees and only imagine them as guests, only imagine themselves as hosts, and understand that we are commanded, no matter which religion we are, commanded as hosts and as guests to pay attention to our obligations. It is not in the American scheme of politics to say that: Of the host is demanded a welcome. That implies an extreme left position in the American understanding of it, but that [misunderstands] the second part of this obligation, which is the guest is obligated to retain and to properly bolster that welcome for the people after that. So the guest is not without responsibility, and having been the guest, I think about that responsibility a lot: How [can I] help leave that door open for one more person?

Everything Sad Is Untrue received a starred review in the May 15, 2020, issue.

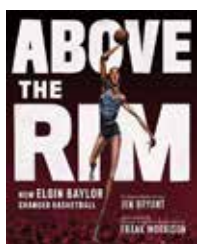


A timely read about an NBA player who spoke out against injustice.

ABOVE THE RIM

way to introduce spatial relationships and positions, such as *on*, *above*, *below*. The impressively intricate collaged cut-paper art adds texture and depth with a slight 3-D effect. The artwork beautifully captures all of the messy, silly, and joyful family interactions. The father has medium-brown skin and is bald, the mother has pale skin and straight, black hair, and the child has light-brown skin and straight, black hair.

A delightful counting book to read aloud, especially at bedtime. (Picture book. 2-5)



ABOVE THE RIM How Elgin Baylor Changed Basketball

Bryant, Jen
Illus. by Morrison, Frank
Abrams (40 pp.)
\$18.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-4197-4108-1

A new generation of fans will be introduced to the legendary basketball player Elgin Baylor.

Elgin Baylor experienced many barriers on his path to NBA success. He grew up in World War II-era Washington, D.C., in a time of segregated playgrounds and a general lack of access to public basketball equipment. Even when he became a prominent player for his all-Black high school's basketball team, local colleges would not allow him admission because they "wanted 'whites only.'" Yet Baylor persevered to become a professional basketball player during the height of the civil rights movement, snapshots of which are interleaved with the primary narrative: the Montgomery bus boycott, the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, a sit-in at a Wichita lunch counter. With Baylor's story, Bryant and Morrison demonstrate that NBA players have a long history of speaking (or, in Baylor's case, sitting) out against injustices in society. Bryant's spare, emphatic text relates how Baylor's Minneapolis Lakers were affected by Jim Crow and how his protest led to a change in NBA policy. Morrison's vibrant paintings emphasize Baylor's lithe athleticism, elongated arms and legs extending balletically. An author's note contextualizes Baylor's story, including the perhaps-surprising information that in his day, basketball was not nearly as popular as it is today. (This book was reviewed digitally with 10.5-by-17-inch double-page spreads viewed at 40.1% of actual size.)

A timely read about an NBA player who spoke out against Jim Crow injustice. (further reading, notes, timeline) (Picture book/biography. 5-10)



BREAKING THE ICE The True Story of the First Woman To Play in the National Hockey League

Bullaro, Angie
Illus. by Payne, C.F.
Paula Wiseman/Simon & Schuster
(40 pp.)
\$18.99 | Sep. 22, 2020
978-1-5344-2557-6

Manon Rhéaume breaks the ice and the glass ceiling in this new biography of one of hockey's trailblazing women.

Though women have been playing hockey for almost as long as the sport has been in existence, for Manon and other girls growing up in the 1970s and '80s, playing with the boys was practically unheard of. As a young player Manon got her break because the team needed a goalie, and since her brothers always made her play goal at home, she was eager to volunteer. She thrived in the position, becoming the first female to play in the Quebec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament, the first female to play a game in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, and ultimately the first female to play in an NHL game, for the Tampa Bay Lightning in 1992. Along the way Rhéaume also earned championships and Olympic medals with the Canadian National Women's Hockey Team. Bullaro keeps the pace in this highlight reel of a biography. Payne's illustrations, despite some anachronistic depictions of modern equipment, truly capture the velocity and scale of hockey and Manon's unique position in it. With the exception of a couple of journalists of color, the White French Canadian woman is surrounded by White players and fans. Rhéaume herself contributes an afterword. (This book was reviewed digitally with 11-by-17-inch double-page spreads viewed at 20.7% of actual size.)

An eminently enjoyable biography, not just for hockey fans, but for all who love stories of pioneering women. (timeline, additional facts) (Picture book/biography. 6-10)



THE HUMAN RACE

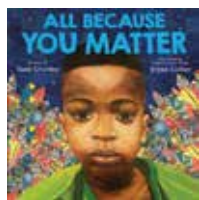
Callery, Sean & O'Malley, Donough
QEB Publishing (96 pp.)
\$19.95 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-0-7112-5668-2

Factoids about various "races" across time.

Across 46 double-page spreads, readers learn about international "races" that cover a range of topics, from actual contests such as the Olympic Games and the Tour de France to general firsts, such as to the top of Mount Everest and to discover radiation. Along the way, facts and information are dolloped out in small paragraphs that stimulate and tease readers' interest. Sadly, the teasing happens too frequently, and information is provided with little context or supplemental information. For example, readers learn that two forerunners to the bicycle were the draisine and the penny farthing. But the draisine looks

like a modern bicycle without pedals while the penny farthing is a vastly different (and scarier-looking) conveyance. What prompted the design of the penny farthing? The Eurocentric focus of the book is a significantly larger flaw, as White faces and White achievements dominate the facts and illustrations. Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay is appropriately given equal visual and textual focus to Edmund Hillary, a White New Zealander, but Japanese climber Junko Tabai, the first woman to summit Everest, is depicted fully covered behind snow goggles and oxygen mask in a far corner of the page. Likewise, the information about Africa focuses textually and visually on David Livingstone, and the only Indigenous Africans depicted are early *Homo sapiens* dressed in stereotypical animal furs. Figures highlighted in the science section include Charles Darwin, Marie Curie, Isaac Newton—it's the same old, same old. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 10.8-by-19.2-inch double-page spreads viewed at 81% of actual size.*)

Readers hoping for alternatives to the dominant narratives will not find them here. (index) (Nonfiction. 10-12)



ALL BECAUSE YOU MATTER

Charles, Tami
 Illus. by Collier, Bryan
 Orchard/Scholastic (40 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-338-57485-2



Two accomplished creators invite Black children to take up their spaces in the world.

Charles' lyrical text addresses "you, dear child," in the voice of a loving caregiver, recounting how the world anticipated and prepared for the child's existence. The child was "dreamed of, / like a knapsack / full of wishes / carried on the backs / of your ancestors," who worked and built, "because to them, / you always mattered." The word "matter" is used in both ways: as a noun, as the child is made up of the same stuff that makes up the universe, and as a verb, because "strength, power and beauty / lie within," even though the world will sometimes make the child question whether "they, / or you, / will ever matter." The universe made room for "you, / your people, / their dreams, / your future," Charles assures the child. The protesters ("take a breath, / take a stand, / take a knee") and victims of racist violence ("Trayvon, / Tamir, / Philando") are mentioned explicitly without becoming the focus; the journey from beginning to end of the book sends a message that is nurturing, nourishing, loving, and reassuring, expanding and deepening the words of the movement it echoes. Collier's trademark paint-and-collage illustrations use petal shapes with patterns and faces, blue and brown hues, and family scenes and close-ups to embody the child's growth within affectionate circles of family, community, and universe.

A gem for every household. (author's note, illustrator's note) (Picture book. 5-10)

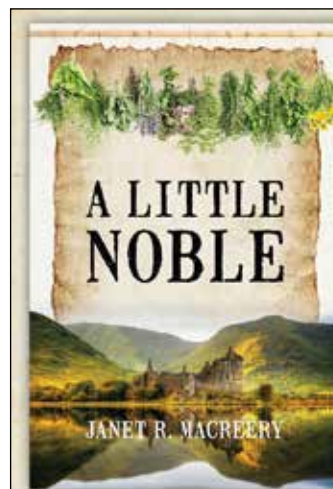


**KIDS CAN COOK
 Fun and Yummy Recipes for
 Budding Chefs**

Illus. by Esther Coombs
 Button Books (64 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-78708-071-3

This cookbook aims to build confidence in the kitchen.

This illustrated cookbook is presented in three sections, each one filled with traditional Western or culturally borrowed fare. "Breakfasts, snacks & breads" includes scrambled eggs on toast, two kinds of pancakes, muffins, quesadillas, skewers, sausage rolls, banana bread, mini frittatas, and flatbread. The section on "Main meals & sauces" includes pasta sauces, pizza, risotto, sliders, fajitas, fishcakes, and curry. "Sweet treats" include ice pops, apple pie, oatmeal bars, cupcakes, cookies, fudge, "gingerbread people," and brownies. The typeface and the illustrations give this book an old-fashioned feel, but the



A LITTLE NOBLE

BY
 JANET R. MACCREERY

This middle-grade adventure features a teen whose destiny connects 17th-century France with Scotland.

"sweet historical fiction tale that emphasizes loyalty and perseverance...A bold final..."

"Readers will be charmed and educated by this lovely historical novel."

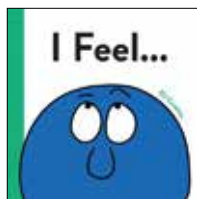
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN 978-1977228352

For information on publishing and film rights, email
 janet.macreery@yahoo.com • www.janetmacreery.wordpress.com

equally retro-seeming line-and-color illustrations are neither realistic nor especially appetizing, so the volume doesn't motivate readers to delve into cooking and eating the way cookbooks with photographs do. The recipes are well chosen for a young cook to develop a solid repertoire and confidence in the kitchen, and the opening pages on safety tips, equipment, and basic techniques are helpful. The instructions for the recipes are not broken down in an especially simple or clear way, however, so the collection ends up feeling like a very slim cookbook for general readers rather than a volume specifically aimed at children. This will work for older children or for highly motivated young chefs, but there are other books that do the same with a more attractive presentation and simpler instructions.

Great selections; not so great presentation. (Nonfiction. 8-12)



I FEEL...

Corchin, DJ
Illus. by the author
 Sourcebooks eXplore (56 pp.)
 \$14.99 | Oct. 1, 2020
 978-1-7282-1946-2
 Series: I Feel . . .

The many emotions one might feel.

A simply rendered face against a plain white background conveys so much. Beginning with the basics, Corchin draws a large, wide smile on a bright, yellow face ("Sometimes I feel **happy**"). With a flip of the page, that face turns blue, tears welling and dripping down ("Sometimes I feel **sad**"). Another page turn: The face is deep red, with downturned eyebrows and a shouting mouth ("Sometimes I feel **angry** and want to be **bad**"). Each face helps readers identify a possible emotion, but the intriguing twist in this exploration of emotional literacy is the variety included, such as guilt, pride, shame, awe, and disgust. There is even a portrayal of feeling "plaid," or not quite having an accurate description for what's going on inside. Corchin doesn't shy away from delving deep; however, the text simply names the mood—young listeners will likely need to continue the conversations with their caregivers. Just what does "I might even **judge** you" mean? Happily, many activity suggestions and prompts are appended at the end. Caregivers and educators will delight: an expert tool for social-emotional learning and helping children to read nonverbal cues. Simultaneously publishing is *I Feel...Different*, and *I Feel...Awesome* follows close behind, on Nov. 6.

A lighthearted, goofy way to help children to own their feelings. (Picture book. 3-6) (*I Feel...Different*: 978-1-7282-1970-7; *I Feel...Awesome*: 978-1-7282-1973-8)



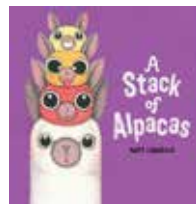
MARVELOUS MAGICIANS

Corry, Lydia
Illus. by the author
 Thames & Hudson (48 pp.)
 \$19.95 | Sep. 15, 2020
 978-0-500-65221-3

Explore the enchanting history of magic.

Readers are guided through an exploration of the conjuring world by a white rabbit named Seymour, who introduces famous magicians, illusionists, and magic acts. The book includes bits of trivia, the history and mechanics of magical illusions (if known), and brief biographies of conjurers throughout history, including Richard Potter, an African American man, Long Tack Sam, a Chinese man, and Adelaide Herrmann, a White woman, nicely diversifying the usual bill. Along the way, bold illustrations with a vaudeville feel beguile readers. The true star of the story (sorry, Seymour!) is the book's designer, who uses occasional gatefolds and 90-degree rotations to make the reading experience as surprising, engaging, and occasionally disorienting as a magic act. Some readers may be frustrated that not every trick is explained, and the biographies are pithy rather than comprehensive, but those looking to learn more about the history of this unusual profession—especially those who value succinct nuggets of information—will delight in the charm of this book. Caregivers and educators should keep in mind that the book will not teach magic tricks, but it will provide a base vocabulary for young readers interested in exploring the art form. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 12.2-by-19-inch double-page spreads viewed at 80% of actual size; gatefolds were viewed at 45% of actual size.*)

A splendid opening act for the profession. (Nonfiction. 8-12)



A STACK OF ALPACAS

Cosgrove, Matt
Illus. by the author
 Scholastic (24 pp.)
 \$14.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-338-71622-1
 Series: Macca the Alpaca

Three misbehaving young visitors give Macca the alpaca hairy conceptions.

The storyline is best regarded as a vehicle for scenes of big-eyed, dainty-hoofed super cuties and a narrative so choked with trite and forced rhymes that it's hard to read with a straight face. The bully-beating woolly introduced in *Macca the Alpaca* (2020) initially welcomes a visit from two nieces and a nephew ("That guy is called **Drew**. / He's Macca's nephew!"). However, they play so wildly that the house is soon a wreck, and they display terrible table manners to boot: "They **flicked** all their peas / and **scoffed** down candies." Confectionery-bright backgrounds set off equally candy-colored crias surrounded by similarly hued rubble. No sooner does "Uncle Mac / completely

Imaginative language takes readers deep into the life of a friendly and contemplative sasquatch.

THE SASQUATCH, THE FIRE AND THE CEDAR BASKETS

blow his stack,” however, than all three repentantly rush off to clean everything up and then fall asleep in an angelic little pile—the titular stack. Sure, young readers will definitely buy that as viable behavior-modeling. On the other hand, the snortworthy verse, sweet pastel colors, and, especially, all those huge, round eyes with their long lashes may beguile even dyed-in-the-wool cynics. For a few moments, at least, and then they will brush their teeth. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 9.9-by-19-inch double-page spreads viewed at 60% of actual size.*)

Readers may wonder if it’s meant to be parody. (*Picture book. 3-5*)



LIA & LUÍS Who Has More?

Crespo, Ana
Illus. by Medeiros, Giovana
Charlesbridge (32 pp.)
\$15.99 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-62354-127-9
Series: Storytelling Math, 1

In this entry in the Storytelling Math series, children are introduced to the concepts of measuring and comparing.

Brazilian Portuguese-speaking siblings Lia and Luís have a relationship marked by a little rivalry. Luís is quick to brag, and Lia doesn’t mind, usually. As they play with blocks, Luís’ tower may be taller, but Lia’s tower—patiently built—doesn’t fall over as easily. When they go to their family’s store for snacks—biscoito de polvilho (tapioca biscuits) for Luís, coxinhas de galinha (chicken croquettes) for Lia—the rivalry continues: “I have more!” brags Luis. But does he? The children compare their snacks by container size (height, width, depth), quantity, and finally by weight. It looks like Lia may finally be the winner, but a sad look on her brother’s face gives her an idea. Sharing a bit of her croquette makes the two sides equal. Simple and uncluttered illustrations follow the children as they try different ways of comparing. There is a sprinkling of Brazilian Portuguese scattered throughout the text (a glossary can be found at the end). The children and their father are portrayed with olive skin and black hair. The backmatter includes more on the math concepts and suggestions of strategies adults can use with children to further develop their measuring skills.

No frills, but it does the job. (*Math picture book. 3-6*)



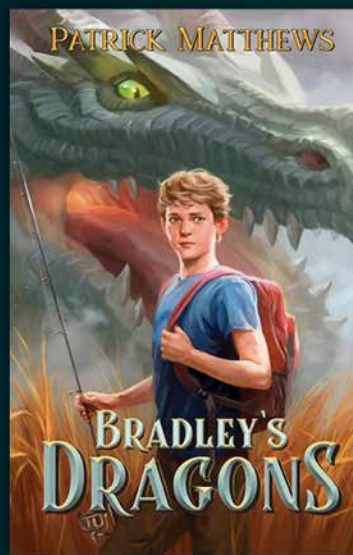
THE SASQUATCH, THE FIRE AND THE CEDAR BASKETS

Dandurand, Joseph
Illus. by James, Simon Daniel
Nightwood Editions (32 pp.)
\$14.95 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
978-0-88971-376-5

A Kwantlen tale from the Pacific Northwest chronicles the life of a sasquatch orphaned by a forest fire.

With imaginative language and humorous imagery, this picture book takes readers deep into the life of a friendly and contemplative sasquatch who ponders why he is such a curiosity to humans. Young readers will marvel as he grows from 9 feet to 12. When he emerges from a swim in the river, his hair is dripping with water, and he leaves a puddle big enough for humans to swim in! He grooms himself, fishes and bathes in the river, and wanders a great cedar forest. He lives peacefully with bears, leaving enormous footsteps behind him as he goes.

Bradley’s Dragons By Patrick Matthews



The hunters are coming

A boy must discover his unusual heritage to save himself and his family in this middle-grade novel.

“The odyssey is both suspenseful and deeply moving.”

“An intriguingly exciting hero’s journey that’s also beautifully thoughtful and humane.”

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #: 978-1733077743

For information on publishing and film rights, email pat@secondstoryup.com • www.bradleysdragons.com

Middle school energy forms a bustling backdrop for this clever story of navigating changing relationships.

SERENA SAYS

After hibernating in a cave, he meets a female sasquatch; they fall in love and have a child. The mother sasquatch weaves cedar basket after cedar basket, strong and watertight, which they leave all over the forest to gather rainwater. When another forest fire occurs, these baskets of rainwater save the whole family. The book uses composite images: photos of natural landscapes populated by two-dimensional sasquatch figures that look like make-believe cutouts filled with a wood-grain effect and marked with the iconic designs of the Pacific Northwest Native peoples. The collages give the book a funny, make-believe feel. Both author and illustrator are #ownvoices creators, the former of the Kwantlen First Nation and the latter of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation.

Visually striking and unusual, this picture book makes the myth of Sasquatch come alive. (Picture book. 5-8)



SERENA SAYS

Davis, Tanita S.
Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins
(272 pp.)
\$16.99 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-0-06-293697-4



Eleven-year-old Serena has always considered herself to be the sidekick to her best friend, JC.

Serena has been anticipating their first visit in over a week, as JC is hospitalized following a kidney transplant. Unfortunately, Serena comes down with a bad cold, and classmate Leilani steps into her role as class ambassador to deliver the gift bag they put together at school. Soon JC is full of talk about Lani, and Serena finds herself resentful of their closeness. Despite the efforts of her mother and older sister, Serena has trouble accepting that relationships change and feels pushed aside despite having new activities and friendships. She even wonders if race is a factor: She is Black while JC is Filipina and Lani is Hawaiian. However, JC's medical issues have exacted a toll: She has become prickly around Serena and seems to reserve her good humor for her new friend. Serena practices recording a personal vlog where she pours out her feelings. It takes time, but Serena does find her own worth and even manages to stand up to her best friend. Middle school energy forms a bustling backdrop for this clever story of navigating changing relationships and developing a sense of personal identity. Secondary characters and storylines provide humor and pathos while at the center is spirited, smart Serena, someone readers will appreciate and cheer.

A delightful multicultural narrative that spotlights friendship and self-awareness. (Fiction. 8-12)



LA DIVINA CATRINA / OH, DIVINE CATRINA

De Alvarado, Aracely
Illus. by Navarro, Claudia
Piñata Books/Arté Público (32 pp.)
\$18.95 | Oct. 31, 2020
978-1-55885-910-4

What to wear, what to wear?

The age-old lament takes on a different nuance as Catrina la catrina, a fashionista of the skeletal sort, desperately searches through her ancient trunk for an outfit befitting her station. Catrina tosses out pinching high heels, a sangria-stained disappointment, a moth-eaten creation, and even some blue high-water palazzos. Nothing is good enough to make her stand out at the Day of the Dead ball. Missing buttons, ruffled lace, what is she to do? Finally, the cranky catrina finds just the thing! So what if a few pearls have gone astray and the sequins blink dully—Catrina has never seen a dress so *divine*. De Alvarado's tribute to José Guadalupe Posada's iconic catrina successfully captures the dressing-for-a-party frenzy even as readers occasionally trip over uneven rhyme schemes and awkward meters, both in her original Spanish text and the uncredited English translation. "Tiene encajes torcidos y polvorientos, / enredados entre perlas finas, / lentejuelas descodidas y canutillo mullido." Similarly, "Inside the chest, there's still more to discover: / a nightmarish necklace and earrings so peculiar. / She puts them on, takes a look in the mirror / and exclaims, 'Darn, I sure cut a fine figure.'" However, Navarro's cocky catrina steals the show. With the perfect touch of the macabre, la divina Catrina expresses consternation and delight as her frantic search for the perfect outfit progresses.

Joins a growing selection for Dia storytimes. (Picture book. 4-8)



LUNA LUMINOSA, ¿DÓNDE ESTÁS? / LUMINOUS MOON, WHERE ARE YOU?

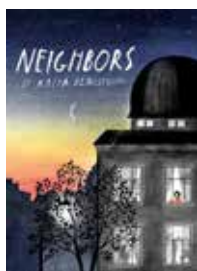
De Alvarado, Aracely
Illus. by Castillo, Victoria
Piñata Books/Arté Público (32 pp.)
\$18.95 | Oct. 31, 2020
978-1-55885-911-1

A boy discovers that the moon is missing from the sky and enlists the help of nighttime animals to find it in this bilingual picture book.

Juanito opens his front door one night to be met with a moonless night sky, so he decides to ask a variety of nocturnal animals if they are the ones who have taken the moon away. Each animal he asks, from the coyote to the fireflies, tells him they do not have the moon. Eventually, Juanito discovers the truth: that the visible moon is constantly changing but will always return. The traditional Spanish children's song "Sale la luna" is incorporated into the story and adds musicality to the finish of the book. The lyrics remind young readers in both Spanish and

English that “The moon comes out so round / ... / Always bright no matter the size.” Each double-page spread includes an image of five moon phases as seen from the Southern Hemisphere. After the cicada is introduced, it playfully interacts with the moon-phases graphic for added fun. The animal sounds used in each character’s response to Juanito’s queries make for perfect read-aloud potential. The dreamlike illustrations depict Juanito as a young Latinx boy with brown skin and straight brown hair.

STEM content and a Spanish lullaby pair up for a satisfying bedtime story. (*Bilingual picture book. 3-5*)



NEIGHBORS

Denisevich, Kasya
Illus. by the author
 Chronicle (44 pp.)
 \$18.99 | Sep. 22, 2020
 978-1-4521-7775-5

A move to a new apartment prompts a series of ruminations in a young grade schooler.

The book opens on a gray European city. The child, dressed in red, ascends to apartment 12. This is the first time the narrator has had a room all to themselves. “But if you stop to think about it...” the child muses, “My ceiling is someone’s floor, and my floor is someone’s ceiling.” As the child imagines these new neighbors, the perspective shifts to a cross-section of the five-story apartment building; the child’s red dress and stuffed toy are the only spots of color. Readers peer in at a hive of activity: a family with many children playing; a gray-haired elder watching TV; someone on a toilet intently reading the newspaper. “Do they look like me? Or are they different in every way?” The page turn reveals startling transformations: The large family becomes Snow White and the seven dwarves; the TV viewer becomes a tortoise; a flying saucer hovers above the newspaper reader. Then: “Do they even exist?... / What if there is nothing at all beyond the walls of my room?” Happily, morning reveals a flute-playing neighbor in apartment 13, a child just the narrator’s size, dressed in yellow. The stable compositions and calm tone give the inquiry a sense of whimsy and wonder; there is no existential terror here. Narrator and neighbors present White.

A thoughtful, restrained reverie. (*Picture book. 4-8*)



THE GIVING DAY

Doerrfeld, Cori
Illus. by the author
 Abrams (40 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Oct. 13, 2020
 978-1-4197-4419-8
 Series: Cubby Hill Tale

Jars of honey make fine presents for friends, but while on his rounds, Cooper the bear delivers an even sweeter gift.

Having brought out a *Welcome Wagon* (2020) for an opener, the tightly knit community of Cubby Hill is coming together

for its Great Giving Festival. “Bee careful!” Grammy Bea warns little Cooper, sending him out with some of the last of the summer’s golden harvest. As everyone is busy setting up on the fairgrounds, Cooper offers to lend a paw at each stop—watching the baby Bouncey bunnies, debugging the VR flight simulator for his friend Stella, and hefting paint-a-pumpkins with another friend, Henry. Unfortunately, at each stop a honey jar somehow ends up spilled or broken (“Oh my gourd! I’m sorry!”), with the inevitable result that Cooper trails sadly back to Grammy’s booth certain that she’ll never trust him again. Imagine his surprise when a crowd rushes up to thank him warmly for his assistance...including Grammy, who makes the lesson explicit: “I want to thank you too,” she says. “For always helping anyone and everyone who needs it.” In populous illustrations that reflect the narrative’s playful tone, Cooper, styling himself “Super Cooper,” is easy to pick out in his cape and outsized eyeglasses amid a bustling, multispecies cast of cute, smiling, big-headed animals in human dress. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 10-by-20-inch double-page spreads viewed at 75% of actual size.*)

Worthy values delivered with a wink...not to mention a generous dollop of sticky sweetness. (*Picture book. 6-8*)



THE DRAGON ARK
Join the Quest To Save the Rarest Dragon on Earth

Draconis, Curatoria
Illus. by Tomic, Tomislav
 Magic Cat (80 pp.)
 \$29.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-1-4197-4837-0

A purpose-built ship—“the mightiest vessel most people will *never* see”—sets out to study the world’s dragons...and track down the rarest of all.

Led by putative author Curatoria Draconis, depicted with brown skin and locs, the multiracial crew of the *Dragon Ark* sails to locales both remote and surprisingly otherwise on each continent. As they go, they pause to fill in fellow dracophiles on basic facts about a dizzying variety of dragons, from the wurm and the deep-sea taniwha of Oceania to amphipteres perching in a presidential eye on Mount Rushmore and drakes lurking in an unused New York subway tunnel. Dense notes accompanying Tomic’s elaborately detailed illustrations not only record observations about each intelligent, reclusive creature’s preferred habitat, diet, size, and suchlike, but sound warnings about worrisome environmental threats ranging from floating plastic waste to the effects of global warming on Antarctica’s meltable ice dragons. A series of obscure clues gathered along the way leads at last to an encounter with a pair of long-sought tien loong, or celestial dragons of China. Stunningly intricate art features an opening portrait gallery of the crew, an immersive cutaway view of the ship, and album-style spreads that offer finely drawn images aplenty of scaled, toothy dragons large and small, some heavy of body, others elegantly sinuous, in natural (or at least characteristic) settings. (The copyright page credits Emma Roberts with the text.)

(This book was reviewed digitally with 15-by-21.6-inch double-page spreads viewed at 75% of actual size.)

A stimulating voyage for hatchling dragonologists.
(Informational fantasy picture book. 7-10)



SKY SONG

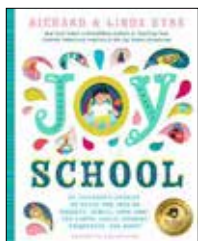
Elphinstone, Abi
Aladdin (336 pp.)
\$17.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-5344-3855-2

Eska, a girl without memories, and Flint, an inventor boy, combine forces to fight the evil Ice Queen.

In the kingdom of Erkenwald, a dark power is rising as the Ice Queen's reign takes hold. As the peace between

Erkenwald's three communities—the Feather, Tusk, and Fur tribes—erodes under her control, adults are imprisoned in the queen's palace while most children hide. Flint, a child of the Fur Tribe who secretly uses magic, sneaks into the palace to save his mother but ends up rescuing Eska instead. She has no memory from before her capture and no known alliance to any tribe, but she knows there is something special about her voice that the queen needs in order to achieve immortality. The pair, along with Flint's little sister, Blu, must journey across the kingdom in search of the powerful Frost Horn to stop the queen. This well-paced story deftly interweaves topics such as community and trusting one's inner voice, but some elements are ill-conceived. Blu has unnamed physical and cognitive disabilities similar to Down syndrome; characterized as simple and loving, her existence centers others' responses to her as a reflection of their degree of moral goodness. The tribes draw on a jumble of elements that evoke Indigenous peoples: the dark-skinned, black-haired, cave-dwelling Feather Tribe; the light-skinned, caribou-dependent Fur Tribe who live in tipis; and the blond, blue-eyed Tusk Tribe who have shamans and live in igloos.

A stand-alone fantasy with questionable diverse representation. (Fantasy. 10-14)



JOY SCHOOL

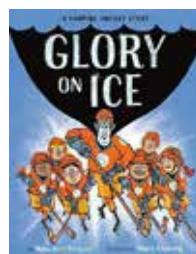
22 Children's Stories To Teach the Joys of Honesty, Family, Your Body, the Earth, Goals, Sharing, Uniqueness, and More!

Eyre, Richard & Eyre, Linda
Illus. by Zakharova, Olga
Bushel & Peck Books (96 pp.)
\$21.99 | Sep. 1, 2020
978-1-952239-75-5

In the vein of Aesop and William J. Bennett's *The Book of Virtues for Young People* (1995), this collection aims to inculcate values in young children through story and verse.

Based on their preschool curriculum, the Eyres' selected stories and poems each highlight one of many "joys," including "Joy of the Body," "Joy of Family," and "Joy of Wonder." A few stories are labeled "Sad-or-Happy Stories" and feature dual storylines, one in which the protagonist makes positive choices and achieves positive outcomes, the other in which poor choices lead to negative outcomes. "Sad-or-Happy" stories are indicated with icons at the beginning of each tale; additional icons highlight which joy(s) are taught as well as estimated reading time. Perhaps as a result of the intended preschool audience, several of the stories lack nuance in both decisions and consequences. Though this may provide clarity for young listeners, the strict dichotomy of right and wrong sets children up for difficulties when faced with real-world decisions down the road. Caregivers should take these as opportunities for deeper discussion, some of which is suggested in the questions that follow each tale. Though illustrations feature some characters of color, the overall impression is of White Western European culture. Nevertheless, the bright illustrations with frequent floral accents are lively and enticing.

Short, simple tales and poems to instill value; they will be welcome in homes where the values presented are shared.
(Anthology. 8-12)



GLORY ON ICE A Vampire Hockey Story

Fergus, Maureen
Illus. by Fearing, Mark
Knopf (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-5247-1451-2

Vlad's search for relief from boredom has him signing up for ice hockey.

With his batwing cape, gray pallor, and pointy ears, nose, and teeth (not to mention the pronounced widow's peak), Vlad looks comically menacing in the Count Dracula style. Hearing a group of children planning to "pound," "crush," and "destroy" their opponents is what first attracts Vlad to the idea, after he ventures from his mist-shrouded castle to the local community center. Vlad (with the "best hockey equipment that treasure plundered from ancient gravesites could buy") falls in love with the sport, watches hockey videos, dreams of playing in the Olympics for Team Transylvania, and works to learn how to skate, pass, and shoot. People—like the salesperson at the hockey store—seem to react with some trepidation around Vlad, but his kid teammates (never named but diverse in racial presentation and including at least one who presents as a girl) are supportive and unperturbed, and a teammate's mom helps him with his skates before practice. Vignettes of game play show Vlad in an enforcer role, elbowing his opponent in the head and shouting from the penalty box as an opposing player trips one of Vlad's teammates. Though his team loses 57-0, it's clear that Vlad has "come to love hockey even more than he loved chasing after terrified mortals." (This book was reviewed digitally with 11-by-17-inch double-page spreads viewed at 38.8% of actual size.)

Light, acceptably silly fare for preschool fans of hockey and vampires. (Picture book. 3-6)

A colorful tale of twins who are not always identical.

MIA AND MOLLY



LITTLE AUDREY'S DAYDREAM *The Life of Audrey Hepburn*

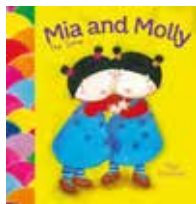
Ferrer, Sean Hepburn &
Ferrer, Karin Hepburn
Illus. by Corbasson, Dominique &
Avril, François

Princeton Architectural Press (56 pp.)
\$17.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-61689-991-2

Audrey Hepburn's life, presented in a temporally unusual structure by her son and daughter-in-law.

"I was born on May 4, 1929, in Brussels, Belgium," opens the first-person narration. Newborn Audrey's short dark hair is already arranged in Hepburn's signature pixie cut; her tiny-waisted mother wears a fashionista dress and chic hat even while saving infant Audrey from whooping cough. As Audrey grows, there's a move to Holland, where ice skating is overtaken by war: the Occupation, air raids, and hunger ("the soldiers took all our food. So we ate green-pea bread, dog cookies, and tulip bulbs"). Midbook, the narrative voice changes to the present tense, but it is still wartime. Audrey now rests in bed to "preserve...calories," daydreaming—still in present tense—adult Hepburn's (true) future. Audrey playacts "little plays and musicals" (illustrated as her most acclaimed future roles); raises kids (dolls, stuffed animals); and engages in charitable work. The illustrations, featuring pale colors, white space, and neat, skinny-limbed characters, are whimsical and delicate; a scene of Audrey, hungry, standing in the snow to watch officers feast inside a restaurant renders the soldiers goofy and the overall feeling romantic. Hepburn's adult accomplishments, ensconced inside wartime childhood fancies, sound both milder than reality and vaguer. Readers without vivid Hepburn images already dancing in their minds (that is, most children) will find this bland, with nothing to latch onto. Because child-Audrey never grows up here, her satisfaction at a life well lived strikes a peculiar note.

For adult Hepburn completists and their extremely patient children. (afterwords) (Picture book/biography. 4-7, adult)



MIA AND MOLLY *The Same and Different*

Freeman, Mylo
Illus. by the author

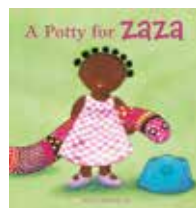
Clavis (42 pp.)
\$14.95 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-60537-571-7

A flip book introduces two Asian siblings, twin toddlers who observe ways they are similar and ways they are not.

"Look—Mia and Molly are twins. They look the same." This half of the book goes on to highlight ways that the twins are similar, focusing on shared preferences in objects and dress. "Today Mia and Molly are wearing the same clothes and the same shoes." Fortunately for the sisters, the illustrations reveal

that there are two of everything, avoiding any source of contention. Bright contrasting colors and textures add dynamism to the illustrations along with artful placement of patterns to surround text or give a pop to objects. Conflict does arise when Mia and Molly fight over one beloved toy frog. Luckily Mommy has a solution. At this point, readers flip the book over and begin reading from the back cover to delve into the differences between the two. Some instances are fairly superficial while others reveal personality distinctions: "Mia loves to laugh at silly puppets. Molly thinks they are a little bit scary." Despite the textual and clothing cues, readers may have a hard time tracking which twin is which, as Freeman does not differentiate them as adroitly as Grace Lin does in her similarly themed early reader, *Ling & Ting: Not Exactly the Same!* (2010). (This book was reviewed digitally with 8.7-by-16.6-inch double-page spreads viewed at 90.1% of actual size.)

A colorful tale of twins who are not always identical. (Picture book. 2-4)



A POTTY FOR ZAZA

Freeman, Mylo
Illus. by the author

Clavis (24 pp.)
\$14.95 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-60537-567-0
Series: Zaza

It's potty time for Zaza.

This title in the Dutch series about a Black toddler named Zaza shows her mother giving her a potty. "Do you know who it is for?" Mommy asks. In what reads like an inversion of the Goldilocks tale, Zaza seats each of her stuffed animal toys one by one on the potty, finding that none are the right size for it. Her bear is too small, giraffe is too tall, a bunny too big, and a snake too long. Showing herself to be a playful good sport, even elegantly dressed Mommy, a tall Black woman, sits on the potty with a laugh. Finally, Zaza decides to try it for herself, and the book ends with her comfortably seated and the potty "just the right size." Freeman defers questions of how and when to use the potty to caregivers, making this more an introduction to the process than anything else. While it's refreshing to see Black characters in a slice-of-life toddler story, some American readers may balk at the exaggerated, wide-set eyes of Mommy and Zaza, which could be seen as veering toward racialized caricature. (This book was reviewed digitally with 8.7-by-16.6-inch double-page spreads viewed at 26.5% of actual size.)

The potty's for Zaza, but the book's not for everyone. (Picture book. 1-3)

Appealing, amusing, and heartfelt.

7 GOOD REASONS NOT TO GROW UP



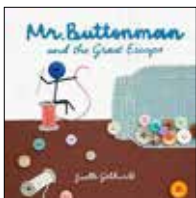
VINCENT VENTURA AND THE DIABOLICAL DUENDES/ VINCENT VENTURA Y LOS DUENDES DIABÓLICOS

Garza, Xavier
Illus. by the author
Trans. by Baeza Ventura, Gabriela
Arte Público (120 pp.)
\$10.95 paper | Oct. 31, 2020
978-1-55885-909-8
Series: Monster Fighter Mystery, 3

Monster fighter extraordinaire Vincent Ventura battles his latest foe: the dreadful duende!

It's around 3 a.m.—the witching hour—when Vincent wakes up to the sound of someone moving into the house at 666 Duende St. Very odd. Stranger yet, Vincent notices that one of his new neighbors, a boy roughly Vincent's age, speaks to himself before committing a random act of vandalism. As the boy, who Vincent learns is named Sayer Cantú, flees on his bike, Vincent notices a little green creature on his shoulder. It looks like there's a new monster mystery afoot! Recruiting his reluctant twin cousins, Bobby and Michelle, Vincent slowly befriends Sayer, whose reputation as a "bad boy" at school and home seems to be caused by the creature's influence. At the library, Vincent and his cousins learn the name of the monster that's causing Sayer's misery: the duende. But what does the duende want? To turn Sayer into a duende! Book 3 in Garza's Monster Fighter Mystery series adds a little psychological horror to Vincent's newest adventure, and this installment emerges as the tightest entry in the series yet as a result. Vincent shares the spotlight with his cousins a tad more, leading to a cohesive story centered on friendship and, more importantly, kicking monster butt. Odd turns of phrase still pepper the author's text, but his enthusiasm for the characters and monster's folklore origins (revealed with a shoutout to fellow author David Bowles) remains palpable as ever in this dual-language novel with a mostly Latinx cast.

A case of lighthearted fun during the witching hour. (Supernatural mystery. 8-12)



MR. BUTTONMAN AND THE GREAT ESCAPE

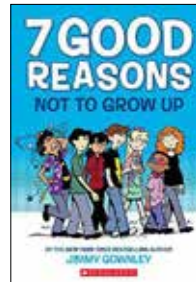
Gebhardt, Joelle
Illus. by the author
Simply Read Books (40 pp.)
\$16.95 | Oct. 16, 2020
978-1-772290-28-8

Abducted and trapped in a strange house, Mr. Buttonman plans a daring escape.

In this wordless tale, Mr. Buttonman, a tiny, slender stick figure stitched from black thread with a blue button head, innocently picks a daisy from a grassy landscape. Suddenly, a woman unceremoniously grabs him by his button head and tosses him into her pocketbook, where he finds himself surrounded by

keys, coin purse, lipstick, pins, coins, and a cough drop. After carrying Mr. Buttonman to her home, the woman drops him into a jar filled with assorted buttons on her sewing table. Frantically rattling the jar, Mr. Buttonman manages to tip it over and jettison himself onto the table, but he literally loses his head in the process. Following several failed attempts to replace his missing head with different buttons, Mr. Buttonman locates his own blue button and deftly stitches it in place. But how will he escape this house and the fierce, interfering marmalade cat that thinks Mr. Buttonman's the perfect toy? Mr. Buttonman's abduction and subsequent actions to escape are revealed through illustrations hand-stitched from applied fabric, buttons, thread, and yarn, using simple shapes and bright colors. Close-up scenes showcase Mr. Buttonman as an action hero, fighting his way out of the jar and resourcefully using materials at hand, despite his diminutive size and fragile physique.

Playful, creative illustrations showcase a plucky, unlikely hero whose quest to survive will delight. (Picture book. 5-8)



7 GOOD REASONS NOT TO GROW UP

Gownley, Jimmy
Illus. by the author
Graphix/Scholastic (272 pp.)
\$12.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-545-85932-5

Kirby Finn is a modern-day Robin Hood who is always looking out for the underdog.

Kirby specializes in devising clever plans that empower kids to stand up to bullies and even rally the community together to save a friend's family business. To his classmates at prestigious Greycliff Academy, he's a hero. But like many heroes, Kirby harbors a painful secret. Despite a fierce loyalty to his friends, he dodges their questions about his family and home life. When the truth finally catches up to him, his friends learn the complicated reasons why he tries so hard to be heroic. Told with humor and authenticity, this book explores friendship dynamics, identity, and the uncertainty of the future. Kirby, his best friend, Raja, and their mutual crush, Kelly, all face their own challenges. Raja struggles to break free from his role as Kirby's sidekick, and Kelly finds strength from surviving an adverse situation in her past. The vibrant, dynamic, full-color panel work succeeds in highlighting the youthful irreverence of the characters and their antics. Wonderfully balanced, this story entertains while also introducing serious topics in an accessible way. Kirby and Kelly present White; Raja is biracial with a White mother and brown-skinned father, and there is diversity in the supporting cast.

The highs and lows of growing up portrayed in an appealing, amusing, and heartfelt way. (author's note; sketches, drawings, and deleted scenes) (Graphic fiction. 9-12)



THE SMARTEST KID IN THE UNIVERSE

Grabenstein, Chris
 Random House (304 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Nov. 3, 2020
 978-0-525-64778-2
 Series: Smartest Kid in the Universe, 1

A seventh grade slacker experiences a synaptic growth spurt.

Grabenstein returns with another romp. This new series stars Jake McQuade, a freckled White 12-year-old who'd rather play video games and schmooze than exert himself in the classroom or on the basketball court. Everything changes when Jake accidentally chows down a scientist's jar of jelly beans imbued with Ingestible Knowledge, sending his IQ sky-high. Accompanied by brainiac buddies Grace Garcia, a Cuban American girl with a secret connection to Riverview Middle School, and Kojo Shelton, a Black science geek and aspiring detective, Jake soon finds himself navigating previously unimaginable scenarios. Sometimes the stakes are local: say, the Riverview Pirates' Quiz Bowl competitions. Sometimes they're a bit larger, like working with the Pentagon on military intelligence or cracking an interstate robbery on behalf of the FBI. All the while, malevolent school principal Patricia Malvolio is scheming with her uncle, real estate tycoon Heath Huxley, to bulldoze the school and erect a condominium, a project funded by a pirate treasure. Can Jake and his pals save their school—or is his brain blast bound to burn out? As always, Grabenstein's cast is more defined by caricature than characterization, and the collective is far stronger than any of its constituent parts. High-paced humor offsets nerdy digressions while light commentary on public education and academic effort lends a veneer of thoughtfulness.

Clever, concise, and compelling. (puzzles) (*Humor: 9-13*)



THE CROCODILE CAPER

Greenfield, A.B.
Illus. by Horne, Sarah
 Holiday House (256 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-0-8234-4649-0
 Series: Ra the Mighty, 3

Ra, the Pharaoh's self-centered, pampered cat and self-proclaimed Great Detective, is not interested in a new mystery.

Ra and his buddies—Khepri, a scarab beetle, and Miu, the kitchen cat—have already solved two mysteries, but Ra much prefers a lazy life of napping and snacking. He is looking forward to a cruise along the Nile with Pharaoh and his children, but Pharaoh must remain in Thebes, and Ra is charged with the task of accompanying and protecting 12-year-old crown prince Dedi and his 6-year-old sister, Kiya. When they dock

at the palace of Lady Satiah, vicious crocodiles surround their barge. Lady Satiah behaves very strangely, and her household is filled with odd characters. She takes the children's jewelry, separates them from their trusted servants, and brags about her remarkable zoo. When Dedi disappears, Ra and his cohorts find themselves with a multitude of suspects, both human and animal—along with plenty of red herrings, intrigue, danger, and some surprise twists—before the culprits are apprehended and the crime is solved. Horne's elongated, exaggerated black-and-white illustrations perfectly capture the setting and characters' idiosyncrasies. The animal leads engage in delightful, often hilarious repartee, speaking in modern syntax easily understood by young readers. While keeping the action moving briskly, Greenfield seamlessly provides information about the mores and culture of ancient Egypt.

A fun romp with a feline detective. (glossary of names, author's note) (*Mystery: 7-11*)



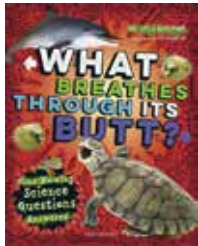
100 CRAZY QUESTIONS
Creatures

Grossblatt, Ben
 becker&mayer! kids (144 pp.)
 \$9.99 paper | Sep. 8, 2020
 978-0-7603-6888-6

This book's out to engage readers who collect odd facts.

Do narwhals sword fight? Would a raccoon do the dishes? Could a manta ray fly through the air? By asking wacky questions about wildlife's weirdness and answering with key facts, Grossblatt shows how remarkably adaptive animals can sometimes be. Broken down by animal classes with one- to two-page spreads per question/species, its design will draw in readers who like to jump around in their reading hunting for info tidbits as well as those who prefer reading from cover to cover. Each of the 100 entries answers its given question with some common facts about the species, provides an unusual fact, and includes a "creature features" box designed to look like a smartphone and listing scientific name, size and weight, and region where it is from. No references or resources are given. The text is humorous and often punny: "What's green, sharp, and tough? Iguana tell you!" Sometimes facts feel arbitrary. "Camels can drink around 30 gallons (114 l) of water in 13 minutes! That's enough to fill up a good-size home aquarium," for instance, may have readers wondering just what exactly that looks like. Using a mix of photos and cartoons, the illustrations add humor but at times sacrifice clarity for flash. The use of the word *crazy* in the title is an unfortunate touch. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 9-by-12-inch double-page spreads viewed at actual size.*)

Funny and engrossing—but subjective. (*Nonfiction: 9-13*)



WHAT BREATHS THROUGH ITS BUTT?
Mind-Blowing Science Questions Answered

Grossman, Emily
Illus. by Bowsber, Alice
Bloomsbury (224 pp.)
\$19.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-5476-0452-4

Scientific inquiry served up in a witty, visual style, with enough fart jokes to satisfy any young reader.

Even kids who are not turned on by a traditional science curriculum will be inspired by this approach. The author's intention of making science friendly and accessible to different learning styles is immediately apparent from the quiz-show format. The book includes 30 attention-grabbing questions, each presented with four possible answers, encouraging readers to consider and speculate. The questions include the one used for the title and such intriguing puzzlers as "Which creature had the strongest bite ever?" and "How long would you need to fart to produce gas with the equivalent energy of an atomic bomb?" In a chatty, kid-friendly style similar to that of the Magic School Bus series, the author, a popular British scientist, youth science advocate, and TV personality, encourages children to ask questions and not be afraid of making mistakes. Each question is presented comic-book style in a speech bubble followed by several pages of in-depth facts about the topic. This highly illustrated volume is visually arresting, with striking, thick-lined, grayscale art taking up the majority of each page. The varied typeface uses bold and all caps for emphasis, and the text is often laid out creatively, such as within the open jaws of a crocodile. Ethnic diversity is indicated in the drawings.

Sure to hook those who already love science—and lure in skeptics. (Nonfiction. 8-12)



OUT OF HIDING
A Holocaust Survivor's Journey to America

Gruener, Ruth
Scholastic Nonfiction (208 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-338-62745-9

The memoir of Holocaust survivor Gruener, who spent much of the war in hiding and has gone on to ensure it will not be forgotten.

In the 1930s, in what was then Lvov, Poland, Luncia Gamzer is born to Jewish parents. Luncia, a brown-haired, light-skinned girl, is a happy child, but when she's 5, Germany's invasion of Poland destroys her world. Could young Luncia have foreseen the eventual extermination of most of Lvov's 200,000 Jews? As Gruener writes, "you can see the truth in hindsight but not as it's happening in the moment." Luncia's awful wartime experiences seem almost benign compared to the horrific experiences

of Jack Gruener, the boy who'd one day become her husband, which are lightly fictionalized in *Prisoner B-3087* (2013), co-authored by both Grueners and Alan Gratz, who contributes the foreword to this title. She starves in a ghetto, she's helpless while her extended family members are murdered, she starves again while hidden by family friends. When the Soviets liberate Lvov, she becomes a displaced person, trying to be normal after a childhood hiding, silent, in the dark. It doesn't take Luncia long to relearn how to walk and talk, but that's the easy part. This blunt, important history is less about the Holocaust itself and more about its aftermath for a traumatized refugee girl becoming a young woman in America after a multiyear wait for visas. She changes her name to Ruth, but becoming an American teenager who understands "fun" is more complicated than a name change.

Accessible, vital, and timely. (map, photographs) (Memoir. 8-11)



WOODLAND DREAMS

Jameson, Karen
Illus. by Boutavant, Marc
Chronicle (32 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-1-4521-7063-3



A sonorous, soporific invitation to join woodland creatures in bedding down for the night.

As in her *Moon Babies*, illustrated by Amy Hevron (2019), Jameson displays a rare gift for harmonious language and rhyme. She leads off with a bear: "Come home, *Big Paws*. / Berry picker / Honey trickster / Shadows deepen in the glen. / Lumber back inside your den." Continuing in the same pattern, she urges a moose ("*Velvet Nose*"), a deer ("*Tiny Hooves*"), and a succession of ever smaller creatures to find their nooks and nests as twilight deepens in Boutavant's woods, autumnal scenes and snow begins to drift down. Through each of those scenes quietly walks an alert White child (accompanied by an unusually self-controlled pooch), peering through branches or over rocks at the animals in the foregrounds and sketching them in a notebook. The observer's turn comes round at last, as a bearded parent beckons: "This way, *Small Boots*. / Brave trailblazer / Bright stargazer / Cabin's toasty. Blanket's soft. / Snuggle deep in sleeping loft." The animals go unnamed, leaving it to younger listeners to identify each one from the pictures...if they can do so before the verses' murmurous tempo closes their eyes.

Sweet fare for bed- or naptimes, with a light frosting of natural history. (Picture book. 4-6)

A compelling celebration of Eleanor Roosevelt that will inspire children to follow in her footsteps.

ELEANOR MAKES HER MARK



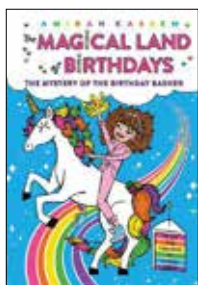
STAND UP! SPEAK UP! A Story Inspired by the Climate Change Revolution

Joyner, Andrew
Illus. by the author
Schwartz & Wade/Random (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-593-30158-6
978-0-593-30159-3 PLB

A story for every budding activist.

Using sparse text made up of two-word sentences that all end in “up,” the story follows an elementary-age kid who attends a climate change rally predominantly attended by other children. While the rally is well attended and positive, the protagonist watches the evening news and is disheartened to see stories of environmental destruction following the spot about the day’s rally. After a sleepless night, the young activist is motivated to be a force of positive change in the community, a decision that culminates in a final double gatefold that shows local change in action. (This scene includes a child in a pink pussy-hat, a nod to Joyner’s earlier work about a kid marching for change, *The Pink Hat*, 2017.) The story reads aloud smoothly and well, but the cartoon illustrations—black and white with pale gray tones and pops of, primarily, green and a few other muted colors—may not be easily seen from the back of a room. The final spread presents brief biographies of children working internationally to promote ecological activism. The book is a solid first step in discussing activism with young children, but caregivers and educators should be prepared to answer questions. The diversity of city characters, from ages to sizes to skin tones, is realistic and appreciated. The protagonist has straight, black hair and paper-white skin. (This book was reviewed digitally with 10.2-by-20.4-inch double-page spreads viewed at 88% of actual size; the double gatefold was viewed at 44% of actual size.)

Should encourage readers to stand up and speak up as well. (Picture book. 5-8)



THE MYSTERY OF THE BIRTHDAY BASHER

Kassem, Amirah
Amulet/Abrams (176 pp.)
\$14.99 | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-4197-4028-2
Series: The Magical Land of Birthdays, 2

Amirah restores birthday magic to the neighborhood.

Strange things are happening in Amirah’s neighborhood. She missed her friend’s birthday party because she didn’t receive the invitation. She discovers that her brother missed a friend’s birthday for the same reason. Then her magical book of birthday-cake recipes starts to fade in her hands, and when she visits the Magical Land of Birthdays in her dreams, it doesn’t feel right—the magic is missing. With some good advice from an elderly friend, Amirah

knows she must trust her heart, which tells her to return to the Magical Land of Birthdays to figure out what is going on. Her B-Buds—birthday buddies who share her birthday—are hesitant, but they trust Amirah enough to follow her around as she picks up clues. She eventually solves the mystery with her own birthday magic and is crowned princess of the Magical Land of Birthdays. Amirah is a likable-enough protagonist with an enviable family and cloyingly adoring friends. Her obsession with birthdays to the exclusion of any other interests feels a bit hollow and unsatisfying. The mystery of fading books and disappearing invitations is enough to draw readers in, but the multiple trips to and from the Magical Land, both in dreams and while awake, feel disruptive enough to take readers out of the story. The multicultural cast includes children who are Mexican, Jamaican, and Japanese; Amirah’s name is Arabic.

This light tale is weighted down by mediocre storytelling and a convoluted plot. (Fantasy. 6-11)



ELEANOR MAKES HER MARK

Kerley, Barbara
Illus. by Fotheringham, Edwin
Scholastic (48 pp.)
\$18.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-545-82612-9

“Candid. Compassionate. Courageous.”

Eleanor Roosevelt comes alive in this energetic depiction of her experiences and accomplishments. Lively textual description portrays her empathy, intelligence, pragmatism, warmth, and humor while dynamic illustrations give a sense of Roosevelt’s exuberance and sincere dedication to helping those who were struggling. Beginning just before her husband’s inauguration, the plot then flashes back to her childhood and moves forward to her achievements as an adult, providing a sense of her formative experiences and tying them to the beliefs she developed and acted on in later life. The text takes care to mention the time she spent developing relationships with the people she sought to help as well as the unique role she played as first lady and partner to FDR, providing advice, knowledge, and information throughout his political career. Though her family life is mentioned, the emphasis here is on the work she did for others: investigating prisons, hospitals, and asylums; helping FDR’s government “serve the good of the people” (her words, quoted by Kerley); fighting for equality and against discrimination; and her participation in UNICEF and the U.N. Fotheringham includes people of color in some scenes illustrating his White protagonist’s civil rights work and outreach. Endnotes showcase an impressive array of photos and provide a framework for young readers to bring about positive change themselves.

A compelling celebration of Eleanor Roosevelt that will inspire children to follow in her footsteps. (photos, questions for reflection, source notes) (Picture book/biography. 5-10)

Filled with heart and humor.

MEASURING UP



PET THAT DOG! A Handbook For Making Four-Legged Friends

Kidd, Gideon & Braunigan, Rachel

Illus. by Hoffmann, Susann

Quirk Books (128 pp.)

\$13.49 paper | Oct. 20, 2020

978-1-68369-229-4

A childhood love of dogs becomes a full-time obsession for a young author and his mother.

When 11-year-old Gideon was 8, he started the website *IvePetThatDog.com* and began posting a picture with every dog he met—by now over 1,000 dogs. The mother-son team now follows up with this informal guide to meeting and caring for dogs. Starting with how to safely pet a dog, they then cover canine body language, good places to encounter dogs, and several stories about heroic and inspirational real dogs. Mascots, therapy dogs, guide dogs, and rescue dogs are described in amusing detail. The text is peppered with vignettes, trivia, and useful tips for young dog lovers. Other sections cover adoption, caring for your dog, keeping your dog entertained, training, allergies to dogs, and basic care. There's a silly dog name generator, a personality quiz, and a dog tracker (akin to birders' life lists). Cheerful, humorous, full-color illustrations and background art add visual interest and feature ethnically diverse humans. Gideon's infectious enthusiasm for his subject shines out from the engaging and chatty text. Those looking for a dog-care manual will need to supplement with additional information, but this fills an important niche for young dog lovers who may not have a pooch of their own. Those wishing to explore a perennially popular subject will be more than satisfied.

Fact-filled fun for any child drawn to canines. (bibliography) (*Nonfiction. 8-12*)



OKAPI TALE

Kramer, Jacob

Illus. by Steele, K-Fai

Enchanted Lion Books (56 pp.)

\$18.95 | Oct. 6, 2020

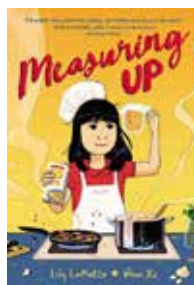
978-1-59270-304-3

Noodlephant, Beaston's beloved, pachydermatous pasta connoisseur, must return from a trip abroad to help her friends reclaim the town's pasta machine from the nasty Okapi-talist.

The sequel to *Noodlephant* (2019) skillfully summarizes the previous book in its opening sentences. Just as in *Noodlephant*, humor in both the text and artwork cushions a morality tale that promotes democratic socialism. There are also silly and often not-quite-scanning—but heartfelt—songs and chants. Noodlephant leaves Beaston (formerly Rooville) to learn about noodles in Japan and China, excitedly acquiring “extra-extra large” geta for her feet and recipes for such noodles as soba and biang biang. Her trip is cut short when she learns that the greedy mayor of Beaston, a kangaroo, sold the town-owned pasta machine to

the Okapi. Most residents must work in the Okapi's polluting pasta factory to afford purchases from the Okapi's other, newly acquired, businesses. Noodlephant returns upon seeing a box of Okapi-branded pasta in a Chinese market, and she and her friends stage actions and even a factory sabotage before the mayor is impeached and the Okapi is sent packing. Readers will note that the text asserts that “the kangaroos”—not *some* kangaroos—are both xenophobic and unhappy about their loss of special privileges, but the art subverts this by showing some kangaroos who seem perfectly happy with Beaston's new egalitarian ways. Nevertheless, text and art are charming and accessible.

More fun with Beaston's favorite beast. (Picture book. 4-9)



MEASURING UP

LaMotte, Lily

Illus. by Xu, Ann

HarperAlley (208 pp.)

\$22.99 | \$12.99 paper | Oct. 27, 2020

978-0-06-297387-0

978-0-06-297386-3 paper

An aspiring young chef discovers her innate resourcefulness and the courage of her convictions.

In this contemporary immigrant story, 12-year-old Cici moves from Taiwan to Seattle with her professional parents, who promote a straightforward formula for success: “good grades, good college, good job.” Cici, however, is sad to leave her grandmother and is determined to bring A-má to the United States for her 70th birthday. When a junior cooking contest presents the prospect of funding A-má's airfare, Cici, an able chef, aims to win and begins making “American” foods. Working with her in-contest partner Miranda, Cici learns to make porcini risotto, *not* to overcook pasta, and that she is a super taster. This revelation reminds readers of the secret spice mixture that A-má taught Cici when she was little—will it help her win the contest? Similar hints of superhero identity lurk throughout this textured graphic novel filled with heart and humor, centering girls with budding ambitions, subverting tropes, and celebrating everyday heroes—including the librarian who introduces Cici to Julia Child. Word to the wise: Readers should not pick up this book while hungry unless they have treats nearby such as Taiwanese minced pork over rice, or at least a bubble tea to go with that pineapple cake and zucchini chocolate cookie.

Bold and nuanced, this intercultural “cook book” dishes up hearty morsels well worth savoring. (Graphic fiction. 9-13)



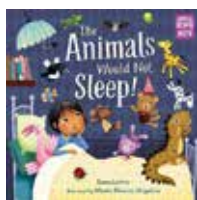
THE EIGHTY-DOLLAR CHAMPION
The True Story of a Horse, a Man, and an Unstoppable Dream

Letts, Elizabeth
 Delacorte (272 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-0-593-12712-4

The enthralling tale of an unlikely champion.

Delayed by a flat tire and a snowstorm, Harry de Leyer arrived at the New Holland, Pennsylvania, horse auction in February 1956 after sales had been completed. The kill buyer had already loaded the unsold horses onto a trailer destined for the slaughterhouse when a gaunt gray gelding with wounds from a plow harness caught de Leyer's eye. De Leyer, a White man who had emigrated from Holland after World War II, knew something about suffering and bought the horse for \$80. Within a few months, Snowman was placidly carrying beginner riders at the exclusive Knox School where de Leyer ran the riding program. However, he tripped over ground poles: He seemingly couldn't jump. But after being sold to a neighboring farmer, Snowman regularly jumped 5-foot fences to come home. De Leyer bought him back; soon the unlikely pair were winning against the most cosseted and expensive horses in the country. Though de Leyer's status as a professional riding teacher meant they were ineligible for the Olympics, Snowman became an international favorite. Here, equestrian Letts revises her adult title from 2011. In many ways it's more successful as a young readers' edition: With the tighter focus, the sweetness of the relationship between de Leyer—who, though needing money, turned down blank-check offers for the horse he and his children loved—and Snowman shines even brighter. Extensive backmatter enhances this irresistible story.

A lovely telling of a lovely tale. (Nonfiction. 8-16)



THE ANIMALS WOULD NOT SLEEP!

Levine, Sara
 Illus. by Miguéns, Marta Álvarez
 Charlesbridge (32 pp.)
 \$15.99 | Oct. 13, 2020
 978-1-62354-128-6
 Series: Storytelling Math

Children are introduced to the concepts of sorting and classifying in this bedtime story.

It is getting close to bedtime, and Marco's mother asks him to put his toys away. Marco—who thinks of himself as a scientist—corrects her: "You mean time to sort the animals." And that's what he proceeds to do. Marco sorts his animals into three baskets labeled "Flying Animals," "Swimming Animals," and "Animals That Move on Land," but the animals will not sleep. So he sorts them by color: "Mostly Brown," "Black and

White," and "Colors of the Rainbow," but Zebra is upset to be separated from Giraffe. Next, Marco sorts his animals by size: "Small," "Medium," and "Large," but the big animals are cramped and the small ones feel cold. Finally, Marco ranges them around his bed from biggest to smallest, thus providing them with space to move and helping them to feel safe. Everyone satisfied, they all go to sleep. While the plot is flimsy, the general idea that organizing and classifying can be accomplished in many different ways is clear. Young children are also presented with the concept that different classifications can lead to different results. The illustrations, while static, keep the focus clearly on the sorting taking place. Marco and his mother have brown skin. The backmatter includes an explanation of sorting in science and ideas for further activities.

Nothing riveting but serviceable enough. (Math picture book. 3-5)



HOW THE CONTINENTS MOVE

Leysens, Jan
 Illus. by Sneyers, Joachim
 Clavis (32 pp.)
 \$16.95 | Oct. 13, 2020
 978-1-60537-580-9
 Series: Marvelous but True, 2

Mysteries are hidden on the ocean floor.

Translated from the Dutch and focused on the uncovering of evidence of continental drift, this offering in the Marvelous but True series briefly addresses early hypotheses before moving on to geologist Marie Tharp's 1943 discovery of the rift along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, which proved that continental drift had occurred. While factually accurate, the text fails to provide historical context and omits information likely of interest to readers, particularly surrounding Tharp's accomplishments as a female scientist—for example, that Tharp was one of the few women working in a field almost exclusively dominated by men; that, despite her brilliance, she was initially unable to secure a scientific job due to sexism; and that her findings were dismissed for the same reason. Seemingly designed to educate rather than excite, the overall product is reminiscent of a basal reader (the text is somewhat stilted and choppy while the illustrations inexplicably feature individuals with oddly pointed ears). No charts or additional source notes are provided. While this may be helpful as an additional selection for students interested in the topic, there are other selections for the age group that provide greater inspiration, more in-depth information, and stronger historical background on both Tharp and her accomplishments.

A tepid tale of scientific discovery. (Picture book/biography. 6-10)



WARM CLOTHES FOR BEAR

Loman, Sam
Illus. by the author
Clavis (32 pp.)
\$17.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-60537-572-4
Series: Bear

A bear learns a valuable lesson: remember yourself when sharing.

Bear goes out on a snowy day and heeds Mom's advice to bundle up in warm clothing. He joins in fun activities with various animal friends, for which he's prepared, clothingwise—but they're not. Generous pal that he is, Bear doffs his toasty duds, one by one, and shares them with his friends so they'll feel comfortable. It doesn't take long before Bear's comrades are attired in sweater, earmuffs, scarf, mittens, etc., but *he's* not, and he feels chilled. Bear returns home, where Mom encourages her sniffly son to snuggle under the bedcovers, gently praising him for being a good friend. Before long, the gang shows up with gifts, including edibles and some cold-weather gear, to help Bear feel better and expressing gratitude for his generosity. Then everyone troops outdoors, this time all properly attired. This gentle import from Belgium and the Netherlands is translated from Dutch and offers a warm message indeed. Narrated in first-person, present tense, it's a twist on the sharing-is-caring trope. While there are many books on this theme, few convey the idea that sharing doesn't necessarily entail completely ignoring one's own needs. The colorful, appealing illustrations are sweet, lively, and full of snowy white space, and they reflect the friends' camaraderie and good cheer. *(This book was reviewed digitally with 10.2-by-19.6-inch double-page spreads viewed at 74.4% of actual size.)*

A good-natured reminder not to forget oneself when being kind to others. *(Picture book. 3-6)*



A STORY FOR SMALL BEAR

McGinty, Alice B.
Illus. by Jones, Richard
Schwartz & Wade/Random (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Oct. 13, 2020
978-1-9848-5227-4
978-1-9848-5228-1 PLB



Preparing for winter hibernation instills a big lesson for Small Bear in this bedtime story.

When a late-fall wind chills the child after an afternoon nap, Mama says, "I smell frost in the air... Tonight we'll start our winter slumber." But the day is packed; they must find sprigs of spruce to make a warm nest. There are juicy acorns to gather. And Small Bear needs to take a bath before their long sleep. Small Bear wants nothing more than to have enough time for a story before sleep, but Mama warns her: "If you help—no dilly, no dally—then we'll have time for stories," she says. Small Bear works hard to avoid temptations: snuggling in a cozy hole in a

spruce tree, playing longer in the stream, and climbing higher in the tree. But Mama's instruction helps Small Bear to stay on track and remember "to save time for stories." Of course, Small Bear's resistance to the kind of procrastination that would sink many others is rewarded with Mama's best story, and sleep comes quickly. McGinty's rhythmic prose and absolute mastery of pace elevate a simple story to something poetically potent. Jones' deeply textured illustrations make every spruce sprig and, especially, the bears' fur stand out beautifully. A standout spread rotates the book 90 degrees for a tall tree climb; it's a delight, just like everything else in this expertly executed picture book. *(This book was reviewed digitally with 10.5-by-21-inch double-page spreads viewed at actual size.)*

Hibernation has rarely felt so well earned and enchanting. *(Picture book. 3-7)*



PEARL HARBOR

Messner, Kate
Illus. by Meconis, Dylan
Random House (224 pp.)
\$7.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-593-12037-8
Series: History Smashers, 3

History is rarely clean cut.

The third book in the History Smashers series offers readers more truths about an important event in history, weeding out tall tales they may inadvertently have absorbed through popular culture. In this installment, Messner challenges the belief that the attack on Pearl Harbor came out of nowhere. The author describes how Japan opened up to the outside world following an 1853 confrontation with Commodore Perry of the U.S. Navy, eventually militarizing and searching for foreign conquests. Next, she shows how, after years of colonialism, the U.S. had become largely isolationist, wary of entanglements in foreign countries and conflicts. Then, the background to the Second World War on both the European and Asian fronts is set, and the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor unfolds, shown to have occurred after a series of miscommunications and mistaken assumptions. The subsequent imprisonment of Japanese Americans is addressed, highlighting injustices perpetrated because of racism and fear. Presenting history through a blend of engaging narrative, graphics, black-and-white illustrations, and photos, Messner explains complex issues in a way that is accessible to young readers. Occasional text boxes provide helpful background information, such as the history of Hawaii. Wartime contributions by African Americans, Native Americans, and Japanese Americans are described.

An intriguing read that will encourage children to question simplistic historical narratives. *(timeline, author's note, bibliography, image credits, index) (Nonfiction. 8-12)*

Will comfort readers who have experienced death with its healthy truth while the gorgeous illustrations will uplift.

ADDY'S CUP OF SUGAR



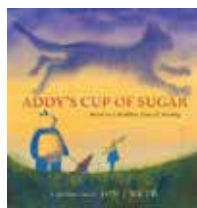
RED STARS *The Case of Viktor and Nadya's Notebooks*

Morosinotto, Davide
 Illus. by Tso, Simone
 Trans. by Muir, Denise
 Delacorte (432 pp.)
 \$19.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
 978-1-984893-32-1

Soviet twins use diaries to recount their experiences during the Siege of Leningrad.

When Germany invades the Soviet Union in 1941, the city soviet council arranges for young people, including Viktor and Nadya, 12-year-old White twins, to flee Leningrad on trains reserved just for children. Before their departure, their father gives the siblings notebooks in which to record what's unfolding. When the twins become separated and sent on different trains, this tension sets the story in motion. While Nadya's train breaks down, Viktor ends up on a collective farm. And as Nadya and her companions continue on foot, eventually joining Soviet sailors in a fortress; Viktor, braving a labor camp and other obstacles, sets out to reunite with Nadya. While they describe their nonstop survival against hunger, cold, enemy forces, and death at every turn, interspersed archival photos, maps, propaganda posters, and fictionalized artifacts make the story resemble a documentary novel. Reports from a Col. Smirnov in 1946 frame the children's documents, presented as having been reassembled into chronologically arranged accounts. Blue ink delineates Nadya's narration and red, Viktor's. It's up to Smirnov to decide their guilt or innocence regarding charges brought in relation to the events recounted within. An added layer of mystery concerning a Soviet agent helps bring to a close this complex, lengthy story translated from Italian.

Experienced readers will enjoy piecing together clues and weighing evidence in this historical adventure story. (author's note, image credits) (Thriller. 11-14)



ADDY'S CUP OF SUGAR *Based on the Buddhist Story of "The Mustard Seed"*

Muth, Jon J
 Illus. by the author
 Scholastic (32 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-0-439-63428-1
 Series: Stillwater

Based on a Buddhist tale, this modern adaptation tells a story of loss and acceptance.

Addy, a young White girl, has a kitten she's named Trumpet for his "tooting" meow, and when she's with him "the world [is] brighter and warmer." But shortly after moving to a new neighborhood, Trumpet is hit by a car. Muth doesn't mince

words here, and that's refreshing. But Addy is very sad and bewildered, and she goes to see the wise panda Stillwater, her friend, for help. Stillwater tells her he will make some medicine for her, but first he needs her to go around to the neighbors and get a cup of sugar—but the sugar can only come from a house that hasn't experienced any death. With simple, direct storytelling, Muth reveals the immanence within everyday life, a theme underscored by the perfect watercolor illustrations. Both juxtaposing warm and cool palettes and using highlights and shadows—rather than line—to define people and objects, he creates images that fairly shimmer with atmosphere and show the strength of the watercolor medium in an expert's hands. Nuanced images of Trumpet-shaped clouds and figures on the Earth underscore the immortality of memories, which Addy comes to eventually realize. This gracefully told story will comfort readers who have experienced death with its healthy truth while the gorgeous illustrations will uplift them. Secondary human characters are diverse.

A master class of picture-book storytelling. (author's note) (Picture book. 4-10)



THE CHALLENGER DISASTER *Tragedy in the Skies*

Naujokaitis, Pranas T.
 Illus. by the author
 First Second (128 pp.)
 \$19.99 | \$12.99 paper | Oct. 27, 2020
 978-1-250-17429-1
 978-1-250-17430-7 paper
 Series: History Comics

In the distant future, a diverse classroom spends a day giving presentations about the tragic and still relevant accident of the space shuttle *Challenger*.

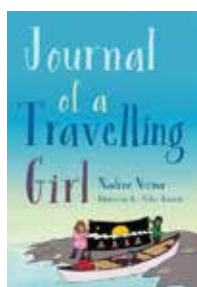
It's "Challenger Day" on the fictional Space Station Sagan, exactly 400 years after *Challenger's* 1986 explosion. The kids on Sagan, drawn with cartoon-style big heads and wide-eyed expressions, sound like today's middle schoolers but use holopads and virtual reality instead of paper and projectors. Fatima, who is brown-skinned and wears a hijab, presents first, showing labeled diagrams of the shuttle and its flight path. The presentation assumes knowledge of aerospace terms such as *propellant* and *thrust*; classmate Chris, also dark-skinned, might be speaking for many readers when he exclaims, "I feel like you gotta be some sort of *rocket scientist* to understand all this!" He then introduces the class to holographic projections of the *Challenger* crew, who cheerfully—and quite eerily—explain their backgrounds and give the 24th-century kids a chance to decry racism as "hatred" that no longer exists. Next, the teacher, who presents White, goes over the events of the launch in the most straightforward, evocative, and beautifully designed and illustrated part of the book. Max, a White-presenting student, describes the investigation into the accident, lionizing Richard Feynman without mentioning his sexism. Carmen, who has light-brown skin, waxes lyrical about space and other pioneers

With an amped-up sense of wonder, the Science Guy surveys the natural universe.

BILL NYE'S GREAT BIG WORLD OF SCIENCE

who faced “setbacks” but “kept going.” The facts are there, seen through rosy lenses.

A well-researched, idealistic tribute. (introduction, afterword, additional facts) (*Graphic nonfiction. 9-12*)



JOURNAL OF A TRAVELLING GIRL

Neema, Nadine

Illus. by Beaverho, Archie

Wandering Fox (144 pp.)

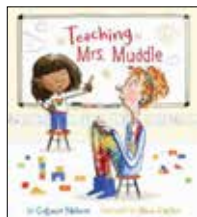
\$12.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2020

978-1-77203-317-5

A girl in mourning goes on a healing canoe trip with members of the local Tłı̄cho tribe.

When Jules' mother moves them to Wekweètì in far northern Canada for a job as the community administrator, she is only 5. Six years later, they are still living among the Tłı̄cho people, and while Jules, who is White, still occasionally feels like a cultural outsider, she has started to think of them as family. When her friend Layla's grandparents invite her on a long and politically significant canoe trip, she is frightened. But her mother, knowing how sad she is about the death of the beloved Tłı̄cho elder Jules called Uncle Joe, insists that she go. Along the way she will witness her tribal friends in their Christian-Indigenous practices, their pride in their history, and their knowledge of the outdoors. She will gather wood, camp, portage, and paddle her way to deeper maturity and an understanding of the land, feeling the spirit of the ancestors draw her closer to nature and the meaning of the trip. Based on the 2005 signing of the Tłı̄cho Agreement, an event that was witnessed by the author, the book was written with tribal approval. (Like Jules' mom, the author is not Tłı̄cho but worked for and lived with the band for some years.) It reads like a sincere effort to record their victory for the right to self-govern. The black-and-white illustrations by Beaverho (Tłı̄cho Dene) capture the river and forest well, but the human faces feel a bit cartoonish.

Of greatest interest to kids who love stories set in the outdoors and Indigenous histories. (*Fiction. 8-12*)



TEACHING MRS. MUDDLE

Nelson, Colleen

Illus. by Carter, Alice

Pajama Press (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | Oct. 6, 2020

978-1-77278-131-1

It's Kayla's first day of kindergarten, and she's riddled with anxiety about all the mistakes she's sure she will make.

Then Kayla meets her teacher, Mrs. Muddle, and realizes that she might not be the only one learning the ropes. Mrs. Muddle passes out all the nametags to the wrong students, reads the morning storybook upside down, and confuses the

library with the gym. Every time she makes a mistake, Kayla corrects her by figuring out the answer on her own. By the time the day is over, Kayla is confident in her ability to navigate her new school. Nelson's narratorial voice is clear and charming, and the choice to illustrate Kayla as a dark-skinned girl of color is pleasing. The plot is not without its flaws, however. While Kayla claims to her mother after school that she made new friends, readers mostly see Kayla interacting with Mrs. Muddle, without the help of other students who might also be trying to correct their wayward teacher. Many of Kayla's classmates appear also to be children of color. This would be a commendable gesture to diversity except that it transforms the book into the story of how a White teacher seems to decide that the best way to assuage the first-day jitters of a set of diverse kindergartners is to feign incompetence, a tactic that comes across as condescending.

Doesn't quite make the grade. (*Picture book. 4-6*)



BILL NYE'S GREAT BIG WORLD OF SCIENCE

Nye, Bill & Mone, Gregory

Illus. by Farinella, Matteo & Fenne, Amelia & Nye, Bill

Abrams (264 pp.)

\$29.99 | Oct. 27, 2020

978-1-4197-4676-5



With an amped-up sense of wonder, the Science Guy surveys the natural universe.

Starting from first principles like the scientific method, Nye and his co-author marvel at the “Amazing Machine” that is the human body then go on to talk up animals, plants, evolution, physics and chemistry, the quantum realm, geophysics, and climate change. They next venture out into the solar system and beyond. Along with tallying select aspects and discoveries in each chapter, the authors gather up “Massively Important” central concepts, send shoutouts to underrecognized women scientists like oceanographer Marie Tharp, and slip in directions for homespun experiments and demonstrations. They also challenge readers to ponder still-unsolved scientific posers and intersperse rousing quotes from working scientists about how exciting and wide open their respective fields are. If a few of those fields, like the fungal kingdom, get short shrift (one spare paragraph notwithstanding), readers are urged often enough to go look things up for themselves to kindle a compensatory habit. Aside from posed photos of Nye and a few more of children (mostly presenting as White) doing science-y things, the full-color graphic and photographic images not only reflect the overall “get this!” tone but consistently enrich the flow of facts and reflections. “Our universe is a strange and surprising place,” Nye writes. “Stay curious.” Words to live by.

Wordplay and wry wit put extra fun into a trove of fundamental knowledge. (contributors, art credits, selected bibliography, index) (*Nonfiction. 11-15*)



EVERY COLOR OF LIGHT

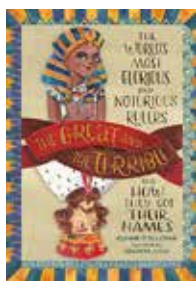
Osada, Hiroshi
Illus. by Arai, Ryoji
Trans. by Boyd, David
 Enchanted Lion Books (38 pp.)
 \$16.95 | Sep. 15, 2020
 978-1-59270-291-6



There is nary a human in this song of praise to the natural world.

This Japanese import opens on a stretch of verdant land and, in the distance, mountaintops. Never leaving this view, author and illustrator explore the effects of the elements on this patch of land and the varied colors that result. The rain falls so hard that it slants. Thunder roars and lightning flashes. When the storm ends, the air clears, and colors shimmer. When evening comes, the moon appears. Birds return, stars sparkle, and the text bids goodnight to the “Spirit of Rain” in the sky. Osada’s sensory text is written in a satisfyingly economical and precise manner: “Setting, the light turns everything golden. Stilling, the water shines silver.” Sprinkled throughout the text is punchy, onomatopoeic language, such as “boom, bah-bah-BOOM!” for thunder. Arai’s lush, atmospheric landscape art is remarkably textured, with what appear to be scratches in the art for the driving rain. Appropriately, the palette is the star of the show; readers see every mood of Mother Nature and her corresponding colors: all shades of green imaginable; warm pastel shades of light filling the sky; vivid, golden, post-rain hues. There’s a subtle moment of whimsy when “stars...share their stories,” and readers see small shapes in the night sky (a squirrel, a saxophone). Colors fade with the children listening: “We’re all / falling / ... / soundly / ... / asleep....”

Simply spectacular. (*Picture book.* 5-12)



THE GREAT AND THE TERRIBLE
The World's Most Glorious and Notorious Rulers and How They Got Their Names

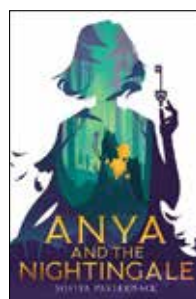
O'Sullivan, Joanne
Illus. by Lugo, Udayana
 Running Press Kids (176 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Sep. 15, 2020
 978-0-7624-9661-7

Profiles of ancient and early modern rulers historically adjudged “Great” or...not so much.

O’Sullivan chooses her 25 entries from a pre-20th-century but worldwide roster—including figures from Indian, Persian, and Mayan realms and from Hawaii, Madagascar, Korea, and Morocco as well as diverse European countries. Separating “Greats” from “Terribles” and mixing in eight women, she leads off with Pharaoh Hatshepsut and concludes with “Bloody Mary” Tudor and Sultan Ismail “the Bloodthirsty.” Along with tucking in side notes for each subject on broader legacies and

on contemporary events elsewhere in the world, she appends lists offering two dozen more “Worthies” and “Notably Notorious” to check out. Her profiles, though brief, are invitingly informal (for Hatshepsut, “pyramids were already *so* last millennium”) and focus as much on positive or negative character traits as on deeds and misdeeds. She commends the tolerance of Cyrus the Great for other religions and cultures in his empire, for instance, and Süleyman the Magnificent for not “micromanaging” his appointees. She also repeatedly points out that even the best sometimes went wrong, and vice versa. On the other hand, writing that the suspension of church services by “Bad” King John was unpopular because it took away a “‘fun’ thing to do” is pretty superficial. Lugo supplies formally posed upper-body portraits of the smiling or scowling subjects.

Casual, occasionally to a fault, but broad of scope and chock full of juicy role models and anti-models. (index) (*Collective biography.* 10-13)



ANYA AND THE NIGHTINGALE

Pasternack, Sofya
 Versify/HMH (416 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
 978-0-358-00602-2

In the land that will one day become Russia, a Jewish girl, a dragon, and a fool go on a quest.

Twelve-year-old Anya has friends in her village for the first time. After the terrifying events of *Anya and the Dragon* (2019), she discovered that the locals actually are happy to be friends with the village’s only Jewish family. And of course, there are her closest friends: Ivan, the professional fool, and Håkon, the last surviving dragon. Ivan and Håkon accompany Anya on a dangerous journey across Kievan Rus’, seeking her father, who was conscripted and sent down to the war near Istanbul. They’ll meet epic heroes, a hideous monster, and even the czar before the journey is over. Can Håkon remain safe in a land where all the other dragons have been killed? The fair-skinned, fair-haired people who are native to the area are pagan or Christian, and it’s mildly dangerous to be openly Jewish. Anya’s family is from Western and Central Asia, yet in this fantasy world, her form of Judaism resembles Ashkenazi Judaism of several hundred years later. Other anachronisms are more charming: the casual acceptance of brown-skinned Ivan’s bisexuality and the deaf character whose manual language resembles American Sign Language. Despite the hand-waving worldbuilding, the characters are delightful and fully fleshed out, with believable hopes and fears.

A welcome Jewish protagonist for a draconic fantasy. (glossary) (*Fantasy.* 10-12)



THE WORRY WARTHOG

Pickett, Lucy
Illus. by the author
Starfish Bay (36 pp.)
\$15.95 | Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-76036-066-5

When you're worried about your worries, you've got real problems.

Ralph Warthog worries. About everything. Day and night. His constant mantra is, "What if...?" One day, he declares he's as brave as Mummy says he is when she asks him to gather berries. Of course, he doesn't really believe it, and it's not long before he's besieged by a host of what if's. Encountering a hedgehog, Ralph tearfully spills the beans. The hedgehog admits that it also knows a thing or two about worries and shares a helpful method for dealing with them. Pointing to assorted animals clustered nearby, the hedgehog enumerates some of their fears and anxieties. This puts things in perspective for Ralph, and he feels better, especially when the hedgehog advises it's a good idea to share worries with friends. Afterward, Ralph asks the assembled animals' aid in gathering berries; they agree and, additionally, guide him home. The story concludes with Ralph's acknowledgment that it's best to ask for help in worrisome times—or at least to talk about one's worries at a berry feast, at which all his newfound animal pals are shown assembled. This sweet piece of bibliotherapy delivers uncomplicated, common-sense advice to young readers/listeners who may occasionally find themselves beset by troubling concerns. Cute, simple cartoons depict Ralph and company in a sympathetic, gently humorous, child-appelling light.

What, me worry? This gentle tale should help comfort young worry warthogs. (*Picture book. 3-7*)



VAMPIRES OF BLINSH

Pinkwater, Daniel
Illus. by Renier, Aaron
Abrams (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | Sep. 22, 2020
978-1-4197-4681-9

The vampires of Blinsh may be the most hopeful monsters in all of literature.

Pretty much everyone in Blinsh, Pinksylvania, eats doughnuts, including the creatures of the night. This is true even though they come in flavors like "boiled turnip and sauerkraut." And yet, Pinkwater notes, "the Blinshites keep buying them and eating them, hoping it will be better this time. It never is." Nevertheless, the vampires in this picture book are cheerful in general, possibly because they can float in the air, although, as the text points out: "Numerous normal-type Pinksylvanians have learned to do this for short periods, perhaps from vampire neighbors?" This is one of the more eventful passages in the book. If there's a plot, it may escape the average reader. The book is mostly a travel guide to Blinsh and its environs, but the

pages are utterly packed with detail. It might not be possible to get all of the in-jokes. A map of the town shows "Wallywood Amusement Park," which could be a reference to a cartoonist, the filmmaking capitol of the United States, or even Dollywood (probably not Dollywood). If there is a protagonist, it's Mr. Papooshnik, who bears a resemblance to the White, Jewish author of the book; the town as a whole is quite diverse. Fans of cult artists may be pleased that the pictures look, faintly, like the gigantic, cartoonish sculptures of Red Grooms. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 9-by-20-inch double-page spreads viewed at 66.7% of actual size.*)

By the last page, Blinsh feels like the real happiest place on Earth. (*Picture book. 5-10*)



THE BOY, THE WOLF, AND THE STARS

Plozza, Shivvaun
HMH Books (384 pp.)
\$16.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-0-358-24389-2

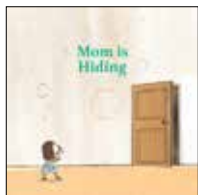
A boy goes on a quest to bring back wish-granting Stars and save his world.

Abandoned as a baby, Bo survived a night in the woods with the malevolent Shadow Creatures. Now a 12-year-old outsider, he's verbally and physically abused by both his gruff guardian and the local villagers, who believe he is cursed. When he accidentally releases magic back into Ulv and reignites a war for power and magic, he sets out on a quest to set things right. Along the way he is joined by his beloved pet fox, a bird-woman who vows to protect him, and a feisty girl with unwieldy magic. Together, they journey to solve three riddles that will let them free the Stars and restore the natural balance of magic to Ulv. Along the way they must outwit vindictive villagers, the bureaucracy of the Un-Royal City and the Temple of the Silent Sisters, a greedy charm-peddling salesman, a power-hungry talking wolf, and the Shadow Witch herself. Interspersed within the third-person, closely focalized narrative are excerpts from *The True Histories of Ulv*, which provide even further worldbuilding background. Self-conscious prose sometimes struggles to strike a balance between humor and angst, but a relentless plot keeps the pages turning. In this vaguely Nordic-inspired fantasy, characters' skin colors are varied; Bo has tawny skin.

For readers who can't get enough of the classic hero's journey. (map) (*Fantasy. 9-12*)

Offers a window for tough but essential discussions around a pandemic.

MOM IS HIDING



MOM IS HIDING

Qian Mo
Illus. by Zhou Yi
Trans. by Wang, Helen
 Cardinal Media (32 pp.)
 \$9.99 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-1-64074-117-1

Faced with uncertainty during a pandemic, a Chinese girl finds her inner courage.

The simple, direct narrative introduces 6-year-old Nina, who lives with her mother while her dad works overseas in Africa. One day her mom sits her down to talk about a virus. Referring to the virus as “little monsters,” Mom explains the monsters bring disease, spreading in three ways: “1. Sneezing 2. Coughing 3. Touching.” Her father concurs, adding tips to protect themselves, such as staying indoors, wearing a mask outdoors, and maintaining healthy habits. Days later, reality hits when Nina’s mother isolates herself in the bedroom with a mask and a message to keep away. The mother explains through the door that the grocery store she visited was reported to have an outbreak of cases and she must isolate for 14 days to prevent spread. Emotive brown- and gray-toned textured illustrations portray Nina as she processes her feelings, from anger to fear despite online calls with her parents. Thankfully, Aunt Mary arrives, and she addresses Nina’s concerns with a 14-day plan of action. Empowered, Nina assures her mom that she will take care of her. Narrator Nina frankly worries that her mother will die, and the book ends with her mother still in quarantine; young readers may well have many questions.

While ending with uncertainty, this Chinese import offers a window for tough but essential discussions around a pandemic. (Picture book. 5-8)



THE LIBRARY BUS

Rahman, Babram
Illus. by Grimard, Gabrielle
 Pajama Press (32 pp.)
 \$18.95 | Oct. 27, 2020
 978-1-77278-101-4

It’s dark in Kabul when young Pari and her mother start up the library bus to visit a small village.

It’s Pari’s first day as Mama’s library helper, and she is excited to be on the only “library bus in all of Kabul.” Girls await the bus, eager to return the books they borrowed from the previous week and to browse for new ones. Then Pari’s mom gathers the girls in a circle to practice English. Afterward, the bus heads along to a refugee camp, and on the way Pari learns that her grandpa taught Mama how to read at a time when girls were not allowed to go to school. She is starting school next year, and her mom encourages her to “study hard [and] never stop learning. Then you will be free.” At the camp, Pari helps pass out notebooks and pencils, and Mama checks out books to the girls. Later, at home, Mama assures Pari that she will help the girls in the village the same way Grandpa helped her. Grimard’s illustrations pair well with

Rahman’s words, from the sun rising over the mountains in the morning against an atmospheric sky to the dusty camp area with tents labeled UNHCR. Pari, her mom, and many girls cover their hair. In the backmatter, the author, an Afghan refugee himself now living in Canada, offers a personal message, which is accompanied by a brief note about refugee camps.

An inspiring story that conveys the power of education—paying it forward and meeting avid readers where they are. (Picture book. 4-8)



THE SHADOW ELEPHANT

Robert, Nadine
Illus. by Vidali, Valerio
Trans. by Klínger, Sarah
 Enchanted Lion Books (48 pp.)
 \$18.95 | Sep. 22, 2020
 978-1-59270-312-8

Misery loves company, they say. This Canadian import, translated from the French, deftly deconstructs that cliché.

A blue elephant, eyes closed, lies on the ground, in the shadows. His friends on the savanna have been discussing his mental state: Is he gloomy or sad, they wonder, or does he prefer shadows? The monkey tells a joke, the ostrich sisters perform a can-can dance in high heels, and the crocodile brings him a treat. Nothing succeeds in cheering him up. A mouse, who merely wants to rest next to the elephant, appears. “You’re not here to change my mind?” the intrigued elephant asks, finally sitting up. After the mouse tells the elephant its woes, a story involving regret and shame, both of them release a “flood of tears.” For the first time the elephant, “drained of his tears,” stands. The two head off into the night. The book’s uncluttered compositions with tightly framed perspectives and Vidali’s sure lines and simple shapes reduce the dramatic action to its essentials. The palette, dominated by velvety, richly colored blues, heightens the book’s emotional impact, and the beguiling use of light and shadow establishes a wistful, pensive mood. The story, including its evocative title, can serve as an effective conversation starter on topics such as compassion, melancholy, and what it means to be a friend.

A deeply felt, truly empathetic story about the value of sharing burdens with others. (Picture book. 4-9)

Forthrightly discusses everything from environmental exploitation to female feticide in language suitable for young readers.

III TREES



SOUND Shhh . . . Bang . . . Pop . . . Boom!

Romanysbyn, Romana & Lesiv, Andriy

Illus. by the authors

Trans. by Chernetsky, Vitaly

Handprint/Chronicle (64 pp.)

\$19.99 | Oct. 6, 2020

978-1-4521-7978-0

A visual survey of the aural world, originally published in Ukraine.

Despite the ostensible topic, it's the art and page design that occupy center stage in this large-format showcase. Done by and large in montages with much use of hot and Day-Glo hues, each eye-catching scene features a mix of flat or minimally modeled images of musical instruments and other sound producers, animal or human silhouettes, and graphic representations of sonic waves, lines, bursts, or blasts. Following a hard-to-parse observation that sound "attracts our attention, we listen for it—and then, we hear it" with a diagram of a human ear, double-page spreads arranged in no obvious order tally, for example, types of sound from natural to body noises, kinds of human singing voices and recording formats, how sound is measured, music-related jobs, spoken language and sign language. Most of the captions are printed in a lightweight, low-contrast typeface only a bit darker than the backgrounds, and some seem to have been arbitrarily swept to the backmatter, replaced by asterisks. After a thunderous rainfall evoked by solid, polychrome lines of streaming onomatopoeia, the volume is switched to low with a "mute sound" icon on an empty spread that leads to closing scenes of a couple embracing, a pregnant mother, and a young child toddling out "to listen, to hear, and to perceive our world."

Jazzy, loud illustrations command—and merit—attention but can't hide a higgledy-piggledy presentation. (*Informational picture book. 7-10*)



DON'T JUDGE ME

Schroeder, Lisa

Scholastic (256 pp.)

\$17.99 | Nov. 10, 2020

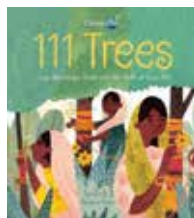
978-1-338-62854-8

Sometimes sticking your neck out is the only way to move forward.

Twelve-year-old Hazel misses the comfort of fifth grade when clothes didn't matter, looks didn't matter, and the boys weren't such huge jerks. Fortunately, she still has her best friend, Tori, who understands why this year is the worst. The school dress code shames girls, two boys deliberately trip Tori and Hazel every day, and Tori's brother, 13-year-old Ben, no longer wants to hang out with them. Hazel is resigned to spending the rest of sixth grade eating lunch in the library, writing haiku, and looking after Pip, the tortoise she found, until she stumbles across a journal. Some of the boys are rating the girls' attractiveness and leaving awful comments

about the ones they don't like. Her new friend, Dion, is also being bullied by other boys. Hazel knows she must do something, but what? Hazel's journey to finding her voice is brimming with lessons on toxic masculinity, sexism, bullying, and how students can work together to make change. The anxiety of transitioning to middle school and Hazel's insecurities about her changing body are equally relatable. Schroeder's slight nods to racism and homophobia are a bit anemic but do not detract from the overall theme. Hazel's actions may inspire readers to stand up for what's right. Characters follow a White default; Dion is cued as Black. Tori has two lesbian moms.

An empowering read. (*Fiction. 10-13*)



111 TREES

How One Village Celebrates the Birth of Every Girl

Singh, Rina

Illus. by Ferrer, Marianne

Kids Can (36 pp.)

\$18.99 | Oct. 6, 2020

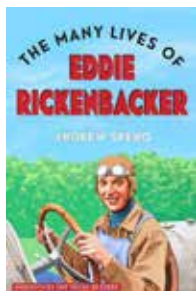
978-1-5253-0120-9

Series: CitizenKid

Haunted by the untimely deaths of his mother and daughter, an Indian man named Sundar grows up to become an activist dedicated to advancing gender equity and environmental justice in his home state of Rajasthan.

After he gets married, Sundar works in a marble quarry owned by men who unapologetically wreak ecological havoc on the land. Disgusted by these practices, Sundar quits his job and runs for the position of head of his village, a title known as the sarpanch, and wins. His joy is short-lived: A year after his victory, his oldest daughter dies. As he mourns, he notices how little female children are valued in his village. He then hatches a plan to honor his daughter's memory, change attitudes about gender, and combat the deforestation that has been devastating the local land. Every time a girl is born in the village, Sundar decides that the people will plant 111 trees in her honor. Sundar's idea fundamentally affects his hometown in deeply positive ways. Including endnotes about Rajasthan, gender equity, and eco-feminism, this earnest, inspiring book forthrightly discusses everything from environmental exploitation to female feticide in language suitable for young readers. Although many readers will give a side-eye when Sundar tells the villagers that in developed countries "girls and boys are treated equally," overall, this is an uplifting story about the power of personal action. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 10.4-by-19-inch double-page spreads viewed at 41.1% of actual size.*)

An inspiring picture book about eco-feminism in action in the global south. (*Informational picture book. 4-8*)



THE MANY LIVES OF EDDIE RICKENBACKER

Speno, Andrew
Ohio Univ. (144 pp.)
\$28.95 | \$16.95 paper | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-8214-2430-8
978-0-8214-2431-5 paper

The adventurous, daredevil life of war hero Eddie Rickenbacker is revealed in a briskly paced narrative.

One of eight children of German-speaking Swiss immigrants, Rickenbacker possessed a reckless fearlessness, creating a contraption consisting of an old bike with a large umbrella tied to it that he attempted to fly off a roof. Thirteen-year-old Rickenbacker dropped out of school when his father died and held a series of jobs, eventually settling on automotive engineering. Rickenbacker went from building cars to racing cars. Known for his abandon on the track, he became a “national figure, competing against the best in the sport in races from coast to coast.” When the United States entered World War I, the Army rejected both Rickenbacker’s attempt to enlist and his proposal to recruit American race car drivers to pilot fighter planes. The ever persistent Rickenbacker was trained by the French to be a fighter pilot and quickly downed enough enemy planes to earn the title “Ace of Aces.” Drawing on Rickenbacker’s ghostwritten memoir and contemporaneous accounts, Speno takes readers from adventure to adventure even as Rickenbacker helmed Eastern Air Lines between the wars before returning to service with the Army Air Forces during World War II. “Did You Know?” featurettes conclude each chapter, offering tidbits of related trivia, and callout boxes provide context when necessary. Numerous archival photographs depict the White ace in dashing poses throughout.

A lively chronicle of a colorful, exciting, risk-filled life. (timeline, glossary, chapter notes, bibliography) (*Biography*. 10-14)



WELCOME TO SMELLVILLE

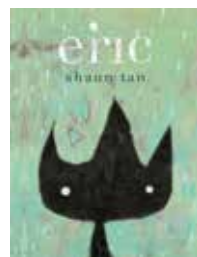
Stine, R.L.
Illus. by Zapata, Jeff
Amulet/Abrams (208 pp.)
\$14.99 | Sep. 29, 2020
978-1-4197-4361-0
Series: Garbage Pail Kids, 1

Ten children chosen from a teeming crew of trading-card characters with personal-hygiene issues shamble into print.

Parodying the Cabbage Patch Kids and subject since the 1980s to various expansions and reboots, the chubby-cheeked characters—all paper white in the monochrome cast list and frequent illustrations—bear suggestive names like Luke Puke, Rob Slob, and Babbling Brooke; exhibit gross and slovenly behavior; and live together in appalling filth. With all this built-in child appeal, who better to present their misadventures in prose than Stine, the creator of the redolent

Rotten School series (and one or two others)? Here, Adam Bomb (his head explodes) and five other housemates trade off narrative duties in a set of short-attention-span episodes. These feature an all-booger science project, middle school hijinks (“Hey, check it out!” Wacky Jackie called, and held up her clay creation. “What *is* that?” Mrs. Hooping-Koff asked. Jackie grinned. “It’s a body part! Guess what it is?”), an abusive Rent-a-Mom hired to fend off the snoopy neighboring Perfects, and, for occasional diversions, repeated failures of favorite TV superhero Jonny Pantsfalldown to nab butt-crack-flashing supervillain Big Bootus. By the end, the Perfects and the Rent-a-Mom are both sent packing. “But we’re not bad kids,” Adam Bomb explains. “We just don’t know any better.” Maybe young readers will.

Lots of laffs...or at least wet and dry heaves. (stickers) (*Media tie-in/fiction*. 7-10)



ERIC

Tan, Sbaun
Illus. by the author
Scholastic (32 pp.)
\$19.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-1-338-62208-9



Ever sensitive to the outsider, Tan examines a diminutive foreign exchange student’s visit through the consternation of his hosts.

With a thin, triangular body, spindly appendages, and a head reminiscent of a maple leaf, Eric exudes vulnerability when strapped into a car with a seat belt or peering into an elephant’s cage. His dark-gray form contrasts with the lighter settings in the square panels—one or more to a page—rendered in graphite. The narrator and Mum are not depicted. This story originally appeared in Tan’s *Tales From Outer Suburbia* (2009). The few changes relate to picture-book pacing: Longer sentences are split to accompany single images; new art and visual tweaks invite slow reflection. Curious and confounding, Eric draws a sink’s drain as a flower (paired with a question mark) and abandons his bedroom for a teacup in the pantry. Such decisions are chalked up to “a cultural thing” by Mum, who only wants him to be happy. When Eric departs, the narrator is bewildered, but readers are then invited to view the pantry for what is “still there after all these years, thriving in the darkness.” Colored pencils create a marvelous array of flowers arising from “small things” Eric had collected, a rainbow-hued thank-you note nestled inside the cup and a familiar shadow on the saucer.

Tan’s singular imagination invokes appreciation for the imprint that lingers from someone special, even after separation. (*Picture book*. 5-9)



THE BAD CHAIR

Tolstikova, Dasha
Illus. by the author
Groundwood (40 pp.)
\$18.95 | Oct. 27, 2020
978-1-77306-246-4

Chair just wants “to be in on the game.”

Every night before bed, Vivi, a brown-skinned girl with puffy pigtails, and Monkey, a child-sized stuffed animal, play a game. Monkey hides in plain sight under a blanket, Vivi pretends to look everywhere for Monkey, Vivi questions the witnesses: Chair, Plant, Kettle, and Cat. Chair is the only witness who cares about the game. But the role of witness is not enough for Chair. Chair loves Vivi and wants to be more involved. But night after night, Monkey comes out of hiding, and the pair leaves Chair sleepless and jealous. One night, Chair decides that if Monkey needed a bath—say, if some juice were spilled on Monkey—then Chair could take Monkey’s place. But the plan backfires. When Monkey doesn’t turn up, Vivi only looks harder for Monkey and becomes upset with Chair when Vivi realizes Chair had a hand in the disappearance. But all ends well when Vivi comes to understand Chair’s intentions. Vivi is easily seen as a beloved adult, with Chair as a misunderstood, child-like character who just wants some attention, making this story a clever representation of all-too-real feelings of the young. Bright, expressive illustrations add to the chuckleworthy drama. There are some off notes: Plant’s falling “in love” with Cat is an odd touch for this age group, and the Monkey-as-peer is rather unsettling both conceptually and visually. *(This book was reviewed digitally with 9.8-by-17-inch double-page spreads viewed at 71.8% of actual size.)*

Cute concept; readers’ mileage may vary. *(Picture book. 3-6)*



THE CROCODILE BIRD

Turner, Richard
Illus. by Tolland, Margaret
Starfish Bay (32 pp.)
\$15.95 | Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-76036-104-4

If you think a bird and a crocodile can’t get along, think again.

Meet the Egyptian plover—the “crocodile bird”—who shares a home along the River Nile with the mighty croc. Creatures that drink from the river flee the fearsome reptile in terror, but not so the plover. Not only does this bird fearlessly stand up to its scaly neighbor; it actually stands *in* it—inside its mouth, that is. The plover performs a service with a twofold purpose: The bird picks out juicy food bits lodged between the crocodile’s razor-sharp teeth—remainders of its previous meals. This helps the mighty beast avoid tooth decay while the bird ekes out a tasty meal from the morsels. Numerous spreads featuring dramatic close-ups of the crocodile’s gaping, toothy jaws and the gray, white, and black avian

dental hygienist unflinchingly doing its work will fascinate young readers as they learn about an unfamiliar creature and a remarkable symbiotic relationship. The informative text is rendered via jaunty four-line rhyming verses that generally read and scan well. The illustrations’ palette is limited to shades of browns, grays, greens, and black and white, focusing on the crocodile and its helpful companion. The zebras, elephant, and wildebeests depicted in the opening spread suggest the African setting but aren’t actually found in Egypt.

An unusual partnership in the natural world that should appeal to young animal lovers. *(Informational picture book. 4-7)*



SUGAR IN MILK

Umrigar, Thrity
Illus. by Le, Kboa
Running Press Kids (48 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-0-7624-9519-1

Two stories overlap in this book, one many generations old and another modern, illustrating both the power of kindness and a shared humanity between immigrants and their new communities.

When a young immigrant girl first comes to the United States, she feels alone and misses her friends, family, and cats back home. The care of her aunt and uncle and all of her new books and toys do not help. Then one day, her aunt tells her a story that changes everything: A group of people from Persia escaped persecution and landed on an Indian kingdom’s shore. “Our land is too crowded,” said this land’s king upon their arrival, “and [they] speak a strange and different language I do not understand.” He went to the seashore to order them to leave, but since neither understood the other’s tongue, he showed the refugees a glass of milk, full to the very top, and illustrated that it could take no more. The travelers were devastated, but then their leader carefully added one spoonful of sugar to the milk, without spilling it. This made it sweeter and convinced the king to let the newcomer’s stay. Exquisite spreads illustrate the book, full of delicate ornamentation for the ancient Parsi tale and cultural diversity on the streets of New York for the modern one. (The protagonist and her aunt and uncle have brown skin, and she and her auntie have shiny, long black hair.) The story changes the young girl’s perspective, helping her to embrace her new home and reminding her to lead the way with kindness.

An engaging, beautiful, and memorable book. *(Picture book. 4-9.)*

A powerful resource for young people itching for change.

WOLFPACK



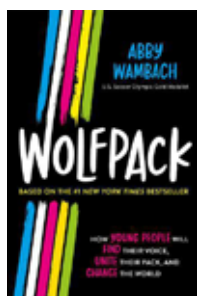
NONSTOP

Ungerer, Tomi
Illus. by the author
 Phaidon (48 pp.)
 \$16.95 | Sep. 16, 2020
 978-1-83866-159-5

The great maverick illustrator sends Earth's last two beings on a dreamlike odyssey in this posthumous and, possibly, final outing.

Through empty streets wanders Vasco, aimlessly following his long shadow—which guides him safely past toppling buildings, sudden floods, and other dangers to an abandoned hospital, where he finds and takes charge of Poco, a green, insectile child. Everyone else has, as the spare narrative has it, “gone to the moon,” and even the plants and animals have disappeared. All that is left are desolate land- and cityscapes, infused in the illustrations with low-angled light and feelings of loneliness. Together the adult and child make their way through further hazards ranging from a refinery on the brink of collapse to a cluster of tree-eating military tanks, on the way at last to a “phantasmagorical” new home...which turns out to be a giant cake where the two remain, “sheltered in peace” thereafter. Though catastrophes to be escaped (as the refrain has it) “JUST IN TIME!” rear up with titular frequency, they are so neatly drawn as to have a ritualistic air, not so much creating dramatic highlights as checking off surreal disasters natural or otherwise. The two figures are drawn generally back to viewers and remain tiny on the page, but they still draw both eye and heart as, holding resolutely on to each other, they weather every threat to reach safe harbor at last. “DON'T HOPE COPE” reads a sign that Vasco passes in one scene. As last words go, not bad.

A dark vision with optimistic, even puckish, strains burnishes a unique legacy. (*Picture book. 9-up*)



WOLFPACK (YOUNG READERS EDITION) *How Young People Will Find Their Voice, Unite Their Pack, and Change the World*

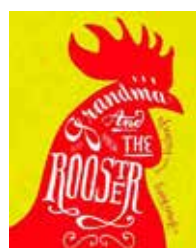
Wambach, Abby
 Roaring Brook (112 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-250-76686-1

Soccer star and activist Wambach adapts *Wolfpack* (2019), her *New York Times* bestseller for adults, for a middle-grade audience.

“YOU. ARE. THE. WOLVES.” That rallying cry, each word proudly occupying its own line on the page, neatly sums up the fierce determination Wambach demands of her audience. The original *Wolfpack* was an adaptation of the viral 2018 commencement speech she gave at Barnard College; in her own words, it was “a directive to unleash [the graduates’] individuality, unite the collective, and change the world.” This new adaption takes the themes of the original and recasts them in

kid-friendly terms, the call to action feeling more relevant now than ever. With the exception of the introduction and closing remarks, each short chapter presents a new leadership philosophy, dishing out such timeless advice as “Be grateful *and* ambitious”; “Make failure your fuel”; “Champion each other”; and “Find your pack.” Chapters utilize “rules” as a framing device. The first page of each presents a generalized “old” and “new” rule pertaining to that chapter’s guiding principle, and each chapter closes with a “Call to the Wolfpack” that sums up those principles in more specific terms. Some parts of the book come across as somewhat quixotic or buzzword-heavy, but Wambach deftly mitigates much of the preachiness with a bluff, congenial tone and refreshing dashes of self-deprecating humor. Personal anecdotes help ground each of the philosophies in applicability, and myriad heavy issues are respectfully, yet simply broached.

A powerful resource for young people itching for change. (*Nonfiction. 10-14*)



GRANDMA AND THE ROOSTER

Wang, Yimei
Illus. by Yu, Hechen
 Reycraft Books (32 pp.)
 \$15.95 | Oct. 22, 2020
 978-1-4788-6974-0

A grandma and her rooster visit family in the city with unexpected results in this import set in contemporary China.

It is Lunar New Year, and Grandma visits her granddaughter, Xiaoyue, bringing along her rooster. The plan is to make her grandchild her “scrumptious chicken soup.” However, once she arrives, she watches as Xiaoyue throws her arms around the bird and declares, “I want to keep this rooster!” (Her emphatic desire is underscored with the use of display type that extends across the double-page spread.) With the reluctant consent of her parents, Xiaoyue and Grandma take turns asking neighbors if they mind if she keeps a rooster; they all happily consent, citing either good luck, since it’s the Year of the Rooster, or fond family and childhood memories. Grandma reveals two more gifts for Xiaoyue: a special toy and a pair of shoes, both made with rooster feathers. Delighted, Xiaoyue walks around the city with Grandma showing off her presents as the rooster humorously follows, sparking nostalgia and goodwill throughout. Yu provides plenty of eye-popping illustrations, beautifully rendered in watercolor with detailed scenic views. The simple story concludes with Grandma and the rooster eventually returning home, with the promise that Xiaoyue and her parents will visit her for the next new year. (*This book was reviewed digitally with 11.375-by-18-inch double-page spreads viewed at 82.7% of actual size.*)

A delightful Lunar New Year tale of love, family, and a rooster. (*Picture book. 5-8*)

A child discovers the revolutionary promise of thinking outside the box.

THERE MUST BE MORE THAN THAT!



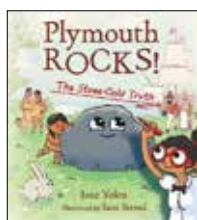
WOMEN IN BIOLOGY

Wissinger, Mary
Illus. by Pioli, Danielle
Science, Naturally! (40 pp.)
\$12.95 paper | Oct. 7, 2020
978-1-938492-30-3
Series: Science Wide Open

Wissinger and Pioli kick off a new series of informational picture books looking at women in STEM.

A curious, bespectacled protagonist explores the world around her through the study of living things and the discoveries of women scientists who helped lay the foundations of biology as we know it today. From the bugs that creep and crawl to the bugs that make you sick, and along the way taking shallow dives into cell theory and DNA, Wissinger gives a primer on biology's basics while highlighting the unique contributions of Hildegard of Bingen, Jane Cooke Wright, and Barbara McClintock, among others. Portraits of these scientists are all reproduced at the end along with phonetic pronunciations of their names in a sort of matching game, and a two-page glossary closes the book, defining such disparate terms as *biology*, the Nobel Prize, and *transposons*. Pioli's illustrations give these women of science a Disney-princessvibe for broad appeal while vibrant colors bring anatomy and cell structures to life. With the notable exception of Dr. Wright, the scientists depicted are White women while the protagonist of color's medium brown skin, green eyes, and dark hair make her racially and ethnically ambiguous. A Spanish edition publishes simultaneously.

A welcome primer on biological science in which the contributions of women take center stage. (Informational picture book. 3-7) (*Las mujeres en la biología*: 978-1-938492-07-5)



PLYMOUTH ROCKS! The Stone-Cold Truth

Yolen, Jane
Illus. by Streed, Sam
Charlesbridge (32 pp.)
\$17.99 | Sep. 8, 2020
978-1-58089-685-6

Plymouth Rock is a great big liar.

Fortunately, the googly-eyed, sentient hunk of granite has a fact checker, a bespectacled brown-skinned person with a very active red pen. Rock narrates in verse, informing readers of its glacial origins, the local wildlife, its Native neighbors, the arrival of English settlers, and the myths that gradually arose around it. As the rock versifies, the fact checker busily marks up Streed's cartoon spreads. "Hold on a minute!" reads one note on a fulsome description of how "the tribes" met the settlers "with a great burst of friendship, food, community." Another vigorously circled note reads, "Native people did greet the colonists and later shared food with them, **but that is NOT the whole story.**" It's a clever device, allowing Rock to pontificate with corrective annotations to set the record straight,

but unfortunately, Rock's story (as opposed to the story of the humans around it) is not interesting enough to sustain 32 pages. In fact, it's something of a snooze (it was moved, dropped, broken, chipped away at, be-plaques, and literally enshrined). It's critical that readers learn that "settlers didn't just 'find' a new world, they colonized it" and that "the Native people...did not consider their world new," but this may not be the best vehicle.

The narrative isn't substantial enough to sustain the needed counternarrative. (bibliography) (Informational picture book. 5-8)



THERE MUST BE MORE THAN THAT!

Yoshitake, Shinsuke
Illus. by the author
Chronicle (32 pp.)
\$18.99 | Oct. 6, 2020
978-1-4521-8322-0



A child who doesn't like her choices discovers the revolutionary promise of thinking outside the box.

Having heard from her big brother (who got it from a grown-up) that the future holds nothing but hunger, disease, gloom, and doom, a young child rushes to her grandma for comfort. Comfort she gets, as Grandma assures her that grown-ups don't know everything and there are many possible futures. This sets her imagination off and running, envisioning futures in which, for instance, "every Saturday is Christmas," a certain pesky bully gets abducted by aliens, or "maybe I'll fall in love and I won't even care that I was bullied!" The line of thought leads to ruminations about false dichotomies. Perhaps something isn't *just* good or bad. Maybe there are more options than simply loving or hating someone. ("I lovate you, Daddy!" she exclaims experimentally to a confused parent.) These deep thoughts come home to roost (so to speak) when her mom asks whether she'd like her egg boiled or fried—which sets off a positive flurry of possible futures for the egg. Yoshitake creates a vivacious cast, using dots, tiny dashes, subtle body angles, and expressive gestures to great effect. The figures in this Japanese import's simple cartoon illustrations present as Asian, wearing casual dress and shown in minimally detailed surroundings.

Long thoughts and fresh heart for readers feeling helpless in the face of scary futures. (Picture book. 6-10)



DREAMS OF A PENCIL

Zhang Xiaonan
 Illus. by Cao, Xiaoying
 Reycraft Books (40 pp.)
 \$17.95 | Oct. 22, 2020
 978-1-4788-6846-0

In this Chinese import, a green pencil stuck in a desk drawer at an elementary school dreams about having adventures that will take it far away, to a place where no one will know who (or what) it is.

The pencil fantasizes about standing in a meadow, watering its “top” such that it sprouts leaves and even a flower; the butterflies and bear who enjoy the flower don’t recognize the cleverly disguised pencil. Next, the pencil dreams about making itself a leafy umbrella for fish to hide beneath and a frog to sit upon. The pencil then considers pretending to be vegetables, like peas and even a zucchini. It imagines itself as a raft, a paddle, and sporting equipment. Finally, the pencil dreams of making its way back into the classroom so that (child) readers can use it to write down their own dreams and fantasies. Narrated in the first person and addressing readers directly, Zhang’s narrative is cheerful, and his partial use of rhyming words suits this nicely to reading aloud, although the plot itself is not particularly original. Cao’s bright and clever illustrations seamlessly connect the narrative, building upon the frames that have come before and carrying the story forward. Occasional details delight: The pencil acts as crossing guard for a line of ants bearing tomatoes on their backs. *(This book was reviewed digitally with 11.375-by-18-inch double-page spreads viewed at 73% of actual size.)*

A cute but not entirely satisfying meditation. *(Picture book. 3-6)*



A JOURNEY OF 600 INCHES

Zhang Xiaoling
 Illus. by Yan Qing
 Trans. by Wang, Helen
 Cardinal Media (32 pp.)
 \$9.99 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-1-64074-120-1

Paul and Maisie are stuck inside, and when Paul comments that their 600-inch-long home would feel pretty big to an ant, they find themselves shrinking.

In this Chinese import set during an unnamed public-health emergency that parallels the Covid-19 pandemic, readers can see empty streets out the window, figures in hazmat suits on TV, and the very recognizable boredom of two youngsters at home. So becoming tiny poses a grand adventure: Aunt Michelle will be arriving with lunch soon, and they need to cross 600 inches of landscape to reach the door. On the way, they encounter the Mouse King (who offers them masks), drive a toy car, and discover the Lost Toy Park under the sofa. Here the tone of the book shifts: Readers learn that the children’s mother has been gone for 10 days and that both parents are in the hospital. When

the phone rings and it is Dad, depicted masked and in street clothes, surrounded by people in hazmat suits, readers breathe a sigh of relief: Dad and Mom may just work in the hospital. Yet the children seem completely alone, with both parents gone and a busy aunt who quickly drops off some food but doesn’t have time to stay. While the shrinking premise is fun and the poignancy of missing loved ones is handled sensitively, the situation may still cause young readers more uneasiness than comfort. Human characters depicted are Asian.

A Covid-19 story that doesn’t quite translate. *(Picture book. 4-7)*



GRANDPA’S 14 GAMES

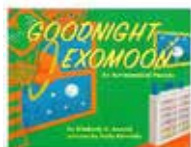
Zhao Ling
 Illus. by Huang Lili
 Trans. by Wang, Helen
 Cardinal Media (32 pp.)
 \$9.99 paper | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-1-64074-121-8

A young girl imagines the different roles people have in a pandemic in this Chinese import.

While her doctor parents are away fighting “the virus,” the narrator spends her days under the care of her grandfather at home. To keep her entertained, Grandpa decides to introduce a game of pretend: Each day, she’ll pretend to be someone new. One day she is one of the many scientists “all over the world searching for a cure to beat the virus.” On another, she is a soldier delivering medical supplies. Through the game, she learns of the tough, brave roles people in the community play during a health crisis. While each day brings a new role to inhabit, bedtime is hard. Sometimes she can’t wait for what the next day will bring. Oftentimes, though, lips quiver, a nose tingles, and eyes dampen. But as Grandpa reassures, “It’s ok to be sad.” Soon, 14 days are up, and a masked Grandpa and granddaughter step outside. Isolation is over. Her next role will be that of a writer. And the task? To remember “all the wonderful people who have worked so hard to keep [them] safe.” Zhao’s quarantine narrative provides a primer of community helpers and first responders. Her text also highlights the emotional toll it takes on these individuals as well as the uncertainty both Grandpa and the girl feel. Huang’s illustrations bring the more playful imagery to life: A magician breathes fire, killing germs; a delivery person is adorned with fairy wings. Both Grandpa and narrator have pale skin, and the girl wears her straight, black hair in pigtails; they eat with chopsticks.

A general but timely overview of pandemic response. *(Picture book. 4-7)*

BOARD & NOVELTY BOOKS



GOODNIGHT EXOMOON

Arcand, Kimberly K.
Illus. by Kennedy, Kelly
 Cottage Door Press (34 pp.)
 \$9.99 | Jun. 30, 2020
 978-1-68052-934-0
 Series: Smithsonian Kids Storybook

The latest addition to the dozens of *Goodnight Moon* pastiches takes a cosmic angle.

In nods to tradition, the room is green, the narrative properly sonorous, and there's a blank "Goodnight nobody" page. The resemblance largely ends there, as the visible furnishings are decidedly astronomical in theme, the bed is replaced by a work desk, the drowsy bunny by an alert young STEM-winder with light-brown skin intent on her computer screen, and the grandmotherly attendant by a "quiet old scientist who was whispering 'globular.'" (Rather creepily, this last figure is a White man.) Likewise, taking an even looser approach to meter and rhyme than Margaret Wise Brown did, Arcand tallies the room's contents ("And there were three little astronomers sitting with monitors // And two little interns / And a pair of emergency lanterns," etc.) before launching a nocturne to the speckled exomoon orbiting a ringed planet that looks like Saturn (but isn't) visible through a window. The final "Goodnight stars / Goodnight air // Goodnight space science everywhere" caps an incantation that, however familiar its rhythms, is more likely to leave young listeners thinking, "What's an accelerometer?" than blinking sleepily. Caregivers hazy on what an "exomoon" is will welcome the author's prefatory explanation. Human figures, from "little interns" on, are diverse of skin color.

A twinkly, labored lullaby to all the moons we know are out there but can't (as yet) see. (*Board book. 2-6*)



FLIP-A-FEATHER

Ball, Sara with Bucca, Lauren
Illus. by Ball, Sara
 Abbeville Kids (22 pp.)
 \$16.95 | Sep. 29, 2020
 978-0-7892-1382-2

A split-page format turns 10 birds into hundreds of avian chimeras in this mix-and-match portrait gallery.

As in her equally fetching *Mix-a-Mutt* (2018), Ball uses empty backgrounds to showcase invitingly big, bright, exactly detailed animals that somehow seem to be smiling up at viewers or down at fuzzy offspring even though they're not anthropomorphized. The book is read by rotating it 90 degrees to the right; with the spine at the top, readers can then manipulate as many layers of the triple-split board pages as they want. Flipping heads, bodies, and hindquarters results in some odd combinations ("I'm a Snowy Owl—Ostrich—Bald Eagle bird"), but the subjects are

placed, posed, and scaled so that aside from radical changes in color or type of plumage, even the most unlikely transitions at least match neatly. To Ball's concept and illustrations Bucca adds bland but informative first-person commentary ("I make the largest tree nest in the world. It's full of soft grass and feathers to keep my eaglets comfortable"); a helpful chart detailing each bird's specific name, range, and diet appears on the front endpaper. The actual bird names alone are worthy of recitation: "salmon-crested cockatoo," "resplendent quetzal," "keel-billed toucan," "marvelous spatuletail hummingbird."

Engaging flights of fancy and fact. (*Novelty board book. 5-7*)



SEE-SAW

Illus. by Busby, Ailie
 Child's Play (26 pp.)
 \$7.99 | Sep. 1, 2020
 978-1-78628-409-9
 Series: Nursery Time



An approachable instruction manual introducing a collection of nursery songs.

Been a while since you sang some classic nursery songs with a little one? Those tricky words and actions not quite coming back to you? This board book has you covered! Designed with the lyrics to different songs clearly printed on each page, the book offers smaller, italicized directions that describe any actions that go along with the ditty—so no one will miss the ever popular nose-beep during "The Wheels on the Bus." There's no accompanying musical notations, so if readers aren't already familiar with the melody, they won't find any help here, but it will cue those who already know the tune. Some, like "London Bridge," described only as a "bouncing rhyme," are a little light on details. The nursery songs are primarily British in origin, with no forays into the repertoires of other cultures, but the sunny vignettes of children that decorate the pages depict a sweetly diverse bunch. Beaming, delicately lined, racially diverse cherubs wear "Five Little Speckled Frogs" frog costumes; two necklace- and tutu-adorned, gender-ambiguous tots rock out to "Here We Go Looby Loo"; the title song is illustrated with two children playing on an adaptive seesaw, extending diversity to disability. A well-made, reinforced cardboard cover with rounded edges will extend the book's life. The simultaneously publishing *Five Little Ducks* and *Pat-a-Cake* are just as successful.

Useful and adorable—a delightful mix. (*Board book. 1-3*) (*Five Little Ducks: 978-1-78628-410-5; Pat-a-Cake: 978-1-78628-411-2*)

Sweet, attractive, and engaging.

WHO ATE MY FRUIT?



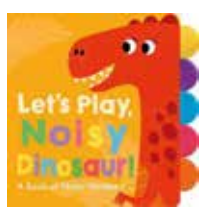
WHO ATE MY FRUIT?

Canizales
 Illus. by the author
 nubeOCHO (16 pp.)
 \$9.95 | Oct. 20, 2020
 978-84-18133-10-7

Animals, fruit, and friendship come together in this lift-the-flap board book.

A cat is hungry and wants to eat some fruit. That should be no problem “I have...1 pear, 1 pineapple, 1 strawberry and 1 banana,” it thinks, imagining each fruit above the printed word. But someone has eaten the pear. The illustration shows a pear with a big bite out of it, the half with the bite printed on a flap that meshes neatly with the intact half on the page beneath. When little ones lift the flap, the culprit is revealed, its body formed in part by the same shape of the fruit. In the case of the pear, it’s a green seal whose rounded head and back look quite pear-shaped. As the book progresses, the cat finds that, one by one, the other pieces of fruit have also been consumed. And, each time, lifting the flap reveals the culprit. In the end, the cat despairingly declares, “My friends ate all my fruit! I’m so hungry!” But no! The other animals reveal their surprise: They’ve made a fruit salad. “For me? Thank you! Please, have some!” The Spanish version, publishing simultaneously, *¿Quién se comió mi fruta?* has a bonus; little ones can count back from four as the fruit is consumed. Also publishing simultaneously are *Who Ate My Cakes?* and *¿Quién se comió mi pastel?* which follow the same format. This time, the cat’s cakes are being consumed by a different set of animal friends, and the surprise is a birthday cake. Colorful, simple and stylized graphics against plain backgrounds depict the edibles and animals in question.

Sweet, attractive, and engaging. (Board book. 1-3) (*¿Quién se comió mi fruta?*: 978-84-18133-09-1; *Who Ate My Cakes?*: 978-84-18133-12-1; *¿Quién se comió mi pastel?*: 978-84-18133-11-4)



LET'S PLAY, NOISY DINOSAUR!

Deutsch, Georgiana
 Illus. by Dafflon, Adele
 Tiger Tales (10 pp.)
 \$9.99 | Sep. 22, 2020
 978-1-68010-631-2

A counting book full of noisy animals.

Dinosaur enthusiasts be warned: This is not a counting book about dinosaurs, nor do dinosaurs feature prominently (except on the cover and in the rather misleading title). Each thick page has its own felt tab affixed to the right margin, and when the book is closed, they form the spine on the cover’s dinosaur. It’s a nice visual addition even though some little fingers may not yet be ready to grasp them to turn the pages. Each spread features a rhyming quatrain, which flows nicely, reads aloud smoothly, and keeps a steady pace. Some pages really invite readers to participate, like the “four noisy dinosaurs [who] romp and stomp around!” The illustrations are very bright and simple, but compositions are occasionally confusing.

All of the animals have cartoonish features with wide eyes and smiles. The little blue mouse (no, not a dinosaur) introduced on the first page becomes a guide, appearing playfully with each group of animals as the book progresses. This is a sweet little detail, and readers will enjoy spotting it, though it’s not always easy to make out, especially when it fades into the blue background of the spread that introduces three yellow birds.

It’s just fine, but there’s not a lot to make noise about. (Board book. 1-2)



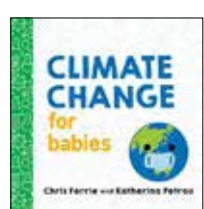
WHAT DO YOU WANT, LITTLE FRIEND?

Dubuc, Marianne
 Illus. by the author
 Princeton Architectural Press (24 pp.)
 \$8.95 | Oct. 6, 2020
 978-1-61689-944-8

Whether this book is charming, profound, or insubstantial, it’s a quick, sweet read.

The overarching simplicity in storyline and artwork in this odd little book leaves one wondering if its message lies in what’s rendered, what’s implied, or what readers infer. Clean, uncluttered lines, spare, bright colors, and white backgrounds mirror the minimal detail of the plot. A playful, kite-flying kitten accidentally steps on a fly. Upset, the kitten asks, “Are you okay, little fly?” Over the course of the next nine double-page spreads, the kitten alternately exhorts the fly to “move like me,” “walk like ants do,” or “fly like the birds.” After each suggestion, the kitten asks, “Don’t you want to?” as the fly lies on its back, legs in the air, either dead or stunned. Finally, the kitten cups a hand to its ear and asks, “What are you saying, little fly?” In what may be a Buddhist nod to the sanctity of all life, a statement about the healing power of love or perhaps the importance of listening, or an unfortunate dismissal of the rules of hygiene, the kitten concludes, “Aaaah! You want a KISS!” After a laying on of lips, the reanimated fly flits off, as the kitten bids it, “Goodbye, little friend!” The net effect is arguably equal parts beguiling and puzzling.

A slightly offbeat lesson in compassion. (Board book. 2-4)



CLIMATE CHANGE FOR BABIES

Ferrie, Chris & Petrou, Katherina
 Illus. by Ferrie, Chris
 Sourcebooks eXplore (24 pp.)
 \$9.99 | Aug. 18, 2020
 978-1-4926-8082-6
 Series: Baby University

This book presents a simplified explanation of the role the atmosphere plays in controlling climate.

The authors present a planet as a ball and its atmosphere as a blanket that envelops the ball. If the blanket is thick, the planet will be hot, as is the case for Venus. If the blanket is thin,

Artful, horizon-expanding.

OUR WORLD

the planet is cold, as with Mars. Planet Earth has a blanket that traps “just the right amount of heat.” The authors explain trees, animals, and oceans are part of what makes Earth’s atmosphere “just right.” “But...Uh-oh! People on Earth are changing the blanket!” The book goes on to explain how some human activities are sending “greenhouse gases” into the atmosphere, thus “making the blanket heavier and thicker” and “making Earth feel unwell.” In the case of a planet feeling unwell, what would the symptoms be? Sea-level rises that lead to erosion, flooding, and island loss, along with extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, blizzards, and wildfires. Ending on a constructive note, the authors name a few of the remedies to “help our Earth before it’s too late!” By using the blanket analogy, alongside simple and clear illustrations, this otherwise complex topic becomes very accessible to young children, though caregivers will need to help with the specialized vocabulary.

Adults looking for an easy entry into this subject will not be disappointed. (Board book. 3-4)



YOGA BABY

Flinn, Amanda

Illus. by Crampton, Shane

Beaming Books (26 pp.)

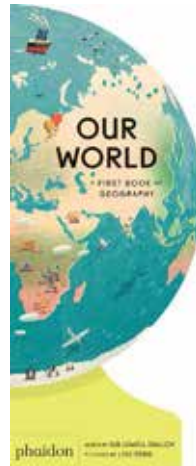
\$7.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-5064-5699-7

Practice yoga with baby.

Rhyming text, expressive faces, and uncluttered illustrations make a pleasant invitation to yoga practice as a positive parenting tool. This mama may be unrealistically slender and energetic compared to most new moms, but she represents a parenting ideal. Her winsome baby with a shaggy brown topknot doesn’t quite imitate mama’s yoga moves. Instead baby does something similar but recognizably babylike. When mama stands in tree pose, baby kneels. As mama moves into crescent moon, baby crawls practically under her, so mama pauses to tickle baby. Pastel illustrations and rhyming text show 11 standard “Yoga mama” poses followed by related “Yoga baby” actions. The duo are clearly delighted with the activity. Even when, in the spread with text that reads “Yoga mama, push up plank. / Yoga baby, pull and yank,” baby pulls mama’s curls that have escaped from her headband and pushes on mama’s back, mama keeps smiling. Eventually baby falls asleep in mama’s arms on the yoga mat. Both mama and baby present White. A final note titled “Practicing Yoga With Little Ones” points to the benefits of a yoga practice and briefly cites approximate ages that babies usually can mimic yoga postures. Together, text and pictures demonstrate how yoga contributes to healthy and mindful living and need not be abandoned when a baby joins the family.

Recommended to encourage playful, patient parenting. (Board book. 6 mos.-3)



OUR WORLD A First Book of Geography

Gallion, Sue Lowell

Illus. by Feng Lisk

Phaidon (26 pp.)

\$18.95 | Jul. 15, 2020

978-1-83866-081-9

A shaped survey of Earth’s lands, seas, seasons, weather, and biomes.

The book is printed on sturdy stock and cut in a half-circle perched on a base so that it opens into snow globe-shaped leaves and can then be displayed in the round. The flyover offers young armchair travelers a series of eye-catching vistas ranging from “forests tall. // And grasslands wide” to “Continents large, islands small, / Salty seas surrounding all.” Interspersed descriptive notes in much smaller type and plainly addressed to an older audience go into general detail about each stop along the way. Feng’s soft focus natural scenes offer plenty of animals but no humans to see aside from an opening glimpse of a pair of snorkelers angled away from viewers and a few minute figures later on. All of the scenes (a line about how some grassland creatures eat grass and some “eat other grassland creatures!” notwithstanding) have a serene, peaceable-kingdom vibe. The point of view broadens at last to a map showing labeled continents and larger bodies of water, then a more distant view of our planet in space precedes a final cozy house beneath a starry sky, which serves as a reminder that our planet is: “a living home for everyone.”

An artful, horizon-expanding introduction to our “living home.” (Informational novelty board book. 2-4)



CITY

Illus. by Hall, Abi

Child’s Play (12 pp.)

\$8.99 | Jan. 1, 2020

978-1-78628-414-3

Series: Making Tracks 2

Take a tour through an urban environment by following variously shaped tracks.

In this book with a little bit of everything, readers can manipulate flaps and touch debossed areas and die cuts. The left-hand page poses the question “Who is making tracks?” along with a shaped, indented track. Little fingers can touch and follow the various paths; folding out the flap on the right side reveals what hidden animal, person, or vehicle made the print. It’s a simple concept that invites plenty of audience participation as toddlers use clues to make guesses about the track’s origin. This simplicity extends to the minimal, stylized art. Chunky, rounded, collage-style illustrations with no shading or outlining are effective enough, if on the garish

side, with a typical page showing a plump gray mouse running atop a matte violet background while a few golden dandelions and the lime-green mouseprints round out the page. Two human children appear. Both have dark skin, and one is a wheelchair-basketball player. Shaped flaps are solid and easy enough to fold out, though confusingly, while some of the die cuts provide clues, such as a bicycle sign near a single-lined tire track, others, like the oval, yellow center of a red-petaled flower, are cryptic. The series also travels to the *Desert*, *Jungle*, and *Mountain*.

An amiable enough combination of tactile elements and problem-solving practice. (Board book. 1-3) (*Desert*: 978-1-78628-412-9; *Jungle*: 978-1-78628-413-6; *Mountain*: 978-1-78628-415-0)

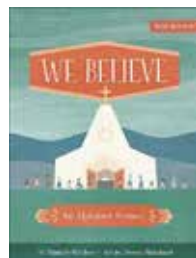


OWL ALWAYS LOVE YOU

Hegarty, Patricia
 Illus. by Clarkson, Bryony
 Tiger Tales (14 pp.)
 \$8.99 | Aug. 25, 2020
 978-1-68010-640-4

Forest-dwelling animal dyads hunker down for the night in their respective snuggeries. Owls roost in a tree, “hoppy” bunnies burrow under flower beds, and field mice nestle in poppy flowers, to name a few. At least one of the featured animals in each spread is a cutout pasted onto the page, and die-cut holes in each page allow these critters to literally nestle as pages are turned, adding some tactile interest for young children. One or two lines of pedantic, rhymed couplets are sprinkled throughout the full-bleed, double-page spreads. In the lovely art, the animals live in dreamy landscapes of rich orange, yellow, purple, and red against deep blue-black backgrounds, successfully balancing a hint of realism with an adorable coziness. On the final pages, a grown blue songbird is enticed back to the nest to meet three yellow, newly hatched chicks. An older sibling? A straying spouse? Readers probably won’t wonder that hard. While the book does not present a realistic nighttime scene, as many of these animals are nocturnal or crepuscular, parents and caregivers will appreciate the title’s soporific qualities.

Suitably restful and soothing bedtime fare for youngsters. (Board book. 6 mos.-3)



**WE BELIEVE
 An Alphabet Primer**

Hitchen, Danielle
 Illus. by Blanchard, Jessica
 Harvest House (24 pp.)
 \$14.99 | Sep. 1, 2020
 978-0-7369-8064-7
 Series: Baby Believer

“We believe” is a statement often used to begin the recitation of a creed, and the purpose is the same here, though wrapped as an attractive alphabet book.

From *Ascension* to *Zion*, Hitchen uses the ABC format to lay out core Christian doctrines. Each topic highlights a relevant Scripture or passage from one of the ancient church creeds, beliefs common to almost every Christian denomination. The illustrations feature an admirably diverse cast of believers as well as appropriately complexed depictions of historical Bible characters—there’s no White Jesus or apostles here. Some illustrations are so symbolic as to be impenetrable: “Kyrie eleison” is depicted by a human figure kneeling in front of an altar that is positioned in front of a window. Others are just impenetrable: “Lord, have... / Mercy,” on the opposite page, simply depicts the window. The palette of peach, brown, dark blue, and sea green gives the book a graceful unity, however. While the board-book format implies a toddler audience, some concepts, such as the doctrines of the incarnation and Eucharist, among others, are difficult to explain to adults, much less little ones. Nevertheless, it is an easy book to peruse together or chew on one’s own. Though the contents may be over the heads of many in the audience, this is sure to find a cozy place on the children’s shelves of many a Christian home.

To be shared and explored, if not yet fully understood. (Board book. 2-6)



THIS LITTLE PIGGY

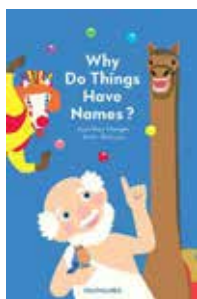
Illus. by Kubler, Annie & Dellow, Sarah
 Child’s Play (12 pp.)
 \$5.99 | Jun. 1, 2020
 978-1-78628-405-1
 Series: Baby Board Books

A multicultural cast illustrates a familiar nursery rhyme.

In successive double-page spreads, five round-faced babies each point to the appropriate toe on verso, acting out the rhyme on the opposite page, dressed as pigs, in hooded pink sleepers. “This little piggy” is always on the left while the action text is on the right. This is a vegetarian version of the song; “roast leeks” is substituted for the traditional “roast beef.” Words with musical annotation are printed on the back cover. All the babies (except the White baby who “had none”) are smiling. The light-brown-skinned tot eating roast leeks looks delighted with the meal. The babies’ brightly colored clothing stands out against uncluttered white backgrounds. Equally diverse groups of babies, with at least one wearing glasses, star in the other Baby Board Book titles that

publish simultaneously. Sleeper-costumed babies play the parts of cat, cow, moon and dog in *Hey Diddle Diddle*. The toddler pairs playing *Pat-a-Cake* (in one case a trio) are interracial; one child appears to have Down syndrome. *Ten Little Fingers*, often used to quiet young children at the start of storytime, ends with a mixed-race pair and three stuffed animals all ready for the next story, with hands folded “just so.” In all books, children cued as Asian are presented with half-circle eyes instead of dots, as if they are closed.

With its companions, music, movement, and language development in four developmentally appropriate packages. (*Board book. 6 mos.-3*) (*Hey Diddle Diddle: 978-1-78628-1408-2; Pat-a-Cake: 978-1-78628-407-5; Ten Little Fingers: 978-1-78628-406-8*)



WHY DO THINGS HAVE NAMES?

Mongin, Jean Paul
Illus. by Shibuya, Junko
 Diaphanes/Univ. of Chicago (42 pp.)
 \$15.00 | Jun. 15, 2020
 978-3-0358-0275-7
 Series: Plato & Co.

Imported from France, Platonic realism for preteens, introduced by the great philosopher himself.

“Why is a horse called a horse” instead of, say, a giraffe? Or, for that matter, “flapdoodle”? Just to keep this all as far as possible from becoming a weighty discourse, a toga-clad, woolly-bearded White gent—plainly a philosopher—leads a Socratic-style enquiry loosely based on the *Cratylus* dialogue that sets up and culminates in an elaborate, fantastic pun. He then goes on to explain that “Plato” is a nickname that translates (very freely) as “Muscleman” and challenges readers to find out where their own names come from. Shibuya’s illustrations helpfully sustain the tone with images of onlookers in antique dress and vaguely Grecian settings along with various creatures led by a smirking horse, all set amid multiple flaps, small pop-ups, die-cut holes, and, at the end, a foil mirror. An attempt to make the point that “horse” is not a universal term goes off the rails, being both confusingly phrased and illustrated with a group of riders clad in stereotypical Native American and like ethnic garb. Otherwise, following Ronan de Calan and Donatien Mary’s *The Ghost of Karl Marx*, translated by Anna Street (2015), and other entries in the Plato & Co. series, this outing may dip barely a toe into its philosophical waters but does at least begin to demystify them. Stylized human figures throughout show mild differentiation in racial presentation and body type.

A quick and comical gallop into the world of ideas. (*Informational novelty. 8-12*)



DINOSAURS

Musgrave, Ruth A.
Illus. by Tempesta, Franco
 National Geographic Kids (26 pp.)
 \$7.99 | Mar. 19, 2020
 978-1-4263-3696-6
 Series: Little Kids First Board Book



National Geographic delivers refreshingly realistic, un-Barney-fied dinosaurs for the board-book set.

Dinosaurs are ever popular among kids of all ages, but in the board-book market, they are rarely portrayed with the majesty that makes them so fascinating in the first place. In offering after offering, they’re drawn in cute caricatures or gimmicky, textured renditions that don’t at all suggest a time when dinosaurs ruled the Earth. While such renderings are certainly nonthreatening, young readers would be hard-pressed to extrapolate any sense of the primal majesty and scale of these beasts, which have fascinated for generations. Therefore, the colorful, massive reptiles depicted herein, with their armor, horns, plates, talons, and teeth, are a breath of fresh air and a return to honest and untamed portrayals of these fascinating prehistoric beasts. One forgivable conceit employed to reduce the likelihood of nightmares is the occasional word balloon and bad pun: Feathered *Scansoriopteryx*, for instance, announces, “I’m a real early bird.” The primeval landscapes are lush with vegetation; landscapes and skies feel both alien and familiar. The book features 11 dinosaurs, of which only two, *Stegosaurus* and *Tyrannosaurus rex*, are familiar favorites. Portraits of dinosaurs in situ alternate with pages naming the dinosaurs shown, with pronunciation and fun facts about the creatures in question (e.g., “*Shunosaurus* had a very long tail”) and dinosaurs in general.

Beautiful artwork, just enough info, and winning subject matter. (*Board book. 2-5*)



THINGS THAT GO

Musgrave, Ruth A.
 National Geographic Kids (26 pp.)
 \$7.99 | Mar. 19, 2020
 978-1-4263-3698-0
 Series: Little Kids First Board Book

Sturdy pages and large pictures should be a hit for toddlers on the go.

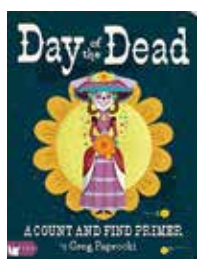
The cover photo of a red sports car promises excitement. Inside, stock photos of readily recognized vehicles invite youngsters to imagine themselves in the drivers’ seats. (Drivers, when shown, wear appropriate safety gear.) Each double-page spread includes a picture of one vehicle; most are on just one page, but the fire engine, passenger train, helicopter, and single-engine airplane pictures span their spreads. Choosing just 11 vehicles to represent all “things that go” leads to some rather specific choices: a double-decker bus, a snowmobile, and hot air balloon. The likelihood of a young child seeing a logging truck is slim outside of logging country, though other types of “tractor trailers” crowd highways all over. The name of each vehicle is printed in contrasting type within one descriptive sentence:

Will have children taking in the myriad details to be found.

DAY OF THE DEAD

“The **motorcycle** roars down the road.” Another factoid is highlighted in a yellow dot: “Wheels roll to make things go. Motorcycles have two wheels.” Snarky asides (“I never tire”) in white speech bubbles may keep the attention of adult readers but will only distract toddlers. Little kids won’t get the jokes, nor will they sit still for the four-question quiz on the final spread.

Attractive and generally useful but quickly parked on the bookshelf. (Numbered pages) (Board book. 1-4)



DAY OF THE DEAD A Count and Find Primer

Paprocki, Greg

Illus. by the author

Gibbs Smith (24 pp.)

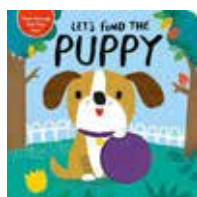
\$9.99 | Aug. 18, 2020

978-1-4236-5426-1

Children can count from one to 10 with items related to the Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead.

Joyful and energy-filled illustrations portray different people and objects that are part of the holiday. No. 1 is a comparsa, here described simplistically as “a carnival-like celebration” though a comparsa is not a celebration but a defined group of people that take part in the celebration. The other items are two catrinas, three “photographs of the departed,” four crowns of flowers, five musicians, six pan de muertos (“bread of the dead”), seven marigolds, eight candles, nine papel picado (“tissue paper art”), and 10 sugar skulls. For each item, readers must find the required number within the illustration. Some are easier than others, but all will have children looking and taking in the myriad details to be found in each double-page spread. At the end, the author has included 10 additional objects for children to go back and look for in the illustrations. The backmatter also includes a little information on each item. Children acquainted with this holiday will recognize the familiar objects; children for whom this is a new holiday will need some adult guidance, as the book gives no explanation for the reason for the holiday. Though most of people portrayed sport masks, the skin tones perceived range from pink to different shades of brown.

Good concept and illustrations; best for households familiar with the observance. (Board book. 2-4)



LET'S FIND THE PUPPY

Tiger Tales

Illus. by Willmore, Alex

Tiger Tales (12 pp.)

\$9.99 | Sep. 15, 2020

978-1-68010-629-9

A lift-the-flap, seek-and-find adventure to locate Puppy.

“Puppy is hiding. Let’s find him!” the text declares on the first page. From there, felt flaps and cutouts in the pages along with clues help readers find the playful Puppy. Felt flaps, the 2.0 version of more common paper flaps, make a more durable reading experience

for toddlers. They don’t integrate with illustrations as well as paper flaps, but that can be helpful for younger readers developing fine motor skills. The game of searching for Puppy is a familiar one, easy for toddlers to dive into. Disappointingly, though, the flaps and illustrations aren’t always proportionate, sending the clues a bit off. A cat is improbably hiding behind a single blooming flower, and though it’s in the foreground, it’s still significantly larger than those around it. A grasshopper is the same size as a bird. A couple pages later, there’s something described as hiding “behind the log,” but it’s actually a tree stump. On the next page, two rigid, erect cutouts are somehow possibly Puppy’s floppy ears. For little readers new to language, vocabulary and accurate descriptions matter. The illustrations themselves are cute enough, the pigeon particularly well realized, but there’s nothing extraordinary or of substance. The simultaneously publishing *Let’s Find the Kitten* handles proportions, cutouts, and descriptions with fewer head-scratchers.

Let’s find...a different book. (Board book. 6 mos.-2) (*Let’s Find the Kitten*: 978-1-68010-628-2)



V IS FOR VOTES! A Suffragette Alphabet

Wage, Erin Rose

Illus. by Pica, Jane

Sunbird Books (20 pp.)

\$8.99 | Aug. 18, 2020

978-1-5037-5461-4

An alphabetical list of diverse suffragists, landmark events, important ideas, and more, commemorating the fight for women’s suffrage in the United States.

Two to three letters of the alphabet and a corresponding figure, event, or concept are presented on each double-page spread using the headings typical for ABC books: “A is for amendment” or “D is for Declaration of Sentiments,” for instance. These are accompanied by a couple of sentences of explanation and an illustration against a red-and-white or purple-and-white background. Relatively well-known historical figures appear, such as Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, but surprisingly, there is no mention of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The inclusion of unsung suffragists is a welcome sight, including Zitkála-Šá, a Yankton Dakota Sioux advocate for Native American suffrage, Nina Allender, a White political cartoonist, and Hattie Redmond, a Black organizer for suffrage in Oregon. Using a Disney-esque style and deep, bold colors, the art is accessible and fresh. A few modern children are included to illustrate concepts such as “Equal,” which depicts a diverse quartet of children, one of them using a wheelchair. Much of the information is painfully brief and, at times, undercuts some of the subjects; Alice Paul is here noted for sewing a flag with a star for each state that approved the 19th Amendment, but she did significantly more than act as a suffragist Betsy Ross. The board format is an odd choice for the content since much of this will go over the heads of babies and toddlers who may not even know what voting is.

Preschool and school-age kids will enjoy this dash through history; here’s hoping they won’t reject the “baby book” format. (Board book. 3-6)

CONTINUING SERIES

JUST BEYOND THE VERY, VERY FAR NORTH

Bar-el, Dan

Illus. by Pousette, Kelly

Atheneum (272 pp.)

\$16.99 | Oct. 6, 2020

978-1-5344-3344-1

Series: The Very, Very Far North, 2

(Fantasy. 8-12)

SPY SCHOOL REVOLUTION

Gibbs, Stuart

Simon & Schuster (352 pp.)

\$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020

978-1-5344-4378-5

Series: Spy School, 8

(Thriller. 8-12)

THE LOST PRINCESS

Glynn, Connie

Harper/HarperCollins (384 pp.)

\$16.99 | Oct. 13, 2020

978-0-06-299440-0

Series: The Rosewood Chronicles, 3

(Fantasy. 8-12)

THE CHASING PAPER CAPER

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Etch/HMH (144 pp.)

\$21.99 | \$10.99 paper | Oct. 6, 2020

978-0-358-38019-1

978-0-358-38018-4 paper

Series: Carmen Sandiego

(Graphic adventure. 8-12)

HEROES LEVEL UP

O'Donnell, Tom

Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (416 pp.)

\$16.99 | Oct. 6, 2020

978-0-06-287217-3

Series: Homerooms and Hall Passes, 2

(Adventure. 8-12)

THE FORBIDDEN LOCK

Shurtliff, Liesl

Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins (480 pp.)

\$16.99 | Oct. 13, 2020

978-0-06-256821-2

Series: Time Castaways, 3

(Fantasy. 8-12)

YOUNG ADULT



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- THE SURPRISING POWER OF A GOOD DUMPLING**
by *Wai Chim*..... 136
- THIS IS HOW WE FLY** by *Anna Meriano* 140
- HEARTSTOPPER** by *Alice Oseman* 141
- SUPER FAKE LOVE SONG** by *David Yoon* 145



THIS IS HOW WE FLY
Meriano, Anna
Philomel (304 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-0-593-11687-6



GOBLIN KING

Barbieri, Kara
Wednesday Books (320 pp.)
\$18.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-1-250-24760-5
Series: Permafrost, 2

A young woman goes to Hel and back to stop Ragnarök in this sequel to *White Stag* (2019).

Having survived the Hunt, goblin Soren rules as Erlking while once-human Janneke grapples with her role as the stag. Once master and servant, now lovers, both are struggling to take on their new responsibilities and overcome their many, many traumas. Raised as a male heir in a vaguely Viking-ish era and held as a Permafrost realm prisoner for 100 years, dark-skinned, green-eyed Janneke is as lethal as her former captors, the goblins, but capable of emotion. Now an untrained magic-user and unwilling recipient of apocalyptic visions, Janneke is also haunted by her abuser, Lydian...“literally,” as the characters would (and repeatedly, gratingly) say. Attempting to use—then exorcise—the liminal Lydian, Janneke and a small circle of trusted goblins dive deep into the Norse underworld. Unwaveringly, perhaps unbelievably, supportive Soren is pale and bluish-skinned, white-haired, and lilac-eyed—for *goblins*, read prettified Celtic elves or Scandinavian trolls, per the novel’s loose basis on and reinterpretation of traditional mythology. The setting, tone, and language are inconsistent and unclear, with the pre-industrial trappings repeatedly clashing with the innumerable, jarringly modern turns of phrase and copious profanities. Barbieri prominently features issues of abuse, disability, eating disorders, self-harm, and gender, but the quality of the writing does not support sensitive and nuanced exploration of these subjects.

An unpolished read. (*Fantasy. 16-adult*)

OPENING YOUR MIND THROUGH READING



THE IMPACT OF diverse books as mirrors is immediate, but their value as windows is largely dependent on the mindsets of readers and their willingness to engage with difference. Growing up biracial, I regularly experienced people shoehorning my family into their preexisting beliefs. As a child out in the world alone with my White father, we were positively received—him, as the benevolent, presumed adoptive parent and me as the

“lucky one.” Once, when my father explained that actually his wife was Asian, the White speaker—originally gushing—grew hostile. Alone in public with my father as an adult, we were frequently treated with hostility and open-mouthed stares by White people who assumed I was his much-younger mail-order bride. If only people had questioned their own assumptions rather than projecting their mental maps onto my family.

Unfortunately, I’ve observed these same dynamics during discussions of books from literary traditions or life experiences other than the reader’s own. Readers from backgrounds less well represented in mainstream literature are already accustomed to code-switching in books (and in life), of course. But we can all benefit from author and world literature advocate Ann Morgan’s “Tips for reading outside your comfort zone,” which highlights unconscious patterns of approaching books that limit the transformative potential of reading diversely.

Naturally it’s fine to have personal preferences, but it’s something else entirely to forget that one’s judgments are culturally conditioned. Many non-#ownvoices works are wildly popular not *despite* their biases and inaccuracies but *because* of them: They allow mainstream readers to believe they are learning about the other while simultaneously reinforcing preexisting assumptions. Meanwhile, #ownvoices works that may require greater engagement (and, therefore, greater rewards) are dismissed by many as “hard to relate to.” This response influences which diverse titles are selected for publication, further skewing general perceptions.

Here are some YA books that will give many readers a chance to explore and grow beyond their usual parameters.

A range of voices and techniques distinguishes *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women*, edited by Lisa Charleyboy (Tsilhqot’in) and Mary Beth Leatherdale (Annick, 2017). The many strong contributors

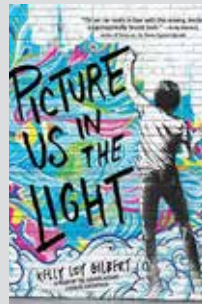


to this groundbreaking work shatter widespread misconceptions.

The Japanese social context makes *My Brother’s Husband, Volumes 1 and 2* by Gengoroh Tagame, translated by Anne Ishii (Pantheon, 2017, 2018), feel startlingly original to many Western readers who encounter these heartwarming graphic novels about confronting homophobia.



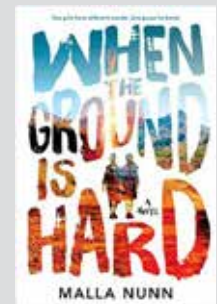
Simultaneously beautiful and gut-wrenching, *Picture Us in the Light* by Kelly Loy Gilbert (Disney-Hyperion, 2018) highlights the tremendous diversity within one group of Asian American teens who are wrestling with sexuality, socio-economic inequality, faith, and family secrets.



Ghady & Rawan by Fatima Sharafedine and Samar Mahfouz Barraj, translated by Sawad Hussain and M. Lynx Qualey (Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2019), presents charming emails between best friends: Ghady lives in Brussels, and Rawan is the girl

in Beirut whom he misses between summer visits.

Set in a boarding school for biracial students in Swaziland, *When the Ground Is Hard* by Malla Nunn (Putnam, 2019) takes on familiar issues such as race and social class—but this quietly compelling novel requires readers unfamiliar with the setting to reframe their points of reference.



In *Apple* (Levine Querido, Oct. 6), Eric Gansworth (Onondaga, Eel Clan) uses his art and poetry to explore generations of cultural dislocation, thorny questions around belonging and identity, and some of the many ways there are of being Native today.



Here the Whole Time by Vitor Martins, translated by Larissa Helena (Scholastic, Nov. 10), tells the story of a gay boy in Brazil with a loving single mom as he struggles with body image and nurses a crush on his very good-looking neighbor.

Laura Simeon is a young readers’ editor.

Offers an intimate view of self-discovery.

SASHA MASHA



THE SELF-COMPASSIONATE TEEN *Mindfulness and Compassion Skills To Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice*

Bluth, Karen
Instant Help Books (184 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-68403-527-4

Mindfulness strategies geared toward overwhelmed teens illuminate this evidence-based self-help guidebook by an expert in the field.

Readers will encounter a whole box of tools for cultivating compassion as they work through nine themed chapters addressing common adolescent struggles. The author outlines strategies emphasizing mindfulness, broad awareness of their shared humanity, and self-kindness. A collection of engaging formal and informal practices punctuates each section, and readers are taught to focus on sensations, thoughts, and breathing to let go of stress and anxiety and remain grounded in the present. Weblinks are included for downloadable audio of each meditation or exercise to support readers in their practice. Somewhat generic teen challenges are detailed throughout the book with first-person stories of scenarios where these practices can be particularly beneficial, including school, relationships, social media drama, and self-image. The author explains the evolutionary and biological reasons why we all experience fear, anxiety, and stress. The messages that teens are not alone in their difficulties and have the ability to change their own outlooks are empowering and hopeful. The author both criticizes how social media can add to teen anxiety as well as offers up ways to harness the power of social media for self-kindness practice, offering a balanced approach. Importantly, the author is explicitly reassuring toward and supportive of LGBTQ+ youth.

Teens will learn to treat themselves with kindness with the tools gleaned from this text. (references) (Self-help. 12-18)



SASHA MASHA

Borinsky, Agnes
Farrar, Straus and Giroux (240 pp.)
\$17.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-374-31080-6

A transgender teen navigates new relationships and heartache in the midst of an awakening identity.

Everything about White, Jewish, 17-year-old Sasha Masha's life feels wrong. Polite smiles and good grades mask underlying surges of sadness. When Sasha Masha's bold, queer best friend moves away, junior year becomes a time of grappling with identity outside of this friendship. An unexpected romance blossoms with Black girl Tracy, an academic superstar, and for the first time Sasha Masha starts to feel like a "Real" person. Despite how much Sasha Masha wants a relationship with

Tracy, it's a struggle to open up and express that something feels wrong until desperation leads to a community meeting of queer teens. Written in the first-person, this coming-of-age story offers an intimate view of self-discovery. Queer community and history play a refreshing significance in Sasha Masha's personal revelations. Finding a name is a turning point within the narrative, so for most of the book other characters use Sasha Masha's deadname. Characters model consent within their relationships, demonstrating the importance of asking before making any physical advance. The small cast of characters shows awareness of diversity and the impact of racial privilege. Unlike in many coming-out stories, Sasha Masha doesn't arrive at a clear resolution possessing all the answers, instead displaying a sense of peace with the ongoing journey ahead.

A sensitive and vulnerable story of self-growth. (appendix) (Fiction. 14-18)



REAL TALK ABOUT SEX & CONSENT *What Every Teen Needs To Know*

Bradshaw, Cheryl M.
Instant Help Books (200 pp.)
\$14.88 paper | Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-68403-449-9

This accessible book unravels the often confusing topics of sex and consent.

Written in a casual tone directed at teens and 20-somethings, this volume covers all aspects of consent, including sexual and emotional awareness, societal influences, the law, what consent looks like, and what to do in the event of a sexual assault. Bradshaw takes the discussion beyond "no means no" and even "yes means yes" into the real world. She gives concrete examples, tools, and exercises that young people can apply to their lived experiences. She acknowledges the complicated feelings that can arise and the difficulty of dealing with rejection. She also gives a simplified explanation of the science behind our fight-or-flight response and why we sometimes appear to consent when we really want to run away screaming. This text is addressed to all genders and sexualities, though it does not hesitate to acknowledge and break down gendered pressures and stereotypes. It is not only targeted at theoretical targets of assault; it clearly explains that if you can't honor someone's boundaries, you are not ready to have sex. Despite a few awkward sentences and corny acronyms, this is an invaluable resource for readers wishing to learn more about these critical subjects.

Everyone learning to navigate sexual relationships should read this manual for total consent. (additional resources, works cited) (Self-help. 13-adult)

Gritty details lend depth to this viscerally powerful tale.

THE SURPRISING POWER OF A GOOD DUMPLING



THE SURPRISING POWER OF A GOOD DUMPLING

Chim, Wai

Scholastic (336 pp.)

\$18.99 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-338-65611-4



Sixteen-year-old Anna cares for younger siblings and experiences first love while dealing with her mother's mental illness.

Anna Chiu, a Chinese Australian teenager, is older sister to Lily, 13, and Michael, 5. Their father usually sleeps over at the family's Chinese restaurant, leaving the children to cope with their erratic mother's extreme, paranoid behaviors. On a good day, Ma is present, taking the kids on outings; on bad days she rants embarrassingly about the perfidies of Western culture or shakes the girls awake in the middle of the night to accuse them of disloyalty. On the worst days she is catatonic in bed. Anna's schoolwork suffers and she feels alienated by her overachieving, popular Asian Australian schoolmates whose lives seem less burdened than her own. She starts helping out at the restaurant in hopes of bringing her family closer and alleviating their financial insecurity, leading to a romantic relationship with Rory, the White delivery boy—a sensitive, theatrical soul who is hiding his own secrets—that provides comfort. Ma's episodes are outlined in strikingly authentic, heart-rending detail, as is the variety of the children's emotional, PTSD-like responses; traumatized and yearning for normality, their portrayals ring especially true. Anna's stomach churns with anxiety while Lily is often angry and Michael, scared and confused.

Gritty details lend depth to this viscerally powerful tale of a teen struggling to help her troubled family. (resources) (Fiction. 14-18)



6 SUPER SKILLS FOR EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING Tools To Help Teens Improve Focus, Stay Organized, and Reach Their Goals

Honos-Webb, Lara

Instant Help Books (176 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2020

978-1-68403-533-5

A positive, affirming guide for teens on setting and achieving goals.

Executive function—the neurological ability to focus, plan, think flexibly, regulate emotions, and control impulses—is often a struggle for a rapidly maturing adolescent brain, especially for those with certain neurodivergent conditions such as anxiety, ADHD, and autism. The approach taken here is similar to that of many other self-help titles addressing organization, motivation, or effective study habits, with heavy emphases on list-making, journaling, inspirational case studies, and positive

reframing. However, setting these “brain hacks” within the context of executive function and the titular superskills (finding gifts, setting goals, chunking, boosting motivation, managing mood, and finding focus) may help some readers connect. The text, addressed directly to readers, is upbeat and informal without being excessively chatty, weakened only by some dated pop-culture references and one unfortunate ableist slur. While peppered with affirming aphorisms, the text makes an effort to explain the underlying psychological mechanisms and the supporting research, which does lend some gravitas; but the relentless breezy cheerleading occasionally borders on the facile. The concluding bibliography is a list of works cited and consulted rather than pointers to additional helpful resources and organizations.

A solid addition to the genre; the angle of approach may spark some interest. (Nonfiction. 12-18)



THE SKY ABOVE US

Lund, Natalie

Philomel (384 pp.)

\$18.99 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-0-525-51803-7

How many of your past lives do *you* remember?

Janie, Cass, and Izzy are there on the beach when the plane falls into the ocean. They're girls with friends, brothers, and ex-boyfriends in common, but they'll bond quickly in the days after the crash. Izzy knows intuitively that her twin brother, Israel, is in that plane, and it is soon confirmed that he was accompanied by Cass' newly ex-boyfriend, Shane, and Janie's neighbor-and-secret-friend-outside-of-school, Nate. But why were the boys flying? And was it by suicide or accident that they lost control? In alternating chapters (first-person accounts post-accident by the girls and third-person narration pre-accident for the boys), a bigger mystery unfolds, seemingly linked to Israel's beliefs about the transmigration of souls and Izzy's belief that he and his friends are now the dolphins she keeps seeing near the Texas Gulf Coast island on which they live. While the multiperspective construction makes narrative sense for a story where readers are expected to be mystified, it's hard to keep track of whose chapter is whose when all the voices sound the same. As the book goes on, the prose becomes less purple, though it's hard not to lose the feeling of woo-woo given the focus on reincarnation when no religion is invoked. Most characters default to White; Izzy and Israel are Venezuelan American.

A compelling premise that never quite shines. (Thriller. 13-18)



DANGEROUS SECRETS
The Story of Iduna and Agnarr

Mancusi, Mari
Illus. by Lee, Grace
Disney Press (352 pp.)
\$17.99 | Nov. 3, 2020
978-1-368-06361-6
Series: Frozen 2

Before Elsa and Anna from *Frozen* (2013) were born, their parents—Iduna, a Northuldra, and Agnarr, prince of Arendelle—faced their own trials and tribulations.

When Iduna was 12 she selflessly saved her enemy, which inadvertently led to her being separated from her family and trapped in Arendelle. Growing up alongside Agnarr, the two naturally became friends and, after some years, inseparable. Slowly, Iduna began to make a life for herself in Arendelle, knowing that she must keep her true identity a secret. All the while, Iduna and Agnarr’s chemistry grew undeniable, but as crown prince, Agnarr faced heavy pressure from the council to find a royal bride. Told mainly through Iduna’s first-person perspective, with a few chapters from Agnarr’s, the story of their friendship-turned-romance will swell readers’ hearts. Filled with tidbits from the movies and building upon *Frozen* lore, this simple love story is filled with all the things fans adore about the franchise: wholesome characters, love, and a little magic. Descriptive writing, two interesting and independent leads, and a warm cast of background characters enhance the story. Iduna and Agnarr’s relationship is one built on trust, equality, support, and kindness. Characters’ ethnicities are the same as the movies; Iduna and Agnarr are both White.

Frozen fans and romance lovers will fall for this endearing tale. (Fantasy. 12-18)



HERE THE WHOLE TIME

Martins, Vitor
Trans. by Helena, Larissa
Scholastic (288 pp.)
\$18.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-338-62082-5

Seventeen-year-old Felipe’s winter break takes a turn when neighbor Caio’s parents go on a trip and he comes to stay.

What was supposed to be three weeks of sitting at home in his apartment in a small Brazilian town surfing the internet becomes a nerve-racking ordeal for Felipe, who’s had a crush on Caio since childhood. It doesn’t help that Felipe is shy and self-conscious about his weight, both of which make him a target for school bullies. His therapist encourages him to initiate interactions, but the thought of Caio’s attention being directed toward him makes Felipe incredibly uncomfortable. And yet, as the days pass, awkward small talk transitions into casual late-night

chats, leading to genuine conversations that allow the boys to open up to one another, including sharing their respective coming-out experiences. The novel, narrated in the first-person, expresses Felipe’s internal turmoil as he endures living in close quarters with a boy he finds irresistible and who, it turns out, also enjoys reading Tolkien, makes delicious brigadeiros, and is happy to join in the daily themed activities planned by Felipe’s supportive single mother. Felipe’s struggle with body image and self-perception is presented thoughtfully, and the frankness with which he tells his story is at turns hilarious and heart-wrenching. All characters are Brazilian; Felipe’s therapist and Caio’s best friend are Black, and the impact of race is discussed in the story.

An uplifting, body-positive story about finding courage and love. (Romance. 14-18)



THE LAST CRYSTAL- BOOK 3

Past and present merge as four children embark on a deadly quest for an object of power.

"A gripping fantasy with relatable young characters meeting life-threatening challenges."

—Kirkus Reviews

"Best book I have read all year." —Goodreads Review

"the magic of maps, mysterious lands, and lost crystals that will have the kids reading well after lights-out."

—Christin Brecher, Author, *The Nantucket Candle Maker Mysteries*

ISBN #9781732788244 • #9781732788251 • #9781732788268

For information on publishing and film rights, email
fsgoonmaker@gmail.com • www.fsgoonmaker.com



INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

AMRA SABIC-EL-RAYESS

SPEAKING UP ABOUT GENOCIDE AND SOUNDING A WARNING

By Laura Simeon



Ingrid Skousgaard

AMRA SABIC-EL-RAYESS' MEMOIR, *The Cat I Never Named: A True Story of Love, War, and Survival*, written with Laura L. Sullivan (Bloomsbury, Sept. 8), shares her experiences as a Bosnian Muslim during the Serbian genocide of the 1990s, when her family was adopted by Maci (*cat* in Bosnian), a calico whose unconditional love changed their lives. Now a professor at Columbia University's Teachers College in New York, Sabic-El-Rayess researches the role of education in perpetuating inequalities and in healing after societal collapse. We met over Zoom to discuss her YA debut; the conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Your story will speak to many people for such different reasons.

It is a complicated book—it captures four years of living under military siege with limited access to food, no

electricity, no normal schooling—and my ultimate arrival in the U.S. as a student on a full scholarship with broken English. I take the reader through a range of emotions, from complete exhilaration with the most ordinary things to devastation. The most difficult moments come when I am reminded that I am viscerally hated for simply being a Bosnian Muslim. I come close to being killed and almost being raped by a Serb soldier. Then there is a surprise, where the beauty comes in, where I find ways [to] build resilience. That didn't happen on my own [but] with the love of those around me, family and friends, even my first crush, [as well as] the love of education and this immense desire to survive.

There is a third layer to the book that is almost unbelievable; there is magic to it. I encounter unconditional love in the form of Maci. People are escaping into [her home city of] Bihać, and I'll never know, but I believe her family was lost or killed. Maci attaches herself to me and my family. To be honest, I did not want a cat; I was afraid of everything with claws—I was attacked by my uncle's German shepherd when I was 5 or 6 years old. My parents didn't want a pet: The war is about to begin. Will we have enough food for ourselves? How are we going to take in another living being? So, we did not want her, but she didn't care! Maci, in fact, saves my brother's and my lives on the very first day of the war. Because of Maci we are saved, but four of our friends are blown up. She represents the symbolism [of] how in life, at times we reject certain individuals [or] ideas, but they become our saviors and, in Maci's case, a guiding light throughout the war for my family.

Why write this story for teens—and why now?

I was 16 when the war started and 21 when it ended. Those should have been beautiful years. I felt that the only way I could truly write the story was to write it for teens. Often when we talk about racism and genocide, we think of the

Holocaust. I wanted to remind young adults—who maybe have felt that’s the distant past and will not repeat itself—that it *can* happen now. It happened to me, and it can happen to anyone. I want [American kids] to learn from that experience and create a better world.

I’ve always thought it’s important, but I have so much other work, and eventually I’ll get to it. Then I started to see contours of hate and violence that I had seen before, and it scared me. My younger daughter came to me—she was 10 at the time—and said, “Mommy, if you and Daddy are rounded up as immigrants or as Muslims, and you leave [my] sister and me, will we live alone?” That woke me up. That made me feel I was abdicating my responsibilities as an immigrant, genocide survivor, mother, educator, [and] academic to [show] how far humanity can go if we opt for hatred.

What do you hope readers will learn from your book?

My greatest hope would be that they forget that they’re reading about a Bosnian Muslim woman and that they begin to see aspects of my life as their own and begin to identify with my pain and suffering and the racism I experienced. If they [haven’t had] those experiences, I hope that they recognize those in their communities [who have]. My fundamental belief is that once we humanize the other, the hated, the marginalized, the excluded, we start to see them in us and us in them.

You excelled in school, and now you teach the next generation of educators. What informs your work?

Education is a political tool, a mechanism often used by elites to pursue and propagate narratives that work to their advantage. Education is not always benign. We have diversity in classrooms, however we have not ended racism and biases. We need to change how we teach kids. In the U.S., more than 50% of children are non-White. How do we account for their perspectives, feelings, and histories? I’m not sure teachers are prepared for that.

The second issue is what is being taught. That’s where *The Cat I Never Named* comes into play: [It] allows teachers to explore marginalization, discrimination, resilience, and motivation. The third area is who gets the privilege of teaching, [including the] professors who are teaching teachers. Unless we diversify faculty in graduate schools of education, we’re not going to diversify the narratives and knowledge that are shared with teachers who [enter] classrooms. [In my book] I talk about being discriminated against in the former Yugoslavia’s educational system. Even though I was one of the top students, I never read a story

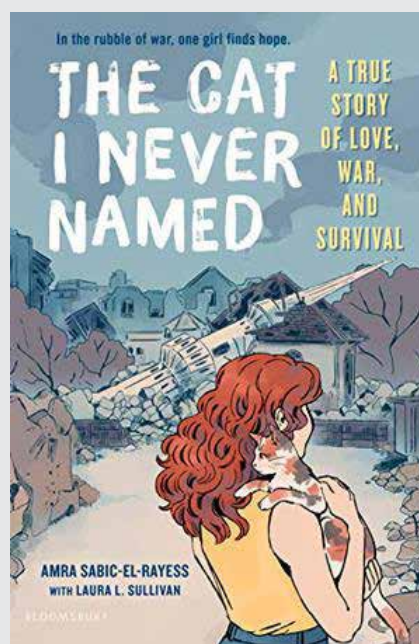
that had a Muslim girl as a heroine or a Muslim individual who was smart or funny. Through my teachers’ behavior—those who discriminated against me—and through the overall curriculum, I was delivered the message that I was lesser, and that made me feel ashamed of my identity.

Your book unfortunately holds such relevance to current events.

Those who have read the book are seeing parallels between what happened in Bosnia and what is happening in the U.S. Serb nationalists who justify genocide against the Bosnian Muslims often say that it had to be done because they’re protecting White Christian Europe, and therefore protecting European culture from infiltration and impurity. If you take that argument and slightly adjust the labels for the actors, you get the narrative of White supremacy and the far-right movement in the U.S. My hope is that my book serves as a warning, because once we go off that cliff, it is a journey with no return ticket.

Living with the label of being Muslim and being attacked for it is something that I have grown up with, even [experiencing the] Islamophobia that’s prevalent in the U.S. But I refuse to be silenced. This book is not only for all those reasons we already discussed, but also [for] friends and family who were killed or raped and who will never tell their stories. I sincerely hope we will never allow hate to spell out our future in the United States of America.

The Cat I Never Named received a starred review in the July 15, 2020, issue.





THIS IS HOW WE FLY

Meriano, Anna
Philomel (304 pp.)
\$17.99 | Oct. 20, 2020
978-0-593-11687-6



A contemporary, magic-free retelling of “Cinderella” featuring a vegan, feminist, gender-questioning, biracial Latinx who joins a Harry Potter-inspired Quidditch team.

It is the last summer before college, and Ellen Lopez-Rourke has been (totally unjustly) grounded by her father and stepmother—so her plan to hang out with her two best friends, Melissa and Xiumiao, falls apart. Even worse, Xiumiao decides she needs to move on from her hopeless crush on Melissa and spend the summer doing her own thing. Melissa and Ellen join a local Quidditch team—the only way Ellen’s parents will allow her out of the house—and Ellen finds herself amid a fiercely inclusive, all-gender, full-contact sport that allows her to explore different sides of her identity. Meriano’s novel is a layered, skillful work that thoughtfully explores the complicated dynamics of a family in conflict due to divergent views of the world, allowing the protagonist to navigate toxic elements of her home life while finding her own voice with the support of friends, both new and old. The story fortunately does not avoid painful, relevant conversations about art, fandom, and problematic creators while showcasing fans who fully love yet critically engage with art. Ellen is of Mexican and Irish descent in a book richly inclusive of many genders, sexualities, races, and cultures. This clever, subtle reimagining of a beloved fairy tale is both subversive and empowering.

Truly enchanting. (*Fiction. 14-18*)



PISTOUVI

Merwan
Illus. by Gatignol, Bertrand
Magnetic Press (192 pp.)
\$19.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-942367-95-6

Pistouvi the fox explores life with his human friend, Jeanne.

Pistouvi and Jeanne are best friends in a strange world with strange rules. The only adult presences come from the friendly Wind (shown as an ethereal, beautiful White woman) and abrasive Tractor (a light-skinned, bald man with an abundant black beard). Despite this, Pistouvi and Jeanne, who is a small, blond-haired White girl, make do with their treehouse home and have many goofy adventures together. Danger is never far off, however, as Pistouvi has a unique predicament: If he ever understands what the birds are saying, he will be forever changed. The birds are ever present, as the target of Pistouvi and Jeanne’s pranks or as bigger, more menacing figures. They add an ominous air to an otherwise lighthearted narrative,

serving as a reminder that one day Pistouvi and Jeanne may grow apart. The prologue and each of the 10 subsequent chapters serve as their own separate but connected interludes, making this volume more accessible to casual readers. Merwan and Gatignol have crafted a whimsical—and sometimes dark—narrative similar in tone to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. The art is gorgeous, the style reminiscent of a black-and-white manga with gray tones. Details such as hair and fur are particularly well executed. The ending is both inevitable and saddening, surprisingly bleak in contrast to the overall more carefree tone.

Sure to strike readers like a hammer. (*Graphic fiction. 12-16*)



THOSE WHO PREY

Moffett, Jennifer
Atheneum (416 pp.)
\$19.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-5344-5096-7

A college freshman becomes the victim of a worldwide cult.

With a dead mother, a busy father, and an unrelatable stepfamily, Emily leaves Mississippi for a fresh start in college up north. Instead, her first year at Boston University in 1994 is lonely. So when she meets Josh and his charismatic friends in a coffee shop, she eagerly accepts their invitations to social events with the Kingdom even as they proceed to control her time and even her thoughts. In the first section of this debut, chapter headings spell out the steps the Kingdom uses to expand their membership in order to show Emily’s brainwashing. Once it’s clear that she’s imbedded in the cult, the story quickly shifts in tone, becoming a psychological thriller. Selected by a Kingdom leader and encouraged by her crush on Josh, Emily accepts a so-called internship to travel with cult members to Italy. The novel’s psychological strengths resonate here, as Emily experiences hunger, fear, strict rules, and even scarier tactics intended to keep her in line and recruit more members. But when she begins to question the Kingdom’s motives and consider leaving, large plot jumps move the story forward but quell the thriller intrigue. A concluding author’s note discusses real cults that swept college campuses in the 1990s. Characters follow a White default.

Engaging but not enthralling. (*Psychological thriller. 14-18*)



LAUREL EVERYWHERE

Moynihan, Erin
Ooligan Press (256 pp.)
\$16.00 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-947845-19-0

In the aftermath of the car crash that killed three members of 15-year-old Laurel’s family, she and her father are left bereft and struggling, each in their own way.

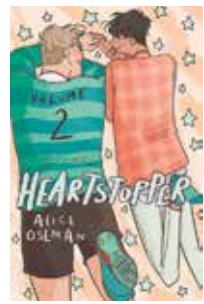
Two weeks after the deaths of her mother; older brother, Rowan; and

Incredibly lovable from start to finish.

HEARTSTOPPER

younger sister, Tansy, Laurel is found on a trail in the mountains east of Seattle by her best friend, Hanna. All Laurel recalls is her father's continuing to hike while she stopped to rest. Now he is nowhere to be found, leaving her in anguish. Fortunately, she has Hanna and Lyssa, their mutual friend, to support her, first as she waits for him to be found and then as he seeks inpatient treatment for his depression. Laurel's grief journey is presented in an insightful manner, detailing impulsive moves (like an illegal stick-and-poke tattoo), imagined visits from ghosts of her dead family, and hatred for the driver who caused the accident. Laurel is a strong first-person narrator, with a wry, believable voice that never seems pretentious or precious. Two well-handled subplots are Laurel and Hanna's slowly growing romantic attraction and Lyssa's positive experience with her foster family. Laurel and her siblings were each named for plants; the symbolism of laurel bushes, tansy flowers, and rowan trees is cleverly woven through the narrative. Most characters are White; Hanna is cued as biracial, with a White mother and dark-skinned father.

A gem. (resources, discussion guide) (Fiction. 13-18)

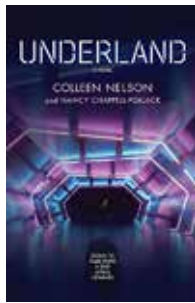


**HEARTSTOPPER
Volume 2**
Oseman, Alice
Illus. by the author
Graphix/Scholastic (320 pp.)
\$14.99 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-338-61747-4



The sequel to *Heartstopper: Volume 1* (2020) continues Nick and Charlie's story as they discover new joys and hardships in their budding romance.

Panels framed in diary pages at the beginning quickly recap the previous entry in which the British boys' relationship blossomed from a platonic friendship to something more, culminating in a kiss. But their relationship status—and how Nick, who previously identified as straight, feels about it—remained up in the air until now. This title documents how their relationship morphs into something more tangible and the issues that come along with that evolution. Nick must confront personal



UNDERLAND
Nelson, Colleen & Chappell-Pollack, Nancy
Yellow Dog (208 pp.)
\$11.95 paper | Oct. 23, 2020
978-1-77337-052-1

The fates of a community of people forced to labor underground and of the city that enslaved them are inexorably intertwined in this sequel to *Pulse Point* (2018).

Alternating narration from Sari, a City dweller introduced in the first installment who becomes suspicious of her corrupt leaders, and Ama, a 12-year-old who toils alongside a group of other Unders, reveals horrifying secrets. The Unders mine for salt brine used to produce energy for the City, and the tunnels they dig have at long last destabilized the domed City's infrastructure, imperiling all. This rapidly paced story focuses on building the atmospherically bleak, ritualistic world of the Unders, where children are brought to work at young ages by Krux, a cruel overseer, and girls disappear to become mothers as soon they start menstruating. Building directly on the events of *Pulse Point*, this sequel often feels rushed and its conclusion perfunctory, with writing that veers toward platitudes rather than allowing for its characters' stories to unfold naturally. While many of the ideas presented are worthwhile, especially the ways in which good leaders are not born but self-made, finding their ways through self-doubt and struggle, this tale doesn't explore them fully. All of the characters assume a White default; Ama is in love with her friend Romi, who is also female.

Ties up a dystopian adventure but disappointingly lacks depth. (Science fiction. 12-18)

A great teaching tool for history class!

THE SEA LOST SONS
G.A. GULICK

A debut YA historical novel spins a tale out of *Treasure Island* and reveals the horrors of the North Atlantic slave trade.

"The author works in the best tradition of parallel novels, exploring those areas of society that the original work skirted but that are of great interest to a modern readership."

"An immersive and technically stunning companion to a Robert Louis Stevenson classic."
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN # 978-1-68433-394-3

For information on publishing and film rights, email gagulick.author@gmail.com • www.newseastory.com

A fast and ferocious finale.

STORMBREAK

confusion and fear surrounding his sexuality while Charlie navigates being in a somewhat secret relationship with someone who isn't yet out of the closet. Illustrated in the same distinctive style as the first volume, the gentle blue shading and the dialogue's handwritten lettering lend a casual, human atmosphere to the story and its characters. Creative transitions from panel to panel and in the gutters of the pages shake up the layout and add artistic flair. Nick and Charlie's lighthearted and tender romance is delightful, and the genuine heart present in the characters makes for a wholesome and uplifting ride. Nick and Charlie appear White; there is some racial diversity among side characters along with positive representation of a trans character.

Incredibly lovable from start to finish. (*Graphic romance.* 12-18)



STORMBREAK

Parker, Natalie C.
Razorbill/Penguin (432 pp.)
\$18.99 | Nov. 10, 2020
978-0-451-47886-3
Series: Seafire, 3

Following *Steel Tide* (2019), a high-stakes trilogy conclusion on the high seas.

No longer after simple revenge against Lir or even the rescue of her brother, Donnally, Caledonia's goal is

huge: to completely change the world, liberating everyone from the Bullets (and the Bullets from Silt, the drug used to control them). She's still outnumbered, though, and so must add to her unlikely coalition of allies as well as take advantage of shake-ups in the ranks of the Bullets while Lir consolidates his power. Caledonia struggles under the mantle of leadership, especially when plans go awry and when she's forced to make brutal choices that have her fearing that to beat Lir, she must become too much like him. The conflict plays out in sabotage, espionage, naval battles large and small, and close-combat with fists and knives; action sequences are obstacle-packed and skillfully drawn. What makes the action land, though, is that the stakes stay real: Characters can (and do) die, and those that do (including those who died in earlier books) are missed and mourned. Romantic storylines of many different gender constellations anchor personal stakes for the characters while not slowing down the action. Refreshingly, female friendships are given equal weight to romance. Though Caledonia, Donnally, and Lir are White, the world is racially diverse (and Caledonia's love interest and best friend both have brown skin).

A fast and ferocious finale sure to please fans. (*Science fiction.* 12-adult)



THIS IS NOT A GHOST STORY

Portes, Andrea
HarperTeen (288 pp.)
\$17.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
978-0-06-242244-6

Despite growing signs of paranormal activity, Daffodil Turner refuses to abandon her housesitting job.

It's the summer before college, and Daffodil needs money to fund her new life—the one she's hoping will be better than her old one. Feeling strangely compelled by the sight of clusters of daffodils, she jumps off the train on her way to the Main Line, Philadelphia, campus and finds herself at the door of a slightly intimidating old house. Luckily, the owner has a job for her: overseeing a renovation project while he's gone. This suits Daffodil perfectly; she can hide in her attic bedroom and not feel pressured to pretend to be happy. But soon Daffodil's nights spent binge-watching *Ancient Aliens* are interrupted; she feels a dark force watching her. Another night, a scratching noise grows louder, seemingly aware of her presence—and that's just the beginning. As eerie occurrences veer into violence, Daffodil rationalizes away the idea that anything's wrong. She needs this job; if she doesn't get paid, she has to go home to Nebraska. She'd rather face all the horrors the house can muster, as well as painful memories from her past, than surrender. Daffodil's first-person narration works against the story; the horrors read as told, not shown, and her extreme denial grows tiresome. The final twist reads as both obvious and in conflict with Daffodil's fiercely independent character. All characters are White.

Another clichéd haunted house story. (*Paranormal thriller.* 14-18)



LYRICS & CURSES

Robinson, Candace
Filles Vertes Publishing (350 pp.)
\$14.00 paper | Nov. 10, 2020
978-1-946802-64-4
Series: Cursed Hearts, 1

Dust off your LPs and cassette tapes for a deep dive into parallel universes and '80s nostalgia.

Lark is a loner with a love of post-punk and new wave rock and the careless style of Ally Sheedy in *The Breakfast Club*. She lives in a trailer park with her sister and neglectful mother. Amid the Texas heat, Lark stokes a flame for Auden, the boy with whom she has been trading song lyrics for months. The teens are conflicted when it comes to hidden truths about their home lives; music becomes their primary means of escape and connection. When they both begin to see strangers dressed in black and hear a haunting refrain that no one else experiences, they are unwittingly thrown into a fight for their lives against mysterious forces from other dimensions. Despite the growth in '80s nostalgia in the media

in recent years, most teen readers lack the firsthand knowledge of the referenced music and popular culture required to grasp Lark's and Auden's lyrical dialogues. Compounding the confusion is a plot that relies heavily on suspense until a big reveal that is more confounding than compelling. Auden and Lark are both White (Lark's father emigrated from Spain); Lark's best friend, Imani, is a lesbian who is coded as Black.

Probably better as a playlist than a novel. (*Paranormal*. 14-18)



THE SHADOW MISSION

Sarif, Shamim

HarperTeen (288 pp.)

\$17.99 | Oct. 6, 2020

978-0-06-284963-2

Series: The Athena Protocol, 2

Athena agents discover that the terrorists who attacked a girls school in India are far from fringe—and they have a personal vendetta against one of the agency's founders.

While in pursuit of the terrorist who burned down a girls school in Pakistan—the catalyst for the founding of the clandestine Athena agency—Jessie, Caitlin, and Hala find that they are too late to stop an attack by extremist organization Family First in Mumbai. Resenting Western cultural influences and what they perceive as the erosion of family values through female education, Family First's target is personal: a girls school established by Jessie's mother, Athena co-founder Kit Love. In Mumbai the agents investigate the attackers and Jessie butts heads with (and fights her attraction to) local female detective Riya Kapoor, who is also lesbian. Together they find that Family First's reach is substantial, involving a prominent politician as well as the military and police in both India and Pakistan. They face great dangers, as their enemies are unafraid to make examples of them. Sarif's second volume in this woman-centered spy series is as fast-paced and engaging as the first. The ethnically and globally diverse cast of Athena women make prominent appearances, but this volume is much more plot focused than revelatory of individual backstory. White British Jessie continues to confront the universality of patriarchal norms, misogyny, and oppressive treatment of women worldwide.

A badass, action-packed, feminist page-turner. (*Thriller*. 14-18)



CAST IN FIRELIGHT

Swift, Dana

Delacorte (448 pp.)

\$18.99 | Nov. 17, 2020

978-0-593-12421-5

Series: Wickery, 1

Pledged to each other since childhood, Adraa and Jatin navigate the complex politics of their respective kingdoms.

Adraa is the heir to Belwar, and while powerful in most types of magic, she has yet to take the royal ceremony to prove her competency in all nine forms and, with it, her right to someday rule. With half its population Untouched by the Gods—unable to use magic—Belwar struggles with inequities between the Touched and Untouched, reminiscent of societal class divisions. Adraa's strong sense of duty to her people leads her to fight against the corruption within her kingdom. Jatin, heir to their more magical neighbor Naupure, has spent years polishing his nine colors of magic at the academy, away from the realities of ruling. He and Adraa compare their magical prowess and progress through letters. When Jatin finally leaves the academy, a series of mishaps results in both of them hiding their true identities even as they grow closer in their fight against a ruthless gang. This intricate world with magic-fueled, action-packed fight scenes and snarky, colloquial banter is loosely infused with Asian Indian cultural references. The story also discusses questions of gender inequality, freedom, self-worth, and identity. Adraa and Jatin both have black hair; in contrast to the cover image, the text makes clear that Adraa is very dark-skinned while Jatin has lighter brown skin.

Will appeal to fans of fast-moving fantasy adventures. (deities and their powers, author's note) (*Fantasy*. 14-18)



REBEL ROSE

Theriault, Emma

Disney-Hyperion (352 pp.)

\$17.99 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-368-04820-0

Series: Queen's Council, 1

Ever wonder what happened to Beauty and the Beast after happily-ever-after?

The curse is broken and Belle and the Beast, better known as Prince Lio, are happily married. With a 10-year-long absence to explain, Belle and Lio travel to Paris to pay their respects to the king, but during their trip Belle stumbles upon an uprising. Revolution is brewing in the streets of late-18th-century France, and despite refusing to assume the title of princess, Belle is deeply conflicted. Meanwhile a magical force tries to warn her of what is coming to Aveyon if she and Lio are not careful. What ensues are pages of long-winded accounts of Lio's trying to placate nobles and Belle's ideas being disregarded. Though Belle knows she has work to do, she makes little

progress, and the story's pacing does not pick up until the very end. Intricate characterization and historical details and a satisfying ending help counterbalance the slow-moving plot, and patient readers will be rewarded for their persistence. Fairy-tale fans will enjoy the care and depth given to Belle's character and the touches of magic. With one exception, characters are cued as White.

A promising start to a new series of fairy-tale continuations grounded in historical events. (*Fantasy. 12-18*)



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA *The Graphic Novel*

Tomi, Varga

Illus. by the author

A Wave Blue World (128 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Oct. 20, 2020

978-1-949518-09-2

The classic gothic romance gets its latest graphic novel treatment.

This faithful adaption begins as Gaston Leroux's novel does. Young ballet dancers fret and gossip about seeing the fabled Opera Ghost. A stagehand is subsequently found hanging dead in the third-floor cellar. Above the tragedy, prima donna Christine Daaé brings the opera hall to a standing ovation as she debuts in the role of Margarita. Later, the Ghost appears in the flesh to threaten the opera's new management if they don't keep his box seat open and let Christine sing again. The managers ignore him. The Ghost's obsession with Christine only grows, and he seeks to possess her as his bride. Her childhood friend and love interest, Raoul, tries to intervene. More Stephen Gammell than Andrew Lloyd Webber, Hungarian artist Tomi casts an eerie light on the horror in this ghostly romance. The Ghost's glowing red eyes, a few times hidden in small background details, pierce through the fourth wall to gaze at the reader. The panels switch from rectangular to jagged and jarring, incorporating different color schemes and styles to distinguish memories (rendered in a bright, soft glow) from horrific sequences (rendered in chilling sepia tones). The cast, with the exception of "the Persian," presents White. The "Backstage Access" section shows original sketches and gallery art.

A well-designed and engaging adaptation. (*Graphic adaptation. 13-adult*)



LOVE & OLIVES

Welch, Jemma Evans

Simon & Schuster (352 pp.)

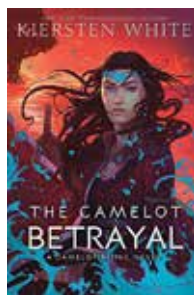
\$18.99 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-1-5344-4883-4

Recurring nightmares remind Olive—who has carved out a new, post-dad identity as Liv—about why she doesn't talk about her father anymore.

The symbolism of dreaming about drowning while searching for the lost city of Atlantis, a mission her father, Nico Varanakis, has dedicated his life to, is impossible to ignore. His kitschy postcards, which suddenly started arriving two years ago, only make her feel worse. His latest is an invitation to visit him in Greece, and she is quick to decline. But at her mother's insistence that she try to reconnect with him, Liv finds herself in beautiful Santorini, joining her father's filmmaking crew and sharing a bunk in a bookstore with his assistant, Theo—a Greek teenager who charms her instantly. They are working on a documentary detailing Nico's Atlantean theories for *National Geographic*, an endeavor Liv finds both exciting and panic-inducing. Her recounting throughout of the 26 items her father left behind when he walked away from their family, and which Liv secreted in a shoebox under her bed, provides insight into his imprint on her memory, but their impending reconciliation requires a deeper dive and Liv has always stayed at the surface when it comes to Nico. The search for Atlantis and information about Greek philosophers add interest to the sweet, if at times predictable, story. There is a little diversity among the non-Greek supporting cast.

A summery, romantic getaway. (*Fiction. 12-16*)



THE CAMELOT BETRAYAL

White, Kiersten

Delacorte (384 pp.)

\$18.99 | Nov. 10, 2020

978-0-525-58171-0

Series: Camelot Rising, 2

More female-centric meandering through Arthuriana.

The sequel to 2019's *The Guinevere Deception* continues to retell in close third-person the story of Guinevere, a magical blank slate with almost no memories of her past and little understanding of herself other than an unshakeable conviction in Arthur, as she tries to "fight like a queen" rather than a witch. The plot holds few surprises, being more a study of Guinevere's internal landscape peppered with bursts of action slowed by Guinevere's constant self-doubt. CIPHER Guinevere wants to understand herself, but her lack of memory means she has little depth to draw from; she has limited identity beyond the questions she ponders and asks of her world. Happily, those questions revolve around power and nature as well as recurring

Clever, hilarious, and empathetic.

SUPER FAKE LOVE SONG

themes of who and how to be, providing rich intellectual fodder for readers who want a think-y book with few conclusions (although the ending implies they are coming in Volume 3). In this version of Arthur's legend, magic is chaos and female while Camelot is order and male; the exception to this dichotomy is Merlin, who is never seen directly but whose hand and lack of care drive Arthur's story and give Guinevere a model of power against which to fight. Guinevere is White; secondary characters are diverse, from those with implied Asian and African parentage to a female Lancelot and a lesbian Isolde, although only Lancelot's identity is interrogated within the context of Guinevere's questions.

Thoughtful and introspective. (*Fantasy, 12-18*)



SUPER FAKE LOVE SONG

Yoon, David
 Penguin Young Readers (308 pp.)
 \$18.99 | Nov. 17, 2020
 978-1-984812-23-0



Fake it till you make it?

Unlike Gray, his aspiring rock star older brother, camera-shy Korean American teen Sunny Dae loves sharing his nerdy hobbies of live-action role-playing Dungeons & Dragons and designing cosplay props with his best friends, Milo and Jamal, despite the bullying he receives from a school jock. Milo is Guatemalan American and Jamal is Jamaican American, and the trio have bonded in their Southern California town that is over 99% White. Then Sunny meets Rancho Ruby High School's newest student, the beautiful, worldly, music-loving, Korean American Cirrus Soh. Soon, he finds himself doing things he's never done before, like pretending his brother's band is actually his. Yoon captures the humor, the heart, and the universal anxieties—and possibilities—of trying on new identities in high school while also exploring microaggressions, toxic masculinity, bullying, parachute parenting, and classism. The book cautions readers against judging character based solely on outward appearances. Part of its brilliance lies in how it shows the ways Sunny's and Gray's desires for acceptance and popularity reflect what they see as their parents' own efforts to keep up with the Joneses. Dungeons & Dragons fans will appreciate the symbolic parallels between Sunny's story arc and the fate of the paladin figurine he made in middle school.

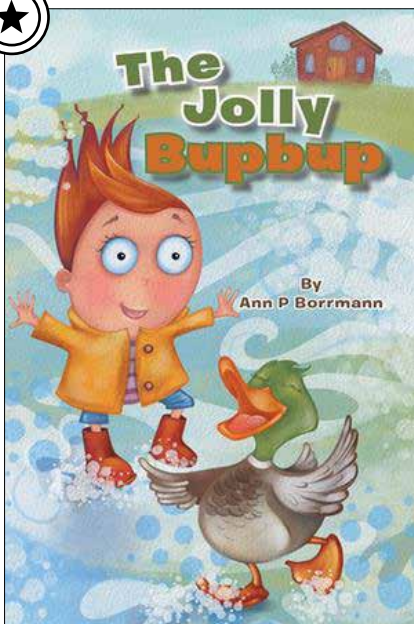
A clever, hilarious, and empathetic look at diverse teens exploring authenticity, identities, and code-switching. (*Fiction, 14-18*)

INDIE



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- THE JOLLY BUPBUP** by *Ann P. Borrmann* 149
- DATING MAKES PERFECT** by *Pintip Dunn* 151
- TO DREAM OF WHITE & GOLD** by *R.K. Hart* 153
- FOREIGN AFFAIRS** by *Daniel M. Jaffe* 154
- RIVER TOWN GIRL** by *Lynn Litterine* 157
- HANDSOME** by *Holly Lorka* 157



THE JOLLY BUPBUP
Boormann, Ann P.
 Tellwell Talent (26 pp.)
 \$5.59 paper | \$2.99 e-book
 May 27, 2020
 978-0-228-8230-3



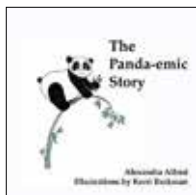
YOUR CAREER MARKETING PLAN

Alharbi, AbdulRazzag
 Self (255 pp.)
 \$9.99 e-book | Aug. 27, 2020

This debut guide suggests applying a marketing plan model to career development.

Alharbi, a former manager at Saudi Aramco and co-founder of two paper industry companies, believes a corporate marketing plan can also be important for a person seeking a career. If an individual does not follow the same strategy, writes the author, “you will end up in a recurring cycle of trying to find a job, then finding a job in which you try your best to align with the employer’s plans, then leaving the job or staying without achieving the growth you desire.” The idea has merit; Alharbi follows through by first using an example of a company owner who wants to market a product, showing how a business plan should be devised. The plan covers situation analysis, marketing goals and strategies, tactics, implementation, and control/feedback. For those unfamiliar with developing a marketing-focused plan, this is a brief but solid primer. The author then proposes a “Career Marketing Plan Template” that essentially adapts the strategy for personal use. The remainder of the book cleverly illustrates how that plan can be developed and implemented. For some, making the leap from promoting a product to packaging themselves as a marketable commodity may be challenging, but Alharbi guides readers through a carefully structured process. Using a real example of a young man who set a goal of becoming the president of a company, the author shows how one can develop a vision at a very early age by using “strategic thrusts” to support that idea, leading to concrete goals and tactical objectives. Next, the author moves on to analyzing the employment pool, assessing the “competition” (other candidates for a position), creating a personal value proposition, and marketing one’s skills and experience. Alharbi spends considerable time discussing the implementation of a career marketing plan and offers helpful suggestions, including how to assess feedback from others. Most chapters include questions to answer and exercises. The result is a clearly written, intelligently packaged, systematic approach to career development.

Smart and methodical advice; especially applicable to those just starting their careers.



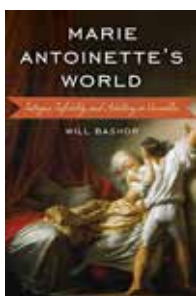
THE PANDA-EMIC STORY

Allred, Alexandra
 Illus. by Beckman, Kerri
 APA Books (28 pp.)
 \$6.00 paper | \$2.99 e-book
 May 15, 2020
 978-1930546301

When a new panda's illness spreads, some zoo animals are selfish and others are helpful in this debut picture book.

The Beijing Zoo's new panda isn't playful because he doesn't feel well. Soon, other animals also fall sick, worrying everyone. One, a giraffe, blames the panda for spreading the illness. Some birds who have been unaffected deliver food to the sick while others deny the problem since they can fly above the epidemic. A wise old rhinoceros says that everyone needs to maintain social distancing for the good of all, but some just laugh, like the vultures. Eventually, most animals—but not the one who listened to the vultures—start to recover. In the end, the illness's origin isn't important because the animals “all came together to help one another.” In her book, Allred provides a beautifully realized Covid-19 fable, with perfectly appropriate correspondences from the animal to the human world. The story underlines that getting through the illness requires kindness, sharing, “and maybe some social distancing.” Debut illustrator Beckman provides lively images in black and white with touches of color that nicely depict the animals' personalities.

A useful, compassionate tale about Covid-19 that makes the issues immediately understandable for children.



**MARIE ANTOINETTE'S WORLD
 Intrigue, Infidelity, and
 Adultery in Versailles**

Bashor, Will
 Rowman & Littlefield Publishers
 (320 pp.)
 \$24.95 | \$14.10 e-book | Jul. 30, 2020
 978-1-5381-3824-3

A scholar on Marie Antoinette delivers his most detailed vision of the doomed queen yet.

In previous works, such as *Marie Antoinette's Darkest Days* (2016), historian Bashor examined how others viewed Marie Antoinette, the queen of France who was executed in 1793, during the French Revolution. Here, he turns his attention to the tragic figure herself. To set the scene, he delves into the history of Versailles between the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XVI. Bashor immerses readers in a contradictory world of rigid social norms, vicious politics, and opulent debauchery. By the time the naïve and sarcastic Marie Antoinette arrives on the scene, many readers won't be able to help but feel sorry for what awaits her. Bashor recounts the different stages of Marie Antoinette's life with great detail, painting her as a privileged teenager who was deeply unprepared for her role. Through stories of her supposed lovers

and unhappy marriage, Bashor makes her sympathetic, although tales of excessive gambling and her preference for the very young and beautiful confirm well-known stereotypes. Fleshing out this well-rounded portrait are some unexpected features: the texts of pamphlets bashing the monarchy, short chapters that evaluate Marie Antoinette's handwriting for insight into her state of mind, and a lengthy exploration of her astrological chart. It's debatable how much insight these latter elements add, although they are entertaining. However, Bashor is reluctant to take a stance on his subject's infidelities despite the ample evidence he provides. But even if mysteries about Marie Antoinette remain, the author's lush details make it easy to imagine nearly every bit of her daily life. He turns on a dime from elegant, haughty court behaviors to the era's ugly realities; when discussing subtler points of fan waving, for instance, he reveals: “They often used the fan to hide their rotting teeth or divert bad breath.” Overall, it's a glorious and realistic representation of Versailles that history buffs will enjoy.

A full, realistic, and completely engrossing view of Marie Antoinette's life and times.



**THE ABCS OF PLUM ISLAND, MASSACHUSETTS
 A Sampling of the Past
 and Present**

Bogard, Jem
 Piscataqua Press (50 pp.)
 \$19.95 | Apr. 17, 2020
 978-1-944393-81-6

History and nature are inspirations for this debut alphabet book about Plum Island.

A descendant of a lighthouse keeper on Plum Island, off the coast of Massachusetts, the author of this picture book for all ages shaped short poems around each letter of the alphabet, inspired by the place's history, industry, and rich wildlife. Some pieces are described in the introduction as “found poems,” including words taken from “signs, blogs, books, maps, and videos.” The regional focus could limit the work's appeal, but there is much to delight American history buffs as well as readers unfamiliar with the island. The homemade scrapbook design encompasses captivating images of old newspaper articles, pages from a 1911 family diary, uncredited historical and contemporary photographs, and a remarkable document signed by President George Washington in 1790 appointing the island's first superintendent of lighthouses. This archival material illustrates each evocative prose poem by Bogard. An aerial photo introduces “Barrier Island” (“Barrier Island / Fragile and narrow / Protecting the mainland / Absorbing the force / Of the ocean and storms”). An old, sepia-toned photo of a young girl accompanies “Grace” (“Look into my eyes / I'm Grace / I took charge of / The Light / For my father / In times of need”). Among other intriguing subjects are “Clams” and “Old tales.” “Walking to school from Plum Island” features a 1910 newspaper clipping about the keeper's son, “a sturdy lad.”

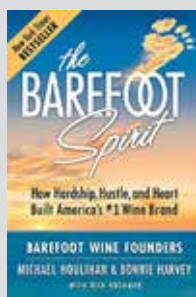
An unexpectedly soulful and absorbing chronicle of regional history in a scrapbook-style work.

INTOXICATING STORIES

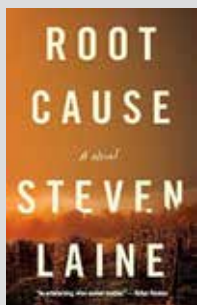


MANY LUMINARIES have rhapsodized about the infinite pleasures of wine, with Galileo proclaiming the drink “sunlight, held together by water” and Hemingway calling the libation “one of the most civilized things in the world.” Kirkus Indie recently reviewed a memoir and two novels focusing on wine that readers should enjoy while savoring a glass of perfectly chilled rosé.

In *The Barefoot Spirit*, Michael Houlihan and Bonnie Harvey, the founders of Barefoot Wine, chronicle their inventive and successful efforts promoting their product—“California in a bottle.” They eventually sold their bustling venture to E. & J. Gallo Winery. Their book, written with Rick Kushman, relates the two entrepreneurs’ effective marketing strategies, which included contributing wine to charity events and regularly contacting mom and pop stores. “An irreverent, eye-opening business memoir,” our reviewer writes.



A destructive pest threatens the globe’s grapevines in Steven Laine’s novel *Root Cause*. Winemaker Corvina Guerra discovers a horde of tiny bugs attacking a vineyard in Italy. She teams up with an attractive master of wine and an intrepid San Francisco reporter to investigate the disastrous reappearance of the insects and find a neurotoxin that could kill them. According to our critic, the book delivers “an entertaining, wine-soaked mystery.”



Vahan Zanoian’s *Waking Noah’s Vines* offers a crime story set in Armenia. Celebrating the end of Soviet rule in the country, two friends wish to revive the moribund wine industry there. Haig Koleyian becomes a noted wine producer in Yerevan. Van Dorian opens the “most popular wine bar in the city.” But after a “nasty character” visits Haig, he suspects a sinister plot by the Russian mob to dilute and then resell his distinctive wine. Our reviewer calls the novel “a delightful fictional blend of history, suspense, and a love of wine.”



Myra Forsberg is an Indie editor.



I HATE MY BROTHER

Bojčić, Branislav
Self (146 pp.)
\$4.99 paper | \$0.99 e-book
Feb. 19, 2020
979-8-6155-3946-6

A Yugoslavian farmer encounters a wave of ethnic hatred unleashed by civil war in this historical novel.

Gvozden Mishic lives a quiet life as a farmer in Yugoslavia with his wife, Yadranka, and young daughter, Anna, willfully indifferent to the political tumult that gradually engulfs his country. He clings to a “black-and-white” worldview, quixotically attached to the dream of Yugoslavian unity that history has repeatedly refuted. Yet the signs of the country’s devolution into chaos following the death of its autocrat president, Josip Broz Tito, in 1980 are unmistakable, however reluctant he is to acknowledge them. But he has no choice when the military demands his presence and he is enlisted into a unit searching for Muslim insurrectionists. He finally realizes that “war would start, the war that will horrify the whole world, that hatred overwhelmed the hearts of all Yugoslav nations, and when this blood of the Balkans starts boiling, reason ceases to exist, not as a mere word, and even less as a state of human mind.” The violent assignment forces him to witness unspeakable atrocities committed by his own fellow soldiers. He desperately wants to return home to defend his family from roaming Muslim paramilitary groups. When he finally makes the trip, he finds both his wife and daughter dead, brutally raped and murdered. He had entrusted their safety to Senad Hojic, a close friend and Muslim he considered a brother. Gvozden is given information that Senad is responsible for the slaughter of his family. Bojčić poignantly chronicles Gvozden’s grim personal trajectory from an apolitical idealist to an angry partisan hungry for revenge, a metamorphosis so complete he finally becomes a “wanted war criminal,” precisely the kind of man he once detested.

The author unflinchingly captures the inexorable ugliness of this “fratricidal war” and a world in which “lives are cheap, and people are killed everywhere.” Gvozden begins the novel disfigured by rage at the inhuman crimes his comrades commit and then ultimately participates in the very same horrors, inspired by an implacable hatred that relieves him of any moral scruples. Bojčić’s prose can be a touch heavy-handed, and his inclination to melodrama can come across as didactic: “Who would be able to destroy the mighty and harmonious Yugoslavia, united by the blood of partisans, into whose foundation millions of people laid their lives? Nobody could do it, but ourselves....” The first half of the novel especially has the feel of a parable meant to impart a moralistic lesson and, like all proselytizing, has a mark of condescension. The book is prefaced with an unnecessary history lesson that only reinforces this impression; the tale would have been all the more moving if left to stand on its own. But the story’s second half is undeniably powerful, artfully charting the ways in which the traumas of war can irreparably destroy a soldier’s soul.

An affecting dramatization of the torment caused by violent national conflict.



THE JOLLY BUPBUP

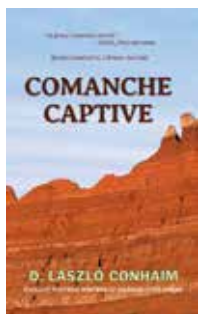
Borrmann, Ann P.
 Tellwell Talent (26 pp.)
 \$5.59 paper | \$2.99 e-book
 May 27, 2020
 978-0-228-82830-3



A girl does her best to cheer up when her beloved sailboat is washed away in the rain in this delightful children's book.

Somewhere in the cold north "not very long ago," a little girl—the jolly Bupbup—lives with her two cats, black and yellow, in her brick house next to the woods. Bupbup looks as jolly as her nature, with rosy fair skin, a round body and big round eyes, and red-orange hair that sticks straight up. But one day, "a very *dreadful* thing" happens. Heavy rains make the river rise so much that Bupbup's sailboat floats away. Having no umbrella, she can't retrieve it, and the cats are no help since they hate getting their feet wet. Afterward, Bupbup heads outdoors to splash around the river in her puddle boots, taking care not to step on any fish: "That would not be kind." She discovers something hiding under a big tree and wonders if it's a Twinkle—elusive but good-natured creatures. But instead, it's her boat, which a thoughtful duck helps her disentangle from the branches. Bupbup, her cats, and the duck go for a nice sail, hoping to partake in a Twinkle tea party. In her debut book, Borrmann shows a light, deft hand and an agreeably old-fashioned tone, cozy but not sentimental. Bupbup's cheerfulness and compassion together with the story's humor are greatly appealing. Borrmann uses repetition well, such as the phrase "*dreadful* thing," to build anticipation and create rhythm. The opening page shows Borrmann's facility with verse as well as prose: "Twinkles are glee-hearted, / Just as pleasant as can be, / And you cannot fail to notice that / On Thursdays they take tea." The kinetic, stylized illustrations (uncredited) are beguiling, composed with skewed proportions that nicely echo the text.

Combines masterful storytelling with fun and affection; deserves to be a children's classic.



COMANCHE CAPTIVE

Conhaim, D. László
 Broken Arrow Press (224 pp.)
 \$13.90 paper | \$6.90 e-book
 Jun. 1, 2020
 978-0-9843175-2-3

A resolute woman teams up with a retired soldier in this Western set in post-Civil War Texas.

In this first volume of a historical fiction trilogy, Conhaim tells the stories of Laura Little, a White woman determined to return to the Comanche family she lived with for years, and Scott Renald, the retired soldier intent on bringing her back to her White relatives. In the book's opening pages,

Laura escapes from the mental institution where her prominent White family confined her after bringing her back to Fort Worth. Scott, in the course of pursuing the survivors of a stagecoach attack, meets Laura while she is being held by the Tonkawa. Although she is not the captive he was commissioned to find, Laura decides he is her best chance for returning to her own tribe and joins him. They make their way through the Texas desert, and when Scott learns that Laura has ties to the wife and sister he lost many years earlier, he agrees to return to the Comanche settlement with her to pursue his own goals. Factions of soldiers, Comanche, Tonkawa, and White civilians deal with one another as players in the United States' efforts to establish its control over the West. The author is a cinematic writer, and his descriptions of shootouts (Laura "inched the rifle barrel into daylight, a movement detectable to anybody on the lookout") and settings ("Peering eastward across the divide to where the stream jackknifed, [Scott] caught sight of its tell-tale marker—a two-pronged natural rock formation, eighty feet high, that to thirsty conquistadors had once resembled a pair of sherry casks") are captivating. The novel's major limitation is its adherence to stereotypical language: Although Conhaim displays substantial knowledge of the tribes he writes about and creates Native American characters who are as fully developed as his White players, the book's narration, which is largely from the point of view of Scott and other White men, is full of references to "braves" and "squaws." Many readers may find these descriptions off-putting.

An engrossing and well-written tale of the Old West.



THE CURSED COIN

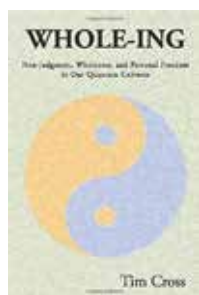
Crantz, Culliver
 Self (164 pp.)
 \$8.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book
 Apr. 11, 2019
 978-1-09-253849-7

This middle-grade thriller finds a brother and sister tangling with an impossibly powerful coin and a gruesome stalker.

Twelve-year-old RJ walks with his younger sister one summer evening. Shelly, who's 10, is much braver than her brother. She stops to examine something in front of a decrepit, "castle-like house" at the end of their cul-de-sac. Behind the house is a wooded cliff and a lake, in which their father, a fisherman, recently disappeared. Shelly, a collector of weird things, picks up a coin and pockets it. As they walk, she suddenly screams in pain: "The coin—my leg!" RJ then hears a strange voice whisper, "*Throw it in the lake.*" After he throws the coin as far onto the property as possible, Shelly reveals she was kidding. They walk home, and RJ sees what look like red eyes near the castle. Later, RJ notices a scraggly man with a sharp cane, first at the grocery store, then at his and Shelly's lemonade stand. This is the Impaler, whose presence terrifies RJ while Mom attends an award ceremony with Ed, her scientist boyfriend. Worse, the coin reappears, this time causing bizarre

sores and strange evil urges in the normally timid RJ. Now he's determined to banish the coin to the lake. Crantz begins a series, in the vein of R.L. Stine's Goosebumps books, with this chilling blend of mystery and SF. Readers have plenty to juggle early on, primarily the true fate of the siblings' father. The kids' exploration of the horrid house kicks off the narrative's second half. A few characters aren't who they seem to be, and younger audiences will learn not to judge people by their appearances. The author effectively offers indelible images, like the Impaler, who's "mangy and dirty like a coyote, but moved like a squid lost on land." While the danger of the coin is entertaining, Crantz lays impressive groundwork for the series by introducing "Project: FrightVision," which mentions other cursed objects and explains the whereabouts of Wally Swanson, a missing neighborhood child. Also noteworthy is RJ's love of video games, which he can't play while having his own adventures.

This gleefully macabre tale hints at a series with great potential.



WHOLE-ING
Non-Judgment, Wholeness, and Personal Freedom in Our Quantum Universe

Cross, Tim
One River Press (420 pp.)
\$19.95 paper | \$9.95 e-book
May 20, 2020
978-0-9888344-9-1

A comprehensive spiritual guidebook that offers a vision of tranquility and

fulfillment.

The title of Cross' new book will give readers the sense that he has some ambitious goals. There are no half-measures in this capacious volume, which aims to synthesize insights from psychology, medicine, cartography, religion, philosophy, and science. It's a lot to unpack, but the throughline is freedom, which Cross, the author of *The Architecture of Freedom* (2014) and *The Path to Personal Freedom* (2016), describes as "letting go of those things in our lives that block us from experiencing our birthright, which is living fully within the flow of this infinite multiverse—a flow that is shaped and interconnected with a deeper type of Love." Of course, ideas like these aren't new; they have roots in time-tested Eastern religious practices that advocate detachment from the things of this world and a search for enlightenment and serenity. The strength of Cross' book, however, is his attempt to put ancient ideas into a contemporary idiom. He's able to do so because he's trained in a very different field—architecture—and the fact that he's a nonspecialist is not a weakness but a great strength. Like a traveler from another land who's able to see things that longtime residents miss, Cross brings an outsider's perspective to spiritual concerns and produces genuinely unique new insights. Among these is his central, titular concept, *whole-ing*, which is both a process and destination for the author; he defines the term as "the conscious illumination, acceptance, and integration of all that we are; all that we judge to be

'good' along with all of the 'bad,' so that we may become more of a 'whole' and complete being." This fuller and more profound experience of life has many aspects, and Cross imagines whole-ing as having spiritual, physical, and psychological benefits. That he's able to make these benefits seem so achievable is a testament to his powers as a writer and as a thinker.

An architect's convincing blueprint for inner peace.



THE QUEST TO UNITE US
Book 1 of the Marcus Santana Time Travel Chronicles

de Rham, William
Self (274 pp.)
\$12.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book
Jul. 11, 2020
978-1-73523-930-9

A modern American teen is pulled back in time to help out Benjamin Franklin in this debut YA novel.

Unlike the rest of his family—his father, his mother, and his brother, Gus, who was killed in the War in Afghanistan—Marcus Santana has no interest in history. He doesn't even care about Benjamin Franklin even though his family home in Philadelphia abuts Franklin Court, where the famous statesman and inventor used to live. All this changes on his 17th birthday, when the struggling high school student and aspiring actor is accidentally sucked into a strange blue light in his basement. When he's spat out on the other side, he's still in a basement, but a strange old man is staring down at him: "His high, pale forehead looms dome-like and alien...his yellow-ish, bloodshot eyes study me....I realize I'm looking at them through the man's glasses: round, thick lenses with horizontal lines through the middle, set in heavy, gray-metal frames." The man, of course, is Franklin, and the year is 1787. Not only that, Franklin tells Marcus that he's visited the statesman before. But those other visits, while in Franklin's past, appear to still be in Marcus' future. The portal closes behind him, leaving Marcus trapped in the past with no money, friends, or means of getting home. Franklin forces Marcus to work to earn his keep—a fact that the teen bristles at—but the boy's knowledge of shorthand makes him the perfect candidate to be the inventor's "amanuensis." The next four months are a period of tremendous importance to Franklin, as the most important men in the country have gathered to figure out a way in which the nation should be governed. Marcus will find himself right in the middle of it, and all he can do is hope he won't screw anything up that will change the face of American history.

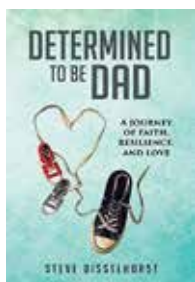
In this series opener, de Rham's prose is lively and humorous, making the most of Marcus' fish-out-of-water situation: "The mood in Franklin's garden is festive. The ale, wine, and rum flow. Elise passes amongst the committee members, offering oysters and clams, and drawing more than one appreciative look, which makes me jealous. Franklin has me bring down his glass armonica, the musical instrument he invented." The premise is admittedly a clichéd one, and all the expected beats

Dunn takes on the enemies-to-lovers romance trope with punchy dialogue and adorable twists.

DATING MAKES PERFECT

arrive on time. The requisite Founding Fathers turn up, and a good deal of the book is focused on the composition of the Constitution. For this reason, certain sections of the novel feel predictably didactic—more in the way of *1776* than *Hamilton*. Still, the author attempts to deal with the less romantic aspects of the time period as well, particularly slavery via the character of Franklin's Black servant, Elise. Marcus is an endearingly petulant protagonist, and the portrait of Franklin is a surprisingly complex one: He manages to come off as charming, boorish, altruistic, and hypocritical all at once. The volume feels a bit long, in part because there isn't much suspense regarding either the fate of the Congress or the destinies of the protagonists. That said, the work has more depth than readers will expect, and it will leave them curious as to what other important events Marcus will bear witness to.

A familiar but engaging and thoughtful time travel tale.



DETERMINED TO BE DAD

Disselhorst, Steve

Publish Your Purpose Press (236 pp.)

\$26.95 | \$19.95 paper | \$9.95 e-book

Mar. 19, 2020

978-1-951591-11-3

978-1-951591-10-6 paper

In this debut memoir, a writer recounts his journey to parenthood despite his initial fears that gay men could not have children.

As a child, Disselhorst thought his life would follow the traditional arc of a Roman Catholic boy from the Midwest: grow up, fall in love with a woman, get married, raise a family. "It was part of the fabric of my being from the beginning of my life," he remembers early in the book. "This desire to be a parent felt predetermined, like the color of my eyes and the way I walked." But as he came to terms with his budding gay sexuality, he assumed that the life of a family man was simply not in the cards for him. Beginning with his first relationships with men in college, he began to come to terms with his life as a single gay man: one of money, travel, and new experiences. Even so, that drive to be a father never went away, and as the times changed—and as Disselhorst matured—he began to envision the sort of family he always wanted. With this book, he recalls his odyssey through the process of self-discovery, monogamy, gay marriage, adoption, and, ultimately, much-coveted fatherhood with his husband, Lorevic, and their two children. Disselhorst's prose is simple and earnest as he describes his evolution from a curious, if timid, teen to a confident, empathetic man: "The experience of engaging with these heterosexual couples struggling with fertility reminded me of the normal bonds that bring humanity together. These couples were experiencing many of the same feelings that I had experienced as a gay man trying to figure out my identity. The shame and loss were universal." It's an oddly calming work despite the ups and downs of the author's life. He rarely expresses anger, and his commitment to family and personal growth are pleasantly altruistic. The memoir is perhaps

not a particularly literary one, but it contains a great deal of information on the adoption process—valuable for would-be parents of all stripes—as well as a chronicle of how the social position of gay men has changed so much since Disselhorst's generation came of age.

A bighearted account of identity and parenthood.



DATING MAKES PERFECT

Dunn, Pintip

Entangled: Teen (400 pp.)

\$9.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book

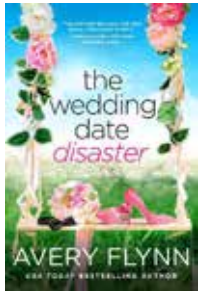
Aug. 18, 2020

978-1-68281-497-0

In this YA romantic comedy, a Thai American teen from a tightknit family starts dating—on her parents' terms.

Orrawin "Winnie" Techavachara is entering her final semester of high school in the Chicago suburbs without a boyfriend. Her parents don't allow her to date, a rule that started with her beloved older sisters, Ari and Bunny, now in college several hours away and happily independent with no thoughts of settling down, much to Mom's dismay. Fearing the same fate for their youngest daughter, Winnie's parents change the rules. Winnie is now allowed to date, but it's not quite that simple. First, Winnie's mom will dictate the dates' locations, each of which will pay tribute to beloved rom-coms, like *Always Be My Maybe* and *When Harry Met Sally*. Second, she'll also dictate the boy. And it won't be Winnie's crush Taran, the new guy in school who also happens to be Thai, but Winnie's former best friend, Mat Songsomboon, who's been Winnie's sworn enemy since an epic falling-out in junior high. Also, kissing is verboten. Mat's father ups the ante for his reluctant son: For every date Mat and Winnie complete, he'll add a day to Mat's post-graduation solo backpacking trip through Asia. What starts as an awkward car ride to school soon becomes much more as Winnie realizes her feelings for Mat are more complex than she once believed, and Mat makes a startling revelation about his feelings for Winnie. But what's a good Thai daughter to do when she's not actually supposed to fall in love? *New York Times*-bestselling author Dunn, a first-generation Thai American, takes on the enemies-to-lovers romance trope with punchy dialogue and adorable twists while paying tribute to the culture's prioritization of food and family: One of the novel's best scenes plays out at the Songkran festival, a celebration of the Thai New Year. Both Winnie and Mat are intelligent, sympathetic characters with genuine chemistry in the throes of mutual eye-rolling-turned-puppy love, and Winnie's family members are finely drawn and nuanced, with aspirations, conflicts, and dreams of their own.

A laugh-out-loud YA romance with a smart cast.



THE WEDDING DATE DISASTER

Flynn, Avery
Entangled: Amara (330 pp.)
\$7.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book
Aug. 25, 2020
978-1-64063-912-6

An ambitious country transplant gets saddled with an infuriating plus-one in this romance.

Hadley Donovan moved to Harbor City with big dreams—namely, taking nonprofit organizations to the next level as a charitable giving consultant. Sadly, things aren't going to plan. She's broke, shares a tiny apartment with a roommate, and is fired from her job thanks to an unexpected kiss at a work event with Will Holt, an old-money CEO and the "evil" twin brother of Hadley's best friend, Web. Now Hadley's heading home to Nebraska for her sister's wedding and a week of festivities with her tightknit, blended family, with Web as her platonic date. But thanks to a last-minute bout of food poisoning, it's Will—who's fighting his lust for Hadley while questioning her intentions with his open-hearted brother—who shows up at the airport to escort her to the wedding. As they fake a relationship for her relatives, the city boy's and country girl's clashing personalities soon result in an unforgettable sexual encounter. While Will wins over her protective but loving relatives through quirky game nights and a surprise dance at a retirement home, Hadley must reconcile her growing feelings for him with the secret she's keeping from her family: that her supposedly glamorous urban life is actually full of uncertainty. Though Will uses the term "gold digger" one too many times in describing Hadley's possible motivations, Flynn's writing is sharp and sweet, with two finely drawn main characters with relatable obstacles and hang-ups. Hadley wants to find success in Harbor City while making a difference, and Will—an orphan with a privileged but lonely upbringing—is fiercely protective of his twin brother. Hadley's extended family is a pure joy to read about, especially her nurturing rancher stepfather, Gabe Martinez, and PawPaw, her spunky grandfather who proudly juggles three girlfriends. PawPaw quickly figures out Hadley and Will's relationship lie and their growing affection for each other. Intimate scenes strike the perfect balance of sensual and emotional.

A quick, fun enemies-to-lovers tale that's equal parts hilarious and sexy.



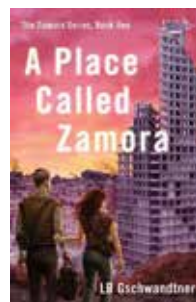
JAZZ FLY 3 The Caribbean Sea

Gollub, Matthew
Illus. by Hanke, Karen
Tortuga Press (40 pp.)
\$18.95 | Jan. 1, 2020
978-1-889910-54-3

A band of insects, speaking Spanish, French, and jazz scat, survives a shipwreck in this third installment of a picture-book series.

The Jazz Bugs—featuring Jazz Fly on drums, Nancy the Gnat on saxophone, Centipede Sam on piano, and Willie the Worm on bass—perform on the cruise ship *SS Le Magnifique*, with Capt. Cockroach at the helm. The group plays so well that no one notices the thunder in the distance or the rolling of the ship until a storm hits and the vessel crashes on the shoals. With the help of the band, Capt. Cockroach gets the passengers aboard lifeboats. Most of the musicians find safety in a glass bottle until the tempest passes. While much of the adventure involves the band's waiting for rescue, the story isn't the highlight here. Gollub's use of music, especially when the book is accompanied by the included CD or audio download, gives the tale its texture. The author's phrases don't always rhyme, which could baffle grown-ups trying to read this work aloud. But the audio enhances the experience, exposing kids to music in 5/4 or 7/8 time. The inclusion of Spanish and French is seamless, especially when pronounced by Gollub and the other performers. Hanke's bright, eye-catching illustrations are sure child pleasers, and, despite the dangerous storm, her depictions of peril are never too scary for young readers.

A sure hit for jazz fans who like to dance along with their read-alouds.



A PLACE CALLED ZAMORA

Gschwandtner, L.B.
SparkPress (264 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | \$9.95 e-book
Sep. 8, 2020
978-1-68463-051-6

In this post-apocalyptic series opener, two young people from the semi-anarchic streets find themselves at the center of unrest and a brewing revolution in a police state.

Gschwandtner's tale is part of the alarmingly fecund SF genre starring YA characters fomenting revolt in a future dystopia. The setting is an unspecified country sometime after the ecological and economic "Collapse" of civilization. Widespread communication has ceased, and a city called Infinitus is now a harsh, self-contained metropolis. Its dictator, Villinkash, uses a sort of sonic brainwashing to turn much of the populace into regimented proles, largely ignorant of the past and bombarded by Orwellian media propaganda. Meanwhile, children either run feral in the streets or suffer in Child Holding Centers.

Hart deftly weaves mythology and history into a rich tapestry of cultures.

TO DREAM OF WHITE & GOLD

Teenage Niko ran away at age 12 from such government control, persevering among outcasts, loners, and predator gangs. But he has a guardian/benefactor, a mystery man called Huston. Niko is also cautiously friendly with El, a beautiful girl raised—and protected from ever-present rape threats—amid an aging, nearly vanished order of nuns (and one holdover Roman Catholic priest) that the Regime tolerates. Niko enters The Race, a cruel but popular annual motorcycle spectacle designed to kill all but one of the 13 contestants. Huston ensures that Niko emerges triumphant from the barbaric Race, but when the teen shares his victory with El—instead of following the tradition of deflowering a state-offered virgin—the couple incur the wrath of Villinkash. While characterizations and psychological motivations are nicely detailed, readers may get a sense of a literary YA dystopia buffet cart stopping for extra-large helpings of Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games series. As Niko and El go rapidly from Infinius idols to enemies of the Regime (and of each other), readers will feel a little whiplash at the change of fortune even if it serves the genre's mechanics (Villinkash really isn't much more than a thuggish President Snow). Closing acts reveal that what seems to be a spontaneous rebellion in fact has deeper, more calculated intrigues behind it, though the volume ends with many narrative strands left dangling. Gschwandtner is bolder than most writers in this territory in deploying R-rated language and elements of violence and lust, though she never lapses into poor taste in the process.

Vivid urban jungle SF settings and vigorous storytelling—if readers can overlook Katniss Everdeen's shadow.



TO DREAM OF WHITE & GOLD

Hart, R.K.

Pindika Press (399 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Aug. 1, 2020

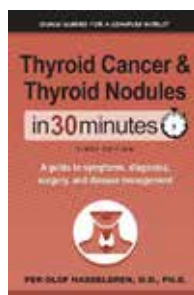
978-0-6488496-1-2

In Hart's debut fantasy novel and series opener, a young woman is thrust into a world of magic and intrigue as she tries to master strange powers that she inherited from her late mother.

As her 18th birthday approaches, Lida d'Cathan's biggest concern is whether she'll be able to apprentice with her healer father or be forced to study abroad. What Lida doesn't know is that she's inherited a secret ability from her deceased mom, Siva: She can enter other people's dreams. In Lida's world, people with superpowers are called "gifted"; some have the ability to heal wounds, create shields, read minds, and even control the weather. They also exist apart from society—ostracized, mistrusted, and even hunted—and it wasn't long ago that some gifts, such as Lida's, were entirely wiped out. Soon, Lida is whisked away by a man named Jakob Merchantto to the Illarum, a safe haven for the dwindling population of gifted, so that she can get the necessary training for her burgeoning powers; there, she'll also find clues about Siva's past. Before long, she's on a riveting journey to the far reaches

of the continent, confronting a harsh landscape, a foreign court, and the dreams and nightmares of the people around her. Hart's debut novel is immersive and artfully rendered with clever dialogue and masterful prose: "Trees and houses rushed past at an alarming speed, barely discernible; the road beneath them was nothing more than a pale smudge of sand catching the last of the day's light." She deftly weaves mythology and history into a rich tapestry of cultures, each with their own idiosyncrasies, customs, and beliefs; all the while, the story hints at a destiny that Lida has only just begun to piece together. Lida is a deeply relatable, strong-willed, but compassionate protagonist who's thrust into a world beyond her understanding. Her nuanced relationships with the various people she meets make up the heart of the novel, and they include romance; most compelling of all, however, is Lida's steadfast desire to understand the mother she never knew and, in doing so, find a connection to a hidden legacy.

A sparkling first novel of self-discovery by a skilled author.



THYROID CANCER & THYROID NODULES IN 30 MINUTES A Guide to Symptoms, Diagnosis, Surgery, and Disease Management

Hasselgren, Per-Olof

130 Media Corporation (106 pp.)

\$22.99 | \$14.99 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-64188-047-3

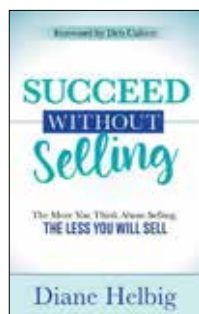
978-1-64188-046-6 paper

A succinct yet comprehensive guide to understanding and managing thyroid cancer and thyroid nodules.

Millions of individuals every year are found to have nodules or cancer in their thyroid glands. Nodules are often benign, and those that are cancerous are often easily treated. Thyroid cancer is frequently referred to as the "good cancer" by doctors, in part because of its excellent long-term survival and diagnosis. But even the possibility of cancer can be quite concerning, and the number and kinds of physicians a patient will encounter, as well as numerous questions that might go unanswered during such an ordeal, can be overwhelming. In straightforward language, this manual outlines the function of the thyroid and offers four cases of patients with thyroid nodules, including malignant ones. Each case offers real-world examples of growth, discovery, and diagnosis, the resulting treatment procedures, and information about the necessity of follow-ups and typical recovery time. Diagnostic imaging and blood tests are explained in simple terms, and medical designations such as the Bethesda classifications, which measure cancer risk, and the TNM staging system for cancer, used to develop treatment plans, are presented plainly. In-depth graphs and images are also provided as helpful visual aids. Hasselgren, a teacher of endocrine surgery with 45 years spent in the operating room, offers readers a wealth of information,

including detailed walk-throughs of treatment procedures, including the total thyroidectomy, lobectomy, isthmusectomy, and lymph node surgery along with possible complications and necessary precautions. A detailed glossary (with a helpful expansion online) and index make the resource easy to revisit for specifics. Though the text stresses this is not a “do-it-yourself guide” and that nothing can replace medical advice from a doctor, for those dealing with thyroid problems, this book is an asset which can turn the unknown and frightening into a manageable, understandable undertaking.

A thorough, informative resource that never overwhelms.



SUCCEED WITHOUT SELLING
The More You Think About Selling, the Less You Will Sell

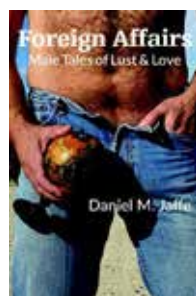
Helbig, Diane
Morgan James Publishing (190 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book
Dec. 1, 2020
978-1-64279-992-7

A business change agent offers a basic overview of the contemporary sales process.

There was a time when *selling* used to be a dirty word. In recent years, the perception of selling has likely improved in part because of a new attitude toward how the process is executed in today’s business environment. As Helbig explains, modern-day selling, especially of complex products and services, has become widely known as solution selling, which doesn’t depend on a “hard sell” at all. The author, who wrote *Lemonade Stand Selling* (2010), bases this book on solution selling, noting that “sales is actually about matching a solution to a problem.” This concept is certainly not revolutionary, but for the nonsales professional (such as a small-business owner) or a person just starting out in a sales position, the method of solution selling is worthy of exploration. In an easily accessible writing style uncluttered by jargon, Helbig walks readers through all the basics of solution selling, including determining product value; identifying a target market; prospecting techniques; using strategic alliances and sales referrals; understanding the differences between inside, direct, and retail sales; selling through franchises; and more. Each topic is treated in a somewhat cursory fashion; clearly, the work is intended as a survey more than an in-depth study. After all, entire books have been written about topics such as sales prospecting and sales management, but here, they are of necessity treated superficially. Still, the author is obviously knowledgeable, and she distills the key details of solution selling into very readable content, delivering practical tips along the way. The chapter on networking, for example, conveys specific pointers about how to approach and engage people at a business meeting or online. “Too many salespeople are using networking to sell,” Helbig writes. “That’s a short-term view. Those who are looking for long term gains are using networking to engage with people for long term relationships.” The “Resources” section at

the end should be of considerable value, especially to the sales novice; it provides 10 worksheets and templates that augment the content.

Engaging and well-paced sales advice, even if rudimentary.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Male Tales of Lust & Love

Jaffe, Daniel M.
Rattling Good Yarns Press (158 pp.)
Oct. 1, 2020
978-1-7341464-0-0



Restless men go abroad in search of sex, love, and belonging in these adventurous short stories.

Jaffe, the author of *Yeled Tov* (2018), sends his protagonists, most of them gay and Jewish, to unfamiliar places to encounter people and situations that stimulate them carnally and spiritually. In “The Importance of Being Jurassic,” an American reporter in Dublin encounters a closeted Catholic man who regards oral sex as a filthy sacrament, and in “Cobblestone Elegy,” a Jewish American in Prague meets the ghost of a gay Holocaust martyr. A middle-aged Soviet woman, looking for a way to immigrate to the United States, tries to lure a decades-younger American student into marriage in “Innocence Abroad.” In “The Trickster,” an aging man at a convention of “bears and chasers” in Catalonia imagines that all the young, attractive men are lusting for his corpulent body, and a new widower falls in love with a frankly businesslike yet soulful female sex worker in Seville in “El Bochorno.” In the sexually graphic “*Walpurgisnacht*,” a Catholic soul knocking on heaven’s gate struggles to explain to St. Peter why he engaged in a satanic sex-murder orgy at a German bathhouse during his last night on Earth. Over the course of this book, Jaffe’s lively, limpid prose features sharply etched characters and passages that shift between absurdist humor (as when a character wonders why an old man on a plane “ensconced himself toe-to-head within a 30-gallon, heavy-duty, clear plastic trash bag”), sly social observation (“No matter how many times you wink at him, he will not return your glance, will just take some book out of his bright blue backpack and read—or pretend to”), and wry sensuality. The result is a redolent blend of atmospheric travelogue, earthy physicality, satire, magical realism, and Kafkaesque disorientation—the latter most notably in “The Return,” in which a descendant of Jewish conversos returns to the Spain that his ancestors fled and finds himself bombarded with hallucinatory inducements to take up his deceased relatives’ gentile ways.

Rich, complex, entertaining tales of strangers in strange lands.

Kasten's prose is measured and understated, building inevitably to some colorful moment of outburst.

A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE



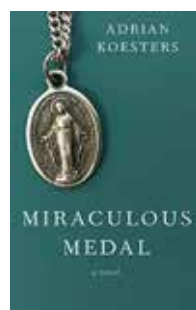
A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE Stories, Monologues, Dialogues, and Observations

Kasten, Kate
Islet Press (220 pp.)
\$9.99 e-book | Jul. 23, 2020

Stories and dialogues, realism and fabulism all sit together in this fiction collection.

A man takes his family to a neighborhood cookout in a park, where parents grill and eat, children play, teenagers lounge, and a few older people look on from some benches: "A little something for everyone, he thinks. Somehow it reminds him of that Dutch artist's scene of peasants taking their leisure at the end of the day. Pastoral." Of course, the man soon finds himself with a pair of police officers' guns drawn on him. Such sharp reversals are common in this hodgepodge collection, in which the tone shifts unexpectedly within stories and between them. In one piece, a little girl sits on the family sofa attempting to work up the nerve to make a confession to her mother in the next room. But when she clears her conscience, it isn't quite what readers anticipated. In another story, a woman decides to put together a puppet show for some children in the park only to be beaten up by the kids when they get too immersed in the performance. A series of offbeat fables gives way to a piece about a woman examining her dead mother. One tale features episodes involving ants and a grasshopper, a group of state senators and Donald Trump, and a coven of witches. Whatever the topic, Kasten's prose is measured and understated, building inevitably to some colorful moment of outburst. Here, a woman confronts a college classmate unsympathetic to her fragrance allergy: "I staggered after the man, and halfway down the hall grabbed him by the neck of his jacket. He swung around, and I took hold of the fragrance-soaked fabric of his sturdy denim lapels. 'Listen, you stinking cesspit, if you come to class wearing Old Spice again, I'll have you shot.'" With the exception of one long (and good) story, the pieces are generally short, and their variety is a feature, not a bug. Some works are inevitably stronger than others, but the author always manages to find the human fault lines in her narratives, revealing them to readers before hurrying on to the next episode.

A multifaceted and highly enjoyable assemblage of tales in different forms.



MIRACULOUS MEDAL

Koesters, Adrian
Apprentice House (246 pp.)
\$26.99 | \$15.99 paper | \$6.99 e-book
May 1, 2020
978-1-62720-253-4
978-1-62720-254-1 paper

A historical novel about a small group of characters living and working in mid-20th-century Baltimore.

The latest book from Koesters, a sequel to *Union Square* (2018), takes place in Baltimore and concentrates on a few days and four characters: young girls Marnie Signorelli and Alice Smaling, Catholic priest John Martin, and a poor parish worker named Jezriel "Jeb" Heath. Koesters follows each of them through the everyday events and vicissitudes of their lives over the course of a long Easter weekend in 1964. Each of the book's four long sections places the focus on a different character, taking readers into their inner worlds and, in the process, providing a composite and ultimately beguiling portrait of Baltimore 60 years ago—a Southern city characterized, in this book, by old-style Catholicism and lingering racism. The latter is handled with unflinching realism, as when Jeb, who's Black, remembers hard-edged advice that he received from the men who taught him how to shine shoes regarding how to use the city's streetcars: Give your fare to the driver without touching his hand, he's told. "Then you go all the way to the back and sit down....If a white lady or white man have to come in the back, you get off the street car and walk the rest of the way you going." Koesters follows her small cast of central characters through their involvement with both church and personal faith, from cerebral, compassionate Father John to impulsive young Marnie, who "knew what everything was, just about, but not always the best way to solve a problem," her friend and neighbor Alice, and Jeb, who "was forty and looked sixty." The latter's internal drama is the most commanding strand in a work that, at its best, invites richly deserved comparison to that of Ernest J. Gaines.

A richly empathetic portrait of four strivers in life and faith in old Baltimore.



THE ERIDANI INCIDENT

Lallier, John
Self (314 pp.)
\$15.00 paper | \$2.99 e-book
Oct. 30, 2019
978-1-70698-732-1

In Lallier's first flight in a new military SF series, humans in deep space go from joint Earth-alien war games to the real thing when they answer a distress signal.

This story is set in 2144, when humankind is a discounted, junior member of a vast space "Commonwealth" of spacefaring civilizations. They're

somewhat friendly with the Tyndal, blue-skinned humanoids who superficially resemble earthlings and play a mentoring role; however, they often come across as curt, aloof, and suspicious due to their mystical and highly logical nature. Their war games are strained when the humans realize that their Tyndal opponents have been cheating by using long-embedded surveillance devices. Then the humans' instruments detect a weak distress signal, indicating an attack in territory that's under the control of the Ssenn—a race of headless quadrupeds whose wisdom and technology even the Tyndals respect. At the insistence of the Earth's Regent, the war games' ships divert to Ssenn space on a rescue mission—one that not only strains treaties, but also becomes a violent conflict with alien raiders, and self-doubting Rear Adm. Jason Ngene is in the thick of it. The author specifically credits the original 1960s *Star Trek* TV series as a major influence, and the human-Tyndal relationship here certainly recalls the one between humans and Vulcans on that classic show. However, the material also calls to mind a number of other favorite SF franchises with its mix of interplanetary diplomacy, derring-do, and troopship maneuvers, including David Weber's Honor Harrington novels, Larry Niven's tales of the Man-Kzin wars, and Ian Douglas' Star Carrier series. The essential thrust of the narrative is also familiar for the subgenre—a crisis test in which Earth soldiers must exhibit proper courage, brains, and judgment to prove they can take their place among more advanced alien cultures. But despite its familiarity, Lallier executes the mission successfully, and indeed, once things get underway the pace doesn't let up. The plotline, which emphasizes duty, ethical choice, and sacrifice, avoids any romance or unexpected twists, but the author manages to wrap up this installment with a satisfying conclusion.

A somewhat standard-issue premise effectively commanded by a fan of the genre.



THE FROG AT THE WINDOW

Langteau, Scott J.

Illus. by Brannon, Michaela

Shake the Moon Books (64 pp.)

\$17.95 | Oct. 1, 2020

978-0-578-55965-0

In this children's book, animals take over a house left empty during Christmas.

The night before traveling for the holiday, Katy Randall spies a frog shivering at the window. Leaving the next morning, the girl accidentally drops her mitten, propping the front door open. The frog moves in to enjoy a nice, warm, quiet house, but then a host of animals—beavers, bears, rabbits, owls, and more—discovers the open door. The frog lays down some house rules (clean up your mess; no eating anyone) to cope. On Christmas Day, the animals throw a huge party and are almost caught by people looking through the window. Thinking fast, the creatures pose like Santa, his sleigh, and his reindeer, with the frog sporting a fake red nose as Rudolph. They depart before the Randalls return but leave a few surprises, like fur on the towels. Stranger still is a certificate saying the family's won a prize for the town's best Christmas window display, citing their creative

use of "stuffed animals." Katy makes sure to leave her mitten in the door every year. Langteau, who has written several children's books, tells a hilarious Christmas story with a building sense of anarchy. Quatrains rhyming in an abcb pattern offer a rollicking rhythm emphasized with typography: "And soon, just like that— / Christmas Day had **arrived** / and their **lives** felt like one giant treat / They **sang** and they **danced**, / and **exchanged** simple gifts. / But what they did mostly was **EAT!**" Still, parents may want to warn kids not to follow Katy's example considering the dangers of possible burglars. Debut illustrator Brannon provides full-page, soft-edged images in rich, glowing colors dominated by tawny red-orange, deep blue, and pine green; the Randalls have terra-cotta skin. She underscores the book's energy and humor with details such as the rabbits' racetrack chalked on the floor and the wonderfully ridiculous, impromptu Christmas display.

The action appropriately snowballs in this uproariously funny seasonal romp.



THE WIDOW VERSES

Levine, Ken

Self (268 pp.)

\$10.17 paper | \$2.99 e-book

Mar. 14, 2020

979-8-6029-9389-9

A New York City poet reflects on life after the death of her husband and contemplates moving forward with a new love in this novel.

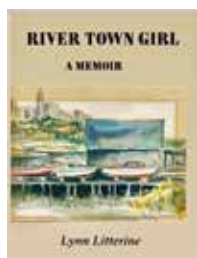
Accomplished poet Marian Collingswood has published 10 well-regarded volumes throughout her career and is working on an 11th when her husband, Nathan, suddenly dies. As their adult daughter, Mira, has moved to Seattle, Marian is left in the house alone. While visiting Nathan's grave, she meets Charles, a widower. Marian is stoic and not very social, but Charles shows an interest in her, and she agrees to go out for tea. In a series of flashbacks, Marian and Nathan's history is recounted as they begin their adult lives in a studio on the Upper West Side in the 1970s. Nathan is unhappily working in advertising while Marian's first poetry book becomes a success when she is just in her late 20s. There is an act of infidelity on Nathan's part, and Marian, raised in Michigan in a family that refuses to show weakness, pretends not to care. As the years pass and Marian devotes herself to a career in poetry while Nathan becomes a history teacher, another act of infidelity threatens their marriage. In the present day, different pieces of Charles' past are revealed as Marian decides whether she wants a life on her own or one with a loving partner. Levine shows a special talent for arranging a variety of nonsequential flashbacks from different times and places in a way that really strengthens the carefully told tale and characterizations. Marian is an utterly impassive character, and the attempt at seeking out the deep emotional connections she has to her family can make for absorbing reading. Written with a heavy dose of Midwestern realness, New York discernment, and a bit of European

Lorka's charming, irreverent voice leaps off every page as she casually unspools the details of her life.

HANDSOME

culture, Marian's story is at once literary, succinct, and at times surprisingly touching.

A placid, compassionate tale about a marriage, widowhood, and the first steps toward starting over.



RIVER TOWN GIRL A Memoir

Litterine, Lynn

Serving House Books (230 pp.)

\$19.99 paper | Sep. 7, 2020

978-1-947175-28-0



Litterine recalls growing up in a small town across the Hudson River from New York City in this original, poetic debut memoir.

The author's first memory of Edgewater, New Jersey, was standing on a stool at 3 years old looking over the town to the Hudson River beyond. Her memoir ably captures growing up in a working-class town in the 1950s, '60s, and early '70s by weaving together memories, journal entries, poetry, dreams, and historical detail. Litterine escorts readers through the streets of her hometown, giving them a full sensory experience, from sights ("sun sequins sparkling on river water") to smells ("shad smoke on the early spring air"). She candidly discusses key life events, like reaching puberty and kissing: "Sometimes when we French kiss, his spit gets in my mouth, and I'm shocked to find it tastes good." Other recorded life events include visiting a psychiatrist to address her anxiety, her first major job at a newspaper, and a trip to Europe. At the opening of the memoir, Litterine ponders her metaphysical connection to Edgewater, a connection she envisions stretched across time to the first settlers: "I can envelop myself in the deep silence that surrounded the Lenni Lenape....Or I can sink back with a sigh into the soft leather seats of the town's first car." A Whitmanesque ability to "embroider the facts left behind and enter other lives" transforms the work into a voyage of discovery in which Litterine imagines being part of the territory's tribal past, "moving through the summer forest I shape the wind that blows around me." When telling her own personal story, she exhibits an extraordinary analytical tenderness: "My father was deeply loving and deeply wounded. Love made him vulnerable and wounds made him self-protective." Those keen on a more conventional approach to memoir may mistake this as a hodgepodge of ideas. What Litterine, in fact, creates is a brightly detailed patchwork of memories that is a vibrant celebration of her hometown across the ages. Includes the author's photographs alongside other relevant artwork.

Both dazzlingly imaginative and comfortingly nostalgic.



HANDSOME Stories of an Awkward Girl Boy Human

Lorka, Holly

She Writes Press (250 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | \$9.95 e-book

Oct. 20, 2020

978-1-63152-783-8



A collection of humorous and heart-felt stories about gender, sex, childhood, shame, and self-acceptance.

"When I was four years old," Lorka states on the first page of her debut, "my friend Mikey told me that when he went downhill fast, like in a car, it made his pee-pee feel funny." Thus begins her collection of autobiographical essays that focus on nearly five decades of awkwardness, sexual awakenings, break-ups, gender dysphoria, upended career expectations, and nighttime visitations by the ghost of singer George Michael. Lorka's charming, irreverent voice leaps off every page as she casually unspools the details of her life, touching on major events only briefly—such as when she dumped her male fiance and embraced her attraction to women, or her difficult relationship with her late mother—only to saunter back to them later with winking familiarity. Lorka's ability to balance life's harshness alongside its ridiculousness and to poke fun at herself make for a read that's never disingenuous or boring. An account of a pit bull attack is, at different points, harrowing and hilarious, and a story of a high school crush on a coach walks a tightrope between longing and obsession. Various digressions about her career as an intensive care nurse manage to, by turns, bemoan the sexualization of nursing and recount the tragic death of a new mother. Most arresting, though, are Lorka's candid discussions of her lifelong struggles with her body and sexuality as a gender-nonconforming lesbian. With self-deprecating humor, the author lays out her internalized shame, her discomfort, and her hunger to be someone different; only after having thoroughly entrenched the reader in this mindset does Lorka then guide them through an account of her agonizing but glorious process of learning to love herself. The results are cathartic, joyful, encouraging, and often very funny.

A delightful remembrance that's brimming with honesty and wit.



GHOST **Where Truth and Fiction Collide**

Marra, Michael

Self (239 pp.)

\$19.95 paper | \$4.99 e-book

Mar. 15, 2019

978-1-79282-689-4

Marra's memoir tells of his complicated life as a man associated with the Mafia and a covert operative trying to get

drugs off of New York City's streets.

The author reveals that he was once known as Luca "Doc" Gunn, a member of the Gambino crime family, and (incorrectly) considered a "made man." But during the late 1960s and early '70s, he was also an intel agent who once trained at "the Farm," the CIA's training facility in Virginia. No one in the family knew that he was a law enforcement operative except for an uncle. His primary goal was to gather information on heroin dealers, but he zeroed in on corrupt Drug Enforcement Agency operatives and beat cops who regularly accepted payoffs from pushers in various New York neighborhoods. But he still had responsibilities in the Gambino family; in one instance, the author hoped to find a nonlethal way to intercept "the Mortician," a killer who was targeting members of the family in misguided revenge. The author's ties to the government and the mob, as well as to the clergy, made him feel perpetually conflicted. Indeed, he calls himself a "ghost," essentially meaning that his true self and motivations always had to remain hidden and that no one really knew him. Fortunately, he had the love of a longtime girlfriend, Tracy Capoletti, to sustain him, but as years passed, he experienced tragedies and became further entangled in his dual existence. He ultimately befriended a whip-smart woman who later became a federal agent; her dangerous work pitted them against the East Harlem Purple Gang and Soviet agents.

Marra's account moves at a generally brisk pace. It starts off with a bang—two, actually—with an account of someone shooting the author twice in an alley. The story moves through several historical events, mostly related to the Mafia. For example, the author witnessed the start of a mob war stemming from the 1972 killing of mobster Joey Gallo ("The streets are going to run red with blood," Gallo's sister famously promised). The book's timeline, however, isn't always easy to follow. In a scene after the Gallo murder, for instance, the author tells of taking his girlfriend to meet Jimi Hendrix—although the musician died in 1970. The narrative, however, is mostly linear and becomes decidedly more focused in the latter half, when the author was eyeing an exit from a world laden with "spy shit." Readers should anticipate a dour tale with sporadic bursts of violence, and the author's interactions with Black gangsters included threats and racial slurs. But overall, the author wished for peace—a strange dichotomy that Marra fully acknowledges; he relates how his nobler side surfaced when he would come to the aid of someone in peril. The author's unadorned prose is succinct and comprehensible though occasionally repetitive; for example, he overuses the metaphor of

his mind being a gerbil on an exercise wheel, which can be confusing; once, as the author gathered his thoughts, he "threw the gerbil off the wheel and tried to slow down."

An often engrossing and edgy story of a man with conflicting loyalties.



RANSOM STREET

Millikin, Claire

2Leaf Press (152 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Apr. 15, 2019

978-1-940939-90-2

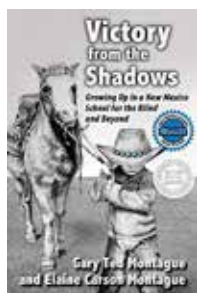
Millikin's latest set of poems tackles difficult material in language that moves from the complex to the simple.

The past lives as a sequence of shadows and memories, leaving poets to put it into words. As the author writes in the opening poem, "Atlantic," "I will go out / in my boat of language / because voice is not only a wound / but also a craft." These poems reckon with landscapes, streets, and objects that are haunted by trauma and tragedy. "Pretty Dresses," for example, ends on the image of one such item: "Traveling back roads into Georgia, we'd stop / where no one much lived, gas pumps by cinderblock / and cotton fields, me wearing grandfather's jacket from the war." The book mixes gritty, real-world imagery with dreamlike contrasts. One work, for instance, describes a rural taxi service and the philosophical feud between Friedrich Hölderlin and Martin Heidegger; another is about playing the Chinese board game Go as a way to survive a winter. Familiar themes of abandonment, isolation, and betrayal are all here, but they're twisted into strange, melancholic songs of pine woods, railroad tracks, and old hotels. Along the way, Millikin tosses in erudite allusions to give mythic weight to memories: "As night is shaped of boxes, (Archimedean squares), / my grandfather built flimsy houses. / The nature of boxes is to be built of sky, / a supply from which my grandfather drew indiscriminately." The long collection has a deeply immersive quality; the poems feel simultaneously confessional and guarded, and they offer different lessons than readers may expect at the outset. There's also a cyclical quality to them, as in "As Snow Closes in the City": "She is reading a story aloud in the bar / and you're sure you've heard it before. / Snow closing the ways between buildings, / alleys, inlets, quays to harbor."

A mournful, elegant collection that explores what one owes to the past.

Myers gives a real sense of Galileo's excitement and his understandable arrogance.

DARK LABYRINTH



VICTORY FROM THE SHADOWS Growing Up in a New Mexico School for the Blind and Beyond

Montague, Gary Ted & Montague, Elaine Carson

ABQ Press (304 pp.)
\$21.95 paper | \$4.49 e-book | Jun. 5, 2019
978-0-578-40795-1

A memoir reflects on a lifetime full of grit and determination.

This expansive work by Gary Ted and Elaine Carson Montague opens as 8-year-old Gary arrived at the New Mexico School for the Blind with his mother in 1944. The pain and longing after they separated are visceral; the married authors circle back to this watershed moment several times, as it encapsulates the sacrifice and fortitude pervading the entire text. With the passage of time and benefit of hindsight, everyone involved came to a better understanding of the situation. The authors also solve the mystery of why Gary's family never visited him at school until graduation. They strike a nice balance describing Gary's rigorous schedule at school and intense labor on a farm during breaks. He thus moved between two worlds: new language codes and systems (Spanish, Braille) contrasted with the familiar rhythms of the animals and the terrain. This is a story of many peaks and valleys; for instance, after the VJ-Day celebrations, Gary's family returned home to find the aftermath of a fire on the property. At such moments, the authors kick their reporting into high gear with evocative prose and arresting imagery. Gary recalls the "grumbling chi-cha of the coal-burning steam locomotive" on the night he left home. A vision of his mother's crocheting ("Like my heart, held together by knots of hope and loss and dreams") leads into associations linked to his father and twin sister. For added authenticity, the authors employ nonstandard spellings to represent Gary's father's distinctive speech ("You're gittin' smarter a'ready") and incorporate family photographs and letters. They pick up the pace as they chronicle Gary's moving through college and marriage. With a fierce work ethic and assistance from others, he attained a degree in secondary education. After some trouble finding suitable work, he began a 32-year career at Sandia National Laboratories. Despite the challenges Gary faced, the narrative tone is not always gloomy. The hazards of visual impairment are often presented with a wry sense of humor. After Gary entered the women's restroom by mistake in a dark restaurant, he commented demurely: "I heard two women talking outside my stall, but it was too late to exit." At the end of the text, the authors provide six discussion questions as well as historical information on the rights of the disabled in America.

A stirring testament to the resilience of a visually impaired individual.



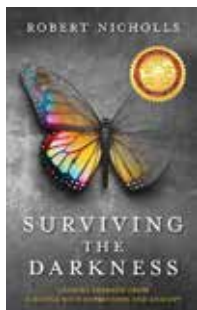
DARK LABYRINTH A Novel Based on the Life of Galileo Galilei

Myers, Peter David
Barbera Foundation (272 pp.)
\$9.99 e-book | Jun. 4, 2020

A historical novel addresses the life of Galileo, a journey fleshed out here with all the intrigue and high stakes of a pivotal era.

Because Galileo's life is so well known, a plot summary seems almost superfluous. Galileo (1564-1642), who lived in the duchy of Tuscany, is probably the most famous figure of the scientific revolution that gave the world Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, Giordano Bruno, and other giants. Galileo is also notorious for recanting his belief in heliocentrism, so the climax of the book and his long house arrest are never in doubt (There is no evidence, by the way, that he ever muttered about Earth: "And yet it moves"). On the other side is the reviled Inquisition that threatens hell-fire and, often, earthly fire, as Bruno's fate attests. To further complicate things, this is the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the papacy feels under pressure to be even more doctrinally rigid than the Protestant sects. None of this bodes well, and readers will see the train wreck coming that Galileo cannot, though he has his fears. This novel is part of the Mentor Project, which focuses on eminent Italians and Italian Americans. Myers has a good sense of drama here even if his prose is sometimes over-the-top ("A nauseated-looking sun hung dejectedly in the meager daylight"). He gives a real sense of Galileo's excitement and his understandable arrogance: Here is a genius beset not just by hidebound intellectual inferiors, but malicious ones at that. Galileo does try to keep his arrogance in check (stupid he is not), and the Roman Catholic Church is actually tolerant of the new cosmological ideas—as long as they are broached as hypotheticals. A painful part concerns the daughters whom Galileo consigns to a convent early on (a decision for which he never forgives himself). The devotion that his daughter Celeste shows him will break readers' hearts. Readers will also find themselves wanting to know more about this celebrated figure and the world that he helped bring into being—the world that they live in today.

A gripping story about a genius grappling with a turbulent new world.



SURVIVING THE DARKNESS

Nicholls, Robert

Robert Nicholls Pty Ltd (164 pp.)

\$20.57 paper | \$8.63 e-book

Aug. 5, 2020

978-0-648-88650-1

A compact guide to coping with depression.

In 2016, at the age of 47, debut author Nicholls, an Australian attorney and consultant, was diagnosed with depression. In this debut book, he relates his personal experience with the mental illness and offers other sufferers paths forward; as he puts it, “I liken recovery to a maze with several possible routes to the exit.” The first several chapters poignantly convey his initial struggles, as when he began to feel drained of energy. He also nods to the common characterization of depression as the “black dog”: “depression can ‘shadow’ the sufferer, even when their mood is upbeat and ‘victorious.’” Such salient observations help to destigmatize depression early on, and Nicholls soon uses his experiences to enlighten others on ways to deal with it in everyday life. For example, he includes a helpful survey of typical traditional treatments and discusses in some detail the coping mechanisms that he used over a number of years to help manage his depression. Nicholls advises that “there is no fixed menu of options,” but his overview of 20-plus strategies, including “*Do not expect too much too soon*” and “*Set Limits*,” supplemented by lessons learned and “failed options,” is likely to be exceptionally helpful to readers in similar situations. A key point is that no one needs to go through depression alone, and a chapter on building “your recovery team” offers specific guidance on selecting the right therapist. A subsequent chapter for concerned friends and relatives includes two valuable tables (“What not to say” and “What to say”) with commentary; for example, the inadvisable phrase, “*I know exactly how you feel!*” is described as “not a helpful way to make someone feel understood when their depression has become overwhelming.” Overall, Nicholls writes succinctly with a keen sense of compassion and understanding.

Candid, reflective, and illuminating.



NO ONE WILL HEAR YOUR SCREAMS

O'Callaghan, Thomas

WildBlue Press (352 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book

May 9, 2020

978-1-952225-14-7

A vicious serial killer terrorizes Manhattan, bent on avenging an abusive past.

In this third entry of a thriller series, after *Bone Thief* (2006) and *The Screaming Room* (2007), New York author O'Callaghan introduces his most heinous killer yet: a psychotic mortician with a vendetta

against Manhattan sex workers. Right from the opening pages, Tilden Quinn is already at work embalming his latest victim inside a mortuary. After the bloodless corpse is discovered floating in the East River, other bodies begin popping up all across New York City. Homicide Lt. John Driscoll dutifully snaps into action to lead an investigation that swiftly blooms with each horrific victim Tilden mutilates. As both a childhood and adult victim of abuse, Tilden is on the loose exacting his hate-filled rage against sex workers, particularly after an encounter that left him sodomized so severely he was hospitalized. To the killer, these women wrongfully “chose a life of immorality” and must be thoroughly cleansed by way of exsanguination. As Driscoll delves deeper into the case, the tall, intimidating detective continues to wrestle with a sorrowful past that includes the death of his mother when he was a boy and the loss of his teenage daughter to a drunk driver. The accident sent his wife into a coma. Just as torturous is Tilden's own history, which the author teases out over the course of the novel. That backstory describes him as a boy being physically abused by his sex-worker mother's live-in john. Driscoll, ably assisted by tough Sgt. Margaret Aligante, a childhood victim of abuse, and Detective Cedric Thomlinson, who is covertly battling a burgeoning alcohol dependency, begins amassing clues. The team investigates suspects in a new string of church-related slaughters and interviews prospective leads, no matter how unsavory they may be, including a porn producer specializing in simulated snuff films. Themes of matricide, religious atonement, arson, and even cannibalism all conspire to create a heady stew of intrigue, crime drama, and thrilling police procedural. In Tilden, O'Callaghan has impressively molded a nefarious sociopathic maniac whose barbaric childhood roots hold the key to his murderous motivation. Not for the faint of heart, this novel is perhaps the most accomplished of the series with its chilling forensics, riveting suspense sequences, grisly details, and a diabolical villain who's wholly consumed by merciless revenge.

Ultragruesome murders are no match for a trio of detectives in this standout thriller.



ST. PETERSBURG WHITE

Randall, Gregory C.

Windsor Hill Publishing (291 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | \$4.99 e-book

Jun. 19, 2020

978-0-9987083-6-2

In this thriller, the identities of two Russians tied to a deadly explosion in a small Midwestern town must be kept secret—even from the Russian authorities.

In Randall's tale, a string of power outages in Maise, Iowa, results in the local ethanol plant exploding. The blast kills 150 residents and sends 400 more to burn centers. On the case is Alex Polonia, a former Cleveland police detective now working for an international security firm. Her boss, Christopher Campbell, tells her the doomed power grid had an easily hackable security system. He said one of the

Rosestone's coming-of-age saga relies on sweeping character arcs and only light touches of magic.

HERLOT OF ALONIA

National Security Agency “guys joked that a child could have found a way into the system.” Actually, it was two children—twins Pavel and Gavril Sokolov. Widowed Ilya Sokolov, who teaches advanced computer programming at the St. Petersburg Computer Institute in Russia, discovers that his brilliant, autistic 10-year-old twins used his computer to successfully break through security programs and initiate the Iowa power outages. Knowing his government will mete out punishment once it discovers his family’s connection to the explosion, he anonymously emails the Maise library to say the catastrophe was a mistake. He adds: “I need help. They are after us.” Alex’s firm is brought in to “rescue” the accidental terrorists because CIA and FBI involvement would easily be identified by Russian agencies. Alex is paired for the assignment with Micah Lynch, who lived in Russia before serving in the United States Army Special Ops. Within days, Micah and Alex, posing as a vacationing couple in St. Petersburg, try to identify the masterminds behind the Iowa blast before the Russians do. Randall’s engaging novel is the third installment of a series starring the adventurous Alex, following *Venice Black* (2018) and *Saigon Red* (2019). The question of where to place blame when talented children unwittingly do horrifying things that cause deaths and injuries makes this globe-spanning tale a thoughtful read. It’s also an exciting one, with a surprising and intricate plot. Alex’s drawn-out backstory bogs down the first chapter, but after that, pistols, speeding cars, and vodka on the rocks make for fast-turning pages.

Like matryoshka dolls, a many-layered, inviting treat.



CALEY CROSS AND THE HADEON DROP

Rosen, Jeff
 SparkPress (288 pp.)
 \$12.95 paper | \$9.95 e-book
 Sep. 8, 2020
 978-1-68463-053-0

This debut middle-grade fantasy sees a neglected orphan returning to the magical kingdom of her birth to face a rising evil.

Thirteen-year-old Caley Cross is the oldest child at the Gunch Home for Wayward Waifs, where she is worked like a slave and kept starved and impoverished. Caley gets on with her life as best she can, but if ever her anger is roused, she dies. Her deaths are only temporary—she revives shortly afterward—but they are linked to an innate power that causes dead animals to come alive. One day, Caley’s resurrections bring her to the attention of a metal-winged crow, whereupon she is rescued from the orphanage and taken to Erinath, a realm beyond Earth. Caley, it transpires, is the lost daughter of Queen Catherine, who disappeared shortly after the girl was born and is thought to have been killed by the nefarious Olpheist. Returned to Castle Erinath (which grows like a tree and often shifts its rooms about), Caley must adjust to her royal status—and to the relentless enmity of Ithica Blight, the vain and petty princess she’s supplanted as next in line to the

throne. Ithica’s cruelties aside, there is trouble brewing in the kingdom. Castle Erinath is sickening and Olpheist is rumored to have broken free of his prison. Can Caley and her new friends sort truth from lies and keep him from laying hands on the Hadeon Drop, the ultimate source of creation and destruction? In this wildly imaginative series opener, Rosen’s storytelling overflows with creative fancy, so much so that the strong Harry Potter resonances (cruelly treated chosen one, boarding school social dynamic, Quidditch-like Equidium teams) become an unfortunate distraction from the boundless parade of whimsical characters and fantastical new material. Caley’s adventure begins in a breathless rush before settling down and building steadily to a somewhat abrupt end (and the promise of a sequel). The author’s prose is easy to read, with clear descriptions, age-appropriate dialogue, and plenty of humor. While Ithica is over-the-top and Caley and Olpheist are little distinguished from default heroes and villains, all the other characters ooze originality. All told, young readers will thrill at the sparkle of enchantment.

A fun and fast-moving adventure giddy with ideas.



HERLOT OF ALONIA

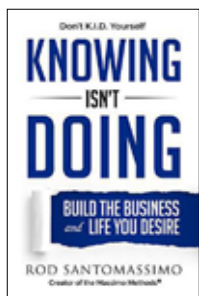
Rosestone, Maria
 BookBaby (426 pp.)
 \$19.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book
 Sep. 1, 2020
 978-1-09-831182-7

This debut fantasy sees a girl surrounded by strange happenings grow up and confront a vile king.

In the village of Alonia, Agatha the midwife traditionally delivers children in her home. And yet Ilvy’s pregnancy has been an odd one, in which the baby sometimes seems to telepathically communicate with the woman, making requests. Instead of giving birth with Agatha’s help, Ilvy is compelled to do so beneath the willow trees. The baby, Herlot, is a healthy girl. But her odd entrance into the world forever marks her an outsider. At the age of 5, she plays hide-and-seek with uncanny precision, as if a ghost tells her exactly where her playmates are. In the woods one day, she meets Devotio, a unicorn, a magical beast she adores. He promises to visit her “every twelve moons” in secret if she promises to never tell anyone he exists. Eventually her older brother, Ambro, finds out and shares in her delight. Yet as the siblings grow up, Ambro tells Herlot that they invented Devotio. Herlot lives with this disenchantment until she is 18. She resolves to become a steward for King Cloudian, who has made his kingdom of Eraska unique by banning gold. Greedy King Felix of Isolda, meanwhile, hopes to rule all. Rosestone’s coming-of-age saga relies on sweeping character arcs and only light touches of magic, not unlike T.H. White’s *The Once and Future King* (1958). The story is sometimes inspired by real-life historical events, specifically the death of Native Americans from smallpox, which helps push Herlot into the heroic spotlight. An outbreak of “crowpox” affects villagers in Alonia and creates ugly chaos but also returns Devotio to Herlot’s life and rekindles her faith in the unseen. The

unicorn tells her: “No matter what happens, the stars can see you.... You’re never alone.” The need for perseverance is equally intense for Movó, Cloudian’s own son whom Felix imprisoned. In this series opener, the author superbly conveys the power of childhood magic in the narrative’s first half as well as the adolescent questioning that may or may not spark a renewal of creative powers in the second. A daring finale should rouse fans for the sequel.

Beneath the medieval drama, this fantasy skillfully addresses life’s grandest dilemmas.



KNOWING ISN'T DOING
Build the Business and Life You Desire

Santomassimo, Rod
Cardinal Publishers Group (210 pp.)
\$24.99 | Oct. 1, 2020
978-0-9838349-3-9

A nuts-and-bolts guide to business basics for independent professionals.

Santomassimo, a former real estate professional and author of the commercial real estate book *Teams Built To Dominate* (2015), reengineered his career to start a business-coaching practice. His own story is at the heart of this manual based on his firm’s

“Massimo Methods,” a set of tools designed to help optimize the performance of small businesses—particularly those offering professional services. Although most of these methods are given clever names (“Massimo Matrix,” “Massimo Opportunity Map,” “I.P.A.I.D.,” and so on), they’re essentially labels for broadly recognized business management approaches. Still, Santomassimo does a solid job of integrating them and organizing his book around specific divisions of “Me, Inc.”: sales, marketing, finance, operations, and human resources. This setup allows small-business owners to think about their companies in terms that are more often associated with larger corporate entities. With its heavy emphasis on “Massimo Methods,” some readers may view this work as a protracted sales pitch for the author’s coaching services, but in practice, it’s more substantive than that. The author begins with a good overview of basic business principles, such as “building wealth, not just income,” applying time management practices, and effectively delegating tasks. He then deconstructs each of his five “divisions” in lengthy but well-paced chapters, which he nicely enhances with charts, illustrations, and examples. The chapter on sales, for example, methodically outlines the seven sequential steps that make up an effective sales process, and the finance chapter, although heavily weighted toward sales, explores a strategic method for determining business opportunities. The human resources section offers an overview of how independent professionals should build their own competencies and discusses when to hire additional personnel or seek partners. Included in each chapter are “assignments” that are designed to help readers apply each principle; a free workbook (not reviewed) is available for download from the author’s website. It concludes with an excellent summary, templates, and worksheets.

A useful resource for anyone starting or improving a professional practice.

This Issue’s Contributors



ADULT

Maude Adjarian • Mark Athitakis • Colette Bancroft • Gerald Bartell • Sarah Blackman • Amy Boaz Jeffrey Burke • Nigel M. de S. Cameron • Catherine Cardno • Tobias Carroll • Lee E. Cart • Wayne Catan • Kristin Centorcelli • K.W. Colyard • Emma Corngold • Dave DeChristopher • Lisa Elliott Mia Franz • Harvey Freedenberg • Amy Goldschlager • Mary Ann Gwinn • Janice Harayda • Peter Heck • Natalia Holtzman • Kerri Jarema • Jessica Jernigan • Tom Lavoie • Peter Lewis • Don McLeese Gregory McNamee • Clayton Moore • Karen Montgomery Moore • Molly Muldoon • Jennifer Nabers • Liza Nelson • Mike Newirth • Mike Oppenheim • Scott Parker • Jim Piechota • William E. Pike • Karen Pinchin • Margaret Quamme • Carolyn Quimby • Roberto Rodriguez • Christopher R. Rogers • Lloyd Sachs • Nadia M. Sahi • Bob Sanchez • Michael Sandlin • Gene Seymour • Polly Shulman • Rosanne Simeone • Linda Simon • Wendy Smith • Margot E. Spangenberg • Daneet Steffens • Chris Vogner • George Weaver • Wilda Williams • Marion Winik

CHILDREN’S & TEEN

Lucia Acosta • Maya Alkateb-Chami • Autumn Allen • Alison Anholt-White • Kazia Berkley-Cramer Kimberly Brubaker Bradley • Jessica Anne Bratt • Christopher A. Brown • Jessica Brown • Patty Carleton • Ann Childs • Alec B. Chunn • Amanda Chuong • Tamar Cimenian • Cherylyn Cruzat Julie Danielson • Maya Davis • Brooke Faulkner • Ayn Reyes Frazee • Nivair H. Gabriel • Omar Galaga • Sally Campbell Galman • Laurel Gardner • Judith Gire • Carol Goldman • Hannah Gomez Ana Grilo • Christine Gross-Loh • Vicky Gudelot • Tobi Haberstroh • Abigail Hsu • Ariana Hussain Danielle Jones • Deborah Kaplan • Sophie Kenney • K. Lesley Knieriem • Megan Dowd Lambert Angela Leeper • Wendy Lukehart • Candice (Wing-ye) Mack • Joan Malewitz • Evelyn Marshall J. Alejandro Mazariegos • Kathie Meizner • Mary Margaret Mercado • Susan Messina • Daniel Meyer Lisa Moore • R. Moore • Mya Nunnally • Katrina Nye • Tori Ann Ogawa • Hal Patnott • Deb Paulson Rachel G. Payne • John Edward Peters • Rebecca Rabinowitz • Kristy Raffensberger • Amy B. Reyes Jasmine Riel • Hadeal Salamah • Karyn N. Silverman • Lenny Smith • Mathangi Subramanian Edward T. Sullivan • Deborah Taffa • Deborah D. Taylor • Steven Thompson • Renee Ting • Jenna Varden • Tharini Viswanath • Yung Hsin • Kimberly Whitmer

INDIE

Alana Abbott • Marie Anello • Kent Armstrong • Darren Carlaw • Charles Cassidy • Michael Deagler Stephanie Dobler Cerra • Steve Donoghue • Jacob Edwards • Lynne Heffley • Justin Hickey Ivan Kenneally • Maureen Liebenson • Rertt Morgan • Randall Nichols • Joshua T. Pederson • Jim Piechota • Matt Rauscher • Sarah Rettig • Mark A. Salfi • Jerome Shea • Barry Silverstein Lauren Emily Whalen



THE SERGEANT’S DAUGHTER
A Memoir

Shelton, Teressa
She Writes Press (320 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | \$8.99 e-book
Aug. 11, 2020
978-1-63152-721-0

A daughter recounts being raised by a physically and emotionally abusive father in this debut memoir.

“What I really imagine feeling when my dad passes is relief,” writes Shelton in her book’s introduction, which discusses her father’s funeral. The author was born in 1958 when her father, a specialist fourth class in the Army, was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. She and her two sisters, Debi and Karen, grew up in fear of a “critical and cruel” patriarch who was quick to “fly off the handle” and partial to dishing out brutal whippings with a belt. The author recounts her father cutting off his daughters’ ponytails and throwing them in the garbage because he felt the girls were obsessing about their hair. She

While the plot speeds along with a snappy momentum, Wolfe's talent is in his crisp characterizations that pepper the story.

MAKE BELIEVE

remembers how he would call their mother “Lard-Ass” after she gained weight and hold “surprise weigh-ins” for the family. Shelton also recalls dancing with her dad, which would offer her a rare glimpse of happiness. The courageous and harrowing memoir focuses on the author’s childhood and teenage years when she set about evading her father’s grip. Shelton writes in a matter-of-fact manner, but she still possesses the power to shock. For example, she describes how, as a boy, her father had “rounded up the kittens from the barn and then dunked them in his kerosene” before setting fire to them. She reflects mordantly: “It helped me understand that when Dad said, ‘You better straighten up or I’ll light your ass on fire,’ he really meant it.” On another occasion, the author almost casually describes her and Karen wiping up “the blood splatters from the wall and hardwood floor” after a beating with a vacuum cord. This stomach-churning detail makes for a difficult read in which readers will brace themselves for what the sergeant will do next. Shelton’s steady, deceptively unemotional style may reflect an upbringing where she and her sisters were mocked for being crybabies. But there is also hope in the author’s laconicism: “My father did many things to try to break me. He did not succeed.” Despite the occasional typo (“all three left for War World II”), this is a powerfully cathartic memoir that recounts the horrors of abuse in painful detail.

A brave, bluntly honest, but undeniably upsetting account by a survivor.



DUCK DUCK GATOR

Wheaton, Ken

Manuscript (221 pp.)

A Brooklyn editor finds himself immersed in the lives of reality TV stars in this comic thriller.

Tony Battaglia makes his living editing reality TV shows. But his best friend and co-worker, Murph, scores him a gig in Louisiana. This time, it’s in front of the cameras for *Gator Guys*, a series whose star, “Lonnie Junior” Lalonde, was recently in a fatal accident. The editor has just undergone a much-needed heart transplant and, Murph informs him, Lonnie Junior’s heart is now in Tony. In Louisiana, Tony introduces himself as the show’s new leading guy to Lonnie Junior’s family; his girlfriend, Chelsea Granger; and his friend and co-star Mitch “Fudgeround” Arcenaux. And though Tony’s new heart is meant to stay secret until later, he feels obligated to tell each one about it. But there’s even more shocking news: Upon reviewing footage from the morning of Lonnie Junior’s death, Tony sees an unknown figure and consequently suspects murder. Early evidence suggests the killer is Travis Richardson, who stars in a rival show, *Mallard Men*, with his devoutly religious family. He certainly has a motive, as his girlfriend, Brit Borders, had once been Lonnie Junior’s lover. But Tony and Fudgeround seem convinced that the murderer is someone else and keep close eyes on the Richardsons as well as Brit. Meanwhile, the killer is trying to avoid detection, which may entail pinning the homicide on another person—and

committing an additional murder or two in the process.

Wheaton’s tale frequently relies on humor. Tony, for example, gets a lesson from Lonnie Senior on boating in the swamp, as he knows nothing about hunting gators. Tony’s paranoia, which leads him to believe Lonnie Senior has plans to kill him and dump his body in the swamp, is quite funny, especially once the protagonist is on the verge of hyperventilating. There are nevertheless sincere moments that create likable characters. Tony is respectful with Lonnie Junior’s friends and family since he’s worried how they’ll react to hearing about the transplant. He also bonds with Lonnie Senior, Chelsea, and Fudgeround in various ways. Even Lonnie Senior’s dog, Cocoa, warms up to Tony. Other characters are despicable, though this does make it harder to pinpoint the culprit. While the killer’s identity is more or less revealed well before the end, it’s still a treat to watch Tony and Fudgeround investigate, as they’re tenacious despite their apparent lack of experience as sleuths. Comedy again plays a part, namely an argument between the two and Chelsea, who sees no reason to dismiss the evidence against Travis, that’s vigorous and entertaining. The author writes in a no-nonsense style which is typically droll, such as the revelation that someone smells “like gym socks and body odor.” But these blunt descriptions also ignite the senses: “It wasn’t the suffocating heat and humidity Tony’d experienced when he first arrived in Louisiana, but a different breed of damp. Louisiana needed a taxonomy of wet like Eskimos had for snow.”

An often witty whodunit with heartfelt characters.



MAKE BELIEVE

Wolfe, Cory

Manuscript (187 pp.)

\$7.99 e-book | Nov. 28, 2020

978-0-578-75048-4

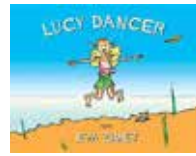
A queer high school student ponders the tragedies engulfing his young life and small town.

Lincoln, Arizona, is the setting for Wolfe’s contemporary slice of LGBTQ+ suspense fiction. “Token gay” Tyler Tuckerman struggles to survive beneath the weight of bullying from football jocks, the pressure of being young and out in high school, and a rash of teen suicides. September is sweltering in the gossipy town, which only makes things more dramatic at a funeral for the latest teen suicide, a tragic death following on the heels of those of two other kids who killed themselves on graduation night months earlier. Meanwhile, new student Nicole Clark arrives and immediately gravitates toward Tyler, who appreciates her friendship. Though a fresh face in town, Nicole is still traumatized by her mother’s death from cancer and the fact that her father is the new county sheriff. An avid photographer, Tyler regularly records the Lincoln High football games but must ride the bus to the events with the hypermasculine jocks, an activity he finds “kind of hot. Almost like being in a locker room, but the harassing side is a bitch.” What saves his sanity are memories of a forbidden love with William Ackhurst at summer camp, but

he remains obsessed with the boy's devastating suicide. Narrative duties are split between Tyler and mental health counselor Jennifer Hall, newly arrived from Phoenix and commissioned by the town to assess the serial teen suicides at Lincoln High. She instantly gels with Nicole's father, and the two band together to look into the particulars of Lincoln's sudden young deaths. She begins with online investigations and student interviews to forge partnerships between herself and the most at-risk school kids to gauge which students could be next to inexplicably lose hope and want to end their lives.

In this potent tale, vivid details emerge about online chat room participants who target gay students and encourage violent behavior against them at the school—along with specifics about a sinister drug cult. Jennifer also discovers the last boy to die was using mood-altering drugs and tranquilizers that match the toxicology scans of the other victims. When Tyler and Nicole are exposed to heavy drugs at a party and another student winds up dead, Jennifer must spring into action to apprehend the killer. The culprit may be much closer to Tyler than the young protagonist ever imagined. While the plot is drawn from relevant headlines and speeds along with a snappy momentum, Wolfe's talent is in his crisp characterizations that pepper the story, from the lunch lady with a penchant for sneaking an afternoon cocktail to bullies like Jason Brophy who foment aggression and trouble at school. Gay readers will find Tyler's openness about his sexuality refreshing, but a plot twist in the book's final third turns the tables on everyone involved. In an economy of pages, this story manages to skillfully reflect on high school identity and self-discovery in the midst of bullying, confusing sexual awakenings, temptation, and angst from all directions. But the intricate novel is also about suicide and murder in their cruelest forms.

A focused, impressively nuanced tale about teenagers, drugs, lies, and the terror of hidden enemies.



LUCY DANCER

Zimet, Eva

Illus. by the author

Rootstock Publishing (32 pp.)

\$13.95 paper | May 15, 2019

978-1-57869-012-1

A little girl who longs to fly unexpectedly finds her passion in a ballet class in this debut picture book by author/illustrator Zimet.

Adventurous Lucy, a White girl, loves to run along the beach and pretend to fly, and she worries her mother by playing near rocks. She also loves the feel of floating in the water, and she even tries gymnastics because the flips remind her of flying. When her mother enrolls her in a ballet class, complete with pink tights and shoes, Lucy is nonplussed. But practicing ballet surprises Lucy; she appreciates the wisdom of her Russian teacher, Miss Gabriela; the French terminology; and the skills of her diverse classmates. Lucy's love for ballet extends to practicing at home, mending her own slippers, and performing in recitals. Her sister's constant criticisms fall away as Lucy finally feels like she can truly fly. Zimet's simple yet lyrical text and full-color illustrations that mix line art and paint capture Lucy's growing love for dance in an authentic voice. The image of Lucy's initial disdain for ballet, including her rebellion against pink ("I wore black"), captures her emotions perfectly; her transformation into a skilled dancer, depicted through ballet poses, is also believable.

This book will appeal most to dancers, but any child who's had a passion surprise them will also feel at home.

KIRKUS MEDIA LLC



Chairman

HERBERT SIMON

President & Publisher

MARC WINKELMAN

Chief Executive Officer

MEG LABORDE KUEHN



Copyright 2020 by Kirkus Media LLC.

KIRKUS REVIEWS (ISSN 1948-7428)

is published semimonthly by Kirkus Media LLC,

2600 Via Fortuna, Suite 130, Austin, TX 78746.

Subscription prices are:

Digital & Print Subscription (U.S.) - 12 Months (\$199.00)

Digital & Print Subscription (International) - 12 Months (\$229.00)

Digital Only Subscription - 12 Months (\$169.00)

Single copy: \$25.00.

All other rates on request.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to Kirkus Reviews, 2600 Via Fortuna, Suite 130, Austin, TX 78746.

Periodicals Postage Paid

at Austin, TX 78710 and at additional mailing offices.

INDIE

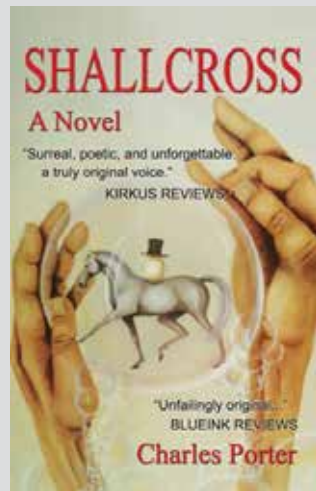
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

FICTION | NONFICTION | CHILDREN'S | YOUNG ADULT | INDIE



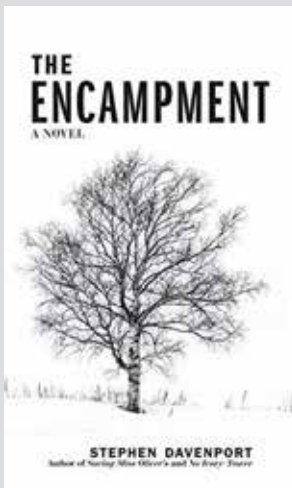
THE ORPHAN'S DAUGHTER
Jan Cherubin

An alternately dark and luminous, wounded and affectionate portrait of a family in crisis.



SHALLCROSS
Charles Porter

Surreal, poetic and unforgettable: a truly original voice.



THE ENCAMPMENT
Stephen Davenport

A thoughtful and compelling account of the responsibilities that come with privilege.



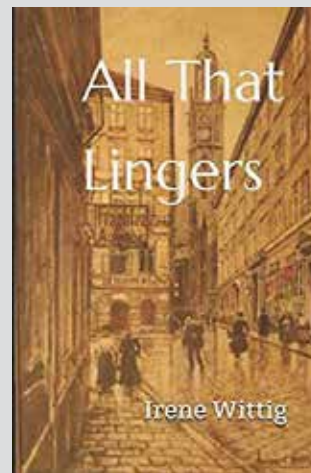
THE WITCHES OF WILLOW COVE
Josh Roberts

A delightfully spooky page-turner for middle-grade readers.



PROPELLED
Andreas Elpidorou

A smart and thought-provoking reassessment of the value of boredom and frustration.



ALL THAT LINGERS
Irene Wittig

A standout among the many novels set in this world-changing era.

SEEN & HEARD

By Michael Schaub

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN SUES FOR FILM RIGHTS TO NOVELLA

George R.R. Martin wants the film rights to his novella “The Skin Trade” back.

Martin filed suit against Blackstone Manor, LLC, in Los Angeles last month, claiming that the company didn’t exercise its option to make a good-faith film adaptation of his werewolf-themed novella in time, the *Los Angeles Times* reports.

Blackstone Manor “hastily assembl[ed] a barebones cast and crew” to shoot the film just before the option would expire, Martin claims in the lawsuit.

The production “was the equivalent of a contractor agreeing to build a skyscraper and, on the last day to begin construction—without a foreman, crew, or approved blueprints—having a handful of day laborers take a month to build a gazebo on the construction site instead,” the complaint reads in part, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*.

“The Skin Trade” was featured in *Night Visions 5*, a 1988 horror anthology. A reviewer for Kirkus singled out the novella as “a jet-powered, marvelously inventive, and suspenseful tale brightened by flashes of humor and of true terror.”



Jeff Krantz/FilmMagic for HBO



David Levenson/Getty Images

HILARY MANTEL: I’M DONE WITH HISTORICAL FICTION

Hilary Mantel is done with historical fiction—at least for now.

The English author told an audience at the Edinburgh International Book Festival last month that she’s not interested in writing another historical novel, the *Guardian* reports.

“I haven’t got another big historical novel in view,” she said. “I think that’s quite important to say, so I hope people will stop writing to me with suggestions. It’s lovely that people have the appetite for it but considering the pace at which I proceed, I would like some life before it’s too late.”

Mantel’s last three novels—*Wolf Hall*, *Bring Up the Bodies*, and *The Mirror & the Light*—formed an award-winning trilogy about 16th-century British statesman Thomas Cromwell.

Mantel said she now hopes to focus on plays and short stories.

“I don’t have a great strike rate with short stories,” she said. “I often find they fall over and I have to abandon them, but I’d like to see if there’s any potential there.”

OCEAN VUONG WILL CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE LIBRARY

Ocean Vuong is writing a new work for an art project in Norway. But you’ll have to wait 94 years to read it.

Vuong, author of the novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*, is the latest writer to take part in the Future Library, the *Guardian* reports. The project features authors contributing texts that will be unveiled in 2114.

The Future Library is the brainchild of Scottish artist Katie Paterson; she plans to recruit 100 writers across the globe to contribute. Other authors participating include Han Kang, Margaret Atwood, Sjón, David Mitchell, and Karl Ove Knausgaard.

Vuong told the *Guardian* that he was drawn to the project because it was “less egotistical than regular publishing.”

“So much of publishing is about seeing your name in the world, but this is the opposite, putting the future ghost of you forward,” Vuong said. “You and I will have to die in order for us to get these texts. That is a heady thing to write toward, so I will sit with it a while.”



Steven Vasic/Getty Images

Michael Schaub is an Austin, Texas–based journalist and regular contributor to NPR.

Appreciations: Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude* at 70

BY GREGORY MCNAMEE



John Leffmann

BLAME IT ON RUTH BENEDICT. During World War II, the U.S. military recruited the Columbia University anthropologist to write a report on the psychology of the Japanese, a reductivist enterprise that posited a monolithic Japanese mind so susceptible to the burden of shame that even a hint of it was enough to set ritual suicide in motion.

Benedict's report was published for civilians in 1946 as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Soon after it came books purporting to explain national psychologies, some by outsiders, some by what anthropologists once called "native informants" such as John Gunther, whose *Inside U.S.A.* appeared the year after Benedict's book.

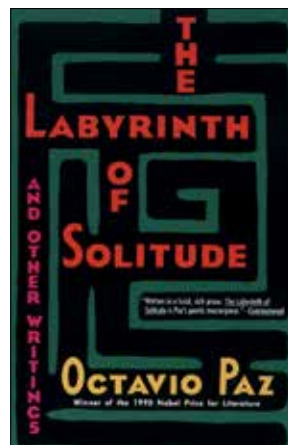
The Mexican poet Octavio Paz followed suit with a survey of his country and its people. Paz had been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to study at Berkeley and then entered his country's diplomatic corps, assigned to New York City. A few years later he was reassigned to Paris, and it was there, contrasting the three countries, that Paz wrote his book, published in 1950 with a title that reflected the existentialist spirit of the day: *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.

It was an ambitious effort. Paz attempted to condense 400-plus years of Mexican history, from the conquest by Hernán Cortés to the revolution and beyond, which required him to elide and omit major episodes. More daringly, Paz revisited the familiar notion that the Mexican character blended Native Mesoamerican beliefs and Spanish ideologies and customs, a story mythologized in the tale of La Malinche—save that he also embedded a story of Oedipal longing and revulsion into the mix, which drew the ire of conservative critics.

Paz took on other subjects in the essays, too. He was fascinated by the cultural differences between Mexicans and Mexican Americans, whom he called pachucos: "persons who have long since left their homeland, who can hardly speak the language of their forebears, and whose secret roots, those that connect a man with his culture, have almost withered away." Such an observation was not likely to win over readers in Los Angeles, but many other writers have since noted that a wall has existed between the two cultures long before Trump came along.

Paz further dissected the notion of machismo, that overweening ethos of male superiority that, he said, in truth hides fear: fear of the power of women, of supposed social inferiors, of the looming United States. It wasn't a recipe for making him many friends in Cuernavaca, either, but it didn't keep Paz from completing his radiografía, his X-ray of his own society, in which that fear transformed into a mask behind which lay a national character marked not by pride but by, yes, solitude.

Our way of looking at the world has changed since the time of *Labyrinth of Solitude*. We are rightly reluctant to essentialize, to make sweeping statements about other cultures and subcultures, even our own. Anthropology has changed accordingly. Octavio Paz's philosophical poetry ("between being and nonbeing / the grasses waver") will last forever, and if his inquiry into his homeland is dated, it still makes for provocative reading as it enters its eighth decade.



Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor.

Abandonment shadows
a father's fraught relationship
with his daughter in this
stunning novel.

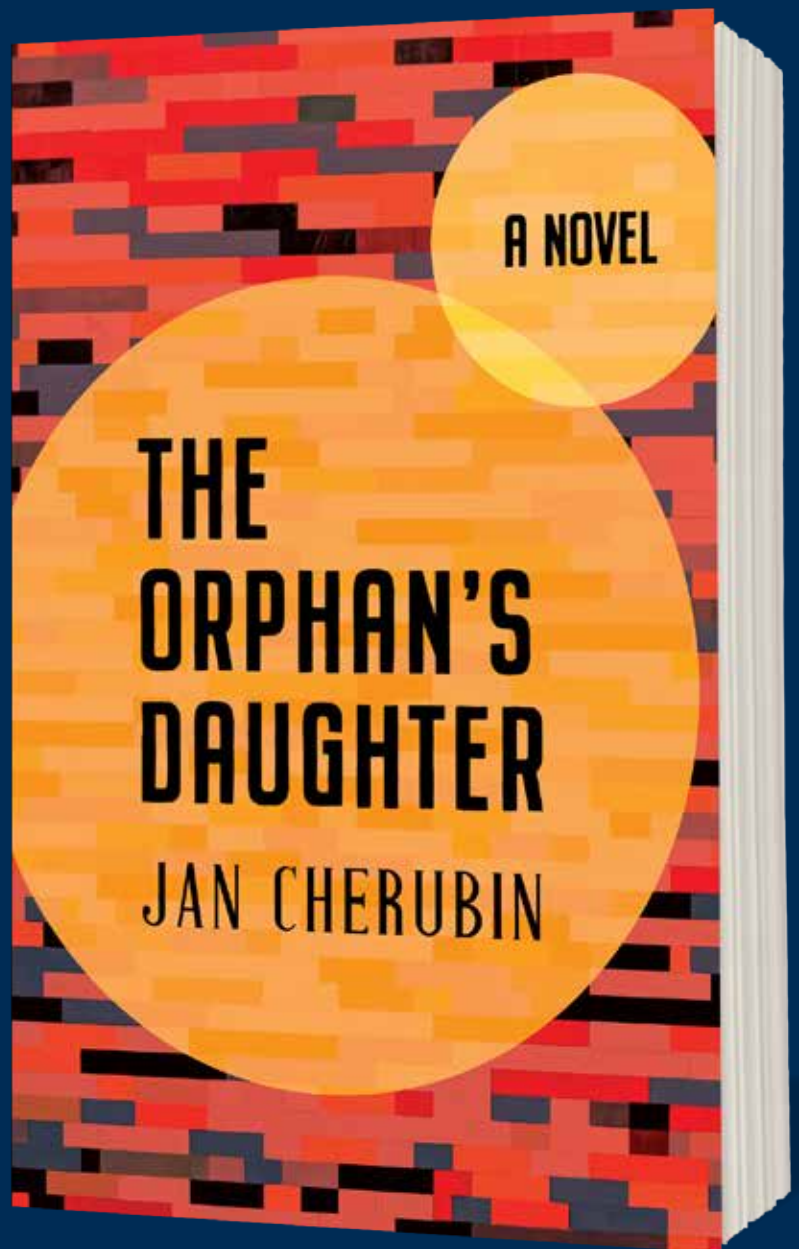
"with tenderness, force and humor
her spellbinding debut novel

SWEPT ME AWAY."

—E. Jean Carroll,
author of *What Do We Need Men For?*

"both **ASSURED**
and **NUANCED.**"

—Daphne Merkin,
author of *22 Minutes of Unconditional Love*



"EPIC AND INDELIBLE"

**"An alternately dark and luminous, wounded
and affectionate portrait of a family in crisis"**

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)



PAPERBACK ISBN #: 978-1-950154-15-9 • E-BOOK ISBN #: 978-1-950154-16-6



www.jancherubin.com



@JanCherubin



@JanCherubin