

Featuring 369 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction, Children's and YA books

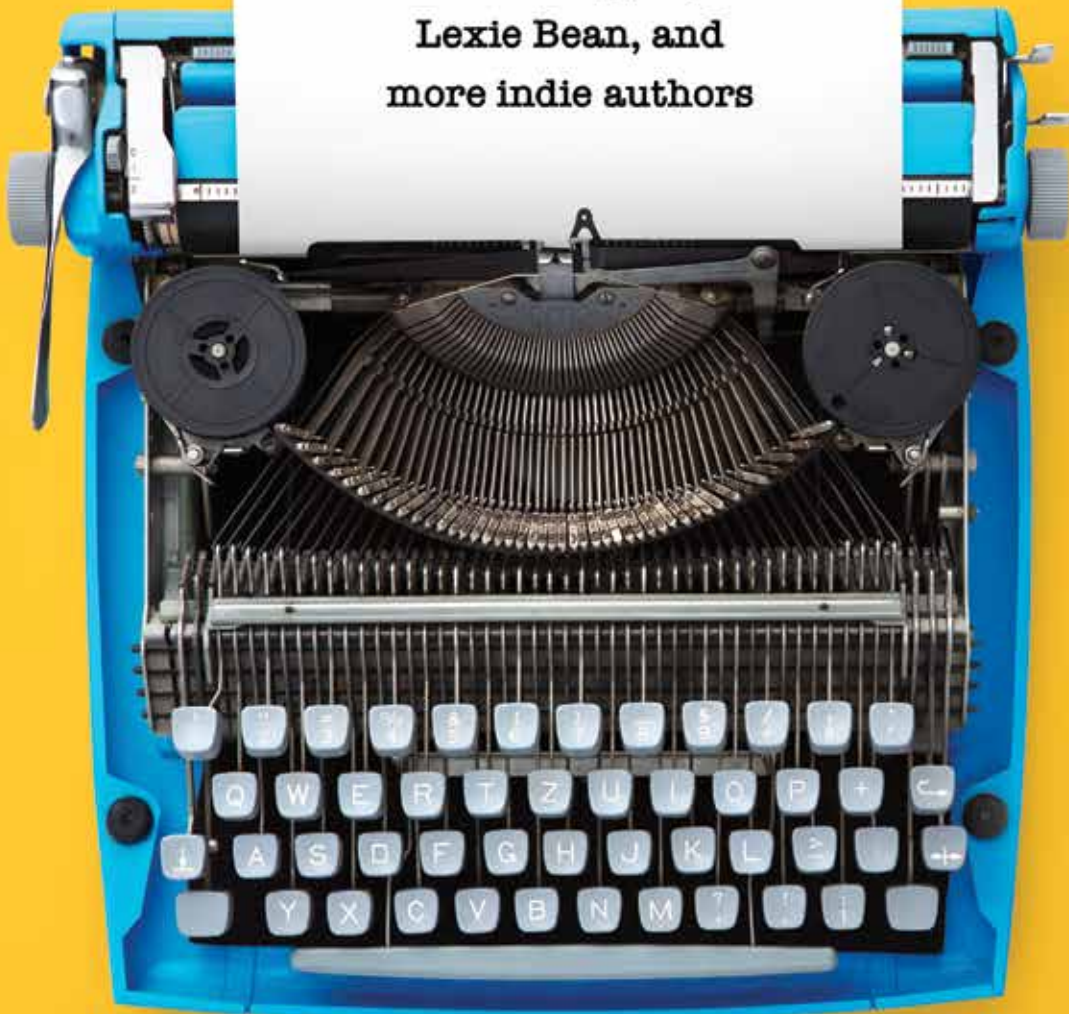
KIRKUS

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REVIEWS

THE INDIE ISSUE

With Pintip Dunn,
Jacob Appel,
Lexie Bean, and
more indie authors



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

Reading Independently

BY KAREN SCHECHNER



Karen Schechner

THIS IS THE FIRST ISSUE Kirkus has published since COVID-19 closed our Austin headquarters and New York office. It's also our inaugural Indie Issue. For readers and writers weathering self- or government-imposed isolation, maybe it's time to experiment with independent publishing, reconsider style or genre, push past procrastination, or collaborate in ways that ease feelings of isolation. Or maybe you just want to stop screaming at your kids to stop screaming.

Independent publishing is in its heyday. An author can upload their book on two platforms, Kindle Direct Publishing and IngramSpark, for example, and not only distribute it globally, including to nearly every independent, online, and chain bookstore in the U.S., but do it for under \$100.

Writers—despite the collective temptations of the internet and the absence of external deadlines—self-pub about 1.7 million books annually; Kirkus reviews more than 4,000 of them.

Indie publishing has a long list of venerables, like Henry David Thoreau, whom we write about in this issue's "Appreciations" ("Thoreau had trouble getting publishers to bite"). Walt Whitman self-pubbed *Leaves of Grass*, which went through numerous post-publication revisions—a practice that, to this day, is a big benefit of self-publishing. That iconoclastic spirit still fuels indie publishing.

There are no gatekeepers in Indieland. Writers can publish their work on their own timeline and control the entire process—from content to cover to marketing. In this issue, we talk with several indie writers. Some didn't want to wait the years it can take to go from finding an agent to final product; others realized that if they wanted to be represented in print, they'd have to do it themselves.

Rosilyn Seay, author of the starred picture book *The Girl Who Loved Pots*, knew that "she had some stories to tell, stories that might have too limited a market appeal for traditional publishers." She wrote a charmer about an African American girl who transforms everyday items. After a lot of research, Seay realized if she wanted to retain "absolute creative and artistic control," she'd need to do everything—"write, illustrate, obtain an ISBN, copyright, obtain a Library of Congress number, and find a distributor"—herself.



Meenal Patel wrote *Priya Dreams of Marigolds & Masala* because it's "critical for kids to be exposed to experiences they can relate to AND experiences that open their eyes to ones that are different from their own." Her starred picture book is a stunner; behold its saffron, pink, and green cover!

Queer and trans author Lexie Bean has both traditionally and self-pubbed their work. Their upcoming starred middle-grade book, *The Ship We Built*, with a transgender lead, will be published by Dial Books in May. "Self-publishing...gave me the foundation and reminder that at the end of the day it is still my story,"

says Bean. "This is especially important to queer and trans people as well as any 'minority group'; we have to know that we don't have to rejigger our truths in order for it to be worth the time and resources for it to get made. We take the risks before anybody else because we already know that existing comes with risk." Read Bean's essay, "From Self-publishing to Traditional," in this issue.

Cheers to the creative risk takers, happy reading, and take care.

Karen Schechner is the vice president of Kirkus Indie.



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Alex Aster's beguiling debut, *Curse of the Night Witch*, is an entirely original fantasy soaked in Latinx folk flavor. Read the review on p. 108.

Publication dates in this issue were correct as of press time. But books are frequently being rescheduled; please consult the publisher's website for the most up-to-date information.

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

PINTIP DUNN

HOW YA AUTHOR PINTIP DUNN LEFT A LAW CAREER BEHIND AND FOLLOWED HER CHILDHOOD DREAM OF BEING A WRITER

By Alex Heimbach



Elizabeth Thomas Photography

IF YOU COULD GO BACK in time and kill baby Hitler, would you? On its face, the answer seems obvious—of course it's worth killing one person to save millions—but the more you think about the question, the more complicated it gets. What if that one person was an innocent? Or your friend? Or your child? And could you even be sure that killing one person would change anything?

Those questions inspired Pintip Dunn's new YA novel, *Malice*, about a teen receiving messages from the future in order to help her prevent a devastating pandemic. "The book really combines all the things I'm interested in: time travel, big epic sacrifice, end of the world stuff," Dunn says.

Growing up the daughter of Thai immigrants in Kansas, Dunn always knew she wanted to write. When her first grade teacher asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, the answer was simple: an author. "All my life, though, I was kind of steered away from it," she says, "by my parents and by teachers, because they saw it as a frivolous thing that wasn't going to lead to a steady career." So she followed her English undergrad at Harvard with a law degree from Yale.

Still, that childhood dream of writing remained. "When I was a lawyer, I would get up two hours early and write before I went to work," she says. "I was just trying to fit writing in any place that I could." This routine was further complicated by fibromyalgia, which left her unable to type without severe pain. She took her law school exams orally and used dictation software instead of typing. (She now writes all of her books on her phones, where the letters are close enough together not to be painful.)

When a severe flare-up forced her to take six months of disability leave from her law firm, she decided to commit herself to writing a book. "For six months I could do nothing but lie there, so I wrote

my first novel that I was going to query lying underneath a glass coffee table with my laptop facedown on the glass and speaking into a microphone,” she says. Once the leave was up, she decided not to go back to practicing law and focus on writing full-time instead.

Since then, Dunn has published seven novels, all with indie publishers. But *Malice* is the first for which she sold the idea before writing the book. She and her editor came up with the concept together, while brainstorming after a conference. “This book was really different because it was a collaboration,” she says. “We came up with the idea together, we bounced ideas off each other....That was a really interesting process for me.”

Alice Sherman is a junior at a STEM-focused high school in Maryland along with her genius brother, Archie, and lifetime best friend, Lalana, when she starts hearing a mysterious voice from the future. First, she’s told to confess her love to a boy she barely knows, then to plant drugs in her best friend’s locker. The tasks only escalate from there. Before long, she discovers that the voice is a future version of herself who is desperate to prevent one of Alice’s classmates from creating a virus that will wipe out two-thirds of the world’s population. But she won’t tell young Alice who exactly the virus maker is.

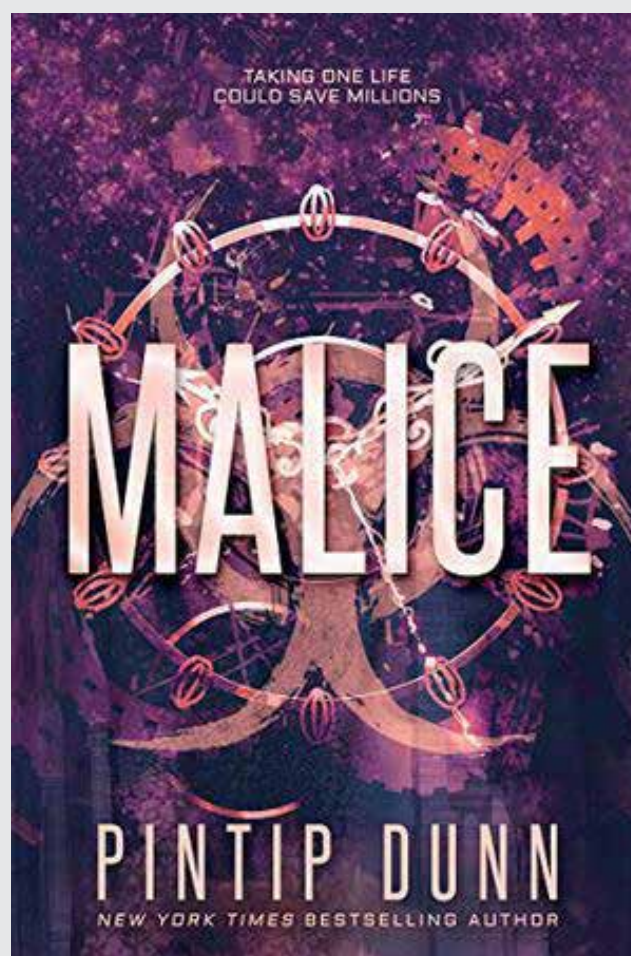
Much of the plot turns on Alice’s relationship with her future self, who sometimes goes by Malice, and whether she can trust this voice in her head. “Based on the way that your life plays out and the decisions you’ve had to make, how does that change you as a person?” asks Dunn. Is it Alice’s faith in her classmates that’s foolish or is it Malice’s insistence that one of them has to die?

A key classmate is Bandit Sadka—the Thai basketball player that future Alice inexplicably demands present Alice confess her love to. Despite Malice’s warnings not to fall in love with him, Alice finds herself drawn to the adorable (but arrogant) boy. It was important to Dunn that her hero be Asian—in fact, she based the character, or at least his penchant for

blue hair, on her son. “When my sister found out that Bandit was inspired by him she was really horrified that she was crushing on a grown-up version of her nephew,” Dunn says.

For her next book—a rom-com about a girl whose parents force her to date, but only on their terms—Dunn is going one step further: Both the hero and heroine are Thai.

Alex Heimbach is a writer and editor in California.



FROM SELF-PUBLISHING TO TRADITIONAL

By Lexie Bean



BEFORE 2012, I never wanted to publish a book. Nor did I believe I had the capacity to. I was the first in my immediate family to leave the automotive industry, extremely quiet, unhealed from many life circumstances, and, from a young age, I was placed in the “resource room” for the slowest readers at school. Even as a college student, I avoided writing classes with fear of rejection. My writing practice began as a private one. I started writing letters to my body parts because I was hospitalized for 10 days as a study-abroad student in Budapest, Hungary, with nobody to communicate with but myself. My body didn’t feel whole, so I wrote to myself one piece at a time.

Back home, I did not feel better in a place where many others also felt a disconnect from their own

bodies. As an experiment, I invited everybody I knew to also write letters to their body parts to allow our pieces to co-exist and maybe even heal through our seemingly individualistic issues together. People shared pieces to their butts, bellies, thighs, cancer, and more. I ultimately self-published this collection as *Attention: People With Body Parts* through CreateSpace, one of the many online avenues for self-publishing. I made an account simply because it seemed like the easi-

est way to print copies for the many people who contributed to its pages.

For *Portable Homes*, my second anthology, I took it a step further. I came out as a domestic violence survivor as I focused on collecting survivors’ letters to their body parts. I raised over \$4,000 on Kickstarter to fund another round of publishing on CreateSpace and organize a tour. However, I was terrified upon the release of this book. I was afraid of the consequences of coming out as a survivor and what that would mean for my personal safety. Because this book was self-published, I had control over where the book would be sold, how it would be marketed.

During this self-publishing period, friends and strangers occasionally offered, “Isn’t that heavy?”

when learning of the content. I had to stick to the belief that my story, among other survivors' stories, well before the #MeToo movement, was not heavy—it was a release. I accepted every letter from every survivor who submitted, and I would never force happy endings on their stories for any reader's comfort. After each contributor turned in their piece, I did not touch the spelling, the phrasing of the odes they wrote to their own bodies, because nobody should have to be “beautiful” or “academically educated” in order to share their sacred truths.

However, as a self-publisher I was responsible for the outreach, editing, cover art, and the many, many contributors—the process did get heavy. I found that every email sent, every tour I organized felt like I was shouting in defense of an entire community as well as my own story, my own body.

When I decided to make my third anthology, this time focused on trans survivors writing to their body parts, I decided to try “traditional publishing” to focus on the craft and emotional labor of holding many stories that mirror my own. In every conversation I had with people in “The Industry,” I received the feedback that anthologies and these “heavy narratives” are not profitable. It wasn't worth their time, and it shouldn't be worth mine. I decided to move forward with self-publishing for a third time. I began collecting submissions, reached out to countless online magazines and bulletins to get the word out with the guidance of mentor, author, and writing professor Susan Shapiro. Thankfully, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, a small publishing company, found my call for submissions on the Lambda Literary website. The publisher reached out to me and asked if they could publish the collection when ready.

It's because I had already self-published two anthologies that they trusted me to make controversial decisions that ultimately went into the making of *Written on the Body: Letters From Trans and Non-binary Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence*. I protected the pieces from getting edited

without consent—by extension, protecting the writers' bodies from further violation and preserving the truths often lost by trans people, survivors, and trans survivors. I am thankful I started with self-publishing, because it taught me that anything I write is ultimately my story, no matter how many people touch it. This is especially important to queer and trans people as well as any “minority group”; we have to know that we don't have to rejigger our realities in order for it to be worth the time and resources for it to get made. We take the risks before anybody else because we already know that existing comes with risk. And in this case, it paid off: In 2019, *Written on the Body* became a Lambda Literary Award Finalist.

My debut middle-grade novel, *The Ship We Built*, comes out with Penguin Random House on May 26. It is my first piece with a large house. My experience with self-publishing taught me to be uncompromising with the narrator's truth—namely, his truth as a young trans boy surviving incest. Without my self-publishing beginnings, it's hard to say who I'd be. Nonetheless, coming out as survivor and trans with smaller audiences first has prepared me for the conversations to come on behalf of my childhood self, my community, and my characters. Most of all, self-publishing has proven to myself that I can do it all, but I don't have to. As long as I keep telling the messy and oftentimes unspeakable truth, people and “The Industry” will catch on.

Lexie Bean is the editor of three anthologies and the author of The Ship We Built, a debut middle-grade novel coming out in May.

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

JACOB M. APPEL

A PHYSICIAN WITH A LAW DEGREE, APPEL IS ALSO A PROLIFIC WRITER OF NOVELS, STORIES, ESSAYS, AND POEMS PUBLISHED BY A RANGE OF TRADITIONAL AND INDIE PRESSES

By Gregory McNamee



JACOB APPEL is a man of parts. He holds a law degree but does not practice. He is a bioethicist, equal measures philosopher and clinician, who ponders the big questions of life and death. And he is a psychiatrist, working shifts at a busy New York teaching hospital, where Kirkus found him

on a quick break between patients for a conversation about his work.

Given those varied careers, one marvels that Appel has the time as well to be the prolific author that he is, and across a variety of genres. Appel has written novels, short stories, books of essays, a book of poems, and 10 published plays along with pieces in more than 200 journals. That impressive body of work runs the gamut of small and large publishing houses, with his 2017 novel *Millard Salter's Last Day* (about a down-in-the-mouth psychiatrist, as it turns out) appearing through a Simon & Schuster imprint and *Who Says You're Dead?* (2019), a book of medical and bioethical essays, published by Algonquin, one of the major literary presses. But most of his books have come out through small, indie, and university presses: Permanent Press, the University of South Carolina Press, and especially Black Lawrence Press, a literary house in upstate New York that has published five of Appel's story collections to date, including his most recent, *Amazing Things Are Happening Here* (2019).

"I always wanted to be a writer," says Appel. "But I didn't really know what that meant. I knew it was the kind of job you could do in your bathrobe and slippers, and that seemed very appealing. It wasn't until I got to law school, though,

that I tried to think of something more productive that I could do with my life. I didn't study much law in law school, but I did a lot of reading and writing—and that's why I'm now a physician and writer."

Appel did finish law school and went on to medical school, though he continued to turn his attention to his writing when he could. His subsequent career in medicine has allowed him a three-days-on, four-days-off flexibility that affords plenty of time for writing. "I tell students that if you're meant to be a writer, then writing really has to be your first priority," he says. "For most people, that priority is some combination of their job and their family life. It doesn't mean that you have to sell your children in order to write, but it does mean that if running triathlons is more important to you than writing, you'll never make it. So, with that said, my time when I'm not with my family or here at the hospital is spent writing."

That includes time taken to ponder, dream, and come up with what in the film business is called the logline—that is, a single sentence that summarizes the entire script. "I spend a lot of time working on that logline," says Appel, "so that when I finally sit down to write a story, I know how it's going to proceed and end." Mind you, that logline can take odd twists and turns; Appel relates one that imagines an alien sent to study the ways of earthlings but who winds up doing so in the setting of a Latvian restaurant located next to an abortion clinic. "It's a very concrete set of facts that lets you know just about everything you need to know to get the story written," he says.

It's not the usual stuff of the story anthologies, which favor a grittier approach to the things of life, but Appel professes an allegiance to a certain offbeat magical realism that coheres with life on the ward. "I walk on the edge of realism," he says. "And as a psychiatrist I hear the most

amazing stories—but, like the old joke about the rabbi who plays his best game of golf ever on the highest of the high holy days, who am I gonna tell? I invent my own stories, and I think they're believable—if you have a very broad definition of believability, anyway."

Not surprisingly, Appel has several other books in the works. Some are destined for the major houses, others for the indies with which he's been working over the years. "When my agent thinks one of my books is going to put her kid through college, she'll take it to a big publisher," he says. "The other ones, I'm free to take where I'd like." He adds, "Your career has to be more than one project." Jacob Appel has proven that again and again—and there's plenty more to come.

Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor.



INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

MEENAL PATEL & ROSILYN SEAR

IN THESE PICTURE BOOKS, GIRLS TRANSFORM EVERYDAY OBJECTS

By Karen Schechner



Meenal Patel

IN A DUO OF KIRKUS-starred picture books, two clever girls use their imaginations to transform their days. Rosilyn Seay's *The Girl Who Loved Pots* stars the endearing May, an African American girl who expects to get into trouble when playtime with her favorite household item goes awry. Our reviewer calls the book a "bracing celebration of creativity with a strong main character who deserves her own series." Priya also needs her own series. She, along with her classmates, boosts the spirits of her grandmother, who's homesick for India, with a saffron-colored garland of paper marigolds in *Priya Dreams of Marigolds & Masala* by Meenal Patel. The authors, who also both illustrate their work, interviewed each other for our inaugural Indie Issue.

Meenal Patel: What inspired you to write *The Girl Who Loved Pots*? Did you draw from your own experiences?

Rosilyn Seay: Definitely. Several memories from my life influenced my story about a young girl who created adventures using pots and pans. May, the curious little girl with endless imagination, and the babysitter who encouraged her to use that imagination were loosely based on yours truly and an adult family friend who helped me appreciate my greatest asset, my brain. The story approach was sparked by the memory of a friend who got a pot stuck on her head. But the biggest inspiration came from my sons, who amazed me with the adventures they created using some unlikely things, including the cardboard boxes their toys came in. I wanted to capture their inquisitiveness, imagination, and resourcefulness—the thing that is natural to all children. What inspired *Priya Dreams of Marigolds & Masala*?

Patel: I love that many moments and people inspired your story! My inspiration is similar in the sense that it came from different moments and people in my life—it's from my experience, my nieces', my sister's, my parents', and grandparents'. At its heart, this story is about being proud of your heritage and the power of sharing it with others. One clear catalyst was traveling to India with my parents. I was inspired by all the sensory moments and struck by how many of those things were deeply familiar, and at the same time, others felt foreign. That trip encouraged me to dig into all the complexity of growing up with many identities and cultures within me.



Seay: Speaking of “sensory moments,” I love the bright colors and imagery in your book. Which came first, the story or the pictures?

Patel: I definitely had strong imagery in my mind before I even understood what the story was. Those thoughts influenced where the illustrations went later on. Being in India was such a visual treat, and I captured a lot of photos while I was there. When I finally did have the story written, I referenced those photos to help with the illustrations, especially with color.

Seay: Incredible how you were able to do that.

Patel: How did you create your characters’ personalities, both in text and images?



Rosilyn Seay

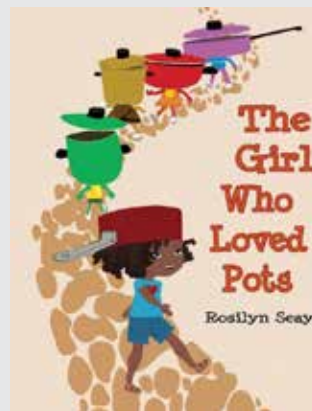
Seay: I started with a very basic story idea. I wanted to write about a young girl with endless imagination who happened to play with pots. It was critical that she be surrounded by supportive and patient adults. The kindhearted babysitter was a later addition. I then digitally created the illustrations to match the interactions and emotions in the text, constantly syncing the two.

Patel: How do you think diverse representation in children’s literature can impact kids?

Seay: I think that what’s depicted in their literature impacts how children view themselves and the world around

them. They not only need to see accurate representations of themselves, but of others who may or may not look, act, think, or talk like them. By being exposed to diverse perspectives, people, and places, children may come to see the world as a single human family.

Patel: I love that you called out that it’s critical for kids to be exposed to experiences they can relate to *and* experiences that open their eyes to ones that are different from their own. It is critical for all children to see themselves in books and other media. They need this as acknowledgment of their existence, as a celebration of who they are and what they can become. And on the flip side, it’s important for all children to be exposed to lives that are different from their own to build understanding, empathy, and a wider worldview.



Seay: It seems that family, culture, and heritage are very important to you. Was that the primary motivation for *Priya Dreams of Marigolds & Masala*?

Patel: Yes, those are all very important to me, but it was only as an adult that I felt proud of my heritage. I grew up in a city that wasn’t very diverse and that was lonely sometimes. Many things that were a part of my childhood home growing up felt so different from others in the U.S., but seeing them all in India was comforting. Taking that trip to India made me think more about all of our different identities. I put up walls between all of my identities because I was afraid of being different. As an adult, I realized how important it is to allow all parts of my identity to mix and to share all parts of me with people. I hope this book inspires kids to be proud of who they are and where they come from. And I hope it inspires them to share their own unique cultures and to be curious about other cultures.

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

JUDY JUANITA

A BLACK STUDIES PIONEER WHO BEGAN BY SELF-PUBLISHING SAYS READERS WANT GOOD BOOKS—NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE PUBLISHED

By Rhett Morgan



JUDY JUANITA WAS A PIONEER in black studies at San Francisco State University and Laney College in her hometown, Oakland, California, and in 2013 she saw the release of her debut novel, *Virgin Soul*, which retraced, through fiction, her own experiences joining the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s. In the years since, Juanita has released two more books, 2016's *De Facto Feminism* and 2018's *Homage to the Black Arts Movement: A Handbook*. With these works, Juanita shares her insight into black life past and present through essays, poetry, and playwriting. For her, self-publishing these books meant finding just the right audience for her sharp, witty takes.

In *De Facto Feminism*, you refer to yourself as an “observational ironist.” How does this sum up your style as a writer?

I’m a “Kibbles and Bits” writer. I’m always making notes, scribbling on Post-its and envelopes. And I get my sense of irony from my dad, who was a very sarcastic person....I eventually learned that sarcasm is a mark of high intelligence. So, I flatter myself to say that I observe closely and I see the absurdity

in human life. But, it’s really just a fancy term to say that I check things out.

How have your experiences self-publishing differed from working with a major publisher?

One of the main differences was that there is a small window of time with traditional publishers. It helps to get their stamp of approval, but exposure and publicity with them was only from the day the book came out to about three months later. It was just the opposite with *De Facto Feminism*, which took off slowly but is still getting responses. To me, the benefit of self-publishing is keeping your work alive.

Once you've self-published, it's there forever unless you take it down.

Do you think that self-publishing can open doors for more diverse voices?

Yes, because you can get to your own audiences, especially if you are a person of color or a person who has a specialized audience. One of my friends told me, "Do Oakland. Do you." So, that's what I did, and colleges here have taken up my books. I also learned an important lesson on my book tour. I saw very successful authors who had their book from traditional publishers and [others with] their books through indie presses. And they were all selling. It wasn't as though the buyers made some huge distinction. They were buying books just because they were by these authors.

You joined the Black Panthers when you were a student. What do you want to see today's young African Americans do to combat racism and fight for equality?

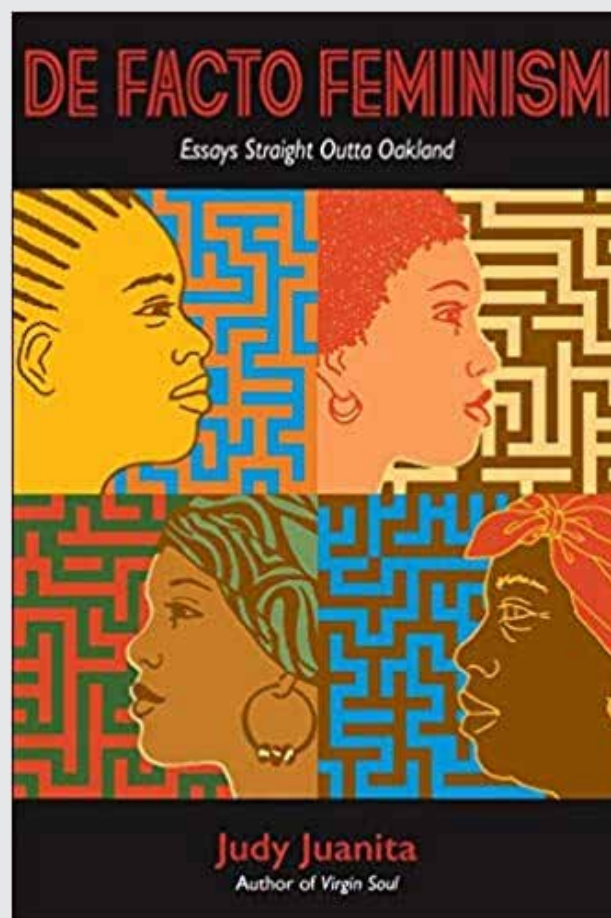
I want my students to have historical awareness. I want them to be aware of the factors involved in situating them where they are today. The breakthroughs that came from the Black Power and civil rights movements, those were so historic and fulfilled one part of the promise of the American independence....They need to understand those factors so they can understand why a Beyoncé and a Jay-Z can exist and have incredible power, why a Barack Obama can come along seven generations after the Emancipation Proclamation. That took seven generations of concerted effort.

You've written about "avoiding African American chick lit." What do you wish you saw more of on

bookshelves from African American women?

It's a critique but not a slam against those books. Anything that gets people reading is fine with me. My hope is that we penetrate all the genres. That's it. Like Barbara Neely, a mystery writer who recently passed away and wrote about a black maid that solved murders. Other people are able to write anything. Why shouldn't we? Sometimes they want to file us just under "Black Authors." We should be all over the place....James Joyce, you know, he was not just an "Irish Writer."

Rbett Morgan is a writer and translator based in Paris.



INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

ANDREW M. FAULK

AN HIV-POSITIVE PHYSICIAN SHARES HIS PERSONAL, UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON AN EPIDEMIC

By Rhett Morgan



As a physician living in San Francisco and then Los Angeles throughout the 1980s, Andrew M. Faulk saw the beginnings of the AIDS crisis in some of its biggest epicenters. And as someone diagnosed with HIV himself, Faulk also had unique insight into how his patients felt. From 1984 to 1991, he limited his practice to patients with HIV. He cared for his friends and even his own partner until their deaths while assuming that he himself would not last much longer. As one of the few individuals who survived

long enough to see the arrivals of better drugs, Faulk has now self-published his memoir, *My Epidemic*, to share the insights that come from his dual experience as both caregiver and patient.

The Kirkus review mentions that early days of the epidemic have become “difficult to imagine” in today’s world. What do you hope today’s readers will understand about that time?

I was present at bedside on several occasions when my patients were subjected to cruel rejection by their families as they simultaneously learned of their son’s diagnosis and his sexual orientation. But these painful individual encounters eventually contributed to a huge advancement in the acceptance of gay people and our movement for legal rights. In a binary world of “us” and “them,” for mainstream Americans we were “them.” But the epidemic served an unexpected purpose: Yes, we were “them,” we were gay, but to the surprise of society and even a few of us, the epidemic showed we were everywhere.

Being a gay man yourself, your book is also a firsthand narrative of the communities that were affected. How did you view their responses to the crisis?

To their great credit, it was the lesbian community

as well as many heterosexual groups that jumped in to orchestrate AIDS fundraising, education, and one-on-one care. Although I have conflicted feelings about ACT UP, they were a welcome force in coalescing gay men, recruiting devoted lesbians, and heightening the awareness of the general public in their drive to force the government and drug companies to prioritize research and treatment. Their haunting triangle logo, “Silence=Death,” was genius in its truth. While our brothers were dying all around us, ACT UP asked how those unaffected could continue on without any interruption in their lives.

Why did you decide now was the right time to tell your story?

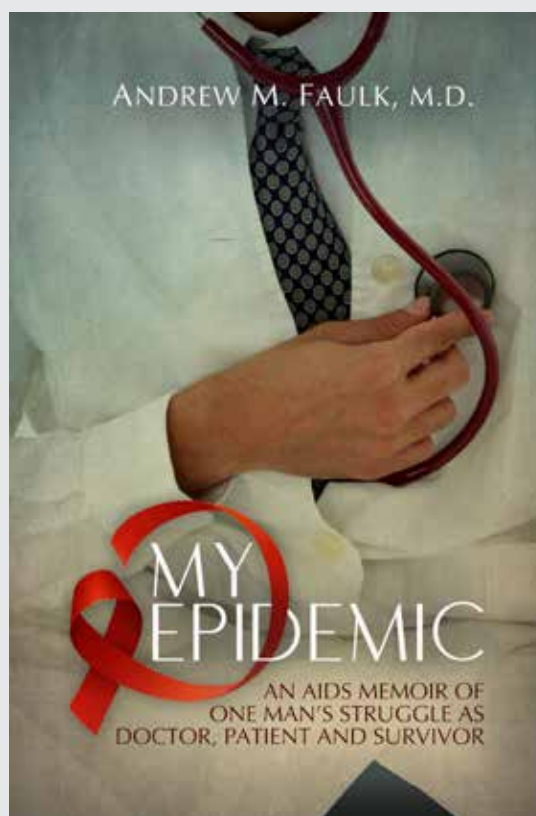
AIDS is now thought of as a chronic condition that is relatively benign. But in the 1980s and early '90s, even if we were HIV-negative, it monopolized everything we saw, everything we heard, everything we thought about. With so many people dying, I thought that gay society would never be the same again—that it should never be the same. But now I see our society going on without all these people. These times—and mainly these people—shouldn't be forgotten.

Why did you decide to self-publish?

I shopped it around for a year and a half. We came really close to a couple of formal publishing houses, and then they didn't take it. One house kept it for a year without giving me a response, saying it had fallen behind a desk. When it came to publishing on my own, my editor and I didn't know where to go....But we got a great typesetter and a great artist for the book cover.... We eventually did print on demand.

Your memoir centers around your dual perspective on AIDS. How did your own diagnosis change your perspective as a doctor?

With my identity intimately tied to my work, it has been a strain to separate the two. In fact, should you ask those who love me, they would tell you it's an enormous issue with which I still contend. My colleagues could depend on my ability to treat people medically—and emotionally—at the very worst moments of their lives. In our efforts to connect with people, our most powerful tool is empathy, and my life story and my own HIV status, while undisclosed, gave me an empathy which translated into an ease in achieving that all-important connectedness....Now I realize that simple words strung together have the ability to provide relief where there is no remedy. That is my hope with this story of the epidemic, that it may be useful for doctors and patients in some other ordeal of plague.



FICTION



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- THIN GIRLS** by Diana Clarke 21
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I HOLD A WOLF BY THE EARS
van den Berg, Laura
Harper/HarperCollins
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
(224 pp.)
\$26.00 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-374-10209-8



YOU EXIST TOO MUCH

Arafat, Zaina
Catapult (272 pp.)
\$26.00 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-1-948226-50-9

A particularly bad breakup leads a young woman to reexamine her past and how it shapes her identity and her desires.

The unnamed narrator of this novel is a “love addict.” What this means in practical terms is that she treats her partners terribly, engages in a lot of casual sex, and develops fixations on people who are unavailable and unattainable. Reading about her describe her life is a lot like being friends with someone who needs to give you every detail about their exploits in self-destruction and is incapable of heeding or even hearing the tiniest bit of reasonable advice. For some of us, it might be a treat to live vicariously. For others, it’s exhausting. How you feel about this book will largely depend on where you land on this matter. What is most interesting is the way Arafat navigates her protagonist’s complex identity. The narrator is, in addition to being a love addict, bisexual and Palestinian American. She comes from a conservative family, which made it difficult for her to understand her own sexuality when she was younger. Her queerness also complicates her already troubled relationship with her mother. At the same time, this character is living with her female lover in Brooklyn and DJ-ing at clubs where she hooks up with women and men both. This isn’t a coming-out narrative. Similarly, while her mother’s ethnic and religious backgrounds present challenges that the narrator has to overcome, she is, essentially, an American. This is to say that this isn’t an “immigrant story” if that means that acculturating to a new country and new way of life is the narrative’s central concern. Arafat’s protagonist is a messy, complicated character who doesn’t fit neatly into any single “multicultural” category, and that, all by itself, is refreshing.

An uneven but, in some respects, intriguing debut.



DON'T TURN AROUND

Barry, Jessica

Harper (320 pp.)

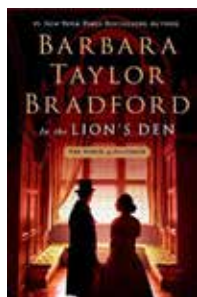
\$27.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-06-287486-3

Two very different women find themselves in a fight for their lives in Barry's adrenaline-spiked sophomore thriller.

Austin bartender and aspiring journalist Cait Monaghan couldn't have known a disastrous one-night stand with an up-and-coming country musician would change her life. Cait is shocked when the guy wraps his hands around her throat during sex and chokes her until she nearly passes out. When Cait posts an anonymous piece about the experience online, it's a hit, but she's eventually outed as the author. Sympathy inevitably falls on the guy's side, and her life and livelihood are threatened. The vitriol of it all inspires her to seek out something different, and she volunteers with the Sisters of Service, who help women in crisis. Cait is to drive her new client, the imminently poised Rebecca McRae, from Lubbock to an Albuquerque clinic, but once they hit the road in Cait's ancient Jeep, they realize that someone seems determined to make sure they don't make it in one piece. Both women are hiding secrets, and Cait is convinced that the man menacing them with his pickup truck is after her, but Rebecca is equally convinced that *she's* his target. As the attacks escalate, Cait and Rebecca must work together to survive their hellish road trip, and Barry builds a believable bond between the two women, born of both necessity and something deeper. The present-day narrative is cut with tidbits from each woman's life, and Barry gets inside the heads of men both intimately and peripherally connected to them, offering a disturbing glimpse at what drives men to horrible extremes as well as the constant sacrifices, big and small, that women are expected to make for them. Barry's electric, perfectly paced tale reads like the gritty lovechild of *Thelma and Louise* and Spielberg's *Duel*, and readers will cheer for Cait and Rebecca all the way to the end of the road.

An action-packed and fiercely feminist big-screen-ready chiller.



IN THE LION'S DEN

Bradford, Barbara Taylor

St. Martin's (352 pp.)

\$28.99 | May 26, 2020

978-1-250-18742-0

The second in Bradford's House of Falconer series about a retail dynasty.

By 1889, James Falconer, soon to turn 21, has made himself indispensable to commerce impresario Henry Malvern while dreaming of founding his own retail empire. As in the first installment, *Master of His Fate* (2018), James' extended family is still warm and supportive. The

decor of every dwelling, be it ever so bourgeois, is still lavishly detailed. And James is still exhibiting his preference for older women. His lover Mrs. Ward, age 31, left London for health reasons, but now there is Irina, age 22, fetching great-granddaughter of a Russian ambassador. One senses immediately, despite their speedy progress from attraction to a perfunctory "insert sex scene here," that Irina is just a place holder—until James and Alexis, Henry's daughter, between whom an attraction has been brewing since *Master*, can resolve their differences. Which seem to have mostly to do with competition for her father's good graces. To Alexis' extreme resentment, James has effectively usurped her status as Malvern's chief deputy since Alexis has chosen to remain, grieving, in the Kentish cottage her late fiancé, Sebastian Trevalian, built for her before his untimely demise. While avoiding her own family, Alexis is still involved with Sebastian's clan, which inhabits the large Trevalian country estate nearby—and she's hurt when the Trevalians avert a potential scandal, involving an unwed mother, without her help. Too often, such misunderstandings take the place of actual conflict. The mystery of who hired thugs to attack James

THE PATTERN MAKER

A Novel by
Richard Snodgrass



A brutal murder in Western Pennsylvania in the 1970s raises questions of coincidence and fate, perception and reality, and the deadly results when they're confused.

The latest in the critically acclaimed
Books of Furness
series

"...a dramatically gripping series."
—Kirkus Reviews

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PEOPLE'S PARTIES



IT'S AMAZING HOW QUICKLY the world has changed; when I see pictures of things that seemed normal a couple of weeks ago, like people crowding onto the subway or attending a Broadway show, I shudder. Don't they know they should be social distancing? But at the same time, I yearn for connection.

When will we be able to go to parties, movies, Seders, or even our offices again? I find myself thinking about Jessica Francis Kane's *Rules for Visiting* (Penguin Press, 2019), a lovely novel about a self-sufficient woman who uses an unexpected month off from her job as a university gardener to visit four friends she hadn't seen for a long time. Our reviewer called May "a winningly eccentric heroine in love with trees and literature," and her vulnerable journey toward connection may provide a blueprint for the months ahead.



Or maybe it would be fun to experience a fictional crowd—and what's more crowded than a football stadium on Thanksgiving Day? Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* (Ecco, 2012) follows a squad of U.S. soldiers on leave from Iraq as they're featured in the halftime show at the Dallas Cowboys game alongside Destiny's Child (yes, there's a walk-on from Beyoncé). "War is hell in this novel of inspired absurdity," according to our starred review.

Douglas Hobbie's *The Day* (Holt, 1993) also takes place over the course of a single Thanksgiving, as a family gathers in Connecticut for their annual feast. Hobbie's writing is intense and funny, and his scenes of family tension are so precise you'll find yourself ducking for cover.

If you've been missing book parties, there are a few options. Olivia Goldsmith's *The Bestseller* (HarperCollins, 1996) will plunge you into a world of expensive lunches and gala parties that was disappearing

long before the new coronavirus made its appearance. Here's the gossip at one of the parties: "Everyone had to scramble for bestsellers now just to keep in the business. Look at what had happened at Knopf—another house known for its great literary fiction: When Sonny Mehta had taken over that venerable firm, he acquired Dean Koontz!" OK, so Goldsmith couldn't see the future, in which Knopf managed to maintain its literary reputation under Mehta, but her book is still a tremendous amount of fun. Kirkus said it was "told with intelligence, wit, and shameless enthusiasm": I love it when reviews from our archive agree with me!

Written more recently but also looking back to publishing's past is *The Last Book Party* by Karen Dukess (Holt, 2019), a coming-of-age novel in which a young woman gets a job as an assistant to a famous writer in 1987 Cape Cod. "Written with fresh confidence and verve, this first novel is a bibliophile's delight, with plenty of title-dropping and humorous digs at the publishing scene of the 1980s," our review said. And it all winds up at a book costume party.



Margaret Drabble throws parties in many of her books. *The Radiant Way* (Knopf, 1987) opens in 1979 at a New Year's Eve party for 200 people during which Liz, the hostess, discovers through innuendo and indiscretion that her husband is planning to leave her for one of their guests. The book follows Liz and two of her friends over the next five years as their lives change and Britain changes under Margaret Thatcher. When I interviewed Drabble many years ago, she said, "I enjoy getting unlikely people together, which is what parties are for." Here's looking forward to attending parties in the real world, not on Zoom, before too long.

Laurie Muchnick is the fiction editor.

and a friend, left dangling in Vol. I, is also too abruptly solved here. As the undisputed heiress, however capriciously she treats her father, to the company James can only claim sweat equity in, Alexis is clearly a more suitable match for the budding tycoon. So of course they will end up together—it's just a matter of how much window dressing gets in the way.

Despite a few mild threats, nothing to suggest any actual lions in this den.



SAD JANET

Britsch, Lucie

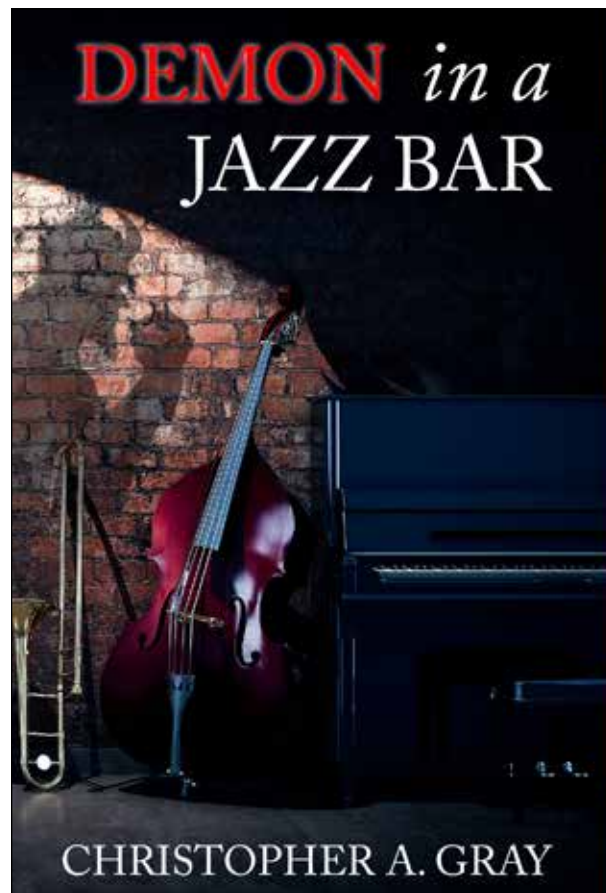
Riverhead (288 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-593-08652-0

In Britsch's darkly humorous debut, a deeply miserable woman is given a once-in-a-lifetime shot at happiness, just in time for the holidays.

Why fake happiness when you can luxuriate in despair? If Janet, Britsch's *Fleabag*-esque antihero, had a mantra, that would pretty much sum it up. Janet's spent most of her life being sad—even going so far as to lovingly give herself the name “Sad Janet.” “It’s manageable melancholia, which feels chic and French,” she argues. Much like Ottessa Moshfegh’s disaffected heroines, Janet takes pleasure in shirking societal pressures to always be striving. She finds some semblance of happiness idly working at a run-down dog shelter and has managed to hold onto a relationship with



A supernatural thriller-romance novella by
Christopher A. Gray, author of *Dark Nights* and
co-author of *All The Big Ones Are Dead*.

Daniel Byrne is an average New Yorker who has made some unwise decisions. His career is in shambles, he's undisciplined, he loses at poker, he owes money to the wrong kind of people, and his girlfriend just dumped him. His luck is about to change. The problem is, no good turn goes unpunished. Sometimes, a bit of good luck doesn't work out just the way you hoped.

"A rare 5 star book. Gives a clear picture in your mind with an entrancing story that makes you want more. Really tugs the heart strings. Highly recommended!"

—Goodreads review

Demon In A Jazz Bar is the first in a trilogy of novellas. It's intriguing and suspenseful, with action that drives a great pace and a romance that crosses time.

Available now at Amazon, Apple, Google, Nook, and Kobo.

ISBN 978-1-926433-19-6

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her boyfriend. That is, until her family stages an intervention about her depression and he breaks up with her right before the holidays. When a new company claims they have a pill you can take to make Christmas tolerable, she acquiesces and tries it out—with both a pro and con being “if I don’t give in, my mother will never speak to me again.” Here’s where the plot would inevitably turn. But it doesn’t. Instead, it moves with the same inertia as its narrator, like a pill caught halfway down the throat. A sardonic portrayal of self-improvement in an age where sadness is stigmatized, Britsch’s novel feels so apt right now. However, by its end, it becomes a sort of echo chamber unto itself, full of cynicism, angst, existential ennui, and no solution. Perhaps that is life.

A misanthropic tale goes awry.



THE PARIS LIBRARY

Charles, Janet Skeslien

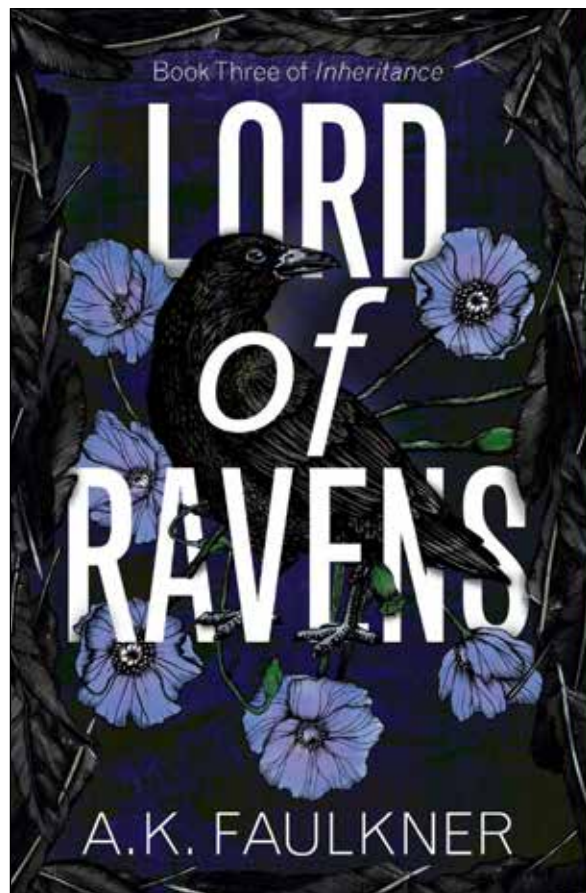
Atria (368 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-9821-3419-8

World War II Paris during the German occupation forms the setting for an intelligent and sensuously rich novel of a young woman’s coming-of-age.

In 1939, Odile Souchet, the daughter of the captain of a police precinct, has just finished library school. She lands her dream job assisting patrons of the American Library, which serves both foreigners and Parisians, and falls in love with one of the police officers her father brings home for dinner. As the war proceeds and the Nazis take over the city, she fears for her twin brother, who has been captured by the Germans, places herself in danger by transporting books to Jewish patrons who are forbidden to visit the library, and begins to question some of her boyfriend’s



LORD OF RAVENS

From the "Inheritance" series, volume 3

by A.K. Faulkner

Two lovers discover new paranormal gifts and enemies in this third installment of a series.

"Faulkner excels at creating individual stories within a cohesive urban fantasy series arc."

"Readers anticipating the author's knack for indelible prose won't be disappointed..."

"A grand entry in a consistently gripping and remarkable urban fantasy saga."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 978-1-912349-13-5

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Incisive social commentary rendered in artful, original, and powerfully affecting prose.

THIN GIRLS

actions. Her story is juxtaposed with that of a teenager named Lily who, in 1983, lives in a small rural town in Montana. When Lily's mother becomes ill, Lily grows close to her previously frosty next-door neighbor Odile, who moved to Montana as a bride immediately after the war ended. While the chapters featuring Lily are snappy and often amusing, especially as she begins to adopt Parisian airs, they play a distinctly secondary role to those concerning Odile's life during the war. Structurally, the novel sometimes sags: Charles tends to move into the points of view of secondary characters, which leads to some repetition. But the author has a clear affection for both Paris and the American Library, where she worked as a programs manager in 2010, and she integrates the stories of many of the real-life employees and patrons of the library into the story with finesse, earning the novel its own place in the pantheon of World War II fiction.

A novel tailor-made for those who cherish books and libraries.



THIN GIRLS

Clarke, Diana

Harper/HarperCollins (368 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-06-298668-9



A first-time novelist explores the abuse women inflict on themselves, the abuse others inflict upon them, and the intersection of the two.

When they were small, Lily and Rose were essentially indistinguishable—even to themselves. As they approached adolescence, though, Lily, the outgoing, people-pleasing twin, had become everyone's favorite while obstinate, awkward Rose became her sister's shadow. Their relationship to each other changed again when Rose discovered a talent for enduring the fad diets imposed by the leader of their clique. As Rose stops eating altogether, Lily starts eating more and more. Rose recounts this history as she embarks on her second year in a clinic where she is supposed to be recovering from anorexia but is really consuming just enough calories to avoid force-feeding. She likes the comforting routine of the clinic and the company of other "thin girls." It's only when Rose realizes that Lily is in a dangerously abusive relationship that she becomes determined to return to the outside world. Rose is a strange and prickly character, constantly interrupting her narration with bits of trivia from the random assortment of books available at the clinic. She is both truthful and wily, and her powers of insight are prodigious—except when she's analyzing herself. It takes her a very long time, for example, to discover that her efforts to shrink her body down to nothingness are related to her unwillingness to accept her own sexuality. The story she tells is as gripping as a thriller, but it's Clarke's language that truly makes this novel special. She writes with a lyricism that not only encompasses the grotesque and the transcendent, but also sometimes commingles the two. When Rose finds a collection of short fiction Lily has written,

these harrowing little fables bring the latent otherworldliness of the novel as a whole to the surface.

Incisive social commentary rendered in artful, original, and powerfully affecting prose.



DANCE ON SATURDAY

Cotman, Elwin

Small Beer Press (324 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-61873-173-9

A collection of six stories that bridge fantasy and realism, with a focus on the supernatural and the unexpected.

The stories in this inventive collection take familiar premises from fantasy—a king's precocious son gets into trouble, immortal beings pine for prior centuries and invigorate them with elements of black and African American



WHEN DEATH IMITATES ART BY P.D. HALT

In Halt's debut mystery, an art gallery co-owner is sent a painting depicting her slain in a bathtub—and then the scene plays out for real.

"Readers will find this chilling story hard to put down..."

"The author, who once lived in Germany, captures the edgy atmosphere of that country's art and club scenes in the '80s, and she offers richly developed characters along the way..."

"An engagingly written mystery featuring art, glamour, sex, love, and murder."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) ★

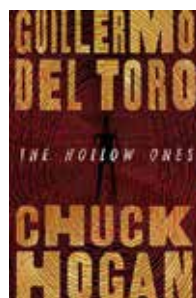
ISBN#: 9781626948877 • ebook ISBN#: 9781626948860

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cultures: The king rocks multicolored kente robes, and the undying crack up at BET's *ComicView*. The result is a refreshing take on favorite tropes, and the stories are fun and full of humor. In "Among the Zoologists," a narrator dressed in a wizard's robe en route to a convention is intercepted by sex-obsessed scientists: "They weren't going to the comic show." "Seven Watsons," the opening story and perhaps the best, unfolds in black vernacular and slides easily into the perspective of the narrator, Flexo, a young man doing his best to get by in the crowded, tumultuous world of the Job Corps. Flexo and his bunkmates welcome Chris, a new member whose tattoo of a goose lifting away from cattails earns him the nickname Duck, a misnomer. Additional, tiny details accumulate like breadcrumbs, making an unexpected turn to the otherworldly totally surprising and yet absolutely fitting. While not every cultural reference lands perfectly ("She waited for a bolt of confidence to dive like the Tuskegee Airmen and rescue her from timidity"), most are stunning, subtle details, seamlessly woven into the texture of each story, as when the king plans a "feast of yam and rice, goblin liver and suckled unicorn" or

when the immortal women "adorned their colossal church hats with feathers and sequins and leaves."

Fun, inventive fiction that refreshes the fantasy genre with elements of black heritage and culture.



THE HOLLOW ONES

del Toro, Guillermo & Hogan, Chuck
Grand Central Publishing (320 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-1-5387-6174-8

A rookie FBI agent stumbles into a supernatural mystery when a series of murders erupts in New York, starting with her partner.

Hogan and del Toro have an exceptional track record with supernatural thrillers—see *The Strain Trilogy* (2009-2011)—so this new series starring a novice FBI agent and a classic occult detective



A STAND-IN FOR DYING BY RICK MOSKOVITZ

A man agrees to sell his body—literally—in exchange for a better life in this science fiction novel from Moskovitz, the first in a trilogy.

"The author's commitment to deeply developing his characters—as well hitting them with more than a few twists and turns—cultivates what could merely be an interesting thought experiment into a compelling novel with some emotional heft."

"An imaginative and soundly executed sci-fi morality tale." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Look for the other 2 books in the *Brink of Life Trilogy*

ISBN print: 978-1734178906 • ebook: 978-1734178937

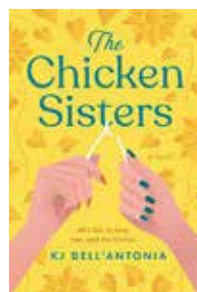
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A charming and satisfying story about family bonds that will make meat eaters everywhere crave fried chicken.

THE CHICKEN SISTERS

is a welcome gift to disciples of Lovecraft-ian fiction. Odessa Hardwicke is cast in the mold of Clarice Starling, a tough but self-doubting FBI agent still finding her way. She and her jaded partner, Walt Leppo, are first on the scene when a disgraced politician slays his wife and children. In the midst of this gruesome scene, Leppo unexpectedly and abruptly stabs the surviving child, forcing Odessa to shoot him dead, glimpsing a weird specter departing as he breathes his last. The narrative then jumps from the modern day to the Mississippi Delta circa 1962, where African American FBI agent Earl Solomon is on the trail of someone lynching white victims. Intertwined between these storylines is the origin story of our other primary character, John Blackwood, a seemingly immortal investigator modeled after Algernon Blackwood's John Silence. These disparate threads converge as Odessa, unjustly exiled from the FBI, connects with a dying Solomon, who gives her insight into his odd fellowship with Blackwood. After Odessa delivers an appeal to a cryptic mailbox in Manhattan, Blackwood suddenly materializes, a gaunt, erudite, and awkward consort cursed to chase down a specific breed of evil in this world. The body count rises with a massacre on Long Island while Blackwood teaches Odessa about a twisted cult dating back to Mesopotamian times that affords a select few souls, the titular Hollow Ones, the ability to jump between bodies and find ecstasy in their host's violent death. Readers of occult fiction from Poe to Richard Kadrey will instantly recognize the creepy vibes and likely enjoy the ride.

An inventive and macabre new spin on malevolent body snatchers.



THE CHICKEN SISTERS

Dell'Antonia, KJ

Putnam (352 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

978-0-593-08514-1

Rival restaurants (and sisters) compete on a reality TV show, but things don't go quite as planned.

Merinac, Kansas, may be a small town, but it's been supporting two fried chicken restaurants for years. Chicken

Mimi's and Chicken Frannie's were started generations ago by sisters, but now they're run by competing families, the Moores and the Pogociellos. Amanda Moore grew up working for her mother, Barbara, at the more casual chicken shack, Mimi's, but then she married Frank Pogociello and switched over to the fancier Chicken Frannie's team, which boasts table service and fried mozzarella sticks. Now Amanda isn't even allowed inside Mimi's, and her relationship with her mother is strained—and that's not even to mention her relationship with her sister, Mae, who fled Merinac the second she could and started a career as a Marie Kondo-esque professional organizer with a decluttering book and a television show called *Sparkling*. When Amanda hears about the reality show *Food Wars*, she thinks it could bring big business to Merinac—so she applies, and soon the TV crew

has descended upon the town to figure out once and for all which restaurant has the best chicken (and which family will win \$100,000). Mae even returns home to support their mother, help out at Mimi's, and possibly rehabilitate her own career. Dell'Antonia writes convincingly and sympathetically about complicated family relationships, giving Mae and Amanda each relatable flaws. The *Food Wars* scenes are a fun peek behind the curtain of the reality TV world, and the small-town warmth of Merinac is comfortingly quirky.

A charming and satisfying story about family bonds that will make meat eaters everywhere crave fried chicken.

WHERE SIN INCREASED

BY SUE BAUMGARDNER

This character-driven cozy mystery tears at the reader's heart following the Theberge family as John Daniel, an emotionally disturbed child grows into manhood. At ten years old, did he murder his eight-year-old sister? That's the driving question.

"Her rendering of the deeply disturbed and unexpectedly complex John Daniel is particularly riveting, and she manages to wring a horror novel's worth of tension from his relationships over the course of the tale."

"A well-told, if idiosyncratic, family drama with an unsolved killing at its center."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN# 978-1095701508

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



LOVE

Doyle, Roddy

Viking (304 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 23, 2020

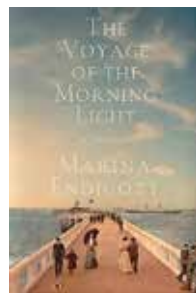
978-1-9848-8045-1

Two men walk into a pub, and they drink and talk until they can't do either for much longer.

Much of Irish novelist Doyle's latest is made up of dialogue, unattributed, as recounted by a man in his late middle age named Davy. He's joined by Joe, a drinking buddy from his Dublin youth, though decades and geography have left some distance between them. Davy and his wife have long lived in England. He returns (alone) to visit his widowed father in Dublin, where Joe still lives. Neither of them drinks much anymore, but now that they're reunited, they decide to do it up like old times. As their talk gets more drunken, sloppier and circular, those old times are very much on Joe's mind, because he recently left his wife

for Jessica, a woman he had first met in those long-ago pubs with Davy and hadn't seen for almost four decades. So they talk of who they were and who they are, their marriages and their families, since neither knows the other's much at all. In some ways, they no longer know each other well. Yet they know each other better than anyone else does, as the much younger men they once were. And perhaps still are? As Joe confesses and Davy badgers him, Davy also shares with the reader at least some of what's on his mind: his own marriage and something he doesn't want to share with Joe. He keeps checking his phone for a call that doesn't come. They keep ordering another round, pints that neither of them really wants. "The drink is funny, though, isn't it?" says Joe. "You see things clearly but then you can't get at the words to express them properly." Whatever clarity they are finding isn't all that clear to the reader, who is beginning to find their company as exhausting and interminable as they do. It seems that Davy is hiding something, burying something, doing his best to escape something from which there is perhaps no escape. Eventually, they have to leave.

By the time the novel belatedly reaches the big reveal, the reader has passed the point of caring.



THE VOYAGE OF THE MORNING LIGHT

Endicott, Marina

Norton (400 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

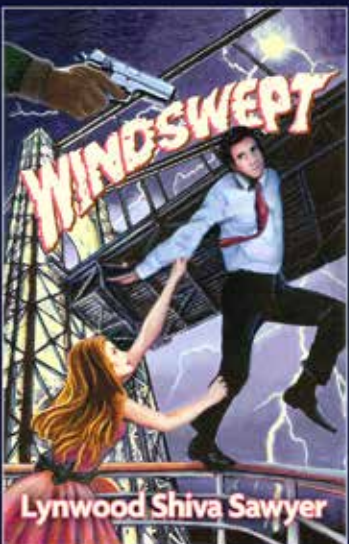
978-1-324-00706-7

Two sisters sail around the world.

It's 1911, and after her much older half sister marries a ship's captain, teenage Kay joins them onboard the *Morning Light* for a trip around the world. Their strict father has recently died, and as they travel, the sisters find themselves still haunted by his legacy: He'd run a school for Native American children in remote Canada, where scores of students apparently died from tuberculosis. Now Kay suffers from nightmares so severe she wakes up screaming. But as the trip continues, both Kay and her sister, Thea, begin to have a look around them. Kay begins studying ancient Greek with a goofy English pastor who's joined them. Things change when Thea, who longs for a child, adopts a young boy from a poor Micronesian island. Kay is troubled by the adoption, though she can't immediately articulate why. Endicott depicts her characters with great delicacy and sympathy. Kay, especially, is a wonder to behold: She's barely a teenager when the novel begins, and to witness her first encounters with the world, as she quietly unravels her own feelings and beliefs about what she sees, is simply marvelous. The novel's second half shifts in time and mood in a way that feels both surprising and exactly right. There is so much in this book to linger over, from Kay and Thea's relationship with each other to the strength and autonomy of Kay's mind to Endicott's lyrical descriptions of the sea and the ship. It's a novel to return to again and again.

Endicott's latest novel is a quiet, elegant triumph with no easy answers.

WINDSWEPT
 BY LYNWOOD SHIVA SAWYER



What boundaries would you violate to save the life of the only man you ever loved?

"...a lot of fun elements in this story as it makes use of different settings around the city... well-drawn characters..."

"An often enjoyable romp..."

—Kirkus Reviews

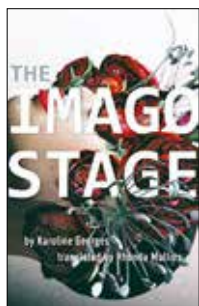
ISBN #: 9780997071993

For information on publishing and film rights, email windswept@exuspat.com • www.exuspat.com/windswept

Watch the teaser on YouTube: "Windswept - Sawyer - Novel"

A thought-provoking meditation on our relationships with images and digital life.

THE IMAGO STAGE



THE IMAGO STAGE

Georges, Karoline

Trans. by Mullins, Rhonda

Coach House Books (192 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-55245-402-2

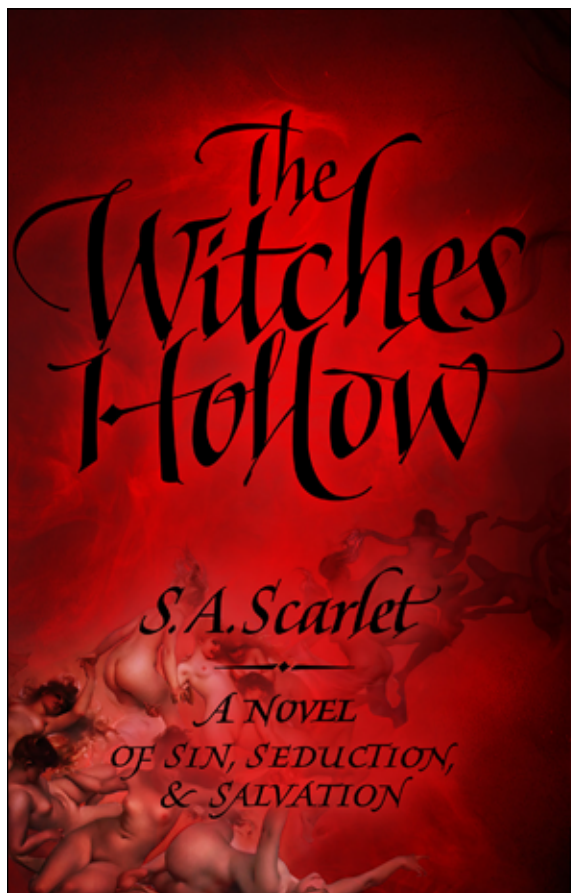
A woman lives through virtual reality.

The narrator of this provocative novel lives partially in a studio apartment in Montreal and partially in a virtual world of her own creation. Entranced

by her avatar, Anouk, a digital creation she can edit at will, she spurns the outside world until her mother becomes gravely ill and is hospitalized. Suddenly, she is wrenched from the cloistered, digital life she has built for herself and faced with the reality of mortality. The novel alternates between the narrator's present-day struggles and stories about her childhood growing up in Montreal and young adulthood working as a model in Paris in the 1980s. From a young age, she was fixated on

images and became obsessed with turning into an image herself. Instead of forming connections with other people, she began to live almost entirely through the digital world of avatars and virtual reality. Georges, who is an accomplished digital artist as well as a writer, clearly understands the power of the image, skillfully critiquing society's fixation on the female body as an object through her protagonist's fixation on images—she takes thousands of self-portraits while working as a model—and her inability to exist comfortably in her body. Only the digital world offers her true satisfaction. Georges' novel is intellectually rigorous and provocative, and she evokes the 1980s vividly. Her characters are thin, however, and her prose can be overwrought: Sentences like "Our galaxies moving resolutely away from each other with the grace of a celestial ballet" are common. Ultimately, this slim volume is more satisfying as an intellectual exercise than as a work of drama.

A thought-provoking meditation on our relationships with images and digital life.



THE WITCHES' HOLLOW

by S.A. Scarlet

Death. Despair. Sin. Seduction.

Introducing the stunningly seductive debut novel of S.A. Scarlet. A wicked tale set in a lost town where evil cloaked in beauty rules.

"A man wrestles with his past while attempting to free a village of an evil entity in this debut paranormal thriller."

"Scarlet proves to be a highly imaginative author and has much more in store for readers of this serpentine tale of sorcery and wizardry."

"A complex and intensely cinematic fantasy debut."

—Kirkus Reviews

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INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

JULIA ALVAREZ

THE AUTHOR REFLECTS ON HER LONG CAREER, HER NEW NOVEL, *AFTERLIFE*, AND HER ROLE AS A SENIOR LATINX STORYTELLER

By Megan Labrise



Brandon Cruz González, El Vocero de Puerto Rico

POET, AUTHOR, AND ESSAYIST Julia Alvarez built a legendary career telling varied, vivid stories of the Dominican American experience, beginning with *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) and *In the Time of Butterflies* (1994). Her latest novel, *Afterlife*, is out now from long-time publisher Algonquin Books.

How did you choose Algonquin as a home for your work?

Oh my gosh, I wish I could say I'd chosen them! Thank God they chose me....My agent, Susan Bergholz, sent [*How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*] to I-don't-know-how-many publishers—she's told me in the past, and I think I've blocked it—13 to 20, they all rejected it. Then this little

indie publisher down in Chapel Hill took the book. Shannon Ravenel and I worked on it for four years. It was lucky that there was this editor, at that time, willing to take a chance. I arrived at the cusp of Latino/Latina writers being “discovered”—using the verb with quote marks, like Columbus’ “discovery” of America—when we’d been right here all along. Algonquin was a small publisher paying attention in ways that maybe bigger publishers, following the old paradigms, weren’t.

And you've continued to work together over many years and many books.

I feel very loyal to who they are and their philosophy. They don't just look at the data of, how much did we sell, is the book doing well? They're interested in following a writer's trajectory, and I respect that because it's what I do as a reader. Once I have a favorite writer, [their latest] might not be my favorite book, but I'm interested in the imagination, the skill, the talent, the personality, and perspective that wrote it. I'm interested in that writer, how they think and put stories together, so I follow them. It's wonderful to get that from an editor, too.

Has the “why” behind why you write changed over the years?

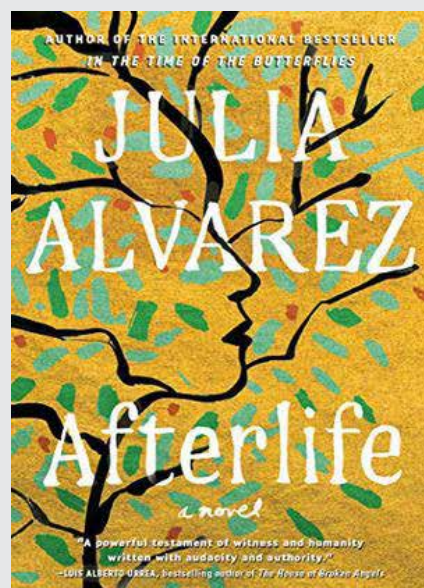
It has, definitely. For so long, I was trying to be a part of the bigger conversation—like Langston Hughes’ “I, Too, Sing America”—someday I'll be at that table, someday I'll be part of that large circle of literature and not pushed into the kitchen of minor writers. Part of the gasoline was to prove myself. The word sounds very Christian somehow, but to “redeem” the sacrifices that my parents, as immigrants, made so my sisters and I could have the education and life they wanted for themselves....Not that those aren't still drives in me, but now I have a different perspective. As Ruby Sales said, I have [“hindsight, insight, and foresight”]. I'm not just looking ahead and at

the present, but behind. It's 360-degree vision. I'm asking myself, what are the perspectives I can share now?...If [my] earlier books helped [Latinx readers] navigate their way as they came of age, what are the books that will help map the elderhood? I think stories help us to understand the different possibilities. What are the stories of an older Latina? What does that mean to be an elder storyteller and a kind of hybrid person, no longer in the country of origin and somehow living here and part of this culture, too? What are the things I see now that I might not have seen before, and what stories are left in me to tell before I go?

How would you introduce *Afterlife* to potential readers?

It is kind of a book of Job, but it's a particular woman, an English professor living in Vermont, recently widowed and retired. Many of the things that have held her life together are now gone, and she sees things happening around her, in society and in nature, that make this an elegiac time. I guess you could say it's about a person living in the world we're living in, right this moment. She's trying to figure out what her life will look like after the life—afterlife—she's been living has vanished. In some ways, it's about when things have fallen apart and you're living in a broken world, how do you go on without losing faith in others or yourself? How do you not succumb to a smaller, simplified version of yourself? How do we hold on to open-heartedness and connection and hope? I want my readers to feel the impact and force of all the losses that surround us but find in that brokenness the possibility of beauty and redemption and love.

Editor at large Megan Labrise hosts Kirkus' Fully Booked podcast. Afterlife received a starred review in the Feb. 1, 2020, issue.



IMPERFECT WOMEN

Hall, Araminta

MCD/Farrar, Straus and Giroux

(304 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-374-27258-6

Three British women have been best friends since their days at Oxford...and then there were two.

Nancy is the beautiful, rich blonde who is cheating on her husband; dumpy Eleanor is married to her career of humanitarian work overseas; Mary is the harried mother of three whose professor husband can barely manage to stop by the house between affairs. As the novel opens, Nancy has turned up dead after a rendezvous with her mystery lover, of whom no one knows a thing. Or just one small, possibly false, thing—she told Eleanor his first name was David. Hall's fifth novel takes a refreshing approach to the multiple-narrator thriller, eschewing at least two tired gambits: back-and-forth chapters between two points of view and tricking the reader by having a narrator withhold information. So thank you for that, Ms. Hall. The first third of the book, in which the crime is discovered and investigated, belongs to Eleanor, whose grief drives her to some uncharacteristic—and not very nice—behavior. The second part moves back in time and gives us Nancy's view of things prior to her demise. "I love what every man has always loved about you," says her lover. "Your perfection." Struggling most of her life with depression, Nancy certainly doesn't *feel* perfect. What's more, she wants out of this affair. The final section is Mary's, and it culminates in a satisfying solution to the crime plus an improbably happy ending, given that we're three corpses in. The murder-mystery aspect of the book is handled well, but the psychological novel is a little on the slow side, with much ruminating on the part of each character, and the Betty Friedan-era feminist themes—career vs. family, the awfulness of housework, the constriction of traditional gender roles—feel oddly dated.

Good bone structure.



THE SWAP

Harding, Robyn

Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster

(336 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-9821-4176-9

Who could have known that swapping spouses for one night could cause so much trouble?

High school senior Swallow "Low" Morrison has always been too tall, too intense, too strange. It doesn't help that her parents are polyamorous, which, despite their Pacific Northwest island's reputation as a haven for recreational spouse swapping, is still considered beyond the pale. After Low gets a glimpse of the

ethereally beautiful Freya Light, she doesn't hesitate to sign up for Freya's pottery classes at her home studio. Before long, Freya is crossing boundaries with Low and shares a few of her darkest secrets. Freya and her husband, Max, a former professional hockey player, moved to the isolated Hawking to get away from a scandal that ruined Max's career and tanked Freya's status as a social media influencer. Low's fascination with Freya quickly blooms into obsession, but Freya's close friendship with Jamie Vincent, a local shop owner, threatens Low's claim her. One night, Jamie and her husband, Brian, join Freya and Max for a night of magic mushrooms and steamy partner swapping. Jamie and Brian, whose relationship is already strained by their inability to conceive a child, are consumed by guilt, but Jamie isn't about to let that night ruin her friendship with Freya. Unfortunately, Low witnessed all that night's action from right outside Freya's glass encased home, and she won't hesitate to use it to her advantage. Of course, the fallout from that night, and Low's simmering emotions, inevitably crescendos to a shocking point of no return. The narrative shuffles among all the major players except Freya, which adds to her aura of aloof perfection.

As events spiral out of control, Harding's deft handling of her characters makes it easy to believe that Jamie and Low could fall under the spell of someone like Freya, whose cool beauty hides dark multitudes, and nearly everyone in this passion play becomes delightfully unhinged in the end.

Shamelessly soapy and dangerously addictive.



THE UNWILLING

Hart, John

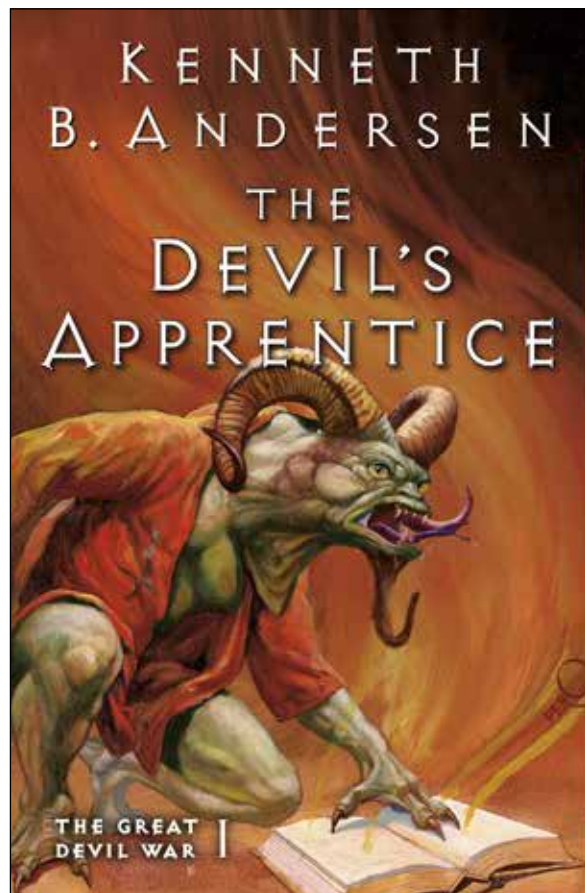
St. Martin's (400 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-250-16772-9

A dishonorably discharged Marine returns home, throwing his family into chaos.

A family melodrama at first appears to be the center of Hart's latest, a diffuse tale that lacks the drive of his other



The Devil's Apprentice

by Kenneth B. Andersen

In Andersen's YA fantasy series opener a teenager enters hell and unwillingly trains to become its ruler.

"Impressive world building through vivid imagery...Highly compelling."

—LoveReading

"One of the most unique YA fantasy books I've read. Highly enjoyable..."

—Bite Into Books

"Imagine if Tim Burton wrote Harry Potter."

—Goodreads

"Andersen's exceptional plotting ensures that its sequel will be irresistible. An enjoyably disturbing supernatural tale."

—Kirkus Reviews

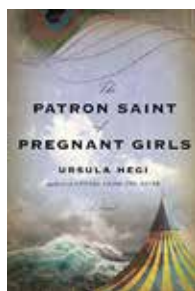
Karen Blixen award • ORLA award
BMF award • Danish School Library award

ISBN # • 9788763861625 • ASIN: B07J9MRZVJ

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works. Jason French has just returned to Charleston, South Carolina. After a dishonorable discharge from the Marines, Jason spiraled into drug abuse and landed in prison. Now freed, his presence roils a wounded family. His twin brother, Robert, was killed in Vietnam. Family patriarch William and his wife, Gabrielle (a woefully undeveloped character), determine to keep Jason away from his impressionable younger brother, Gibby, a high school senior. Gibby looks up to Jason, eventually believing his dishonorable discharge was undeserved. Gibby's coming-of-age tale might have focused the story, but it vies with a long lineup of characters, events, and themes trailing through the plot. Family drama morphs into horror story when a convict among a busload of inmates from a state prison farm spots Jason and informs Prisoner X (so named because his real name is Axel, or possibly because he killed 10 men). Worth millions and brutally powerful, X terrorizes prison staff and powerful outsiders into doing his bidding. X shared prison time with Jason and now, for reasons gradually parsed out, wants the ex-Marine back at the prison, so he manipulates his minions to murder a woman Jason knows and frame him for the killing. Fleeing arrest, Jason is captured and sent back to prison. Gibby thereupon determines to clear his brother of murder and learn what was behind Jason's discharge from the Marines (alas, not a very startling reveal). Now the narrative turns into a more traditional police procedural. The case windup adds some much-needed juice to an otherwise slow-moving, colorless narrative, which ends with a chilling kicker.

Less would be a lot more.



THE PATRON SAINT OF PREGNANT GIRLS

Hegi, Ursula

Flatiron Books (288 pp.)

\$26.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-250-15682-2

A folklore-inflected tale focused on three mothers, a highly unusual group of nuns, and a chorus of Old Women who comment on everything.

The main narrative unfolds in the wake of a freak wave that breaks over the beach on the island of Nordstrand in August 1878, sweeping away Lotte and Martin Jansen's three oldest children. Devastated and even unable to love their remaining baby, Wilhelm, Martin literally runs away with the circus, in this case the Ludwig Zirkus, a traveling band of free spirits in the harshly judgmental society of 19th-century Germany. Among its denizens is Sabine, abandoned by her husband and fiercely protective of her developmentally disabled daughter. Another Nordstrand refuge for misfits is the St. Margaret Home, founded by art-loving Sister Hildegunde, where nuns care for unmarried pregnant girls with love and without judgment. Grieving for her newborn given up for adoption, 11-year-old Tilli becomes Wilhelm's wet nurse while he and his near-catatonic mother are temporarily staying with the nuns, and her devotion becomes an issue with Lotte. That's a

lot of plot to launch a novel, particularly since Hegi intersperses Sabine's and St. Margaret's backstories in chapters dating back to 1842. The Old Women's interjections sometimes seem unnecessary, though it's a pleasure to hear of them giving a brutal husband his comeuppance. Hegi's contrast between the censorious, sanctimonious pillars of society and the kind, tolerant nuns and circus folk is a bit pat, particularly in both groups' anachronistic acceptance of open homosexuality. The vaguely magical realist elements aren't a strong point for this author, who has excelled in probing the moral complexities of both personal and political relations in such previous works as *Children and Fire* (2011) and *Salt Dancers* (1995). Still, her characters in this less satisfying book are still full-bodied, and their various conflicts lead to tender final resolutions for the three protagonists.

Not one of Hegi's best, but this thoughtful writer's work always merits attention.

THE CONCORDAT

FORGERY. BLACKMAIL. MURDER

BY SEAN HEARY

In Heary's debut thriller, the Catholic Church goes to great lengths to protect its reputation while the Kremlin is determined to destroy it.

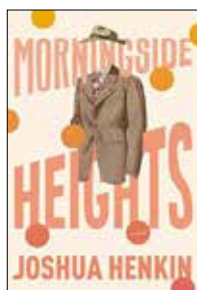
"His strengths lie in his ability to fuse dramatic tension, political intrigue, and even wry humor into a narrative that manages to be simultaneously informative and escapist."

ISBN: 9781789013443

"Highly recommended for fans of thrillers in the vein of Dan Brown's and Robert Harris' works."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) ★

For information regarding publishing or agent representation, please email seanhearyauthor@gmail.com



MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS

Henkin, Joshua

Pantheon (304 pp.)

\$27.95 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-5247-4835-7

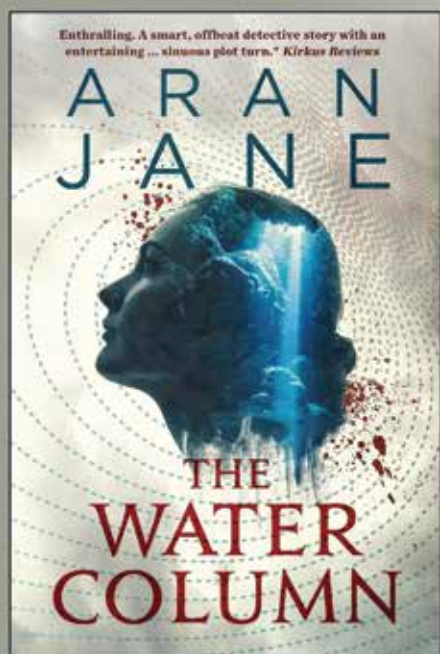
A superstar literature professor is struck down in his prime in the cruelest possible way.

"So you're sleeping with your professor," Camille said. "Weren't you the one lecturing about the casting couch?" OK,

it's a #MeToo novel, you're thinking, set at Columbia in the 1970s, about a relationship between a 22-year-old Ph.D. student named Prudence Steiner and her only-six-years-older Shakespeare professor, Spence Robin, a dashing, auburn-haired campus idol who rides her around the Upper West Side on his moped. But Henkin's fourth novel turns out to be a different sort of story entirely—tragedy rather than outrage. Pru drops out, gets married, gets pregnant while Spence gets two Guggenheims, a Mellon, and a MacArthur.

But talent and good luck are ultimately no match for early-onset Alzheimer's. Pru is 51 and Spence 57 and their only child, Sarah, has just left for medical school when discomfiting things begin to happen. Spence is cold all the time, misreads a party invitation, and, most critically, can't seem to make any headway on his book project, a new, annotated Shakespeare—though it would provide income they desperately need to support his disabled sister and his son, Arlo, from his brief first marriage. Henkin specializes in melancholy stories about complicated families, and this one is a real heartbreaker. His portrait of Pru is nuanced and sensitive, following her into one of the darkest places a spouse can go and hitting the notes just right. The other point-of-view character is Arlo, a dyslexic genius raised haphazardly by his bohemian mom and his underinvolved dad—his trajectory is interesting but distant from the emotional core of the story. Some of the most powerful moments in the book are sudden insights into Spence's experience—more of these would have been welcome.

Caring for a spouse with Alzheimers is an ever more common heartbreak, illuminated by this tender portrait of a marriage.



ISBN: (PB) 978-0-578-62289-7

ISBN: (EB) 978-0-578-62290-3

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THE WATER COLUMN

ARAN JANE

A private investigator for a law firm uncovers a potential conspiracy when she looks into a man's fatal high-rise plummet in this psychological thriller.

"A smart, offbeat detective story with an entertaining...sinuous plot turn."

—Kirkus Reviews

"An imaginative thriller...plunges into a mystery from the get-go [and] suggests more rousing adventures to come."

—Foreword Clarion Reviews

"Engaging. Crisply written with skilled dialogue and description...authentic and refreshing. Aran Jane has penned a thought-provoking character who deserves her own series."

—Blue Ink Review

For publishing rights or inquiries please contact aj@aranjane.com

Oh for the days when life was a picnic on the beach: Hilderbrand sets the gold standard in escapist fiction.

28 SUMMERS

**28 SUMMERS***Hilderbrand, Elin*

Little, Brown (432 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

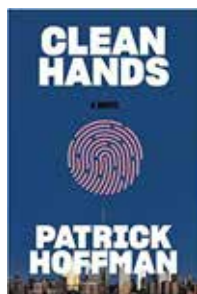
978-0-316-42004-4



A Nantucket-ization of the world's most romantic adultery story.

Inspired by the 1978 movie *Same Time, Next Year*, Hilderbrand creates her own pair of annual secret lovers—Mallory Blessing and Jake McCloud. Mallory is a Baltimore girl, born and raised in Anne Tyler territory, who inherits a Nantucket beach cottage from her gay aunt. Jake is her brother Cooper's best friend from his college days at Johns Hopkins. They first cross paths in 1993, when Mallory hosts Cooper's bachelor party over Labor Day weekend...and the book's title gives you a pretty good idea of the rest. When they meet, Jake is already the property of a glamorous but cold-hearted powerhouse named Ursula DeGournsey—the two grew up together in South Bend, Indiana—who by the end of the book is a U.S. senator running for president. To get to 2020, Hilderbrand paves a lush path of nostalgia, introducing each year with a rundown of headlines, song lyrics, and pop-culture memories, and also slips in an astute commentary on marriage, showcasing various good ones and bad ones along the way. Come for the sailing, the sunsets, and the sweet romance, stay for the cold gin and tonics, the lobster dinners, and truly unparalleled picnics: “rare roast beef, Boursin, and arugula pinwheel sandwiches, chicken and potato sandwiches with celery and chives; a marinated cucumber salad from the Baltimore Junior League cookbook, and lemon bars with a coconut shortbread crust.” In her 25th novel, Hilderbrand gets everything right and leaves her ardent fans hungry for No. 26.

Oh for the days when life was a picnic on the beach:
Hilderbrand sets the gold standard in escapist fiction.

**CLEAN HANDS***Hoffman, Patrick*

Atlantic Monthly (288 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-8021-2953-6

After a cellphone containing “hot documents” that spell trouble for a legally embroiled New York bank gets pickpocketed, the corporate law firm representing the bank turns to a government fixer with serious CIA experience

to limit the damage.

The mobile device contains texts, emails, and memos revealing that the Calcott Corporation has been illicitly funneling money to a shell company in Oman. Should that information become public, it would tip the scales of a federal law suit Calcott is defending following a failed merger. The phone was swiped—or made to look like it was swiped—from a young

lawyer on the team representing Calcott. Faced with recovering the phone and dealing with the shady parties into whose hands it's fallen, Elizabeth Carlyle, the imposing but easily unnerved head of the firm, calls upon glamorous ex-CIA case officer Valencia Walker to save the day. A problem-solver of high repute, Valencia traces the phone to three hustling Jewish Russian brothers in Brooklyn. They're easily enough dealt with, but the same can't be said of their powerful Uncle Yakov, whom neither they nor Valencia want to rub the wrong way. But Yakov proves to be small-time compared to the hidden schemers at work here. An enjoyably hard-boiled yarn streaked with noir effects, Hoffman's follow-up to *Every Man a Menace* (2016) is a skillfully orchestrated effort that achieves its most outlandish effects with nifty understatement. It is a book of constantly moving parts and constantly moving vehicles, as characters race across New York City to avert disaster. Ultimately, the author is less concerned with the human cost—little feeling is attached to characters' deaths—than the long reach of corruption in the modern era.

Crime fiction that gives chaos an entertaining ride.

Arnolfini
ART *Mysteries* 2

Rich DiSILVIO

★★★★★

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— Viga Boland for Readers' Favorite

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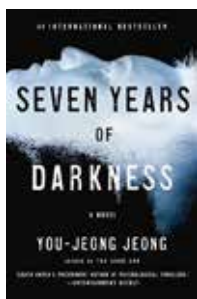
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SEVEN YEARS OF DARKNESS

Jeong, You-Jeong

Trans. by Chi-Young Kim

Penguin (352 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-14-313424-4

Questions, and plenty of secrets, still linger seven years after the murder of 11-year-old Oh Seryong kicked off a series of events that destroyed the lives of so many.

In 2004, Choi Hyonsu, who was head of security at Seryong Dam, was convicted of killing Seryong; Seryong's father, who owned much of the property around the dam; and his own wife, then opening the dam's floodgates, destroying nearly the entire Seryong Village. The scandal followed Hyonsu's 11-year-old son, Sowon, as he was passed around to numerous family members. Eventually, Mr. Ahn, a security guard who worked for Hyonsu at the dam, takes Sowon in. Now, the two make a living diving

for clams in the waters surrounding the island where they live in tiny Lighthouse Village. Their quiet existence is shattered when they help retrieve a group of people missing after a diving accident and Sowon's past is exposed. Sowon then receives a manuscript written by Mr. Ahn, detailing the events of 2004, and he begins to wonder if his father is actually guilty of the crimes that led to his incarceration on Seoul Prison's death row. Bestselling Korean author Jeong sprinkles Sowon's narration and excerpts of Mr. Ahn's manuscript throughout, and eerie interludes, such as a night dive by Mr. Ahn that reveals the largely intact underwater village that was previously flooded to create the dam, add a sense of dreamlike beauty. Each character's motivations are examined, such as Sowon's bond with his troubled, hard-drinking father and Seryong's treatment by her cruel father, the details of which are rendered even more potent by the author's frank descriptions. Missing and dead girls are a prolific staple of crime fiction, but Jeong's portrait of Seryong, a young girl unforgivably betrayed by the very people whose job it was to keep her safe, saves her from being just one of many. Readers will think they know what actually happened to Seryong long before Sowon does, but they should be prepared for a few final twists.

A moody and multifaceted psychological thriller.

In this debut novel, a man becomes obsessed with tracking the online identity of a person who may be behind a string of shootings.

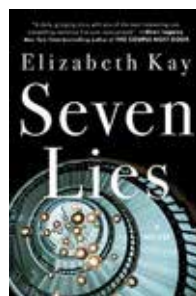
"...twists are genuinely shocking and only further the narrative's somberness."

"A profound, harrowing examination of violence in the 21st century."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #978-0-578-61739-8

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



SEVEN LIES

Kay, Elizabeth

Pamela Dorman/Viking (352 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-9848-7971-4

An obsessive friendship leads to tragedy, one lie at a time.

Jane Baxter and Marnie Gregory were the best of friends until Marnie's marriage drove them apart. Jane hated Charles from the beginning, but to avoid a confrontation with Marnie, she told her she thought they were good together—the first of seven lies that led to Charles' death and Jane's undoing. The story begins with this plot spoiler and counts down to the moment when it happened. It's as if Jane is begging the reader to get through the first few chapters. Fortunately, there's more drama to follow. Jane's own husband, Jonathan, died a while ago in a terrible accident. And the coincidence of two best friends losing two husbands in close succession has a nosy reporter scrambling to do the math, but with little evidence, the accusation doesn't stick. Jane isn't an especially likable character. The value she places on her friendship is relatable right up to the point when it leaves her morally bankrupt. It's no surprise when Jane's frantic efforts to keep her friend close after Charles' death pushes her away instead. The real tension lies in learning the truth about Jane's intentions—and the person who hears her confession.

Frustrating, fascinating, and wicked entertainment.

A swift, compelling thriller with unexpected swoops and swerves.

ALL THE BROKEN PEOPLE



ALL THE BROKEN PEOPLE

Konen, Leah

Putnam (368 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 30, 2020

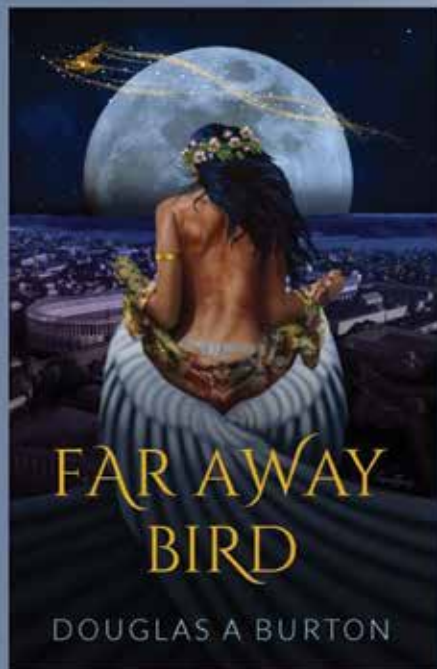
978-0-593-08547-9

On the run from her abusive boyfriend, Lucy King holes up in Woodstock, New York. Her new neighbors, John and Vera, welcome her with open arms. But are they too good to be true?

In her first non-YA novel, Konen proves herself a master of weaving webs that slowly contract, strangling characters in the threads. Within minutes of meeting Vera, Lucy is warned off the couple by Maggie, who lives on the other side of Lucy's cottage. She cautions Lucy that Vera Abernathy and John Nolan are charming but only care about themselves. But after Lucy's hidden all of her valuables under the floorboards beneath her bed and closely documented everything in the cabin, determined not to let her violent boyfriend,

Davis, gaslight her ever again, she drops by her neighbors' for dinner anyway. Soon, Vera, John, and Lucy are inseparable, their friendship fueled by alcohol and half-revealed secrets: Lucy confesses to Davis' abuse but holds back the details of his surveillance; Vera alludes to unfriendly relations in town but won't say why. And as the weeks progress, Lucy finds herself emotionally dependent on Vera and strongly desiring to kiss John. Yet questions persist: Why did their previous neighbor, Rachel, move out? Why are the townspeople leaving threatening notes in their mailbox and graffiti on their gallery downtown? Who is sneaking into Lucy's cottage, leaving faucets running and mementoes rearranged? As tensions rise, Vera and John tell Lucy about their plan to escape the hostilities by faking a death, and Lucy seizes the opportunity to help. But when someone turns up actually murdered, Lucy has to solve the mystery before she is arrested and blamed herself.

A swift, compelling thriller with unexpected swoops and swerves.



FAR AWAY BIRD

DOUGLAS A BURTON

Burton's award-winning debut novel explores the psychology of a young woman in an exploitative industry--from destitution to empress.

"...elegantly written historical tale in which he effortlessly weaves sweeping emotion and fine detail..."

"A well-researched rags-to-riches tale that's told with confidence and enthusiasm."

—Kirkus Reviews

"...monumental work of scholarship. Burton writes with tremendous grace and authority, but above else, he has an intuitive understanding of what makes history worth reading."

—Mary Anne Yarde, author, *The Du Lac Chronicles*

ISBN: 978-1733022101

ISBN-10: 1733022104

Cover art illustration by George Frei
www.treehouseamachine.com

For information on publishing and film rights, email d@douglasaburton.com • www.douglasaburton.com



THE MARGOT AFFAIR

Lemoine, Sanaë
Hogarth/Crown (336 pp.)
\$27.00 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-984854-43-8

A French teenager struggles to navigate her relationships with her famous parents in this moody bildungsroman.

Margot Louve's life changes forever when she and her mother, Anouk, a successful stage actress, see her father's wife outside a cafe in Paris. Suddenly, Margot begins to question the secret life that her father, Bertrand Lapierre, the French Minister of Culture, and her formidable, unconventional mother have built together. Though Margot adores her father, who remains a frequent presence in her life, his identity must remain a secret to the rest of the world. When faced with the reality of his other, public life and family, Margot begins to yearn for her father to leave his wife and takes a reckless step to encourage

him to do so. This debut novel by Lemoine, a French Japanese writer who currently lives in New York, explores Margot's relationships not only with her parents, but also with Brigitte and David, two older, married journalists with whom she develops an ambiguous, sexually fraught relationship. Lemoine excels at teasing out the ambivalent contours of relationships between teenagers and adults. At 17, Margot teeters between childhood and adulthood: Both insightful and immature, she is eager to be treated like a grown-up. Frustrated by adults who treat her like a child, she is drawn to people who seem to take her seriously. But these relationships are not straightforward, and as the book progresses, Margot reevaluates her ideas about Brigitte, David, and her parents. Though the novel is largely concerned with Margot's interior emotional state, it moves at a satisfyingly quick pace, and Lemoine's prose is visually and emotionally precise: "If she abandoned me," Margot thinks of Anouk, "I'd have a concrete reason to blame her, other than this confused feeling of unhappiness."

An engrossing, impressive debut novel that skillfully charts a young Frenchwoman's coming-of-age.

WHAT WE TAKE FOR TRUTH

BY DEBORAH NEDELMAN

Is there a path out of a forest of betrayal?

"...a permanent home on my bookshelf... displayed proudly and fittingly between Brian Doyle's *Mink River* and Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion*."
—Heather Durham, author of *Going Feral*

"An impressive environmental tale with an engaging heroine from a talented new novelist."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) ★

ISBN-10: 1950437183 • ISBN-13: 978-1950437184

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

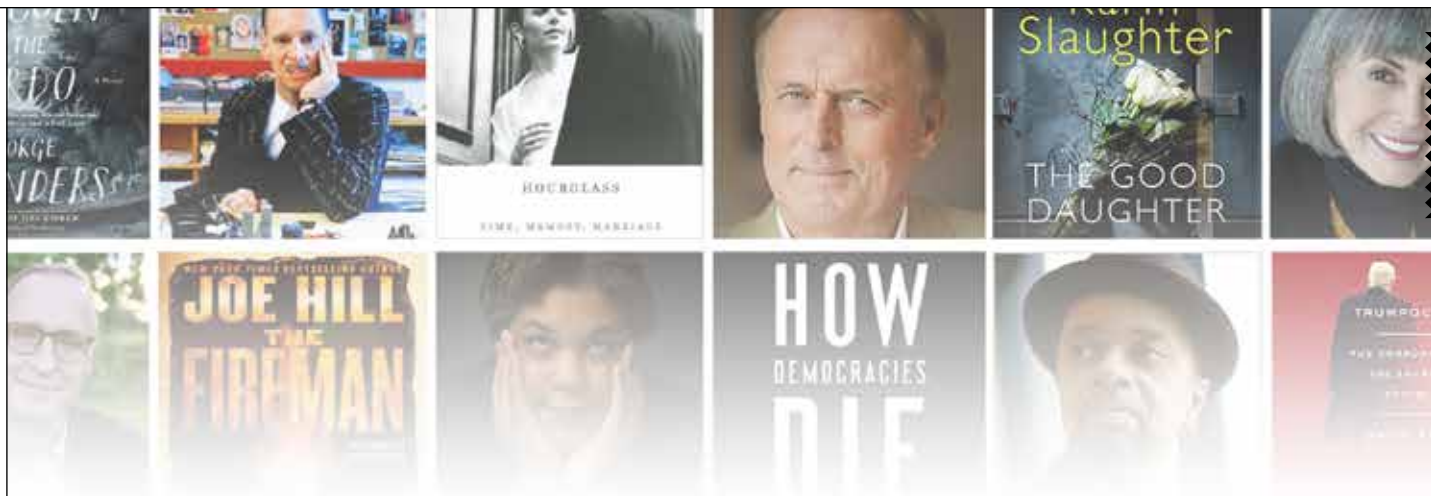


MUST I GO

Li, Yiyun
Random House (368 pp.)
\$27.00 | Jul. 28, 2020
978-0-399-58912-6

A mother grapples with her daughter's death.

As in her last novel, *Where Reasons End* (2019), written shortly after her son killed himself, Li, winner of multiple literary awards, again imagines the effect of a child's suicide, this time, on Lilia Liska, widowed 3 times, who has raised 5 children and the child of her dead daughter, Lucy, who killed herself at age 27, two months after giving birth. Now living in a senior facility where she treats other residents with cold condescension, Lilia devotes herself to reading and annotating the voluminous diaries of Roland Bouley, her former lover, an urbane older man she met when she was 16. Pregnant—with Lucy—from their first encounter, having seen him only 4 times afterward, she has become increasingly obsessed with him over the past several years after acquiring his diaries through the efforts of a local librarian: If she could understand him, she thinks, she might understand their emotionally volatile child. Roland, charming as he was, became a desultory, often self-absorbed bookseller who, Lilia suspects, "revised his diaries for dramatic effect" and "wore his lies like tailored suits." He recounts, in sometimes repetitious detail, assorted lovers and two long-lasting attachments: with a worldly older woman, a forgotten poet who, like Lilia, had lost a child; and with his coolly elegant, self-possessed wife. As much as Lilia insists on her desire to memorialize Roland and to leave his annotated diaries to Lucy's daughter, her real project is keeping Lucy alive. "I haven't stopped arguing with Lucy for thirty-seven years," she writes; "everything in my life is a part of



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**KIRKUS
REVIEWS**

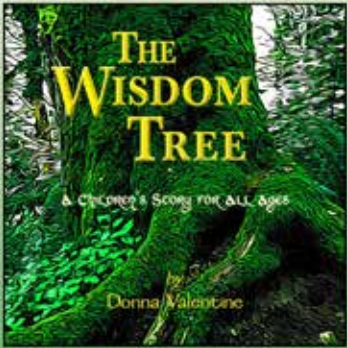
that long argument with Lucy.” Although priding herself on her independence and hardness, her reflections reveal abiding grief, loneliness, and regret, which she refuses to confront. Regrets, she remarks, “are like weeds. You kill them before they grow and spread. Willpower is the strongest weed killer.” Lilia’s bitterness masks vulnerability that too rarely emerges from Li’s restrained narrative.

A sensitive portrait of a wounded woman.

THE WISDOM TREE

A Children's Story For All Ages

Donna Valentine



“This book has all the right elements to be a quality children's book truly ‘for all ages.’ And those illustrations! This book is a gem.”

—Erika M. Schreck, Shamanic Practitioner

“100% 5-star Amazon ratings”

ISBN Hardcover: 978-0999677117
ISBN Paperback: 978-0999677124

“Valentine offers some nice metaphors...”

“A highly personal tale for nature and poetry fans.”

—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing and film rights, email askme@donna-valentine.com • www.donna-valentine.com



ANIMAL SPIRIT

Marciano, Francesca
Pantheon (256 pp.)
\$25.95 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-5247-4815-9



Marciano’s latest is made up of six longish stories set mostly in a vibrantly described Rome, often involving animals as pets or predators.

“Terrible Things Could Happen To Us,” about the ripple effect of an unexpected death, sucks the reader in immediately. Told from the multiple viewpoints of the dead man’s wife, her married lover, the lover’s wife, and both couples’ children, who are unhappily aware of their parents’ secrets, the story has a layered structure that gives it the rich, leisurely feel of a Fellini film. Though narrowly focused on two characters, “The Girl” also feels larger than its form. A young woman recently out of rehab apprentices with a circus snake charmer who hopes to charm her into loving him. He fails but years later rediscovers her in a satisfyingly bittersweet conclusion. The title story that follows is actually the book’s weakest. It cleverly contrasts the tensions between two couples—one newly minted, the other long-standing—who share a vacation cottage. But a lost puppy becomes the too-obvious metaphor for domestic bliss, and the resolution feels pat. In “Indian Land,” “the fragility of nature” more successfully reflects human fragility as a happily married woman leaves her husband in Rome to aid an ex-lover having a nervous breakdown in New Mexico (described with gorgeous affection). In “There Might Be Blood,” a New Yorker takes a two-month break from her troubled marriage to live in Rome. When hostile sea gulls beset her terrace, she hires a sea gull remover and finds herself obsessed, “like being in love,” with his hawk. Avian aggression exposes marital truths the woman has been avoiding. In the final story, “The Call Back,” an American film director in Rome meets the woman who inadvertently caused his older sister’s death 25 years earlier. Death’s lasting power echoes back through the stories, but Marciano’s closing lines offer hard-won hope.

Emotionally charged issues of commitment, loyalty, and trust explored with dry yet oddly comforting European wit.



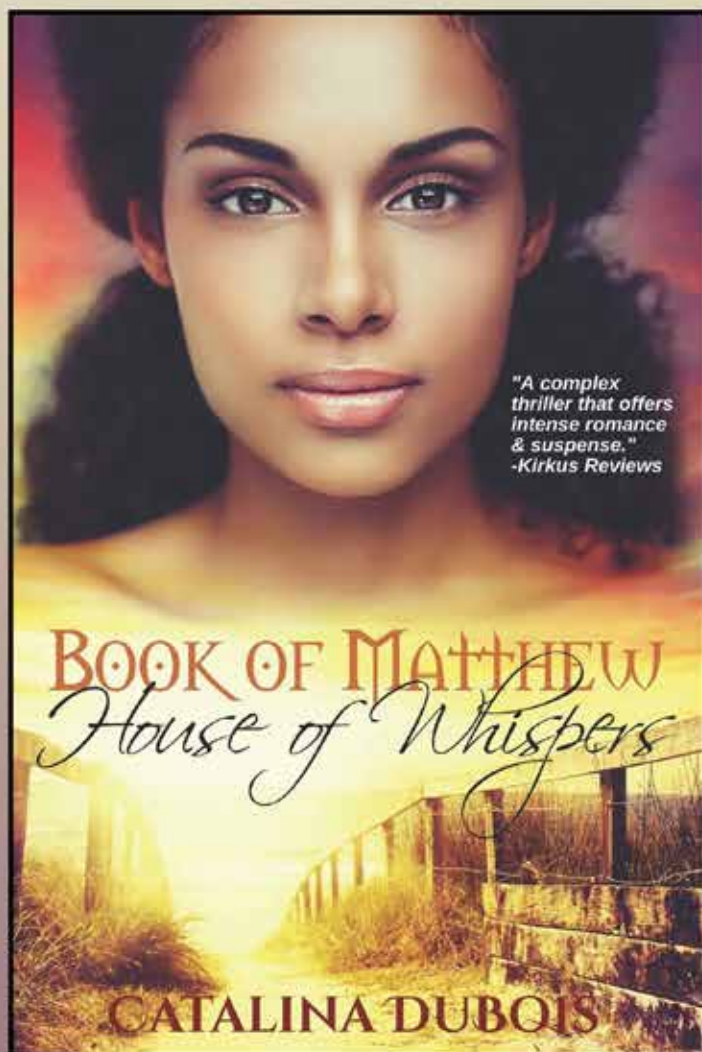
THE LEHMAN TRILOGY

Massini, Stefano
Trans. by Dixon, Richard
HarperVia/HarperCollins (720 pp.)
\$35.00 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-0-06-294044-5



A fictional history of the immigrant family that built a great American financial institution.

Source for the eponymous stage production, Massini’s imposing novel in verse tells the story of Lehman Brothers, the venerable



"A complex thriller that offers intense romance & suspense."
-Kirkus Reviews

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."

ISBN-13: 9781987088939



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

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investment banking firm whose unimaginable collapse in 2008 helped trigger the Great Recession. Beginning with the arrival from Bavaria, in the mid-19th century, of brothers Henry, Emanuel, and Mayer and the establishment of first a grocery store and then a cotton trading business in Montgomery, Alabama, Massini follows three generations of this German Jewish family as it sinks its roots in unfamiliar soil and then, through shrewdness, daring, and tireless work, forges a worldwide financial empire. Expansive and intimate, sober and playful, Massini's novel focuses less on arcane financial maneuvers and more on the outsized personalities of the Lehman family members who drove the company's success. Among the most memorable are Sigmund, son of Mayer, who steels himself for leadership by memorizing a list of 120 draconian rules for ruthless business dealing, and Emanuel's grandson Robert "Bobbie" Lehman, art collector and owner of racehorses, who shepherded the bank through the Depression and into the modern era, sowing the seeds of both its continuing prosperity and its ruin. Massini departs from the Lehman financial saga for a portrait of Herbert Lehman, Sigmund's brother, the liberal reformer who

challenged some of the excesses of capitalism displayed in the family business while serving as both governor of New York and senator from that state. With the aid of a vibrant translation from the Italian, the novel takes on an epic quality as the Lehmans relentlessly expand the scope of their business, accumulating vast wealth and economic power, while devoting themselves with equal single-mindedness to the acquisition of social status, the latter effort symbolized in their drive to shoulder aside rivals and move to the front row of their New York City synagogue.

A vivid account of one remarkable family's role in shaping modern America.



EVERYONE KNOWS HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU

McCarthy, Kyle

Ballantine (288 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-984819-75-8

Exploring a troubled, obsessive friendship between two young women in New York.

Whatever happened between Lacie and Rose in high school, they're not saying—not to each other or to anyone else. They haven't seen each other in more than a decade. Now Rose, a writer years deep into working on a novel based on their shared experience, has moved to New York and then, before either of them can catch their breath, into Lacie's apartment. McCarthy's debut is an utterly taut construction, as unsettling as it is propulsive. Rose narrates the novel—both in present-day scenes and in high school flashbacks—but it quickly becomes clear that she may not always make the most reliable source. Throughout, McCarthy toys with the idea of double consciousness: Rose, who scrapes together an income tutoring privileged teenagers, listens to one of her clients explain the notion this way: "It's when you see yourself from the inside, like a normal person, but also from the outside." As Rose digs deeper into her novel—sneaking into Lacie's room, trying on Lacie's clothes, hoping to gain insight for the character she's based on Lacie—the limits of her own self-awareness become more and more clear. Meanwhile, the obsessive cast to her friendship with Lacie continues to heighten. Ironically, though, as Rose's agent compliments her on her portrayal of the fictional Lacie, the other Lacie—the one we're reading about—remains something of a cipher. Rose grows into one of the more complex—and, sometimes, plainly repugnant—characters of recent fiction, but Lacie, the object of her fascination, remains, for most of the novel, just that: a blank object.

McCarthy's debut, with the acumen of the best literary fiction and the suspense of a psychological thriller, is a marvel.



"Diverting tale of murder, espionage, and the possibility of living forever."
—Kirkus Reviews

IMMORTAL RED
a novel
KEITH HUMMEL

The story of Turritopsis dohrnii, a dime-sized jellyfish with a bright red stomach, and the gift of immortality.

"...maintains a consistent momentum with short scenes and brief chapters, and his scientific elucidation..."

"...it's prime material for a sequel, as this is the first installment of a planned series."

For agent representation and information on publishing rights,
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An unusual heroine anchors this creepy, fast-paced chiller.

THE GIRL FROM WIDOW HILLS



THE GIRL FROM WIDOW HILLS

Miranda, Megan

Simon & Schuster (336 pp.)

\$26.99 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-5011-6542-9

Arden Maynor was only 6 when a traumatic event changed her life forever.

Twenty years ago, Arden, who now goes by Olivia Meyer, was swept into Widow Hills, Kentucky's underground system of pipes during a deluge and was trapped for three days before she was miraculously rescued. The rescue effort was immense, as was the media coverage. Support, monetary and otherwise, for little Arden poured in. Not all of the publicity and attention were good, however, and Olivia, who remembers very little about those three days, has been trying to put the entire incident behind her for a decade. Now she's a hospital administrator in rural Central Valley, North Carolina, and is starting to feel that the worst is behind

her, until she wakes up outside her home after a sleepwalking episode, the same thing that preceded her childhood ordeal. The sleepwalking incident sets her alarm bells clanging, but then she's approached, in public, by a man who seems to know exactly who she is. She hasn't even told her closest friend and co-worker, Bennett, about her past. When she awakens outside again one night, there's a man's body at her feet and blood covering her hands. The dead man turns out to be a blast from Olivia's past, and now the police are involved. But Olivia isn't about to let everything she's done to put her past behind her come crashing down, even it means opening a Pandora's box full of secrets that may have been better off left in the dark. Miranda nimbly mines underexplored terrain: the long-term aftermath of dramatic, highly publicized rescues. Olivia's desire to live a life undefined by that one event is relatable, and her amnesia about those three days lets Miranda flaunt her considerable talent for jaw-dropping, yet believable, twists. Even jaded readers might not see this one coming.

An unusual heroine anchors this creepy, fast-paced chiller. This is Miranda's best book yet.



FINDING CLAIRE FLETCHER

BY LISA REGAN

"Readers should drop what they're reading and pick up a copy of Finding Claire Fletcher."

—Gregg Olsen, *New York Times* bestselling author

"Regan keeps the tension alive from the first page. Her psychological insight into her characters make the story as intriguing as it is real as today's headlines. This is a well-written and thought-provoking novel that will keep you riveted until the conclusion."

—*Suspense Magazine*

"A wonderfully written crime tale that favorably compares to the work of Michael Connelly, James Lee Burke, and Elmore Leonard."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review) ★

ISBN: 978-1542046107

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ECHO ON THE BAY

Ono, Masatsugu

Trans. by Turvill, Angus

Two Lines Press (160 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-949641-03-5



Atmospheric tale, with shades of the procedural and the coming-of-age story, by Mishima Prize-winning novelist Ono.

Cross García Márquez and Simenon and set the piece on the Sea of Japan, and you'll have a feel for Ono's latest, told through the point of view of a middle schooler who's uprooted from the city by her unambitious father, newly appointed the police chief of a small fishing village. Strange things are afoot there. Dad's first friend is the town drunk, who'd "endured no real defeats, exhausted by an endless struggle against barriers (the enemy without) and hesitation (the enemy within)." The two stay up late, night after night, drinking while other townies

make a sport of sending bottle rockets flying toward the home of a widow named Toshiko. Meanwhile, an election brings out political opponents, one of whom doesn't have much of a platform except to keep those rockets out of the air, and more than a little whiff of corruption. Ono's yarn brims with unexpected turns that not only link these matters, but also nimbly move the villagers backward and forward in time and space: Toshiko and the stumbling drunk have a connection that stretches across the sea to Manchuria, where a Japanese army of occupation behaved brutally during World War II, and now Chinese migrants are crossing the same waters in search of jobs in Japan, some dying miserably in the holds of rusting freighters even as a pollution-born red tide devastates the fisheries. Throughout, Ono peppers the story with magic-realist moments: The drunk finds a corpse buried in seaside muck that only he seems able to see while a "rock-like" fisherman and a chemically toxic colonel hover on the edges of an altogether beguiling, swiftly flowing story, one in which everything—well, almost everything—connects in the end.

Fans of Kenzaburo Oe's *Death by Water* and Haruki Murakami's *1Q84* will enjoy Ono's enigmatic story.

STARMANS SAGA

THE LONG, STRANGE JOURNEY OF LEIF THE LUCKY

BY COLIN ALEXANDER



ISBN # 978-0-9993257-6-5 (paperback)
978-0-9993257-3-5 (Kindle)

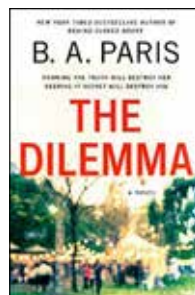
An American on humanity's first voyage to another star system discovers peril, romance, and considerable mayhem on the contentious project.

"...the author skillfully steers the story. Alexander creates a good number of memorable jeopardy-in-space situations requiring steady nerves and know-how, and he evokes a nicely thought-out alien environment."

"A vigorous, intelligent reworking of familiar SF elements, featuring an American veteran who makes a long, international space voyage survivable."

—Kirkus Reviews

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THE DILEMMA

Paris, B.A.

St. Martin's (352 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-250-15136-0

A woman plans—and experiences—the long-awaited 40th birthday party of her dreams. But to ensure the party is a success, both she and her husband have decided to keep unexpected news from each other that will derail their lives.

Neither Livia nor her husband, Adam, are perfect. Over the decades of their marriage they have both hurt each other, but despite this, they still love each other. Married quickly in a registry office as teens because of Livia's unexpected pregnancy, their planned futures derailed 23 years ago as parenthood and manual labor replaced their individuality and chances to go to university. Because her dreamed-for over-the-top wedding didn't take place, Livia began saving money to have the perfect 40th birthday party as a substitute. But 20 years into the planning and six weeks before the party she finds out something she fears will end the comfortable life she and Adam have established with their two grown children, Josh and Marnie. So she decides to keep it a secret until the party is over. And the day of the party, Adam finds out something devastating that could not only destroy their lives if it is true, but could also needlessly ruin the party Livia has been planning for so long if it isn't. So he decides to keep quiet until after the party. This is a novel told almost entirely in hourlong chunks during the course of that day, alternating between Livia's and Adam's points of view. Author Paris grapples with the question of whether it's love or selfishness that keeps half of a couple from sharing bad news immediately with the other half and whether or not it's deceptive to

A grumpy octogenarian travels to Antarctica and rediscovers herself.

HOW THE PENGUINS SAVED VERONICA

do so. While the complicated, interlocking nature of Livia and Adam's social circle might present an overwhelming amount of detail to absorb at the start of the book, clarity comes quickly and is crucial to understanding the story.

An all-encompassing, tightly plotted novel of psychological suspense.



HOW THE PENGUINS SAVED VERONICA

Prior, Hazel

Berkley (368 pp.)

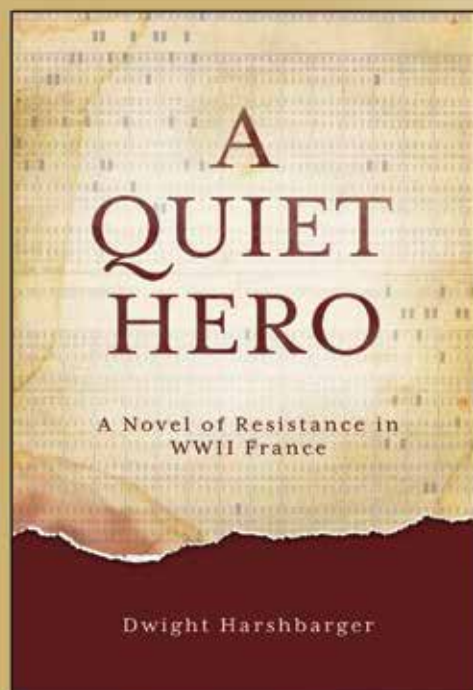
\$16.00 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-9848-0381-8

A grumpy, emotionally isolated octogenarian living in Scotland travels to Antarctica and rediscovers herself.

The years and decades have quietly slipped by Veronica McCreedy as she

has lived alone along the Ayrshire coast with her various staff tending to her, her home, and its grounds. But midway through her 80s, she rediscovers her teenage diaries and realizes that she doesn't recognize the isolated person she has become. Though her short-term memory might not be what it once was, the memories of her teenage years come flooding back, and she decides she must find out if she has any living relatives and reclaim the adventurousness that once defined her. When the initial meeting with her 27-year-old grandson, Patrick, is a flop, she decides she'll leave her millions to the Antarctic penguins she's been watching on a television series. And, in a choice that readers might view incredulously, she buys all the necessary equipment, clothing, and tickets, announces her planned arrival time at the Locket Island research facility, and sets off. Prior, author of *Ellie and the Harpmaker* (2019), has written a story about the importance of family and love and how memories might remain long buried but, once they surface, can be just as distressing or joy-inducing as when they first occurred. The narrative, partially told by Veronica, partially by Patrick, and partially via emails, blog posts, and diary entries, explores



ISBN: 978-1-64307-276-0

A QUIET HERO

A Novel of Resistance in WWII France

A Quiet Hero—wrecking the Nazi census of French Jews.

Dwight Harshbarger

This historical novel features the true story of Gen. René Carmille, "the world's first ethical hacker," who saved thousands of French Jews from Hitler's Final Solution.

"Harshbarger has a riveting story to relate and he tells the tale superbly."

"During moments of heightened drama, the author deftly uses the brevitas trope."

"A vivid, dramatic, and believable tale of a courageous and self-effacing war hero."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)



"If you are fascinated by World War II, A Quiet Hero is a must-read."

—Readers' Favorite

For information on publishing and film rights, visit dwightharshbarger.com

the complicated emotions that guide people's decisions, in both good and bad ways. Drug use, addiction, and depression are touched on, but Prior ensures that readers understand the underlying goodness of her characters and their ability to survive despite loss. While some might view the story's proselytizing about climate change and the redemptive love of animals onerous, others will agree wholeheartedly.

A light but enjoyable, optimistic tale.



ONLY THE RIVER

Raeff, Anne

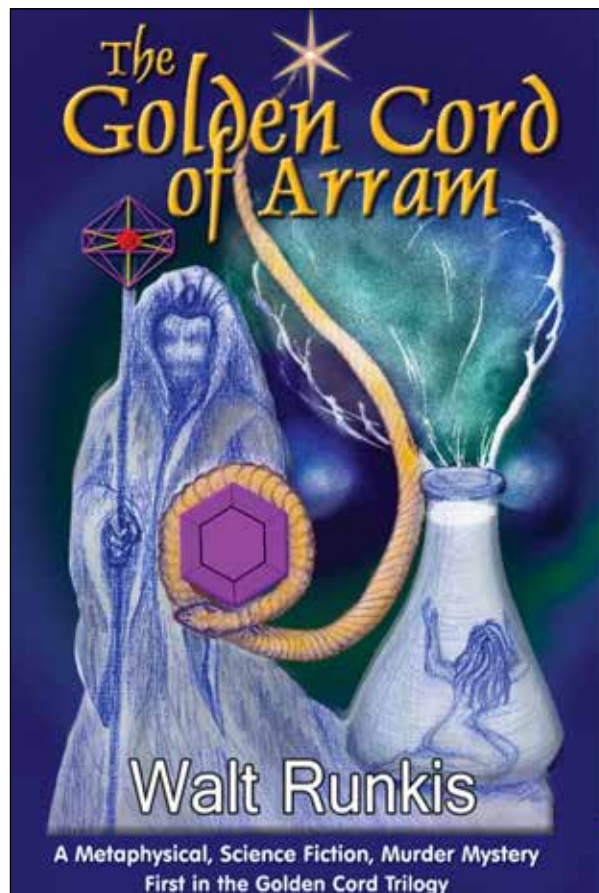
Counterpoint (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | May 5, 2020

978-1-64009-334-8

A Jewish family's escape from Nazi-occupied Austria to find refuge in Nicaragua in 1942 sets a young girl on a winding path of grief, creating a legacy of loss that spans decades and crosses continents.

When 14-year-old Pepa finds refuge in the small village of El Castillo, where her parents, both doctors, have come to battle yellow fever, she falls into a romantic relationship with Guillermo, a local young man. Trauma holds Pepa in its oppressive grip, causing a paralysis in her after she finds out she's pregnant. Just as they secure visas to the United States, Pepa's parents discover her condition and decide to eliminate the problem themselves. It's when the family arrives in New York City that the book grounds itself, as if waking up



GOLDEN CORD OF ARRAM by Walt Runkis

A metaphysical, science fiction, murder mystery- will make you laugh, and it may make you cry; it might also make it hard to sleep some nights because it is speculative fiction that skillfully blurs the boundaries between what is real and what is not.

"...riveting story with a tantalizing end, making the reader want the next installment in the series. For readers who enjoy speculative fiction with a heavy science basis and metaphysical elements, Walt Runkis's novel will satisfy." —The Book Review Directory

"...its mix of conspiracy and crime fiction makes for a generally entertaining and...thought-provoking escape."

**"A stylish story in which
investigators aren't afraid to
get in too deep."**

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #: 9781543992489 (paperback)

For information on publishing and film rights, email walt@goldencordtrilogy.com
www.waltrunkis.com • www.goldencordtrilogy.com

A blockbuster portrayal of the zombie apocalypse.

THE LIVING DEAD

from an ephemeral fever dream. This mirrors Pepa's emotional journey but also transforms Nicaragua into an almost imagined place, a more primitive location framed by an unintentional neocolonial viewpoint. Still mourning her life in El Castillo, Pepa leaves school to work at a Jewish paper, where she meets her future husband, Oskar, a concentration camp survivor. The narrative is told from alternating characters' viewpoints, with the ghost of Pepa and Oskar's son, William, slipping in and out. William, who went to Nicaragua in 1982 to fight with the Sandinistas despite having the barest familial link to the country, is reported to have died in his first battle. Liliana, Pepa's daughter, goes back to Nicaragua and El Castillo in present time after the harsh end of her long-term relationship. Guillermo and his own daughter, Federica, also tell their stories as Liliana and William float into their lives, altering them forever.

A haunting, intricately layered novel, but the central characters' ties to Nicaragua ultimately lack a deeper believability.



SUGAR, SMOKE, SONG

Rajbanshi, Reema

Red Hen Press (232 pp.)

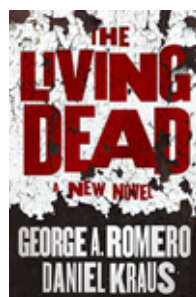
\$16.95 paper | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-59709-891-5

A debut collection of linked stories about women trying to escape tricky family relationships only to re-create them in the world.

In Bollywood movies, melodrama can be delicious and fun, but in fiction it's tricky to keep it from sliding into histrionics. That's what happens in many of these stories, in which sisters betray each other, families draw blood, and men behave rakishly. In "The Stars of the Bollywood House," for example, we see Jumi, a Harvard grad, wasting away from a broken heart. This is the third story about her. In the first ("Ode on an Asian Dog"), Jumi dumps Walt, her cloddish college boyfriend, 30 times. In the second ("Swan Lake Tango"), she's graduated and dating Sammy, her tango partner, and talking nonstop about Walt. She cries in front of displays of wedding necklaces, recalls all the terrible things Walt said ("How he's moved on, how he prefers white girls to her, how everyone said he was too good for trash like her"), and refuses her father's love. This goes on for more than 30 pages, and though Jumi's father, who narrates most of the sections, has an endearing voice and his own emotional scars, it's hard not to catch yourself thinking, "Pull yourself together, Jumi!" The star of the book is the Bronx, which Rajbanshi captures in all its rich complexity: its "buoyant crayon streets" with "Pakistani women in salwars pushing strollers...baby-faced Puerto Rican girls laughing in tight jeans and swinging hoop rings...." Rajbanshi writes some beautiful, arresting sentences. "The precious thing about the old," one character observes, "is that their skin feels the way butterflies look." But because of the overly dramatic plots and underdeveloped characters, it's hard for her poetic sensibility to shine.

Style alone cannot carry these stories.



THE LIVING DEAD

Romero, George A. & Kraus, Daniel

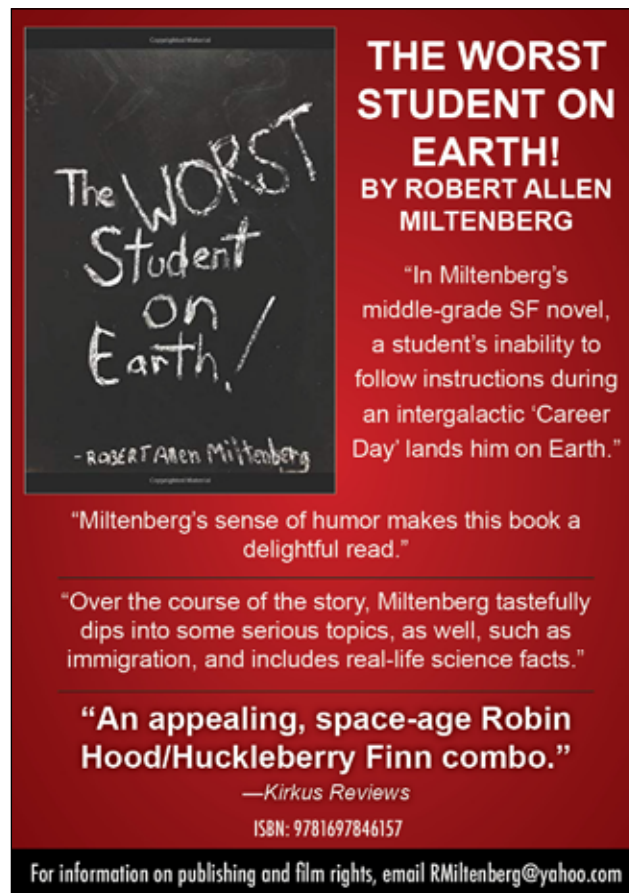
Tor (656 pp.)

\$27.99 | Aug. 4, 2020

978-1-250-30512-1

The last testament of the legendary filmmaker is a sprawling novel about the zombie apocalypse that dwarfs even his classic movie cycle.

Though this long-simmering novel was unfinished when Romero died in 2017, his estate turned its completion over to Kraus, an adept novelist and collaborator with Guillermo Del Toro. The result is a satisfying, terrifying chronicle of the zombie crisis that includes explosive set pieces and moving character beats in equal measure. Just before Halloween, the first cadaver appears in the lab of San Diego medical examiners Luis Aco-cella and Charlie Rutkowski, asking the pair "Shall we dance?" even as Charlie holds his heart in her hands. In rural Missouri,



teenager Greer Morgan soon learns society's rules have been drastically altered by the rise of the dead. The growing severity of the crisis is seen at a national television studio in Atlanta, where conceited anchor Chuck Corso finds the danger growing closer and closer. On the aircraft carrier *USS Olympia*, helmsman Karl Nishimura and pilot Jenny Pagán join forces when they're trapped between the resurrected dead and the zealous chaplain convinced God wants him to lead a death cult. These harrowing survival stories are marked by cinematic spectacles—a bloody escape by jet fighter, a school shooting, and fragments told from the zombies' point of view are among the memorable episodes—but Kraus injects a dramatic dose of human pathos into the mix as characters bond, fight for survival, and frequently die so that others may live. By the time these disparate characters converge in the last act after a significant time jump, readers will know them so well that each loss takes on more emotional weight. Less soapy than *The Walking Dead* and less inventive than Max Brooks' *World War Z*, it's still a spectacular horror epic laden with Romero's signature shocks and censures of societal ills.

A blockbuster portrayal of the zombie apocalypse and a fitting tribute to the genre's imaginative progenitor. (14-page co-author's note describing the genesis, research and writing of the novel.)



HOME BEFORE DARK

Sager, Riley

Dutton (384 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-5247-4517-2

Spectral danger and human evil stalk Sager's latest stalwart heroine.

When Maggie Holt's father, Ewan, dies, she's shocked to discover that she has inherited Baneberry Hall. Ewan made his name as a writer—and ruined her life—by writing a supposedly nonfiction account of the terrors their family endured while living in this grand Victorian mansion with a dark history. Determined to find out the truth behind her father's sensational bestseller, Maggie returns to Baneberry Hall. Horror aficionados will feel quite cozy as they settle into this narrative, and Sager's fans will recognize a familiar formula. As he has in his previous three novels, the author makes contemporary fiction out of time-honored tropes. *Final Girls* (2017) remains his most fresh and inventive novel, but his latest is significantly more satisfying than the two novels that followed. Interspersing Maggie's story with chapters from her father's book, Sager delivers something like a cross between *The Haunting of Hill House* and *The Amityville Horror* with a tough female protagonist. Ewan and Maggie both behave with the dogged idiocy common among people who buy haunted houses, but doubt about the veracity of Ewan's book and Maggie's desperate need to understand her own past make them both compelling characters. The ghosts and poltergeist activity Sager conjures are truly chilling, and he does a masterful job of keeping readers guessing until the very end. As was the case with past novels, though—especially *The Last Time I Lied* (2018)—Sager sets his story in the present while he seems to be writing about the past. For example, when the Holt family moved into Baneberry Hall in 1995 or thereabouts, Ewan—a professional journalist—worked on a typewriter. When Maggie wants to learn more about the history of Baneberry Hall, she drives to the town library instead of going online. Sager is already asking readers to suspend disbelief, and he makes that more difficult because it's such a jolt when a character pulls out an iPhone or mentions eBay. This is, however, a minor complaint about what is a generally entertaining work of psychological suspense.

A return to form for this popular author.



BUY THE BOOK

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Objects, animals, and places that no longer exist, except in our collective imagination.

AN INVENTORY OF LOSSES



AN INVENTORY OF LOSSES

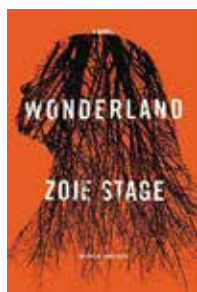
Schalansky, Judith
Trans. by Smith, Jackie
New Directions (224 pp.)
\$22.95 | Jun. 30, 2020
978-0-8112-2963-0



Objects, animals, and places that no longer exist, except in our collective imagination.

Schalansky's fifth book is a collection of beautifully constructed stories about objects that have not survived the test of time. "Being alive means experiencing loss," Schalansky writes, and the world has experienced much loss. Animals, people, and places that once existed are now only memories due to inevitable decay, colonialism, the cleansing of records, and natural disasters. While in Schalansky's previous book, *Atlas of Remote Islands* (2010), she wrote of remote havens that remain difficult to reach even with modern travel, here she depicts the animals, people, and places that are only known through what details have been recorded or remembered. From fragments of Sappho's poems to a submerged South Pacific island, from the extinct Caspian tiger to the lost films of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Schalansky brings us to the fantastical worlds of gladiator rings in ancient Rome, the ruins of a 19th-century German palace, and the surface of the moon. Tying the stories together are Schalansky's evocative, precise descriptions and the sense of wonder in confronting the sheer immensity of what has been lost. "The world...only grieves for what it knows," she writes. Schalansky documents her chosen objects with utmost care while relying on myth as she moves beyond what we know for fact to what we might imagine. "For myth is the highest of all realities and...the library the true theater of world events." Schalansky's meticulously researched stories are poignant reminders of the extent of our impact on the natural world and a call to honor the animals, objects, and places that, due to our own negligence, have ceased to exist.

An exploration of extinct animals and objects told through dazzling stories that question the bounds of memory and myth.



WONDERLAND

Stage, Zoie
Mulholland Books/Little, Brown
(368 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-0-316-45849-8

A plot of land becomes a family's prison.

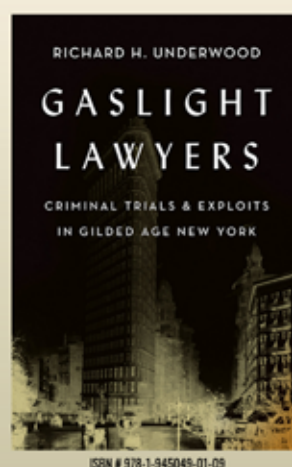
Ballet dancer Orla Moreau has long been the Moreau-Bennett clan's breadwinner, but now that she's 41, it's time for her to retire and watch the kids while her husband, 38-year-old

painter Shaw Bennett, pursues his dream. Nature inspires Shaw, and their money will go further up north, so they put their New York City co-op on the market and start house hunting. When a realtor shows them a dilapidated dwelling on six remote acres in the Adirondacks, they pass; although Shaw feels drawn to a 500-year-old Eastern white pine that occupies the property, an isolated fixer-upper isn't what they had in mind. In the ensuing months, though, Shaw grows obsessed with the tree—dreaming about it, painting it—so when the price drops, they take the plunge and sink their savings into renovations. Orla, Shaw, and their children, 9-year-old Eleanor Queen and 4-year-old Tycho, move in after Thanksgiving, anticipating an idyllic winter in the country. Instead, Shaw turns manic and distant, Eleanor Queen senses an entity trying to communicate with her, and the homestead is beset by inexplicable phenomena. Attempts to leave are not only thwarted, but punished. Orla resolves to figure out what is tormenting her family and why, but she might not like the answer. Author Stage perfectly captures the fears and frictions that accompany household moves and career changes; indeed, her keen portrayal of domestic upset is what grounds

GASLIGHT LAWYERS

Criminal Trials & Exploits in Gilded Age New York

RICHARD H. UNDERWOOD



"Underwood is a masterful researcher..."

"An accessible, marvelously rigorous account of a bygone legal era."
—Kirkus Reviews

"...An exhilarating, informative read."
—Foreword Clarion Reviews

2018 Silver Medal, Independent Publishers Book Award, True Crime
2017 Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Awards Finalist, True Crime

For information on publishing and film rights, visit
www.smpbooks.com/authors/richard-h-underwood

the story and imparts verisimilitude. Regrettably, the book's bigger emotional beats fail to resonate, blunting the tale's impact, and a silly denouement further disappoints.

What starts as a creepy slow burn fizzles in the homestretch.



SELF CARE

Stein, Leigh

Penguin (256 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

978-0-14-313519-7

Tensions grow between the co-founders of a hot, womencentric startup in this hyper-timely—and unexpectedly heartfelt—satire of #girlboss culture and the wellness industrial complex.

Maren and Devin are the co-founders of Richual, a social network for women. In addition to tracking

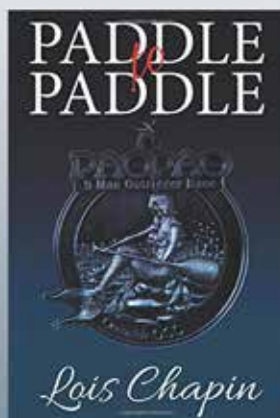
your self-care habits—minutes meditated, REM sleep slept, water consumed—it was, Maren explains, the “digital sanctuary where you went to unload your pain,” mostly in the form of yoga selfies. In the unofficial org chart of Richual, it is Maren’s job to be competent and Devin’s job to be rich, charismatic, and thin. “More than work wives,” Maren muses, “Devin and I were sisters.” And the company is a perfect mashup of their comparative ideologies, Maren’s commitment to global social justice paired with Devin’s passion for self-care. But as the company comes under a series of extremely 2020 stresses—the novel opens with a PR disaster brought on by one of Maren’s ill-conceived tweets and culminates in a distinctly #MeToo-era crisis—their visions of what a feminist company can and should be become increasingly incompatible. Richual is a stand-in for any number of real women-led companies that sell female empowerment as an affordable luxury, and Stein sets up both the dream and the failings of this breed of corporate feminism with admirable nuance. But the book is smarter than its characters, who are exactly who you expect them to be, right down to the details meant to complicate them. This hardly takes away from the fun of the novel, which is compulsively readable, occasionally brilliant (a *Vogue* slideshow about their office is titled “Workplace as Vulva—And Why Not?”), and studded with genuine insight into the relationship between modern wellness and dormant rage. But the book—which leans heavily on references in lieu of precise observations—is ultimately too broad to have much bite.

It’s rich territory, if not entirely mined.



PADDLE to PADDLE

Lois Chapin



Chapin’s masterful poetry collection traces the arc of a lifetime—growing up in a violent household, teenage rebellion, parenthood, and reuniting with an estranged mother.

“...an alarmingly skilled poet whose devastatingly powerful debut demands a cover-to-cover read in one sitting.”

“Acutely observant writing; unsettling and life-affirming in equal measure.”
—Kirkus Reviews

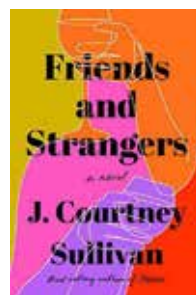
ISBN-13: 978-1889755106

“‘Paddle to Paddle’ is an especially endorsed addition to...community, college, and university library Contemporary American Poetry collections.”
—Midwest Book Review

5/5 stars *San Francisco Book Review*



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FRIENDS AND STRANGERS

Sullivan, J. Courtney

Knopf (416 pp.)

\$26.95 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-0-525-52059-7

A new mother with a successful career and her babysitter form an unlikely bond in a small college town.

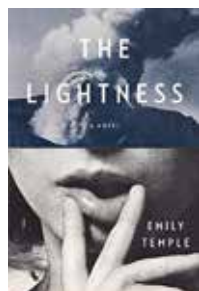
Elisabeth, one of the protagonists of Sullivan’s latest novel, has just moved with her husband, Andrew, and baby, Gil, from brownstone Brooklyn to a remote college town 250 miles away—or as she tells her New York City friends, upstate, “but not, like, cool upstate.” A successful journalist and author, she misses her old friends and community—although she still compulsively devours the postings on her old neighborhood parent listserv—and hasn’t been able to compel herself to make new ones, secretly suspecting she won’t like the other women in her town. Eventually she finds a confidante and companion in Sam, a student at the nearby women’s college whom she hires as Gil’s babysitter. Unlike Elisabeth, who comes from a family as wealthy and privileged as it is dysfunctional, Sam, an aspiring artist with an older British boyfriend who may be a threat to her career ambitions, comes from a big, warm, middle-class family and is funding her college education through a scholarship, a

A dark, glittering fable about the terror of desire.

THE LIGHTNESS

cafeteria work-study job, student loans, and off-campus child care work. The inequity in the two women's relationship and status is mostly lost on Elisabeth but not on Sam. But Sam, who finds common cause with Elisabeth's father-in-law in fighting for the overlooked and economically disadvantaged, has her own blind spots in relation to the women she works alongside in her dorm cafeteria. When both Elisabeth and Sam meddle in other people's lives with the best intentions, well, suffice it to say that things don't go precisely as they had hoped. Sullivan, whose bestselling work includes *Saints for All Occasions* (2017), writes with empathy for her characters even as she reveals their flaws and shortcomings. And while the story she tells focuses primarily on two women from different backgrounds and at different stages of life, it also illuminates broader issues about money, privilege, and class; marriage, family, and friendship; and the dueling demands of career and domesticity with which many women struggle.

This perceptive novel about a complex friendship between two women resonates as broadly as it does deeply.



THE LIGHTNESS

Temple, Emily

Morrow/HarperCollins (288 pp.)

\$26.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-06-290532-1

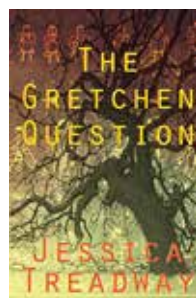


Four teenage girls attempt to unlock the secrets of levitation in this unsettling debut from the senior editor of *Literary Hub*.

Olivia's father left to attend a Buddhist retreat at the Levitation Center but never returned home. When Olivia flees her abusive mother in order to find out what happened to him, she spends the summer attending the center's retreat for teen girls. "They were slick-finish girls, cat-eye girls, hot blood girls," Olivia recalls. "They were girls who reveled. They were girls who liked boys and back seats, who slid things that weren't theirs into their tight pockets." But the crackling energy of three girls in particular catches Olivia's eye: commanding Serena, stoic Janet, and provocative Laurel. Under the direction of Serena, the four young women convince Luke, the center's gardener and a universal object of teenage lust, to teach them the secrets of levitation. In preparation, the girls fast on nettle tea, play dangerous fainting games, and attempt to seduce Luke. The summer wears on, and Serena pushes them each to the brink. At last, Olivia must confront the possibility that Serena's quest for control over their bodies might put them all in danger—or is that what Olivia really wants? Temple's evocative exploration of teenage girlhood, shame, and longing illuminates the double-edged desire for power and belonging. Her sentences are complex and rich, although the ominous mood of the novel occasionally overpowers the emotional payoff of its reveals. "You might as well learn this now: even the tiniest bit of power turns me instantly immoral," Olivia laments early in the novel, though it's difficult to say how much power Olivia ever wields. Still, Temple's narrative strategies of deferral

invite us into a complex, psychological study of a young woman haunted by her past—and her capacity to hunger for violence and self-destruction.

A dark, glittering fable about the terror of desire.



THE GRETCHEN QUESTION

Treadway, Jessica

Delphinium (250 pp.)

\$25.95 | Jun. 9, 2020

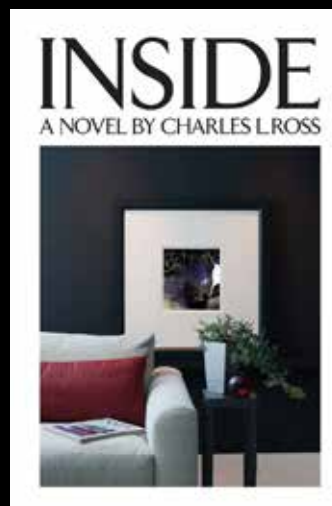
978-1-883285-89-0

A woman must decide whether to reveal her most intimate secrets before she takes them to the grave.

Roberta Chase wakes up one morning and takes inventory of what she has to do that day: go to a work meeting, put away her best friend's trash cans, and meet with her therapist. But from the beginning, there is an undercurrent of anxiety

"A sexy, scathing insider's view of an interior design magazine that hardly needs its murder plot to keep readers enthralled."

—Kirkus Reviews



A LAMBDA LITERARY AWARD FINALIST

Charles L. Ross was art director of *Architectural Digest* (1978-1985) and *Veranda* (1987-2004).

Contact: clr345@comcast.net Available at Amazon.com

to every moment of Roberta's day that suggests these activities, and this day, may not be as mundane as they seem. Told from Roberta's perspective and relying heavily on flashbacks, the novel reveals a great deal about what has brought Roberta to this point—and what may push her to take action, to make a decision she has been avoiding for most of her life. These flashbacks introduce us to the people in her world, especially her best friend, Grettie, and her estranged son, Will. And with each fragment of story, we are faced with a singular rule of life: Every choice we make has consequences. As Roberta proceeds through this day, heading toward a significant face-to-face confrontation, there are hints that she may not be presenting even us, the readers, with the full truth. And then the ending of the book casts doubt on Roberta's honesty, or her grip on reality, in a big way. As a reader, when faced with a possibly unreliable narrator, we wonder: How much can we trust anything they have told us, any piece of their story, if we can't trust the "reality" of their own ending? But, in the case of Treadway's novel, this unreliability also speaks to deeper layers of the novel. Roberta is caught in the trap of her own "Gretchen Question" (an allusion

to *Faust* explained within the novel), but there are also larger questions posed by the novel to the reader: How do you qualify and find value in your life when you are nearing the end of it? What do you owe those you leave behind? And what do you owe to yourself?

A thoughtful, and thought-provoking, meditation on love, loss, and legacy.



I HOLD A WOLF BY THE EARS

van den Berg, Laura

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (224 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-374-10209-8

Identity, like reality, is a slippery thing for the women in van den Berg's latest collection of short stories, all of whom are grasping at a sense of stability that seems forever out of reach.

All 11 stories here are sharp as they are haunting; in this world—maybe like the real one—nothing is exactly what it seems. In "Cult of Mary," which is as short as it is devastating, a daughter takes her aging mother on a quietly gut-wrenching group tour of Italy. Against the backdrop of an earthquake-ravaged Mexico City, "Karolina" a divorcing art restorer, runs into her brother's now-destitute ex-wife and is forced to confront truths about her brother she has managed until now to willfully ignore. In "Lizards," a husband plies his unhappy wife with cans of special sparkling water, off-brand LaCroix but with sedative properties, for when she "simply becomes too much." And doesn't she also, in a way, appreciate the dulling of her own mind? "The truth is that she is angriest at her own anger," van den Berg explains, "which she suspects has arrived far too late to be of any real use." Other stories have a darkly surreal edge, like sweaty, hyper-realistic nightmares; someone has always disappeared or is in the process of disappearing: A husband vanishes into a tree; a woman is casually kidnapped by her new friend. In the title story, a woman named Margot semiaccidentally begins impersonating her missing sister at an Italian academic conference. They are raw and searching, the women at the centers of these stories. She didn't want her sister's life, Margot thinks. "All she wants is to feel like she isn't being destroyed by the world." The stories here, vibrating with loss, but wickedly funny, are a distinctly van den Berg-ian hybrid, as biting as they are dreamy.

Witty, painful, and thoroughly unsettling.

The Friday Edition

A Samantha Church Mystery

Betta Ferrendelli



In Ferrendelli's debut mystery, a reporter desperate to solve her sister's murder must face demons of her own.

"...authentic, thoughtful prose."

"...vulnerable, highly sympathetic heroine."

"A smart, nimble treat of a mystery that provides ample foundation for growth."

—Kirkus Review

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

A beautifully written exploration of identity, memory, power, and agency.

MOTHER DAUGHTER WIDOW WIFE



THE TASTE OF SUGAR

Vera, Marisel

Liveright/Norton (384 pp.)

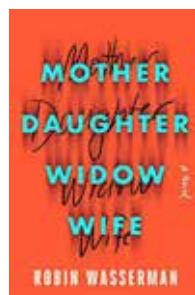
\$26.95 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-63149-773-5

A sprawling family epic that stretches from the mountains of Puerto Rico to Hawaii and across decades of love, famine, and war.

Valentina Sánchez comes from a middle-class, urban family in late-19th-century Puerto Rico. Her family has modest dreams, but Valentina luxuriates in her fantasies of marrying a handsome man and seeing Paris. When the dashing Vicente Vega, son of a very wealthy (or so Valentina assumes) coffee farmer, sweeps her off her feet at a cousin's wedding, Valentina is determined to go against her family's wishes and marry for love. However, Valentina's marriage to Vicente never takes flight. Between fending off the advances of her lecherous father-in-law and dealing with the starkly unromantic realities of being married to a coffee farmer who's actually quite poor, happiness eludes Valentina. As the novel creeps into the 20th century, Valentina's suffering increases alongside Puerto Rico's. Caught in the crossfire of the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rican farmers experience Spanish tax hikes, drought, American devaluation of the peso, and finally American occupation. Hurricane San Ciriaco kills thousands and washes away not just farms, but Puerto Rico's dreams of self-rule. Eventually, Vicente and Valentina are lured by false promises to Hawaii, another U.S. territory described as paradise but rife with violence and exploitation. Vera tells a grand story using innovative techniques. The chapters tend to be short and are frequently interspersed with letters, detours into the past, and theatrical monologues. The Vega and Sánchez families are made up of vivid, fully realized characters, and Vera has a knack for writing dialogue that is full of personality. Her descriptions of Puerto Rico's natural beauty are impressive: "[Vicente and Valentina] meant only to look up at the stars from the veranda, but the scent of orchids lured them into the garden and soon they were enveloped by coconut palms. Las damas de noches opened their white petals for the moon, and the moon mistook the silver embroidery on Valentina's dress for stars." Where the novel runs ashore is in grappling with historical events. Vega chronicles the exploitation of Puerto Rico by the Spanish and then the Americans, and the reader will emerge with a deep sense of Puerto Rican history and suffering that has been lost to most Americans, but at times the author's devotion to historical details and anecdotes pushes the beautifully wrought characters aside.

Vera's breakout novel is a sweeping, emotional tale that puts her characters, and her readers, through an emotional wringer.



MOTHER DAUGHTER WIDOW WIFE

Wasserman, Robin

Scribner (288 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 23, 2020

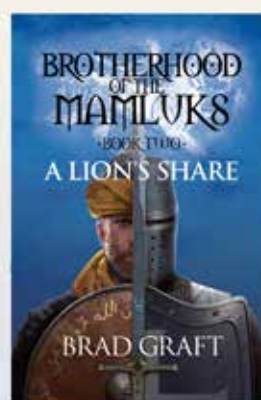
978-1-9821-3949-0

A missing woman's past upends the lives of the women around her.

In Wasserman's new novel, the author of *Girls on Fire* (2016) explores the lives of three women after one of them goes missing. Despite everyone telling her to move on, college student Alice is searching for her mother, who's disappeared. When she discovers her mother has gone missing before, she sets out to find her and the truth—which brings her to the door of Elizabeth Strauss. While working as a fellow at the Meadowlark Institute for Memory Research, Strauss, who at that time was going by the nickname Lizzie, was invited to join a once-in-a-lifetime project by "psychology's latest golden

BROTHERHOOD OF THE MAMLUKS BOOK TWO: A LION'S SHARE

BRAD GRAFT



Authored by finalist
for the 2019
Colby Award for
military fiction

"...the action is
engrossing...a time of
nearly unthinkable conflict
is vividly brought to life."

"...this Muslim war tale delivers
gripping action scenes."

—Kirkus Reviews

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god,” Dr. Benjamin Strauss (then her boss, now her recently deceased husband). The project? Studying Alice’s mother, aka Wendy Doe, a woman found on a bus without identification or memories, who’s in a dissociative fugue state. Wendy’s perspective is also offered through lyrical diary entries in which she explores who she is, who she’s not, and what’s happening to her in the moment (which is all she has). Told in alternating perspectives by Alice, Elizabeth, and Lizzie, the novel is like a knot being slowly unraveled. While a bit disorienting at first, Wasserman’s choice to differentiate between Lizzie’s point of view (the past) and Elizabeth’s (the present) succeeds narratively and thematically. By offering one woman’s insights at different points in time, the novel explores the ways time, memory, and hindsight inform who we are and who we become. After completing an exercise where she lists every memory she’s had in the last two weeks, Lizzie realizes: “Almost everything that happens is forgotten. Decades swallowed. Maybe... the mystery isn’t why we forget some things and not others. Maybe the mystery is why we ever remember.” In addition to meditating on personhood and recollection, Wasserman

deftly explores power dynamics, ambition, and the lingering scars of trauma.

A beautifully written exploration of identity, memory, power, and agency.



I WAS TOLD IT WOULD GET EASIER

Waxman, Abbi

Berkley (352 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-451-49189-3

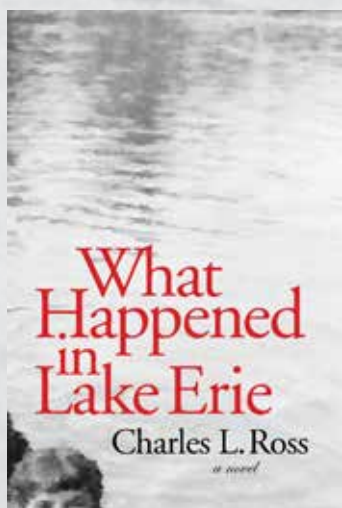
Jessica Burnstein, 45 and “full of optimism,” accompanies her daughter, Emily, “stressed beyond belief,” on a weeklong bus tour of top-notch colleges.

Jessica, a lawyer and single mother, wants the best for Emily, which includes getting her into a top college. She purchased a pricy package deal to tour big-name colleges up the East Coast from Georgetown to Columbia—hotels and trips to famous sites are all included in the price, as is the inevitable discord. Emily doesn’t know what she wants; her mother does! Let the clash begin! Emily does the teenage thing, pushing her mother away; Jessica does the parent thing, managing her emotions without drowning in them. The college tour is the river the story meanders on, complete with a peppy tour guide, hectic schedule, anxious parents, annoyed kids, and a visit from the FBI. Then there’s the undercurrent of Jessica’s job issues and Emily’s troubles back at school in Los Angeles, neither of which mother or daughter has shared with the other. So there will be a reveal, but the meandering pace dissipates much of the tension by the time that happens. The story culminates in a slow whirlpool when the FBI interrupts the tour group, bringing Emily’s hidden secrets to the fore. The river eventually flows into the ocean, an understated ending for a tale that promises more than it delivers.

Waxman fans may find that this isn’t her best, but her witty, ironic voice makes it worth the read.

“... the bold exploration of a father and son’s relationship makes for a compelling reading experience.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS



Charles L. Ross was art director of *Architectural Digest* (1978-1985) and *Veranda* (1987-2004).

Contact: clr345@comcast.net Available at Amazon.com



SAVING RUBY KING

West, Catherine Adel

Park Row Books (304 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-7783-0509-5

After Ruby King’s mother, Alice, is murdered in their home on the South Side of Chicago, Layla, Ruby’s best friend, tries to rescue her from despair.

While looking for answers about her best friend’s mother’s death, 20-something Layla unravels a knot of secrets that has tangled her family with her friend’s for generations. As young black women, Ruby and Layla confront enormous challenges, from racism and gentrification to their family’s expectations. Layla’s father,

A moving examination of the complexities of motherhood and the strength of female friendship.

THE SECRET WOMEN

Jackson, serves as the pastor of their church, where Alice, Ruby's mother, spent most of her time. Everyone in the church community knew Ruby's father, Lebanon, abused Alice and suspects he might have killed her. While at odds, Jackson and Lebanon both rule their families as traditional patriarchs, and after Alice's violent death, Layla must defy her father's authority in her determination to help Ruby. Debut author West plays with multiple perspectives and timelines, making for a rich tale. Ruby, Layla, Jackson, and Lebanon are all compelling point-of-view characters, but the real star is the Calvary Hope Christian Church, which reveals some of the most startling moments. By endowing Calvary Hope with consciousness, West uses a fresh approach to covering not only several decades of family history, but also complex themes including the ways in which close communities can nourish and harm their members; how friendships and family ties can hold intimacy and distance; the way misunderstandings and trauma can pass down the generations; and the difference between a relationship with God and a church. The characters, language, and plot come together for a story full of hard truths, insight, and warmth. Every so often, the novel veers into melodrama, but overall it delivers a daring, dynamic story.

A multilayered love letter to South Side Chicago's African American faith-based community.



HER LAST FLIGHT

Williams, Beatriz

Morrow/HarperCollins (400 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 30, 2020

978-0-06-283478-2

What if Amelia Earhart had not only survived her last flight, but found true romance?

The book opens in 1947 with the story of Janey Everett, a war correspondent whose first-person frame narrative alternates with excerpts from her book, *Aviatrix*, about celebrity airwoman Irene Foster and her flight coach and eventual lover, stunt pilot Sam Mallory. Williams' otherwise imaginative novel front-loads a lot of exposition, particularly about Janey's past—the many reasons she's in denial about the extent of her own vulnerability as she uses men to get information, first about the location of Mallory's remains and later about the whereabouts of Irene, who now, a decade after her plane went missing in 1937, lives in obscurity in Hawaii. Janey's chronicle of star-crossed lovers Irene and Sam unfolds in similarly creaky fashion. They meet while surfing on a California beach. A stray kitten is in the mix, adopted by Sam. The cat, dubbed Sandy, serves as motif and talisman. After Sam teaches Irene to fly, Sandy stows away on their groundbreaking flight from California to Australia. Nineteen years later Janey discovers that Sandy, living with Irene, has defied all conventions of feline longevity. Although the book is expressly not intended as biographical fiction, many aspects of Earhart's life are here, among them an alcoholic father and a New York publisher who acts as

her promoter (based on George Putnam, but here, in a sly nod to Williams' own publisher, surnamed Morrow). The action is significantly slowed by technical details about surfing and flying that are sometimes engrossing but often gratuitous. Only halfway through does tension ramp up as Irene and Sam contemplate a future together and confront a giant impediment: Sam's wife, who wouldn't hesitate to use his young daughter as a pawn. Plenty of twists ensue, but by now readers may have lost patience. Williams has a fine ear for period-appropriate dialogue, leading us to wonder why there isn't more of it.

An inventive if imperfect solution to a decades-old mystery.



THE SECRET WOMEN

Williams, Sheila

Amistad/HarperCollins (304 pp.)

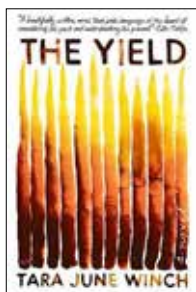
\$17.99 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-06-293422-2

A newfound friendship galvanizes three women into exploring their late mothers' pasts.

Elise Armstrong is just "not feelin' Namaste" at her weekly yoga class when her less than enthusiastic performance catches the attention of her classmates Carmen Bradshaw and DeeDee Davis, who also seem to be struggling with finding their Zen. When they decide to grab dinner at a Mexican restaurant after class, they discover that all three are grappling with the grief left in the wakes of their mothers' deaths—Elise's mother, Marie Wade; Carmen's mother, Joan Bradshaw; and DeeDee's mother, Laura O'Neill. All of the women are still in the process of going through their mothers' possessions, and each is hesitant to dive into the past for varying reasons. Marie was a collector—of African masks, 10 sets of china, five distinct collections of jewelry—and Elise is overwhelmed with the prospect of picking through it all. Laura struggled with bipolar disorder throughout DeeDee's childhood, and DeeDee is not only dealing with the fear that her free-spirited daughter, Frances, has inherited her grandmother's mental illness, but she is loath to unearth more of Laura's inner turmoil. Joan was a preacher's wife who lived a quiet life, and Carmen doesn't imagine she'll find any evidence to the contrary in her mother's old things. But when Elise, DeeDee, and Carmen agree to help each other wade through these items, they grow closer to each other and to the women their mothers really were. Flashback chapters from Joan's perspective prior to Carmen's birth as well as diary entries written by Laura during DeeDee's adolescence give further insight into the ways each mother's experience intersects and contrasts with those of her daughter in the present day.

A moving examination of the complexities of motherhood and the strength of female friendship.



THE YIELD

Winch, Tara June

HarperVia/HarperCollins (352 pp.)

\$26.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-06-300346-0

An Aboriginal woman uncovers her heritage, and her painful past, to save her family's home.

August Gondiwindi, a dishwasher in London, receives word that her grandfather Poppy Albert has died and knows she must return to Massacre Plains, the small Australian town her family has lived in for generations—a place she hasn't visited in years: "Go back full with shame for having left, catch the disappointment in their turned mouths, go back and try to find all the things that she couldn't find so many thousands of kilometres away." She arrives at the family farm, Prosperous House, and as she helps her grandmother Elsie prepare food and clean for the large collection of aunts and uncles gathering for the funeral, she runs into former classmates and old flames and wrestles with her long-dormant grief at the disappearance of her sister, Jedda, who vanished when August was 9 and Jedda, 10. She also discovers that this may be the last time she sees her childhood home—her grandmother will soon be forced out of Prosperous House because a company plans to open a large tin mine on the land. Interwoven with August's story are two other narrative strands: a lengthy letter from the Rev. Ferdinand Greenleaf, who founded the mission that eventually became Prosperous House to "build a home of safety for the poor waifs and strays," and sections from a dictionary Poppy Albert was compiling of their family's native language before his death, which includes words from the author's ancestral Wiradjuri language. Albert's entries are easily the most charming parts of the book. "The dictionary is not just words—there are little stories in those pages too," he writes, and the same is true for his own effort, which weaves in reminiscences of meeting Elsie, fond memories of raising Jedda and August, and stories from his ancestors. But August's chapters suffer from a lack of clarity; it's often difficult to understand why events are significant, especially in the novel's more dramatic latter half. Too often, it's simply that the sentences are bewildering: "When the previous evening, like a virus, the true rumour that Rinepalm Mining had set an open day at the town hall filtered into the Valley, and back streets, the men and women, though on the edge of heat-stroke, leapt from their houses and headed into town."

A story woven from profound, overlooked historical material that's sadly marred by sloppy execution.



TOKYO UENO STATION

Yu, Miri

Trans. by Giles, Morgan

Riverhead (192 pp.)

\$25.00 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-0-593-08802-9

A ghost haunts a Tokyo train station, with history and tragedy much on his mind.

Kazu, the late narrator of Yu's second novel to be translated into English, spent his life as an itinerant laborer, one of eight children who moved from his home in Fukushima to help build facilities for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. (Fukushima was the epicenter of the 2011 nuclear power-plant disaster, which also plays into the story.) Kazu recalls pieces of his life in digressive fashion as he wanders the grounds of a homeless encampment near a busy Tokyo train station. He listens in on conversations and recalls how he himself wound up residing there. His mood is scattered ("noises, colors, and smells are all mixed up, gradually fading away, shrinking"), but it's soon clear in this brief, piercing novel that Kazu is circling around a series of heartbreaks, and when Yu finally hits on them—Kazu's separation from his family for work, the death of his son, the financial desperation that led to his homelessness—the novel gains a pathos and focus that justify its more abstract and lyrical early passages. As Kazu chronicles the funeral rites and his own fallen fortunes, the novel becomes a somber cross section of Japanese society, from the underclass to salarymen to the royal family to the homeless people subject to the whims of government (like the potential closure of the camp due to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics). Yu's first novel in English, *Gold Rush* (2002), was a hyperviolent, *American Psycho*-esque tale of Yokohama street youth. This more restrained and mature novel is a subtle series of snapshots of "someone who has lost the capacity to exist, now ceaselessly thinking, ceaselessly feeling."

A gemlike, melancholy novel infused with personal and national history.

M Y S T E R Y



WORSE ANGELS

Barron, Laird

Putnam (336 pp.)

\$27.00 | May 26, 2020

978-0-593-08499-1

When private investigator and former mob guy Isaiah Coleridge is hired to look into the suspicious death of a man's nephew, he will discover layers of corruption beneath the power of politicians.

Like the Mighty Wurlitzer, Blackwell pulls out all the stops.

THE LAST CURTAIN CALL

Ex-NYPD cop Badja Adeyemi had been the bodyguard for Gerald Redlick, a businessman who's now a U.S. senator. When Redlick's company came under scrutiny for corrupt doings, Adeyemi too became a suspect. Now, before he gets sent to prison, Adeyemi wants to ease his sister's mind by having Coleridge investigate the death of her son at a supercollider project site several years earlier. This will lead the tough and tough-talking Coleridge and his equally tough associate, Lionel Robard, to small towns and people with big egos, bigger payrolls, and absolutely zero scruples about doing whatever it takes to win. Although author Barron displays an ability to move along the multilayered plot, his frequently florid prose slows things down, especially when Coleridge takes a philosophical turn: "Reality is a frequency, time is a ring, and gravity bleeds through a membrane that cocoons this universe."

It will take a reader even tougher than the protagonist to hold on till the end of this story.



MURDER GOES TO MARKET

Bateman, Daisy

Seventh Street Books (248 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-64506-012-3

A farm-to-table marketplace owner falls back on the computer skills she thought she'd left behind to solve a murder.

Claudia Simcoe used to work as a software engineer but gave it all up for the quiet of a small Sonoma coastal town, where she ekes out a living running a market and lives in a tiny cottage that came with the property. When someone leaves Claudia proof that her stall holder Lori Roth's handmade products are actually cheap knockoffs, she's forced to confront Lori, who's naturally furious at being forced out. Next morning Claudia finds Lori dead, garroted with a cheese cutter from the Cow Cheese Company stand. The local police chief, who's both incompetent and nasty, clearly has Claudia in his sights. Although his attractive deputy is more sympathetic, Claudia quickly realizes it's up to her to solve this crime before she's arrested. Luckily, she has plenty of free time now that the market's shut down. Because none of her other tenants profess to know anything about Lori's background, Claudia calls on her computer search skills. One of the boxes Lori had left in the empty cottage Claudia uses for extra storage contains personal property, including a notebook with some cryptic notes and a photo of Lori's BFF. The arrival of Lori's ex-husband only complicates the case. But Claudia soldiers on with moral support from friends and her newly adopted puppy.

A pleasing debut for a complicated sleuth in this up-to-date take on the cozy mystery.



THE LAST CURTAIN CALL

Blackwell, Juliet

Berkley (336 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

978-0-593-09793-9

A renovation contractor labors to restore a historic movie palace, rehome some squatters, investigate a contemporary murder, solve an 80-year-old murder, and make her new home fit for habitation.

Mel Turner, who shares ownership in Turner Construction with her dad, Bill, really does mean to set a date for her wedding to Berkeley professor Landon Demetrius, who bought her "a beautiful and rather good-sized house in Oakland" as an engagement gift. But a girl can get distracted when she has to remodel said house. And when she opens the door to find a ghost named Hildy Hildecott, who offers her a fabulous dress with a tiny hole in it, just big enough to have been made by a knife. But she barely has time to ask vintage clothing expert Lily Ivory about the dress because Gregory Thibodeaux, who represents investors from the Xerxes Group, is in a hurry for Mel to complete the restoration of the Crockett Theatre in San Francisco's Mission District—a restoration that can't even begin until Mel finds another place for the band of illegal residents firmly entrenched in the Crockett. Gregory doesn't realize the theater is also home to dozens of otherworldly inhabitants, one of whom Mel hopes can tell her more about Hildy. Before anyone can, the Crockett's organ, the Mighty Wurlitzer, arises miraculously from the orchestra pit bearing the body of Isadora Sepety, one of the squatters. Two murders, two restorations, and a healthy dose of family drama leave Mel scant time for her fiancé, who fortunately has less to say than any of the ghosts.

Like the Mighty Wurlitzer, Blackwell pulls out all the stops.



LADY RIGHTS A WRONG

Casey, Eliza

Berkley (336 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

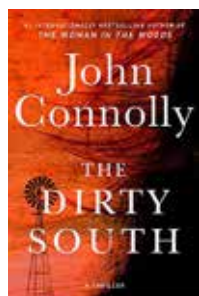
978-1-9848-0390-0

Lady Cecelia Bates investigates the death of a suffragette.

Cecelia truly loves Danby Hall and the beautiful Yorkshire countryside that surrounds it. But the intelligent and curious daughter of Lord and Lady Avebury wants more out of life than presiding over the bring-and-buy tent at the annual church bazaar. Fortunately, Anna-
bel Clarke, the fashionable American heiress who hopes to marry Cecelia's brother, Patrick, proves an eager and valued companion for Lady Avebury to bring along on her many social

engagements. With Annabel to distract her, Lady Avebury's efforts to get her daughter well married dwindle to occasional references to how handsome Mr. Brown, the young village vicar, looks at Sunday service. Her mother's preoccupation with Annabel also gives Lady Cecelia time to slip away and attend a rally held by the Women's Suffrage Union at the village guildhall, accompanied by Annabel's maid, Jane Hughes. The union's president, Amelia Price, an inspiring speaker as well as a canny one, immediately recognizes Lady Cecelia as someone who could be of great help to the cause. The friendship between Mrs. Price and the avid young woman is just beginning when the activist is found dead at the bottom of the staircase in her rented home. None of the suffragettes sharing her quarters, not even her daughter, can say when or how Mrs. Price died, so it's not even clear that she's been murdered. But the heroine of *Lady Takes the Case* (2019) is suspicious, and she enlists the help of quick-witted Jane and Jane's perceptive cat, Jack to make sure justice is served.

Something for everyone: activists, romantics, mystery lovers, and feline fanciers.



THE DIRTY SOUTH

Connolly, John

Emily Bestler/Atria (448 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 30, 2020

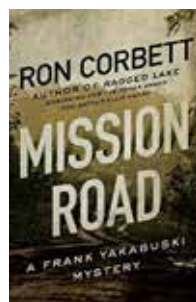
978-1-9821-2754-1

The 18th novel in Connolly's Charlie Parker series takes readers back to the beginning of the ex-New York City detective's career as a private eye, finding him "deep in the Dirty South" helping local police investigate horrific murders.

Parker is an unwelcome stranger in a Cargill, Arkansas, diner in 1997. Local cops find him suspicious when he mentions the name of a young black girl whose violent death has been officially deemed accidental. Parker himself has lost a wife and daughter to vicious murders. He's quit the NYPD, and he's on a quest to find the man who killed his family "and tear him apart." The story's mood is dark: The local lake named Karagol has water so black "it seemed to consume light," and it gave its name to nearby Cargill, a dismal town that seems to consume spirit. The police chief decides to accept Parker's help investigating some obvious murders, to the chagrin of some important, malevolent people. A company named Kovas Industries makes missile components and is considering a major investment in Cargill, which would turn it into a company town and make certain people rich. The last thing they need is publicity about killings, so they just want the fates of two girls to be "obliterated." The coroner says they are "poor dead colored girls. That's not the same thing" as dead girls, suggesting they matter less. And much of the town is angry at the girls for getting themselves killed to begin with. (Yes, what were they thinking?) If they must be deemed murders, one character opines that "it would be best" if a "Negro" were the culprit. But Parker wants to know if it's the same person who killed his family. This is a story populated with

richly described characters, be they honorable or slimy, as well as rich descriptions and dialogue. Fast-moving, witty dialogue helps speed this well-plotted yarn to a dramatic conclusion.

A most satisfying read for crime buffs.



MISSION ROAD

Corbett, Ron

ECW Press (336 pp.)

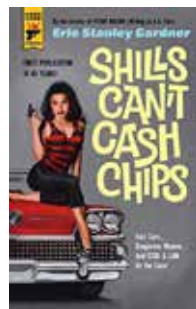
\$15.95 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-77041-396-2

The news that diamonds worth \$1.2 million lifted from Canada's De Kirk Mines in *Cape Diamond* (2018) are hidden somewhere off Mission Road unleashes "the Great Springfield Diamond Hunt."

The first apparent casualty is Jason McAllister, an American math student who vanishes shortly after announcing his intention of hiking Mission Road during a frigid February six weeks after the original heist and the kidnapping and return of Grace Dumont—whose late grandfather Gabriel Dumont was head of the Travellers gang—along with a million-dollar gem for her inconvenience. When McAllister's Facebook account posts a map of the search area 10 days later, Senior Detective Frank Yakabuski, who's already linked McAllister to main-chance criminal Robert Allen Bangles, aka Bobby Bangs, knows that other fortune hunters will follow. Once Yakabuski succeeds in neutralizing a quartet of mobsters visiting from Buffalo, the treasure hunt settles into a competition among three local gangs: the Shiners, whose chief, Sean Morrissey, the alleged mastermind behind the theft, is eager to "use our enemies against each other"; the Travellers, now under Linus Desjardins; and the Popeyes, whose acting head is Henri Lepine. Mexican assassin Cambino Cortez, Morrissey's presumed partner, scurries from one rendezvous to the next, winnowing the cast as he closes in on the jewels. Despite the sky-high body count and some powerful individual scenes, this sequel suffers from sequelitis: In the absence of a beginning or an unforeseen ending, it's all middle.

Lots of diamonds, lots of homicides, not a whole lot of other stuff.



SHILLS CAN'T CASH CHIPS

Gardner, Erle Stanley

Hard Case Crime (240 pp.)

\$10.95 paper | Jun. 23, 2020

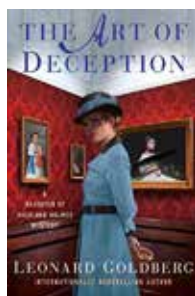
978-1-78565-636-1

Hard Case exhumes a tale of Bertha Cool, Donald Lam, and a dizzyingly complicated insurance scam originally published under the name A.A. Fair in 1961.

Bertha couldn't be happier that Cool & Lam is finally getting work from a high-profile client like Lamont Hawley, who heads the claims department at Consolidated Interinsurance.

Well-insured real estate sharpshooter Carter J. Holgate, one of his clients, recently plowed into the rear of a stopped car driven by divorcée Vivian Deshler, who claims to have suffered whiplash. Consolidated wants to know more about the claimant but can't get close to her, and they think Donald, whose history of charming lovely ladies is well attested (as in books like 1940's *Turn on the Heat*), will have better luck than their own investigators. The job is suspiciously easy. Donald, posing as the world's most polite ex-con and a witness to the accident, succeeds in getting within snuggling distance of Vivian, her friend and neighbor Doris Ashley, and Holgate's secretary, Lorraine Robbins. He can't help wondering why everyone involved is so eager to prompt, accept, record, and reward his obviously false testimony when it's only going to put Holgate and Consolidated on the hook for what feels more and more like a bogus claim. When a corpse turns up in the trunk of the car Donald drives for the agency, the police have quite a few questions of their own, and what seemed like a simple scam turns out to have more layers and a more pungent fragrance than a month-old onion.

A high-spirited romp you'll be sorry to see end.



THE ART OF DECEPTION

Goldberg, Leonard
Minotaur (320 pp.)
\$26.99 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-250-22420-0

The daughter of Sherlock Holmes (who's married to Dr. Watson's son) investigates a case of vandalism and murder tied to the world of art treasures.

Inspector Lestrade once again calls upon Joanna Watson, who's inherited her father's remarkable crime-solving talents, to help with an odd case of vandalism. Someone has been breaking into private homes and art galleries and slashing valuable paintings but not stealing anything. From the only clue, a tattered scarf left behind, Joanna deduces that the wearer is a tall, middle-aged man fallen on hard times who suffers from a skin condition he's treating with coal tar. All the paintings were either displayed at the Hawke and Evans Gallery or had been restored there by James Blackstone or Harry Edmunds, two former restorers who used their talents to create and sell forgeries. Edmunds is in jail; Blackstone is presumed to have fled to Australia. Because all the paintings were slashed and torn open but their backings left in perfect condition, Joanna concludes that something valuable is hidden in one of the paintings, though the searcher does not know which one. She's sidetracked when an attack of cholera at her son's school forces her to remove him to 221B Baker St., where she has the support of both her husband, John, and his father, the ever reliable Dr. Watson. Johnny's remarkably like his grandfather, and even in his illness he provides valuable ideas about the case. Joanna relies on a number of informative experts as she unravels a complex mystery involving several people, at least one of whom is willing to kill to gain his ends.

A primer on art history combined with a mystery that crawls toward the denouement.



THE RAT BEGAN TO GNAW THE ROPE

Grafton, C.W.
Poisoned Pen (304 pp.)
\$14.99 paper | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-4642-1298-7

The Library of Congress' series of reprints of classic crime novels kicks off with a 1943 case by mystery writer Sue Grafton's father that sends a very junior lawyer nosing around among the dirty secrets of the well-heeled family that dominates Harpersville, Kentucky, in both good ways and bad.

Why would William Jasper Harper, approaching Ruth McClure only 10 days after her husband's death in a car crash, offer her four times the listed value of John McClure's hundred shares of Harper Products Company's stock? His generosity to his old employee, which comes with significant strings attached, smells funny to Ruth and even funnier to Gilmore Henry, the attorney she retains to look into the offer. Even before Gil's arrival in Harpersville, someone shoots out a tire of the car he's driving, leaving him wondering whether the intended target was him or James Mead, the senior partner whose car he borrowed, who turns out to be representing Harper Products. Ruth quickly sours on Gil; her adopted brother, Tim, punches him out; the local sheriff offers to arrest him if he doesn't leave town on the next train; and that's all before William Jasper Harper gets himself shot to death. The suspects include a neighbor whose policies about selling eggs make no sense, the accountants who handled Harper's books, and, of course, the deceased's invalid wife and daughter, who now stand much closer to millionaire status. There'll be more murders, more attempts on Gil's life, and many more wisecracks. Editor Leslie S. Klinger's conscientious period footnotes contrast amusingly with Grafton's headlong pace.

Perfect for fans of A.A. Fair's brash contemporaneous Bertha Cool/Donald Lam franchise.



MESA VERDE VICTIM

Graham, Scott
Torrey House Press (249 pp.)
\$15.95 paper | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-948814-23-2

The potential discovery of priceless artifacts from the Ancestral Puebloan people leads an archaeologist down a cash trail among the canyons.

An expert in archaeology in the Four Corners region, where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet, Chuck Bender is an obvious suspect when his former colleague Barney Keller is shot and killed. The death of Barney, whom everyone describes as a good guy, makes no sense until Chuck does some digging, figurative and literal, into Barney's latest work. It seems that his tales of Ancestral Puebloan

canopic jars might just be true, and the discovery of these organ-holding vessels used in the mummification process would be quite a find for an archaeologist—or a salesman. Because Chuck once dated Sandra Kingsley, the lead officer on the case, he trusts that Sandra's sure of his innocence even though he's a suspect. His wife, Janelle, maintains that Sandra's faith in Chuck is rooted in lingering feelings, and she may be right, but Chuck would never let that distract him from his family or his mission to find the killer. His knowledge of the Mesa Verde canyons and cliffs inspires his fearless teenage stepdaughters, Carmelita and Rosie, who take turns trying to help him while acting as a surrogate audience asking questions his vast archaeological knowledge allows him to answer. What they find among the rocks marries modern times to an 1800s discovery that foreshadows the very same crime.

An expert look at the great outdoors seamlessly incorporated with a focus on the hero's family.



CAMINO WINDS

Grisham, John

Doubleday (304 pp.)

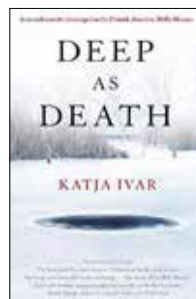
\$28.95 | Apr. 28, 2020

978-0-385-54593-8

A tempest is bearing down, and murder most foul is afoot in Grisham's latest whodunit.

Call it a metamystery: Grisham, prolific producer of courtroom thrillers, moves the action to a Florida resort island populated by mystery writers. In the wake of a ravaging hurricane, one of them turns up dead—a nice, affable fellow named Nelson Kerr, a former trial lawyer who “ratted out a client, a defense contractor who was illegally selling high-tech military stuff to the Iranians and North Koreans.” It’s not hard to understand that the client might want Kerr dead. But then, so would others whom Kerr has written about, including money launderers and—well, let’s just say other entrepreneurs who wouldn’t like their activities to be described in any detail. Enter bookstore owner Bruce Cable, friend, drinking buddy, and sometime editor and adviser of Kerr and other members of Camino Island’s literary crowd, including “an ex-con who’d served time in a federal pen for sins that were still vague.” Cable is perhaps Grisham’s least sympathetic hero; he drinks night and day, sleeps around, and has few apparent scruples. At least he’s not a lawyer. Neither is he a cop, though he’s quicker on the scene than the island’s homicide investigator—“I didn’t know we had a homicide guy,” Bruce allows, since murder is rare in these parts. That leaves it to him, an intern, a girlfriend, and assorted other players to piece together what happened to the unfortunate Mr. Kerr, who, it must be said, is dispatched in a way nicely in keeping with Floridian lifestyles. Grisham’s tale unfolds at a leisurely pace, never breaking into a sweat, and if the bad guys seem a touch too familiar, the rest of the cast make a varied and believable lot, and some might even be fun to ride out a storm with, at least if they’re unarmed.

A pleasure for Grisham fans and an undemanding addition to the beach bag.



DEEP AS DEATH

Ivar, Katja

Bitter Lemon Press (295 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-912242-30-6

The second volume in Ivar’s trilogy about Finnish investigator Hella Mauzer shows her fighting crime just as ferociously even when she’s an ex-cop.

Bounced from the police force after the rocky road of *Evil Things* (2019), Hella can’t imagine why her old boss, Chief Inspector Jon Jokela, recommended her to Helsinki madam Klara Nylund. The answer is simple: Because Jokela, who doesn’t want to bother looking into the death of pregnant prostitute Nellie Ritvanen, would rather farm the job out to a private eye. Once Hella gets the bit between her teeth, though, she refuses to give up. Not when her apparent slowness in identifying Ahti Virtanen, a well-heeled politician’s profligate son, as the obvious suspect earns a rebuke from Klara. Not when Klara is murdered herself. And not when Klara’s successor brusquely terminates her employment. As Hella, who’s just been dumped by Steve Collins, her married lover, tries to figure out her next move, the case attracts the attention of Chief Inspector Erik Mustonen, her old colleague, and Anita, the old friend who’s just joined the Helsinki police as a trainee and moved in with Hella without waiting for an invitation. Ivar’s sharp eye for both the institutional oppression of women in 1953 and her heroine’s rabid willingness to push back against it adds an edge to the twists and turns as Hella’s suspicions fall on a series of possible killers increasingly close to herself.

The subzero temperatures of both the setting and the plot make other Nordic noirs seem positively balmy.



CREDIBLE THREAT

Jance, J.A.

Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster

(336 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-9821-3107-4

The archbishop of Phoenix, threatened with death by a woman determined to avenge the long-ago suicide of her abused son, turns for help to Ali Reynolds and B. Simpson, the married couple behind the cybersecurity firm High Noon Enterprises, and one of them responds in spades.

Still grieving the death of her friend Alexandra Munsey, Ali is in no mood for further heroics. But she’s struck by the sincerity and humility of Archbishop Francis Gillespie, who’s helped High Noon before, when he shows the couple the anonymous threats against him that have been dropped in collection baskets around the diocese. He has no idea who’s sending them, but readers do: It’s housewife Rachel Higgins, whose life has

A trio of interlinked horrors unfold in the days leading up to Iceland's celebration of Christmas 1987.

THE MIST



ground to a hellish halt ever since her son, David, fatally overdosed several years ago. When a chance discovery reveals that David was one of the victims of his swim coach, predatory priest Paul Needham, Rachel vows revenge—not against Needham, whose prison term was cut short when he died of AIDS in 2008, but against his enablers in the church. The irony that Gillespie has stood out from most churchmen because of the unflagging, “no-holds-barred” measures he’s taken against abusive priests is completely lost on her as she methodically plots to execute him and frame homeless Desert Storm veteran Jack Stoneman for his murder. When a nonnegotiable demand from a Swiss client who faces a ransomware threat takes B. to Zurich, Ali is left virtually on her own to protect the archbishop from a determined and increasingly resourceful killer.

Patient, professional, and uninspired, without a single memorable character, plot twist, or surprise.



THE PERSUASION

Johansen, Iris

Grand Central Publishing (464 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-5387-6296-7

A couple inconveniently at odds with each other battle a sociopath in a high-stakes game of cat and mouse.

Continuing the battle against evil she and Seth Caleb joined when they rescued Seth's sister, Lisa, in *Mind*

Game (2017), Jane MacGuire becomes a target of people seeking to take advantage of Seth's dangerous gift of killing people using his mind as a weapon. This time Jane and her 10-year-old brother, Michael, are targeted by Stefano Luca, a ruthless sociopath who's used art theft to finance his fanatical determination to become a modern Medici. First a portrait that looks just like Jane is stolen from a Scottish castle, replaced by a photograph of her dripping in blood. Soon after Seth suddenly turns up at an archaeological dig in Wales where Jane and Michael are staying, someone shoots at them. Michael is psychic, and even though the siblings' parents, Eve Duncan and Joe Quinn, don't encourage him to use his skills, he's communicating psychically with a boy in Italy who's been tortured. Jane may have ended her relationship with Seth, but he'll do anything to keep her safe, and their sexual attraction smolders even while they squabble. Now they must combine their skills and talents to take down Luca, who'll stop at nothing to bring his dream to fruition.

Familiar characters and a touch of the supernatural can't overcome the derivative plot and lack of terror or suspense.



THE MIST

Jónasson, Ragnar

Trans. by Cribb, Victoria

Minotaur (320 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-250-76811-7

A trio of interlinked horrors unfold in the days leading up to Iceland's celebration of Christmas 1987.

Maybe the following February is too soon for Detective Hulda Hermannsdóttir to have returned to work at Reykjavík CID. Assigned to reopen the case of Unnur, a girl from Gardabaet who vanished last autumn during the tour of Iceland she undertook on foot before enrolling in college, Hulda thinks it's the worst possible investigation she could have been handed because she's still reeling from the darkly hinted domestic catastrophe that began with the withdrawn behavior of Dimma, her own teenager, and alienated her from her husband, Jón, over the holidays. As Hulda, who's not “kidding herself that there would be any happy ending,” soldiers on in search of the missing Unnur, Jónasson counterpoints her inquiries with excruciatingly paced stages of a flashback to the days before Christmas, when family farmer Einarsson's wife, Erla, opens the door of their house to Leó, a lost stranger who claims to have gotten separated from other members of his hunting party. A wintry storm prevents Leó from leaving, and with every hour that passes, Erla uncovers more discrepancies in his story. Who is he really, why has he come to their isolated home, and what unspeakable plans does he have in mind?

Jónasson weaves his suspenseful tales together with remorseless logic up to a climax more nightmarish than the buildup.



SPRING GIRLS

Katchur, Karen

Thomas & Mercer (320 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

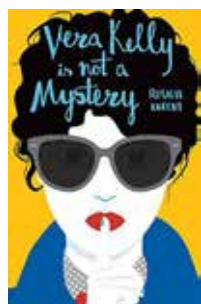
978-1-5420-9324-8

Detective Geena Brassard of the Pennsylvania State Police takes on a case that involves the most heinous spring-time ritual imaginable.

Everyone in and around Bangor is unnerved when the body of legal secretary/college student Valerie Brown is pulled from Minsi Lake because she's the third young woman who has been discovered raped and strangled at the rate of one a year. Geena is even more disturbed than everyone else because she knows that Valerie's not the third victim but at least the fourth. Seven years ago, Janey Montgomery was attacked in a remarkably similar way but somehow survived to be interviewed by Detective Albert Eugenius, Geena's partner and mentor. Geena pries Janey's name out of Albert, since retired, who swears her to secrecy, and shares

it with her current partner, Detective Parker Reed, whom she swears to secrecy. It doesn't matter. Rumor swiftly spreads Janey's name and secret far and wide. Reporters descend on her like vultures to ask, "How do you feel about being the only surviving victim of the Spring Strangler?" Janey's psychologist, Dr. Helen Watson, begins to press her in uncomfortable ways. Fellow students and their parents lodge mounting complaints against her son, 6-year-old Christian, who's always been difficult and may be graduating to violence. Could that be because he's the child of Janey's rapist, who's graduated to serial murder?

The dilemmas of two good women struggling in very different ways to do the right thing creates suffocating suspense.



VERA KELLY IS NOT A MYSTERY

Knecht, Rosalie
Tin House (256 pp.)
\$15.95 paper | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-947793-79-8

After leaving the CIA, a former spy becomes a private detective in New York City.

The welcome sequel to *Who Is Vera Kelly?* (2018) opens in August 1967, a year after Vera's last mission for the CIA. Both her personal and professional lives are upended when she's dumped by her girlfriend and loses her job for being a lesbian on the same day. At a loss, Vera decides to use her CIA training to open an office as a private investigator, and when a Dominican couple asks her to find the missing son of a politically endangered family for her first major case, all of Vera's skills, intuition, and self-reliance will be tested. Vera discovers the boy has run away from foster care after his caretaker died, and her subsequent trip to the Dominican Republic to find the boy's parents echoes her escape from Argentina in the last book when her investigation reveals her employers are not who they seem and she's taken hostage. In between her undercover obligations, Vera attempts a new relationship with a bartender named Maxine but finds she cannot develop substantial connections with others while keeping all of her secrets. Author Knecht uses this second book to delve more into Vera's personal life and history while also deftly balancing the host of characters related to the mystery. Knecht's prose is expansive in Vera's moments of introspection and lively in moments of action, and she moves easily between Vera's first-person narration and third-person scenes regarding the missing boy. Readers will be thrilled by Vera Kelly's return.

A worthy and welcome continuation of a subversive series.



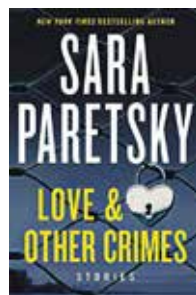
DEATH IN THE EAST

Mukherjee, Abir
Pegasus Crime (352 pp.)
\$25.95 | May 5, 2020
978-1-64313-468-0

The reappearance of an unwelcome figure from his past in 1922 India leads Capt. Sam Wyndham to an impossible case of murder.

Finally acknowledging his addiction to opium, Wyndham journeys to a remote ashram to take the cure. As he approaches his destination, he spots a man who tried to kill him 17 years ago, when he was a freshly minted constable in Whitechapel. Two days after Bessie Drummond, a housekeeper who'd stepped out with Wyndham before his superior pressed him to drop her and she instantly made an unsuitable marriage, was attacked in an East London street, she was beaten to death in her own room, which was locked from the inside. Wyndham's own investigations, and his devil's bargain with a pair of crime lords from Yorkshire, led the police to a suspect who swore he was innocent. Struck by his sincerity, Wyndham raced to pursue new leads, but all in vain. Now the man he's convinced actually killed Bessie has turned up in the most unlikely place, and there's every sign that he's recognized Wyndham. The disappearance and death of one of his fellow residents at the ashram is only a prelude to a second fresh murder—an unholy echo of Bessie Drummond's death in another locked room, with the added complication that the obvious manner of death seems to have been physically impossible. Mukherjee juggles his two time frames effortlessly, brings both the East End and upcountry India to vivid life, wittily places his hero under the thumb of his own sergeant, and supplies an improbably logical conclusion to Wyndham's most baffling case to date.

Every time you think you know where he's going, Mukherjee pulls the rug out from under you with pleasingly insolent ease.



LOVE & OTHER CRIMES

Paretsky, Sara
Morrow/HarperCollins (448 pp.)
\$17.99 paper | Jun. 30, 2020
978-0-06-291554-2

Fourteen stories, most dating from 1996 to 2018, about Chicago shamus V.I. Warshawski, her friends and family, and a remarkably diverse group of other people.

Five of the seven stories about Warshawski are first-rate; only "Wildcat," which takes the young Victoria's family through the disruption of Martin Luther King's 1966 visit to Chicago, and "Is It Justice?" a wish-fulfillment sequel to *Critical Mass* (2013) in which somebody shoots a newly exonerated killer as he descends the courthouse steps,

play better as politics than fiction. In the others, V.I. seeks out a student she humiliated at a high school Q&A; finds a contemporary case of plagiarism beneath a decade-old murder; hunts down her client's father only to be told that he's not her client's father; turns down a bodyguard gig on behalf of a wealthy author who begins trash-talking her every chance she gets; and, in the brand-new title story, goes to bat for her dislikable ex-neighbor's kid brother when he's arrested for murder. What's even more impressive is the variety of the other seven stories. Paretzky effortlessly masters Dr. Watson's voice in an adventure that shows Sherlock Holmes bested by an upstart American and sends Carroll John Daly's pioneering hard-boiled dick Race Williams to the 1933 Century of Progress Fair. The deftly plotted "Acid Test" shows an apostle of nonviolence arrested for bombing a neighbor's scientific institute. The charming "Miss Bianca" turns on a 10-year-old girl's solicitude for a lab mouse. The dystopian fantasy "Safety First" and "Trial by Fire," a pendant to *Bleeding Kansas* (2007), show off Paretzky's willingness to take risks. And "Heartbreak House," in which a romance writer's editor recommends that she consult a psychotherapist, who promptly gets killed, ends the collection on a wryly amused note.

The well-wrought plots and densely imagined worlds make this the most distinguished mystery collection so far this year.



THE BEST OF JULES DE GRANDIN

Quinn, Seabury

Night Shade (512 pp.)

\$24.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-949102-26-0

Don't have time to wade through all five volumes collecting the stories of pulpmeister Quinn (1889-1969) published in *Weird Tales* between 1925 and 1951? Editor George Vanderburgh has

obligingly selected 20 standouts.

"Standout" doesn't mean "best." Self-described "physician and occultist" Dr. Jules de Grandin is roused from his rarely glimpsed domestic sphere in Harrisonville, New Jersey, by an unending parade of cases that end up involving ghouls, vampires, werewolves, mummies, familiars, reincarnated figures from past history, and the undead. So every one of these stories is very much like all the others. Even many of their titles—"The House of Horror," "Restless Souls," "Stealthy Death," "The Mansion of Unholy Magic," "Witch-House," "Suicide Chapel"—are interchangeable. Yet they all stand out from the everyday world in the starkest terms possible. Grandin and his stodgier sidekick, Dr. Samuel Trowbridge, confront bridegrooms who drop dead at the altar, horribly vengeful surgeons, sinister kittens, fathers eager to sacrifice their children in the name of science, and plot twists that echo "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," *The Moonstone* and "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (and, to be fair, others that anticipate "The Most Dangerous Game" and

Jamaica Inn). National and ethnic stereotypes take the place of characterization, and both the malefactors and their victims are largely indistinguishable from others in their class. Quinn's zeal is reserved for pulpy plotting. He launches each tale with a juicy hook, breaks as many taboos (from dismemberment to incest) as possible, and keeps the pot boiling en route to the inevitably anticlimactic explanations, face-offs, and post-combat libations.

Blood and thunder along with scantily clad female victims, monsters of every stripe, and more blood.



THE SKY WEEPS FOR ME

Ramírez, Sergio

Trans. by Chambers, Leland H. with McPherson, Bruce R.

McPherson & Company (272 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jun. 19, 2020

978-1-62054-020-6

An abandoned yacht in a Nicaraguan lagoon hints at much darker crimes in this noir novel by a Nicaraguan author.

As the streets of Managua celebrate the procession of Our Lady of Fatima, Inspector Dolores Morales, Chief of Intelligence of the Office of Drug Investigations, learns of an abandoned yacht a few hundred miles away in Bluefields, monitored by his friend Deputy Inspector Bert Dixon—nicknamed Lord Dixon because of his impeccable manners. (And that's not all: The city's DEA liaison is called Chuck Norris because of his resemblance to the action star.) It's assumed that the yacht was left by "narcos" once traces of blood are found on the deck along with a stained T-shirt. A riverside peddler known as Casanova provides the first solid lead but fears for his safety. And so it goes with the investigation, as violent criminals methodically undermine the work of law enforcement. The raw wounds left by the recent revolution make people wary of cooperating with the police. At length, one murder victim is identified as Sheila Marengo, who was aboard the yacht with an unsavory crowd including thugs Black Bull and Caupolicán (after a legendary Chilean war leader). A melancholy sense of déjà vu hits Morales and Dixon when a body washes ashore, surely linked to the yacht. The complicated search for Black Bull and Caupolicán drags in the DEA and the singular Violeta Maria Barquero, who's second in command of the Nicaraguan National Police.

Colorful characters and Nicaraguan history are folded into a stylish procedural.



LOST RIVER

Scott, J. Todd

Putnam (448 pp.)

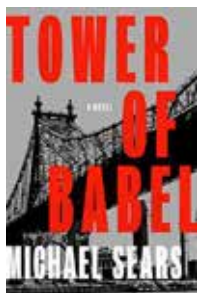
\$27.00 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-0-7352-1294-7

In this thriller written by a federal agent, the Drug Enforcement Administration investigates a “firestorm of fatal ODs” in a small Kentucky town.

Special Agent Casey Alexander and her partner have been targeting the Glasser family “forever.” The Glassers control the drug trade in Angel, Kentucky, but one day, they are shotgunned to death in their home. The Angel PD finds, among other horrors, a woman with wildflower tattoos on her back and her head blown off, one arm extended trying to reach her unharmed baby. But “Little Paris” Glasser is still alive, and he’s the worst of them, “five feet of the devil....And every fucking inch of him hell.” The agents need every bit of their steel-spike toughness to deal with this demon, who smokes a mix of crank and wasp killer out of a 60-watt light bulb and sells drugs in glassine bags with pictures of dancing skeletons and the label “DOA.” As the law closes in, the action never stops until the final bullet flies in the inevitable, explosive confrontation. Scott’s writing is as vivid as it can get, with stunning lines like “Dillon Mackey hits his first home run ever, just as his mama, Kara, drops dead in the bleachers.” A character named Renfro is “an absence of light...vacant, a hole in the world.” The f-bombs fly as well, which would merit no mention except that there are enough to fill up their own chapter, and they lose their effing impact after the first few hundred. So Alexander and her partner may stop Little Paris or not, but the drug crisis goes on. This grim, gritty novel captures the feeling of hopelessness that the opioid epidemic brings. As Alexander muses, “Sometimes stories just don’t have happy endings.” Such as this one.

Well-told but raw as an open wound and not for the squeamish.



TOWER OF BABEL

Sears, Michael

Soho Crime (408 pp.)

\$27.95 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-64129-195-8

Sears introduces a new hero to his world of high-finance thrillers: a soiled, likable Queens ex-lawyer whose highly questionable business practices are radically challenged by the murder of his partner.

Ted Molloy wouldn’t actually call Richie Rubiano his partner, but now that he can’t practice law anymore, his livelihood depends on negotiating bailouts on behalf of the principals whose properties reformed lowlife Little Richie has identified as subject to foreclosure. The latest case Richie’s turned up

could be worth \$1.2 million—enough to scare away Ted, who’s consistently gotten burned when he’s ventured much over his \$50,000 limit, and evidently enough to get Richie shot to death. Ted, true to form, is inclined to walk away, but Richie’s feisty widow, city employee Cheryl Rubiano, demands that he deliver the \$1.2 million Richie identified and incidentally find his killer. Working with Lester Young McKinley, a beguiling title insurance investigator who steps into Richie’s shoes all too easily, Ted soon tracks down Barbara Miller, the 93-year-old owner of several properties coveted by Ronald Reisner, the wealthy developer determined to erect a monster multiuse tower backed by Queens councilman Kevin Pak and opposed by a legions of locals. The most weighty of many complications is that Reisner’s attorney and bagman, Jacqueline Clavette, is married to Jill Fitzmaurice, the ex-wife Ted, back on friendly terms with her, would do anything to avoid estranging again. Or almost anything, as the explosive complications that follow make clear.

Even if you’re not already sold on Queens, Sears makes real estate law as sexy and dangerous as international intrigue.



REMAIN SILENT

Steiner, Susie

Random House (320 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-525-50997-4

Steiner’s Manon Bradshaw is back on the case, looking to solve the murder of a migrant while seeking the elusive work-life balance.

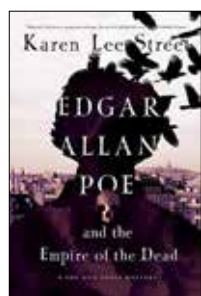
Manon finds herself, in her mid-40s, dealing with the highs and lows of living with her partner, Mark; her toddler, Teddy; and her adopted teenage son, Fly. When she returns to the Cambridgeshire police force to work on cold cases part-time, she misses the glory days of her time as a detective but also embraces the more flexible schedule (with more time for online shopping). But then she discovers a body hanging from a tree, and she’s quickly pulled back into the thrill—and chaotic schedule—of active investigation. The dead man is a Lithuanian migrant, so Manon and her earnest partner, Davy, must confront the terrible living and working conditions of people who have come to England seeking better circumstances only to find themselves exploited and hated. As in her other Bradshaw mysteries, Steiner doesn’t shy away from confronting the current political climate, and this time she also gives us an honest portrait of a woman, still endearingly human, faced with her own aging as well as the constant exhaustion of caring for her loved ones, pursuing a career, and dealing with a family health crisis. Steiner continues the structure from her previous novels of delivering different chapters from different third-person perspectives, but while this decision adds necessary backstory, it also relegates Manon this time to a more supporting role—and in doing so, makes her feel almost like a caricature of herself rather than a dynamic force of nature with a giant heart. In

Electrifying, ambitious, and crushingly beautiful.

THE DISTANT DEAD

this case, differentiation has muted, rather than intensified, the novel's energy.

Still savvy, sharp, and smart but a step down from Steiner's previous books.



EDGAR ALLAN POE AND THE EMPIRE OF THE DEAD

Street, Karen Lee

Pegasus Crime (352 pp.)

\$25.95 | May 5, 2020

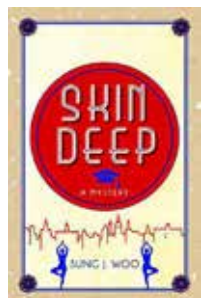
978-1-64313-422-2

What nemesis has tricked the noted American author into coming to Paris, and why?

An urgent request from his friend C. Auguste Dupin brings Edgar Allan Poe

to Paris in June 1849 to help him unravel another mystery, this one very personal. Dupin, the Parisian detective in the real-life Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," dreads the reemergence of his nemesis, Ernest Valdemar, the man who destroyed his family decades ago. Poe, who narrates in typically florid style, is mourning the death of his beloved wife, Sissy, and his two-week crossing from Philadelphia to Le Havre is bathed in melancholy. When he arrives, there's another surprise. Dupin didn't write the letter that brought him; who did? And why did they want Poe in Paris? The plot unfolds in a series of juicy set pieces. Touching a carved owl reveals a dark passage behind a bookcase. Dupin believes, against any scientific proof and the opinion of his physician, Dr. Froissart, that an elixir he takes in small doses may be slowly killing him. Froissart is consumed with another crime as dastardly as it is convoluted. Years ago, a boy was kidnapped and has now grown into manhood. The Grand Duke of Gerolstein is investigating this matter; coincidentally (or perhaps not), Poe interacted with the grand duke and his friend Herr Durand on his trans-Atlantic crossing. Dupin fears that both the grand duke and the young man are in danger. But from whom? The duo's search takes them to the catacombs, the Grand Guignol, and a bizarre puppet theater.

The third co-starring vehicle for Poe and the detective he created is a juicy gothic potboiler.



SKIN DEEP

Woo, Sung J.

Agora Books (352 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | May 19, 2020

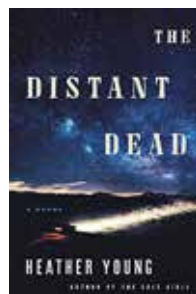
978-1-947993-95-2

Woo strikes out in a wholly new direction with this soft-boiled debut mystery about a private eye's search for a frenemy's missing daughter.

On the day she's celebrating her second anniversary with the Ed Baker Investigative Agency, Korean American adoptee Siobhan O'Brien,

nee Kim Shee-Bong, finds her boss unexpectedly dead, leaving her the sole proprietor of a business worth maybe \$20,000 on a good day. Will Siobhan, an ex-reporter of 40, shut the place down? Not if pushy Josie Sykes, the younger sister of Siobhan's late friend Marlene, has anything to say about it. Josie's daughter, Penelope Hae Jun Sykes, who, like Siobhan, was adopted, has vanished from Llewellyn College, where she was a first-year student. The members of the Womyn of Llewellyn, who took her in and maybe did a number on her, insist that she's fled the emotional abuse of her overbearing mother and that they don't have to answer to her. Siobhan, who interviewed Llewellyn president Vera Wheeler shortly after her appointment, finds that an awful lot has changed on campus in the five years since. Wheeler seems determined to admit no one but beauty queens and make over the college into a temple of state-of-the-art cosmetology. Her plans have put her at odds with the Krishna Center in nearby Hawthorne, New York, where Penny's allegedly hunkered down—or maybe, as Siobhan gradually learns when she goes undercover at Llewellyn and Krishna as a reporter, they haven't after all. Woo's vision of the Stepford College is logistically shaky but metaphorically resonant.

The prize is a heroine who's by turns wide-eyed, gravely amused, susceptible, and plenty cool enough for an encore.



THE DISTANT DEAD

Young, Heather

Morrow/HarperCollins (352 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-06-269081-4

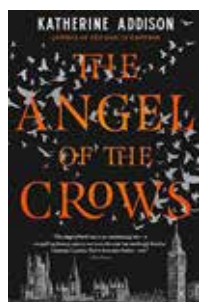
Lonely, broken people in a dead-end town are forced to confront the fragility of life and relationships in the aftermath of a horrific death.

A young boy, Sal Prentiss, discovers a burned corpse in the lonely hills of a small Nevada town, soon revealed to be that of Adam Merkel, the middle school math teacher, a new arrival who came—and died—carrying a lot of secrets. Though few mourn his passing, nearly everyone in town seems to be struggling with their own frustrations and losses, from Nora Wheaton, the history teacher who tends her ailing father, unable to confront him about his role in her brother's death years ago, to Sal, who lost his mother to a drug overdose the year before. As each one makes choices that will direct the courses of their own lives and those of so many others, they also work to find out more about Adam's death and what events had brought him to their town: the intersections of the lives that led to his death. Playing out against the barren landscape of a struggling town, all this drama is worthy of a Greek tragedy, and there is also something tragic in the scope and depth of the characters' hubris and personal struggles. Young clearly has a gift for crafting complex, flawed protagonists and creating both empathy and understanding for them, but it takes a true master to also build empathy for minor characters, who would be so easy to leave in two dimensions. When a middle school bully, in teasing a teacher, becomes the

target of that teacher's anger, the way Young reveals the root of the boy's cruelty, and vulnerability, suddenly reverses everything we thought we knew. And this small example, magnified, represents the brilliance of the novel: It is at heart about the timelessness of human curiosity, the eternal possibility of forgiveness, and the everyday miracle of survival.

Electrifying, ambitious, and crushing beautiful.

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



THE ANGEL OF THE CROWS

Addison, Katherine

Tor (448 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 23, 2020

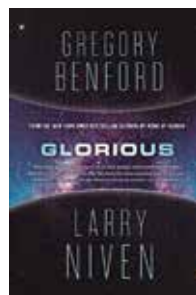
978-0-7653-8739-4

An alternate-world fantasy that adds a few welcome twists to the famous Holmes and Watson archetypes.

Addison's novel begins with an injured army doctor returning to London from Afghanistan and taking up

residence with an eccentric detective in a flat on Baker Street. Readers don't have to be mystery aficionados to guess what's going on here, but this is no ordinary take on Sherlock Holmes. Addison's 1880s London is populated with werewolves, vampires, and angels alongside its serial killers and common thieves. The Watson figure, here called Dr. Doyle, turns into a hellhound at night due to a supernatural injury, which Doyle must keep secret or risk being punished for not having registered with the government as an occult creature. The Sherlock figure, here called Crow, is an angel who helps Scotland Yard (Lestrade is still Lestrade, as useless as ever) solve its trickiest cases. Recognizable Arthur Conan Doyle mysteries and characters have new life in this sturdily built fantasy universe, making it fun to read even such familiar tales. All the while, the detectives watch the papers for more news on the grisly Whitechapel murders, committed by the all-too-human Jack the Ripper. As Doyle and Crow explore London's seedy occult underground, Addison doesn't shy away from discussing the era's racism. It would be a spoiler to be too specific, but what really makes this title stand out among a sea of Sherlock Holmes stories is its straightforward criticism of gender roles and the gender binary itself.

A Sherlock Holmes-esque novel that truly breaks the mold.



GLORIOUS

Benford, Gregory & Niven, Larry

Tor (400 pp.)

\$29.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-7653-9240-4

The third and presumably final installment about a hard-science space odyssey whose purpose is to help spread humanity throughout the galaxy.

Previously, our starship encountered the Bowl, a vast, steerable object that wanders space capturing and enslaving alien species to occupy its unimaginably huge living space. Having wrestled the Bowl's birdlike boss species to a standstill in the sequel, Captain Redwing and crew planted a thriving colony there. Now, the starship finally attains its original destination, Glory, a planetary system whose orbital dynamics prove artificially engineered and enormously more complex than remote surveillance indicated. The Bowl, it emerges, directed by ancient, patient alien Ice Minds, has met the Glory system's controlling intelligences before—and they are not best buds. Like its predecessors, this adventure is clotted with technical detail (what was it Twain said about never letting the facts get in the way of a good story?), nearly all of it skippable. Biologists Beth Marble and Cliff Kam-mash (they're an item) visit the alien planets and encounter a parade of mind-bogglingly implausible critters, some lethal, some highly intelligent, some merely ridiculous, in a narrative peppered with borrowings, often annoying, from Brian Aldiss' classic *Hotbouse* (1962). Redwing, meanwhile, heads for a gigantic living spaceship and a meeting with Glory's weird head honcho; this offers the authors scope to write impressive exchanges wherein resourceful humans augmented by AI are not altogether overmatched.

Full of ideas and often intriguing, if difficult—so, just about worth the effort.



THE LAST DRUID

Brooks, Terry

Del Rey (448 pp.)

\$28.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-399-17854-2

The chronological conclusion to both the four-book *Fall of Shannara* miniseries and the entire *Shannara* oeuvre established in 1977.

What began as a standard sword-and-sorcery universe has morphed into one where magic and technology coexist, where heroes zoom around in airships powered by something akin to dilithium crystals yet still fight with swords and blast each other with magic. Here, the Four Lands face destruction by the warlike Skaar, invaders driven from their home by climate change. Four groups with dominant female leads operate largely independently and often without reference to the plot's main thrust.

A marriage of convenience leads to love between a duke and a woman who never intended to marry.

MARRY IN SCARLET

Tarsha Kaynin, schooled in wishsong magic by the druid Drisker Arc, faces a showdown battle with the evil witch Clizia Porse. The witch has hurled Drisker into a demon-infested realm from which there's no escape, where he discovers Grianne Ohmsford, an old acquaintance, a long-term prisoner. Young Belladrin Rish, a clandestine Skaar agent working to subvert the Four Lands' defenses, begins to doubt her mission. And Skaar princess Ajin D'Amphere, now collaborating with warrior Dar Leah and friends, heads toward Skaarland with, just possibly, a technological solution to the climate problem. Familiar Brooks strengths—courage, perseverance, loyalty, and so forth—are prominent, yet it's hard to ignore the underlying exhaustion. Things happen randomly, so the narrative strands never quite cohere into a single satisfying package; events readers might have anticipated from the previous volumes fail to materialize. Brooks' style is easy and undemanding. His characters often resemble fantasy archetypes yet possess just enough individuality to avoid skepticism; plots seldom stray far from boilerplate. His greatest appeal has been to youth, and recent attempts to inject mature themes such as sexual violence have not been a success. As he has pretty much throughout the entire Shannara cosmos, Brooks takes his departure with the contention that science and magic are flip sides of the same coin. They're not. Science works for anybody. Magic works only if you have the gift.

Like a weary yet exultant marathon runner: wraps itself in a flag, totters across the finish line, and crumples in a heap.



HARROW THE NINTH

Muir, Tamsyn

Tor (512 pp.)

\$26.99 | Aug. 4, 2020

978-1-250-31322-5

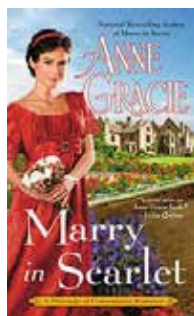
Quirky space opera, dark fantasy, gothic novel, and unreliable-narrator thriller combine in unusual and unpredictable ways in the second of a series.

Harrowhark the First, newly created Lyctor of the Emperor—a near-immortal councilor and warrior—is in some difficulties. The young necromancer is having serious trouble integrating the soul of her sacrificed cavalier, a necessary step in assuming her full powers and ensuring her body will fight when her soul is immersed in the undead realm of the River. Perhaps this trouble stems from her mistaken belief that her dead cavalier was cowardly bad poet Ortus Nigenad; readers of the previous volume, *Gideon the Ninth* (2019), know that Ortus died before the Lyctor challenge began; Harrow's true cavalier primary was the crude, defiant, and appealing young woman known as Gideon Nav. Harrow's rewritten memories of a past that never happened as well as her conviction that she's insane make it nearly impossible for her to fully prepare for a hopeless battle with a planet's vengeful soul—or to determine what's real from moment to moment. Harrow is nowhere near as fun a protagonist as snarky, passionate Gideon, and we soon realize that her troubles are

mostly self-inflicted. Although she remains sympathetic, Harrow wanders through most of the book confused, sad, desperate, and repressed except for a secret and kind of creepy passion for the Body, a beautiful, feminine-appearing preserved corpse she glimpsed in the taboo and supposedly inaccessible Locked Tomb at her home and whose ghostly presence seems to follow her everywhere. It's somewhat grim going until the final fifth of the book, when the story gathers itself with thrilling speed, delivering exciting action sequences and explosive revelations.

A slow-gathering hallucinatory adventure that eventually delivers a great payoff.

ROMANCE



MARRY IN SCARLET

Gracie, Anne

Berkley (336 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | May. 26, 2020

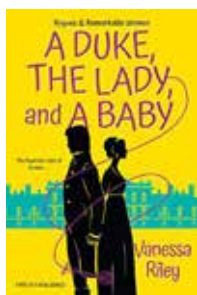
978-1-984802-06-4

A marriage of convenience leads to love between a duke and a woman who never intended to marry.

After the Duke of Everingham, known to his friends as Hart, was jilted at the altar, the aunt of his supposed-to-be bride offers up a different niece instead.

At first Hart declines, but as he learns more about Georgiana Rutherford, a headstrong young heiress who simply wants to live in the country with her dog and horses, he decides she would make a decent match. George, however, tells herself she's not interested in the cold, arrogant duke. Her body says otherwise though, as she yearns for his kisses and touch. When the two are caught in a compromising situation, Hart announces their betrothal. George is furious at first, but as they grow to trust and appreciate each other, true feelings develop. For the most part, the conflict is low stakes and the story is character driven. George is spirited and smart while Hart starts out insufferable. He believes all women are devious and that "love was a delusion that women used to control men." Thankfully, his relationship with George leads to a change of heart. After their marriage near the end of the book, the story suddenly becomes plot heavy as they deal with the mystery of a missing, possibly kidnapped, boy. It's a jarring change, but the story is exciting and gives readers a bit more time to enjoy Hart and George as a couple.

Uneven yet pleasantly frothy and quaint.



A DUKE, THE LADY, AND A BABY

Riley, Vanessa

Zebra/Kensington (320 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-4201-5223-4

A woman must infiltrate her own home in order to care for her infant son after the death of her husband.

Patience is a West Indian heiress who married Colin Jordan, a proper English gentleman. Patience loved her husband, but he became remote and distant over the course of their brief marriage and died before meeting their now 3-month-old son, Lionel. Colin's evil uncle, Markham, forcibly removes Patience from her home and sends her to Bedlam, the mental asylum, hoping to gain control of her large trust by claiming he is Lionel's sole remaining relative. After escaping Bedlam with a friend, Patience is determined to find a way to regain control of her trust and take Lionel back to her home island, where he will be safe. Her plan is thrown into chaos with the arrival of Colin's cousin and heir, Busick Strathmore, Duke of Repington, who inherited their home and is Lionel's true legal guardian. Busick fires all the servants and bans Markham from the house, paving the way for Patience to disguise herself as a wet nurse for Lionel. Although Busick cares for Lionel and wants to be a good guardian, Patience can't trust him with her secrets. Busick already believes she abandoned Lionel, and he'll never understand the toxic mix of racism and sexism that allowed Markham to get rid of her so easily. Riley's use of first-person narration for Patience highlights both her desperation to save her son and her ability to see how English society has failed them. Slowly, Patience learns to trust Busick, and they decide to work together to bring down Markham. The Duke's affection for Lionel and the way the three bond as a family is the primary love story; Busick and Patience's romantic relationship as partners and lovers is underdeveloped and emotionally flat.

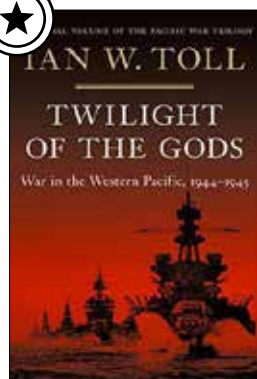
A slow, almost stolid, story of how a family develops against great odds.

NONFICTION

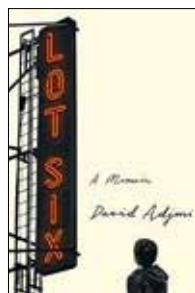


These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

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TWILIGHT OF THE GODS
War in the Western Pacific, 1944-1945
 Toll, Ian W.
 Norton (864 pp.)
 \$40.00 | Jul. 21, 2020
 978-0-393-08065-0



LOT SIX A Memoir

Adjmi, David

Harper/HarperCollins (400 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-0-06-199094-6

Determined to be an artist, a Syrian Jew wrests himself from his past.

Growing up in a Syrian Sephardic Jewish community in Brooklyn, award-winning playwright Adjmi felt like an outsider to his culture, religion, and family. In his debut memoir, the author chronicles in visceral detail his anguished youth and laborious search for his true identity. His father, he writes, was a con man and pathological liar who never understood any of his children. "He was constantly situating his kids in stories about our lives that had nothing to do with us," writes the author, "but somehow we ended up as characters in those stories." Still, Adjmi wanted to please him, hoping that he could win his father's love, "even if his love confused my sense of self." His father left the family, cutting off contact for five years, leaving the children with their demanding, narcissistic, angry mother. Childhood, he thought, was "a sort of exhausting performance." When he was 10, he "plummeted into depression," which his mother considered a personal affront. He desperately wanted her love but "learned to tamp these impulses. When I did hug her," he writes, "I sensed her flinching discomfort." Besides depression and anxiety, Adjmi was beset by "anguish about being a homosexual." In his sophomore year of high school, he was in "a near-suicidal depression," and he feared becoming a "Lot Six." Lot numbers, he explains, were part of a coded system that Syrian businessmen used to negotiate prices on cameras and Walkmans. "Lot Six was code for three, an odd number—odd, as in queer." Lot Six "had no value," rendering him worthless. Adjmi struggled mightily to reinvent himself, prove himself "morally superior" to his family and culture, fulfill his artistic ambitions, and, finally, believe in his own talent. Although at times the narrative reads like a long, petulant lament, the author powerfully recounts pain and self-discovery.

Raw revelations make for an engrossing memoir.

THE JOYS OF INTERMITTENT READING

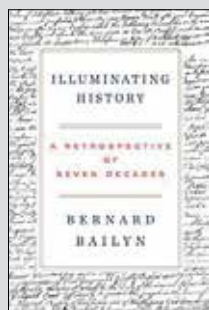


Leiah Overstreet

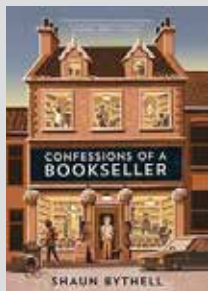
IN THE PAST COUPLE WEEKS, our world has changed irreversibly. While I am confident that we will emerge on the other side, hopefully stronger and more compassionate and empathetic to all of our global citizens, so much is uncertain right now that it's increasingly difficult to focus on any one thing for very long.

This includes reading, as we constantly update our families about our health and safety and fight the temptation to check Twitter, Facebook, and other outlets for the latest (usually depressing) news. With that in mind, here are five April books that you can pick up and put down without losing the thread. All of them are quite different, which reflects my catholic tastes in literature, but each is suitable for intermittent reading.

Illuminating History by Bernard Bailyn (Norton, April 14): The well-honored master historian—two Pulitzers, a National Book Award, a Bancroft Prize, and a National Humanities Medal—compiles seven (!) decades of writing in this top-notch collection. Our reviewer calls it “a privilege for history buffs from a master of the craft,” and whether Bailyn is explaining the effect of the Puritans’ beliefs on the early American economy or discussing his diligent research methods, the narrative is rarely dull and never less than, yes, illuminating.

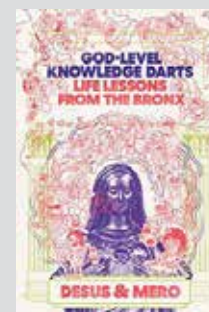


Confessions of a Bookseller by Shaun Bythell (Godine, April 7): It’s a cliché, I know, but this book is legitimately laugh-out-loud funny; I LOL-ed every few pages. In this “bighearted, sobering, and humane” memoir, Bythell presents a day-by-day, journal-style chronicle of his experiences as an independent bookstore owner in Wigtown, Scotland. Always astute and wry, the author not only gives us an inside look at what it takes to run a bookstore; he also offers consistently entertaining portraits of the many quirky regulars and other characters who stop by.

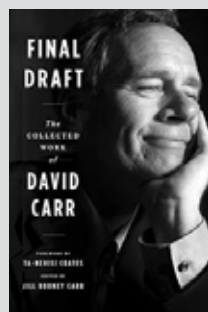


God-Level Knowledge Darts by Desus & Mero (Random House, April 14): “A poetically profane, verbally adroit guide to life by two jokers who are smarter than

they act,” this one’s not for everyone (especially readers uncomfortable with frequent profanity or graphic discussions of sex and drugs), but it will undoubtedly please the many fans of the duo behind the hit eponymous show. It’s a rapid, back-and-forth conversation from black and Latinx perspectives that is consistently raw, often hilarious, and sometimes quite poignant.



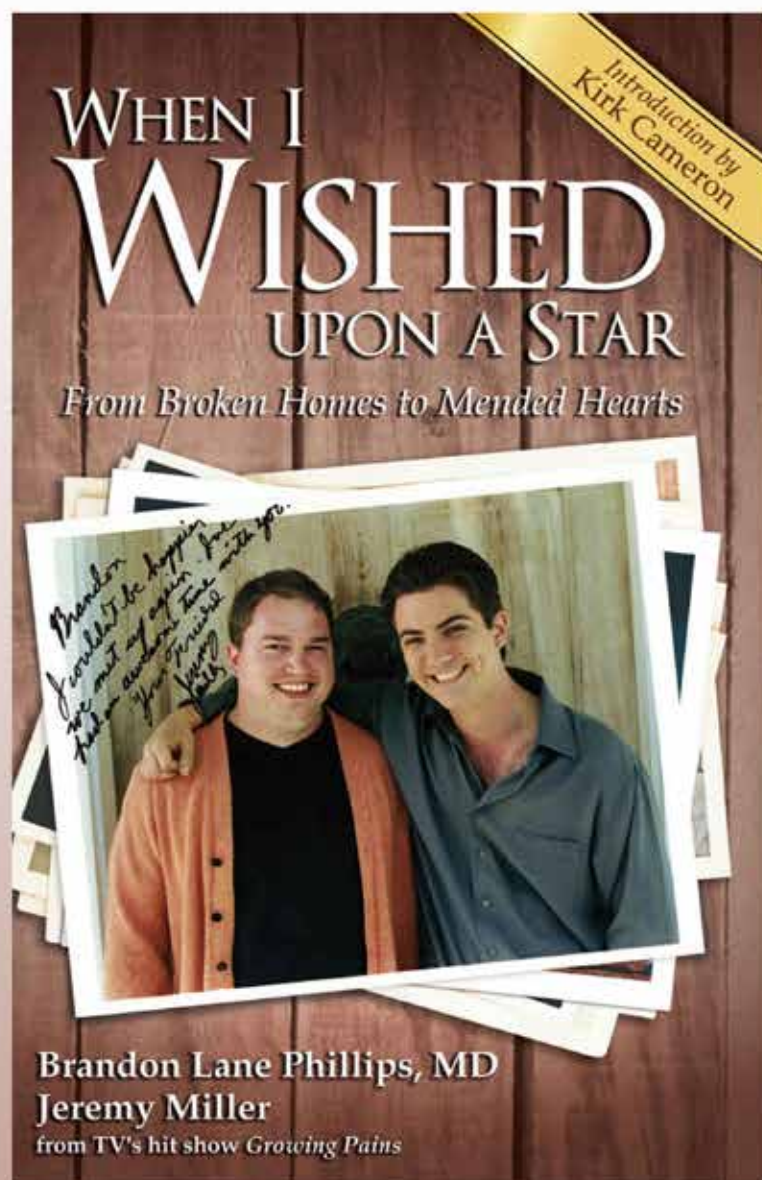
Final Draft by David Carr (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, April 7): Though we lost this top-flight journalist in 2015, his legacy lives on in this well-curated collection that spans his career, from the *Twin Cities Reader* to the *New York Times*. Each piece demonstrates Carr’s “profound care about his craft, flashes of humor, and, when necessary, genuine fangs: See his 2015 piece about a neighbor’s cat, and witness the gleam of his verbal scalpel that vivisects [Ann] Coulter.” I would pay good money to see what he would make of our current political and cultural landscape. If you enjoy this collection, do not miss his outstanding memoir, *Night of the Gun* (2008).



Foxfire Story, edited by T.J. Smith (Anchor, April 28): In the latest of the long-running franchise about life in Appalachia, the executive director of Foxfire—a heritage preservation organization—compiles what our reviewer called “yarns aplenty, from tall tales to etiological myths and collections of folk beliefs.” In addition to engaging folktales and nuggets of traditional wisdom, “readers will learn that the local way of saying insomnia is ‘big eye,’ that something ‘catty-whompus’ is lopsided, that working people wear clodhoppers while someone in an office wears a ‘choke-rag,’ or necktie.” Also check out *Travels With Foxfire* (2018) and their 45th anniversary book (2011).



Eric Liebetrau is the nonfiction and managing editor.



Phillips' debut memoir tells the story of how a wish when he was an ill child led to his career as a successful doctor.

"The connection between Phillips and the sitcom star is legitimately intriguing..."

"...readers who are religiously inclined (like Phillips and *Growing Pains* co-star Kirk Cameron, who provides the book's introduction) might see the hand of God at work in this story."

"An earnest, inspiring memoir"
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"This is a book with a Christian message, but for non-Christian and nonreligious readers, ...a darn good read."

—*Mensa Bulletin*

"...the perfect read. This story truly touches the soul."
—Jonathan Horton, Olympic Gymnast & American Ninja Warrior

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Even teetotalers will relish the insights into this arcane world.

UNVARNISHED



UNVARNISHED A Gimlet-Eyed Look at Life Behind the Bar

Alperin, Eric and Stoll, Deborah
Harper Wave/HarperCollins (320 pp.)
\$27.99 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-0-06-289928-6



The life of high-end bartending gets a thorough examination in this vivid memoir of setting up and running a Los Angeles establishment.

Like many graduates of performing arts schools, Alperin had to get side jobs in New York to support his dream of becoming an actor. The more he worked, the more he realized that bartending, which has its own dramatic side, was his true calling. In this brash and insightful book co-written with screenwriter and journalist Stoll, Alperin traces his move to LA, where, with “barfly entrepreneur” Cedd Morris and the colorful “microdoser” Sasha Petraske (“central casting’s wet dream of the

nutty professor”), he opened The Varnish, a small bar dedicated to precise renderings of classic cocktails, the “kind of place someone would want to tell their friends about but also keep to themselves.” This isn’t the usual breezy or dutiful as-told-to memoir but rather a deep and meticulous dive into Alperin’s personality and experiences. Consequently, sometimes the narrative is spectacularly and absorbingly dorky: If you haven’t thought about the process of making ice or about those cubes or chunks we unthinkingly drop into our glasses, you will now. Just as often, the text zooms in on the minutiae of a night in the life of the bartender: “Bostick dry-shakes a Ramos gin fizz with short, hard strokes while I stir up a manhattan in a mixing glass, like spinning a spool of liquid silk, the rye’s dark legs spiraling down the glass, lightening in color as it dilutes.” Alperin doesn’t hold back on the details of his personal life, revealing plenty about drugs and anonymous sex. The book also includes a substantial midsection with instructions on how to make enough familiar and exotic drinks to keep the home drinker occupied for a lifetime.

Even teetotalers will relish the insights into this arcane world.

DEFINING THE TIMES

BARACK OBAMA

BY PATRICIA DUNCAN

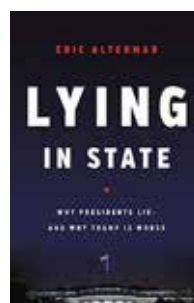
A look back at the presidency of Barack Obama.

“The author’s sincere admiration for Obama shines through in this collection, which effectively commemorates a historic presidency.”

ISBN: 978-0-9847316-5-7

“Readers who are nostalgic for the Obama years will appreciate this unique tribute.”
—Kirkus Reviews

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LYING IN STATE Why Presidents Lie—And Why Trump Is Worse

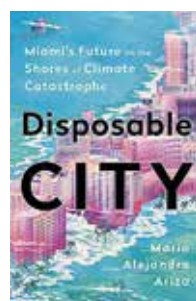
Alterman, Eric
Basic (416 pp.)
\$30.00 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-5416-1682-0

All presidents lie—but some much more bigly than others.

When Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark out, writes *Nation* columnist and author Alterman, he told the new nation a white lie: The pathfinders were supposedly exploring the Mississippi River, a story that, Jefferson wrote, “masks sufficiently the real destination”—namely, the Pacific Ocean. Why would he lie about such a thing? Perhaps to disguise his intentions from prying enemies or perhaps just for the joy of it. Just so, by Alterman’s insightful account, Lyndon Johnson lied about nearly anything he could, though one of his biggest lies—concerning the Gulf of Tonkin incident—was based on such faulty information that he might not have known it was a lie. A Mexican invasion of the U.S., a promise not to raise taxes, weapons of mass destruction, oral sex in the Oval Office—presidents tell lies for manifold reasons, sometimes in the interest of national security, sometimes because the lie is the common coin of politics. There are exceptions. Even though “Barack Obama was not perfectly honest with the American people,” he seems to have corrected course once a misstatement or overstatement was brought to his attention; investigators discovered only six “outright falsehoods” in his entire second term. All this brings us, of course, to the undisputed king of presidential fabulists, Donald Trump, who lies as if lies were mother’s milk and who would confuse us were he ever to tell the truth. Alterman’s merry inventory—which includes

detailed breakdowns of many of the 10,000 lies calculated to have come from Trump's mouth between January 2017 and September 2019—is damning, just as much as is a critical moment at the end of the narrative, when MSNBC anchor Nichole Wallace finally closed a report by saying, “But the president isn’t telling the truth.”

For followers of politics and its practitioners, a capable, readable history of a mendacious tradition.

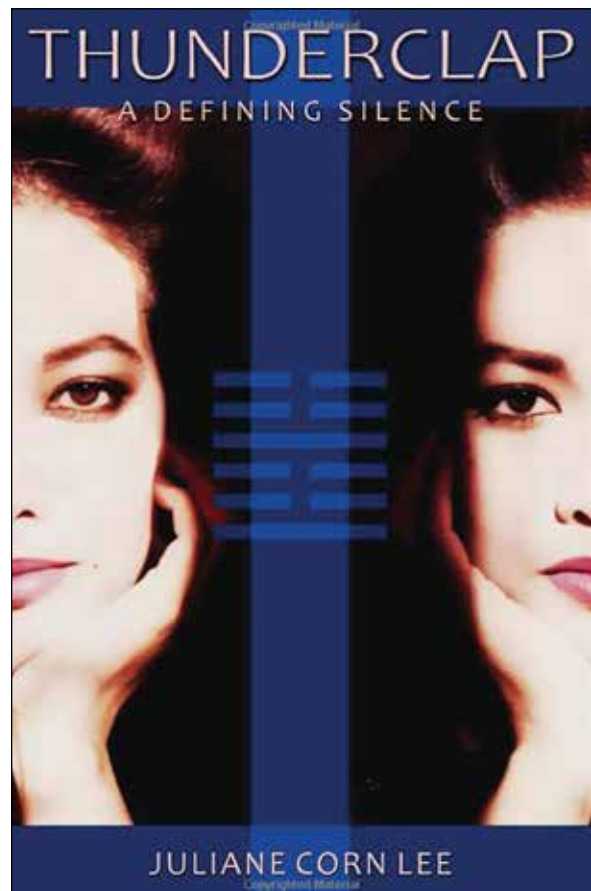


DISPOSABLE CITY *Miami's Future on the Shores of Climate Catastrophe*

Ariza, Mario Alejandro
Bold Type Books (320 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-1-5417-8846-6

How rising sea levels will test the resiliency of Florida's coastal city.

Miami-based journalist Ariza, who grew up in his native Santo Domingo and Miami, makes a compelling book debut with an urgent analysis of Miami's vulnerability to climate change. Interviewing more than 150 sources, including city officials, geophysicists, realtors, climate scientists, and frightened residents; combing public records; and drawing on many scientific studies, Ariza argues persuasively that Miami must take “radical and swift action” to avert disaster. Although sea levels have risen 3 inches globally, in Miami, that figure is 5 inches, “influenced by the temperature of



THUNDERCLAP BY JULIANNE CORN LEE

A woman recalls her frightening confrontation with leukemia and the ways in which it changed her outlook on life.

“The author, writing in deeply introspective prose, astutely examines the ways in which the disease compelled a revision of her worldview, puncturing the illusions of her youth.”

“Her memoir is notably forthcoming and meditatively sensitive—with a gimlet-eye, she limns both tragedy and her triumph over it to find a meaning that encompasses both.”

“A cancer survivor’s affecting and elegantly composed remembrance.”

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #: 978-0-692-14242-4

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

Required reading for any American serious about dismantling systemic racism.

A MORE PERFECT REUNION

the ocean, localized atmospheric pressure, the persistent direction of the wind, and, most importantly, the relative strength of the Gulf Stream." Because of its particular geology—the city is cut from a swamp, and its limestone soil "is ludicrously porous"—the land cannot sustain that influx of water: Roads, buildings, bridges, and septic tanks will be overwhelmed. Besides detailing Miami's particular geography and geology, Ariza points out the economic inequality, greed, and myopic public planning that affect Miami's future. The city, he asserts, "rests on a sodden foundation of merciless racial and environmental exploitation." While realtors work to get the highest prices they can from properties, "the city's already yawning gap between rich and poor" is stretched "past its breaking point." Foreign investors, who often are absentee owners, exacerbate the problem, looking at Miami's expensive real estate "as a good place to park capital instead of as places to live." Ariza notes the popularity of the word "resilience" in discussions about climate change, but, he maintains, "resilience without massive carbon cuts and immediate state and federal aid is the policy equivalent of hospice care." Miami's problems, and the nation's, require leaders

"willing to tear down icons, bust norms, and shift debates rapidly toward recognizing the increasingly dire scientific reality."

A forceful depiction of a global crisis viewed through the lens of one of the world's most vulnerable cities.



A MORE PERFECT REUNION *Race, Integration, and the Future of America*

Baker, Calvin

Bold Type Books (288 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-56858-923-7



An impassioned analysis of America's failure at racial integration as a failure of democracy.

Decades after the many successes of the civil rights movement, why hasn't America dismantled racism? According to Baker, a novelist who has taught at a variety of universities, it's because we've never employed the only real solution to the problem: integration. The author argues that integration is "the most radical, transformative idea in US politics," once properly understood, and he endeavors successfully to deliver that understanding. This is not an easy task considering that many Americans are invested in the systems that "perpetuate racism," but Baker provides plenty of illuminating examples to bolster his argument: A company hires diversity consultants but won't diversify its C-suite. We want to end the national crisis of school desegregation, but we shrink from the idea of busing. Baker defines integration as full rights of self-determination and participation for all black Americans and other groups historically excluded by race, "in every facet of national life." A gifted storyteller, the author writes with the urgency of what's at stake—i.e., the very survival of our democracy. Denying black people rights has been the "flaw in the design of America we have been struggling to resist" for 400 years, and Baker dissects critical junctures in the nation's history when integration could have ameliorated racism, from the Continental Congress through the election of the first black president. He offers incisive analysis on a variety of topics, including politics, sports, gentrification, and pop culture, and he examines such pivotal figures as Shakespeare, Frederick Douglass, the Black Panthers, Public Enemy, and Colin Kaepernick. Scholarly yet accessible, this book is a wake-up call for a country that would rather celebrate how far we've come than focus on how far we still have to go to eradicate racism.

Required reading for any American serious about dismantling systemic racism.

THE MUELLER REPORT GRAPHIC NOVEL

by the author of *You Can Do a Graphic Novel*, Barbara Slate

The Mueller Report Graphic Novel
by Barbara Slate

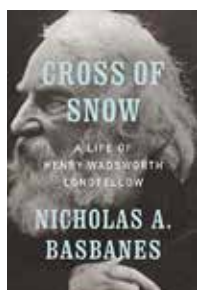
"Slate has provided something that is half-public service, half-wild ride, both crucial and rollicking."
—*Comics Beat*

"...a useful tool in the future for readers who wish to understand the particulars of the Russia investigation when it is no longer general knowledge."

"...distressing, disturbing, and occasionally infuriating."
"A well-crafted visual depiction of the troubling contents of the Mueller Report." —*Kirkus Reviews*

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CROSS OF SNOW *A Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Basbanes, Nicholas A.
Knopf (480 pp.)
\$37.50 | Jun. 4, 2020
978-1-101-87514-8



A welcome new biography of the iconic 19th-century poet.

For many Americans, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) is fondly associated with "Paul Revere's Ride," the "most memorized poem in American history." In this comprehensive, affectionate, and astute biography, the first in many years, Basbanes provides a valuable reassessment of the once-beloved poet who fell from grace in the literary establishment just years after his death. For Basbanes, Longfellow was "discreet, loyal, and principled to a fault." Drawing on previously unexplored primary source material, he focuses as much on the private man—especially the influential roles Longfellow's two beloved wives, Mary and Fanny, had on his work—as he does on the public one. Their horrific deaths affected him greatly. One of eight children, young Henry was a "model of probity and purpose," publishing his first poem at 13. Success at Bowdoin College—where lifelong friend Nathaniel Hawthorne was a fellow classmate—earned him a European fellowship to study foreign languages. The trip, Basbanes writes, was "fundamental" to everything he would become. Longfellow taught at Bowdoin but grew restless, yearning for the literary life. A position at Harvard included more language study abroad; ultimately, he was able to read 15 languages. By the age of 30, Longfellow had published numerous poems, essays, and translations. His first major work, *Hyperion*, received a favorable response but was trashed in print by Edgar Allan Poe. During the Civil War, Longfellow's poem "The Building of the Ship," writes Basbanes, "brought tears to the eyes of Abraham Lincoln." *The Song of Hiawatha* sold 4,000 copies upon publication, 50,000 in the first two years in America. He was also popular in Britain, "outselling Robert Browning and Tennyson on their own turf." His translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* "alone is a singular achievement, and his sonnets compare with the best in English."

A revelatory exploration of Longfellow's life and art and how he became a "dominant force in American Letters." (76 photos)

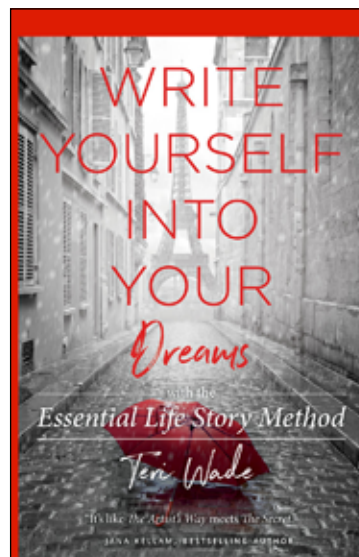


THE ORIGINS OF YOU *How Childhood Shapes Later Life*

Belsky, Jay & Caspi, Avshalom & Moffitt, Terrie E. & Poulton, Richie
Harvard Univ. (400 pp.)
\$35.00 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-674-98345-8

Four prominent psychologists investigate a range of human development questions.

Belsky, Caspi, Moffitt, and Poulton bring together a variety of threads in this engaging account of the results of three longitudinal studies—"nonexperimental, observational research in which children are studied over time and no efforts are made to influence their development." In mostly accessible, occasionally jargon-y prose, the authors explain that their field is a probabilistic rather than deterministic science, a dynamic process that mingles what is going on within the child and the



A debut guide
advocates
self-
improvement
through
autobiographical
exercises.

"It's a basic and thrilling claim, one that will cause readers at all stages of writing expertise to seriously consider putting their own stories down on paper."

"An unconventional and ultimately uplifting call to reclaim your own life story."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN #978-0-9708809-0-1

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INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

ALIA VOLZ

HER MEMOIR, *HOME BAKED*, RECALLS A SAN FRANCISCO CHILDHOOD AND HER MOM'S HUGE SUCCESSFUL POT BROWNIE BUSINESS

By Marion Winik



Dennis Heame

ALIA VOLZ's *Home Baked: My Mom, Marijuana, and the Stoning of San Francisco* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, April 20) is both a lively, well-written memoir of an unusual childhood and an insightful cultural history of the Bay Area in the 1970s and '80s—as Kirkus' reviewer puts it, a “love letter to San Francisco filled with profundity and pride.” At a time when possession of one marijuana plant could send you to jail, Volz's mother built a business selling pot brownies to a bustling community of hippies and buskers, artists and actors, restaurateurs and shopkeepers. By the time she closed Sticky Fingers for good, AIDS was devastating that community and the brownies had become medicine.

Your mom grew up in Milwaukee, where she narrowly escaped getting busted for pot before heading to the West Coast in 1975. As you put it in the book, “she was like most everyone who traveled west hoping to reinvent themselves and ended up reinventing the West.”

The line, “Go west young man, and grow up with the country,” dates back to the gold rush. San Francisco was built on a series of mass migrations—including the Summer of Love and the techie invasion—that both destroyed and remade our culture. My mom came here hoping to change her own life and ended up changing the city.

Amazingly, every single decision she and your father made in building a 10,000-brownie-per-month business was based on consulting the I Ching. You say at the beginning of the book that you don't believe in it—but considering their success, the book makes quite a case!

My parents believed that the I Ching kept them safe, and I wanted to make that feel as real and magical as it was to them. But my mom was also street-smart. When my parents fled San Francisco because of negative I Ching hexagrams, they were also conscious of Sticky Fingers Brownies getting too much media attention. They felt the city changing in the wake of the Milk/Moscone assassinations, the Jonestown massacre, and the riots. The I Ching told them what they already knew.

From infancy, you were surrounded by adults in altered states, whether it was marijuana, mushrooms, LSD, or cocaine. When you were old enough, you were drafted to help with the brownies. Yet you state many times that your mother was an excellent parent.

Certainly, some families are destroyed by drug use, but that didn't happen to us. My mom was always present for me. Some memoirists represent alternative parenting as a kind of abuse, but I know plenty of hippie kids who came out fine. If you're fine, you usually don't write a memoir, so these stories aren't told. No trauma, no drama. In my case, I have a larger drama to draw on.

You are incredibly kind about your father, too, though he was troubled and a less capable parent.

When I started this book 12 years ago, my dad and I were estranged. Over time, I realized that to tell this story properly, we had to have conversations that were decades overdue. In the course of developing his character and reconstructing his actions for the book—which we did to—

gether—we healed our relationship. It was brave of him to go there with me.

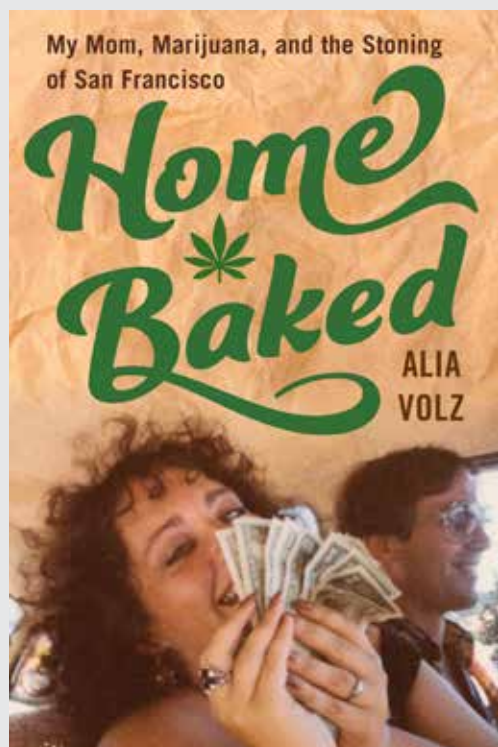
The historical information in *Home Baked* is backed up with pages of footnotes, and you have pretty granular detail in the personal story as well. You describe people's clothes, moods, thoughts, and conversations in an immersive way that made me wonder how much was reporting and how much was imagination.

One of my models was *The Devil in the White City*, which reads like a novel, though every detail is rooted in research. Whenever I'm in someone's head in *Home Baked*, that comes directly from an interview, and all the major players read the manuscript for accuracy. Along with historical archives and newspapers, I had access to hundreds of family photographs and a chronological archive of the illustrated bags they used for delivery.

And some of each are included in the book. The brownie bag that says "If all the world's a stage, San Francisco is the cast party"—seems to capture the city you grew up in.

That bag from 1978 captured a moment when the city was bursting with creativity and life. But I was an infant then. I grew up during the AIDS years, when the cast members were fighting for their lives. We were left with this incredibly brave, raw humanity—and the healing power of community. More dramatic than ever, I guess, but utterly real.

Marion Winik is the author of The Big Book of the Dead and reviews for Kirkus, the Washington Post, and other publications. Home Baked was reviewed in the Feb. 1, 2020, issue.



environment in which they are raised. Taken together, a myriad of factors allows researchers to gain insight into—even to predict—future adult functioning. The volume displays scope and curiosity, as the authors look at genetic factors, whether early circumstances can forecast certain later developmental outcomes, how and if the family experience and the environmental situation shape aspects of later life, and the role of the childhood experience in determining elements of adult health. The authors also examine developmental mechanisms at work regarding how self-control displayed in childhood can lead to particular behavior in adulthood or how a diagnosis of childhood ADHD could affect elements of adult life. There is a clear mapping of how adverse family and neighborhood environments promoted enduring anti-social behavior, and there are evident indications that long hours spent in day care fostered disobedience and impulsivity (even in sensitive day care environments). There are wide-open, preliminary chapters on the roles of genetics and the environment on anti-social behavior and depression (and your chances of becoming a smoker), and it doesn't come as much of a surprise that adverse experiences in childhood, such as bullying, can undermine future health. Amid the grim news is evidence of the salubrious roles played by resilience and intervention.

A dispassionate embrace of both theory-guided inquiry and theory-free empiricism. (28 illustrations)



THE IMPOSTORS
How Republicans Quit
Governing and Seized
American Politics

Benen, Steve
Morrow/HarperCollins (384 pp.)
\$28.99 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-0-06-302648-3

A political writer argues that “the modern Republican Party has become a post-policy party.”

In this thoroughly researched book, Benen, blogger and award-winning producer of the *Rachel Maddow Show*, makes a solid case that in recent years, Republicans have repeatedly upended their once-cherished beliefs in order to focus on more power-oriented political and ideological goals. The author clearly demonstrates how Republicans have consistently reversed positions in order to score points against the Democrats, whether on trade, taxes, guns, immigration, or deficits. Regarding deficits, “since Watergate, every Democratic president has left office with a deficit smaller than when he started, and every Republican president has left office with a deficit larger than when he arrived.” Furthermore, even when Republicans agreed with Democrats, at least in principle, as in the case of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, their votes often failed to reflect bipartisanship. Despite 130 congressional hearings over multiple committees, Republicans—who had once supported many of the Affordable Care Act’s tenets—claimed Obama had “rammed through” the ACA. A particularly ironic

A poignant and unsentimental account by a dedicated doctor doing palpable good.

ONE BY ONE BY ONE

example of willful contrariness was the Ebola crisis of 2014, during which Republicans either accused Obama of being “too hands off” or of being alarmist. Donald Trump, who had yet to declare his candidacy, even called for his resignation. The author ably lays out the many disturbing trends in the Republican political arena, making a convincing case for his argument that the GOP has “quit governing” and now merely focuses on attaining and wielding power or simply negating any progress made by Democrats. Unfortunately, given the pace at which events unfold in today’s political landscape, much of the narrative may feel like old news not long after publication.

A clear-eyed argument that “strategy and governing [have] been replaced by instincts and partisan id.”



ONE BY ONE BY ONE *Making a Small Difference Amid a Billion Problems*

Berkowitz, Aaron

HarperOne (352 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-06-296421-2



A close-up, personal look back at humanitarian efforts through the eyes of a doctor who has worked in Haiti and other areas of the world in desperate need of medical care.

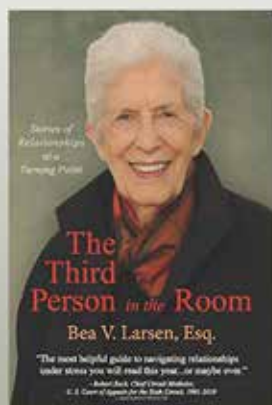
Berkowitz, a former Harvard Medical School professor and the founding director of Global Health at Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine, writes movingly of his days as a young neurologist facing the challenges of saving one Haitian’s life in a country where the vast majority of citizens lack basic medical care. “More than half the population lives on less than two dollars a day, and about a quarter on less than one dollar a day,” he writes. “So patients go to the closest doctor they can find.” When 23-year-old Janel arrived with an extraordinarily large brain tumor, the author hoped for a positive outcome by way of surgery in the U.S. With a novelist’s touch for bringing to life people and places, he tells of the complexities of arranging Janel’s treatment—raising money, getting Janel a passport, finding the surgeon and the hospital—and of the complications that ensued, including surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation, and rehabilitation. During this learning experience, the young Berkowitz discovered a significant lesson of humanitarian work: that success and failure are not clear-cut. Also vital, he realized, is the importance of remembering the individuality of the patients who make up the statistics of public health. As the Haitian proverb goes, “every person is a person”—“tout moun se moun” in Creole Haitian, a language that appears frequently in the narrative (an English translation follows each instance), which adds unique flavor to the prose. Recalled conversations and text messages abound, giving the text a refreshing immediacy and allowing the personality of each of Berkowitz’s many colleagues to emerge. The author also charmingly recalls his interactions with Partners in Health founder Paul Farmer, a “rock star” in the arena of global health.

A poignant and unsentimental account by a dedicated doctor doing palpable good.

The Third Person in the Room

Stories of Relationships at a Turning Point

By Bea V. Larsen, Esq.



“The most helpful guide to navigating relationships under stress you will read this year...or maybe ever.”

—Robert Rack,
Chief Circuit Mediator,
U. S. Court of Appeals for the
Sixth Circuit (ret.)

“A winner for the inquisitive. It teaches, you learn, and enjoy.”

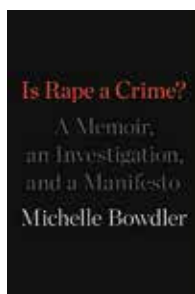
—Hon. Jack Sherman, U. S.
Magistrate Judge for the Southern
District of Ohio (ret.)

ISBN # 978-1-7533402-0-5

“An emotional, thought-provoking read about the fragility of relationships.”

—Kirkus Reviews

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**IS RAPE A CRIME?
A Memoir, an Investigation,
and a Manifesto**

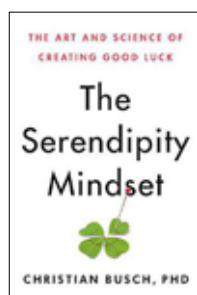
Bowdler, Michelle
Flatiron Books (304 pp.)
\$27.99 | Jul. 28, 2020
978-1-250-25563-1

The executive director of Health and Wellness Services at Tufts University tells the intimate, powerful story of how attempting to bring her rapists to justice

forged her dedication to activism.

The defining trauma of Bowdler's life took place in Boston in the summer of 1984, when two men—self-confessed serial burglars—broke into her apartment and robbed and raped her. Even though there was ample evidence at the crime scene and Bowdler dutifully completed a rape kit with police, her case languished in the system. She received no answers from the detective assigned to her case—one of “a spate of break-in and rapes in the greater Boston area” during that summer—forcing her to endure years of personal and professional trauma. It's exceedingly depressing that so much of this work portrays the author having to undergo the repeated judgment of others, including her family. Sharply encapsulating a victim's dilemma, she writes, “decisions on whether to report are heavily socially informed—victims worry that the rape will not be considered important, that they will not be safe, that they won't be believed, that the crime won't be followed up on, and sometimes they see keeping the perpetrator out of trouble as self-preservation.” Indeed, as Bowdler notes, the “strong, self-assured woman of just a few days [before]” vanished with the rape, replaced by someone filled with shame and self-doubt. Divided into three parts—“A Memoir,” “An Investigation,” and “A Manifesto”—the author moves effectively among the personal and the political. She poignantly explains how watching the 1991 Anita Hill hearings (and witnessing the despicable reactions by male senators and media to her testimony) helped crystallize her activist mission, and she consistently shows herself to be a tireless advocate. Ultimately, she has learned to ask: If rape is considered a crime, why were there no investigations into her own? And when will anything change?

An urgent, necessary, stark exploration of “one of the most horrific violations that can happen to a human being.”

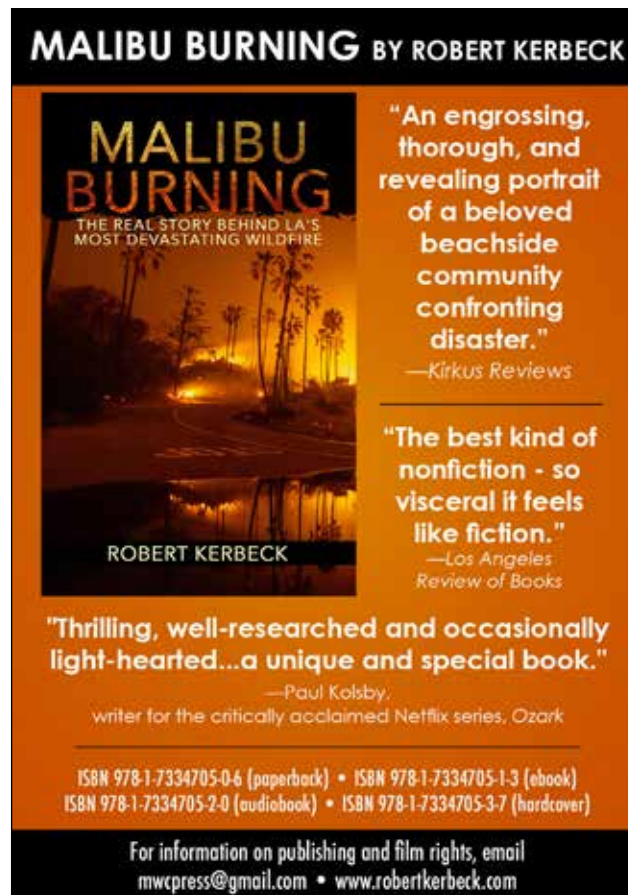


**THE SERENDIPITY MINDSET
The Art and Science of
Creating Good Luck**

Busch, Christian
Riverhead (384 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-593-08602-5

An exploration of how “we are all prone to coincidental encounters”—and how we can use them to our advantage.

A horrific car accident as an 18-year-old set Busch to thinking about good luck—or, as he calls it, serendipity, “the hidden force in the world, and it is present all around us, from the smallest day-to-day events to life-changing, and sometimes world-changing, breakthroughs.” Surely, surviving a wreck counts as good luck, and being open to good luck probably leads to more rather than less of it—as Louis Pasteur said, “chance favors only the prepared mind.” Busch delivers a narrative that is partly common-sensical but that too often veers off into pseudo-science, speculation, and New Age-y platitudes: “Things such as synchronicity—these meaningful coincidences in time—tend to happen when we put energy into the universe.” Those practical elements are squarely in the business/self-help tradition, and while there's not much surprising about them, it's useful to be reminded: Reframe a problem as an opportunity, and you're likely to come up with something interesting. Surround yourself with interesting people, diverse but not so diverse as to be diffuse. Build networks and be active in doing good things for their members; “nobody appreciates being in your address book just because of what they can do for you.” The author is adept at



In this eloquent narrative, the author offers a moving portrait of a woman in search of herself as well as a joyful celebration of physicality, friendship, and the art of surfing.

ROCKAWAY

analyzing specific events and institutions to help drive home his points. For example, he studies the physical layout of Burning Man to deduce that its closely spaced public places foster meetings while filling their centers with art provides an opportunity for people admiring the same piece to interact. After all, plenty of things happen as a result of chance encounters. Even so, readers interested in luck and accident would do just as well to read Arthur Koestler's 1972 book *The Roots of Coincidence*.

A mixed bag, but it contains solid contributions to the literature of creativity and organizational change.



ROCKAWAY
Surfing Headlong Into a New Life

Cardwell, Diane

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (272 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-0-358-06778-8

A journalist's account of how midlife disappointments fueled an unexpected journey into the world of surfing.

As she entered her 40s, Cardwell, a founder of *Vibe* magazine and former *New York Times* reporter, was the picture of success. She had a prestigious newspaper job and a handsome husband she adored. Sadly, just as she and her husband were trying to conceive, they divorced. Devastated, Cardwell spent the next three years mourning lost opportunities for motherhood and wondering whether she would ever "get to be the girl on someone's arm again." Everything changed when a newspaper assignment took her to Montauk, where she observed a group of surfers—"a secret tribe of magical creatures"—frolicking in the surf. Transfixed, Cardwell suddenly decided she wanted to learn the sport. The impulse shocked her; she was far from athletic. Her first clumsy attempts at surfing made her realize that as much as "the mind was more than willing...the flesh was going to need a lot of work." She began attending a surfing school in Rockaway Beach and going to the gym, and she quickly developed friendships with other surfers who gave her advice on everything from surfing equipment to how to read the ocean and its rhythms. Less than a year and a half later, the author bought a home there, bringing her closer to the people she had come to know and pulling her away from the Manhattan hustle she thought she could never do without. When Hurricane Sandy flooded her home and neighborhood in October 2012, Cardwell realized that despite the risks of living by the ocean in the age of climate change, she had finally found her tribe and a renewed zest for life. In this eloquent narrative, the author offers a moving portrait of a woman in search of herself as well as a joyful celebration of physicality, friendship, and the art of surfing.

A bighearted and uplifting memoir.



INTENTIONAL INTEGRITY
How Smart Companies Can Lead an Ethical Revolution

Chesnut, Robert

St. Martin's (304 pp.)

\$28.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-250-23970-9

Airbnb chief ethics officer Chesnut debuts with an upbeat book on how to chart a "proactive, ethical course" for business.

The author, a former federal prosecutor, writes, "we are all capable of dishonesty," recounting workplace ethical issues

WHY ON EARTH DO I FEEL THIS WAY?

BY
JOLENE ARASZ,
Psy.D.

(manuscript)

Control Theory brings an entirely new perspective to the field of anxiety and mental health and will make a drastic impact that no other treatment approach or intervention has done before.

"A debut psychological work explains how Control Theory can help patients get a handle on their anxiety."

"Arasz writes in a lively and accessible prose that makes it easy for readers to grasp her concepts..."

"A well-explained and precise solution for anxiety from the cognitive behavioral therapy school." —Kirkus Reviews

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

that have rocked Enron, Volkswagen, and other corporations; headline-making cases of sexual harassment and assault; and everyday instances of bribery, fraud, and conflicts of interest. Yet, he writes, "most companies don't talk much about integrity." Many simply distribute a code of ethics template emblazoned with a corporate logo. With little reason to fear consequences, individuals believe they can "get away" with unethical acts, and "even small acts of fraud and deceit, doing work while intoxicated, fudging numbers, violating domestic or international regulations, become compounded over time." Each poor choice makes the next "easier to make." In this exhaustive overview, Chesnut argues persuasively that every organization needs a "deliberate, intentional commitment" to ethical rules based on its clearly stated purpose and values. The rules must be widely and constantly disseminated so that they become a company "norm." The process will generate "business success and positive social value," helping firms attract the best employees and avoid scandals. Drawing on considerable experience with the nuances and circumstances of integrity violations at Airbnb and, earlier, eBay, Chesnut offers plentiful examples of common integrity issues—e.g., romantic entanglements, selling customer data, social media issues—tips on how to handle them, and ways to create a safe process for reporting lapses. He is especially good on such matters as enforcing consequences and handling situations involving violators who are high-performing employees. The author's enthusiasm sometimes leads him astray—his anticipated "contagion of integrity" in business seems unlikely—but his rigorous guidelines for lawful behavior should keep employees on their toes and limit federal liabilities. Appendices cover diverse ethical crises.

Valuable reading for companies that want to get serious about workplace ethics. (first printing of 100,000)



WITHOUT EVER REACHING THE SUMMIT
A Journey

Cognetti, Paolo
Illus. by the author
Trans. by Luczkiw, Stash
HarperOne (160 pp.)
\$22.99 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-0-06-297831-8

A writer recounts his spiritual trek through a remote region of the Himalayas.

In 2017, with his 40th birthday soon approaching, Italian writer Cognetti was inspired to embark on an expedition in the Dolpo in northwestern Nepal. Accompanying the author was a team of nine travelers, including a childhood friend from Italy, a painter he had recently met, and several local Sherpa guides along with their mules. Their plan was to trek hundreds of kilometers across often uninhabited mountains, ascending to heights over 5,500 meters. "There is a whole region," he writes, "above four thousand meters untouched by the monsoons or paved roads—the most arid, remote, and least populated part of the country. Perhaps up there, I said to myself, I could see

the Tibet that no longer exists, that none of us can see anymore. This was the journey I wanted for my fortieth birthday, a fitting way to celebrate my farewell to that other lost kingdom: youth." Cognetti's journey was also greatly inspired by the Peter Matthiessen classic *The Snow Leopard*. Throughout, he liberally references and quotes Matthiessen, and while following a similar path, he revisits memorable locations from that book. The emerging parallels in their stories unfortunately expose Cognetti's weakness as a storyteller. The author is a fine travel writer, investing his narrative with vivid insights into the present-day Nepalese region and sharing the often grueling physical effects of traversing through these high altitudes. Yet his personal context for the undertaking is vague. Matthiessen's physical and spiritual journey is deeply enhanced by the intimate and emotional experiences of his past; his spiritually enlightening memoir is often moving. Readers unfamiliar with Cognetti's previous work may come away from this slender narrative feeling they know little about him.

An informative but emotionally remote journey through modern-day Nepal. (illustrations)

THE GREAT PIVOT

Creating Meaningful Work to Build a Sustainable Future

JUSTINE BURT

Lays out meticulously comprehensive proposals for creating the green jobs needed to address climate change and reverse mass species extinction.

"...well-designed, smoothly readable nonfiction debut..."

"...author's narrative is buoyantly can-do and forward-thinking, with a refreshing real-world pragmatism..."

"...this book will likely inspire a great many readers hoping for a better future."

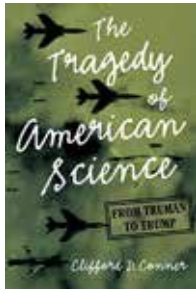
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 978-1-935994-34-3

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Delectable reading.

REBEL CHEF



THE TRAGEDY OF AMERICAN SCIENCE *From Truman to Trump*

Conner, Clifford D.
Haymarket (300 pp.)
\$26.95 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-1-64259-127-9

An angry polemic about how American science has deteriorated catastrophically.

Science historian Conner dates the onset from the 1942-1945 Manhattan project, the first “big science” project in which the government spent massively on developing the atom bomb; after this, science became big business. In a series of grim chapters, the author describes the “corporatization” and militarization of American science. Nutrition science is especially debased. Incompetent research, industry-sponsored hype, bribery, and obliging regulators produce wildly contradictory dietary guidelines. Unsurprisingly, “Coca-Cola Company has been particularly culpable in its efforts to misdirect nutrition science regarding sugar.” With the help of well-paid scientists, tobacco companies held off government action for decades, and fossil fuel industries have successfully adopted their techniques to quash efforts to reduce global warming. Denouncing the “green revolution” in agriculture, Conner points out that it has vastly increased food production but that politics and war—not lack of food—cause famines today. He adds that its costly fertilizer and seed enrich large farmers and impoverish poor ones and that the additional chemicals pollute waterways. Military research is an easy mark because so much is genuinely horrible. It’s old news that during World War II, Nazi and Japanese researchers performed sadistic experiments on prisoners. American leaders welcomed them in the hopes of acquiring their expertise. When it comes to weapons that kill innocents, military researchers display an unnerving lack of sympathy, and civilian superiors, Democrat as well as Republican, tend to go along. The author urges vigorous government regulation independent of corporate influence—a no-brainer but spotty in previous administrations, to say nothing of the current one—and 100% government funding and control of research. Though this was a disaster in the Soviet Union and Mao’s China, Conner gives high marks to Cuba. Many democracies exert far stricter government control, which smacks of socialism, a poisonous word to American ears.

An indictment of American science so critical that it seems beyond hope.



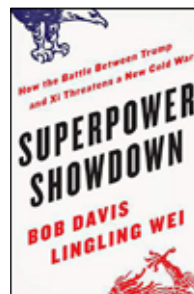
REBEL CHEF *In Search of What Matters*

Crenn, Dominique with Brookes, Emma
Penguin Press (304 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-7352-2474-2

A Versailles-born female chef tells the story of how she came to the U.S. and, without formal training, went on to become a culinary icon.

Crenn grew up the adopted daughter of a “well-respected and connected” French politician and his wife. From childhood, she was drawn to food. Family dinner parties showed her that “food could be used to create an atmosphere of glamour and fun.” However, the cooking schools to which she applied after finishing university work all discouraged her, because in France, “the role of the chef as artist was reserved for men.” Searching for the freedom to chart her own path, she went to San Francisco in 1989. There, she embarked on a process of personal and political evolution that began with the recognition of her own lesbianism. Crenn also laid the foundation for her professional life by waitressing in restaurants and meeting people from the restaurant industry. With signature boldness, she introduced herself to renowned chef Jeremiah Tower, who became her first mentor. Crenn then left San Francisco for a job as an executive chef in a Jakarta hotel that promised her a staff of women, who she believed needed greater representation in the food world. Political unrest in Indonesia drove her to Los Angeles, where she began to develop a culinary style that fused French, California, and Asian cuisines. Crenn returned to San Francisco almost a decade later to open the first of several acclaimed restaurants that sourced from small farms, encouraged kitchen workers to be creative, and made diners aware they were “part of [a] chain, not above it.” Each dining experience would be “akin to reading poetry,” leading diners “through waves of emotion.” Engaging and candid, this memoir offers a glimpse into a unique life as the author eloquently articulates the artistic, social, and political vision behind her daring, award-winning cuisine.

Delectable reading. (b/w photos)



SUPERPOWER SHOWDOWN *How the Battle Between Trump and Xi Threatens a New Cold War*

Davis, Bob & Wei, Lingling
Harper Business (448 pp.)
\$29.99 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-06-295305-6

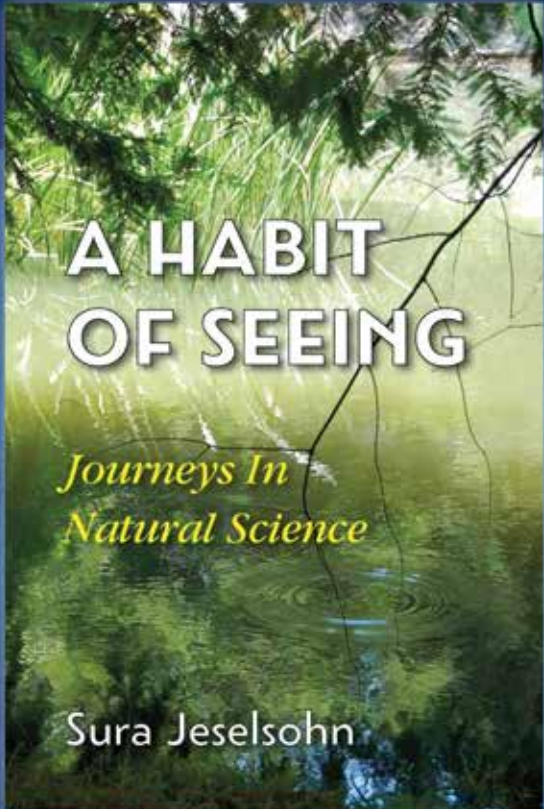
A revealing look at U.S.–China trade relations during the Trump administration.

In December 2018, an informal poll of 75 corporate executives attending a Washington, D.C., conference showed that roughly 50% believed that, in light

of recent trade history, the U.S. and China would be at war within 30 years. Davis, a Pulitzer-winning senior editor at the *Wall Street Journal's* Washington bureau, and Wei, who works at the *Journal's* Beijing bureau, depict this "romance gone bad" by focusing on the first three years of the Trump administration. According to the authors, a series of miscalculations and misunderstandings on both sides have brought the two nations to the current impasse. Chinese President Xi Jinping has failed to appreciate how his government's subsidization of private companies and implausible denials of technological theft have alienated American officials. As for Donald Trump, the authors persuasively argue that his protectionist policies vis-à-vis China have achieved mixed results at best. Yet Trump "deserves credit for challenging the easy assumptions about China that had guided American policy since at least the Clinton administration," particularly the idea that economic engagement would lead to political liberalization. General readers may be forgiven for skimming the more detailed passages, which depict the seemingly endless series of trade talks and controversies. Yet the authors skillfully enliven what could have been a dull

narrative. Particularly diverting are the biographical sketches of the participants in the trade talks—including that of Peter Navarro, the profane hard-line economist in Trump's administration—and a number of illuminating anecdotes and facts. China, for example, had the world's largest economy "until roughly the U.S. Civil War," and the Chinese refer to those who return home after working overseas as "hai gui," or "sea turtles."

"We hope this book provides the material to understand what happened and why," the authors conclude. Mission accomplished.



A collection of short essays reflecting on the surprising majesty of the natural world that surrounds us.

"The author recounts adventures big and small in encountering the ecological gems hiding in plain sight..."

"...vividly describes her often fascinating findings...writes with great clarity and informal unpretentiousness; her expertise is undeniable, but she expresses it without a hint of professional arrogance."

"A lucidly informative tour of the natural world's astonishing complexity, cheerfully conveyed."

—Kirkus Reviews

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A brilliantly crafted, compelling, and deeply relevant history for our times.

FREEDOM



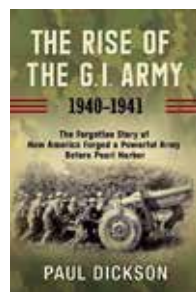
FREEDOM
An Unruly History
de Dijn, Annelien
Harvard Univ. (400 pp.)
\$35.00 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-0-674-98833-0



An authoritative history of changing Western ideas of freedom.

In this sweeping narrative, which covers more than two millennia, Utrecht University historian de Dijn advances two central arguments, each persuasive and clearly backed by impressive scholarship. The first is that the original Western understanding of freedom, born with the Greeks, was what we call popular government, or rule by the people. Yet gradually and more decisively, since the American and French revolutions, freedom has come to be seen as the condition of being left alone by government, a condition embodying another, distinct kind of liberty: inner freedom and freedom of conscience. The author's second argument, the freshest and likely to be the most influential, is that this shift—a “dramatic rupture” and “backlash”—owes itself not to liberal thinkers but rather to conservative, counterrevolutionary opponents of democracy who feared government in the people's hands. Nevertheless, within the context of the Cold War, this ideal of freedom, originating with the anti-revolutionary right, “ultimately came to be reimagined as the key value of Western civilization.” Yet because of the expansion of political and other rights to women, workers, and minorities, what's today taken to be the “liberal understanding of freedom”—freedom from government—can actually be seen in many quarters as “a thinly veiled defense of elite interests rather than an appealing political idea,” as it was in earlier times. A narrative exposition rather than a critique of others' interpretations, the book is unusually easygoing for a scholarly work on an elusive subject. The author's main strength is her clarifying directness. Analytical rather than argumentative, she shows how in our time, political freedom—“freedom for,” that is, control by the people—has given way to private freedom—“freedom from,” a moral ideal with antidemocratic implications. Thus endures the tension between collective and individual freedoms.

A brilliantly crafted, compelling, and deeply relevant history for our times. (29 photos)



THE RISE OF THE G.I. ARMY, 1940-1941
The Forgotten Story of How America Forged a Powerful Army Before Pearl Harbor

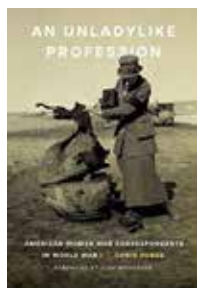
Dickson, Paul
Atlantic Monthly (416 pp.)
\$30.00 | Jul. 7, 2020
978-0-8021-4767-7



A richly detailed history of the rebuilding of American military power in the run-up to World War II.

In 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland, the U.S. Army had fewer than 120,000 men in uniform; Gen. Douglas MacArthur said they all could have fit into Yankee Stadium. Recognizing that war was all but inevitable, President Franklin Roosevelt took steps to revitalize the nation's military, and his most important move was likely the appointment of Gen. George Marshall as chief of staff of the Army. Marshall had been prepared for the job due to his leadership in the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, in which young men learned discipline and skills that coincidentally prepared them for life in the Army. The CCC, writes Dickson, “became a driving force for improving the Army and facilitating the education and professional development of key officers.” The establishment of a peacetime draft in 1940—against strong opposition from isolationists in Congress and elsewhere—was also a key element. Marshall gave the Army's officer corps a vital shot in the arm with his creation of Officer Candidate School, allowing talented men to rise to command positions without a degree from a traditional military academy. Dickson also highlights the war games that took place in 1941, especially a large exercise in Louisiana just before Pearl Harbor where both Dwight Eisenhower and George Patton proved their abilities. The author provides a wealth of fascinating detail; even those familiar with the general history of the period will learn something new. Especially intriguing are Dickson's discussions of the rise of the United Service Organizations, with shows headlined by Bob Hope and other stars, and the implications of a universal draft for black Americans.

One of the best treatments to date of America's rapid transition from the Depression to the wartime power it became.



AN UNLADYLIKE PROFESSION American Women War Correspondents in World War I

Dubbs, Chris

Potomac Books (336 pp.)

\$34.95 | Jul. 1, 2020

978-1-64012-306-9



In *American Journalists in the Great War* (2017), Dubbs barely mentioned the women reporters of World War I. This follow-up book is an impressive corrective.

The author explores the careers of nearly 40 courageous women who covered the war for newspapers, news syndicates, magazines, and other publications. Most of the principals will be unfamiliar to general readers, but their bylines were widespread from 1915 through 1919. Two of the most well-known names are the journalists who also found success as novelists: Edith Wharton, who worked for *Scribner's Magazine* and the *Saturday Evening Post*; and Mary Roberts Rinehart, "America's most popular mystery novelist when she traveled to Europe in 1915 to be a war correspondent." Other recognizable names—at least to readers versed in the history of journalism—include Nellie Bly and Louise Bryant. In addition to the rich anecdotes and samplings of their reporting provided by Dubbs, period photographs enhance the engaging portrayal of wartime drama. Another strength of the book is the author's decision to focus not just on Western European countries, but also on the battle-grounds of Turkey, Armenia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Russia. Of the newspapers and magazines hiring women to report about the war, the *Saturday Evening Post* was perhaps the most prominent and aggressive (and women-friendly), and Dubbs covers it appropriately. "While the *Post's* coverage included the military, political, and economic components of war," he writes, "its women correspondents showed...the impact on the home, family, and individual lives." In her foreword, *PBS NewsHour* anchor Judy Woodruff admirably ties the reporting of women journalists currently covering global conflicts to the work of those during WWI: "Today's intrepid female reporters stand on the shoulders of women who pioneered the role." Readers will be inspired by the nearly unimaginable obstacles these journalists overcame to perform their jobs with flair.

A welcome history suitable for World War I aficionados and budding journalists.



BEZONOMICS How Amazon Is Changing Our Lives and What the World's Best Companies Are Learning From It

Dumaine, Brian

Scribner (336 pp.)

\$28.00 | May 5, 2020

978-1-9821-1363-6

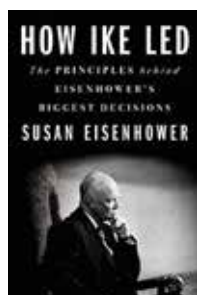
A business journalist examines the widespread influence of Amazon's strategies.

Drawing on Brad Stone's *The Everything Store* (2013), much media coverage, and more than 100 interviews, *Fortune* magazine contributing editor Dumaine offers a lively history of Amazon's huge success and forecasts its effect on 21st-century business. The author clearly admires Jeff Bezos for his astute melding of big data and artificial intelligence in running "the smartest company the world has ever seen." Bezos, Dumaine writes, is "a force of nature, moving at warp speed through a vast canvas." He has the ability "to face the unvarnished truth no matter how inconvenient, to make decisions based on cold, hard facts." He reads "at an Olympic level," quickly absorbing information and responding in detail with "both strategic and tactical feedback." He takes a long view, thinking "in terms of decades and centuries." He harbors "an ambition to be seen as more than a businessman—as rather, a cultural force, an idea merchant." The author does acknowledge some shortcomings: Bezos' "fact-driven, relentlessly focused mind" can make him appear "as less than empathic," especially to his employees and community, earning him a reputation as a plutocrat. Dumaine's recounting of Amazon's rise, as well as his portrayal of Bezos, is likely to be familiar to readers who keep up with business news. Besides analyzing the company's success, the author speculates about what areas Bezos will disrupt in the future: Likely suspects include advertising; health care, with Amazon offering prescription drugs, home health care products, and remote monitoring by medical practitioners; and banking—Amazon would become "a digital financial business offering checking accounts, loans, and mortgages." As Dumaine asserts, "the list of new ventures for Amazon keeps growing" along with an increasing number of business consultants advising clients on how to compete.

A brisk look at the business giant.

Fans of Don Winslow's fiction and Mark Bowden's nonfiction alike will be eager to read Feuer's blood-spattered tale.

EL JEFE



HOW IKE LED *The Principles Behind Eisenhower's Biggest Decisions*

Eisenhower, Susan

Dunne/St. Martin's (352 pp.)

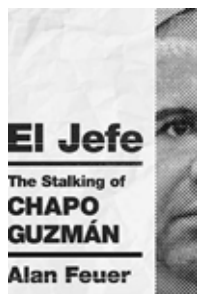
\$29.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-250-23877-1

A granddaughter of the 34th president celebrates his life and accomplishments.

The author, who published a memoir, *Mrs. Ike* (1996), about her grandmother, turns her attention to her grandfather in this mix of biography, memoir, and history; she has few negative things to say about him other than the fact that he did not like phone calls but rather “far preferred to meet his colleagues in person.” Instead, she celebrates his remarkable life, noting his humility and “intellectual honesty” and how he was “transparent and accountable” to the public and possessed a “determination to put the country first.” The author is clearly determined to remind readers of his many accomplishments—not only in World War II (he organized D-Day, among many other operations), but during the eight years of his presidency (1953-1961). She credits him for laying the groundwork for civil rights—e.g., he sent the 101st Airborne to Little Rock to facilitate school integration—balancing budgets, keeping us out of war, working hard to get the U.S. into space, refusing to attack his critics in public, and declining to diminish himself by responding to Sen. Joseph McCarthy and, later, to the Democrats (JFK among them) who tried to use the early Soviet space achievements for a political advantage. She shows him as an empathetic family man with a strong moral compass. In the epilogue, the author attacks the tribalism poisoning our current political climate. “Our culture no longer understands what was deeply ingrained in Eisenhower and many of his generation,” she writes. “Today we seem to think that strength is derived from winning every small fight, while raising ourselves up for recognition and advancement, even if others have to be diminished in the process.... To [him] the exact opposite was fundamental to his beliefs.”

A patent paean to a beloved grandfather and his military, political, and family achievements. (17 b/w photos)



EL JEFE *The Stalking of Chapo Guzmán*

Feuer, Alan

Flatiron Books (256 pp.)

\$28.99 | Aug. 25, 2020

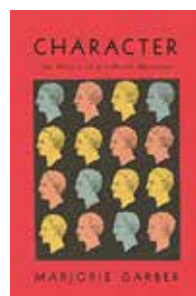
978-1-250-25450-4

Fast-paced tale of the decades-long quest to capture a notorious drug kingpin.

Joaquín Guzmán, aka El Chapo, was just one of many crime lords in Mexico to fall under the scrutiny

of American authorities back in the 1980s. By 2006, he was the head of a cartel, at war with other drug clans and the Mexican government. At this point, writes Feuer, who covers courts and criminal justice for the *New York Times*, Guzmán had earned “full folkloric status,” having escaped from one of the country’s most secure prisons after bribing his jailers. He was on the loose for a decade after, hiding out in the Sierra Madre, where he enjoyed some of the best technology on the market, including a private cellphone network, phones so well encrypted that the FBI’s best technicians could not crack them, and, later, wireless repeaters that enabled his commandos to communicate in the forested country around Guadalajara. Technology is at the beginning and the end of Feuer’s well-documented, only occasionally clichéd account, which includes an up-close portrait of the hacker who built Guzmán’s systems. Through networks and tools of their own, including simulators that “send out signals that mimic those given off by cell towers and essentially suck up locational data from cell phones being targeted,” American drug enforcement agents and Mexican officials alike were eventually able to track him down. Feuer builds a taut narrative of the cat-and-mouse game that found Guzmán at one safe house here, another there, somehow always able to escape even the vaunted Mexican marines. The author sometimes can’t resist the arid, hard-boiled conventions of true crime—“If he was going to hide up there living on tortillas, they were going to make damn sure that he didn’t get beans”—but he knows how to spin a tale.

Fans of Don Winslow’s fiction and Mark Bowden’s nonfiction alike will be eager to read Feuer’s blood-spattered tale.



CHARACTER *The History of a Cultural Obsession*

Garber, Marjorie

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (464 pp.)

\$30.00 | Jul. 14, 2020

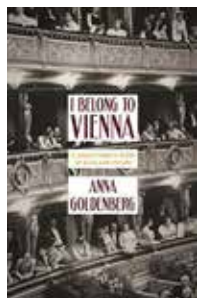
978-0-374-12085-6

The acclaimed literary scholar considers the shifting significance of the term “character.”

Garber, a Harvard professor of English and visual and environmental studies, brings a wide range of sources to her erudite, illuminating study of the “complex, sometimes self-contradictory, and often elusive concept” of character, whose meaning has changed throughout history. Claiming the idea of character to be a cultural obsession involving politics, entertainment, education, psychology, neurology, art, and literature, Garber examines many questions it has generated: “How can it be perceived, measured, assessed, developed, trained, or ‘built’?” Is character “innate, learned, taught, or instilled? Are character traits fixed or changeable?” Is there such a quality as a national character? Is character synonymous with personality? Is a person’s character visible, able to be “read” by head bumps, as phrenologists believed, or analyzed by physiognomy? As the author explores such questions, she turns to

sources as varied as Shakespeare (Garber is a noted Shakespeare scholar) and other playwrights, Greek philosophers, photographers and artists, education tracts, and contemporary political rhetoric. The idea that character can be trained, she asserts, was promoted by many 19th-century self-help books as well as the Scouting movement. Character building “was an invitation to personal initiative.” The popular 19th-century educational series *McGuffey's Readers*, Grimm's fairy tales, and even *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* all contain moral teachings to help a child build character. Garber traces the 18th-century fad of physiognomy, which later emerged as phrenology, which asserted that qualities such as greed, wickedness, melancholy, and maliciousness could be assessed from physical traits. Rubrics of character traits have been popular for centuries: As far back as the fourth-century B.C.E., Theophrastus came up with a list of 30 character types, including The Flatterer, The Reckless Cynic, The Officious Man, The Vain Man, The Oligarch, and The Slanderer, most of which, Garber astutely notes, are recognizable today.

A capacious overview of an enduring human value. (32 pages of b/w illustrations)



**I BELONG TO VIENNA
A Jewish Family's Story of
Exile and Return**

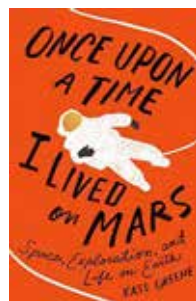
Goldenberg, Anna
Trans. by Price, Alta L.
New Vessel Press (207 pp.)
\$16.95 paper | Jun. 9, 2020
978-1-939931-84-9

Why would you return to a city that tried to murder you? Here is the story of one Jewish family that did.

In her English-language debut, Goldenberg, a former culture fellow at the *Forward* who is now a freelance journalist in Vienna, blends history, biography, and memoir to tell the story of her extended family and some significant others. Though the Holocaust is the primary setting, the author begins and ends in Poughkeepsie, New York, where her grandparents, both doctors, went to work after World War II. They did not stay long but returned to Vienna, where their families had been hunted by the Nazis—but also where they had found remarkable assistance from others. As Goldenberg notes, they felt that they *had* to return to their homeland—though she still has plenty of questions regarding their motivations. “How had they found reconciliation with Austria? Weren’t they constantly reminded of the humiliations they’d been subjected to following Hitler’s 1938 annexation of their homeland?” The author’s grandmother was a prime source for research, but Goldenberg also visited relevant sites in Europe and America—sometimes in company with her grandmother, who had spent time in Theresienstadt—consulted family papers and memories, and visited assorted archives. “For my grandmother...remembering has become a sport—a race against oblivion, in which every detail that comes to mind puts her in the lead,” writes the author. With these resources, she vividly re-creates the scene in Vienna as horror

arrived: the rise of the Nazis, the abuse of Jews, the roundups and transportations, and the varied fortunes of her family members, some of whom didn’t survive. Goldenberg’s principal focus is her grandparents—Hansi and Helga, who were teens at the time—and how both were able to escape the worst of it.

Well-researched, intimate, evocative look at some of the 20th century’s foulest days. (b/w photos, family tree)



**ONCE UPON A TIME I LIVED
ON MARS
Space, Exploration, and Life
on Earth**

Greene, Kate
St. Martin's (240 pp.)
\$27.99 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-1-250-15947-2

A set of loosely connected personal essays written during one of NASA’s simulated missions to Mars.

In her first book, laser physicist-turned-writer Greene sets out to use the wisdom of “human explorers on Mars [to] inspire new ways to sustain our lives and ecosystems back on Earth.” It’s a laudable goal, but the resulting collection mostly falls flat. Writing from her own experience as second-in-command of the 4-month-long 2013 Hawai’i Space Exploration Analog and Simulation (HI-SEAS) mission, the author chronicles her life’s changes refracted through the prism of living in tight quarters with other crew members, who all “brought their own projects to the mission.” Over the course of the narrative, we learn about Greene’s failing marriage and the importance of retaining a rent-controlled apartment in San Francisco; the death of her brother; her parents’ house in Kansas, where they have lived for decades; and the fact that because of the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiments, Greene had to sign forms consenting to be a research subject. In going from “writing like [a] science journalist...to someone who was writing herself into a story,” however, the author drops the more interesting threads involving space exploration. Greene helpfully coins the term “technoschmerz” to describe the anguish caused by the disconnection between what we expect from technology—e.g., moonshots and Mars missions—and the confusion, emotional rifts, and anxiety it produces as it separates us from one another. Recalling Frank Borman, commander of the 1968 *Apollo 8* mission that produced the iconic *Earthrise* photograph, Greene claims that only poets could capture the grandeur of Earth viewed from space. Technoschmerz en route to Mars also may be the domain of poets, but that poem has yet to be written.

Living on “Mars” may have changed Greene, but her journey of self-exploration is unlikely to change many readers.

Tackling such painful subjects as domestic abuse, trauma, and racism with grace and wisdom, this eloquent book probes the human condition as it chronicles a woman's ever evolving spiritual journey.

THE BEAUTY IN BREAKING



HATEMONGER
Stephen Miller, Donald Trump, and the White Nationalist Agenda

Guerrero, Jean

Morrow/HarperCollins (336 pp.)

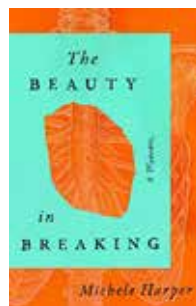
\$28.99 | May 19, 2020

978-0-06-298671-9

An unsparing portrait of the young architect of Trumpian nationalism.

"Stephen's rhetoric has completely infected the tone and mantra of this administration," says a former high school classmate of Donald Trump's chief henchman. "It's his." That rhetoric, writes California-based journalist Guerrero, centers on multiculturalism, which Stephen Miller, descended from Jewish immigrants from pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, rejects in favor of white nationalism. The author charts the ambitious Miller's rise, claiming that, at one point, he aspired to be a U.S. senator. Fresh out of college, he started working as an assistant to tea party darling Michelle Bachmann, moved on to work with a right-wing Arizona congressman, and then snagged a job with Alabama senator and erstwhile Trump attorney general Jeff Sessions, "an elfin nativist with white hair." He eventually jumped into the White House, promoted by Steve Bannon, having been nurtured by right-wing entrepreneur David Horowitz, and forged connections with a broad range of nationalist allies, including white supremacists and neo-Nazis. By Guerrero's account, Miller is the principal author of the administration's immigration policy, with its tent-city prisons and separation of infants from parents. The "demonization of migrants" as criminals and people who, as Trump once said, "would never go back to their huts," is an essential tool to keep a nationalist base galvanized and ready to fight. Trump didn't need Miller to teach him the art of hatemongering, Guerrero writes, but all the same, Miller's "fanatical ideology, work ethic and strategic thinking" have furthered the aims of a president bent on destroying existing norms. Guerrero sometimes shades off into idle speculation, as when she connects Miller's California origins to Hollywood make-believe, but her account of his unsentimental education by way of racist texts, a carefully cultivated hatred for the nonwhite world, and a core group of mentors is carefully documented and persuasive.

A readable study in the banality of evil, even if it comes clothed in bespoke suits.



THE BEAUTY IN BREAKING
A Memoir

Harper, Michele

Riverhead (304 pp.)

\$27.00 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-0-525-53738-0

An African American emergency room physician reflects on how "the chaos of emergency medicine" helped her come to terms with a painful past and understand the true nature of healing.

Though Harper grew up a member of the Washington, D.C. "black elite," the beautiful homes she shared with her parents held a dark secret: domestic violence. Determined to "fix people" rather than hurt them the way her abusive father hurt her family, Harper became an ER doctor. Her path was difficult. After she accepted her first post-residency job, the man she had met at Harvard and later married walked away from their relationship. Braving a life on her own in a new city, night shifts in an urban hospital, and the life-and-death dramas of the ER ward, Harper began a period of intense soul-searching. Observations of her patients and the struggles they faced taught her abundant lessons in human brokenness—especially her own—and resilience. A newborn baby whose death she could not explain helped her learn to open her heart and truly feel. A white male patient who had committed sexual assault on a female doctor forced the author to push past old memories of her father's abuse and feelings of rage to see a human being in pain. A young black man brought to the ER ward by white police officers who unsuccessfully tried forcing him to submit to medical examination for drugs reminded Harper of her own struggles as a black woman in an overwhelmingly white profession. It also made her realize that "America bears...many layers of racial wounds, both chronic and acute," and that part of her purpose was to continue her fight to promote social healing. Tackling such painful subjects as domestic abuse, trauma, and racism with grace and wisdom, this eloquent book probes the human condition as it chronicles a woman's ever evolving spiritual journey.

A profoundly humane memoir from a thoughtful doctor.



LAME OF THRONES
The Final Book in A Song of Hot and Cold

Harvard Lampoon

Hachette (320 pp.)

\$17.99 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-306-87367-6

George R.R. Martin's sprawling saga comes in for a satire not worthy of the *Cracked* cutting-room floor.

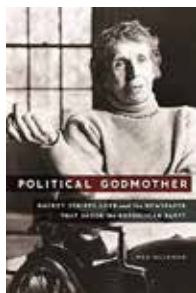
Martin has made a considerable fortune and built a massive following with his long-running Game of Thrones franchise, which makes him and it fair game for the parody served up here by the editors of the *Harvard Lampoon*.

A slow burn with an exciting finale.

12 SECONDS OF SILENCE

"I'm, how do you put this delicately, really goshdarn fucking rich now," the presumed Martin of this slender volume begins, adding snootily that HBO has turned his books into "the pre-eminent softcore porn series" of its day. The book—the one you wish Martin would write, according to the cover copy—proceeds by sounding the depths of the lowest common denominator, which is pretty low indeed. Remove 90% of Mel Brooks' brain, including the parts that control humor, and this is what you would get. "Once again his inability to read had prevented him from reading," goes one gag, an extremely faint echo of the joke trope that Groucho Marx started with, "I'd like to stay, but that would prevent me from leaving." Most of the remaining shtick is built around characters with sophomoric names like "Ratpiss," "Asserhole," "Fucknugget," "Yomomma," and "Cervix Bangsister" (??), characters who witness and/or commit some pretty nasty stuff. There are lashings of violence, too, which is faithful, at least, to some of the more extreme elements of Martin's original: "Dog Shit unsheathed his sword and began making his way toward Whoremund....Whoremund began to launch into an impassioned speech about how this was a historic day for Mildling rights, one sentence into which his throat was cut by Dog Shit." It's not worthy of the *National Lampoon* of Douglas Kenney's day, which was just as dumb and sex-addled and pun-crammed but with one difference: It was funny.

The operative word is "lame."



POLITICAL GODMOTHER *Nackey Scripps Loeb and the Newspaper That Shook the Republican Party*

Heckman, Meg

Univ. of Nebraska (200 pp.)

\$29.95 | Jun. 1, 2020

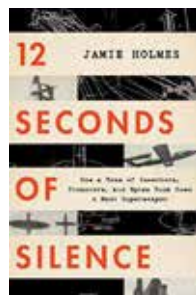
978-1-64012-193-5

An underacknowledged newspaper publisher and conservative activist receives her biographical due.

The political influence of New Hampshire's *Union Leader* as the leading newspaper in the state with the first primary has long been recognized. However, that paper's clout is usually ascribed solely to the larger-than-life bluster of the late publisher William Loeb. Here, journalism professor Heckman shows how his wife, Nackey Scripps Loeb (1924-2000), extended the paper's reach after taking over as publisher in 1981. The author also discusses how she helped give their shared conservative values voice during the newspaper's ascendance, though she was always more comfortable in the shadows than the spotlight. Nackey (as she is referred to throughout the narrative) was almost universally admired as an effective manager and a principled journalist, even by those who disagreed with her ideological principles. Heckman lays out her complex legacy: Though she was underestimated due to both her gender and her disability (she was partially paralyzed after a car accident), she was adamantly anti-feminist, opposed the Americans With Disabilities Act, and served as a crusader against government encroachment

and interference of any kind. Born into the Scripps journalism family, she was a reluctant newspaperwoman, but her marriage to Loeb was a match made in political heaven. "Somebody once said that he used a sword and I used a needle," she told an interviewer. "But we were both aiming for the same target." Throughout, Heckman makes a convincing case for her significant and lasting influence in conservative politics. From her friendship with Ronald Reagan to her support for Pat Buchanan, she was in the vanguard of the "right-wing populism" that would lead to the tea party and, eventually, the Trump presidency.

A straightforward biography that attests to the subject's accomplishments without embracing her politics.



12 SECONDS OF SILENCE *How a Team of Inventors, Tinkerers, and Spies Took Down a Nazi Superweapon*

Holmes, Jamie

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (384 pp.)

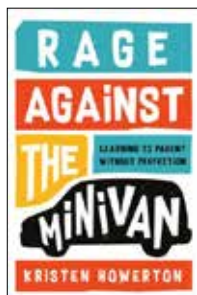
\$27.00 | Aug. 4, 2020

978-1-328-46012-7

The story of the first "smart" weapon.

On the first page of his debut book, Washington, D.C.-based journalist Holmes introduces his protagonist, Merle Tuve, who would become the leader of "Section T," a scientific research-and-development group tasked with designing a new type of fuse for anti-aircraft shells. In the early days of World War II, naval gunners were practically defenseless against fighter planes and bombers. The author describes the antiquated, inefficient process of loading and aiming shells meant to bring down enemy planes before they could sink battleships and destroyers. "No wonder it took thousands of rounds to knock one 'bird' out of the sky," he writes. "No wonder every ack-ack gunner dreamed of a shell that could automatically explode near a target." Officials realized that the war would be won by air power and, thus, also by air defense. Tuve was responsible for developing a new kind of fuse for these shells, one that did not require nearly impossible feats of technical calculations performed in seconds against planes moving hundreds of miles per hour. The proximity fuse he created was a work of true genius, but like any great invention, it required immense amounts of perseverance and human ingenuity. Using radio waves to detect proximity, the fuse was able to make shells that were far more accurate than anything before. Holmes also focuses on the creation of the V-1 flying bomb, the Nazi "superweapon." His harrowing description of London under incessant bombardment in the months after D-Day makes the success of the fuse all the more amazing. The author's chronicle of the Battle of the Bulge and the decisive role of proximity fuses in that final confrontation is equally fascinating. Holmes is a meticulous historian, and while his story begins a bit sluggishly with the painstaking scientific and political efforts necessary to deploy the proximity fuse, he ends up showing how this technological marvel played an invaluable role in winning the war.

A slow burn with an exciting finale. (16-page photo insert)



RAGE AGAINST THE MINIVAN *Learning To Parent Without Perfection*

Howerton, Kristen

Convergent/Crown (224 pp.)

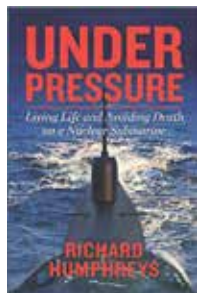
\$26.00 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-9848-2516-2

Why it's OK not to be a perfect parent.

In her first book, Howerton, a marriage and family therapist, gives readers a refreshing take on parenting: Relax. Nobody is perfect. As the mother of four children, two adopted and two biological, the author is well equipped to offer advice. "Hopefully," she writes, "this book will help you rage against the narratives of motherhood and life and relationships and gender that tell us we aren't enough." Among other topics, she shares her tragic experiences with multiple miscarriages, her long wait to officially adopt her first son, and the confusion people experienced when encountering her mixed-race family. Howerton's tone is refreshingly authentic and upfront but not cheeky, sassy, or heavy-handed as it attempts to hit the laugh-out-loud button. "The truth is that contentment is an inside job," she writes. "So is authenticity. Validation doesn't come from magazines, blogs, Facebook feeds, or even your best friends. It doesn't come from looking like you have it all together online." So forget unattainable goals, she writes; "it's about opting out of the comparison game and giving ourselves permission to fail, to get back up, and to love with our whole hearts again the next day." Nothing offers more proof of that maxim than Howerton's story of her trip to Haiti with a newborn to see her adoptive son at the time of the massive earthquake that devastated the country. She also explores her difficult decision to divorce her pastor husband despite their deeply religious community, which led to "some of the darkest [years] of my life. Many days, not crying in public or in front of my kids was the best I could do." Ultimately, Howerton shows the good and the bad sides of parenting and encourages readers to breathe easier when contemplating their own inadequacies.

A candid and witty alternative to more formulaic parenting books.



UNDER PRESSURE *Living Life and Avoiding Death on a Nuclear Submarine*

Humphreys, Richard

Hanover Square Press (272 pp.)

\$28.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

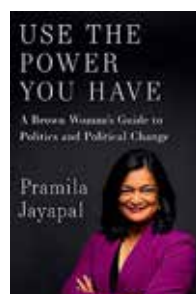
978-1-335-99624-4

Life aboard a Polaris missile submarine, a serious business most of the time.

The son of working-class British parents, Humphreys was bright enough to win a scholarship, but the experience of an English public school convinced him that

a life of adventure trumped education. After an unsuccessful attempt at professional soccer and rejection from the French Foreign Legion at age 17, he joined the Royal Navy in 1985. Britain's fleets no longer ruled the sea, but the country did possess four Polaris missile-firing nuclear submarines. Before beginning five years of service, Humphreys experienced basic training, which "is pretty consistent across the armed forces," involving ceremony, interminable drills, draconian inspections, and staff dedicated "to making your life a misery." Being fit and a veteran of public school bullying, he made it through mostly unscathed, and he delivers much wry commentary. Moving on, Humphreys delivers a vivid description of a profession that requires technical skill, obsessive multitasking (men routinely perform several jobs), and absolute absence of claustrophobia: He explains the unique experience of living in cramped quarters with 143 men breathing the same stale air during three month patrols away from sunlight and family. To avoid detection, missile submarines never "transmit sonically." The author reminds readers that the Cold War hadn't yet ended, and no one doubted that an order to fire missiles meant Armageddon. For the most part, readers will enjoy an expert account of nuclear submarine technology, operation, command structure, and culture. Regarding the last, the author describes how smoking was permitted, as was drinking to excess—although that was curbed after an intoxicated sailor murdered his captain in 2011. The humor often centers on bad smells and the overworked toilets. The author also includes a helpful diagram of the sub, an officer hierarchy, and a glossary.

An amusing addition to the rare genre of submariner memoirs. (b/w photos)



USE THE POWER YOU HAVE *A Brown Woman's Guide to Politics and Political Change*

Jayapal, Pramila

The New Press (240 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-62097-143-7

The first Indian American woman elected to the House of Representatives chronicles the path that led her to commit to fight for a more inclusive society.

In 1982, Jayapal came to the U.S. to begin her studies at Georgetown. After graduating, she decided to "fulfill my promise to my father by parlaying my liberal arts degree...to the top investment banks in New York City as the foundation of other success." Realizing investment banking was not right for her, she "did the next most expected thing" and went to business school. Jayapal also tutored poor children on Chicago's South Side, where she discovered that her true calling was to help the underserved. An internship with a nonprofit organization serving refugees in Thailand and a fellowship to study villages in India followed. Her political activism emerged in the wake of 9/11, when she became the force behind the campaign to make Seattle and Washington state at large "Hate Free Zones." Jayapal quickly learned "how to build movements and apply

An engaging addition to Chinese history that offers many insights for general readers.

THE LAST KINGS OF SHANGHAI

political pressure,” even if that meant going to jail. Within a decade, she became a vocal advocate for Seattle’s Sanctuary Cities ordinances and the Fight for \$15 movement. In 2014, she was elected to the Washington Senate on a progressive platform. She caught the attention of Bernie Sanders, who helped her fundraise for a successful 2016 House run. Now a tireless fighter for everything from immigration and Medicare reform to livable incomes for all, Jayapal sets forth a vision to create “an America more just...than the one we were handed.” At the end, she offers a list of political lessons for all, but especially for female change-makers of color. Passionate and unapologetically leftist, this hopeful book not only chronicles an immigrant’s political successes, but, more significantly, the enduring faith in American democracy that inspired them.

A passionately articulate memoir and political manifesto.



THE LAST KINGS OF SHANGHAI *The Rival Jewish Dynasties That Helped Create Modern China*

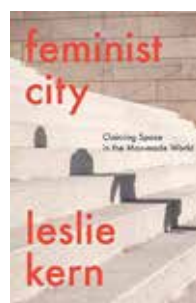
Kaufman, Jonathan
Viking (384 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-0-7352-2441-4

Historical account of two significant Jewish families who built wildly prosperous financial empires in Shanghai and Hong Kong that lasted for nearly two centuries.

From opium trading to banking to real estate, the Sassoon and Kadoorie families “helped open the world to China—and opened China to the world.” As Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Kaufman notes, they were “taipans,” alternately revered, feared, and loathed by the Chinese, who have largely “obscured” their stories since 1949. The author—who covered the Tiananmen Square massacre and also served as the China bureau chief for the *Wall Street Journal* from 2002 to 2005—digs deep to unearth their personal histories, creating an absorbing multigenerational saga. He begins with patriarch David Sassoon, who was descended from centuries of Baghdad Jewish royalty and was hounded out by the Ottoman rulers in 1830; he landed in Bombay at the height of the British Empire. Fully anglicized and prospering in the trade of cotton and opium, he sent his sons to function as ambassadors to various world outposts. Elias, one of his sons, outmaneuvered British rivals and cornered the market on opium distribution. Later, David’s grandson Victor Sassoon rose from “dilettante figurehead” to impresario, building the famous Cathay Hotel, which transformed the Shanghai skyline. He also helped forge the so-called “China Lobby,” which financially backed the nationalist regime under Chiang Kai-shek. Meanwhile, Elly Kadoorie, apprenticed in the Sassoon schools for businessmen in Bombay, enriched himself and his wife, Laura, and sons in finance, especially via investment in rubber. He also built opulent hotels and other luxury projects in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Both families’ fortunes

were decimated with the Communist takeover, and while their wealth overshadowed the enormous poverty of the Chinese, Kaufman argues persuasively that their entrepreneurial drive built a lasting capitalist legacy in the country. While acknowledging the official Chinese version of history, the author does a service by examining “other truths” as well.

An engaging addition to Chinese history that offers many insights for general readers.



FEMINIST CITY *Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*

Kern, Leslie
Verso (208 pp.)
\$24.95 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-78873-981-8

A Canadian professor of geography explores the gendered nature of urban environments and how those environments inform social relationships.

Whether it is through skyscrapers that glorify patriarchal “corporate economic power” or guidelines for wind effects that use bodily dimensions corresponding to “an adult male,” cities are made to the measure of men. Drawing on feminist, geographical, and sociological studies along with her own experiences as an urban woman, Kern explores how cities impact female bodies. Her own awareness of how gender impacted urban spaces came into clear focus during pregnancy. “People read my protruding belly as if it said, ‘rub here please!’” Even after her baby was born, the author found that many urban spaces made her feel unable to juggle the demands of child care, paid employment, and school. In considering women’s relationships with each other, she discusses how cities disrupt networking possibilities for low-income and other marginalized women through the destruction of social housing projects. Kern does point out that being alone in an urban environment can also offer many pleasures, but those pleasures are harder to come by for women because they must always contend with the fact that they are always “fair game for harassment and even violence.” Activism and protest can connect women to cities in significant ways, but protests that claim to be women-only spaces need to take into account the way they “reproduce systems of privilege and oppression,” especially where trans or disabled women are concerned. In the process of creating safe cities, the author further observes that urban revitalization programs that help women tend to make cities less safe for other marginalized groups. Visionary, intelligent, and humane, this book offers intersectional insights into the gendered nature of the modern city to promote “living more justly in an urban world.”

A timely, thought-provoking study.



WHY DO WE STILL HAVE THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

Keyssar, Alexander

Harvard Univ. (512 pp.)

\$35.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

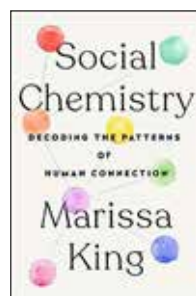
978-0-674-66015-1

Why the Electoral College system has survived more than two centuries of opposition to its obvious imperfections.

Featuring nearly 120 pages of endnotes, this is clearly a scholarly book

that will appeal most to specialists and policymakers. Amid the obviously deeply researched scholarship, Keyssar, a professor of history and social policy at Harvard, clearly explains the numerous objections to the Electoral College and the reasons those objections have never gained enough traction for reform to occur. An overly simplified explanation involves the desire to maintain the status quo instead of tinkering with “new arrangements that might have unintended consequences.” Keyssar devotes some attention to the EC anomaly of Donald Trump in 2016 but digs more deeply into the history. The author begins with the Constitutional Convention in 1787, “where the framers of the Constitution struggled to figure out the best way for a new kingless nation to choose a chief executive.” Within a decade, certain “problems” surfaced, which required the “adoption of the Twelfth Amendment in 1804.” However, as Keyssar shows throughout the book, little has changed since the early 19th century. Much of the reform effort has focused on the winner-take-all-provision in each state on Election Day. A national popular vote, minus the EC mechanism, seemed like an obvious fix, but that idea never generated adequate momentum and “was essentially a nonstarter until the second half of the twentieth century.” Further Constitutional amendments could have accomplished change, but that process is difficult to achieve regarding most issues. As efforts at solutions emanate mostly from the state government level, Keyssar explains the possibility of the current movement to free state electors from unquestioningly confirming the winner-take-all tradition. The author, who also offers cogent discussions of the role that race has played over the decades, believes the only way to parse the enduring illogic of a flawed system is the close study of historical forces.

General readers may skim some sections, but the book contains solid, useful information to learn before the 2020 election.



SOCIAL CHEMISTRY *Decoding the Patterns of Human Connection*

King, Marissa

Dutton (368 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-5247-4380-2

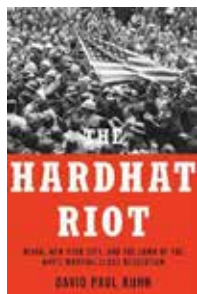
A close look at the various structures of social networks.

King, a professor of organizational behavior at the Yale School of Management, has spent some 15 years studying social relationships among a variety of networks. In a psychobabble-free manner, she presents the findings of numerous researchers in the field, and, using simple diagrams, she maps the structure of three common types of personal networks. She categorizes their organizers as Expansionists, Brokers, and Conveners, and anecdotes about well-known figures illustrate the basic elements of each network's social structure and psychological differences. Expansionists have huge but relatively weak networks, spend time meeting lots of new people, and know how to work a room. A good example is Jim Cramer, the loud host of *Mad Money*, whom the author describes as “the epitome of brash overconfidence.” Networks organized by Brokers have a very different style, embodied here by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, whose musical collective Silk Road Ensemble is a network of talented people from very different social worlds. Conveners build dense networks with deep roots in which their friends are also each other's friends. King's choice to illustrate this is *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour, queen of the fashion industry. Celebrities abound in these pages, but the author takes care to clarify the benefits and drawbacks of each style and emphasizes that for any individual, the most appropriate style is one that matches their personal goals, career stage, and needs. Throughout, she blends the findings of numerous sociological and psychological research studies with thoughtful advice and relevant stories from her own life, which gives the book a comfortable balance and adds to its readability. Rather than providing quick tips on how to build a network, King gives readers the big picture, showing what social networks are and demonstrating their importance in one's career and personal life.

A personable approach to one of the hot topics of our times.

A hilarious, heartbreaking, and endlessly entertaining homage to black women's resilience and excellence.

THIS IS MAJOR



THE HARDHAT RIOT *Nixon, New York City, and the Dawn of the White Working-Class Revolution*

Kuhn, David Paul
Oxford Univ. (384 pp.)
\$29.95 | Jul. 1, 2020
978-0-19-006471-6

An account of a mostly forgotten 1970 altercation between New York City construction workers and citizens protesting the continuing war in Southeast Asia.

The majority of the violence occurred on May 8, 1970, four days after the Kent State tragedy. Kuhn, who has written for *Politico*, *RealClearPolitics*, and CBS News, among other outlets, explains how the tension had been building for several years—and on a variety of fronts. In addition to regular protests around the country, these included the campus of Columbia University, the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the 1969 Moratorium To End the War in Vietnam, and, perhaps most significantly, within the rhetoric of Richard Nixon, both as a candidate and as president. For a few chapters, Kuhn foreshadows the violence committed by the construction workers while providing educated suppositions about why the NYPD seemed mostly unprepared to protect the protesters exercising their First Amendment rights. The graphic accounts of the violence occupy more than 80 pages, a section that ends chillingly: “The reporter asked Tallman, Would you hurt demonstrators again? ‘You bet. If they come back here Monday, we’ll give them the chase of their lives.’ ‘We’ll kill them,’ his friend added.” The author focuses not only on the construction workers, protesters, and police, but also NYC Mayor John Lindsay, who noted on the morning of May 8 that the hard hats were “out for blood today.” As Kuhn shows, Lindsay, a Republican who, two years later, “was the most liberal candidate in the Democratic race,” failed to fully grasp the combustible nature of the conflicting actors. Throughout the narrative, the author wrestles with conflicting ideologies of patriotism, especially as symbolized by the American flag. In a trenchant epilogue, Kuhn connects dots from the events of that summer to the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump.

A welcome resurrection of a forgotten riot with relevance for our current fragmented political landscape. (b/w photos)



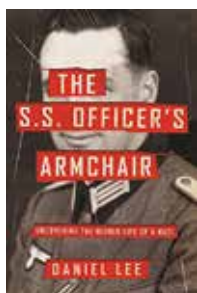
THIS IS MAJOR *Notes on Diana Ross, Dark Girls, and Being Dope*

Lawson, Shayla
Perennial/HarperCollins (336 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Jun. 30, 2020
978-0-06-289059-7

A memoir in essays serves as a bold and deeply personal celebration of black women's lives and culture.

Black women, writes poet and creative writing instructor Lawson, have always been “possessed of irony and rebellion,” blazing trails and disrupting the status quo. The problem is that “the world wants everything we have to offer, except us. It is not that Black Girl Magic isn’t real. It is that it doesn’t set us free.” In a narrative that is part memoir and part lively social history lesson, the author blends her own story with black women’s broader cultural histories. An essay on the rough emotional terrain of Lawson’s senior year in high school and early 20s gives way to pieces about her failure to become “Twitter famous,” dealing with bias in a “transparent creative sustainable millennial” workplace, and white people mistaking her for black celebrities such as Oprah and Whoopi Goldberg. With smart, infectious prose that often reads like poetry, Lawson illuminates the racism that renders so many black women and their accomplishments invisible—literally, in the case of AI’s discrimination problem. The author also details lesser-known histories about the true origins of the term “hipster” and Rodeo Caldonia, a 1980s-era performance collective of radical black Brooklynites who “were fourth-wave feminists before Riot Grrrl ever hit the third wave.” Lawson celebrates Diana Ross as “major,” an icon who is both “intimate and invincible,” a balm for black women who are routinely viewed as “difficult” or “impossible to get close to.” The music of SZA inspires an extended meditation on dating disasters, sexual double standards, and heartbreak. Lawson’s essays—some traditional, some experimental in form—deftly challenge the notion of #BlackGirlMagic as an extension of the stereotype of black women as exotic beasts of burden unworthy of protection, as body parts and hairstyles to be appropriated. The author honors black women in their fullness.

A hilarious, heartbreaking, and endlessly entertaining homage to black women's resilience and excellence.



**THE S.S. OFFICER'S
ARMCHAIR**
*Uncovering the Hidden Life
of a Nazi*

Lee, Daniel

Hachette (336 pp.)

\$28.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-316-50909-1

A midlevel Nazi bureaucrat comes to life thanks to an unexpected discovery.

In 2011, a woman took an old armchair for reupholstering, and she discovered that, sewn inside a cushion, was a bundle of Nazi-era documents from a lawyer named Robert Griesinger. British historian Lee determined to learn more, and the result is a fascinating true-life detective story, as the author engagingly chronicles his searches in archives and interviews with elderly survivors. Five years of research revealed that Griesinger was born in 1906 in a family wealthy enough to escape most of the privations of World War I. Along with many Germans of his age, Griesinger hated the Treaty of Versailles and, like his family, was politically conservative. He attended university, where he acquired a circle of like-minded, fiercely nationalistic friends. Without distinguishing himself, he chose a career in the law and joined the Ministry of Interior in 1933 under new chancellor Adolf Hitler. This ministry dealt with the police, so Griesinger worked with the Gestapo, a group he eventually joined. Although working in buildings where vicious interrogation and torture took place, his duties were administrative; Lee turns up no evidence that he participated or that he disapproved. Called up in 1939, he served until wounded in 1941 and then returned to civilian duties, acquiring a plum position in Prague in 1943. Even as the Red Army approached, officials stayed on the job, so Griesinger was caught in the May 5, 1945 Czech uprising, which inflicted brutal revenge on the remaining Germans. He died in September, possibly of disease. Perhaps because few personal writings survive, Griesinger's character remains a mystery, but Lee succeeds in documenting the life of a Nazi civil servant who, like many in his generation, showed little interest in Hitler before he took power or objection to him afterward.

An illuminating biography and more evidence for the “banality of evil.” (b/w photos, maps)



DEAD RECKONING
*The Story of How Johnny
Mitchell and His Fighter
Pilots Took on Admiral
Yamamoto and Avenged
Pearl Harbor*

Lehr, Dick

Harper/HarperCollins (416 pp.)

\$28.99 | May 12, 2020

978-0-06-244851-4

An evenhanded history of the hunt for the mastermind of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

Nearly a year and a half after the U.S. declared war on Japan, the Army Air Forces would finally catch up with Japanese Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy, in the skies over the then-Japanese-held islands of Rabaul and Bougainville. Lehr—a professor of journalism at Boston University who has written two books on Whitey Bulger—weaves together two touching stories: the tale of Maj. John Mitchell, who was an ace flyboy chosen to lead the mission, homesick for his new bride, as well as the story of Mitchell's team; and the chronicle of Yamamoto, who, as a young cadet, had seen his country prevail against the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and became a forward-thinking officer who attended Harvard, worked two postings in Washington, D.C., and—significantly—grasped that aircraft carriers were the weapon of the future. Yamamoto also “sensed... from a mix of press accounts and military intelligence, that the United States was waking up—that following the deadly Pearl Harbor debacle, instead of curling up into a fetal position, she was climbing to her feet, raring to fight and seek vengeance. [He] had no way of knowing its full extent, but the winter of 1942 saw the [U.S.] hastily and effectively establish its wartime footing.” By 1943, he was nearing 60, with a wife and children as well as a longtime geisha lover to whom he wrote passionate letters. Refreshingly, Lehr gets beyond the hate-filled, racist propaganda on both sides to give an honest appraisal of the protagonist, especially Yamamoto, whose logic in attacking Pearl Harbor was to “induce [America] to settle for peace with Japan.” Once the Americans cracked the Japanese code, Midway became “Yamamoto's lament.”

A sympathetic, exciting portrait of both American and Japanese warriors caught up in “targeted-kill operations.” (b/w photos)

A pleasure to read, even in its darkest moments, and refreshingly optimistic about the future of the republic.

DEMOCRACY IN ONE BOOK OR LESS



DEMOCRACY IN ONE BOOK OR LESS *How It Works, Why It Doesn't, and Why Fixing It Is Easier Than You Think*

Litt, David

Ecco/HarperCollins (384 pp.)

\$28.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-06-287936-3

Former White House speechwriter and humorist Litt digs in deep to discuss what's ailing us politically—and gets in a few laughs along the way.

The author begins with an amusing guerrilla action that demands a John Belushi to play it onscreen: namely, trying to bust his way into Mitch McConnell's fraternity at the University of Kentucky. Why? Because somewhere in those roots lies the development of a political system that does not represent the people or reflect the consent of the governed in the slightest, giving rise to a polity most of whose members do not trust the government to act correctly, with those who do “roughly the number of Americans who believe in Bigfoot.” The genius of the system McConnell authored, Litt rightly observes, is that thanks to gerrymandering and polarization, there are practically no political consequences inherent in ignoring the wishes of the electorate. The fixes are pretty simple, or at least some are. If you're not a voter, Litt suggests, then you don't really count, and if you don't vote, then you cede the field to the boomers who went for the current occupant of the White House. “Along nearly every dimension,” Litt writes, “the average voter looks more like Donald Trump than the average American does.” Only a mass turnout of the young—the author is in his 30s—will change that picture. Just so, because so many minority voters have been disenfranchised, voters are wealthier than nonvoters, acquiescent in congressional and presidential acts that benefit the rich. The irony is that we now have a tyranny of the minority—an easy fix if only the majority will act, in part by throwing out McConnell, for whom “our dysfunctional legislature is working just fine.”

A pleasure to read, even in its darkest moments, and refreshingly optimistic about the future of the republic.



AOC *The Fearless Rise and Powerful Resonance of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*

Ed. by Lopez, Lynda

St. Martin's (240 pp.)

\$26.99 | Aug. 11, 2020

978-1-250-25741-3

Fifteen writers reflect on the meteoric rise of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

When Ocasio-Cortez was elected as the U.S Representative for New York's 14th congressional district in 2018, having defeated a 10-term incumbent, she made

history as the youngest woman to serve in Congress. She also set the path for a new breed of young, social justice-minded politicians. Lopez, an Emmy-winning radio and TV journalist who anchors WCBS NewsRadio in New York City, assembles a bright and uniformly compelling collection of thought pieces on AOC. Her contributors—from the arts, media, and political landscapes—closely examine the essential qualities of AOC's broad appeal. The right voice at the right moment, AOC embodies a growing progressive movement in the U.S. Deeply conscious of working-class values and environmental concerns, she's a feminist with nimble social media skills, effectively communicating her message to an expanding mass of supporters. Among the many memorable essays are “In No Uncertain Terms,” in which Peru-born novelist Natalia Sylvester digs into AOC's Latin roots and demonstrates how she and AOC share an imperfect yet emotionally engaging bilingualism; Pedro Regalado's precise consideration of “the complexity of Ocasio-Cortez's Latina background” within the historical context and expanding strength of Puerto Rican activism in New York; and Nathan J. Robinson's eloquent summary of AOC's enduring influence. “[Her] democratic socialism is a threat to the established order,” writes Robinson, “because she presents a vision of a possible politics where young people, working people, women, and people of color all create a humane and decent society together, one where everyone is clothed, housed, fed, and given quality healthcare, and you don't have to be a billionaire to serve in public office....She is the expression of a profound and new kind of socialist politics, one that may very well change the world.” Other contributors include Rebecca Traister, Jennine Capó Crucet, and Carmen Rita Wong.

Enlightening and engaging perspectives on a remarkable political ascent. (8-page b/w insert)



CODE NAME MADELEINE *A Sufi Spy in Nazi-Occupied Paris*

Magida, Arthur J.

Norton (320 pp.)

\$27.95 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-393-63518-8

A singular World War II tale highlights the bravery of a Sufi mystic's daughter who sacrificed a peaceful life in France to become a secret agent for the

British during the war.

Magida fashions a highly original biography of the short, brave life of Noor Inayat Khan (1914-1944), who became a radio operator for the British in her late 20s and was dropped into France as a spy in the summer of 1943. It is a sad and harrowing story of a young woman with a steely will and strong sense of family honor who was eagerly incorporated into wartime service by the British Special Operations Executive, perhaps due to her mixed upbringing and perfect French—even though one official noted that she was “sensitive, somewhat dreamy.” Magida spends a substantial, fascinating portion of the narrative

exploring Khan's unusual upbringing in the suburbs of Paris, where her father, a renowned Indian-born Sufi mystic teacher and musician, taught his international pupils and disciples. Noor's mother, Ora, was the sister of the notorious self-styled yogi Pierre Bernard. By the author's account, Noor's upbringing was spiritually oriented, literary, and sheltered, and the family was uprooted when her father died. Noor, who trained as a musician as well, was closest to her mother and younger brother, Vilayat. Joining the exodus to England when the Nazis invaded in June 1940, the siblings, nonviolent rather than pacifist, had to decide how best to aid the war effort. Noor enlisted and trained in wireless telegraphy. While courageous, "direct...forthright and no pushover," and "used to being underestimated," Noor (spy name Madeleine) unfortunately disregarded some important rules of the secret agent, such as not contacting anyone she had known before the war, and her movements caught the attention of the Gestapo. She was imprisoned and eventually executed at Dachau.

A harrowing thriller in which a young woman's "joy of sacrifice" turned to tragedy. (37 illustrations)



**LOST COMPANIONS
Reflections on the Death of
Pets**

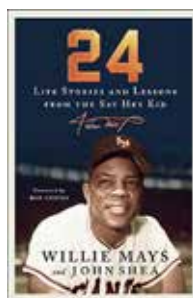
Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff
St. Martin's (272 pp.)
\$27.99 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-1-250-20223-9

The acclaimed author of numerous books about the emotional lives of animals now turns to the experience of losing a pet.

"I believe it is a deep and ancient longing, to bond with a member of a different species," writes Masson near the beginning of this heart-rending foray into the challenge of "facing the death of...the animal you have come to love like any other member of the family." Nothing brings home the depth of that relationship like death, upon which we "are confronted with mortality in general, writ large in these animals who have become family, but in some sense even more than family—maybe part of ourselves." The author investigates the psychology of this loss through testimonies from their human companions as well as conversations with friends and veterinarians. Masson's tone is sympathetic, for he is a firm believer in the sentience of animals and the dignity with which they should be treated in life and death. He argues that animals have a sense of impending death and that death could be as relevant to them as it is to us. Dogs, in particular, bring an unalloyed state of pure happiness when they are in our presence, an elemental love free of all the baggage that accompanies human relationships. In many ways, that is why their loss is so heartbreaking. Occasionally, Masson's associations go too far—"losing [a pet] is very much like losing a child"—but readers can skip parts that seem over the edge. The author has many wise things to impart about a child's grief—e.g., "it is

important to recognize the genuineness of the emotions of the child, to honor them by taking them seriously."

A touching, sensitive journey that will, like Masson's previous books, find a wide audience.



**24
Life Stories and Lessons From
the Say Hey Kid**

Mays, Willie & Shea, John
St. Martin's (352 pp.)
\$28.99 | May 5, 2020
978-1-250-23042-3

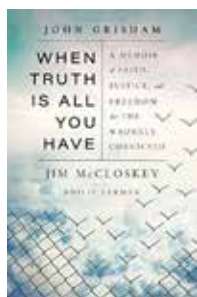
Living legend Mays (b. 1931) and *San Francisco Chronicle* baseball writer Shea present fresh material about the often chronicled career of the superstar center fielder.

The title refers to Mays' jersey number and also corresponds to the number of chapters in this conversational book. The majority of the text contains Shea's words about the Hall of Famer, but Mays' own words are scattered throughout each chapter along with an excellent array of photographs from every stage of his life. The narrative is upbeat in the sense that the hundreds of individuals quoted are consistently enthralled by Mays' sterling character, positive outlook, and baseball talent. But it's not all sunshine. Mays faced intense racism after transitioning from the Negro Leagues to white-dominated Major League Baseball. Though Jackie Robinson became the first black player to break the color barrier, the role of Mays as a racial pioneer in MLB is unquestionable. His white teammates and his few black mentors tended to protect him instinctively from the most repulsive racism, almost surely because of his winning personality as well as his on-field talents. In chapters framed by various life lessons—e.g., "Set an Example," "Have Fun on the Job," and "Benefit From Versatility"—the authors illuminate Mays' stellar career; service in the Army in the early 1950s; meetings with many U.S. presidents, with Barack Obama as the most special; and the similarities and differences between him and players of his own era, especially Hank Aaron, as well as modern stars such as Barry Bonds and Mike Trout. Despite the scandal involving Bonds' use of performance-enhancing drugs, Mays is adamant that he deserves entry into the Hall of Fame. Bob Costas provides the foreword, noting that "a strong case can be made for Willie Mays as the greatest all-around player in baseball history."

A book primarily for baseball fans, but it offers plenty of material for readers interested in U.S. race relations. (color printed endpapers, 68 b/w photos)

A well-paced and engaging account, highly relevant to current political debates.

BETWEEN EVERYTHING AND NOTHING



WHEN TRUTH IS ALL YOU HAVE *A Memoir of Faith, Justice, and Freedom for the Wrongly Convicted*

McCloskey, Jim with Lerman, Philip

Doubleday (320 pp.)

\$26.95 | Jul. 14, 2020

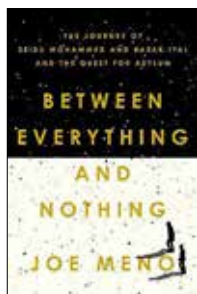
978-0-385-54503-7



A heartfelt and heart-rending story of fighting wrongful convictions, which “are on no one’s list of our most important problems.”

McCloskey is the founder of Centurion Ministries, an organization that, since 1983, has managed to free 63 people convicted of crimes they did not commit. Before starting this noble work, the author was an often aimless Vietnam veteran searching for a purpose in life. In this worthwhile reflection, co-written by former *USA Today* national editor Lerman, McCloskey not only recounts the successes and failures of Centurion; he also looks back candidly on his own journey. The author begins with his days at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he took an assignment as a student chaplain in a local prison. There, he had a life-changing encounter with a prisoner named Jorge “Chiefie” de los Santos. The author believed that Chiefie was innocent of the crime of murder for which he had been convicted, and Chiefie’s case led him to his life’s calling: to fight for the wrongfully convicted. Examining his work and life, he shares a dual narrative: “the story of how I learned what a cruel, mindless, mean machine the justice system can be,” and “how I learned to look that evil in the eye and still understand there is good in the world.” All of this makes for eye-opening, sometimes inspiring reading, and McCloskey also weaves in his own personal tale of redemption—of toxic love affairs, trysts with prostitutes, and other hedonistic endeavors that eventually led him to seek out a better path. The author’s writing is conversational, forthright, and brusque, and his subject matter is humane, uncomfortable, and often raw. The narrative charts triumphant stories of innocent persons freed, heartbreaking tales of defeat, and disappointing insights into a broken justice system. John Grisham provides the forward.

Compassionate tales from a dedicated warrior for justice.



BETWEEN EVERYTHING AND NOTHING *The Journey of Seidu Mohammed and Razak Iyal and the Quest for Asylum*

Meno, Joe

Counterpoint (336 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-64009-314-0



Ambitious exposé of the troubled immigration system as seen through the lens of two African migrants’ experiences.

Meno, a professor of creative writing and prolific fiction writer, tracks the grueling journeys of his complexly rendered protagonists, Razak and Seidu, both from Ghana, one fleeing a murderous family dispute, the other a promising soccer player facing persecution after being outed as bisexual. The author portrays them convincingly as hapless pawns in a massive explosion of migration, countered in the Americas with greed and cruelty. Even for those with legitimate reasons to seek shelter, like his protagonists, “the asylum process in the U.S. has become its own inviolable system.” The narrative is both sprawling and controlled, as Meno alternates between a terrifying account of their attempts to reach safety across the Canadian border during a blizzard and the longer-term arc of their improbable, brutal journeys as migrants. Both men traveled through Central America, facing constant danger and abuse. Applying for asylum at the American border, they discovered an unfortunate truth: that the post-9/11 realignment of homeland security “had far-reaching political and cultural consequences, immediately changing how refugees and asylum seekers were publicly viewed.” Razak was detained for two years at a remote private prison, feeling “he had been taken out of the world.” Seidu was also detained, eventually bonded to his brother’s custody: “It was almost too much, this homecoming, this feeling of unabashed love and support” Yet, despite his credible fear, his request for asylum was denied without explanation, prompting his flight to Canada. Similarly, Razak found a life in New York but fled north after being scheduled for deportation. The narrative is dispiriting, as Meno documents the Kafkaesque, for-profit reality of today’s immigration morass, but Meno writes deftly, with a fine sense of detail and place, bringing an all-too-common story to life.

A well-paced and engaging account, highly relevant to current political debates.



THE DRAGONS, THE GIANT, THE WOMEN *A Memoir*

Moore, Wayétu

Graywolf (272 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

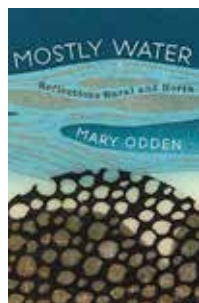
978-1-64445-031-4

A lyrical reckoning with the aftermath of civil war.

The first Liberian civil war was a disaster for the people of Liberia, including Moore and her family. Only 5 years old at the time, she was forced to flee her home on foot alongside her family as rebels advanced down her street, guns firing. After weeks of walking, they found relative safety in the village of Lai, near the border with Sierra Leone, where they would remain for seven months. When a rebel arrived in Lai promising to sneak Moore’s family into Sierra Leone, the author breaks the narrative, jumping ahead 25 years to the mid-2010s. At that time, she lived in Brooklyn, and things were not going well. She was stalled on a novel (perhaps her acclaimed 2018 book *She Would Be King*).

Amid the racial tensions following the highly publicized deaths of black citizens at the hands of police officers, she broke up with her white boyfriend after he insulted her, and she was having nightmares and considering returning to Liberia for the first time since she was a girl. This section drags a bit, as Moore's problems take on a developed-nation air, especially in light of the chapters that preceded them. But for the remainder of the book, the author confronts the legacy of the war for her family and her country, trying in particular to understand the rebel woman who led her surviving family to safety. As Moore conducts this investigation in earnest, she writes a long section of the text in the voice of her mother. It reads like fiction in the sense that the author's inhabiting of her mother's character is absolute. Nonfiction purists might balk at this liberty, but the resulting intimacy is profound. Here and throughout, Moore's control of language is impressive.

Formally dazzling yet coolly reflective prose makes for a refined memoir.



MOSTLY WATER

Odden, Mary

Boreal/Red Hen Press (248 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-59709-919-6

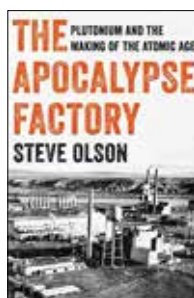
Travels in the Northwest by Alaska-based journalist and essayist Odden.

"My grandmother Mona was missing an index finger on her left hand because she cut it off with an ax when she was a little girl." So begins Odden's liter-

ate, occasionally florid collection, a piece celebrating the self-reliance and independence of country people while suggesting that all kinds of unhappy things can happen out on the land. In a narrative peppered with horses, cows, rivers, farms, and the people who work all of them, the author often arrives at exactly the right thing to say. Her description of a brooding thunderstorm over the arid plains of her home ground, for instance, is eminently memorable: "In eastern Oregon, you knew you were about to be in a storm when the sky would glint yellowish gray and the filmy veils of virga would start to descend." Sometimes, however, Odden lays the lily-gilding on a little too thickly, as when she revels in freshly picked berries: "In their moment I am privileged to be among them, their small dark roundness in my hand one at a time, or a lucky handful in the right season." There are a few throwaway pieces that seem dashed off to meet a deadline—e.g., a *Foxfire*-ish couple of pages about canning peaches. But though some of the expected tropes are there, given the country under discussion and its trees, lakes, bears, and salmon, Odden also turns in pieces that are marvels of compression, such as a celebration of country dogs that would do Rick Bass proud. "Our present dogs," she writes merrily, "have transferred most of their instincts to saving us from red squirrels." In a nice turn, the author closes by admitting that she's changed the names of people "I could imagine protesting portrayal in these pages" after turning in sketches that

are mostly admiring, and that anyone familiar with the territory will appreciate.

Not everything works, but there's much to like in Odden's observations.



THE APOCALYPSE FACTORY

Plutonium and the Making of the Atomic Age

Olson, Steve

Norton (320 pp.)

\$27.95 | Jul. 28, 2020

978-0-393-63497-6

How Americans made the plutonium that went into the first atomic bomb.

Beginning a captivating, unnerving history, Seattle-based journalist Olson emphasizes that while uranium gets the headlines, plutonium makes up almost all of the thousands of bombs in arsenals around the world. In 1943, everyone in an immense southern Washington area received orders to move out within a month. Tens of thousands of workers poured in to build entire cities and infrastructure and then three nuclear reactors to produce plutonium and three huge factories to extract it. Olson delivers gripping accounts of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation's construction, the iconic summer 1945 test in New Mexico, and the bombs' destruction of Japanese cities. Hanford's output peaked in the 1960s before obsolescence and overproduction took its toll. By the 1970s, most reactors had shut down. With the project's declassification, the first historical accounts extolled its immense effort, technical accomplishments, and ultimate triumph, but time has produced more unsettling information—especially regarding the health effects, given that "Hanford had released far more radioactivity into the air, water, and soil than outsiders had known." Until Hanford, no one had handled radioactive material on an industrial scale, and readers will be dismayed as Olson describes the results. In addition to the problems associated with radioactive gas, cooling water and factory chemicals flowed into the nearby Columbia River. Radioactive solid waste lay in open dumps until experts decided that this was a bad idea; then it was collected in huge steel containers with a predicted lifetime of 20 years, after which someone would surely find a better way to deal with it. Most are still there, corroded and leaking. Billions of dollars have been spent in a cleanup, but a huge area remains poisoned. If it's any comfort, Kate Brown's superb *Plutopia* (2013) reveals that the Soviet Union's version of Hanford was worse.

A riveting history of a lesser-known Manhattan Project triumph that, like so many wartime triumphs, has lost its luster. (32 illustrations)



An instructive demonstration of how alternative truths play themselves out.

NOTHING IS WRONG AND HERE IS WHY



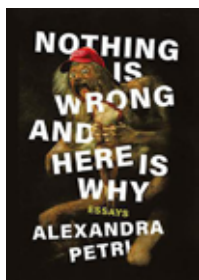
A DECADE OF DISRUPTION *America in the New Millennium*

Peck, Garrett
Pegasus (368 pp.)
\$28.95 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-64313-444-4

A lucid history of the first decade of the 21st century, which set trends in motion that are with us today.

What to call that time? Washington, D.C.-based historian Peck dismisses “the aughts” as “too Victorian,” and he suggests that the “decade of disruption” is just about right to describe an era in which technology ravaged entire industries. He examines many other trends that seemed to happen overnight but that took years—e.g., the constantly threatened right of gay couples to marry, the rise of the tea party as a directly racist response to Barack Obama, and the still reverberating consequences of the Great Recession, among them the political polarization that reigns supreme today. Peck has a keen eye for the small but telling detail, such as the fact that Wall Street analysts were publicly promoting the dot-com boom but privately keeping their distance, aware that it was a bubble about to burst. (Make that two bubbles: the internet and the telecommunications sector.) The cynicism of Wall Street and Washington are constant threads, with “shareholder value” and giveaways to the already rich being the main ends of the denizens of both. Disruption holds sway throughout Peck’s narrative, but there are plenty of old-fashioned decadence and con games as well, from the fraudulent Trump University to Tiger Woods’ infidelities. By Peck’s account—and he’s a military veteran—the single greatest mistake of the decade was an act of hubris: “following a false trail of evidence and messianic zeal to overthrow a Middle Eastern dictator,” thus leading to the invasion of Iraq. In his nimble yet fact-dense account, the author enumerates many other errors, from gerrymandering and the expansion of the imperial presidency to the ideological sclerosis of the Republican Party and the destruction of the middle class.

A valuable road map that shows us how we got where we are today. (16 pages of color photos)



NOTHING IS WRONG AND HERE IS WHY *Essays*

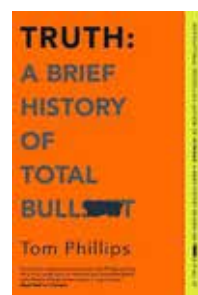
Petri, Alexandra
Norton (240 pp.)
\$25.95 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-324-00645-9

A collection of columns that provides sharp political humor in these serious times.

As a columnist for the *Washington Post*, Petri shows that we’ve come a long way since Art Buchwald. Her barbed perspective owes more to the cinematic

surrealism of David Lynch, conjuring a reality where what was once thought impossible has become improbably normal. As she explains in the introduction, “we have much less need of imagination than we did before. People once had to produce parodies and caricatures to imagine all the ways things could go wrong. But now—we need simply watch.” Petri has watched and taken notes amid the new normal of the Trump administration. In one column, she takes up Trump’s persona, lamenting, “I thought I had the best team ever assembled, but I had a big coat full of skunks, six rejected concepts for Batman villains, and a disembodied voice that yells rude things in the Quiet Car.” Evoking *Macbeth* in a column titled “Nasty Women,” Petri reveals the cabal of witches who are determined to keep Trump from prevailing. They “have an election to rig. They must make haste. The agenda is quite full.” Evoking Beckett’s *Godot*, she puts Vladimir and Estragon on the periphery of Trump’s inner circle, waiting in vain for the promised pivot toward the center, away from the radical extremes of his rhetoric. As is usually the case with collections of columns from a daily paper, the results are varied (more hits than misses), and the humor depends on one’s political persuasion. Yet Petri’s vision is consistently more prescient than dated, and she gives a powerful voice to the resistance of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. From her very first words—“Relax. Nothing Is Wrong”—she warns readers to be very, very afraid.

An instructive demonstration of how alternative truths play themselves out.



TRUTH *A Brief History of Total Bullsh*t*

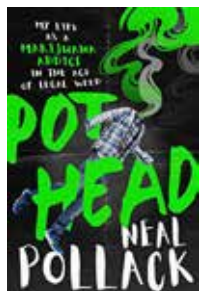
Phillips, Tom
Hanover Square Press (320 pp.)
\$19.99 paper | May 5, 2020
978-1-335-98376-3

A professional fact checker says that if you think we live in “a uniquely fact-resistant time,” you need to check your facts.

Phillips, the London-based editor of the nonpartisan fact-checking organization Full Fact, sounds a distinctly British keep-calm-and-carry-on note in this anecdotal rejoinder to the idea that “we live in a ‘post-truth’ age.” “Don’t get me wrong,” he writes. “I’m not trying to convince you that our present time *isn’t* stuffed to bursting with a hundred thousand flavors of horse-shit—it absolutely is! It’s just there’s a simple problem with the idea that we live in a ‘post-truth’ age: it would mean that there was a ‘truth age’ at some point that we can now be ‘post-’ about.” Lacing profanity into jaunty but often sophomoric arguments, Phillips notes that ancient clay tablets record the misdeeds of an apparently dishonest Mesopotamian merchant. Later dissemblers include showman P.T. Barnum, Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes, and Benjamin Franklin, a “gleeful perpetrator” of literary hoaxes under pseudonyms. Why do we tolerate lies? The reasons range from laziness (it’s too much trouble to check facts)

to the cognitive bias called “anchoring,” “our brain’s tendency to latch onto the first piece of information we get about any subject and give it more weight than anything else.” Phillips allows that lies can kill — “when our leaders lie, sometimes really, really, *really* large numbers of people die. There can be wars and stuff” — but we needn’t “freak out” about perfidies like “fake news.” We can survive them “just as long as we don’t throw up our hands and go all, ‘LOL—nothing matters.’” The author’s jolly style at times has the air of insouciance he warns against, and in a presidential election year in which a candidate’s lies can have perilous consequences, this book may strike Americans as tone deaf.

A lighthearted history of lying that may play better in Britain than in the U.S.



POTHEAD
My Life as a Marijuana Addict in the Age of Legal Weed

Pollack, Neal

Central Recovery Press (224 pp.)

\$17.95 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-949481-30-3

The Austin-based novelist and journalist chronicles his battle with marijuana.

In his two previous books of nonfiction, Pollack has explored his attempts to reinvent himself. *Alter-nadad* (2007) recounted his efforts to become a cool father while *Stretch* (2010) focused on the practical and existential benefits of yoga. While the author has always made a few sly comments about his drug consumption, his latest book shows how, for the 15 years after *Rolling Stone* named him the “Hot Writer of the Millenium” in 2000, he engaged in a “nonstop marijuana binge.” Pollack begins in gonzo fashion with a chronicle of his road trip from Austin to Pueblo, Colorado, where he and his pal explored the newly (state) legal forms of cannabis, driving around “high as mockingbirds.” For those who follow the author’s work, there are a few pleasing flashbacks, including his run on *Jeopardy!* and his stint as a marijuana journalist. However, what seemed like mischievous misadventures at the time are uncomfortably rendered here. Among Pollack’s many transgressions: exploding into a profanity-laced tirade during a pub trivia night, falling into a “low-rent gambling” habit, and “plac[ing] my marriage in mortal danger” with his erratic behavior. The plummet to the bottom occurred after his mother’s sudden death, after which the author took himself on a “self-styled improvised baseball holiday,” spending money he didn’t have on a ticket to the 2017 World Series. And smoking a joint laced with crack in the depths of grief did little to improve his demeanor. The consequences described in the book’s final half comprise a fairly conventional addiction-narrative arc, with Pollack coming to terms with his addiction and the need for sobriety. Ultimately, it’s the same old song: Artist gets really high, screws up a lot, and finally grows up a little bit.

An intermittently funny yet largely unremarkable memoir of recovery.



SHIELDS OF THE REPUBLIC
The Triumph and Peril of America's Alliances

Rapp-Hooper, Mira

Harvard Univ. (288 pp.)

\$27.95 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-674-98295-6

A fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations makes a convincing argument for the importance of maintaining America’s alliance system despite the targeted

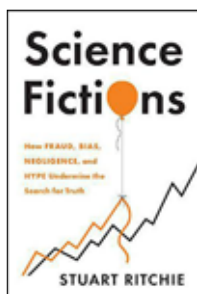
criticism by the current administration.

In this brief academic study, Rapp-Hooper argues persuasively that the complex alliance system instituted after the devastation of World War II has proven remarkably successful. “After two global catastrophes in just twenty-five years,” writes the author, “[survivors] were seared with reminders of why Washington should want to craft and fund security alliances,” which “were necessary to deter and defend against the Soviet Union, to reassure war-torn partners in Europe and Asia, and to prevent further conflict.” Yet the memory of this conflict is growing weak. Rapp-Hooper moves chronologically, from the Founding Fathers’ arguments against “entangling alliances” (after shedding French help and influence) to the necessity of aiding France and Britain against the German blockade of the Atlantic coast in 1916. Originally, thanks to America’s fortuitous geography and the caution of the founders, the U.S. had avoided alliances—until the “extraordinary emergencies” of World War II. The global spread of technology had finally rendered the American homeland vulnerable, and the Korean War demonstrated that the U.S. and its partners needed to “assemble a durable military infrastructure”—hence the birth of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The author offers astute “counterfactual” scenarios—e.g., what if America had not ringed the Soviet Union with allied bases, which allowed it to maintain the pressure of defense and deterrence during the Cold War? (Probably more wars.) Rapp-Hooper also delves into the political costs and perils of alliances, such as entrapment and free-riding, and the pros and cons of Bill Clinton’s expansion of NATO. With Donald Trump’s active animosity toward our traditional allies, the author cautions about a glaring blind spot: rising nonmilitary coercion from China and Russia.

A solid argument for the repurposing, reforming, and upgrading of the alliance system. (5 illustrations, 2 tables, 1 map)

A vital investigation for this election year—and far beyond.

IN DEEP



SCIENCE FICTIONS *How Fraud, Bias, Negligence, and Hype Undermine the Search for Truth*

Ritchie, Stuart
Metropolitan/Henry Holt (368 pp.)
\$29.99 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-1-250-22269-5

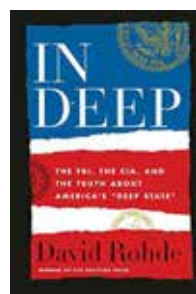


An unnerving yet much-needed analysis of why so many scientists pub-

lish nonsense.

A lecturer in social, genetic, and development psychiatry, Ritchie begins with an account of a respected Cornell psychology professor asking subjects to guess an object concealed behind one of two screens. As expected, they succeeded about half the time—unless the object was lurid, such as a pornographic picture. Then the success rate was over 53%, which, according to his 2011 paper, was “statistically significant” and evidence for extrasensory perception. The media trumpeted the study, and the professor appeared on talk shows. Good studies are repeatable, but when researchers tried it again, they found nothing. Subjects guessed correctly about half the time, pornography or not. The researcher remains a respected Cornell professor. What happened? Ritchie answers with a frighteningly well-documented follow-up to a 2005 article entitled “Why Most Published Research Findings Are False.” He makes it clear that fraud happens regularly. Asked anonymously, 2% of scientists admit to faking data, so the true incidence is undoubtedly higher. Far more disturbing is the massaging of data. As one wit said, “if you torture the data enough, it will confess to almost anything.” Thirteen percent of papers contain serious errors, and most favor the author’s conclusion. Bias distorts research, and serious, well-meaning scientists offend regularly. Everyone deplores media hype, but scientists increasingly litter papers with exuberant adjectives like “innovative,” “unique,” and “groundbreaking.” Ritchie admits that editors, academics, and foundations are growing less tolerant of scientists who game the system, but the difficulty is that scientists, being human, pursue rewards: jobs, promotions, research grants, fame. These follow dramatic announcements and media attention. Career advancement depends on sheer number of publications, and quality becomes irrelevant. Reform requires that scientists search for nature’s secrets purely for the joy of discovery. Some already follow this ideal, but readers may wonder if it will catch on.

A timely, hair-raising must-read.



IN DEEP *The FBI, the CIA, and the Truth About America's "Deep State"*

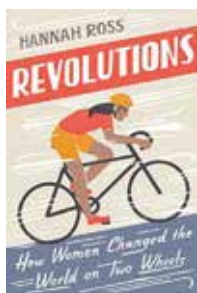
Rohde, David
Norton (352 pp.)
\$30.00 | Apr. 14, 2020
978-1-324-00354-0



A two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist attempts “to answer the question of whether a ‘deep state’ exists in America.”

Rohde, an executive editor of the *New Yorker* website, examines where the conspiratorial term originated and how the Trump administration has consistently undermined checks-and-balances efforts in order to create its own “parallel, shadow government.” The term, coined by Peter Dale Scott in *The Road to 9/11* (2007) to designate nefarious plans by foreign authoritative governments, was appropriated by Trump and associates to mean underhanded attempts by a “policy elite” (primarily the State Department, FBI, and CIA) to sabotage and delegitimize his election and government. Is there really a deep state, or is it an effort by the Trump administration to spread disinformation and distrust of government, a tactic that has been effective in shoring up his conservative base? Rohde agrees that Americans are justified in distrusting the government during periods of scandal and outrageous misconduct, and the author systematically walks through those cases, chronicling violations of citizens’ privacy, from the Cold War to Watergate to trumped-up evidence for Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction. On one hand, Rohde continually returns to the success of the Church Committee’s (1975) unprecedented bipartisan efforts to expose early governmental abuses and suggest recommendations that, over time, created new congressional intelligence committees to monitor and check the CIA and other agencies. On the other hand, the author reveals how the “imperial presidency,” thwarted during the Nixon administration, has steadily crept back in place thanks to work by Attorney General William Barr and others, causing a veritable “collapse of Congressional oversight” that found its apotheosis in the impeachment and acquittal of Trump. Throughout his immaculately researched work, Rohde inserts the career stories of “good civil servants,” including many of the officials who testified in the impeachment hearings. As this revelatory book shows, the deep state, which now incorporates such nonelected loyalists as Rudy Giuliani, Sean Hannity, and Barr, has become the government itself.

A vital investigation for this election year—and far beyond.



REVOLUTIONS *How Women Changed the World on Two Wheels*

Ross, Hannah

Plume (368 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-593-08360-4

A British writer and cycling enthusiast offers a global history of women cyclists while discussing the connection of cycling to feminist issues worldwide.

The concept for the bicycle can be traced back to a German inventor working in the early 1800s, but it wasn't until 1885 that the first true ancestor to the modern bicycle emerged in Britain. In this well-researched, readable book, Ross shows how these "freedom-machine[s]" became intertwined with women's emancipation and the feminist movement. In the first section of the four that comprise the book, the author examines how the rise of cycling coincided with the emergence of the Anglo-American "New Woman," "feminists who...wanted to throw off the restrictive shackles imposed by late-Victorian patriarchy." Women able to afford bicycles embraced them for the freedom of movement they offered. Some, like dress reform advocate Florence Wallace Pomeroy, campaigned for women's cycling bloomers. But such women often found themselves at odds with social conventions that deemed cycling a menace to "femininity, grace and even fertility." In the second section, Ross explores how minority females, along with those living in anti-feminist regimes worldwide, combat underrepresentation by creating cycling groups and teaching each other how to ride. She also shows how women like the "pre-Hollywood" Audrey Hepburn used bicycles during World War II to circulate "anti-Nazi propaganda." The third section, about female cycling adventurers, features stories about intrepid individuals such as Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Dervla Murphy, who used their bicycles to travel Europe and the world. In the final section, Ross celebrates the largely unsung bicycling champions—e.g., Olympian Emma Pooley—who have fought, and continue to fight, sexism and lack of financial support for competitive female cyclists. Comprehensive and inclusive, the narrative shines the spotlight on a neglected history while making an impassioned plea for gender equality in cycling.

An informative and enlightening blend of sports history and women's history.



PAYING THE LAND

Sacco, Joe

Illus. by the author

Metropolitan/Henry Holt (272 pp.)

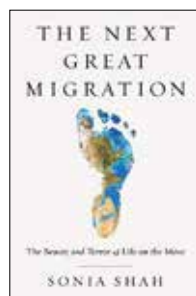
\$29.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-62779-903-4

An epic graphic study of an Indigenous people trying to survive between tradition and so-called progress.

Eisner Award winner Sacco's *Palestine* (2001) and *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) are classics of contemporary graphic journalism. This is his first book since the stunning *The Great War: July 1, 1916* (2013), and it's well worth the wait. The author and illustrator spent six weeks reporting with the Dene people, a native society with deep roots in the Mackenzie River Valley in Canada's Northwest Territories. Partly oral history and partly a compassionate portrait, the narrative recounts the people's transition from a culture that respected and lived off the land to one faced with challenges that threaten to erase the fundamentals of their culture. Sacco portrays the Dene's old ways with his extraordinary illustrations, vividly showing how they once lived. The title comes from citizen Frederick Andrew's memories from his youth. "You give it something," he says. "A bullet, perhaps, water, tobacco or tea. It's like visiting someone. You bring the land a gift." Many readers will be distressed by the many indignities that modern society has visited upon the Dene people. The recent phenomenon of fracking creates division between those who see economic opportunities and those who believe the practice is a defilement of their land. Sacco also portrays in stark relief the pervasiveness of problems stemming from substance abuse. Another theme involves the arrival of the first airplane, the signal that Canada intended to remove Dene children to residential schools that "were essentially used as a weapon for assimilation and acculturation and Christianization." The children also suffered horrific abuse from both teachers and other students. Part of what makes Sacco's portrayal so masterful is his proficiency as a journalist; he uses the real words of Dene citizens to tell their stories, augmenting them with his extraordinary artistic insight.

A startling depiction of an Indigenous people struggling to remain true to their traditions. Yet another triumph for Sacco.



THE NEXT GREAT MIGRATION *The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move*

Shah, Sonia

Bloomsbury (400 pp.)

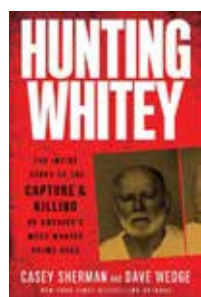
\$28.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-63557-197-4

Science journalist Shah looks at the biology and human ecology of migration, a topic overlaid these days with all sorts of political shadings.

The child of Indian immigrants, Shah—author of the excellent and ever more timely book *Pandemic* (2016)—returns with an incisive examination of migration, which she considers a phenomenon both biological and cultural. Many bird species, for example, travel great distances in annual migrations, and a delicate butterfly species with which the author opens her narrative exhibits “a consistent pattern of movement across half of North America.” We have been taught to view such movement as potentially perilous: Invading species arrive, we think, and immediately disturb pristine ecosystems. Even Shah admits that “the idea of migration as a disruptive force has fueled my own work as a journalist.” Yet nothing could be more natural than animals moving in response to changes in environmental conditions. As the author shows, only a tiny fraction of relocated species displace others, an act that is consistent with Darwinian theories of natural selection. “Condemning newcomers as inevitably disruptive,” she writes, pointedly, “blames them for all transgressions committed by 1 percent or less of their members.” When it comes to humans, she writes, the topic becomes more fraught. In a time when humans are increasingly on the move, whether because of political or economic displacement or because their homes are becoming uninhabitable thanks to climate change, politicians such as Donald Trump are using the tiny number of problem-makers, real or potential, to keep the vast majority of law-abiding would-be citizens from making their homes in new lands. This ignores millennia of human movement from one place to the next. Even though “over the long history of life on earth, [migration’s] benefits have outweighed its costs,” nationalists still create xenophobic, incoherent policies, agreeing only that strangers are to be despised.

A scientifically sophisticated, well-considered contribution to the literature of movement and environmental change. (b/w maps)



HUNTING WHITEY
The Inside Story of the Capture & Killing of America's Most Wanted Crime Boss

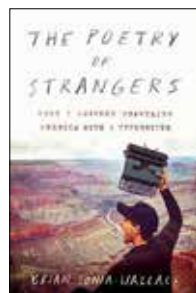
Sherman, Casey & Wedge, Dave
Morrow/HarperCollins (352 pp.)
\$28.99 | May 26, 2020
978-0-06-297254-5

Sherman and Wedge turn their attention to the far-flung wanderings of mob murderer and longtime fugitive Whitey Bulger (1929–2018).

Bulger was a nasty piece of work, caught up early in a life of violent crime, becoming an unrepentant contract killer for the Boston mob. He had disappeared from view when, tipped off by corrupt cops and FBI agents in his network, it appeared that he was going to be imprisoned. Sherman and Wedge begin their account with the investigative legwork undertaken in February 2008 by a team led by an assistant special agent named Noreen Gleason, who made it her personal mission to see that Bulger was brought to justice, in part because doing so would restore

the Boston office’s tattered reputation. One of her colleagues had just solved the case of Etan Patz, a young boy who was kidnapped and murdered at the hands of a pedophile. Bulger went into hiding just as the team got to work, disappearing from view with a girlfriend who, the authors hold, had pursued him romantically to get revenge on the husband she was then divorcing—and, as they write, “Whitey had killed two of her husband’s brothers in cold blood.” He had untold other victims to his credit. He seemed to enjoy the game of cat and mouse, but eventually he was caught because, he complained, he and his girlfriend were animal lovers, and they went outside once too often to take care of a stray cat. The authors deliver plenty of hitherto undocumented or overlooked details, including the fact that he had been subject to CIA experiments on mind control via LSD while imprisoned in the 1960s. They also link Bulger’s murder as an elderly invalid to lack of prison policing thanks to Trump administration budget cuts.

A deeply unpleasant but highly readable story of crime and punishment.



THE POETRY OF STRANGERS
What I Learned Traveling America With a Typewriter

Sonia-Wallace, Brian
Perennial/HarperCollins (304 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Jun. 30, 2020
978-0-06-287022-3

A writer travels the U.S. with his typewriter, crafting custom poems for those he meets along the way.

It began as a one-month performance art experiment. Sonia-Wallace had graduated from college, been laid off from his job, and recently suffered a breakup with his first long-term boyfriend, “the one I was with when I came out as gay to my parents.” After hearing a story on the radio about someone who sold poems in the park, he decided to try and earn his rent by busking verse for strangers. He went from setting up his typewriter at sidewalks and swap meets to becoming a writer-in-residence for Amtrak and the Mall of America. What began as something “between an avant-garde solo show and a practical joke” became a surprising passport to the inner sanctum of peoples’ hearts and minds. This heartwarming essay collection chronicles many of the author’s travels, the people he met, and a few of the things he learned in the process. Much like his geographical journeys, Sonia-Wallace’s writing meanders through his own past, across history, and touches on some wildly disparate topics, including politics, evangelicalism, music festivals, and California wildfires, to name a few. While poetic verse is the common denominator of each essay, the theme that ties it all together is how similar we all are at the core. From the 95-year-old widower who became the author’s steady companion on the train to the nonbinary witchcraft collective he visited in Massachusetts, Sonia-Wallace recognized the same thing in just about everyone he met: the longing to be seen and heard. “Most people just need their stories to be heard,” he writes. “And

A deeply researched work that allows this historic personage to live and breathe.

UNCROWNED QUEEN

that *need* in the right word. That we lose something when our stories are not heard. That something not only in us, but in the world, dies."

An enlightening project that exposes how alike we are in our differences. (first printing of 25,000)



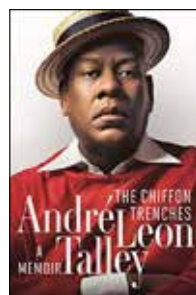
PROMISED LAND How the Rise of the Middle Class Transformed America, 1929-1968

Stebenne, David
Scribner (336 pp.)
\$28.00 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-1-9821-0270-8

A history of "the rise of the middle class as a defining feature of American society from the 1930s to the 1960s."

In the mid-20th-century, middle-class Americans saw their position as timeless and natural. Few believe that now, and political scientist Stebenne has written a provocative account of their rise and fall. He reminds readers that until well into the last century, farming was a grueling life, and wages in factories, mines, mills, and offices did not support a bourgeois lifestyle. Matters began changing between the wars. The author begins with Herbert Hoover, whose winning 1928 election campaign emphasized the nation's march toward prosperity. His personality ill-equipped him to handle the Depression, an accusation no one makes against his successor, Franklin Roosevelt, whose programs, conservatives insist, did not end massive unemployment. Stebenne agrees and admits that many New Deal programs flopped, but others laid the groundwork for the postwar middle-class explosion. Among these were farm subsidies, business regulation, bank reform, housing legislation, social security, encouragement of labor unions, and a graduated income tax to pay for it. In 1945, civilians had savings that they yearned to spend, so the depression everyone expected when returning soldiers flooded the job market never happened. By the 1950s, prosperity seemed the norm, although it was a white, suburban family prosperity with a male head of household. The impoverished minority seethed, and dissatisfaction swelled among intellectuals and activists. Few doubt that the 1960s saw the end of the good times. Stebenne blames the Vietnam War, the revival of organized, free-market conservatism ("born out of opposition to [John F.] Kennedy's efforts to sustain and expand the existing system through diplomacy abroad and activist government at home"), and competition from Europe and Asia, now recovered from the devastation of World War II, which stimulated businesses to move to the low-wage south and then across the sea.

A thoughtful look at a long-ago era when America seemed egalitarian and prosperous.



THE CHIFFON TRENCHES A Memoir

Talley, André Leon
Ballantine (304 pp.)
\$28.00 | May 1, 2020
978-0-593-12925-8

The inimitable fashion veteran shares the scandals and name-dropping details of his sartorial career.

Readers of Talley's debut memoir, *A.L.T.* (2003), will recognize the details of his Southern childhood and his grandmother's significant influence. Moving further forward in this volume, he delves into his later years and dishes the dirt on his many years at *Vogue*. In a conversational and earnest voice, the author chronicles his defining years learning under Diana Vreeland, who got him into "all the right parties," and his time at *Interview* magazine with an accommodating Andy Warhol. From there, Talley ascended to positions at *Women's Wear Daily* and *Vogue*, his "dream job," where he would spend decades weathering a "series of voyages" within a tumultuous business (and personal) relationship with the demanding and mercurial Anna Wintour. Other relationships were similarly tumultuous and unpredictable, including his four-decade friendship with Karl Lagerfeld, which instantly and cruelly dissolved when Lagerfeld simply "cut [Talley] out of his life." The author's writing becomes more animated when he describes more personal details—e.g., his coming-of-age on the New York party circuit in the halcyon late 1970s, when "everyone was high on coke and cock"; or his vulnerability regarding his weight and self-worth. Talley too-fleetingly addresses the sobering reality of the "subtle, casual jabs" of racism that he has experienced throughout his career. He does note how many editors with whom he worked failed to understand his perspective as a black professional in a predominantly white field or appreciate the cultural significance of events such as Beyoncé's gracing the cover of *Vogue* in 2018. Though the text brims with gossip anecdotes, Talley mixes the serious and the saucy with equal heft. Though his legacy speaks for itself, this balanced, entertaining memoir is dramatic proof in print.

A heartfelt and often eyebrow-raising memoir perfect for armchair fashionistas or high-fashion insiders. (8-page full-color insert; b/w photos throughout)



UNCROWNED QUEEN The Life of Margaret Beaufort, Mother of the Tudors

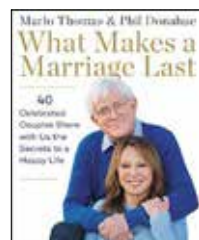
Tallis, Nicola
Basic (416 pp.)
\$32.00 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-5416-1787-2

A fresh biography of the woman who ushered in the Tudor dynasty.

In this intricate and intimate work, Tallis manages to cut through the dizzying ties of royal ancestry to get at the steely personality of Lady

Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509), a beleaguered mother whose single-minded purpose was to redeem the status of her son—and herself in the bargain. The author, who has previously written about Queen Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, presents a fully fleshed portrait of a justly celebrated woman who weathered several marriages and royal wars to prevail with the accession of her son, Henry VII, to the throne of England as the first Tudor. One of Margaret's ancestors was the founder of the house of Lancaster, whose ties would come to define all of her dealings. Wealthy and well-connected, she was a prime pawn in the marriage market, betrothed twice as a child and married to Edmund Tudor at age 12. The author clearly renders this early marriage as a traumatic experience; Margaret got pregnant immediately, and Edmund died in battle less than two years later. Nonetheless, she was a devoted mother, and, through two more advantageous marriages, to Henry Stafford and Thomas Stanley, she skillfully positioned herself during the War of the Roses between the supporters of the Lancasters and Yorks. With Richard III's usurpation of power in 1483, Margaret actively plotted to render her exiled son to the throne and arrange his marriage to Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV, in order to claim legitimacy. Despite a perilous period of being branded "mother of the king's great rebel and traitor," it actually came to pass. In 1485 at the Battle of Bosworth, Henry defeated Richard to become king. For fans of British royal history, Tallis is a reliable guide, and the timeline and dramatis personae are highly useful.

A deeply researched work that allows this historic personage to live and breathe.



WHAT MAKES A MARRIAGE LAST
40 Celebrated Couples Share With Us the Secrets to a Happy Life

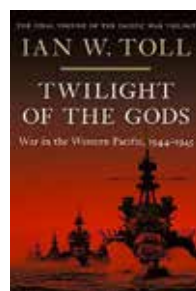
Thomas, Marlo & Donahue, Phil
 HarperOne (512 pp.)
 \$29.99 | May 5, 2020
 978-0-06-298258-2

Famous couples reflect candidly about married life.

Hoping to be both informative and inspiring, Thomas and Donahue, happily married since 1980, interviewed 40 couples (including a few same-sex pairs), most married more than 20 years, to find out "if there really is a secret sauce to a successful marriage." The authors' disarming ebullience makes them endearing interviewers, with questions including how the partners first met, how they knew they were in love, what they learned from their parents' marriages, how they resolve fights, and how they have dealt with blended families, survived traumatic problems, and maintain their individual growth and change. "What advice," they ask, "might they give to younger couples starting out—or the already married—that they wish they had known themselves when they first took their vows?" Not surprisingly, competitiveness emerges as a frequent question for celebrity couples. "I'll tell you one thing we're never jealous of is each other's career," Kevin Bacon remarked about

his marriage to Kyra Sedgwick. Sedgwick stopped working to raise their family, taking a role in *The Closer* when their children were teenagers. By then, having lost their savings in Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme, they needed her income. Although couples like Michael J. Fox and Tracy Pollan hoped to emulate their parents' wonderful marriages, many couples vowed not to repeat their parents' animosity or the troubles they experienced in their own first marriages. Some partners—Thomas and Donahue, James Carville and Mary Matalin, among others—accommodate vastly different personality traits. Carville and Matalin decided to be interviewed separately, in fact, the better to answer questions honestly. Much marital advice underscores what Judy Woodruff calls "the eternal values, like honesty, integrity, and respect. And, yes, love." As Rob Reiner's mother once remarked, the key to a long marriage is to "find someone who can stand you." Other contributors include Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, George Stephanopoulos and Ali Wentworth, and Joanna and Chip Gaines.

Warmhearted testimony to enduring relationships.



TWILIGHT OF THE GODS
War in the Western Pacific, 1944-1945

Toll, Ian W.
 Norton (864 pp.)
 \$40.00 | Jul. 21, 2020
 978-0-393-08065-0

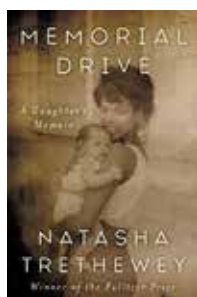
The final volume in Toll's fine Pacific War Trilogy.

The author begins with the July 1944 Honolulu meeting of the key American figures. He rocks no boats in his evaluations of Franklin Roosevelt (canny if slippery politico), Adm. Chester Nimitz (brilliant but colorless technocrat), and Gen. Douglas MacArthur (military genius with a massive ego). At the meeting, American officials reached a decision to invade Japan by way of the Philippines rather than Formosa. By 1944, Japanese leaders knew that victory was impossible but also believed that they were unconquerable. Once Americans, whom they considered technically advanced but soft, realized that every Japanese soldier, civilian, and child would fight to the death, they would lose heart and agree to a compromise peace. "There was a difference between defeat and surrender," writes the author, a meticulous historian, "between losing an overseas empire and seeing the homeland overrun by a barbarian army." Ironically, the first part of the Japanese strategy worked. Convinced that the Japanese preferred death to surrender, American military leaders did not quail but simply proceeded with that in mind. There is no shortage of accounts of the brutal island-hopping invasions (Peleliu in September, the Philippines in October, Iwo Jima in February 1945, Okinawa in April), but Toll's take second place to none. Accompanying the Philippine invasion was the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in world history. The most effective submarines of the war were not Hitler's but America's, which crippled Japan's economy and



sank a torrent of warships. Toll's account of the coup de grace, the atomic bomb, barely mentions the debate over its use because that began after the war. At the time, a few administration figures protested but did not make a big fuss, and it turned out to require two bombs and the Soviet invasion before Japan decided to surrender.

A conventional but richly rewarding history of the last war that turned out well for the U.S. (32 photos; 20 maps)



MEMORIAL DRIVE
A Daughter's Memoir

Trethewey, Natasha

Ecco/HarperCollins (224 pp.)

\$27.99 | Jul. 28, 2020

978-0-06-224857-2

Reprising years that she tried to forget, a daughter unearths pain and trauma.

Former U.S. Poet Laureate Trethewey, winner of a Pulitzer Prize, Guggenheim Fellowship, and many other awards,

begins her graceful, moving memoir with her mother's murder in 1985. Her mother was 41; Trethewey, 19. In an effort to discover "the hidden, covered over, nearly erased," the author returned to the scene of the crime and her own buried memories. "I need now," she writes, "to make sense of our history, to understand the tragic course upon which my mother's life was set and the way my own life has been shaped by that legacy." Trethewey spent her early childhood in Mississippi, where she felt "protected, insulated from racial intimidation and violence." Her black mother, Gwendolyn Turnbough, was a Head Start administrator; her white father was rarely home, either working or pursuing a graduate degree in New Orleans. By the time 6-year-old Trethewey and her mother moved to Atlanta, the couple had divorced. The move, writes the author, "ended the world of my happy early childhood," and soon her comforting sense of "the two-ness" between mother and daughter was broken when Turnbough's new boyfriend, Joel, moved in. When her mother was at work, he found ways to torment Trethewey. "Always," she reveals, "there was some small thing he'd accuse me of, some transgression he invented in order to punish me." He beat her mother, and Trethewey could hear her pleading at night; her face would be swollen and bruised in the morning. Trethewey was in high school when her mother finally divorced Joel, and at last "everything felt normal." But in February 1984, he tried to kill Turnbough. He was arrested and imprisoned, but after his release, he threatened her again, and this time succeeded.

Delicate prose distinguishes a narrative of tragedy and grief.



DOT.CON
The Art of Scamming a Scammer

Veitch, James

Hachette (208 pp.)

\$17.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-306-87459-8

A British comedian dedicates his days to drafting playfully funny conversations with the authors of scam emails.

Veitch's penchant for scamming the scammer originated with a comedy show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and continued with a few TED talks. In this collection, first published in the U.K. in 2015, the author describes how he creates a persona tailored to each weird phishing email he gets. "I think of the spam folder not as Pandora's box, but as a costume shop in which you can play and play at being whoever and whatever you wish," he writes. "If only for a time. Last week, I was a bank robber, a pilot and the one-time confidant of a beautiful Arabian princess—and that was just Monday." In the fitfully interesting email exchanges that follow, Veitch tortures the scammers, whether he needs to pose as a hedge fund manager or a "fruit consultant." They vary widely in length, from "The Sheriff and the Vacuum Cleaner," simply twisted to form surreal poetry, to a lengthy conversation with "Winnie Mandela," concerned about her husband's health. "Given that Nelson died three months ago I'd describe his health condition as fairly serious," Veitch retorts. Whether the scammers originate in the Philippines, Dubai, or Nigeria, the comic's ultimate goal is to drive them to profanity-laden rage-quitting, which he does more and more successfully as the exchanges stack up. As the scammers arrive offering gold, fortunes, and even romance, they soon find their own scams turned around on them as Veitch variously demands poems, declarations of love, and a blurb for his illusory book, *Sensitive Passion*. It's a weird niche, but the author's absurdist approach and enthusiasm for his work make for unpredictably funny reading.

An amusing, oddball compilation of email exchanges with princesses, smugglers, and other charlatans.



A SILENCED VOICE
The Life of Journalist Kim Wall

Wall, Ingrid & Wall, Joachim

Trans. by Saranpa, Kathy

AmazonCrossing (272 pp.)

\$24.95 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-5420-1811-1

The parents of a Swedish freelance journalist who was killed in the line of duty pay tribute to their daughter.

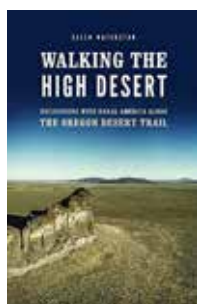
Though some of this plainspoken memoir reads like a murder mystery, the authors have taken great pains to ensure that Kim Wall (1987-2017) isn't remembered as merely a victim.

A probing and limpid explanation of an often misunderstood patchwork of systems, requirements, and mechanisms.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VOTING—AND WHY

Alternating with chapters documenting the benumbed horror of discovering the circumstances of their daughter's death and dismemberment are the memories of her life, career, and accomplishments—of which there were many, as she packed a lifetime's worth of experience into her 30 years. After committing herself to her parents' profession of journalism following her education at the London School of Economics and Columbia University, where she won a Foreign Press Association award, Wall had been published in the *New York Times*, *Harper's*, and the *Atlantic*, among other outlets. Her stories took her all over the globe, from India to North Korea to Africa to Cuba. She was about to embark on a new adventure when she arranged for one last interview feature close to home: aboard the self-built submarine of Danish inventor Peter Madsen, who soon planned to launch a rocket into space. Details remain murky, but there was apparently an equipment malfunction on the sub. Wall "may have died from carbon monoxide poisoning," and Madsen may have found it easier to dispose of the body in parts. As he apparently told the forensic psychiatrist before his trial, "I don't want any corpses on my submarine. What do you do if you have a big problem? You divide it into smaller ones, of course." He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. Her legacy, diligently extended by her dedicated parents, now includes a fund in her name, with an annual award to a promising young female journalist.

A tragically short life that will hopefully serve as inspiration.



WALKING THE HIGH DESERT *Encounters With Rural America Along the Oregon Desert Trail*

Waterston, Ellen

Univ. of Washington (248 pp.)

\$24.95 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-295-74750-7

Equal parts travelogue, guidebook, history, and nature writing on the Oregon wilderness.

The Oregon Desert Trail runs 750 miles, mostly on public lands, from the Oregon Badlands Wilderness in the central part of the state to the Owyhee Canyonlands not far from Idaho. Waterston, author of *Where the Crooked River Rises* and four poetry collections as well as a longtime resident of the forgotten side of Oregon, bases this book on her experience hiking the trail. But don't mistake it for a *Wild* knockoff. Instead of inviting readers along for the metaphorical and literal ups and downs of the hike, Waterston uses the trail's geography to explore the social, political, ecological, and economic concerns of the day as they present themselves to the thoughtful explorer—the 2016 occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge, to name only the most prominent. As important as it is to connect these dots from ideas to places, the author's real gift is her ability to show readers how to know and love a place. It is a sensibility borne of historical awareness—knowing a place's stories and the peoples

past and present—that is unavailable to anyone fully satisfied by just noting the beauty of the scenery. This is very much a guidebook for would-be hikers of the ODT, one that tells them not only where to walk and where to get water, but also how to respect and care for the landscape. It is by this method that we might, as Waterston implores, "Imagine the ODT as a slight wave of the hand that ultimately propels the preservation and protection of wild places."

Whether or not you make it to this part of the country, Waterston will make you take a closer look at the place you call home. (map)



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VOTING—AND WHY

Wehle, Kim

Illus. by Burk, Penny Ross

Harper/HarperCollins (336 pp.)

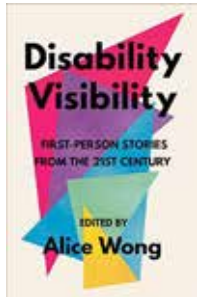
\$17.99 paper | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-06-297478-5

A thorough examination of the specifics of voting in the U.S.

Constitutional scholar and law professor Wehle has designed this book as a guide for those seeking greater insight into a variety of related topics, including the slippery concept of the right to vote, the background basics of voting, and the structural barriers to voting. Though the writing is clear and conversational, there is a serious aura about the proceedings. She introduces readers to what she calls the "Voter Two-Step"—first register, then vote. This is not as simple as it sounds, as each state has its own stipulations; furthermore, the Constitution has no express provision conferring the right to vote. State legislatures administer federal, state, and local elections, so Wehle offers state-by-state breakdowns of specific requirements; early, provisional, and absentee voting; and the rights of those with disabilities. She then explores one of the most controversial elements of our political process, the Electoral College—"If this sounds to you like an insider's game, you're right. If this sounds bizarrely anti-democratic, you're right again"—before moving on to gerrymandering ("politics-driven...congressional districts"); term limits; voter fraud and its cousin, voter suppression; the dicey role of money in politics; and the troubling role played by the Supreme Court regarding campaign finance laws. Though Wehle can—and has reason to—get cynical at times, she cogently lays out what readers need to know, all with an eye on an important question: "Who...is in charge of our democracy? If it's not 'We the People,' who is it?" In the face of depressing news and statistics about voter turnout, tampering, and other issues, "the answer isn't despair or complacency," she writes. "The answer is to vote." An appendix lists state-by-state registration and identification requirements, among other useful information.

A probing and limpid explanation of an often misunderstood patchwork of systems, requirements, and mechanisms. (illustrations)



DISABILITY VISIBILITY
First-Person Stories From the
Twenty-First Century

Ed. by Wong, Alice

Vintage (240 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

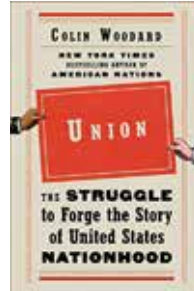
978-1-984899-42-2

A self-described “disabled activist” brings together diverse perspectives in an anthology to be published on the 30th anniversary of the Americans With Dis-

abilities Act.

Wong, the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project, makes it clear that she never intended the book to serve as a “best of” work or a quasi-academic syllabus for “Disability 101.” As she writes, “I want to center the wisdom of disabled people and welcome others in, rather than asking for permission or acknowledgment.” The editor notes that, according to the most recent U.S. census, 20% of citizens in the country live with a disability. The book is divided into four sections. “Being” captures writings that explain the daily challenges of wrestling with a disability, from blindness and deafness to autism, bipolar personality, generalized mental illness, fibromyalgia, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and others. In “Becoming,” the essays focus less on defining a specific disability and more on how the contributors have figured out how to follow a life-affirming path. “Doing” displays the accomplishments—many of them quite remarkable—that affect not only the anthologists, but also society at large. The final section, “Connecting,” illuminates how those labeled as disabled find ways to transcend isolation. Some of the essays are original, but many have been previously published in newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, and elsewhere. Readers will recognize relatively common scenes, such as Haben Girma’s navigating with a guide dog (“Guide Dogs Don’t Lead Blind People. We Wander as One.”), while other contributions ably demonstrate that not all disabilities are apparent. Recognizing that “it is impossible to capture the full expanse of the disability experience in one book,” the editor offers a robust section of further reading that encompasses not just nonfiction, but also fiction, poetry, podcasts, and other forms of expression.

Wong’s discerning selections, bolstered by the activism that shines through, will educate and inspire readers.



UNION
The Struggle To Forge the
Story of United States
Nationhood

Woodard, Colin

Viking (432 pp.)

\$30.00 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-525-56015-9

A veteran foreign correspondent highlights the essential regional makeup of the U.S. through several historical per-

sonages who used their sectional differences to attempt to weld a national character.

How did a sense of a shared nationhood coalesce through so many sectional differences? First, Woodard, a state and national affairs writer at the *Portland Press Herald*, delineates the mission of New England elite George Bancroft. Educated at Harvard and abroad in Germany, he was a failed teacher who supported himself in his wife’s family business before embarking on his great life’s scheme to write a history of the U.S. in terms of God’s plan for the unfolding of its triumphant mission of “popular sovereignty, equal justice, and a free economy.” While creating his decidedly blinkered American national myth—he utterly ignored Native and African Americans—his New England bias was criticized by Southerners. One of them was Charleston, South Carolina, native William Gilmore Simms, who serves as Woodard’s second model regional character. Simms was a wildly popular hack novelist of Southern fiction in which the masters were benevolent and the slaves so happy with their condition that they declined freedom. Dallying in politics, he went on to support some of the most die-hard secessionist and anti-Reconstructionist leaders. The third of the author’s primary characters is Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery and joined the abolitionist movement of William Lloyd Garrison, then published his enormously popular autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, in 1845. Woodard manages to bring all of his disparate biographical threads together in a coherent narrative, using as his apotheosis the life of Woodrow Wilson, Southern-born writer of his own Anglo Saxon-centered *History of the American People* and proponent of D.W. Griffith’s white supremacist film *Birth of a Nation* (1915); Wilson became president despite his racism. One glaring omission is the lack of at least one strong female presence; otherwise, the scholarship is sound.

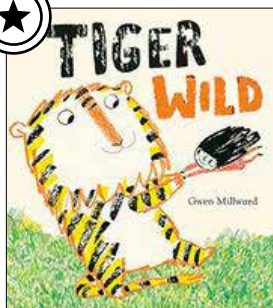
Sturdy American history.

CHILDREN'S



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- THE ONE AND ONLY BOB** by Katherine Applegate;
illus. by Patricia Castelao 108
- CURSE OF THE NIGHT WITCH** by Alex Aster 108
- CATCH THAT CHICKEN!** by Atinuke;
illus. by Angela Brooksbank 108
- RAISING LUMIE** by Joan Bauer 109
- THE SHIP WE BUILT** by Lexie Bean; illus. by Noah Grigni 109
- HURRY UP!** by Kate Dopirak; illus. by Christopher Silas Neal 120
- DRESS CODED** by Carrie Firestone 122
- SHIRLEY & JAMILA SAVE THEIR SUMMER** by Gillian Goerz 123
- FINDING FRANÇOIS** by Gus Gordon 123
- THE SUMMER WE FOUND THE BABY** by Amy Hest 126
- LET'S SWAP FOR A DAY** by Shu-Ti Liao 128
- MAX ON THE FARM** by Kyle Lukoff; illus. by Luciano Lozano 129
- LULU THE ONE AND ONLY** by Lynnette Mawhinney;
illus. by Jennie Poh 130
- IF YOU WANT A FRIEND IN WASHINGTON** by Erin McGill 131
- WHERE ARE YOU, AGNES?** by Tessa McWatt;
illus. by Zuzanna Celej 132
- TIGER WILD** by Gwen Millward 132
- NACHO'S NACHOS** by Sandra Nickel;
illus. by Oliver Dominguez 134
- THE MAGIC ERASER** by Aaron Starmer;
illus. by Courtney La Forest 139
- MAIL DUCK** by Erica Sirotich 151



TIGER WILD
Millward, Gwen
Illus. by the author
Viking (32 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 30, 2020
978-0-593-11815-3



DANNY CONSTANTINO'S FIRST DATE

Acampora, Paul
Dial (224 pp.)
\$16.99 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-1-9848-1661-0

A seventh grader invites a celebrity to the school dance.

Danny Constantino was best friends with Natalie Flores Griffin throughout primary school. When Natalie went on to become a famous child star in Hollywood, the pair emailed back and forth for a bit, but the emails eventually stopped. Three years later, Danny's dealing with the loss of his childhood dog and a mom who's running for mayor. Luckily for Danny, the big dance is coming up and Natalie has accepted his emailed invitation to be his date...and everyone is losing it. Danny's mom wants to use her in the mayoral campaign. Danny's principal wants to get Natalie to take part in the pep rally. Danny's friends want her to go trick-or-treating with them. Danny juggles everyone's desires as best he can while reconnecting with an old friend who hoped for nothing more than a few days out of the spotlight. Danny and Natalie's blossoming romance is well drawn, and Acampora steers clear of treacle territory with deft deployment of subplots. The book's structure is a bit uneven, and some of the supporting players are thinly developed, but Danny's relationships with his grandmother, his mother, and Natalie reinforce one another, painting a strong portrait of a young boy coming in to his own with the help of three strong female characters. Danny and Natalie seem to present white, but Danny has several friends of color.

Every first date should be this charming. (Fiction. 11-13)



THE ADVENTURES OF CHUPACABRA CHARLIE

Aldama, Frederick Luis
Illus. by Escobar, Chris
Mad Creek/Ohio State Univ. Press
(36 pp.)
\$9.95 paper | Jun. 26, 2020
978-0-8142-5586-5
Series: Latinograpix

A chupacabra and its human friend look for adventures on the borderland.

Charlie is a 10-year-old chupacabra, a monster from "made-up human stories." Except Charlie is real. Charlie and family

PICTURE BOOKS + POETRY = LUCKY READERS



Leah Overstreet

POETRY IS ONE OF those areas of literature where children are way luckier than grown-ups. While poetry for grown-ups is a rarefied art, largely relegated to journals with small circulations and anthologies with equally tiny press runs, poetry for children is a thriving thing for all ages. Continuing a literary tradition dating back at least to ancient Sum-

er, children's authors often compose stories in verse, ranging from picture-book tales to lengthier texts for older readers. It's so commonplace that many readers may not even stop to think that such perennial favorites as Anna Dewdney's *Llama Llama Red Pajama* (Viking, 2005) and Sherri Duskey Rinker and Tom Lichtenheld's *Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site* (Chronicle, 2011) are forms of verse.

But short-form, nonnarrative poetry for children abounds as well, and this is never more obvious than in the annual boomlet timed for National Poetry Month. Did the American Academy of Poets consciously choose T.S. Eliot's "cruellest month" for its yearly celebration of the form? Who knows? But the tonic of poetry seems especially apropos this year, and happily, there are books aplenty for readers to turn to.

The combination of verbal and visual imagery means that picture-book collections offer multisensory experiences for their readers. In *Woke* (Roaring Brook, March 10), Mahogany L. Browne, Elizabeth Acevedo, and Olivia Gatwood join forces to give young readers a series of poems on activism and resistance, illustrated by Theodore Taylor III, whose bold outlines and bright colors emulate graffiti. Acevedo writes in "Rock the Boat" that "you may want to be quiet / so as not to rock the boat, / but just know / you contain waves, / you are an ocean." The accompanying picture shows a multiracial group of determined protesters holding signs: "I AM THE FUTURE," reads one, held high by a child perched on the shoulders of an adult who tenderly holds the tot's legs for safety.

The late poet and anthologist Lee Bennett Hopkins (1938-2019) and illustrator Ellen Shi's *Construction People* (Wordsong/Boyd's Mills, March 17) is, as the title suggests, an elegant assemblage of poems focused on builders, the

arrangement of poems and illustrations taking readers from planning to finished skyscraper. In the illustration for J. Patrick Lewis' "Electricians," a smiling, brown-skinned figure with locs under a yellow hard hat strings and snips wire, representing the "Master and apprentice technicians, / the nation's hot-wire magicians, / [who] work to empower the dark / tower."

There are many creatures to be found *In the Woods* (Candlewick, April 7), and they populate poet David Elliott and illustrator Rob Dun-



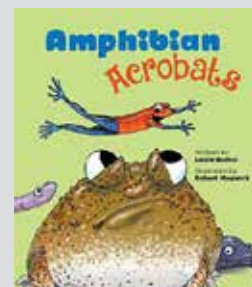
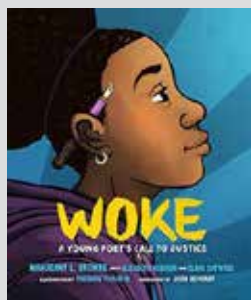
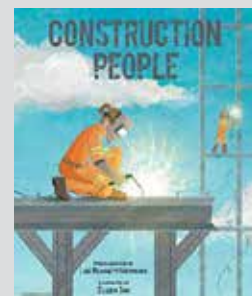
lavey's sweet collection that mixes imagistic musings with whimsy. "The Scarlet Tanager" is "A flash of red / in the spring / green of the trees, / as if the forest air / is branded, / burned"; in the accompanying painting, a diamond-shaped streak of red with blurred, black wings stands out dramatically against dappled greens. In

contrast, Elliott tells "The Opossum" that with "Your rat-tish snow, your naked tail / dragging on the woodland trail: / you're not a classic beauty"; a beady-eyed mother possum looks out at readers as seven fuzzy baby possums cling to her fur.

Poet Leslie Bulion supplements her wry verse with paragraphs of prose while illustrator Robert Meganck's clear, humorous cartoons offer levity in *Amphibian Acrobats* (Peachtree, March 1). The bulging eyes of two half-buried Australian desert spadefoot toads peer out as readers learn how "down under scorched sand / pudgy toadspuds dream"; indeed, both toads and sand are potato-skin brown. The value-added scientific note adds, "Using another froggy trick to protect their skin from drying air, they tuck their legs and hunker in the shape of a small, roundish potato."

The adults who read these books with their kids are some kind of lucky.

Vicky Smith is the children's editor.



live on the border close to “the land they call Estados Unidos,” but Charlie has never seen over The Wall. One night, thirsty for adventures, Charlie sneaks out and searches for a friend. Soon, Charlie meets Lupe, a human girl who joins the search for adventures. As they reach The Wall and try to scale it, the duo realizes they’ll need help to cross over. After The Wall helps them—it turns out it is sentient—they are tasked with a mission: rescuing the niños who are lost on the other side and held captive by Big People in Green. The adventure Charlie and Lupe embark on is a timely and courageous one as it addresses the migration crisis on the border and the imprisonment of children. Gaunt-looking humans fill the pages, with contrasting kind-looking and non-threatening (but still monstrous) chupacabras that flip the idea of what is a threat. However, the illustrations at times seem to defeat the purpose, as they are filled with Mexican stereotypes of congested city streets and thick-mustachioed men, like El Señor Big Bigote. Spanish words in the text are italicized and easily understood through context clues and immediate translation.

Timely yet skippable. (note, glossary) (Picture book. 4-9)



**ON YOUR MARK,
GET SET, GOLD!
An Irreverent Guide to the
Sports of the Summer Games**

Allen, Scott

Illus. by Corbineau, Antoine

Nosy Crow/Candlewick (96 pp.)

\$19.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-5362-1398-0

An overview of Olympic and Paralympic events, with notes on rules, history, special gear, and epic feats and fails.

After quick intros to the ancient and modern games—and a timeline of the latter that, in a spirit of optimism, runs to 2020—this handbook goes on to cover some 40-plus events or classes of event, including sport climbing and skateboarding, both putatively debuting in 2020. Each entry arranges quick bursts of fact, historical background, basic rules of play, and medal tallies of renowned winners around a large, stylized central scene showing racially and ethnically diverse competitors in vigorous action; occasionally snarky commentary adds a chuckle or two (Wrestling: “A combat sport in which two athletes in singlets roll around on a mat cuddling each other until one of them can’t move anymore”). Along with individual entries for goalball and boccia, which are exclusively Paralympic events, versions of each sport as adapted for athletes with disabilities get nods throughout. Despite a claim at the outset that it’s “all about the medals!” every entry also includes general advice about the hazards and pleasures of participating in each sport at any level of skill. Readers will come away with a good overall view of the summer Olympics, if not a complete tally—in sailing alone, as Allen notes, there are 10 to 15 races in each of eight different events—plus a look at 19 exciting sports or games that may one day be added, like break dancing or...well, bowling.

Brisk, broad, often funny...and more than just peddling the medals. (index) (Nonfiction. 8-11)

CHILDREN'S

**JUNIOR'S DREAM / EL SUEÑO
DE JUNIOR**

Alvarado, Rodolfo

Trans. by Baeza Ventura, Gabriela

Piñata Books/Arté Público (140 pp.)

\$10.95 paper | May 31, 2020

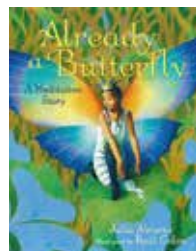
978-1-55885-900-5

Together in their 1951 Chrysler station wagon, the Hernández family makes their annual seven-hour journey from

Piedras Negras, Mexico, to West Texas to harvest cotton.

Papá, Mamá, Lala, Esmeralda, Juan Daniel, Oscar, and Junior are a loving, prayerful, and playful traditional Mexican family. Almost 14, narrator Junior is the eldest and, like his siblings, has picked cotton since he was 8—the age each Hernández child joins the workforce. What initially reads like a story about a farm-working family’s experience turns out to be, as the title suggests, more about Junior’s hopes for himself as a growing young man. Will he ever fall in love like his parents or be a hardworking man like his father? A romantic, oftentimes nostalgic tone accompanies Junior’s true-to-age concerns—born of Alvarado’s own experiences—with the exhausting work of picking cotton and the racism that comes with it creating more of an atmospheric backdrop than a central theme. When a near-death experience pulls Junior’s narration even further inward, the story loses grounding and momentum. Readers seeking a more descriptive and emotionally nuanced take on a young person’s experience during a harvest would appreciate Cynthia Kadohata’s *The Thing About Luck* (2013). Baeza Ventura’s Spanish translation follows the original English version, which adds a richness to the story for Spanish-language readers.

A straightforward, touching account that nevertheless doesn’t go very deep. (Historical fiction. 9-14)



**ALREADY A BUTTERFLY
A Meditation Story**

Alvarez, Julia

Illus. by Colón, Raúl

Christy Ottaviano/Henry Holt (40 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-62779-932-4

Meditation and mindfulness practices are woven into a sweet story about a busy butterfly.

Mari Posa is a beautiful butterfly, depicted with a human body, vibrantly jewel-toned wings, medium-brown skin, and black braided hair. She stays extremely busy, with a fast-paced pollination schedule and lengthy list of chores, and she never has time to rest. Mari doesn’t feel any better prepared for the bustling tempo of the world after her parents offer suggestions that she follow her instincts and have fun but without any advice on how to do so. A timely lesson from a friendly flower bud on self-acceptance and measured breathing helps Mari connect with her body and find the joys in life that she

Brooksbank's vibrant illustrations teem with motion and activity.

CATCH THAT CHICKEN!

had been passing by. An enlightened Mari approaches life with new appreciation for her surroundings and fresh confidence. The message that readers can find quiet within themselves is followed by a simple lesson on breathing embedded in the story. Mari chants, "Breathing in, I am a butterfly. Breathing out, I feel happy," and readers may find themselves breathing along. Soft, textured illustrations full of floral elements match the gentle quality of the tale.

In a world that can't seem to slow down, this story reminds readers to trust their instincts and breathe. (afterword) (Picture book. 5-8)



THE ONE AND ONLY BOB

Applegate, Katherine

Illus. by Castelao, Patricia

Harper/HarperCollins (352 pp.)

\$18.99 | May 5, 2020

978-0-06-299131-7

Tiny, sassy Bob the dog, friend of *The One and Only Ivan* (2012), returns to tell his tale.

Wisecracking Bob, who is a little bit Chihuahua among other things, now lives with his girl, Julia, and her parents. Happily, her father works at Wildworld Zoological Park and Sanctuary, the zoo where Bob's two best friends, Ivan the gorilla and Ruby the elephant, live, so Bob gets to visit and catch up with them regularly. Due to an early betrayal, Bob doesn't trust humans (most humans are good only for their thumbs); he fears he's going soft living with Julia, and he's certain he is a Bad Dog—as in "not a good representative of my species." On a visit to the zoo with a storm threatening, Bob accidentally falls into the gorilla enclosure just as a tornado strikes. So that's what it's like to fly. In the storm's aftermath, Bob proves to everyone (and finally himself) that there is a big heart in that tiny chest...and a brave one too. With this companion, Applegate picks up where her Newbery Medal winner left off, and fans will be overjoyed to ride along in the head of lovable, self-deprecating Bob on his storm-tossed adventure. His wry doggy observations and attitude are pitch perfect (augmented by the canine glossary and Castelao's picture dictionary of dog postures found in the frontmatter). Gorilla Ivan described Julia as having straight, black hair in the previous title, and Castelao's illustrations in that volume showed her as pale-skinned. (Finished art not available for review.)

With Ivan's movie out this year from Disney, expect great interest—it will be richly rewarded. (afterword) (Fiction. 8-12)



CURSE OF THE NIGHT WITCH

Aster, Alex

Sourcebooks Young Readers (352 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-4926-9720-6

Series: Emblem Island, 1

New Year's Eve has finally arrived on Emblem Island, and for 12-year-old Tor Luna, it means an opportunity to wish away the leadership emblem he so deeply

loathes.

Amid the annual festivities, Tor casts his wish to the wish-gods in hopes of a new emblem—a marker on one's skin—that will grant him the power to become a water-breather, forsaking the leadership path forged by his Chieftess mother. Alas, his wish backfires when he awakens the next day cursed with a shorter lifeline instead. It's the Night Witch's mark, a black eye marked upon his skin. Now the young boy must travel across Emblem Island to confront the wicked Night Witch and reverse the curse. With two companions—Engle, his comically brave best friend, and Melda, an intelligent, cunning girl—Tor embarks on an adventure charted in *The Book of Cuentos*, a collection of folklore based on the various enchanting, cruel inhabitants—Emblemite and beast alike—of Emblem Island. Aster's debut includes the fruitful elements of a riveting tale: lovable characters, thrilling heroics, and villainous fiends. What sets this series opener apart is the author's exquisite use of real Latin American folktales to broaden her fiction, bolstering the particulars of the world she creates here. Pages from *The Book of Cuentos* fill the gaps between each chapter, providing island lore for flavor and context. Tightly paced, Tor's adventure concludes with a promise of more to come.

Worthy of every magical ounce. (Fantasy. 8-12)



CATCH THAT CHICKEN!

Atimuke

Illus. by Brooksbank, Angela

Candlewick (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-5362-1268-6

Nobody catches chickens better than Lami, and everyone in the village

knows it.

Lami hears, "Catch 'am, Lami" from Auntie Aisha, Daddy Danlami, Nana Nadia, and a host of other friends and relatives who all acknowledge this brown-skinned girl's talent. Many visual and textual details announce this book's likely Nigerian setting: the school lessons that take place outside under a tree; the beautiful African-patterned fabrics the characters wear; the braided hairstyles of the little girls; a large gathering under a baobab tree, and the Hausa directive for Lami to "Sannu! Sannu!" ("Slow down!"). Ignoring the warnings that relatives fling at her as she runs past, Lami climbs up the baobab

in hot pursuit of a black-and-white chicken and falls from a great height. The sprained ankle she gets from the fall slows her legs, but after receiving some sage advice from Nana Nadia, she starts to use her mind more than her legs and finds a new way to do what she loves. Brooksbank's vibrant illustrations have the look of quickly stroked pastels and teem with motion and activity. Chickens in many colors populate the pages, and the interactions among both adults and children emphasize the strong sense of community in this village. Brooksbank also makes excellent use of white space to focus in on Lami's love of chickens and her delight in pursuing them.

A fun-filled, culturally rich tale that will delight readers young and older. (Picture book. 3-8)



RAISING LUMIE

Bauer, Joan
Viking (272 pp.)
\$16.99 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-0-593-11320-2



Olive, a seventh grader with plenty of heart, is raising a puppy to be a guide dog for the blind.

Olive's devoted to dogs, and the opportunity to raise Lumie through the first year of her life comes at just the right time for her. Her beloved father died six months ago of cancer, and she'll be living with her stepsister, Maudie, a young woman who's nearly a stranger to her. Maudie is trying to find her way through a serious but unhappy relationship with a self-focused man who doesn't want Olive in their lives. In addition, Olive must relocate three hours away from all she's ever known, moving with Maudie into a small section of a rooming house. Winner of a Newbery Honor for *Hope Was Here* (2000), Bauer once again works her magic, crafting memorable characters overflowing with courage and kindness who react in believable—but also admirable—ways to the challenges in their lives. Just as Olive gets ready to face Lumie's placement in advanced training, the year-old dog is viciously attacked and seriously injured in the park by an escaped guard dog, leaving her fate in doubt. The pitch-perfect ending will leave readers both smiling and crying—simultaneously. Olive and Maudie present white; some of their fellow rooming-house residents are people of color.

Outstanding for dog lovers and anyone who could use a hefty dose of good feeling. (Fiction. 10-14)



THE SHIP WE BUILT

Bean, Lexie
Illus. by Grigni, Noah
Dial (288 pp.)
\$16.99 | May 26, 2020
978-0-525-55483-7



A 10-year-old transgender boy sends letters via balloon, hoping someone out there will read them.

It's 1997, and Rowan is starting fifth grade. He knows he's a boy, but no one else understands. He called a girl "cute" during truth or dare, and now he's a social pariah. His dad comes into his room at night, but he's not ready to talk about that yet. He's sorry for being weird. Bean vividly and sensitively captures the struggle of being a child who just can't fit in and doesn't understand why. It is an authentic portrayal of childhood pain without an ounce of condescension. Over the course of the school year, Rowan, who is presumed to be white, and his new best friend

Mr. Moonbeam AND THE Halloween Crystal

By Ryan Cowan



"With great dialogue, narrative and character description, the reader is thoroughly immersed in this story from beginning to end."
—Readers' Favorite

"This story is wonderfully written and flows beautifully."

—Writer's Digest Self-Published eBook Awards

Moonbeam Children's Book Award for Pre-Teen Fiction, Ebook (Bronze) 2019

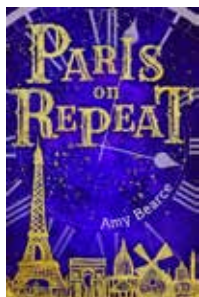
2019 Indie Diamond Book Awards Semifinalist for Middle Grade, Young Adult, New Adult

"A tale with plenty of spooky trappings and valuable lessons for young people."
—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing and film rights,
email ryanecowan@ucla.edu

Sofie, who appears to be black, struggle to make sense of what is right and wrong, good and bad in their working-class Michigan world. While the book tackles big issues, primarily addressing being trans and queer and surviving incest as well as touching on parental incarceration, anyone who has ever been a sad or confused child will be able to see a little bit of themselves in Rowan and Sofie. And if the author leans a bit heavily on the unnecessary crutch of '90s references, at least it increases the book's appeal for both young retro-enthusiasts and nostalgic adults—and this is one of those rare middle-grade books with real adult appeal.

Everyone should read this remarkable, affecting novel. (author's note, resources, acknowledgements) (*Historical fiction. 10-14, adult*)



PARIS ON REPEAT

Bearce, Amy
Jolly Fish Press (224 pp.)
\$11.99 paper | Jul. 14, 2020
978-1-63163-437-6
Series: Wish & Wander

A self-absorbed, risk-averse teen with a secret crush finds herself reliving the last day of a class trip to Paris.

Atop the Eiffel Tower, Eve, 14, summons the nerve to tell Jace she likes him only to discover him kissing her best friend, Reggie. Eve witnesses pretty, popular Reggie buy a love lock to seal her romance with Jace from a mysterious palm reader, who gives Eve a key and cryptic advice. Later, Eve uses her key to open the lock and hurls it in the Seine. Next morning, she awakens to relive the awful day, the first of many repeats that lead her to focus on what she has power to change, including her reaction to her parents' imminent divorce. As each iteration brings new developments and oracular pronouncements from the palm reader, Eve discovers she's not the only one reliving that day. Borrowing a popular plot device familiar from the film *Groundhog Day* (1993) and studded with Parisian tourist-attraction references, the novel fails to persuade. Eve and the challenges she must overcome—parental divorce, unfamiliar foods, jealousy, and lack of empathy—are real but universal, too commonplace to merit occult intervention, the stakes too low to justify the effort. Repetition reinforces both the book's structural weaknesses and Eve's character flaws. Eve appears white; while a few names and references to skin color and/or hairstyle imply diversity, characters are largely interchangeable. A concluding paragraph hints at a sequel set in Rome.

An overworn concept ineptly executed. (author's note) (*Fantasy. 11-14*)



MOLLY'S MOON MISSION

Beedie, Duncan
Illus. by the author
Templar/Candlewick (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | May 19, 2020
978-1-5362-1016-3

Molly the moth goes where no moth has gone before.

The back of a closet is too small to hold Molly's yen for adventure, and so she dons a paper helmet and blasts off past her skeptical mom toward that bright light in the sky—which turns out to be a light bulb. "The moon is much bigger and much further away," says a fly. "Too far for a little mite like you." Oh yeah? Onward and upward! Past the street light and its equally discouraging spider, past the dizzying lighthouse, all the way to the "biggest, brightest, farthest light she could see" in the night sky. That would indeed be the moon...where she helps two astronauts (one white, one a person of color) gather samples and make dust angels. In return they give Molly both a lift home and a genuine mission patch. In his illustrations, Beedie goes for cuteness over verisimilitude by outfitting his insect astronaut with long lashes, a hair bow, and wings that look more decorative than functional. Readers accustomed to the dismissiveness of their elders will cheer as, despite all distractions Molly achieves her goal at last, triumphantly taking that one small step. She takes the next step too, going on in a final scene, after her mom (who also rises to the occasion) proudly welcomes her back, to prepare her younger sibs for flights of their own.

What better role model than a bug with the right stuff to make her dreams come true? (*Picture book. 6-8*)



LITTLE BLUE HOUSE BESIDE THE SEA

Bogart, Jo Ellen
Illus. by Lemniscates, Carme
Tilbury House (32 pp.)
\$16.95 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-0-88448-671-8

A solitary child rejoices in the special beauty of a seaside home.

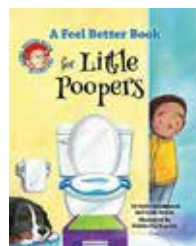
Nattily dressed in green sweater, stocking cap, and orange leggings, the little redhead walks home from school over the cliff tops to a tiny blue house, first waving goodbye to school friends, one white, like the protagonist, and one a child of color. Along the way, the child admires the bees in the flowers, the puffins "with drooping fishes in their bills," and humpback whales breaching and observes the beauty of the ocean in all its moods. When a storm blows up, the child runs to the safe little cottage "that keeps me from the storm winds' might." Simple rhyming couplets and colorful, textured collages make this book evocative and charming, even for children who may not be familiar with the ocean. This young child seems to live independently in the titular house; while improbable, this is a fantasy that many

Sure to help kids with this bummer of a problem.

A FEEL BETTER BOOK FOR LITTLE POOPERS

readers will find appealing. In a final note, the author describes her connection with Newfoundland, where the little blue house of the title is located, and her fascination with the idea that the endless ocean could connect friends "who love the ocean as I do, and want to keep it safe, alive, and beautiful."

Not the most original offering but a reassuringly fresh and simple take on nature in a complex world. (Picture book. 6-8)



A FEEL BETTER BOOK FOR LITTLE POOPERS

Bowen, Leah & Brochmann, Holly

Illus. by Ng-Benitez, Shirley

Magination/American Psychological Association (32 pp.)

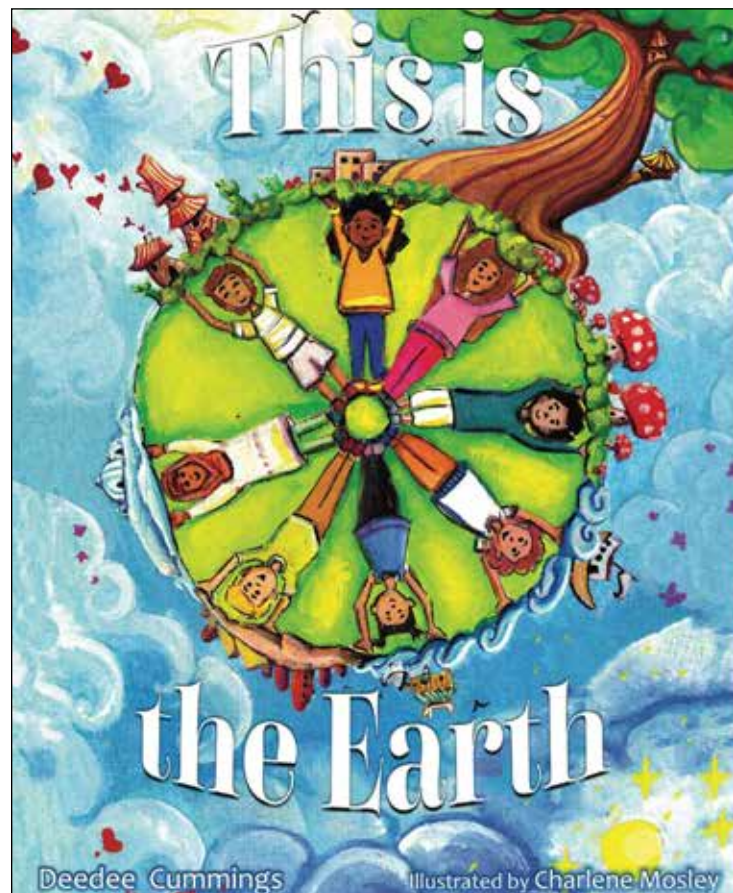
\$16.99 | May 19, 2020

978-1-4338-3240-6

Series: Feel Better Books for Little Kids

Help for kids whose No. 1 fear is going No. 2.

While shelves may groan with potty-training books, this bibliotherapeutic title is for kids who are already out of diapers but are afraid to poop on the toilet. A backmatter note to adults explains: "There is a common, but vicious cycle that happens when a child is scared to use the bathroom—they hold their poop in, subsequently become constipated, it hurts when it finally does come out, the pain creates fear so they hold it again, and the cycle is repeated over and over." The rhymed verse of the main text offers a similar explanation directed at child readers:



THIS IS THE EARTH

BY DEEDEE CUMMINGS

"While telling young readers that they don't have to think the same way as other people, the author soothingly shares in rhyming phrases an important idea. They should try to recognize someone else's viewpoint..."

"The message is a poignant one...the beauty of the notion comes through clearly."

"Extensive endnotes supply discussion questions, quotes from famous figures on the topic of peace, and space for independent readers to write their own responses."

"This work gently encourages kindness and empathy—and delivers fanciful illustrations that will draw the eyes of young readers." —Kirkus Reviews

ISBN: 9781951218188

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INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

NANCY REDD

IN HER DEBUT PICTURE BOOK, THE AUTHOR BRINGS NIGHTTIME HAIR-CARE RITUALS INTO THE LIGHT

By Maya Payne Smart



Marcos Galvany

OUTSPOKEN SELF-HELP AUTHOR Nancy Redd is known for her tell-it-like-it-is candor on topics ranging from puberty and diet culture to miscarriage and postpartum depression. In her picture-book debut, *Bedtime Bonnet* (Random House, April 7), illustrated by Nneka Myers, she turns her attention to a seemingly lighter topic, but don't let the adorable images and delightful plot twists fool you. Redd's still serving up much-needed insight into underexplored topics—this time, black hair culture, from braids and twists to roller sets and locs, all colorfully wrapped in silken sleep caps, scarves, and do-rags.

There have been a number of picture books celebrating black hair. Why did you begin your story with the nighttime preparation that leads to daytime style?

Oh, because it's a very crucial step, and I felt like it wasn't getting its due. The bedtime bonnet is a staple, and it's beloved. But when it was time for my daughter to wear her bonnet, she was not feeling the love. The only people she had seen wearing one were me and my mom, so she thought bonnets were for old people. The cartoon characters she watched didn't cover their heads at night. There weren't books about bonnets. I didn't want my daughter to grow up with any stigmas about something that's such a natural, normal thing. I look at my bonnet as [similar to] wearing eyeglasses. I cannot see without eyeglasses; my hair cannot be laid without a protective head covering. So if it's something that is a necessity, we can't have any shame around it.

Why was it important to make this an intergenerational story and showcase a variety of hairstyles and hair care?

Well, because we are so different. Children's books are getting a lot better, but for the longest time, everybody [black] was the same color—that warm color of brown—and that's not how we roll. Everyone in my family is a different shade of brown. That doesn't make us any blacker or less black, but we don't look alike. We don't have the same hairstyles, either. Right now, I wear my hair curly, my mom wears her hair straight. She still wears a scarf to bed at night, sometimes over foam rollers. She still bobby pins pin curls in her bangs. The thing we share is the fact that we're black and we wear something on our heads at night. That's what the book expresses. That's why it's authentic and can speak to the joy of being black.

How does the picture book relate to your previous work?

It's always important to me to defy stereotypes in my works of art. I've always done photographic guides specifically. If you

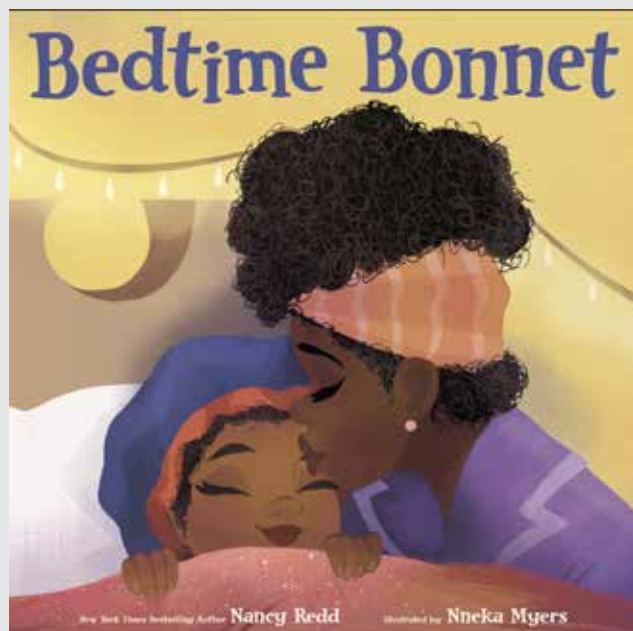
look at the covers of my books, you will see that there are people you don't typically see on the covers of books, especially my last one, my pregnancy book.

So it's the same thing here. With the men in particular, it was important because I feel like we have so many stereotypes. If you think of a black man in a do-rag and a tank top, often-times negative connotations come up if you are not familiar with our actual joy and awesomeness. Right? So for me, contextualizing this happy family and breaking any kind of mold of negativity is very important, so that the only image of [a black man] in a tank top isn't derogatory.

So you created the resource that you needed as a parent to put bonnets in perspective for your daughter?

It's funny, when I came up with the book idea two and a half years ago, bonnets were not in the zeitgeist. Now we have an Oscar-winning bonnet in *Hair Love*. One of my favorite couple of seconds in the video is when her head is on her pillow. She's the first cartoon character I've ever seen with a bonnet. And we're seeing it more. Tia Mowry is constantly posting Cairo in that bonnet. One of the best moments in *Love Is Blind*, that show on Netflix, was when [the character] busted that bonnet out and the guy was like, cool. So I'm happy to be part of another movement of just being unapologetically black.

Maya Payne Smart is an Austin, Texas-based writer who muses on life, literacy, and literature at MayaSmart.com. Bedtime Bonnet was reviewed in the March 1, 2020, issue.



"You don't want to go / in the potty like you should— / you're worried and scared / that it won't feel good." The text goes on to offer validation of children's fears, tips for relaxing, and the reassurance that *everyone* poops (to borrow Taro Gomi's title line from his popular 1977 picture book). Both parts of the text (backmatter and the book proper) acknowledge the physical discomfort this cycle can cause as well as the social disruptions that can occur in a child's life as a result. Ng-Benitez's accompanying illustrations do not follow a sole child who overcomes a fear of pooping. Instead, pictures show diverse children at different stages of holding, then confronting and overcoming their fear.

Sure to help kids with this bummer of a problem, and their caregivers, too. (Picture book. 2-5)



BRIGHTLY WOVEN

Bracken, Alexandra
Illus. by Seaton, Kit
Disney-Hyperion (176 pp.)
\$21.99 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-368-01588-2

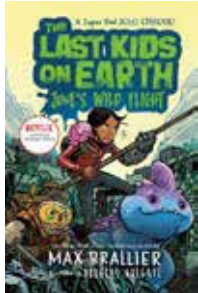
A magical boy enlists a provincial weaver to thwart a war between kingdoms.

Sydelle Mirabil, 14, is a talented weaver living with her parents in their quiet, drought-plagued village in the kingdom of Palmarta. One day, angst-y Wayland North—a rainbow-cloaked, 15-year-old wizard—suddenly appears in her life and sweeps her up into a dangerous adventure. He claims to need her help in both navigating kingdoms and mending his enchanted cloaks in order to deliver a report that reveals the identity of the king's assassin. With a magical swish of North's multicolored mantles, the duo travels throughout the realms, trying to stay a step ahead of North's nefarious nemesis, Dorwan, and the impending war he seeks to bring. Sydelle is a feisty heroine, and the sparks between her and North quickly ignite as their banter and relationship gradually warm. Based on Bracken's 2010 YA fantasy of the same name, this full-color graphic adaptation lowers its protagonists' ages a bit for a middle-grade audience. Imbued with magic and romance, it holds true to fairy-tale tropes; those looking for a comfort read should heartily enjoy the journey to its happy ending. Seaton's exciting and expressive illustrations keep their perspective squarely focused on the action. Both Sydelle and North present white; secondary characters have more varied skin tones.

A homespun fairy tale full of spells, secrets, and romance. (Graphic fantasy. 8-13)

The rich watercolor art employs multiple techniques to create textural contrast.

A PERFECT DAY



JUNE'S WILD FLIGHT

Brallier, Max

Illus. by Holgate, Douglas

Viking (272 pp.)

\$13.99 | Apr. 7, 2020

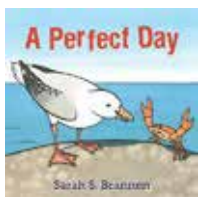
978-0-593-11718-7

Series: The Last Kids on Earth, 6

A special solo adventure following *The Midnight Blade* (2019) for intrepid reporter June Del Toro.

During the middle of an equipment test, the “last kids” of the series title are interrupted by a band of banditlike Rifiers chasing a mysterious creature. In the chaos, June’s DoomKart ends up dragged far away before she can liberate herself for a solo adventure—well, almost solo, as cute mascot-type character Globlet joins her. They follow a scream and find the creature, cornered by the Rifiers—who plan to take it to Thrull, instrumental in the takeover of the Earth. After a daring, explosive rescue, June realizes the creature’s a baby Winged Wretch—but unlike other Wretches June’s encountered, he’s not evil, so she decides to help him get back to his kind. Along the way, her party is rounded out by comic-relief character Johnny Steve, an “oversized-owl dude” and a self-proclaimed expert on humans with hilariously wrong facts. They face dangerous obstacles and reversals before a strong theme of belonging and interconnection emerges to add heart to the jokes and action, a theme that emphasizes June’s separation from the original cast and harks back to the first book. The art is well integrated into the story, especially helpful in blocking the frequent action sequences. The ending pushes along the series’ overall storyline. June is implied to be Latinx; Quint appears black; Dirk and Jack seem white.

A very funny, solid little side quest with great characters. (Horror/adventure. 8-12)



A PERFECT DAY

Brannen, Sarah S.

Illus. by the author

Philomel (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-984-81284-1

A sea gull finds a flock in an unlikely crustacean.

While basking in the sun on a rock in the middle of the ocean, a sea gull remarks, “Blue sky, gentle breeze! Warm sun, cool feet! It’s a perfect day.” That is, until a nitpicky crab crawls onto the rock and negates the sea gull’s optimism. According to the crab, the day is *not* perfect, as the sky has a cloud in it (yes, just one). The sea gull counters that the cloud is “pretty.” But the crab persists with the negativity, next noting the “smelly old boat” in the distance and the barnacles on the slippery rock. “Fine!” the sea gull says, and flies off “to find a better rock”—one *without* crabs. But when both the old and the new rock—in reality, two whales’ heads—rise up out of the ocean, the sea gull’s

“perfect day” completely sinks. Or does it? Brannen’s spare dialogue, accompanied by three gorgeous and completely wordless double-page spreads, makes for lovely opportunities to talk with young readers about the story. The rich watercolor art employs multiple techniques to create textural contrast. The animal figures are simply drawn and outlined with thick, black lines, but their expressive gestures and faces bring them to life. That the sea gull would choose to befriend rather than just eat the annoying crab adds a layer to the story—and indeed the sea gull’s bright-eyed personality.

A sweet, simple friendship story buoyed by sophisticated art. (Picture book. 3-7)



THE INVENTION HUNTERS DISCOVER HOW LIGHT WORKS

Briggs, Korwin

Illus. by the author

Little, Brown (48 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 14, 2020

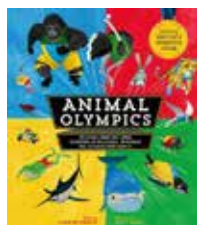
978-0-316-46796-4

Series: Invention Hunters

The troupe of wacky, peripatetic invention collectors returns for a fourth adventure.

Having in previous episodes failed to comprehend machines, electricity, and sound (each explained with infinite patience by the children they encountered), four doofus scientists now crash their flying Museum of Inventionology outside an elementary school in order to investigate light. After storming the nearest classroom, they surprise a bespectacled kid, who patiently explains what a prism, magnifying glass, crayon, camera, and television are, respectively. As the child talks, the explanations scaffold upon one another. In one instance the discussion of how a prism bends light leads naturally into a talk about how a magnifying glass changes how that light does or does not come together. Each explanation is accompanied by supporting information, examples, diagrams, and historical notes with dates. Alas, by the end the Invention Hunters are no wiser than they were when they began, but young readers may have reaped the benefits. Silly art and jokes abound, perhaps to a lesser extent than in previous outings. Still, with adults as cheerfully clueless as these, it’s hard not to want to see them louse up more kinds of science in the future. The Invention Hunters are diverse; their patient guide in this title has pale skin and straight, black hair.

Readers will cheer the return of these merry, lab-coated schlemiels. (Informational picture book. 4-7)



ANIMAL OLYMPICS

Brown, Carron

Illus. by Tanis, Katy

Ivy Books (32 pp.)

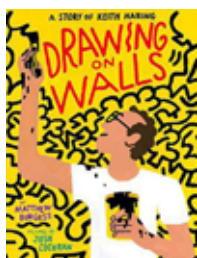
\$16.99 | May 5, 2020

978-1-78240-987-8

Animal athletes compete for the gold.

In this unrelated but similarly conceived counterpart to Richard Turner's *Wildlife Winter Games*, illustrated by Ben Clifford (2019), three disparate competitors line up to show their stuff in each of 12 events, from long jump (flea; grasshopper; kangaroo rat: "I can jump backward, too!") to general climbing (gecko; gelada baboon; mountain goat). Brown supplies a few lines of basic facts about the capabilities of each entrant and awards the gold to one—often the smallest, as, for instance, rhinoceros beetles can lift many more times their body weight than elephants or gorillas, and a mantis shrimp's punch is more powerful for its size than anything a brown hare or eastern gray kangaroo can deliver. In her tidy, stylized illustrations, Tanis doesn't draw the animals to scale but does outfit them in athletic gear and garb on one side of each double-page spread to add a bit of fun and then shows them in natural settings on facing pages. Steer readers with a yen to continue the games to Martin Jenkins' *Animal Awards*, illustrated by Tor Freeman (2019), which broadens the areas of competition beyond sports, and Mark Carwardine's much more expansive *Natural History Museum Book of Animal Records* (2013).

A limited but mildly stimulating gathering on a (possibly) timely theme. (bibliography) (Informational picture book. 6-8)



DRAWING ON WALLS A Story of Keith Haring

Burgess, Matthew

Illus. by Cochran, Josh

Enchanted Lion Books (64 pp.)

\$18.95 | May 19, 2020

978-1-59270-267-1

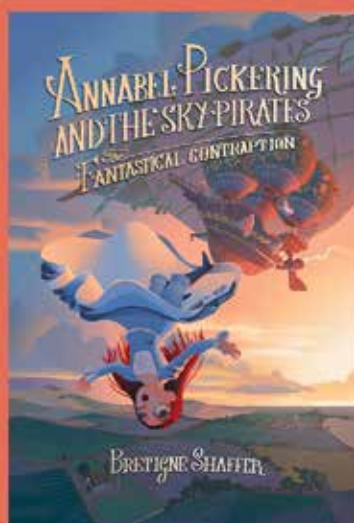
"[N]o matter how busy he became or where in the world he went, he always made time for children."

Thirty years after Keith Haring's death of AIDS-related complications, this vibrant picture book brings the iconic pop artist's work and story to the hearts of a new generation. Often featuring a bold black line, Cochran's painterly illustrations drive the narrative—bursting with movement and color—utilizing a wide variety of perspectives and both spot and full-bleed illustrations to dance around the text in a suitably neo-expressionist tribute to the subject. Stylized and simplified figures fill the pages with smiling faces in a broad spectrum of skin tones and body types, opening the door on Haring's passionately held belief that "Art is for everybody." Without erasing or dwelling on any particular aspect of Haring's personal life, author Burgess outlines Haring's relationships with art, with children, and

with his partner, Juan DuBose, in straightforward, accessible language—from his childhood in Pennsylvania to his "final mark" in Pisa, Italy (five months before his death)—with the same bold honesty and vibrance visible in his subject's art career. Biographical, author's, and illustrator's notes back up the book, supplementing the broad strokes of the text with finer detail and more individual perspectives on Haring's personal, political, and artistic legacies.

An inspired, and inspiring, continuation of Haring's intention. (Picture book/biography. 4-9)

ANNABEL PICKERING AND THE SKY PIRATES BY BRETIGNE SHAFFER



A teenager goes on the run and flies with pirates in this middle-grade Victorian steampunk adventure.

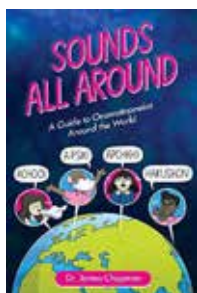
"This tale is well described and very imaginative, featuring not merely the standard elements, but also several novelties (such as the fabulous notion of using liquid to store information)."

"An engaging introduction to a world of wonder and intrigue."

—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN-13 (paperback): 978-0997093520 • ISBN-10 (ebook): 0997093528

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SOUNDS ALL AROUND A Guide to Onomatopoeias Around the World

Chapman, James

Illus. by the author

Andrews McMeel (168 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | May 5, 2020

978-1-5248-5076-0

This graphic survey of onomatopoeias takes on a global demographic of sounds.

The narrator is a smiling, golden star that appears on every page, introducing readers to an individual sound as it is expressed in different languages. Each chapter represents a category of sounds, starting with animal sounds, then moving on to loud noises and sounds the human body makes, before ending with the expressive sounds of emotions. Refreshingly, the survey ventures beyond Western European languages, including Malay, Latvian, Punjabi, Telugu, and Filipino, among others. Languages that do not use the Roman alphabet are transliterated, so an Arabic lion says, “zayir”; when bubbles pop in Russia they go, “chpok!”; and a Korean clock goes, “ddok ddak.” Though it’s easy to see how children can have fun mimicking the sounds expressed in the speech bubbles that dot the colorful cartoon illustrations, there is no appreciable education about the cultures represented. Some pages feature illustrations of human characters of various skin colors. While, admirably, there seems to be no racial correspondence of skin color to language, the narrator makes some jokes that fall flat, as when it declares its preference for classical music when a Danish duck says “rap,” or seems to make fun of Korean screams. There is no map to locate languages geographically for readers.

This survey of languages is fun but superficial. (*Graphic nonfiction. 8-12*)



A LOVELY JOURNEY

Chen, Yingfan

Illus. by the author

Reycraft Books (40 pp.)

\$14.95 | May 22, 2020

978-1-4788-6821-7

A sensitive child experiences friendship in this book from a Taiwanese author/illustrator.

A heart with furnished rooms in each chamber sits inside a person’s silhouette. On the facing page, a child wearing a polka-dot dress and a smile sets a table for one. The text says, “My tiny self lives in a tiny house. Sometimes I enjoy being alone.” Other times, though, the child doesn’t want to be alone. “Especially when I think of times past.” The child wonders where their friends have gone and where to find new friends. But what makes a good friend anyway? Each day of the week, the child asks a new animal this question, and each animal has a different answer. Friends share food (the guinea pigs’

advice); friends snuggle up close (a cat’s); friends wait for you (a turtle’s). After a week, the child stands on the street, feeling lonely—until a boy approaches asking where he can find some friends. They look around together before walking off hand in hand. At the end, the protagonist is glad to have gone looking for friends, because “they were looking for me.” This thoughtful, quiet story offers a way for children to explore emotions and social relationships. Depicting multiple perspectives and emotional needs brings home the story’s gentle message of uniqueness, consideration, and interdependence. Soft colors dominate the pictures, which depict the children with paper-white skin and black hair.

This lovely journey makes a lovely read. (*Picture book. 4-8*)



MY BREAKFAST WITH JESUS Worshipping God Around the World

Cho, Tina M.

Illus. by Wolek, Guy

Harvest House (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-7369-7712-8

Breakfast traditions from all around the Christian world.

Readers begin their journey in this book with the Bible story of Jesus’ preparing breakfast for his disciples as an act of love and caring. Fast-forward thousands of years to the present day, and readers discover how Christians eat their breakfasts in locations all over the globe and even in spaceships above it. These breakfasts are portrayed as a way to celebrate faith together and to praise Jesus. Within each double-page snapshot, detailed cartoons present both characters and inset drawings of the foods they are about to eat. Alongside each inset is a factual gloss about that particular breakfast, including how the food is made and the cultural meaning of each meal. A Ghanaian girl breakfasts on *hausa koko* (a millet porridge); a Russian boy eats *syreniki* (cottage-cheese pancakes); a Chinese congregation worshipping in secret enjoys noodles and dumplings. Diverse cultures are represented, with visits to each of the continents, including a research station in Antarctica. Some breakfasts are enjoyed within families; others are shared among friends; and some are prepared to give to those in need. The common thread throughout is the joy all take in their breakfasts, just as Jesus and the disciples took joy in theirs.

This engaging, inclusive book will be a welcome addition to shelves in Christian homes or church libraries. (*Informational picture book. 5-8*)

This sequel is another stunning work of art.

SKY ISLAND



SKY ISLAND

Chu, Amy

Illus. by Lee, Janet K.

Viking (160 pp.)

\$20.99 | \$12.99 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-451-48023-1

978-0-451-48024-8 paper

Series: Trot & Cap'n Bill, 2

Trot the girl and Cap'n Bill the cat are back in another adventure with the *Sea Sirens* (2019).

School is out, and Trot is ready for another summer of surfing. In hopes of spending some time with her Sea Siren friends, Trot sends them a message in a bottle with the help of her grandfather and his fishing pole. When she receives an urgent message from King Anko in a different bottle, Trot, Cap'n Bill, and Grandpa clamber into the monarch's submarine. Once they're onboard, Princess Clia explains that her best friend, Merla, has been kidnapped by humans. With a little magic to replace her tail with legs, Princess Clia joins the three on land, where they discover the boat that took Merla is connected to abandoned amusement park Sky Island. With the help of Grandpa's friend, they set off to Sky Island to rescue Merla. Featuring the same bright color palette and impressive linework as its predecessor, this sequel is another stunning work of art. With mermaids, an evil collector of curiosities, a hero cat, an extraordinary theme park, and twists and turns aplenty, there is something for all fantasy adventure lovers—though some of the twists are abrupt, and the conclusion feels rushed. Vietnamese American Trot's grandfather's dementia is mentioned when Trot uses it to explain why he is talking about mermaids.

Mesmerizing artwork carries an exciting rescue mission. (Graphic fantasy. 8-12)



WHAT DO BLACK HOLES EAT FOR DINNER?

And Other Silly, Yet Totally Smart, Questions About Space

Tremblay, Grant & Coppens, Katie

Tumblehome Learning (90 pp.)

\$16.95 | Jun. 15, 2020

978-1-943431-54-0

Answers to big questions, from the titular one (answer: "Everything!") to what happens to pee in space ("it would **boil**, then **freeze**").

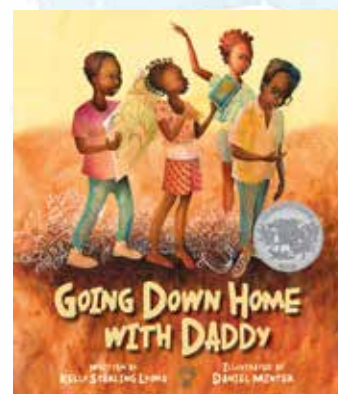
The co-authors—one an astrophysicist, the other author of *Geometry Is as Easy as Pie* (2020)—offer chatty but cogent responses to a free-floating set of astro-queries. Along with frequent reminders that outer space is unimaginably enormous, readers will get relatively detailed lowdowns on diverse topics including black holes in general ("You'd only see this blindingly bright, white light in *the fraction of a second* before you were *vaporized*"), the nature of mass, the possibility that "rain" on planets

like Jupiter is made of diamonds, space trash, Cepheid variables, the recordings on the Voyager probes, and the notion of multiple universes: "Crazy, right? But kind of cool too." Highlighted by images of galaxies colliding in a "beautiful cosmic trainwreck" and 2019's breakthrough photograph of a supermassive black hole, an array of well-placed space photos and digital renditions add small but evocative notes of visual wonder that complement the text's abundant enthusiasm. The substantial text is not broken up into chapters, but text-message-shaped callout boxes presenting the questions help walk readers through the narrative, with logical related questions presented in yellow boxes. There is no backmatter beyond image credits.

A tasty, digestible buffet of cosmic phenomena for readers with their eyes on the skies. (Nonfiction. 9-11)

GOING DOWN HOME WITH DADDY is the Book of the Summer

A 2020 Caldecott Honor Book



HC: \$17.99 / 978-1-56145-938-4

★ "Warm, loving, necessary."

—Kirkus Reviews, STARRED REVIEW

★ "Joyful...moving...Highly recommended."

—School Library Journal, STARRED REVIEW

"A lushly illustrated tribute to family history."

—Publishers Weekly

PEACHTREE

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Córdova's story primes readers for a light, amusing series to come.

THE WAY TO RIO LUNA



THE WAY TO RIO LUNA

Córdova, Zoraida
Scholastic (336 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-338-23954-6

A boy's magical adventure to find his lost sister.

Danny Monteverde believes in wishes, fairy dust, and fairy tales, but Danny and his sister's story hasn't had its happy ending yet. He and Pili have been bounced among foster homes and orphanages for a long time. Unfortunately, the siblings are separated after Danny turns 9, and soon, his sister disappears. The next two years are torturous for Danny, as the siblings' favorite book and most valuable possession, *The Way to Rio Luna*, is taken away by Danny's foster parents after he digs in their backyard trying to find a secret portal to Pili. However, Danny's luck seems about to change when he discovers the original *The Way to Rio Luna* with the help of magic arrows on a field trip to the New York Public Library. With newfound friend Glory Papillon and a cast of magical creatures, Danny soon finds out that the magic within him is the key to reuniting with his sister and helping those he encounters on the way. In creating her diverse cast, Córdova opts for physical descriptions, often in the form of simile—"Danny's hair [is] thick and wavy like ropes of black licorice"; his social worker has skin "like fresh coffee with steamed milk"—rather than specific cultural markers (Glory is also a kid of color). Funny and exciting, Córdova's story primes readers for a light, amusing series to come.

An entertaining series opener. (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



WHEN YOU LOOK UP

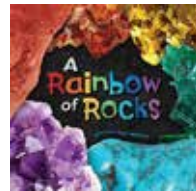
Decur
Illus. by the author
Trans. by Roberts, Chloe Garcia
Enchanted Lion Books (184 pp.)
\$29.95 | May 5, 2020
978-1-59270-293-0

A lonely child encounters a new diversion in a new home.

The story begins with Lorenzo, a little boy with blue, gogglelike glasses and pink skin, preparing to move to a new house with his mother. In the car, a classic "when I was your age..." from Mom sets the tone in an unsuccessful attempt to pull him from his cellphone to admire the scenery from the car window or the spacious property of their new house. The structure is strange and empty of all but unfamiliar smells and a peculiar notebook hidden in an antique writing desk. Upon Lorenzo's opening it, the pages change from a lush, cool-toned palette to vibrant sunflower-yellow, providing a background for candy-colored papercut illustrations depicting fantastical stories of cats riding bicycles, tiny teal quail building mysterious machines, and more. The stories reflect Lorenzo's surroundings with the distorted logic

of a dream, leading him to search for and eventually uncover the truth behind them—his discoveries cleverly depicted with bright cut paper laid over the painterly gouache "real world." Alas, due to unnecessary moralization and a string of uniformly white human characters broken only by a singular, uncomfortably depicted black man, it fails to positively reflect the magic of the world beyond its pages. In the simultaneously publishing original Spanish text, readers will enjoy much more amusing use of onomatopoeia and side commentary from background characters.

Unconvincing text distracts from utterly enchanting illustration. (*Graphic novel*. 6-10) *Cuando levantas la mirada*: 978-1-59270-309-8



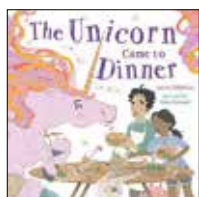
A RAINBOW OF ROCKS

DePalma, Kate
Barefoot (24 pp.)
\$16.99 | \$7.99 paper | May 15, 2020
978-1-78285-986-4
978-1-78285-992-5 paper

Characteristics of rocks and minerals are presented alongside beautiful photos in this picture book.

Clear, close-up photographs of rocks and minerals set against black backgrounds highlight this informative picture book designed for young readers. The first nine double-page spreads of the book feature a simple rhyming text that points out an uncomplicated distinguishing characteristic of two paired rocks, each named in a complementarily colored type: "Copper give **sunstone** its fiery glow. / Iron makes **citrine** rusty, though!" While this initial information is very basic, and the rhyming text doesn't really add anything, when presented with colorful, crisp photographs of the rocks and minerals, it will generate in readers a curiosity about what else these beautiful stones are. The substantial backmatter uses a Q&A format to delve into more detail—"How hard are they?"; "What are they made of?"; "Does light shine through them?"—and introduces words such as "luster," "hardness," and "impurities." A bit of a design kerfuffle occurs on the final double-page spread, where the question, "What happens as light moves across them?" is squished into the top part of the copyright page. Nonetheless, the book succeeds in both generating curiosity and intrigue about rocks and minerals through beautiful photos and presenting a basic narrative, clearly written.

A colorful and accessible introduction to rocks and minerals for young readers. (*Informational picture book*. 3-7)



THE UNICORN CAME TO DINNER

DeStefano, Lauren
 Illus. by Cornwall, Gaia
 Roaring Brook (40 pp.)
 \$18.99 | Jun. 2, 2020
 978-1-250-31040-8

Mythical beast versus pragmatic parents—with somewhat expected results.

A unicorn has arrived for dinner, having apparently eaten Mom and Dad's daughter, Elizabeth (not for the first time). Rude, ungainly, and temperamental, the unicorn tracks prints around the house and exhibits appalling table manners. Dad and Mom, initially irritated, eventually tame this wild beast and even tuck it into bed with a teddy bear. Parents may smile in recognition at the rather obvious ending of this preachy tale. Kids might recognize themselves in this enormous creature that can't control its temper and feels generally misunderstood; however, the final metamorphosis has little explanation or

catalyst, and the story's perspective seems very parent-oriented. There's no explanation why the unicorn is so upset; rather, the parents must figure out how to handle this situation as calmly and positively as possible. That seems unhelpful for both children and caregivers who need emotional guidance. Cornwall's illustrations, done in muted earth tones save for the pink unicorn, do nothing to enliven the flat story, a stark contrast to the vibrancy and emotional range evident in her debut, *Jabari Jumps* (2017). Furthermore, she uses paper-bag skin tones for this family of color, even giving Mom nearly the same skin tone as that of the woodwork.

Disappointing and preachy, with illustrations that leave little to readers' imaginations. (Picture book, 4-6)



Violet Shrink Doesn't Like Parties



A powerful story about a young girl navigating social anxiety by the author of *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*





FIVE THINGS ABOUT AVA ANDREWS

Dilloway, Margaret

Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-06-280349-8

When Ava's only friend moves away, anxiety makes finding a new social circle daunting.

Ava's best friend, Zelia, has always been her prop and support. It's tough being an 11-year-old with a pacemaker; the noncompaction cardiomyopathy she was born with (Ava had heart surgery when she was only 4) combines with intense anxiety to leave Ava self-loathing and socially isolated. Her dad teaches cotillion classes for sixth graders, and Ava, like her older brothers before her, is required to attend, to dance, and to make excruciating small talk. A girl in class invites her to an improv group, and Ava reluctantly agrees. To her shock, improv, which celebrates failure, is amazing for her anxiety. But the improv theater and the waterfront where it's located are under threat from pricey real estate developers. Saving the area from gentrification will require a committed activist, though, and Ava can barely speak in public. Cotillion and improv give Ava tool sets to use to live with anxiety, and the cause gives her a motivation. The conclusion is optimistically uncomplicated, but in a story that successfully explores the complexities of chronic illness mixed with mental illness, the comfort is welcome. Ava is biracial, Japanese American and white, and lives in a diverse community; the vice principal and Ava's therapist are black, and the mean real estate developer is almost stereotypically white.

Opens as standard living-with-disability tale, grows into a heartwarming story about a community discovering activism. (author's note, improv games) (*Fiction. 9-11*)



HURRY UP! A Book About Slowing Down

Dopirak, Kate

Illus. by Neal, Christopher Silas

Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 19, 2020

978-1-5344-2497-5



A child learns to change the pace in this playful picture book. A brown-skinned child with energetic, straight hair wakes to "hurry up," flies down the stairs, backpack in tow, and out the door to the school bus. At school, children of various racial presentations "hurry here. / Hurry there. / Hurry, scurry everywhere!" Leaving school, getting home, starting homework, and taking the dog out all happen in a hurry—until the child and dog reach a meadow and "STOP. // Slow things down." Looking closely at nature and the landscape, playing fetch, and exploring until the sun goes down become ways to

slow it down, right through bedtime. The spare, rhyming text is fun to read aloud, and it conveys a too-familiar feeling of helter-skelter frenzy that settles into a friendlier pace suited to attention to the world and then relaxation. The illustrations use rows of chairs, rows of houses, crowds of children, and flying papers to represent chaos, competition, and stress, then close-ups, panoramic views, and saturated colors to show the sources of calm and restorative slowness. This story is sure to strike a chord with many a modern family; it's a wonderful addition to a bedtime collection to settle in with at the end of a hectic day.

Hurry up and buy this charming book. (*Picture book. 3-8*)



SON OF HAPPY

Fagan, Cary

Illus. by Pavlović, Milan

Groundwood (44 pp.)

\$18.95 | May 5, 2020

978-1-77306-178-8

A boy decides to follow in his father's comically large footsteps.

The unnamed white Jewish protagonist clearly doesn't want to go to his friends' parties. Mom forces him to, but the visiting entertainment at each of them, a classic red-nosed, white-faced, huge-pantsed clown who makes balloon animals, leaves him cold. When Happy the Clown asks him, "And what kind of animal do you want, young man?" he answers, "That's okay, Dad....I'll pass." The boy confesses to a friend that he doesn't like clowns and wishes his father had a "regular" job, like being an accountant, but when the clowning business goes down and Dad goes back to being a lawyer, the boy starts to realize what he's missing. This small-trim picture book has long blocks of text on most spreads, narrowing its read-aloud audience to patient lapsitters. But absence of controlled vocabulary keeps it off the early-reader shelf, nor is it an early chapter book. Some similarly uncategorizable stories can be made to work, but unfortunately this one suffers from an emotionally flat story with little to no tension or intrigue to keep readers of any level engaged. The loose gray and colored-pencil illustrations tonally match the story but don't add excitement or depth to the pages.

A pro-clown missive that fails to entertain. (*Picture book. 6-8*)

Kellogg's textured brush strokes capture the sweeping clouds, sheets of rain, and various internal storms that children face.

CRYING IS LIKE THE RAIN



CRYING IS LIKE THE RAIN
A Story of Mindfulness and Feelings

Feinberg, Harriet Hawke
Illus. by Kellogg, Chamisa
Tilbury House (36 pp.)
\$17.95 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-88448-723-4

Emotions can be tumultuous but passing, just like the weather.

Feinberg, founder of Mindful Kids, a nonprofit that promotes social and emotional learning, likens various emotions to different types of stormy weather. While this is certainly not a new concept, Feinberg delves into the topic by addressing the reader directly with questions and using direct address to pull them in. The beginnings of storms can feel uncertain. Some storms are loud and thunderous; some storms are relatively gentle. Sometimes "the storm feels like it will never end, but it always does." And of course, "crying is like the rain." It helps release pent-up emotions, oftentimes giving a sense of calm at its end. Kellogg's textured brush strokes capture the sweeping clouds, sheets of rain, and various internal storms (or other natural disasters) that children face, such as swirling tornadoes of confusion or fiery volcanoes of anger. The two main characters, presumably siblings, present white, but both adults and children of color also appear throughout. Various mindfulness exercises related to weather ("Be a weather reporter and share your weather with someone you care about") appear in two pages of backmatter.

Not brilliant storytelling—but useful and purposeful. (Picture book. 3-8)



AFTER SQUIDNIGHT

Fenske, Jonathan E.
Illus. by the author
Penguin Workshop (32 pp.)
\$12.99 | Jul. 28, 2020
978-1-5247-9308-1

Squids ink their way into an oceanside home.

Rhyming text sets the scene: "The sky is black. / The clouds are inky. / The salty air / is still and stinky." A child sleeps with the window ajar. The page turn reveals an angry-looking squadron of squids creeping toward the house. Several tick-tocks of the clock cue midnight as "a suckered hand / drags itself / onto the sand." The squids come closer and closer. The child sleeps peacefully. Despite their scowls, the squids come in peace. These "pale artists" want to "make their mark" with inky squid art. They leave a few masterpieces in the kitchen, on the hallway rug, and in the bathroom. Then they slide toward the child's room, squeezing underneath the door. They draw on everything in sight—even the child! But still the child sleeps. And still the squids ink. When, at last, the sun rises, the squids "with glee / drag themselves / back to the sea." but what of the art they

left behind? The narrator's direct address brings readers into this mock-horror tale, which, like Aaron Reynolds's *Creepy Carrots!*, illustrated by Peter Brown (2012), is more silly than scary. The grayscale cartoon illustrations with hints of teal effectively create a spooky atmosphere, and metered language produces a steady, tension-heightening rhythm. Unfortunately, the lack of character development or any real plot lessens the payoff.

Plenty of squid ink, cloudy on the substance. (Picture book. 4-8)

GRANDMA OWL'S GREAT IDEA
by Nasia Usikova

A wise owl suggests two lonely creatures open a forest restaurant.

by Nasia Usikova
Translation & Recipes by Doreen Harvey

ISBN: 978-1-329-19352-9

"Provides a sweet animal story, an enjoyable entrée to cooking, and a fun family activity."
—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing and film rights, email
dwight@gettogetherbooks.com • www.gettogetherbooks.com

"Seven recipes of forest favorites are included..."

"The author's childlike illustrations in felt-tipped watercolor pens add naive appeal."

Vividly conveyed, their almost-palpable adolescent angst is at once uniquely contemporary and timeless.

DRESS CODED



DRESS CODED

Firestone, Carrie

Putnam (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-9848-1643-6



A spirited eighth grader and her friends leverage the power of social networking to fight their school's oppressive dress code.

Students are furious when the class campout is canceled because fellow student Olivia contravened the dress code. That changes after Molly persuades Olivia to tell the embarrassing story on her new podcast. Going public at first worsens her mortification; both girls are targeted by bullies. Then, as Molly's podcast followers mount, others post photos of dress-code shaming on Instagram, revealing the harm caused by policing girls' appearances while ignoring social, cultural, and economic realities that govern their lives and clothing choices. Talia's hair (she's Trinidadian) triggers the dress code. While Molly's pre-pubertal figure is ridiculed by an obnoxious classmate (Megan, with cerebral palsy, knows how that feels), her violations of the dress code are ignored, but girls with curvier bodies are repeatedly sanctioned. When district administrators ignore their petition to end dress coding, students strategize next steps. Molly, a refreshingly average student gifted with empathy, has a brother who deals vaping paraphernalia, stressing her white middle-class family financially and emotionally. Diverse secondary characters include several with disabilities. Beyond code inequities, everyday issues like family stress and active-shooter lockdowns complicate the lives of these appealing characters. Vividly conveyed, their almost-palpable adolescent angst is at once uniquely contemporary and timeless. Readers will root for them as they discover that taking action makes an effective antidote.

Timely, engaging, and full of heart. (Fiction. 10-15)



THE MYSTERIOUS MESSENGER

Ford, Gilbert

Christy Ottaviano/Henry Holt (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jul. 21, 2020

978-1-250-20567-4

Eleven-year-old Maria Russo helps her charlatan mother hoodwink customers, but Maria has a spirited secret.

Maria's mother, the psychic Madame Destine, cons widows out of their valuables with the assistance of their apartment building's super, Mr. Fox. Madame Destine home-schools Maria, and because Destine is afraid of unwanted attention, she forbids Maria from talking to others. Maria is allowed to go to the library, where new librarian Ms. Madigan takes an interest in Maria that may cause her trouble. Meanwhile, Sebastian, Maria's new upstairs neighbor, would like to be friends. All this interaction makes it hard for Maria to keep her secret: that she

is visited by Edward, a spirit who tells her the actual secrets of Madame Destine's clients via spirit writing. When Edward urges Maria to help Mrs. Fisher, Madame Destine's most recent mark, Maria must overcome her shyness and her fear of her mother—helping Mrs. Fisher may be the key to the mysterious past Maria uncovers and a brighter future. Alas, picture-book-creator Ford's middle-grade debut is a muddled, melodramatic mystery with something of an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink feel: In addition to the premise, there's a tragically dead father, a mysterious family tree, and the Beat poets. Sluggish pacing; stilted, unrealistic dialogue; cartoonishly stock characters; and unattractive, flat illustrations make this one to miss. Maria and Sebastian are both depicted with brown skin, hers lighter than his; the other principals appear to be white.

An effort as insubstantial as any spirit. (author's note) (Paranormal mystery. 7-10)



THE MALLOW MARSH MONSTER

Ghislain, Gary

Boyd's Mills (160 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 5, 2020

978-1-62979-678-9

Series: The Goolz Next Door, 2

Wheelchair-using seventh grader Harold Bell and his ghost-hunting neighbors return to take on the town monster.

Days after the events of *A Bad Night for Bullies* (2018), Harold and the Goolzes—horror author Frank Goolz and his daughters, beautiful Ilona and her impish kid sister, Suzie—accept a gruesome new assignment. The unnervingly “synchronized” Farrell twins explain that their mother has disappeared...except for the severed foot they've found. Claw marks, discarded teeth, and an ominous message—“I'll be back for you”—suggest that their mother's turned into the dreaded Mallow Marsh Monster, Bay Harbor's local legend. Anyone the monster bites becomes a monster themselves—so when the monster bites Harold, the Goolzes must act fast to lift the curse. Unfortunately, this sequel to a likable first volume feels unevenly paced and somewhat halfhearted. Though budding monster Harold's seismic belches might raise some giggles, the previous book's humor is largely absent. Harold and Ilona's budding romance is awkwardly sweet, but most characters are one-dimensional caricatures, lessening suspense. The twins, in matching, old-fashioned clothes and perfect unison, resemble “creepy mannequins in a tacky haunted house,” and their “nerdy” scientist parents are “discreet, bespectacled, and unfashionable”; a “giant,” likely overweight character is messy and inexplicably eats napkins. However, the Goolzes' matter-of-fact inclusion of Harold is heartening. After a somewhat hasty resolution, a cliffhanger ending sets up another adventure. Most characters appear white; one twin has two different-colored eyes.

Monsters notwithstanding, weak characterization and uneven pacing create a rather toothless read. (Horror. 8-12)



SHIRLEY & JAMILA SAVE THEIR SUMMER

Goerz, Gillian

Illus. by the author

Dial (224 pp.)

\$10.99 paper | Jul. 14, 2020

978-0-525-55286-4



When Jamila Waheed meets fellow 10-year-old Shirley Bones at a garage sale, she's hopeful she's made her first neighborhood friend.

Shirley's mother is sending her to camp for the summer, against her will. When Jamila confesses that she's in the same situation, Shirley, who's a bit of an oddball, says that she'll convince her mother to convince Jamila's mother to let them skip camp and spend time together instead. Jamila is skeptical, but Shirley comes through, and before long, the two girls are spending their days together on the nearby basketball court. But instead of practicing, like Jamila, Shirley makes it her home base for doing detective work. When Jamila joins Shirley, the two begin to forge a true friendship—one that their latest case puts to the test. This fast-paced graphic novel set in Canada features a diverse cast of characters featured in drawings teeming with movement, detail, and life. Jamila is a brown-skinned Muslim girl, and Shirley is white. Goerz is a master of character development, making no one into a villain and no one into a saint and giving each a fascinating role to play. While Jamila and Shirley's friendship is the highlight, it's only one of many deeply satisfactory layers of storytelling.

An action-packed graphic novel about finding—and forgiving—our closest friends. (*Graphic fiction. 8-12*)



FINDING FRANÇOIS A Story About the Healing Power of Friendship

Gordon, Gus

Illus. by the author

Dial (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-0-525-55400-4



A piglet and her grandmother lead a cozy and cultured life together on a hilltop in Paris—but something is missing.

Alice enjoys reading, making lists, and organizing buttons on her own as well as baking and eating crème brûlée with her beloved guardian. Sometimes, however, she yearns for “someone her own size to talk to.” The bottle she pitches into the Seine is carried by an octopus, a sea gull, and the current across the ocean to François, a lonely lighthouse keeper's son (a dog). So begins a wonderfully preposterous correspondence in which Gordon's sly humor and understanding of child logic (very reminiscent of William Steig's) shine forth. When François inquires as to Alice's whereabouts, she replies, after some thought: “I am... / ...over here. What are you doing over there?” The

seascapes, city scenes, and interior views, rendered in cheery, warm watercolors and pencil, are enriched with clippings that appear to be from an antique French catalog; labeled furniture and kitchen items add texture and whimsy. When the protagonist's grandmother dies and the little pig goes to live with kindly Miss Clément (an antelope), readers will witness Alice's withdrawal and grief (and François' confusion at the silence), until “the dark clouds slowly packed up their things and shuffled into the distance, and the sun sprung forth.” A lighthouse visit and the resumption of baking show it is possible to accommodate loss into living.

Elegant language, endearing characters, and irresistible images will warm hearts and minds with each reading. (*Picture book. 4-7*)

TIME BENDERS

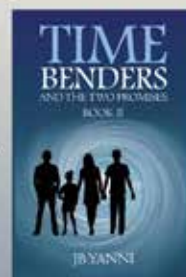
BOOKS 1 AND 2

JB YANNI



ISBN: (PB) 978-1-5462-6669-9
ISBN: (HC) 978-1-5462-6647-5

In Yanni's debut YA adventure, four siblings discover a way to travel through time, giving them the opportunity to possibly prevent their parents' deaths.



ISBN: (PB) 978-1-7283-4574-5
ISBN: (HC) 978-1-7283-4574-1

“A breezy, straightforward approach to time travel featuring unforgettable characters.”

—Kirkus Reviews, on *Time Benders: The Machine*

“Appealing siblings fortify a time-bending tale that offers plenty of drama.”

—Kirkus Reviews, on *Time Benders and the Two Promises*

For information on publishing and film rights,
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THE AMELIA SIX

Gray, Kristin L.

Paula Wiseman/Simon & Schuster

(272 pp.)

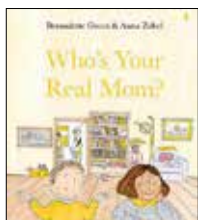
\$16.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-5344-1885-1

Six girls spend the night at Amelia Earhart's childhood home and end up in the middle of a robbery.

When 11-year-old Amelia, nicknamed Millie, gets to the home of the eponymous aviator, she stumbles upon an incredible artifact: the goggles Earhart wore on her solo flight across the Atlantic. Not long afterward, however, the goggles go missing. Millie's determination both to find them and to reach out to her absent pilot mother is endearing; even more so is the friendship that develops among Millie and the other five girls as they work to solve the mystery. Though shy, anxious Millie narrates, by the time she comes into her sarcastic own all six girls cohere into a charming ensemble cast. From Thea, the girl who builds and rides motorcycles with her auntie, to the generous turkey-truck driver who rescues Millie and her dad, the novel presents a suite of characters who, as Thea would say, "are like cake. [They] have layers." Narrator Amelia notes skin color only for those characters with dark skin; others' descriptions only go as far as hair color, evidently relying on the white default. Due honor is given to trailblazing Deaf pilot Nellie Zabel Willhite and black and Native pilot Bessie Coleman. An author's note adds fascinating context on Earhart's real story.

A cozy whodunit that cheerfully affirms girls' and women's contributions to aerospace. (reading list, author's note, selected sources) (*Mystery*, 8-12)



WHO'S YOUR REAL MOM?

Green, Bernadette

Illus. by Zobel, Anna

Scribble (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

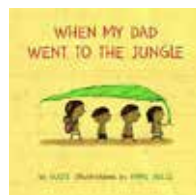
978-1-950354-24-5

A child deflects persistent questioning about their family.

Elvi (a child of color with light brown skin and straight, brown hair) has two moms (one of whom has darker skin and hair and one, lighter than Elvi). When Nicholas (who has light brown skin and curly hair) comes over to their house, he asks, "Elvi, which one is your real mom?" Elvi's initial, confident retort is: "They're both my real mom." Elvi patiently offers similar responses as Nicholas persists, then starts to have a little fun with Nicholas. As if to point out the ridiculousness of the questions, Elvi asserts, "She's the one who can do a handstand on one finger," and "She's the one who's a pirate in disguise." Meanwhile, the illustrations juxtapose realistic scenes of the children and Elvi's moms in the background with pictures of the imagined scenarios, the latter of which use lots of blue

to visually signify their fantastic nature. Later, Elvi shifts gears to explain that their real mom is "the one who holds me when I'm scared" and "who tucks me into bed." Nicholas says, "Don't they both do that?" and Elvi replies, "Exactly." Ideally, readers who need this message will grasp it sooner than Nicholas does, though perhaps the book's impact will have more power for those who read it as validation of their own experiences enduring microaggressions.

Potentially affirming—and potentially exhausting. (*Picture book*, 4-8)



WHEN MY DAD WENT TO THE JUNGLE

Gusti

Illus. by Decis, Anne

Greystone Kids (40 pp.)

\$17.95 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-77164-670-3

City kid Theo narrates their father's trip to "the mother of all jungles"—as well as the young protagonist's own silly attempts to pantomime the Indigenous ways of life relayed in their father's tales.

For example: When Theo learns that "the people in the jungle" include tucus (a variety of large worms) in their diet, the curious child heads for the garden to "[dig] up some earthworms." The text grows more serious when the storyteller's father describes the jungle's environmental plight: the dwindling of the harpy eagle and ranching-induced deforestation. Enchanted by stories of the jungle's Native population and the spirits who live among them, Theo declares, "If I go to the jungle one day, I'll tell the spirits that I love them and ask them to come over." Meanwhile, illustrator Decis depicts Indigenous spirits as white, round-faced creatures with wings and two twigs coming out of their heads; it's unclear whether this rendering has any resemblance to how Sápara people (identified by name only in the backmatter) view their own spirits. Sadly, Sápara people and their Amazonian home are flattened in this narrative despite the author's gestures at self-reflection. In a book focusing on the struggles of a Native people, the acknowledgment page and author's note spend more time applauding the Spanish researcher in charge of Gusti's expedition into the Amazon for "her inexhaustible struggle to save the South American jungle."

A disappointing example of exoticization. (publisher's note, epilogue) (*Picture book*, 6-9)

Hannigan sticks closely to historical records in tracing the causes and course of the fire.

THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE



THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE Rising From the Ashes

Hannigan, Kate

Illus. by Graudins, Alex

First Second (128 pp.)

\$19.99 | \$12.99 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-250-17425-3

978-1-250-17426-0 paper

Series: History Comics

Two young eyewitnesses link watershed events in Chicago's history: its massive fire in 1871 and the Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Separated from their parents, Franny and John Patrick Fitzgerald flee amid panic-stricken crowds—and also witness flaring prejudice against the city's Irish immigrants—as the fire destroys one neighborhood after another. Both then reappear 22 years later as young parents to marvel over the Ferris wheel and other wonders of an exposition that was organized to highlight their city's brilliant recovery and promise. Hannigan sticks closely to historical records in tracing the causes and course of the fire (no, it was not the fault of either Mrs. O'Leary or her cow) as well as the architectural and infrastructure improvements wrought in its wake and the fair's artistic and technological highlights. If the dialogue sometimes assumes a declamatory cast ("There are so many new immigrants moving into the city—Greek, Italian, Jewish, Polish"), Graudins overlays the infodumps with small, intimate panels depicting period-clad people with appealingly open expressions (and, often, puppies in tow) in accurately drawn settings. Crowd scenes frequently feature both white characters like Franny and John Patrick and people of color...except at the Exposition, from which, as one character pointedly if anachronistically puts it, "African Americans" were excluded. Simultaneously publishing in the History Comics series, Chris Schweizer's *The Roanoke Colony: America's First Mystery* (with coloring by Liz Trice Schweizer) works period sources and modern archaeology into a snarky account of the early settlement's decidedly checkered career delivered by two local observers from the Secotan Nation. Both volumes close with source notes; students of the Windy City also get a modern tour and a timeline.

A fictive plotline adds a strong "you are there" feel to this informative account. (bibliography, maps, additional facts) (*Graphic historical fiction.* 9-12) (*The Roanoke Colony:* 978-1-250-17434-5, 978-1-250-175-2)



SUN AND MOON HAVE A TEA PARTY

Heo, Yumi

Illus. by Stoop, Naoko

Schwartz & Wade/Random (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jul. 14, 2020

978-0-385-39033-0

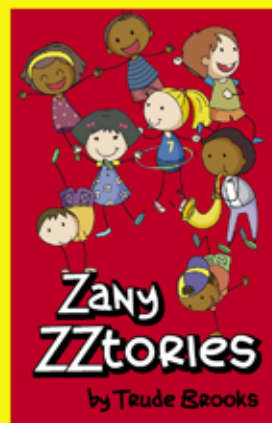
978-0-385-39034-7 PLB

Locked in a bitter dispute about the nature of the world, Sun and Moon can't both be right, can they?

Enjoying tea and cookies together above the Earth late one afternoon, the sun and the moon discover the vast difference in their experiences. When Moon notes, "Children have to go to sleep," Sun responds, "Wrong!...Children have to go to school." Sun and Moon recount their understanding of what children, parents, streets, birds, and even streams are like, each one's description in direct opposition to the other's. As the disagreement becomes increasingly heated, along comes

Zany ZZtories

by Trude Brooks



Zany ZZtories, captivate children to read about friendships between animals and children with differences.

These uplifting and quirky stories, always with a caring message, contain endearing characters and experiences which opens a new world in a child's life.

Children are educated about befriending animals and those who have challenges

Careful thought has been kept in mind in writing these stories for children.

For information on publishing and film rights, email Beautifulbooks4u@aol.com • www.BeautifulBooks.nyc

Hest balances foreground action against background deftly.

THE SUMMER WE FOUND THE BABY

Cloud, who offers a way for the two to see the world from a different view. It's a straightforward but effective story, with quiet, rounded illustrations creating a soft and accessible universe. Sun, Moon, and Cloud have simple but expressive line-drawn faces that drive the text's dramatic tension and satisfying resolution. Repeated use of one family—what appears as a white-skinned, black-haired mom; a peach-skinned, blond dad; a white-skinned, flaxen-haired child; and a white-skinned, black-haired child—gives the celestial debate some human resonance, and people depicted in city scenes include a range of skin tones, ages, and abilities. The changing behavior of morning glories under Sun's and Moon's respective gazes is a particularly clever detail that may have readers curious to learn more.

A thoughtful, gentle introduction to the limits of one's own perspective. (Picture book. 4-8)



THE SUMMER WE FOUND THE BABY

Hest, Amy

Candlewick (192 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 4, 2020

978-0-7636-6007-9



Three children, one baby, and a dog share a special time during World War II.

Two sisters, their widowed father, and their dog who is "too scared to go in the ocean" are spending a wartime summer at a small beach town in Long Island, New York. Julie Sweet is 11, and her sister, Martha, is 6. Next-door neighbor Bruno Ben-Eli is 12 and has an older brother fighting overseas. The story opens with great drama as Julie finds a baby in a basket at the about-to-open children's library. Martha thinks that the baby is a doll, and Bruno, who is on his way to the train station to deliver a secret letter for his brother, finds an envelope that came with the well-cared-for baby. The three children each tell their stories in short, alternating chapters with very engaging voices, dialogue expressed in all-capital letters. Bruno is trying to sort out the whole girl thing while Julie claims that she "doesn't even like boys that much." Both families are strong and loving even as Bruno's mother frets about her older son. In a short time, the library will be dedicated with a very special lady visitor from Washington, D.C., in attendance. Hest balances foreground action against background deftly: The mystery of the baby will be a happy reveal, and the war will continue. The characters all present white.

Warm family stories laced with some sorrow and great joy. (Historical fiction. 9-12)



DO NOT GO IN THERE!

Horn, Ariel

Illus. by Burton, Izzy

Imprint (32 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jul. 14, 2020

978-1-250-18949-3

What is behind that alluring red door?

Two friends see the red door with the gold handle and have very different reactions to what might be behind it. Morton, a horned bunny with a lizardlike tail, tells of amazing possibilities and happy endings, presented in red text. Maybe there will be balloons and candy or spaceships, carnivals, and puppies, and wondrous magic. Bogart, a large, fuzzy, purple creature, counters each of Morton's starry-eyed prognostications with dire predictions of danger and doom, especially to bunnies. Maybe there's a scary wolf behind this door that eats bunnies. Maybe it collects pointy forks to eat all the bunnies, and it will take Morton's imagined spaceships to find more bunnies in outer space. The terrors, presented in blue text, grow harsher and more frightening, but Morton is ever ready with more bright imaginings. Morton's innate sweetness and joy reassure Bogart, and perhaps they will open the door together. Horn's take on the friendship between the pessimist and the optimist speaks directly to young readers whose fears of the unknown can sometimes overwhelm their innocent imaginations. Burton's very bright illustrations depict a mashup of the scary and the fun, with Morton's happy thoughts always coming out ahead. Sharp-eyed readers will also notice another creature looking on, watching the developments. Children and their grown-ups can read together in two voices, perhaps switching characters for the repeat that is sure to come.

Tender, reassuring, and lots of fun. (Picture book. 3-7)



HAROLD'S TREASURE HUNT

Johnson, Crockett

Illus. by the author

Harper/HarperCollins (64 pp.)

\$16.99 | May 12, 2020

978-0-06-265531-8

Harold takes his purple crayon on a newly minted adventure, meeting pirates and lots of sea life.

Designed to mimic the look and feel of Johnson's original series, this anonymously composed and illustrated spinoff (title-page credit notwithstanding) follows the pajama-clad lad on a nighttime outing onto a pirate ship, off a plank at sword point, into and out of the ocean, and finally through a cave where, once he draws a window "that the sun shined through big and bright," he finds "the best treasure ever" in his own bedroom toy box. Along the way he encounters a mermaid (discreetly clad in a camisole) but passes by because he doesn't want to "interrupt" [sic] her and an octopus who is no help with directions because "they didn't see eye to eye,"

whatever that means. In the purple-dominated illustrations the pirate and the mermaid are just outlines, and so take on the color of the background, but Harold's exposed hands and round head have been darkened just enough to create a whiff of racial ambiguity. This has absolutely none of the magic of the 1955 classic, and it's hard not to wonder what Johnson might make of it; the Ruth Krauss Foundation holds the copyright, but the identities of the actual author and illustrator are carefully concealed.

Could have been a slick pastiche...given a spell check run and better art and writing. (Picture book. 3-5)



MY AMERICA

Katz, Karen
Illus. by the author
Henry Holt (32 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-0-8050-9012-3

Whose America? The title pages are telling. As is the cover art.

In this read-aloud, the cover image of a sea of smiling faces in many skin hues suggests plurality (we/our) rather than the singular possessive "my." Within, colorful spreads evoking early childhood drawings and self-portraits accompany text that poses as first-person narratives, as though real children were rendering their individual experiences. One-dimensional depictions of motives and methods of immigration to "America" result in dichotomies—here/there, then/now—that oversimplify differences and perpetuate stereotypes: Tae speaks of eating rice and kimchee in South Korea versus pizza in New York; Samaira from India informs readers: "I wear a bindi on my forehead." And does a white child (Anna) asserting "All my family lives here.... We have been here a long time" belong in this story centering children who have recently "come to live in America"? Notable absences of Native American and African American descendants—whose families have been here even longer than Swedish American Anna's—underscore a thematic inconsistency, raising the question as to *whose* America this picture book, in fact, showcases. These simplistic, reductive representations undo otherwise bold attempts to promote empathy and inclusion. The well-known excerpt from Emma Lazarus' "The New Colossus" that acts as inscription on the Statue of Liberty closes the text.

Recommended as an exemplary instructional tool for how *not* to "do diversity." (Picture book. 5-7)



IZZY AND FRANK

Lehman, Katrina
Illus. by Beer, Sophie
Scribble (32 pp.)
\$16.99 | Jul. 7, 2020
978-1-950354-23-8

Moving away from the island where she's always lived, a little girl misses everything, especially her best friend.

Izzy loves living on an island in a lighthouse with a "staircase that twirled high into the sky." Most of all, she loves her sea gull pal, Frank. On "gray-storm-rainy days," they dig for buried treasure, play hide-and-seek, and draw in the sand. On "blue-sky-sunny days," they swim with seals and hunt crabs or starfish. "Wild-wind-blowy days" they evade sea monsters and fight pirates. Then Izzy moves to the city, to a small house with "sharp corners" and no sea view. Izzy hates the city. The games other children play seem alien, and she must wear shoes and be quiet. She misses the wind, salt, sand, the lighthouse, the

THE

Adriana Tales

THE TOOTH FAIRY TRILOGY

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island, and, most of all, Frank. Izzy searches the streets and sky for Frank, and, one morning, he alights on her windowsill, ready to help her reinvent her life. Peppered with sensory images—“wind that whistled and wailed,” “crusty crabs,” and “sparkly, spiky starfish”—the alliterative text invites reading aloud. With its perky palette of aqua and orange, the simple, playful illustrations show Izzy as an exuberant white girl with freckles and unruly red curls who gradually adapts her free-spirited island life with Frank to an urban venue with new, diverse friends.

Beautifully pitched tale for kids leaving behind familiar places and moving to new ones. (Picture book. 3-7)



THE THREE MONKS

Li, Shaobai

Illus. by Tao, Juxiang

Reycraft Books (48 pp.)

\$18.95 | May 22, 2020

978-1-4788-6804-0

In this parable imported from China, three monks quarrel over everything, leading to worse results for everyone.

Old Monk, Young Monk, and Mini Monk, hairless figures with pale skin and textured collage bodies, do nothing but argue. One day, they decide to leave their temple in hopes that a change of scenery will help. It doesn't. Out in the world, they still quarrel over everything, from who walks ahead to who gets to hold their one umbrella in the rain. Each argument is resolved in a way that is worse for everyone: All three fall into a river when they walk side by side over a narrow bridge, and everyone gets soaked when they close the umbrella to be fair. Time after time, rather than any one of them getting an advantage, they all suffer. Finally, Mini Monk has an idea: They can each buy some food and share. This works well until they encounter a roast duck restaurant—but they cannot eat meat. Upon their arrival home, they conclude that the world is nothing but trouble. They also agree to share the work and never fight again. While this conclusion is commendable and entirely expected for the genre, it is hard to follow the logic—why the sudden change of heart? What is the importance of the duck? Scrawly illustrations combining different media reinforce the rustic atmosphere with charm.

An appealing-enough lesson about working together, despite some narrative shortcomings. (Picture book. 4-8)



LET'S SWAP FOR A DAY

Liao, Shu-Ti

Illus. by the author

Reycraft Books (32 pp.)

\$14.95 | May 22, 2020

978-1-4788-6819-4

A child and pet enjoy trading lives for a day, until nature calls and accommodations are needed.



Alphie, a human child with pale skin and black hair, and Nini, a brown dog with pointed ears, are best friends. Sometimes, they “are jealous of each other's life,” so one day they decide to swap. The morning goes well, with Alphie sleeping 'til noon in Nini's dog bed and Nini attending school. The afternoon is fun; Alphie swims, plays Frisbee, and hides Daddy's toupee while Nini listens to the teacher, makes art, and plays with (human) classmates. When it's time to eat, though, the fun slows down; Alphie doesn't like the taste of Nini's bones, and Nini refuses Alphie's vegetables. But they don't give up until they really can't go—the grass is no match for a bathroom, and vice versa. Liao's brightly colored illustrations crackle with movement, child-friendly energy, and expression. The loose, casual application of paint matches the text's breezy authority. The fact that the other characters aren't fazed by a dog in school and at the table only adds to the hilarity of the swap. This perfectly paced, funny read uses only a touch of potty humor to cap off a sweet story of friendship, curiosity, and indulgence, ending with gratitude for something many of us take for granted. Caregivers won't mind children rereading this silly book.

This humorous tale may become a dog lover's favorite. (Picture book. 4-8)



WOODPECKER GIRL

Liu, Chingyen & Chiang, I-Tsun

Illus. by Doll, Heidi

Reycraft Books (40 pp.)

\$17.95 | May 29, 2020

978-1-4788-6954-2

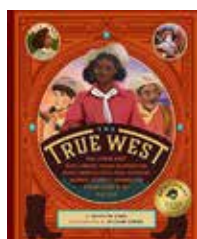
A physically disabled girl paints by using a brush attached to a headband.

This Taiwanese import ostensibly crafted by three creators—two authors, one illustrator, no translator—actually has four creators: Huang Yipei, the model for the protagonist, made paintings that Doll integrates into the illustrations. Doll's breathtaking paintings, with Huang's work seamlessly incorporated, shimmer with swaths of soft and rich colors, warm and harmonious. Angles are steep, scale dramatic—the protagonist is often miniscule. Canvas texture under the paint adds depth. On one spread, the protagonist sits in her wheelchair, half-hidden behind a door, at the far-away end of a stark path of light; a storm cloud unleashes rain onto her head while, in the foreground, un-rained-upon children play with a puppy. She can't play with the puppy because her chair's wheels “might roll onto him,” but why can't someone lift him onto her lap? The text's tragic view of disability—“All I can do is sit quietly”—shows some uplift with the introduction of assistive technology (a headband-brush to paint; a computer to speak), bringing the girl freedom and joy. But the text doesn't let her do it for herself; even though she loves making art, it hurts, but she will do it to bring happiness to others. Her specific disability—cerebral palsy—goes unacknowledged until the backmatter, where notes from all three creators and Huang's mother overcorrect the tragic viewpoint, framing Huang as an inspiration.

Gorgeous artwork within a disappointing framing of disability. (Picture book. 4-9)

Captures the playful, innocent spirit of two friends testing the boundaries of the world around them.

MAX ON THE FARM



THE TRUE WEST Real Stories About Black Cowboys, Women Sharpshooters, Native American Rodeo Stars, Pioneering Vaqueros, Celebrity Showmen, and the Unsung Explorers, Builders, and Heroes Who Shaped the American West

Lowe, Mifflin

Illus. by Luong, William

Bushel & Peck Books (48 pp.)

\$19.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-7336335-1-2

Women and men on horseback fought, explored, performed in rodeos, enforced laws, and helped to shape the American West.

In his author's note, Lowe states that he intends to celebrate "a shared history of the American West," which was "a melting pot every bit as much as the cities of the East Coast." In spite of their suffering, and dealing with "unbelievable conditions and national scorn," Native Americans, African Americans, Chinese Americans, and Latinx people "helped create the country that we live in today." What follows are capsule entries on cowboys and cowgirls from the previously mentioned backgrounds. Each is accompanied by a colorful, full-page portrait of the person, often with a big smile. Also included are pages on dress, Chinese railroad workers, and buffalo soldiers. The entry for Levi Strauss does not mention his Judaism, but it is followed by a two-page spread on Jews. The information on the Chinese railroad workers states that they "were genuine heroes who helped make this country a better place to live," but this statement lacks information on and sensitivity to Indigenous peoples, and there is no mention of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Also, the article on rodeo star Fox Hastings tells readers that she was not only a "true beauty," but also a "genuine daredevil"—leaving them to ponder if the two are otherwise mutually exclusive.

A history that excels at admiration but fails at overall accuracy. (further reading) (*Nonfiction. 9-12*)



MAX ON THE FARM

Lukoff, Kyle

Illus. by Lozano, Luciano

Reycraft Books (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | May 29, 2020

978-1-4788-6863-7

Series: Max and Friends, 3



Two friends sneak off on a late-night adventure during their class field trip in this third series installment by Stonewall Award-winner Lukoff.

White, transgender boy Max and his friend Teresa, a cisgender girl of color, love making messes together. Although Max doesn't like getting into trouble, Teresa thinks trouble is part

of the fun. When their class takes an overnight field trip to a farm, unexpected mischief awaits them after dark in the stinky, muddy pigpen. This picture book/early reader hybrid captures the playful, innocent spirit of two friends testing the boundaries of the world around them as Teresa's spontaneity encourages Max outside of his comfort zone. The story centers on the dynamic of their friendship and what they learn on the farm, but readers of previous titles in the series will recognize recurring characters in the background, and both Max's teacher and his whole class support him when the farmer and square dance instructor misgender him. Lozano depicts racial diversity in Max's classmates, including students with pink to dark-brown skin and different textures of hair. Lukoff's representation of a transgender character is refreshingly casual and well rounded. He provides much-needed inclusion for transgender youth in a new-experience story that doesn't fixate on identity as a point of conflict and goes beyond the coming-out narrative.

A sweet and spunky everyday adventure. (Picture book. 4-7)
(Note: Lukoff is a freelance contributor to Kirkus.)



THE BIRD IN ME FLIES

Lundberg, Sara

Illus. by the author

Trans. by Epstein, B.J.

Groundwood (120 pp.)

\$18.95 | May 5, 2020

978-1-77306-260-0

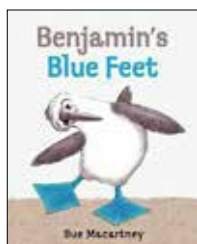
Swedish artist Berta Hansson grows up on a farm and finds it stifling in this fictionalized account.

In 1920s Sweden, a family farm requires a lot of work. Everyone pitches in except Mama, in bed with tuberculosis. Berta covers Mama's sickroom wall with drawings and makes birds of clay for her; it is achingly painful that she and Mama can't hug for fear of contagion. Berta wants to be a bird herself, to "fly off. / Away from our village — / to something else. / To a place where I could be myself"—to stop doing farmwork and housework, and to make art all the time. Even as a job—and even though she's a girl. Viewing a reproduction of Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, Berta relates to Eve, who's "waiting for her turn to come / into existence. To be seen. To come alive." Lundberg's full-color, page-filling paintings make this verse novel a picture book. They are damp and moody, the colors dark and tertiary, the shapes full of shadows and stark angles. Some faces are jarringly rouged, with red noses, like Hansson's real-life work. Cold and hot temperatures emanate from the pages. Beauty pours from close-ups of Berta's hands, in pink-peach-gray watercolor shadings and exquisite lines. Papa insists Berta become a housewife, but at roughly age 17, this budding artist stages a coup by burning a pot of soup—and gets herself sent off to art school. An afterword by Swedish journalist Alexandra Sundqvist adds biographical details; unfortunately, the backmatter includes only two Hansson reproductions.

Melancholy and moving. (sources, references, photos)
(Picture book/historical verse fiction. 7-12)

This book does more than simply tell a single story of biracial experience.

LULU THE ONE AND ONLY



BENJAMIN'S BLUE FEET

Macartney, Sue

Illus. by the author

Pajama Press (32 pp.)

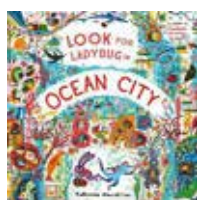
\$17.95 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-77278-111-3

A bird learns self-acceptance in this tale with a concealed environmental message.

Benjamin, a blue-footed booby, loves to go treasure hunting on his beach. He tugs a long, red “string-stretch-it” (an elastic band) out of the sand, and a round “hmmm...a...hole-thing-um” (a silicon wristband) is a delightful find. But when he finds a shiny “twink-um-doodle” (a mirror), he declares that to be the best treasure of all. He can see himself reflected for the first time! Unfortunately, he doesn’t like what he sees. His beak is too long, his wings are too wide, and his feet are too blue. Benjamin decides to use his treasures to change how he looks. He squeezes into the “hole-thing-um,” ties the “string-stretch-its” around his feet, and fastens other treasures all around. But now, he can hardly move. Luckily, he breaks free and becomes thankful for his original features. Macartney never explicitly mentions the word “trash,” but it is clear to eagle-eyed observers what Benjamin’s “treasures” really are. Benjamin’s quirky names for all of the items he finds add levity, but many other creatures on the island have heavy-lidded stares, making them look sleepy or ill (except when they are laughing at Benjamin).

Water-pollution discussion requires an extra step beyond the reading, but this a good place to start. (*Picture book.* 3-7)



LOOK FOR LADYBUG IN OCEAN CITY

Manolessou, Katherina

Illus. by the author

Frances Lincoln (32 pp.)

\$19.99 | May 5, 2020

978-1-78603-776-3

An errant ladybug once again wanders off to lead animal detectives Daisy (a pink-and-brown-striped rabbit) and Basil (a blue lizard with red baseball cap worn backward) on a merry chase.

It was tough enough to *Look for Ladybug in Plant City* (2017)—here, the undersea realm offers 10 more big, populous, and bewilderingly busy sites artfully designed to conceal the mischievous mite from searching eyes. As if the challenge of picking Ladybug out from the swirling plethora of small, red, spotted sea creatures in each scene weren’t enough, Manolessou tucks in dozens of additional figures to winkle out. Readers are prompted to find (among others): one crab on a swing in Octopus Gardens and another wearing eight hard hats at a building site; an octopus holding four brushes near the thermal vent spa (featuring signs for various attractions as “Salt Scrubs” and “Mud Jacuzzis” as well as slogans urging visitors to “Go With the Flow” and “Let Your Hair Down”); a *Portrait of a Fish With*

a *Pearl Earring* at the Ocean City Museum; and five sea snakes in every picture. Happily, the perky pet rejoins the exhausted detectives at the end (briefly, anyway)...and equally happily, the author provides a visual key to stave off incipient eyestrain in young viewers.

A bright and bubbly outing for confident seek-and-find fans. (*Picture book.* 5-7)



LULU THE ONE AND ONLY

Marwhinney, Lynnette

Illus. by Poh, Jennie

Magination/American Psychological Association (32 pp.)

\$14.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

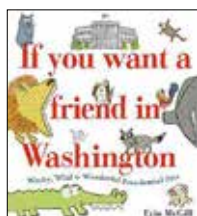
978-1-4338-3159-1



Lulu’s story gives children tools to talk about biracial identity.

This picture book tells the story of Lulu (short for Luliwa), her brother, Zane, and their biracial family. Daddy coaches Zane’s hockey team, and Mama studies space and compares Lulu to her namesake—the black pearls that come from her grandmother’s Kenyan homeland. With one black parent and one white parent, Lulu must navigate frequent questions about her identities. Most upsetting to Lulu is the question “What are you?” Lulu hates it as much as she loves her family. Thankfully, Zane comes to the rescue by suggesting Lulu devise a powerful response to these questions: the “power phrase.” This phrase is a masterful, self-affirming response to other people’s insensitive questions about their identity and family. Armed with her own unique power phrase—“I’m Lulu Lovington, the ONE and only!”—Lulu feels empowered to handle any questions that come her way. Poh’s friendly cartoons depict Lulu with pale brown skin and two energetic afro-puff pigtailed. This book does more than simply tell a single story of biracial experience: It talks about navigating everyday racism in sensitive, but frank, ways. This affirmation is just as important as the power phrase. In a concluding note, the author, herself biracial, provides essential, candid guidelines for talking about race, self-love, and identity with mixed-race children.

All children will benefit from this pitch-perfect discussion of race, identity, complexity, and beauty. (*Picture book.* 4-11)



IF YOU WANT A FRIEND IN WASHINGTON Wacky, Wild & Wonderful Presidential Pets

McGill, Erin

Illus. by the author

Schwartz & Wade/Random (44 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jul. 7, 2020

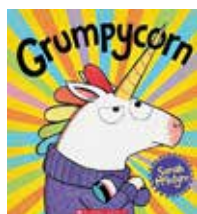
978-0-593-12269-3

978-0-593-12270-9 PLB

A highly entertaining catalog of presidential pets and other White House animals.

An apocryphal remark by Harry S. Truman observes, "If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog." Why? Because, "As the president you are in charge of the WHOLE of the United States of America," and "Citizens might not agree with your opinions, ideas, or political party." While there have been over 100 dogs belonging to presidents and their families, an astonishing variety of other animals have been quartered at the White House. Both Calvin Coolidge's wife, Grace, and Theodore Roosevelt's family had quite a few. The names of members of presidential menageries are entertaining, from Boston Beans Coolidge (dog) to Misty Malarky Ying Yang Carter (cat) to Mooly Wooly Taft (cow) to Emily Spinach Roosevelt (snake). Andrew Jackson's foulmouthed parrot makes an appearance along with the tigers given to Martin Van Buren (they were confiscated and given to a zoo). A gift of elephants to James Buchanan never arrived, but both John Quincy Adams and Herbert Hoover supposedly had alligators. The dozens of expressive, brightly colored, shaggy, scaly, toothy creatures in McGill's charming cartoon illustrations seem to radiate good humor and cheerfulness. Backmatter names the pets belonging to every president (only James K. Polk and Donald Trump had no animals at all) and offers additional facts. Endpapers feature black-and-white photos of animals belonging to eight former commanders in chief.

Great, fascinating, lighthearted fun. (additional facts, selected sources) (*Informational picture book. 3-9*)



GRUMPYCORN

McIntyre, Sarah

Illus. by the author

Scholastic (32 pp.)

\$6.99 paper | Jul. 21, 2020

978-1-338-61799-3

A unicorn with writer's block turns into a whole story.

Unicorn has every writer's dream setup: a charming, cozy, isolated shack well stocked with writing supplies, friends to bring him snacks, and time to write. But he "didn't know where to begin his story." He assembles his special writing implements and beverages to boost his creative juices. But: "I wish an idea would come knocking at my door," he says, and in riotously colored spreads, supportive sea creatures try to help. Narwhal asks to be a character, Mermaid brings him cookies as a bribe for a

featured role, and Jellyfish bubbles over with ideas. But Unicorn refuses to see these as anything other than distractions, yelling "I can't get ANY ideas because everyone keeps bothering me!" After he throws his notebook and special pen into the sea, his friends find the empty notebook and decide to fill it with their own story, relating everything that just happened in the preceding pages with themselves in starring roles. Each spread offers a wealth of details for readers to pore over, and the goofy sea creatures are fun and clever. Silent sea horses, trailing in the background, help bring the story to a satisfying conclusion in the endpapers. This hits just the right notes, engaging children, who will want to yell at the stubborn unicorn, and making any procrastinating adults chuckle in recognition.

A delicious blend of the fanciful yet realistic. (*Picture book. 4-8*)



THE TIMES MACHINE! Learn Multiplication and Division...Like, Yesterday!

McKellar, Danica

Illus. by Masse, Josée

Crown (232 pp.)

\$19.99 | \$22.99 PLB | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-101-93402-9

978-1-101-93403-6 PLB

A thorough introduction to understanding multiplication and division.

In this follow-up to *Do Not Open This Math Book: Addition + Subtraction* (2018), celebrated mathematician, writer, and actor McKellar returns to guide young readers through multiplication and division via a punny time-machine motif. Comic strips that introduce each section feature McKellar and her two companions (pessimistic Mr. Mouse returns and is joined by peppy Ms. Squirrel) traveling through humorous historical anecdotes that serve as jumping-off points for the math, sometimes in unexpected ways. The organizational flow is intuitive. Charts and visualizations are presented to help readers solve basic problems by understanding number relationships; then memorization tricks are given to help master times tables (some clever, some rhymed); finally, McKellar tackles more complicated concepts (the order of operations, or PEMDAS—with pandas; multidigit problems; and long division). The visuals throughout help in keeping the material so simple that even adults will be able to follow math pedagogy they didn't learn but that's currently being used in schools (and there's a guide in the backmatter). The brilliant-through-simplicity textual explanations are easily accessible to independent readers, and the problem sets ("Game Time" sections in each chapter) are set up for readers to succeed. For extras and more math, McKellar points readers to the book's website and to her more-advanced middle school book, *Math Doesn't Suck* (2008).

Multiplies the good times for young mathematicians. (answer key, index) (*Nonfiction. 7-12*)



WHERE ARE YOU, AGNES?

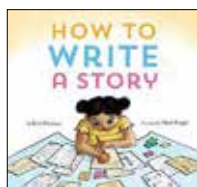
McWatt, Tessa
 Illus. by Celej, Zuzanna
 Groundwood (44 pp.)
 \$18.95 | May 5, 2020
 978-1-77306-140-5



The artist Agnes Martin's childhood and its influences are imaginatively portrayed in this picture book from Canada.

While the author's note at the end of the book makes clear that the narrative is influenced, but not constrained, by events in Martin's life, the story does successfully establish a tone that gets at the sensitivity of the famed abstract artist. The language is simple and evocative, and its repetition of phrases grounds its key concept—that beauty exists in the mind—which could have otherwise become too vague for the audience. Agnes is shown as a child growing up in the prairie of Saskatchewan and being introduced to its beauty by her beloved grandfather. Her family's move to the city challenges Agnes' need for visual beauty, but again, her grandfather helps her to see the beauty inside. As subtly effective as the narrative is, the illustrations are sublime. Working in the delicacy of watercolor and colored pencil and using negative space prominently, Celej inserts judicious bits of cut collage, the sharply defined edges of which visually heighten the softness of the other media. The result is art that is both soft, emanating visual possibility, and ordered—much like the minimalist work of Martin herself. A palette that modulates from the grays of the city back to the soft colors of the prairie acts as a visual cue to Agnes' internal artistic flowering. All people shown are illustrated as white.

A rare treat for sensitive and artistic readers. (Picture book. 4-10)



HOW TO WRITE A STORY

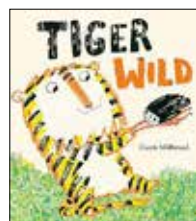
Messner, Kate
 Illus. by Siegel, Mark
 Chronicle (36 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jul. 7, 2020
 978-1-4521-5666-8

This follow-up to *How To Read a Story* (2005) shows a child going through the steps of creating a story, from choosing an idea through sharing with friends.

A young black child lies in a grassy field writing in a journal, working on "Step 1 / Search for an Idea— / a shiny one." During a walk to the library, various ideas float in colorful thought bubbles, with exclamation points: "playing soccer! / dogs!" Inside the library, less-distinct ideas, expressed as shapes and pictures, with question marks, float about as the writer collects ideas to choose from. The young writer must then choose a setting, a main character, and a problem for that protagonist. Plotting, writing with detail, and revising are described in child-friendly terms and shown visually, in the form of lists and notes on faux pieces of paper. Finally, the writer sits in the same field, in a new season, sharing the story with friends. The illustrations feature

the child's writing and drawing as well as images of imagined events from the book in progress bursting off the page. The child's main character is an adventurous mermaid who looks just like the child, complete with afro-puff pigtails, representing an affirming message about writing oneself into the world. The child's family, depicted as black, moves in the background of the setting, which is also populated by a multiracial cast.

A lovely encouragement to young writers to persist. (Informational picture book. 6-10)



TIGER WILD

Millward, Gwen
 Illus. by the author
 Viking (32 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jun. 30, 2020
 978-0-593-11815-3



Lily blames her wild and willful behavior on her imaginary tiger, but she learns there's a time for wild and a time

for quiet.

Big-eyed and seemingly innocent, Lily sits amid a kid-crafting disaster zone. As paint oozes down the side of the couch (which barely hides a hulking orange-and-black striped mass with ears and a tail), Lily declares Tiger the culprit. The "two" continue to wreak havoc wherever they go until Lily, unabashed and unapologetic, receives a timeout. With Tiger roaring the enticing words "We can do anything we want. We can be **wild!**" the two run away. Lily's expressive mop of black hair flies free behind her gleeful, paper-white face. But things begin to get too wild as Tiger eats all their sustenance, equipment, and, hilariously, Lily's shoes. Like Maurice Sendak's Max, Lily begins to miss home. Relief, hugs, and remorse are shared when Lily is found, and then both girl and tiger are lovingly tucked into bed. But Millward does not thereafter relegate Lily to a life of boredom or exacting behavior. Instead, she gives Lily depth, acknowledging that the girl may still want to visit the wild at times—and her parent may also. These sophisticated, energetic illustrations, full of spontaneity and made to look like a child's drawing on paper, are loaded with playfulness and appeal that perfectly match the wit and wisdom of the text.

Ablaze with humor, insight, and love. (Picture book. 3-7)



THE BULL SHARK

Monninger, Joseph
 Scholastic (224 pp.)
 \$6.99 paper | Jul. 21, 2020
 978-1-338-58766-1
 Series: Dragged From Under, 1

When bull sharks turn up in the residential canals of Sarasota, Florida, a young boy is determined to find out why.

Sixth grader Barn Whimbril, whose pale white skin burns easily in the Florida

GOOOOOAAAAAALLLLL.

THE BIG BOOK OF SOCCER

sun, is obsessed with two things: sharks and the Boston Red Sox. Looking forward to attending the opening day of spring training at Fort Myers, he quickly changes plans when he gets an alert on his phone about a shark attack in the area. Wanting to investigate further, and put his special knowledge of shark behavior (he even breeds cat sharks for sale) to use, he sets out to find proof that the sharks are there so the community can be properly informed when making decisions on how to deal with the problem. This fast-paced ecological mystery will easily keep readers intrigued as Barn, often getting close to danger, tries to understand why sharks are being drawn to the canal so changes can be made before local residents use dynamite as a solution, killing both sharks and other marine life. Heavy-handed in its foreshadowing, especially in the frequency with which Barn promises not to go into the water, nevertheless it remains accessible and engaging. Barn is often assisted by two friends: Margaret, who is also white, and Finn, an Inuit boy "with a heavy brow ridge" who was interracial adopted from Greenland.

A thriller with lots of teeth. (*Adventure*. 9-12)



STAND UP TO SEXTING An Open Conversation for Parents & Tweens

Monson, Christy & Boynton, Heather

Illus. by Pinilla, Albert

Bushel & Peck Books (120 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | May 5, 2020

978-1-73363-357-4

A guide to help adults broach the dangers of sexting with preteens.

Recognizing that sexting is a significant parenting concern today, the authors created this book to give parents, teachers, faith leaders, and other adults who live and work with elementary- and middle school-aged young people tools to start a dialogue on the subject. After a brief introduction to some of the emotional, social, and legal consequences of sexting, the guide is then divided into four sections on sexting basics (e.g., what it is and how it affects the brain), sexting participation (both actively and as a bystander), how to avoid becoming a sexting victim, and related topics (e.g., determining readiness for a smartphone). Each chapter opens with a short explanation of the topic in a conversational style and continues with a realistic and accessible anecdote aimed at kids. Examples range from unsolicited locker-room snapshots through solicited nude photos to potential online predators. These are followed by conversation starters that avoid shaming young people or blaming any one gender; journal prompts and goal-setting exercises appear with blank lines for kids' musings. Kid-friendly graphics featuring a multiracial cast further amplify the book's approachable tone. The text addresses only heterosexual relationships, however, and one bully-prevention idea excludes some faiths by suggesting only joining a church youth group.

Overall, a valuable resource on this important topic. (*Nonfiction*. 10-13)



THE BIG BOOK OF SOCCER

Mundial

Illus. by Weighill, Damien

Wide Eyed Editions (112 pp.)

\$27.99 | May 5, 2020

978-0-7112-4910-3

A 360-degree look at the world of soccer.

Mundial presents readers with a trivia-heavy smorgasbord of lingo, history, statistics, and symbols from the world of soccer. Most double-page spreads take on a different topic or focus of the game while a few topics stretch across several pages. The arrangement may be slightly haphazard for chronological readers, but for soccer fans who are content to open and browse, this book should be an enjoyable read. Weighill's cartoon illustrations are bright, inviting, and slightly goofy, but they should be applauded for their inclusivity, as a range of racial and gender presentations can be found throughout the book. The text does its best to remind readers that women's soccer is just as exciting and important as the men's game, and even those steeped in the game may learn something they didn't already know about some of the women's teams and their impressive histories. Be prepared for some follow-up questions about the Dick, Kerr Ladies and their North American tour. The book also does a commendable job highlighting international tournaments beyond the World Cup, giving fans something to research in their off seasons. It's unfortunate that only three women make the list of the greatest soccer players of all time (out of 11), but the book's focus throughout may soften this blow. Overall, a worthy title for any sports section and a title that will be appreciated by both die-hard and novice fans alike.

Definitely a GOOOOOAAAAAALLLLL. (*index*) (*Nonfiction*. 8-12)



PRIMER

Muro, Jennifer & Krajewski, Thomas

Illus. by Lusky, Gretel

DC (144 pp.)

\$9.99 paper | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-4012-9657-5

A feisty young teen explores the literal power of art.

Ever since her abusive father was imprisoned, spunky graffiti artist Ashley has bounced from foster home to foster home. When she finally finds a new family she jibes with, she's cautiously optimistic. Kitch Nolan is a visual artist while his wife, Yuka, is a geneticist for Zecromax Labs. They're overjoyed to welcome Ashley into their life, but Yuka grows increasingly distant. Soon Ashley discovers that Yuka is keeping a secret: She's stolen some prototype Project Warpaint. A new secret weapon coveted by the military, this is body paint imbued with superhero powers, one per color. When Ashley accidentally activates the paints and begins experimenting with them, she

Nickel's thorough research brings to life the man behind the world's favorite cheesy bites.

NACHO'S NACHOS

decides to assume a superhero identity, becoming the titular Primer with the help of her new friend Luke. Soon she realizes she's up against a bigger threat than your average bad guy. A supersoldier is hunting down this new secret weapon and is more than happy to take out Ashley in the process. The character design has slightly exaggerated features (white-presenting Ashley has oversized eyes and a petite waist), and the illustration style is realistic, dynamic, and, of course, colorful. Readers willing to overlook slight inconsistencies in characterization and questions about worldbuilding will find this read delightful and look forward to future chapters. The Nolans are an interracial couple, and Luke presents black.

An energetic introduction to a new superhero. (*Graphic adventure. 8-14*)



SUCH A LIBRARY! **A Yiddish Folktale Re-Imagined**

Nadler, Jill Ross

Illus. by van den Berg, Esther

Intergalactic Afikoman (40 pp.)

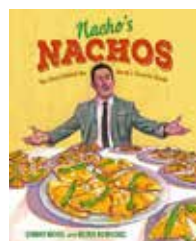
\$18.95 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-951365-02-8

An old Yiddish folktale is reset.

A spare retelling of a tale perhaps best known from Margot Zemach's *It Could Always Be Worse* (1976), beloved by many storytellers, opens this book. In it, a shtetl dweller goes to the rabbi for advice about his noisy household but finally learns to appreciate the din. In this version, updated to a 21st-century library, young Stevie is trying to read in a quiet environment, away from his siblings. Alas, a storyteller interrupts his peace by intoning those special words, "Once upon a time." Stevie complains about the ensuing "party," which leads the librarian to open a book—out of which pop noisy partygoers. Stevie then complains that he is in a zoo, which prompts the librarian to open the book again, and out pops a noisy menagerie. Stevie next complains about the circus, which yields a noisy array of circus performers. Totally exasperated, Stevie yells at the librarian, who answers in her very best librarian voice, and all the creatures reenter the book, which she then hands to Stevie. With just the swishing of pages, the tapping of computer keys, and the storyteller's voice—soft, now, by comparison to the chaos—Stevie has his peace and quiet. Stevie and the librarian are white, and other children are diversely represented. The illustrations are colorful and fill the pages to bursting with silliness.

Repetition, action verbs, and onomatopoeia make this a fun read-aloud. (*author's note*) (*Picture book. 3-6*)



NACHO'S NACHOS **The Story Behind the World's Favorite Snack**

Nickel, Sandra

Illus. by Dominguez, Oliver

Lee & Low Books (32 pp.)

\$18.95 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-62014-369-8



On a platter or in a bowl, cheesy nachos are everywhere! But where did they come from?

Ignacio "Nacho" Anaya was working his shift at the Club Victoria in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico—across the Rio Grande from Eagle Pass, Texas—when Mamie Finan, a regular Anglo customer, walked in with some friends, challenging Nacho to come up with something different for them to try. Nacho scrambled around the empty restaurant kitchen until he spotted some freshly made tortilla chips. Recalling his foster mother's quesadillas, he sprinkled cheddar cheese on the chips and crowned them with gleaming slices of pickled jalapeños. A few minutes in the oven, and history was made! Since that fateful day in 1940, celebrities from both sides of the border—even President Lyndon B. Johnson—have clamored for a plate of Nacho's Special. Eighty years later, minus the apostrophe and "special," people the world over dig happily into servings of cheesy, crunchy, spicy—nachos. Nickel's thorough research, including communications with the descendants of the principals, brings to life the man behind the world's favorite cheesy bites. Dominguez's detailed facial expressions and vibrant, full-bleed, double-page period illustrations successfully capture the people, the era, and its fashions.

Nickel's homage to this congenial, hardworking man and his renowned snack is a celebration of ingenuity and kismet. (*sources, citations, biographical note, author's note*) (*Picture book/biography. 8-12*)



SWIMMING WITH DOLPHINS

Paddock, Jesse

Scholastic (208 pp.)

\$6.99 paper | May 5, 2020

978-1-338-53812-0

A wheelchair-using seventh grader must overcome her fear in order to swim with the dolphins she loves.

For KT Wynn, leaving Iowa City and her BFFs for Fernbank, Florida, fewer than 60 days before her 13th birthday is already hard. Worse, she and her wheelchair, Sprinkle, have trouble fitting into the "jigsaw puzzle" of Fernbank Middle School, even after she meets outgoing Sabina (aka Socks) and her friends. Fortunately, Fernbank also offers the Dolphin Cove dolphin sanctuary—where KT gets the chance to swim with her favorite animals! But when it's time, she discovers that "the thing [she loves] the most can also be the scariest." Can she swim with dolphins and navigate the murky waters of middle

school friendship? Though KT's friends and classmates (and their hashtag-laden dialogue) are largely indistinguishable from one another, Paddock sympathetically explores homesickness and the anxious awkwardness of making friends. KT's gradual overcoming of her dolphin fear is realistic, and her family is comfortingly supportive—particularly her 17-year-old sister, who sometimes has “mysterious teenager” moods but always has her back. KT tackles patronizing grown-ups with dry aplomb, and dolphin facts pepper her narrative. Most characters, including KT and her family, appear white. One is Jewish; another is Latinx. Socks has gluten and peanut allergies; her hairstyle, described as “lots of short, dark brown braids,” will likely lead readers to imagine her as black.

Readers taking the plunge into new activities or new places will appreciate this uplifting tale. (*Fiction. 8-12*)



PINKY CRASHES THE PARTY!

Portis, Michael

Illus. by Richmond, Lori

Crown (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jul. 21, 2020

978-1-101-93302-2

978-1-101-93303-9 PLB

A wish for a particular birthday party guest comes true.

Penny is turning 6 and asks for a flamingo-themed party this year. She also requests a special guest: a flamingo named Pinky, who lives in the city zoo. Her mom says they should stick to her classmates—but when Penny looks into the backyard, she sees Pinky splashing around in the inflatable swimming pool! Penny tells him to stay out of sight; Pinky says, “Squawk.” Penny and her dad go to buy supplies, such as a piñata and cake, while Pinky tags along. Then they pick up Penny’s friends for a round of miniature golf before heading to the house for cake and “Pin the Feather on the Flamingo” (*not* Pinky!). As Mom and Dad hand out party favors, Mom finally twigs to Pinky’s presence. This book doubles as a game of sorts, as readers try to find the wayward flamingo at the party-supply store, on the golf course, and amid the partygoers. Illustrations are bright and fun in a simple cartoon style. The creativity in the themed decorations and visual plot embellishments means the majority of the story details occur within the pictures while the minimal text supplies only the barest skeleton. The mild silliness in this sequel to Portis and Richmond’s *Pinky Got Out!* (2019) will appeal to young animal lovers like Penny. Penny has brown hair and beige skin, and her parents are an interracial couple; her friends are diverse.

Playful illustrations make this book worthwhile. (*Picture book. 3-6*)



THE STARKEEPER

Pray, Faith

Illus. by the author

Random House (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jun. 9, 2020

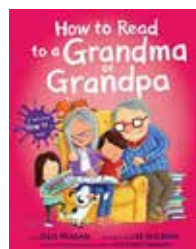
978-1-9848-9270-6

978-1-9848-9271-3 PLB

A young girl finds a way to make her star shine.

A black-haired, brown-skinned child simply referred to as “the girl” walks in a rainy village accompanied by a gray tabby cat. She finds herself enveloped in a “world” that has “been dark for a long time. Rainy. Lonely. Dark.” One day she makes an “enormous wish. She wished the lonely dark away.” The next day she finds a star by the village’s fountain. “It was beautiful and warm and perfect.” Soon after attempting to hold it in her coat the girl realizes that it refuses to be hidden, but even in the open it is quickly losing its shine. The girl makes several futile attempts to revive it, but her numerous calls for help to the community are left unanswered. It is when she finds other children in need and decides to help and share the star that its light begins to shine brighter. A few idiosyncratic word choices (“shrinkier,” “glowy”) occasionally disrupt the flow of the narrative. However, Pray’s textured line drawings are alluringly filled with pastel colors. Initially the pages are saturated in dark blues and grays, but as the girl’s acts of kindness expand to others in her diverse community, the colors transform to a brighter tone. Pray lets readers know of their inherent power to bring about positive change, no matter their size.

Illustrations elevate this tale of hope and empowerment. (*Picture book. 3-6*)



HOW TO READ TO A GRANDMA OR GRANDPA

Reagan, Jean

Illus. by Wildish, Lee

Knopf (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jul. 7, 2020

978-1-5247-0193-2

978-1-5247-0194-9 PLB

Series: How To...

A pair of savvy grandchildren provides inspiration for family reading with their grandparents.

Like all good reading advocates, the children have thought of everything: where and how to choose books, where and when to read, and how to savor the good or not-so-good parts by rereading, discussion, and even acting out dramatic or humorous scenes. Overall, this double pair of siblings and perceptively keen elders ably models a love of reading. Amusing and endearing cartoon drawings colorfully depict a variety of other reading bonuses, such as book-inspired garden-bug investigations, science experiments, and moonlit backyard snuggles. Of course many of today’s grandparents are regularly involved in the care and nurturing of their grandkids, and many aspects of reading

together are entertained, including silly ones like reading under the bed with a grandpa or a shared reading with long-distance grandparents via video chat. Making books part of everyday life is a steady message throughout. Within this quartet, the grandma has pale brown skin and the grandpa appears white, and one child's skin is slightly lighter than the other's.

Wise and sometimes a bit wacky literary advice for the intergenerational family. (*Picture book. 5-8*)



PLAYING POSSUM

Reinhardt, Jennifer Black

Illus. by the author

Clarion (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jul. 21, 2020

978-1-328-78270-0

Two frightened animals deal with loneliness. Can they become friends?

Alfred, a possum, freezes and plays dead whenever he's nervous. This is problematic, as he's frequently nervous. Making friends seems unachievable. Then Alfred meets Sofia, an armadillo. She's also nervous—and when an armadillo feels nervous, it curls into a ball. On their first encounter, each adopts their signature coping strategy. However, realizing they have something in common, the potential pals unfreeze and uncurl and feel better about themselves and each other. Best of all, with time and patience, each comes to understand the other: When Sofia occasionally curls or Alfred freezes, each calmly waits it out, knowing “that when they became themselves again, they would see a friend.” Eventually, the duo's newfound confidence helps them recognize that some neighbors feel anxious, too, and they reach out with empathetic paws. This is a sweet, reassuring story with a plea for understanding and acceptance of differences that will strike a resonant chord with kids. Alfred, in blue overalls, even when hanging from a branch by his prehensile tail, and Sofia, in her red-flowered hat, even curled up, are the endearing stars of the lively, expressive illustrations. Minimal text on pages and ample white space focus attention on protagonists and action in a woodland setting. Backmatter discusses a variety of animal defense mechanisms.

No playing around: Here's a charming tale that kids will return to again and again. (*Picture book. 3-6*)



THE LION QUEENS OF INDIA

Reynolds, Jan

Photos by the author

Lee & Low Books (32 pp.)

\$18.95 | Jul. 8, 2020

978-1-64379-051-0

The photography-driven book tells the story of an all-women animal rescue team working in India's Gir National Park, the world's last known habitat for Asiatic lions.

The book is narrated by Rashila, who declares, “I love lions,” and who became the first woman forest guard at Gir in her early

20s, earning the moniker “Lion Queen.” Subsequently, several other women have been hired as guards, hence the title's plural. From fighting poachers to confronting lions, and despite the dangers these women face on a daily basis, they show an unwavering commitment to preserving the wildlife, no matter what it takes. Reynolds' photography (supplemented by others' contributions) is based on fieldwork in Gir in January 2018 as well as interviews and ongoing conversations with sanctuary leadership and workers. The result is a refreshing take on the exotic-animal photo essay, one that centers people of the community rather than white, foreign scientists. Indeed, the only white person in the book can be found in a small photo of the author riding pillion on a motorbike with Rashila. In her author's note, Reynolds describes initially meeting Rashila and then shadowing her through the park. The note also reiterates the text's strong environmental messaging. In addition to profiling these remarkable women, the text is full of lion facts and vocabulary, which make it a solid nonfiction book about animals.

Young readers will be inspired by these women who show an unwavering commitment to preserving the wildlife, no matter what it takes. (bibliography) (*Informational picture book. 5-8*)



THE UNREADY QUEEN

Ritter, William

Algonquin (272 pp.)

\$16.95 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-61620-840-0

Series: The Oddmire, 2

The twins already saved the Wild Wood from a breakdown in magic in *Changeling* (2019); can they also save the humans and magical creatures from one another?

Tinn and Cole, inseparable white twins, are adjusting to this new world in which Tinn's learned he's a goblin changeling. Though Cole's not happy about Tinn's goblin lessons and the new divide between the brothers, he's supportive—all he wants is Tinn's happiness. The boys still have a great time playing in the woods with their friend Fable, the daughter of the Queen of the Deep Dark. The “unready queen” of the title, Fable's a magically gifted adolescent who'd rather shape-shift into a bear than train her magic, and she is a delightful friend to the boys as they confront the drama of everyday life: shortage of money, interest in girls, accidentally turning partway into a goblin in school. Meanwhile, though the townsfolk have lived alongside the Wild Wood for generations, a few people incite bigoted violence, and an outside industrialist drilling for oil and felling magical trees whips up the locals to battle with the magical creatures for his own profit. Ritter deftly executes the all-too-timely theme of racist demagoguery—and profiting from it—in a way that is realistic yet hopeful. He also leavens it with humor: Fable, particularly, is a reliable source of silliness and fart jokes.

Captivating adventure, magical friendship, and just the right amount of goofiness. (*Fantasy. 9-12*)

The trip is a succulent travelogue, flavored with foods and scenic views and feelings.

NOBODY CAN STOP DON CARLO



AUNTIE UNCLE Drag Queen Hero

Royce, Ellie

Illus. by Chambers, Hannah

POW! (32 pp.)

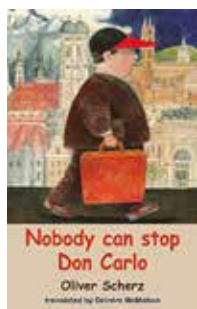
\$17.99 | May 19, 2020

978-1-57687-935-1

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes.

Meet Uncle Leo/Auntie Lotta, who, the narrator informs readers, is an office worker by day and a drag performer by night. When Lotta saves an errant puppy at a local Pride parade, the mayor wants to honor her with an award. But who will accept it: Leo or Lotta? Leo/Lotta is written with a rigidly binary personality. Readers learn that Leo is good at math; Lotta loves to sing and dance. The social circles of work and play are kept distinctly separate. Although the personas combine into "Auntie Uncle" in the final pages, the passive stereotyping of the character is strong. In Chambers' bland cartoons, Leo is depicted as a white man in a brown, tweed sport coat, tie, and trousers while the be-wigged Lotta is drawn in flamboyant outfits that range in color. Although the characters combine at the end, wigless and wearing earrings, a brown coat and trousers, and a diaphanous overskirt, the roles are still separate, although now they are tripartite: "I love my Uncle Leo. He still checks my numbers. I love Auntie Lotta. She still sings and dances with me. But I think maybe I love my Auntie Uncle the best of all." The world needs more stories about drag queens, but it also needs stories where the moral isn't to compartmentalize their lives or their personalities.

Sashay away. (Picture book. 6-10)



NOBODY CAN STOP DON CARLO

Scherz, Oliver

Trans. by McMahon, Deirdre

Dedalus Limited (112 pp.)

\$11.99 paper | Jun. 5, 2020

978-1-912868-02-5

A young boy sets off on his own, without permission, across Europe, in this German import.

Carlo has felt unsettled for five months, two weeks, and eight days—ever since Mama kicked Papa out of the house. Papa was flaky and sometimes disappeared for days, but he was affectionate and robust, and Carlo misses him terribly. Surely if Carlo can reach him, he can bring him back. So, lying to Mama that he'll be at a friend's house, this 11-year-old begins at his local train station and heads from Bochum, Germany, to Palermo, Sicily. His trip is a succulent travelogue, flavored with foods and scenic views and feelings. Challenges include lack of funds, suspicious adults everywhere, the need to lie to Mama via text message, and a taxi driver who robs him between Rome and Palermo. Highlights include a dog conveniently chewing a train ticket (who says it

wasn't Carlo's?), hiding in a lifeboat to stow away on a ferry, a boisterous and kind Italian family ladling up pasta with ham sauce, and the reunion with Papa. Papa and Carlo are both fat; Carlo's been hassled for it and twice refers to his "mozzarella-belly," but the narrative viewpoint casts fatness as refreshingly neutral and even makes Carlo's and Papa's similar bodies a point of warm connection. Carlo is white, half Sicilian and probably half German.

A snug, contemporary adventure—romantic realism, innocent yet hearty. (Fiction. 8-12)



S IS FOR SUPLEX

Schrod, Ryan L.

Illus. by Camia, Nicholas

Trism Books (36 pp.)

\$9.95 | Jun. 29, 2020

978-0-9993886-4-8

An inclusive ABC imparting essential squared-circle lingo.

E is for everybody, for people like me (and maybe you), who cry out with glee as the ref counts to three in a book that is long overdue! Over the decades, professional wrestling has earned—and deserved—a bad rap due to racist, sexist, homophobic, and otherwise bigoted storylines and gimmicks. Countless competitors have worked to recuperate the business's image, and this alphabet book casts a diverse coalition of stars to define 25 wrestling terms in verse. Despite some stultifying stanzas—"G is for Gimmick / Every grappler is unique: / special clothes, looks, attitude, / distinct moves, and ways they speak"—wrestlers of all races, gender identities, sexual orientations, body types, and backgrounds come to life in its vibrant digital illustrations. Featured performers include the likes of Nyla Rose, a First Nations wrestler who recently became the first trans woman to win a world championship in a major American promotion; Sonny Kiss, an African American gender-neutral standout; "Big Swole" Aerial Monroe, an African American contender living with Crohn's disease; and talents hailing from Puerto Rico, India, South Africa, Mexico, Japan, and many other countries around the world. A glossary provides succinct definitions for each vocabulary word and enumerates the roster of over 90 real-life sports entertainers who have graciously lent their likenesses.

Subpar poesy aside, this woke ABC's epic feats of representation prove wrestling is for everybody. (author's note) (Picture book. 3-7)

This rollicking interactive book will easily engage young children.

DON'T WAKE THE DRAGON



ALIEN TOMATO

Schroeder, Kristen
Illus. by Engell, Mette
Page Street (32 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-1-62414-976-4

Veggies aren't just good for you: They *know* stuff, too.

Take the garden denizens who believe the strange red orb that lands among them is an alien tomato! A resident gopher thinks differently and tries vainly to change their minds. The vegetables wonder how to deal with the newcomer—is it dangerous?—and decide to be friendly and welcoming. Allie, the name they give the visitor, doesn't respond. The gopher knows why, shouting with exasperation: "It's just a red ball!" The veggies ignore the gopher and throw a party, giving Allie a crown. Under cover of night, the jealous rodent secretes Allie in its underground lair and hides the crown. The bewildered vegetables can only conclude Allie returned to her planet. Meanwhile, the gopher covertly plays with the "red ball" until...the final satisfying twist awards the gopher a comeuppance and proves the veggies right. This comical tale will captivate readers with its animated protagonists and surprising ending. The veggies zing with lively personalities and expressiveness, conveyed in both cartoon faces and speech bubbles, and the mammalian butinski is a know-it-all hoot. The adorable illustrations of plant foods—broccoli, asparagus, peas, radishes, carrots, beans, and others—may encourage even greens-averse kids to think of them more positively (and, perhaps, try them). Allie is equally fun in "her" stolidity and in pulling off that who-would-have-guessed-it feat.

Young readers will never think about vegetables the same way again. (Picture book. 4-8)



DON'T WAKE THE DRAGON

Schulze, Bianca
Illus. by Hardy, Samara
Clever Publishing (32 pp.)
\$10.99 | May 19, 2020
978-1-949998-64-1
Series: Clever Storytime

Careful with those page turns. The noise might wake the dragon.

"THE most rascally dragon" has just fallen asleep, and loud page swishes and other cacophony could waken her. Turning the first page bangs the door shut so thunderously the noise surely might rouse her. Thankfully, it doesn't, but the following page turn requires that readers say "Shhh!" three times to ensure the dragon's continued slumber. Subsequent loud noises, including clanging cookware and a clamorous birthday celebration, require closer scrutiny of the snoozing dragon. After being instructed to rock the book, readers find her awake and unamused. What to do? "Stroke her scales?" Sing to her? Happily, a lullaby works soothing magic—and readers/listeners are urged

to lie down, tuck themselves in with the dragon, and say "shhh" again. The concluding warning: "close the book **very** gently"... and, well, you know the rest. This rollicking interactive book will easily engage young children, who'll be eager to heed all the book's comical instructions before settling in for a peaceful night. Colorful, amusing, energetic illustrations enliven the text. Frequent use of larger and dynamically emphasized fonts to enhance animated read-alouds and onomatopoeic words that reflect numerous sound effects add to the fun.

Kids won't be dragon their feet to hear this lively pre-bedtime book. (Picture book. 2-5)



13 STORIES ABOUT HARRIS

Schwartz, Amy
Illus. by the author
Holiday House (40 pp.)
\$18.99 | Jul. 14, 2020
978-0-8234-4249-2

Small moments in the life of a small person.

Harris, a tiny blond white boy with a mom and a dad, has a happy life in a friendly city. Thirteen vignettes show moments in his life that will be immediately familiar to young children and their grown-ups. He falls off a toy truck, pretends to *be* a truck during Thanksgiving, experiments with permanent markers, and gets chocolate cake all over a pristine outfit. The illustrations are loose but expressive; everyone has tiny black eyes and relatively blank faces, but much is expressed through body language. Bright, primary colors match the simple, innocent text. These anodyne stories seem tailored to hark back to a fictional simpler time, like the "Here and Now" style pioneered in an earlier era of children's literature, but unfortunately these come across as cloying rather than refreshing today. Despite the situational diversity (people of color in the background, including Harris' black friend Ayana), this book feels old-fashioned rather than timeless. While children might laugh at some of Harris' antics, and adults may chuckle along, the structure of 13 very short stories that don't quite fit together makes this less than effective as a read-aloud.

Sweet but bland. (Picture book. 3-6)



DINOSAUR LADY

Skeers, Linda
Illus. by Miguéns, Marta Álvarez
Sourcebooks eXplore (40 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jul. 1, 2020
978-1-7282-0951-7

A new picture-book biography of the pioneering scientist and finder of bones.

Armed with both a hammer and chisel and a spirit of inquiry, young Mary Anning searched the beach and cliffs of Lyme Regis, England, eventually unearthing the bones of an enormous,



heretofore-unknown creature. Action-filled illustrations and straightforward text allow Anning's determination to shine through and show how her knowledge as well as the fossils she found were initially dismissed because of the sexism of the time yet nevertheless led to the study of fossils, the invention of paleontology, the understanding that animals could become extinct, and the discovery of dinosaurs. Though her financial struggles as a white woman of the time are made evident, portions of her story, including the facts that she was struck by lightning as a baby and that her father died when she was around 11, go unmentioned before the informative backmatter, which seems a lost opportunity. Readers likely to ask questions—her age when she made various discoveries, why she began searching the cliffs, the specific time period in which she lived—will have to wait for the timeline and author's note. (An additional spread offers a smattering of paleontology facts.) Still, Anning is clearly a worthy subject, and this tale of her accomplishments is sure to elicit excitement and curiosity.

A sturdy portrayal of Victorian scientist Mary Anning that showcases her accomplishments, intelligence, and perseverance. (Picture book/biography. 6-9)



DRAGON MEETS BOY

Slack, Michael

Illus. by the author

Christy Ottaviano/Henry Holt (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 30, 2020

978-1-62779-271-4

Old toys aren't discarded: They're re-loved.

When a dragon meets a boy, they become best friends and have daring adventures; Dragon is Boy's constant companion. Things change, though: Boy grows, Dragon doesn't. Then Boy places Dragon in a special cave and asks him to guard his treasures. Eventually, after a final hug, Boy leaves. Years pass. Dragon protects the items diligently, then falls into a deep sleep. One day, hands reach into the cave, removing everything, including Dragon. Surprise: The "thief" is a small girl. Dragon receives a bigger surprise when he sees the man with her. Before the page turn, will readers guess who he is? Guess who becomes the child's new BFF in this sweet, heartfelt tale about love transcending generations? Readers can infer that Boy, now a dad, shared happy memories of his favorite childhood plaything, and his reminiscences encouraged his daughter to seek Dragon out for her own exciting, affectionate romps. The charming, expressive, sometimes poignant illustrations, occasionally depicting familiar children's books, present Boy and his blonde daughter as white. As child and adult, Boy has straight brown hair and wears blue glasses; he is freckled in childhood. Purple, smiley Dragon displays two nonthreatening fangs. Boy, girl, and Dragon star on delightful endpapers.

Readers will love the idea that beautiful childhood memories last a lifetime. (Picture book. 4-8)



THE MAGIC ERASER

Starmer, Aaron

Illus. by La Forest, Courtney

Penguin Workshop (224 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | Jun. 30, 2020

978-0-593-22285-0

Series: Locker 37, 1

There are strange goings-on at an amazing, not-entirely-normal elementary school.

Carson has been given the combination to locker 37, a magical repository that only his fellow fourth graders may know about. This locker can do absolutely anything and solve any problem, often in a wildly unexpected manner. Carson's first problem involves the mysterious appearance of a stain of unknown origin in an embarrassing location on his pants. Carson opens locker 37 hoping for a clean pair of pants only to find a pink eraser with instructions to "rub three times." He informs his "brilliantly strange" best friend, Riley, about both locker and eraser. She immediately tries it out, making several solid objects disappear. Carson accidentally erases a toilet, causing a huge flood, and Riley lets loose a rainstorm of cockroaches when she erases a ceiling vent. And in a fit of frustration Carson erases Hunter, the class bully. What follows is wonderful, imaginative, magical hilarity, all in the service of obtaining a clean pair of pants and somehow retrieving Hunter from oblivion. Starmer's third-person narration speaks directly to readers, with humorous asides and remarks, including "wait a second" math and history chapters that readers are invited to skip if they like. Carson is delightfully earnest, caring, and funny, as are his friends and teachers. Most of the characters present white in La Forest's madly original green-and-gray cartoon illustrations.

A laugh-out-loud tour de force; readers will be eager for the sequel. (Fantasy. 8-12)



LLAMA UNLEASHES THE ALPACALYPSE

Stutzman, Jonathan

Illus. by Fox, Heather

Henry Holt (40 pp.)

\$18.99 | May 5, 2020

978-1-250-22285-5

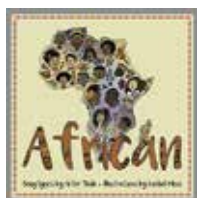
Series: Llama Book

Llamas, alpacas, and clones—oh my!

In this sequel to *Llama Destroys the World* (2019), hapless Llama once again wreaks unintentional, large-scale havoc—but this time, he (sort of) saves the day, too. After making an epic breakfast (and epic mess), Llama decides to build a machine that will enable him to avoid cleaning up. No, not a vacuum or dishwasher: It's a machine that Llama uses to clone his friend "of impeccable tidiness," Alpaca, in order to create an "army of cleaners." Cream-colored Llama and light-brown Alpaca, both male, are pear shaped with short, stubby legs, bland expressions,

and bulging eyes. Paired with the cartoon illustrations, the text's comic timing shines: "Llama invited Alpaca over for lunch. / Llama invited Alpaca into the Replicator 3000. / And then, Llama invited disaster." Soon the house is full of smiling Alpacas in purple scalloped aprons, single-mindedly cleaning—and, as one might expect, things don't go as planned. Mealtimes (i.e. "second lunch" and dinner) offer opportunities for the "alpocalypse" to emerge from Llama's house into the wider world. Everyday life grinds to a halt as the myriad Alpacas bearing mops, dusters, and plungers continue their cleaning crusade with no signs of stopping. That is, until the Alpacas realize they are hungry....It's all very funny, but the sight of the paler-coated Llama exploiting the darker-coated Alpaca, for whom nothing brings "more joy than cleaning," is an uncomfortable one.

For many readers, uneasy optics will take the fun out of this romp. (Picture book. 4-8)



AFRICAN

Tosh, Peter

Illus. by Moss, Rachel

Akashic (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-61775-799-0

Series: LyricPop

Jamaican artist Moss illustrates the lyrics of Tosh's 1977 reggae hit "African."

Tosh's lyrics open the door to black people everywhere, regardless of nationality or geography, to consider themselves African. The first spread shows a world map with Africa at its center and arrows from the continent throughout the world, a vague representation of the diaspora. The refrain, "Don't care where you come from, / as long as you're a black man, / **you're an African,**" is interspersed with verses that list cities and countries of residence as far flung as Russia and Taiwan, naming different complexions and denominations as inconsequential as well. The joyful illustrations depict young and older black people of various colors, with many different hairstyles and wearing an array of clothing styles, playing, riding, dancing, and walking. The settings faithfully convey the scenery of the locales named. However, the depiction of African wildlife instead of people on several spreads of the refrain, juxtaposed with the people and buildings in other illustrations, risks obscuring the realities of modern, urban Africa. And although modern readers may balk at the gendered chorus, the dynamic art and text work together to form a loving ode to belonging for black people of the diaspora. This is one of four in the new LyricPop series. It and Christine McVie's *Don't Stop*, illustrated by Nusha Ashjaee, which depicts a pink bunny playing with woodland friends as winter melts into spring, are two that work in this series of lyrics-turned-picture book. Skip Paul Hoppe's interpretation of Mike Love and Brian Wilson's "Good Vibrations," in which a kid and a dog surf in unlikely circumstances, and Margaret McCartney's version of Dee Snider's "We're Not Gonna Take It," depicting three toddlers resisting naptime. A QR code on the back opens up a Spotify playlist with all the series songs.

A serviceable volume in a hit-or-miss series. (Picture book. 4-8) (*Don't Stop*: 978-1-61775-805-8; *Good Vibrations*: 978-1-61775-787-7; *We're Not Gonna Take It*: 978-1-61775-788-4)



THE WALL OF WILLOWS

Tsai, Luther & Vittachi, Nury

Reycraft Books (128 pp.)

\$12.95 | May 22, 2020

978-1-4788-6925-2

Series: Magic Mirror, 4

A pair of siblings works to change history for the better.

In this fourth title in the Magic Mirror series, Chinese American siblings Marko and Miranda Lee know that history can come to life. Thanks to a magic mirror that allows them to travel through time to different moments in Chinese history, it is literally true. The concise narrative reveals that their paternal grandfather, Anqi Sheng, an archaeologist and magician, assigns them tasks in which they utilize the mirror to help mitigate damage at critical points in time. This time the pair must travel to 210 B.C.E. to carry out Emperor Qin's dying wish: to deliver the royal seal and an order to name his eldest son, kindhearted Prince Fusu, the heir. However, corrupt Chancellor Zhao and his soldiers are hot on their heels with the emperor's previous order demanding the prince's death by suicide. The plot is action-packed and is driven at a bustling pace. Marko and Mira are aided by a few others including Mejin, the Lady of the Wall, a figure from Chinese folklore during the building of the Great Wall. An author's note explains the historical basis for the characters and events within the story, but there is no bibliography of either their sources or further reading. Though a few sudden resolutions may confuse readers, this lively, high-interest adventure should appeal to those looking for a quick, exciting read.

Successfully combines history and entertainment. (Science fiction. 8-11)



ZEUS, DOG OF CHAOS

Tubb, Kristin O'Donnell

Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins

(304 pp.)

\$16.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-06-288593-7

Zeus, a service dog trained to aid a diabetic, is assigned to middle schooler Madden.

Zeus is initially nonplussed by his assignment; it must be a dangerous job for the valedictorian of his prison-trained canine class. But after he meets Madden and his controlling military mother, he begins to rethink his position. Madden benefits from the latest diabetes-treatment technology, but sometimes the pressure of

Virnig tucks in bad jokes, the odd common-sense advisory, and stomach-churning historical incidents.

DUNG FOR DINNER

trying to fit in overrides his best intentions. Wanting to appear like just a regular kid was one of the reasons he chose to take up tuba in the band, even though it's a physically taxing instrument. Because of the way it makes Madden stand out, Zeus becomes convinced that music, as much as he savors it, must be the enemy. He needs to protect his boy from it, leading to lots of humorous if well-meaning attacks on all things band-related, his motivation never registering with the humans in his life. This just adds to Madden's embarrassment of having a German shepherd accompany him around his school. Narrator Zeus, ever insightful in a canine way, does a hilarious job of deciphering English, assembling interesting interpretations of new words. Madden's fumbling attempts at a relationship with Ashvi, an attractive flute player, add spice to this engaging tale. Zeus does not seem to understand racial difference, but Madden and his mom seem to be white; Ashvi's name suggests that she is South Asian.

Fun and surprisingly informative. (Fiction. 9-12)



KAT AND JUJU

Vahdani, Kataneh
Illus. by the author
 Two Lions (48 pp.)
 \$17.99 | Jul. 1, 2020
 978-1-5420-4328-1

This debut gently encourages personal growth while reinforcing the value of being different.

Kat is most comfortable doing things "her very own way," but sometimes she gets lonely. The "other kids" each have their own "very best friend"—an animal who serves as a playmate and confidant—so Kat is thrilled when Juju shows up. But Juju, a giant, fluffy red bird, soon diverges from Kat's preferred activities and routines. While shy Kat is anxious about being disliked or being laughed at for being different, playful Juju sticks around and helps Kat both take herself less seriously and even befriend the other kids. With a limited color scheme of black, gray, red, and blue against a stark white background, the cartoon illustrations utilize watercolor- and crayonlike textures as well as collaged red gingham for Kat's dress. The author/illustrator's background in animation is evident: The children have large, round heads with exaggerated features. Black-haired Kat is white as paper. Among the other children, one has red hair and white skin, and there is a darker-skinned child with a black Afro; a third seems to have Asian features and, in a deeply unfortunate characterization choice, is almost always illustrated with prominent buck teeth. No other humans (not even family members!) or social institutions appear in the text or images, which makes this story feel disconnected from a larger community or context.

A superficial celebration of diverse experiences, overcoming shyness, and friendship. (Picture book. 3-7)



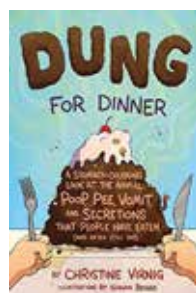
THE LITTLE RED CRANE

Van Wright, Cornelius
Illus. by the author
 Starbright Books (40 pp.)
 \$16.99 | May 1, 2020
 978-1-59572-843-2

Cranes of every shape and size enjoy the limelight.

Dex is just a small mini, or spider, crane, best suited to interior work. Still, when a letter comes inviting his operator, Pete, to help with an "incredibly **BIG** project," the two hop to it. To get there, they must journey over land and across the sea, passing myriad different cranes on the way. Passing a relatively human-scale loader crane and telescopic crane, the truck carrying Dex reaches the waterfront and is loaded onto a ship, allowing him to encounter jaw-droppingly massive shipbuilding, ship-to-shore, offshore, floating, and tower cranes. In the face of the sheer gargantuan size of their mechanics, Dex is baffled as to why he was selected for *any* kind of important job. Happily, his merit is made clear when he unloads and lifts the different parts of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton within a museum. While each crane Dex comes into contact with exhibits anthropomorphic features (eyes, faces, etc.), this does not detract from the awe they will inspire in construction-obsessed young readers. Deft watercolors bring the sheer scale of this storyline to life, with sweet-faced Dex the friendliest little red spider crane you ever did see. Alas, but one crane is gendered female, offsetting only slightly the otherwise male-heavy cast.

Dead certain to instill a newfound and deep-seated crane obsession in its young readers. (further information) (Picture book. 3-6)



DUNG FOR DINNER A Stomach-Churning Look at the Animal Poop, Pee, Vomit, and Secretions That People Have Eaten (and Often Still Do!)

Virnig, Christine
Illus. by Briggs, Korwin
 Godwin Books/Henry Holt (176 pp.)
 \$19.99 | Jul. 21, 2020
 978-1-250-24679-0

Poop has been put to enough worthy uses down the years to fill a book. "This is not that book."

Instead the author, a pediatric physician, zeroes in on the "poop, pee, vomit, and secretions that people *put in their mouths*." Why? "Because that's way more fun. And way more gross." Dispelling any lingering reader hesitancy with a not-altogether-superfluous trigger warning, she proceeds to emit a stream of anecdotal observations—on how substances including boar dung, pus, and ox snot were ingested for medicinal purposes (fancied or otherwise) in ancient times and fecal

Expect kids to have great fun poring over the numerous tiny details incorporated into the delicate, colorful, busy line illustrations.

ALL ALONG THE RIVER

transplants today treat intestinal infections; on the insect origins of the glaze used in the manufacture of candy corn and other sweets; on honey ("sweet insect vomit") and more-localized delicacies such as haggis and jellied moose nose; what houseflies do when they land on your food; and the many uses of maggots, to name a few. Along the way she also tucks in bad jokes, the odd common-sense advisory, and stomach-churning historical incidents. She also spreads plenty of science around...including a mention of the FDA's online *Food Defect Levels Handbook* that will definitely send readers racing for their keyboards. Briggs adds line cartoons (not seen in finished form), from a honey jar with a vomiting bee on the label to an ancient Roman toilet complete with communal butt-wiping xylospongium. Text type and graphics are all printed in suitable shades of brown ranging from taupe to umber, including humans of diverse racial presentations.

Adds nuance to the old saw that we are what we eat...in an all-too-informative way. (bibliography, index) (Nonfiction. 9-12)



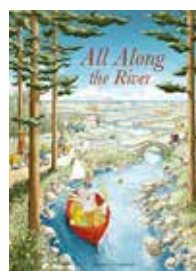
ANT IN A BOOK

Wang, Yimei
Illus. by Cao, Cao
Reycraft Books (48 pp.)
\$16.95 | May 29, 2020
978-1-4788-6932-0

When an ant finds himself flattened in a book and moves from page to page, he inspires the Chinese characters printed on them to start moving too, creating new stories every day.

The ant is sleeping among the petals of a flower when a girl comes and plucks the flower, placing it in a book to press it. The ant awakes, also flattened, and hears voices. They are the voices of characters—the words and parts of words that make up Chinese writing. When the ant moves through the book, the characters decide they should try moving too, but of course, their moving around changes the book. When the girl remembers her flower and opens the book, she finds a new story. After a few days, she realizes what is happening, and soon she reads the book's new story every day. Reds and natural yellow tones dominate the illustrations, which, though not striking, contain humorous touches: The characters are drawn with little googly eyes on top and, once they start moving, red boots on bottom; the cross-eyed ant wears a scarf and striped socks. (The girl has beige skin and brown pigtails.) The clever play on the word "character" works nicely in this import, provoking curiosity about the nature of writing in different languages and the characters in English books. Readers will be intrigued by the concept and will surely envy the girl whose book changes every day.

Recommended for fans of metafiction and wordplay. (Picture book. 5-8)



ALL ALONG THE RIVER

Weightman, Magnus
Illus. by the author
Clavis (32 pp.)
\$18.95 | May 19, 2020
978-1-60537-518-2

Some rabbits sail down a river looking for a lost toy duck.

As Bunny plays with her toy in the small river near her home, it floats away; her two brothers immediately join the search effort. Adventure ensues as the trio pursues the yellow, red-scarfed duck in their boat, following the river as it courses through forests, pastures, waterfalls, flower fields, and farmland and past assorted structures. Alas, the duck consistently eludes them. This is where the reading/listening audience comes in, invited from the outset to collaborate in the Where's Waldo?-type investigation. And the enterprise is playfully challenging, seeing as how the duck isn't always willing to be located *too* easily. Expect kids to have great fun poring over the numerous tiny, sometimes complex, details incorporated into the delicate, colorful, busy line illustrations that fill every spread—along with myriad other anthropomorphic animal protagonists; information about how those characters fit into the grand scheme of things appears on an introductory spread before the book's title page. There's just enough minimal, pithy text per spread, often with tantalizing hints to the duck's possible whereabouts, but the illustrations, naturally, are the main focus and draw. The ending presents two surprises—hint: The journey wasn't exactly what it seemed—and a hitherto-unheralded creature invites readers to return to the illustrations and locate it.

This charmer demands and rewards repeat visits, and children will find unexpected pleasures every time. (Picture book. 4-8)



THE WOMAN'S HOUR (ADAPTED FOR YOUNG READERS) *Our Fight for the Right To Vote*

Weiss, Elaine
Illus. by Porwell, Debbie
Random House (208 pp.)
\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jun. 2, 2020
978-0-593-12518-2
978-0-593-12519-9 PLB

Adapted from Weiss' 2018 book of the same title, this work focuses on the final push for the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

By the summer of 1920, 35 states had ratified the amendment to give women the right to vote, and only one more state was needed to change the Constitution. Tennessee scheduled a special legislative session to decide if it would become that final state. Suffragists and those opposing ratification—the

Antis—poured into the state, using every legal power, and a few that weren't, to steer legislators. Amid promises and betrayals and through numerous votes and procedural diversions, suspense is carefully sustained—even though readers know the eventual outcome. Unfortunately, the depiction of Antis, the Southerners described as “froth[ing] with rage,” is oversimplified. Portrayed as disdainful of women and racially motivated, many (less malevolently if with no greater enlightenment) just clung to the 19th-century belief that the idealized women's sphere would be destroyed by participation in the sordid world of politics. The racism within the suffrage movement is glancingly addressed. To keep suspense high, Weiss also represents this as quite likely the last hope for ratification, although Connecticut would vote to ratify just a month later. Brief profiles of women involved in both the radical and the more traditional wings of the suffrage movement offer rich insight into the determination of these brave crusaders. Fine backmatter rounds out this fascinating if not quite balanced presentation.

An inspiring tale that just might spark greater voter participation. (bibliography, index) (Nonfiction. 10-16)



AMAZING ISLANDS 100+ Places That Will Boggle Your Mind

Weiss, Sabrina

Illus. by Hyndman, Kerry

What on Earth Books (64 pp.)

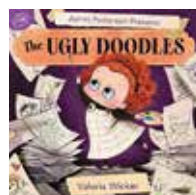
\$24.00 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-912920-16-7

A compendium of oddly interesting facts about islands, large and small, and their human and animal inhabitants.

Weiss and Hyndman open by defining island and other names associated with this geographical term, like “islet, skerry, or cay—these are names for very small islands” and “ait—a small island, often found in a river or lake.” Subsequent double-page spreads introduce individual islands or island groups like the Galápagos, Cuba, the British Isles, and Sri Lanka. In no particular arrangement, topical spreads are intermixed. Lists of large and small islands, “[y]oungest natural islands,” and a world map showing the locations of the islands mentioned will satisfy reference buffs. The illustrations feature a heavy emphasis on green and blue tones, sometimes muted, and occasionally obscuring the small print of the text, making it difficult to read some descriptions. The layouts are varied and lively, with realistic details of animals and plants, and occasional foldouts add both more space for information and a bit of excitement. The text and the illustrations usually complement each other well, but, unfortunately, on the spread on river islands, the text mentions the Empire State Building (nowhere to be found in the picture) but not the Freedom Tower (which dominates the skyline). People pictured are diverse, but the depictions of “island peoples” tend toward the exoticized.

Curious kids may enjoy browsing through this cornucopia of island facts. (glossary, pronunciation guide, index, sources) (Nonfiction. 8-11)



THE UGLY DOODLES

Wicker, Valeria

Illus. by the author

Jimmy Patterson/Little, Brown (32 pp.)

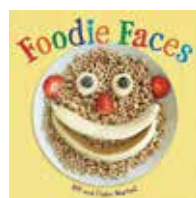
\$17.99 | Jul. 7, 2020

978-0-316-45626-5

Artwork has paranormal staying power.

Raven, a peach-skinned girl with curly red hair, sees masterpieces in an art museum and sets out to create some herself. It's harder than she thinks, and although she works diligently, she finds the results “ugly.” She gathers up the so-called “doodles” and stuffs them under the bed. But just like the cat in the old folk song, the papers come back. Not a wardrobe nor the attic nor even the recycling center can hold them; they return onto her mirror, into her bed, and even—eek!—as part of “a brand-new box of drawing pads made from 100 percent recycled paper.” Three visual tones—Raven's art, styled like a child's black-and-white pencil drawings; Raven's huge, round, uber-glossy cartoon eyes; and ominously dark backgrounds that turn dystopically yellow at the recycling center—complement but also jar against one another, parallel to the way the drawings' reappearances unsettle Raven. When Raven finally takes her “hideous. Miserable-looking. Mess-ups” and works on them again until they're “perfected” into her “very own gallery of masterpieces,” the delicious spookiness vanishes into a boring moral. Moreover, the text's consistent and incorrect use of the term “doodle” is not only inaccurate—doodles are casual or absentminded, whereas Raven tries hard, even at the beginning—it belittles Raven's deliberate artwork. Even more importantly, it dismisses young readers' deliberate artwork too.

Catastrophically undermines its own message. (Picture book. 4-8)



FOODIE FACES

Wurtzel, Bill & Wurtzel, Claire

Illus. by the authors

Little, Brown (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-0-316-42354-0

A colorful picture book filled with faces created out of food.

Explore a world of vibrant and expressive emotions through an array of cleverly crafted edible faces. Readers will experience emotions such as happiness, sadness, curiosity, confusion, and confidence through everyday foods including oatmeal, eggs, bananas, lettuce, bagels, pasta, and more. Each page is dominated by a photograph of a single plate on which a food face has been arranged, with a short line naming the emotion conveyed above or below. Emotions are highlighted in the text with bright colors and capitalized letters. Simple sentences—“Sometimes I feel **SAD**. / Other times I feel **HAPPY**”—complement the eye-catching photographs. A plate on which sits an expertly cut watermelon wedge, a piece of banana, a blueberry, and a blackberry becomes background

for a face illustrating anger. Though the concept is simple, the intricacies of each face beg for closer examination, and readers might find themselves transfixed in wonder at the fantastical creations. Young readers will enjoy this journey through food and feelings, and if they're tempted to try their hands at creating their own foodie faces, there are helpful tips at the end of the book.

A visually delightful experience. (author's note) (*Picture book.* 3-6)



CITY OF SECRETS

Ying, Victoria

Illus. by the author

Viking (256 pp.)

\$20.99 | Jul. 28, 2020

978-0-593-11448-3

A mechanized city harbors a secret.

In the capital city of Oskars, orphan Ever Barnes lives among the gears and levers in the Switchboard Operating Facility, an edifice that can rotate and shift. Instructed by his father (who was brutally murdered), Ever guards a mysterious safe housed within the movable building. Across the city, highborn Hannah, whose father owns the Switchboard, spends her days in comfort. When the two run into each other, she is instantly taken with Ever. They form a friendship and soon find themselves caught up in a vast political conspiracy and in very real danger. This middle-grade steampunk graphic novel features a delightfully constructed world with broad appeal, reading like a remix of Hope Larson and Rebecca Mock's *Four Points* series, with a dash of Laura Ruby's *York* series and a hint of Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2008). Ying has constructed a thrilling genre-bender that seamlessly blends hot air balloons, a secret society, an assassin's guild, a giant robot, and political intrigue without ever feeling overloaded. The city of Oskars becomes its own fully formed character as its secrets—like a mysterious map, concealed gears and mechanisms, and a hidden safe—slowly reveal themselves. Ying's full-color illustrations are cinematic in scope, spotlighting the nonstop action. While Ever and Hannah's adventures come to a satisfying resolution, more are promised in a later volume. Ever presents white, and Hannah has Asian features.

Thrills and fun galore. (*Graphic mystery/fantasy.* 7-12)



AMBUSH

Yu, Hongchen

Illus. by the author

Reycraft Books (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | May 22, 2020

978-1-4788-6938-2

Two kingdoms battle for control in ancient China.

Approximately 2,000 years ago, China was divided into many warlord-led kingdoms after the fall of the Qin Empire. Two kingdoms emerged as formidable forces: the Chu Kingdom and the Han Kingdom. Years of fighting erupt when the Han Kingdom, ruled by Liu Bang, attacks. Xiang Yu, the Chu Kingdom's ruler, furiously leads his troops against Liu Bang's army, but the latter's superior tactics exhaust the Chu forces. Numbers dwindle, and emotions are tested. In the face of the impending Han victory, Xiang Yu resolutely takes his last stand. The text is sparing with dates and specific locations, and readers will need to pursue other resources for historical context and timeline information. Yu, however, effectively presents a weighty account of the power struggle, particularly Xiang Yu's "fearless[ness]" in defeat. Illustrations capture the intensity of battle strategy as double-page spreads engulf readers in the action. Faces and body language are expressive, and perspective and angle often highlight the emotional toll of battle. Yu's illustrations appear to combine traditional paper-cutting techniques with watercolor and ink painting. Occasional elements, such as a crane and tree branches, break the confines of panels.

A visually striking and spirited but extremely brief look at the lead up to the Han dynasty. (*Informational picture book.* 8-10)



SWEET LABA CONGEE

Zhang, Qisheng

Illus. by Zhu, Chengliang

Reycraft Books (24 pp.)

\$15.95 | May 22, 2020

978-1-4788-6934-4

A small child shows readers how their family celebrates the traditional Chinese Laba Festival.

In what looks like a small Chinese village, the young protagonist introduces readers to the Laba Festival, celebrated on the eighth day of the 12th month of the lunar year. Through deceptively simple poetic prose and whimsical typesetting, readers learn that making sweet laba congee, a tasty porridge made from many valuable ingredients, is a highlight of the holiday. The family prepares the ingredients the day before and then cooks it on a traditional wood-burning stove (not their new gas stove) to guarantee that "it will be perfect." Then they use it as an offering to their ancestors, asking for good luck for themselves and their family, including the child's father, who is "working in a different city." They take some in a pot to elderly neighbors, and they smear it on the big persimmon tree that grows in the yard of their home compound. Most importantly,

Zommer employs agile brushwork and a fondness for graceful lines and bright colors to bring to life bustling bouquets.

THE BIG BOOK OF BLOOMS

the grandmother, mother, and child sit to enjoy it together. Delicate and charming illustrations of village life recall an earlier time, but hints like having a gas stove and an uncle away at university indicate that this may be a deliberate nod to those who live in poorer conditions right now.

Sweet and simple, like a warm bowl of laba congee on a cold day. (Picture book. 3-7)



THE BIG BOOK OF BLOOMS

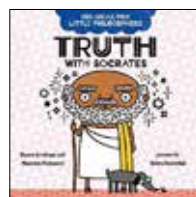
Zommer, Yuval
Illus. by the author
 Thames & Hudson (64 pp.)
 \$19.95 | May 5, 2020
 978-0-500-65199-5

Spirited illustrations brighten a large-format introduction to flowers and their pollinators.

Showing a less Eurocentric outlook than in his *Big Book of Birds* (2019), Zommer employs agile brushwork and a fondness for graceful lines and bright colors to bring to life bustling bouquets from a range of habitats, from rainforest to desert. Often switching from horizontal to vertical orientations, the topical spreads progress from overviews of major floral families and broad looks at plant anatomy and reproduction to close-ups of select flora—roses and tulips to Venus flytraps and stinking flowers. The book then closes with a shoutout to the conservators and other workers at Kew Gardens (this is a British import) and quick suggestions for young balcony or windowsill gardeners. In most of the low-angled scenes, fancifully drawn avian or insect pollinators with human eyes hover around all the large, luscious blooms, as do one- or two-sentence comments that generally add cogent observations or insights: “All parts of the deadly nightshade plant contain poison. It has been used to poison famous emperors, kings and warriors throughout history.” (Confusingly for the audience, the accurate but limited assertion that bees “often visit blue or purple flowers” appears to be contradicted by an adjacent view of several zeroing in on a yellow toadflax.) Human figures, or, in one scene, hands, are depicted in a variety of sizes, shapes, and skin colors.

A floral fantasia for casual browsers as well as budding botanists. (glossary, index) (Informational picture book. 7-9)

BOARD & NOVELTY BOOKS



TRUTH WITH SOCRATES

Armitage, Duane &
 McQuerry, Maureen Doyle
Illus. by Rosenthal, Robin
 Putnam (20 pp.)
 \$8.99 | Jul. 7, 2020
 978-0-593-10875-8

While this book won't help toddlers understand the scale of Socrates' importance to Western thought, it presents some simple and vital moral truths and should get kids thinking about thinking.

In a spate of board books for toddlers aiming to introduce them to concepts perhaps better suited to college classrooms, this volume manages to be sweetly age appropriate. It will *not* give young children an appreciation of the Socratic method; in fact, no iteration of the term occurs. If it teaches children to value truth and honesty, though, and to build an inquisitive spirit, it will justify its place on a child's bookshelf. As portrayed herein, Socrates is a brown-skinned, bearded old man with a toga, staff, and dog; he has large eyes and appears to be thinking hard. Simple, clear text explains, “A philosopher is someone who loves wisdom.... / Socrates was a philosopher who lived a long time ago.” A racially diverse cast of children, some with visible disabilities, explores their world, asking themselves, “Why am I here?” and “Where did the world come from?” The characters' large oval heads allow for big, expressive faces with lots of personality. Contrasting pastels and a rich palette of distinct skin tones, varied fonts with colorful highlights, and eye-catching background patterns provide great visual appeal. “Socrates... said wisdom meant *wondering* about the truth.... / What is something you wonder about?”

Raises more questions than it answers...and that's good. (Board book. 1-4)



WHAT DID THE GOOD NIGHT MONSTER DO?

Austin, Ruth
Illus. by Harnett, Katie
 Compendium (32 pp.)
 \$39.95 | Jun. 1, 2020
 978-1-970147-05-6

A cozy bedtime story and accompanying plush toy allow families to reframe the narrative of nighttime monsters.

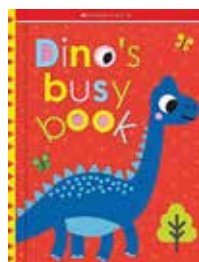
After humans have gone to bed, nocturnal Monster awakens as guardian over the household. Monster monitors the night light, keeps an eye on shadows and an ear out for things that go bump, and chases away scary things under the bed. As Monster amuses the other toys with a bedtime story and other games, young readers can enact the

The diminutive bunnies, hedgehog, and fox are reminiscent of characters in Richard Scarry's classic *Busy Town Busy People*.

THE WHEELS ON THE DUMP TRUCK

scenario with the toy Monster and their other bedroom friends. Readers can also connect and expand upon Monster's solo evening adventures, which include partaking in midnight snacking and having a bathroom accident. The narrative encourages questioning, offers affirmations, and invites interaction with a repeated refrain: "And then what did Monster do?" A starry-night theme carries throughout the pages of the book and onto the box containing the plush toy, which also contains a guide for grown-ups for further enrichment tips in how to reduce nighttime anxieties. Specific suggestions include having grown-up and child agree to Monster's bedtime routine in the morning. Grown-ups can also encourage a child to talk through their worries and fears with Monster and think of suggestions for working through them. Book and toy are not sold separately.

A cuddly tool to help children build positive associations around bedtime and mitigate common fears. (Guide for grown-ups.) (Picture book & plush toy. 3-6)



DINO'S BUSY BOOK

Illus. by Barker, Scott

Cartwheel/Scholastic (10 pp.)

\$9.99 | May 5, 2020

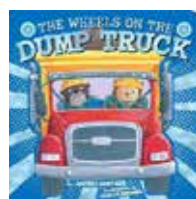
978-1-338-64568-2

Series: Touch and Explore

Turn the textured tabs to follow a blue dinosaur from sunup to bedtime.

Each spread offers a four-line verse that describes the action of Dino and three more cartoon dinosaur pals. The verse doesn't always trip off the tongue: "Run and chase. / Then eat some lunch. / Tasty leaves! / Crunch, **chomp**, munch!" Other, mostly predictable rhymes include "day" and "play"; "wash" and "splish"; "fruit" and "cute"; and "bed" and "head." Bold, bright colors are layered to create fanciful background scenery and illustrate Dino's actions. Peach-colored mountains drip with sherbet-hued snow. Each spread includes a colored dot with the instruction: "Feel the tab and find the same pattern on the page." Initially this seems straightforward. The first padded fabric tab is blue with bumpy teal spots, like Dino's back. On the second spread, both the first and second tabs are visible, and each can be matched with a pattern on the page. But the second pattern is not included on the third spread, and the fish scales meant to match the shiny silver third tab are tiny—or are readers supposed to be looking at the similarly patterned droplets of water? Though the tabs are tactile, the matching elements to be found in the illustrations are not, so there is nothing to match by "feel." Toddlers will just grab the glued-in tabs, destroying the book and creating potential choke hazards in the process.

Busy indeed! Board-book readers will tear this book up—but not in a good way. (Board book. 1-3)



THE WHEELS ON THE DUMP TRUCK

Burton, Jeffrey

Illus. by Brown, Alison

Little Simon/Simon & Schuster (16 pp.)

\$5.99 | Mar. 3, 2020

978-1-5344-4248-1

Construction work set to the rhythm of "The Wheels on the Bus."

The bulldozer, excavator, and cement truck and their anthropomorphic animal operators are building a park in stages. The use of the beat of "The Wheels on the Bus" gives the book a familiar cadence that is sure to appeal to toddlers tuned in to the childhood classic. Though the book doesn't invite or direct readers to sing the text, it's hard not to. Only then does the text feel clumsy, as the opening line of the book breaks with the original's cadence, and lines such as "the workers on the construction trucks" don't bounce along the way readers' ears will tell them they should. Brown's illustrations are nicely detailed (a tiny blueprint with drawings!), and the diminutive bunnies, hedgehog, and fox are reminiscent of characters in Richard Scarry's classic *Busy Town Busy People* (1976). The way that the finished park slowly comes together not only is true to the process, but also engages readers and encourages them to make predictions about what the animals are building. Though the words don't dazzle, children will enjoy the dirt-covered construction vehicles.

Doesn't dig up anything new, but built for toddler enjoyment. (Board book. 6 mos.-2)



OSCAR THE HUNGRY UNICORN

Carter, Lou

Illus. by Dyson, Nikki

Orchard/Scholastic (24 pp.)

\$10.99 | May 26, 2020

978-1-40835-953-2

Oscar the unicorn forcibly eats his way through various fairy tales before finding a welcoming home with a unicorn-loving princess.

In this droll, twisted tale, Oscar, a rotund, cartoon-style unicorn complete with cotton-candy-pink body and majestically sparkly rainbow mane, looks like just another horned charmer. But a second glance at Oscar's stony, half-lidded eyes shows that he isn't quite so sweet after all—and isn't quite so easy to empathize with either. The ever ravenous Oscar has eaten his stable and sets off to find a new home in a fairy-tale land, but wherever he wanders he wreaks havoc. There are entertaining scenes in the deadpan narrative: a young witch hiding in her gingerbread house; lights twinkling inside Oscar's belly after he eats the decorations of a dragon discotheque; or discombobulated fairies whisking him away from their half-eaten toadstool homes. Still, its subversive humor edges toward mean-spirited. While there's a certain amount of giggles due to its veering from

the conventional sweet-unicorn story, this is essentially a running gag about a terrorizing, farting unicorn illustrated in over-saturated colors. The ending, in which a young princess with pale skin and purple hair on a speedboat rescues Oscar from trolls and makes him her willing pet by feeding him enormous amounts of treats, is anticlimactic.

This anarchic tale will tickle some readers, but it is far from enchanting. (Board book. 2-4)



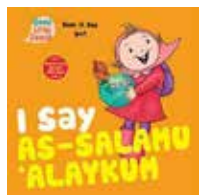
POP-UP VOLCANO!

Daugey, Fleur
Illus. by Vaillant, Tom & Duisit, Bernard
Thames & Hudson (22 pp.)
\$29.95 | Aug. 4, 2020
978-0-500-65222-0

Pop ups and cross sections add drama to a quick overview of volcanoes in fact and legend.

In a geological overview, this French import offers terse introductions to plate tectonics, pyroclastic and other types of eruptions, and extraterrestrial equivalents such as Olympus Mons on Mars. There are also brief accounts of the eruption of Vesuvius witnessed by Pliny the Elder ("He died, but his notes recorded many important scientific details") and the legendary origins of Mount Fuji and the Hawaiian volcanoes as well as how more-recent researchers traced ash in polar ice to a climate-changing Indonesian eruption in 1257. Lit up by Day-Glo orange highlights, blocky 3-D depictions of generic blasts on the surface and at the bottom of the sea join layered glimpses of volcanologists at work among glowing lava flows and a floating look at the Earth's inner structure. These are all capped by a view of the peaceful-looking Fuji that looms over its reflection in tranquil waters. "But nothing about volcanoes," Daugey writes, "is ever completely certain!" Human figures not swathed in protective gear are mostly but not uniformly white.

More fizzle than blast, but could heat up dormant interest in the topic. (Informational pop up. 7-9)



I SAY AS-SALAMU 'ALAYKUM

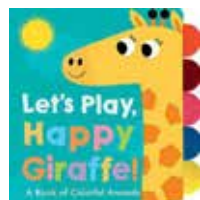
Dee, Noor H.
Illus. by Iput
Islamic Foundation (20 pp.)
\$9.95 | Mar. 3, 2020
978-0-86037-648-4
Series: Good Little Deeds

Siblings Noura and Nabil introduce common Islamic phrases to young readers in this title and its companion in the Good Little Deeds board-book series.

On their way to the park, Nabil greets each person they meet with "As-salamu 'alaykum" ("may peace be upon you"), leading Noura to ask why. Nabil explains that saying salam is a "prayer for someone's peace and happiness." With this understanding, Noura says salam to each creature they meet: a

butterfly, a "ladybird," a snail, and a rabbit. In companion title *I Say Mashallah*, Noura and Nabil go camping with their father, repeating, "*Mashallah*," whenever they "see something beautiful." First published in Indonesian in 2015, then translated into British English, this series introduces and breaks down common concepts and phrases used among Muslims, in Muslim-majority countries, and sometimes among speakers of Arabic. The titular phrase is repeated throughout the book, reinforcing word usage and appropriate times of use. The final page of each book includes the phrase in Arabic script with diacritics, a transliteration, and the English translation. Additional opportunities for extension and engagement invite children to count or name objects, and readers will enjoy the expressions of Noura's goldfish, carried in a bowl throughout each book. In the simple, bright cartoon illustrations, Noura and Nabil and their family members have light-colored skin and brown hair. Nabil's hair is curly while strands of Noura's straight brown hair appear from under a pink headscarf.

A powerful tool for practical use in Muslim families and a cross-cultural-understanding opportunity for non-Muslim readers. (Board book. 1-5) (*I Say Mashallah*: 978-0-86037-643-9)



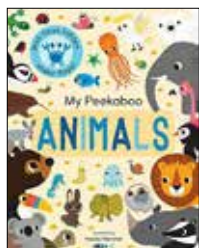
LET'S PLAY, HAPPY GIRAFFE!

Deutsch, Georgiana
Illus. by Dafflon, Adele
Tiger Tales (10 pp.)
\$9.99 | Mar. 24, 2020
978-1-68010-610-7

A cheerful teal-blue mouse greets an orange monkey, a red lion, a pink flamingo, a blue elephant, and a yellow giraffe.

The animals are not named. Instead, four-line rhymes describe an emotion sometimes associated with the predominate color on the page. So "**orange** is excitement"; red corresponds to bravery; "**pink** is oh-so-playful"; blue is (predictably) sadness; and "**yellow** is bright happiness." The rhymes mostly scan, though the toddler audience may not understand the similes embedded in each verse to explain abstract concepts. Only five colors are featured rather than the typical crayon-box eight. In companion title *Let's Play, Funny Flamingo* (published simultaneously) each of the nine animals included rates only two lines as the verses explore opposites. Felt tabs embedded in the pages of both books help little people turn the pages. However, the positioning of the tabs in *Happy Giraffe* places them after the corresponding color. So, for example, when a child grasps the orange tab and turns the page, the page revealed is all about red. The real purpose of both books is to extol the virtue of friendship, a message that's almost lost amid the lessons about colors and feelings. Still, finding the mouse on each spread can become a game for young children.

Cute animals and felt tabs can't redeem this confusing effort. (Board book. 1-3) (*Let's Play, Funny Flamingo*: 978-1-68010-611-4)



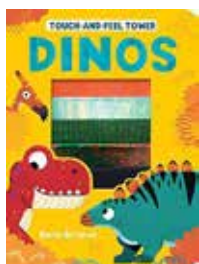
MY PEEKABOO ANIMALS

Edwards, Nicola
 Illus. by Marshall, Natalie
 Tiger Tales (12 pp.)
 \$10.99 | Mar. 3, 2020
 978-1-68010-604-6

This lift-the-flap board book presents a variety of animals grouped by climate and habitat.

The fun of this one for little readers is the thrill of opening little flaps (sometimes several) hidden beneath larger flaps, acting as a book version of a nesting doll. Each two-page spread shows a different grouping: animals “under the sea” or “on ice,” for example. Some animals are simply identified; others are given more elaborate descriptions. While many of the animals will be familiar to preschool-age enthusiasts, some are lesser known, like the quokka, bilby, and capybara. The combination of recognizable and unfamiliar animals and the element of surprise behind the flaps will keep readers engaged. The backgrounds depicting each habitat are brightly colored and mimic the landscape in each: The jungle is a busy tangle of branches and vines while, in contrast, the forest is grassy and shaded. The animals are softened, cartoon versions of the originals with wide eyes. The images of the animals under the succession of flaps at times appear skewed, like a warthog below a cheetah below a lion, all out of proportion. A polar bear and arctic fox are confoundingly shown inside an igloo, which is not an animal home and helps to perpetuate misunderstandings about Indigenous peoples; bees are inaccurately depicted as residing in a paper-wasp nest. These issues aside, the mechanics and topic of this book will give it high appeal for little readers.

More lift-the-flap adventure than storybook. (Board book. 2-4)



DINOS

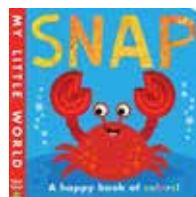
Hegarty, Patricia
 Illus. by Beranek, Carlo
 Tiger Tales (14 pp.)
 \$10.99 | Mar. 3, 2020
 978-1-68010-609-1
 Series: Touch-and-Feel Towers

Stacked touch-and-feel elements provide the primary interest in yet another cartoony dinosaur book for toddlers.

Fourteen double-page scenes present five stylized, smiling dinosaurs and one pterosaur, each depicted tail or wing first, with a turn of the page required to reveal the bulk of the beast. Each reptilian limb features a textured surface that invites the touch of little hands. The cover and all but the final two pages have die-cut windows that offer a preview of each rectangular touch-and-feel surface, arranged one above another. The rhymed text is light on information, though every couplet identifies one notable trait of each dinosaur. The opening tableau sets the scene: “Let’s all go on a journey to a different time and place, / When dinosaurs

ruled the earth. What dangers will we face?” A long blue tail with a club at the end stretches across both pages, and the text suggests, “Let’s follow the trail of this spiky tail....” The tail’s owner, pictured on the following page, is Ankylosaurus (“... look at her spikes— / With armor like that, she can do what she likes!”). Ankylosaurus studies another tail, as the text demands, “‘Stomp, stomp!’ Who’s by the swamp?” The owner of that tail is Stegosaurus, who notices yet another tail, and so on. The follow-the-tail device provides a fun peekaboo element to the proceedings. The bright colors and pop-art prehistoric backgrounds are delightful, but Triceratops is one horn short.

Adequate dino diversion for tots. (Board book. 1-4)



SNAP

Hegarty, Patricia
 Illus. by Galloway, Fiona
 Tiger Tales (16 pp.)
 \$8.99 | Mar. 31, 2020
 978-1-68010-625-1
 Series: My Little World

A playful red crab teases his fellow brightly hued sea creatures in this color concept book.

A red crab “shock[s]” a blue fish, “surprise[s]” a green turtle, and encounters a yellow sea horse. Claw-shaped die cuts appear on each recto in ever decreasing sizes to provide a sensory experience for the youngest readers. This also has the effect of pinning the crab in claws-up position in every scene, with backgrounds and sea flora and fauna changing to provide some compositional variety, and his varied facial expressions also help to make up for this. Scientifically preferred terms, such as pink “sea jelly” (which smiles seraphically) and orange “sea star,” are included in the bland, unevenly scanning rhymed couplets that are meted out on each spread: “Green sea turtle cannot believe her eyes / when crab snap snaps—what a surprise!” The saucy crab finally gets his comeuppance when a gray shark appears on the scene, making the crab scuttle into hiding. The graphically clean imagery features a color palette that is appropriately watery, but the black, sans-serif type is virtually unreadable on a couple of the spreads, when it is set on a dark-blue background.

Crab is a cheerfully cheeky crustacean if a bit uninspiring. (Board book. 6 mos.-3)



MAMA LOVES HER LITTLE LLAMA

Magsamen, Sandra
 Illus. by the author
 Cartwheel/Scholastic (12 pp.)
 \$7.99 | Apr. 7, 2020
 978-1-338-62917-0

A baby llama queries other animals in search of mama.

A woolly cria asks a cow, a pig, a cat, and a horse the same question: “Are you

As the claims about the bunnycorns grow more extravagant, the artwork explodes in garish bursts of color.

I BELIEVE IN BUNNYCORN

my mama?" Each animal responds in the negative with a rhymed retort: "No, I'm a pig. That's my gig!" The smiling baby llama always appears on recto with eyes closed so it's beneath two plush llama ears securely attached to the top of the back cover. This gimmick is the only new feature in the overplayed baby-llama-and-mama genre, and only the very youngest listeners will be surprised when the cria finds its mama and she declares her love for the baby. The companion title, the slightly more engaging and original *I Love You Little Monster!* also embeds plush elements into the back cover, but this time it is monster horns. On each right-hand page, a different monster with the same green horns appears. The theme here is the hoary one of unconditional love, as the unseen first-person narrator proclaims that love will be bestowed even if the monster in question gets angry, jumps in mud puddles, or causes bathtub floods. Magsamen's signature look of faux stitch-work and brightly colored lettering is at play in both the images and on key words in the text. Hearts are sprinkled throughout the sunny art.

Sentimental and derivative. (Board book. 1-3) (*I Love You Little Monster!*: 978-1-338-35979-4)



WHO'S HIDING IN THE RAIN FOREST?

Illus. by McEwen, Katharine
Nosy Crow/Candlewick (10 pp.)
\$9.99 | May 12, 2020
978-1-5362-1010-1
Series: Who's Hiding

A fact-filled, lift-the-flap discovery of animals living in the rainforest.

The book begins in the morning, with a look at the rainforest canopy, the illustration a twist of vines, wide leaves, and branches. There are animals readily visible, with many more below the camouflaged flaps, which are cut to match the rough outlines of flora and fauna. Each page turn moves readers through the day and a different part of the rainforest, ending with nighttime. Readers will enjoy hunting for the shaped flaps and discovering the mystery of what is hiding beneath. The undersides of all of the flaps reveal facts that range from brief and obvious—"Toucans have large, colorful beaks"—to lengthier and more interesting observations, such as information about how long manatees can hold their breath and when they surface. The illustrations are very detailed, complete with miniature markings on fish, snakes, and jaguar spots, suiting this to the older edge of the audience. The only drawback is that some animals are so small their impact is lost, as with the piranhas and their "razor-sharp teeth" which are difficult to discern on the colorful fish. Only the animals below the flaps are identified, a missed opportunity to label all that appear for readers' benefit. Companion title *Who's Hiding on the Savanna?* follows the same morning-to-nighttime format to introduce animals of the African savanna.

Lush illustrations and disguised flaps make this one worthwhile. (Board book. 3-5) (*Who's Hiding on the Savanna?*: 978-1-5362-1217-4)



I BELIEVE IN BUNNYCORN

McLean, Danielle
Illus. by Le Tandé, Prisca
Random House (18 pp.)
\$9.99 | Jan. 7, 2020
978-0-593-12643-1

Copious amounts of glitter and rainbows and a die-cut rainbow flower add a bit of interest to this celebration of the titular one-horned bunnies.

With simple, rhyming text and high-contrast, neon illustrations, this book is like cotton candy for the eyes and ears. Like that sugary confection, it's sweet—arguably, too much so. "We're going on a bunny hunt / to find the bunnycorns. / We follow trails of sparkle dust / and look for shiny horns! // We'll find them in the places / where candy carrots grow. / I CAN SEE A BUNNYCORN! / Let's go and say hello!" As the claims about the bunnycorns grow more extravagant, the artwork explodes in garish bursts of color. As for the aforementioned die-cut flower, it starts as a large cutout on the front cover of the book, becoming progressively smaller through each successive page, till it ends as a glittery, yellow single flower on the second-to-last double-page spread. In the denouement that follows, the narrative voice breaks the literary fourth wall: "If you believe in bunnycorns, / then they'll believe in you. / 'Cause bunnycorns are special, / and baby, YOU are too!" The use of bunnies, of course, constitutes a radical departure from author McLean and illustrator Le Tandé's 2019 opus, *I Love My Llamacorn*.

Cute, harmless, and unlikely to achieve classic status. (Board book. 1-4)



MUSIC A Fold-Out Graphic History

O'Neill, Nicholas & Hayes, Susan
Illus. by Taylor, Ruby
What on Earth Books (22 pp.)
\$19.99 | May 12, 2020
978-1-9999679-4-9

Folded, appropriately enough, accordion style, a panoramic survey of noteworthy music and music makers from bone flutes to Beyoncé.

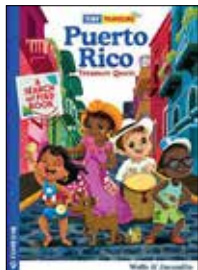
With an international outlook and an eye for music that incorporates disparate styles and traditions, the authors and Taylor closely fill both sides of a nearly 8-foot-long strip of sturdy stock with hundreds of human figures—broadly diverse in skin color and period or national dress—and musical instruments, all paired to blocks of pithy but lucid commentary. Following an opening world map of prehistoric highlights on every inhabited continent, the contents take a chronological drift with biographical entries running along the top, cultural notes in the middle, and technological advances highlighted at the bottom. Select milestones in opera, orchestral music, and rock-'n'-roll get fair shares of attention (the Beatles even rate

No ageist stereotypes here!

GO, GRANDPA, GO!

an entire page), but so do the histories of Indigenous American, Asian, and African music; son Cubano and Caribbean styles; Australian bush music; and other music linked to particular cultures or regions. Likewise, the nods to lesser-known figures or milestones—composers such as Amy Beach, performers from kunqu opera founder Wei Liangfu to punk ranter Poly Styrene, and tools such as the online music platform Chinabot—can't help but give young audiences an expansive view of what music is and can be.

Unfolds a world of music for casual as well as serious listeners. (recommended playlist, authors' notes, glossary, source list, index) (*Informational novelty.* 9-12)



TINY TRAVELERS PUERTO RICO TREASURE QUEST

Pereira, Steven Wolfe & Jaramillo, Susie

Encantos (22 pp.)

\$12.99 | Feb. 25, 2020

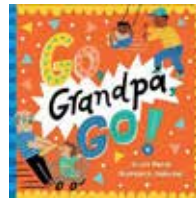
978-1-945635-30-4

Series: Tiny Travelers

In this new addition to the Tiny Travelers series, young armchair travelers go on a treasure hunt to the island of Puerto Rico.

Following the same format as other books in the series, the book starts with a double-page map of Puerto Rico. The map includes illustrations of the objects readers will have to keep an eye out for as they read the book, as well as a few quick facts about Puerto Rico. Busy and colorful double-page spreads inform children about the island: its love for celebrations; a style of music known as "Bomba"; some of the typical foods such as "mofongo" and "arroz con gandules"; the magical experience of seeing bioluminescence in Vieques; or exploring the rainforest of "El Yunque." The information is presented in rhyming text; each page also includes a "DID YOU KNOW" tidbit, expanding on the information presented with a quick, fun extra. Readers are also directed to find a hidden object, usually depicted with "a glow" around it, though that yellow aura is not always easy to find against warm-colored backgrounds. A few words are presented in Spanish in boldface, accompanied by their phonetic pronunciations. As with the other series entries, there is a commercial side to the outing, as readers are encouraged to visit the website, where they can purchase related material.

An engaging and enjoyable introduction to Puerto Rico. (*Board book.* 3-6)



GO, GRANDPA, GO!

Plourde, Lynn

Illus. by Beer, Sophie

Little Simon/Simon & Schuster (20 pp.)

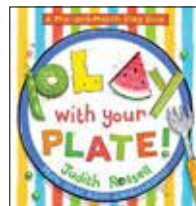
\$7.99 | Mar. 10, 2020

978-1-5344-5224-4

A high-energy board book celebrates intergenerational relationships.

Brief rhymes and alliteration describe what grandpas do. Young children will quickly join in on the refrain, "Go, Grandpa, go!" The grandpas are notably diverse, with a range of skin tones, hair colors, clothing, and ages represented. Four of the grandpas and one of the children wear glasses. One of the grandpas is bald; three have beards; one sports a gray mustache. The children are equally representative, with one in a wheelchair. A child in a dress plays with a firetruck; another wears both a baseball cap and bumblebee wings. A companion volume, *Go, Grandma, Go!* makes similar sensitive choices. A grandma shops for groceries, but so does a grandpa. If anything, the grandmas' activities are more strenuous than their counterparts', including sliding down a slide, sledding, surfing, and hiking. The grandpas' most daring activities are examining a beehive (inaccurately represented) and stomping in a mud puddle. Busy illustrations against clean backgrounds fill in details and give youngsters plenty to talk about, but that refrain reminds them to turn the page. Quiet snuggle time brings a satisfying end to each book. Are two separate titles really needed? Yes—to give equal attention to both grandpas and grandmas and to serve families whose grandparents don't come in pairs.

No ageist stereotypes here! These active grandparents are indeed on the go. (*Board book.* 1-3) (*Go, Grandma, Go!:* 978-1-5344-5222-0)



PLAY WITH YOUR PLATE!

Rossell, Judith

abramsappleseed (18 pp.)

\$12.99 | Apr. 14, 2020

978-1-4197-3907-1

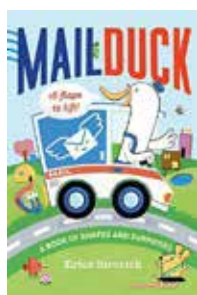
Series: Mix-and-Match Book

An interactive concept book relating to food, colors, and shapes for the preschool set.

When children open the book they will find four small books arranged as a square. The two on the left open to the left, the two on the right open to the right. When all four books are open it looks like a place setting, with a plate full of food. The books have illustrations of food with different shapes: circles (slices of kiwi, a bowl of guacamole) and triangles (a pizza slice, a watermelon wedge); different colors: red (kidney beans, red miso soup, tomatoes), yellow (corn bread, a taco, pineapple), green (peas, lettuce, edamame); and food types: fruits, vegetables, sushi, pizza, pasta. The book suggests some plate arrangements children can make: "Can you make a plate of only triangles or circles?" "Can you make a plate of only vegetables or fruits?" or "Can you make a plate of your favorite foods?"

But the possibilities are many, and readers can come up with their own combinations—including matching the plate edges or the accompanying flatware. Adults can also use the book as a springboard for a playful conversation on food and nutrition.

Playing with your food is allowed (and encouraged!) here. (Board book. 2-4)



MAIL DUCK A Book of Shapes and Surprises

Sirotich, Erica

Illus. by the author

abramsappleseed (20 pp.)

\$9.99 | Apr. 21, 2020

978-1-4197-3989-7



From a mail truck, a friendly, overalls-wearing white duck delivers variously shaped parcels—triangle, circle, square, oval, rectangle, and heart—to a corresponding critter who happens to be a lover of said geometric figure.

Each shape-and-animal pairing is allotted a double-page spread on which Mail Duck delivers the package to a grateful recipient. Pink owl Omar, for example, lives in a hollow tree trunk with an oval opening, and readers can peek behind flaps to view all the ovals in the owl's house. Mail Duck hands over an oval-shaped package to the owl that readers can view the contents of behind a flap, which reveals it to be an oval-shaped balloon. This pattern is repeated with Scout the beaver, Cecil the snail, Trudy the mouse, Rosie the snake, and Harry the cat. The simple text declares the preferred shape of each animal, and Mail Duck ponders what could be inside each package via thought bubble. The final spread features gatefold flaps that open up the post-office exterior to reveal those friends with the contents of their packages, which happen to be party supplies in honor of Mail Duck. Sirotich's art steals the show, with smiling faces and hidden shapes throughout in gentle greens, cotton-candy pinks, and highly saturated blues. While the 16 shaped flaps are easy for little fingers to lift, they won't withstand robust play.

Mail Duck delivers delight, and toddlers will clamor for more. (Board book. 1-3)



PANCAKES WITH GRANDMA

Smith, Kathryn

Illus. by Braun, Seb

Tiger Tales (12 pp.)

\$9.99 | Mar. 3, 2020

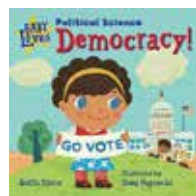
978-1-68010-623-7

Little Bunny and Grandma go on an ingredient-finding adventure to make a surprise breakfast.

With several flaps to lift and doors and windows to open, the book invites readers along on the hunt for cooking supplies for a mystery breakfast. Each two-page spread poses a specific question directed to readers, such as "Can you find some

delicious berries?" The berries are revealed after looking behind an upside-down flowerpot, pulling back the leaves on a tree, and peeking inside a basket. Each scene includes some flaps that hide objects other than what the bunnies are looking for (as in a dozing mouse beneath that flowerpot). Toddlers and preschoolers will get such a thrill out of this "game." They'll also get to use their predictive pre-reading skills and use context clues when the culminating question—"Can you guess what the bunnies made?"—is finally answered. The bunnies are adorable, as is the attention to detail. A tiny cookbook on the kitchen table titled *Breakfast for Bunnies*, by Bunny Oliver (which actually opens!), cleverly reappears throughout the book. At the very end, it is shown large-scale with an actual recipe to try. Smith and Braun's simultaneously publishing *Picnic With Mommy* is similar in format, although it's missing the fun of the central mystery that propels this book along. With the fun of discovering what lies behind each flap, the joy of playing with Little Bunny, and a simple real-life recipe, this one is sure to be enjoyed.

A dash of mystery and a spoonful of seek-and-find make for a heap of fun. (Board book. 2-4) (*Picnic With Mommy*: 978-1-68010-622-0)



BABY LOVES POLITICAL SCIENCE Democracy!

Spiro, Ruth

Illus. by Paprocki, Greg

Charlesbridge (20 pp.)

\$8.99 | Apr. 7, 2020

978-1-62354-227-6

Series: Baby Loves...

Baby learns about the elections in this latest entry to the Baby Loves... series.

A toddler with light-brown skin works with her white mommy to color signs and put stamps on postcards to get out the vote, and she cheers Mommy on when she "puts the ballot into the machine." Along the way, Baby explores key aspects of the political process with her white mom and another, brown-skinned caregiver, such as campaigning, candidates, and the different types of political leaders. It is a simplified and rosy picture of American democracy, asserting confidently that the "candidate with the most votes wins," and political opponents "can still be friends" after an election. The art is a toddler-centric, idealized world in a bold, bright cartoon style featuring political candidates from a wide range of backgrounds. There is a female-presenting president, a black, male-presenting vice president, a brown-skinned, hijabi senator, and a white, male-presenting representative who uses a wheelchair. While the explanations, imagery, and suggested activities are spot-on for older preschoolers, the format and the "baby" label make the content developmentally inappropriate for the target audience of babies and toddlers. Little ones still learning to label things in their homes and their neighborhoods will be hard-pressed to understand the basics of civic engagement.

A straightforward and lively introduction to the democratic process for readers older than babies. (Board book. 3-5)



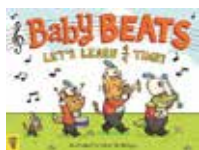
ANIMAL ANTICS / JUEGOS DE ANIMALES

Stewart, Whitney
 Illus. by Alejandro, Rocio
 Trans. by Perez, María
 Barefoot (16 pp.)
 \$7.99 | Apr. 15, 2020
 978-1-78285-983-3

This bilingual book presents a series of mindfulness exercises to help young children focus and transition from one activity to another.

While pretending to be elephants, frogs, and cats, children engage in mindfulness practices such as bending, hopping, and stretching that help them wiggle their waggles away, ending with “Now it’s time to be ourselves. / ... / We are ready for what’s next!” and “Y ahora seamos nosotros mismos. / ... / ¡Estamos listos para lo que sigue!” Spanish speakers may find one quibble in Perez’s otherwise flawless translation of the English text into Spanish: The verb “to swing” is arguably better translated as “mecer” rather than “balancear.” The book is also available as an English-only text. Companion volume *Rest & Relax / Descansa y relájate* is similar in presentation and is also published in an English-only edition. Here, children prepare for sleep as they are led through guided visualization to relax their bodies, starting with their toes, followed by their knees, tummies, hands, arms, shoulders, until they eventually close their eyes. The kid-friendly artwork, featuring a group of children diverse in both skin tone and physical abilities (one has a guide dog), is more decorative than informative, and it is really the text that informs what the actions to be taken should be.

Will work best for adults seeking a guide to use with young children. (Board book. 2-5) (*Animal Antics*: 978-1-78285-936-9; *Rest & Relax / Descansa y relájate*: 978-1-78285-984-0; *Rest & Relax*: 978-1-78285-935-2)



LET’S LEARN 4/4 TIME!

Illus. by Stubbings, Ellen
 Odd Dot (10 pp.)
 \$8.99 | May 5, 2020
 978-1-250-24145-0
 Series: Baby Beats

Toddlers learn about rhythm, beats, and notes.

In this book children are introduced to 4/4 time, usually associated with a marching beat. A group of animals in marching-band outfits invites readers to “Count out loud! / One! Two! Three! Four!” With a page turn, they are instructed to “Say aloud! / Alligator!”—this animal being a four-syllable animal. As the book progresses, two-syllable animals (“Lion! Tiger!”) and then one-syllable animals (“Fox! Cat! Rat! Bat!”) are presented. In addition, above each word there is a musical note (a whole note for the alligator, a half note for lion and tiger, and quarter notes for Fox, cat, rat, and bat), which, unless readers have a formal musical background, will not mean much. Rather surprisingly, the book ends with, “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Readers

will probably find the whole exercise a little befuddling. To add to this bewilderment, instructions on how to read the book are on the back cover—a place most readers typically overlook. There, aside from learning they must clap along with the syllables, they also learn what whole, half, and quarter notes are and what they look like. Companion books *Let’s Learn 3/4 Time!* and *Let’s Learn 2/4 Time!* follow the same format and presentation with a waltz and tango theme, respectively.

Sing, dance, clap, and enjoy music with baby. Just skip the book. (Board book. 1-3) (*Let’s Learn 3/4 Time!*: 978-1-250-24146-7; *Let’s Learn 2/4 Time!*: 978-1-250-24147-4)



LET’S FIND THE DINOSAUR

Tiger Tales
 Illus. by Willmore, Alex
 Tiger Tales (12 pp.)
 \$9.99 | Mar. 17, 2020
 978-1-68010-599-5

It’s a hunt to find the T. rex among the other prehistoric reptiles in this book, which combines descriptive clues, peekaboo cutouts, and felt flaps.

As readers search for the fearsome theropod, this colorful board book also introduces a pterodactyl, a diplodocus, a triceratops, and a stegosaurus. Readers lift flaps and take hints until at last they discover their quarry beneath a yellow, egg-shaped piece of felt. The felt flaps are well suited to eager little hands; while a determined-enough toddler may be able to tear a flap from the book as, say, a T. rex tears into its prey, they are certainly sturdier than paper flaps. Each cutout incorporates glimpses of the felt flap on the next page. A flash of pale-green felt viewed through a tail-shaped die cut accompanies the question “Could this be T-rex in the trees?” A page turn reveals the full, bush-shaped flap, behind which sits a smiling triceratops. Each dinosaur’s full image appears with its name and a phonetic spelling—with, oddly, the exception of “Tyrannosaurus rex.” Willmore’s illustrations are bright and inviting with pops of lime green, deep orange, fuchsia, and turquoise. Though the T. rex features described may be fanciful rather than scientific (“spiky back,” “scaly head”) in this playful context, it seems fair game. Companion title *Let’s Find the Mermaid* follows the same format, though the clues are clearer, making for more successful guesses.

Not much to sink one’s teeth into but toddler dino lovers won’t mind. (Board book. 1-3) (*Let’s Find the Mermaid*: 978-1-68010-608-4)



MY NEW FRIENDS

Turner, Jeffrey
Illus. by the author
 Schiffer (20 pp.)
 \$9.99 | Mar. 28, 2020
 978-0-7643-5914-9
 Series: Early Concepts

A personable poodle introduces youngsters to some animal friends and to primary and secondary colors, too.

This Early Concepts volume utilizes engaging and expressive characters, bright hues, an appealing rhyme scheme, and a clear, simple concluding lesson to convey some basic concepts about color. "Would you like to meet my new friends?" asks a wide-eyed, gray poodle, who then presents the rest of the cast: a red bear, an orange cat, a yellow snake, a blue snail, a green frog, and a purple squirrel—and a rat, dog, and hog for good measure. The rhymed introductions are simple and fun: "Red bear braids hair. / Oh, what flair!" (Three braids in different colors suddenly appear atop the bear's head.) "Orange cat knits a hat. / For a little rat." (The rat and the cat are already wearing matching hats, but another one is underway.) Sentence structure and punctuation aside, the ideas flow in easily digested bites. At the end is a simple lesson in chromatics: "Did you know," asks the poodle, "that a branch of science is concerned with colors?" On the final page, the book's colorful cohorts present the primary colors and mix them to create secondary hues. Companion volume *My New Haircut* deals with shapes less effectively. The variously shaped haircuts, though silly, resemble hats or helmets more than styled hair, undermining the central conceit, and the concluding descriptions of a five-pointed star and a triangle should state "this star," and "this triangle," as not all triangles or five-pointed stars are equilateral.

This poodle lacks pizzazz, but it's a decent effort overall. (Board book. 2-4) (*My New Haircut*: 978-0-7643-5916-3)

CONTINUING SERIES

A TRIP TO THE COUNTRY FOR MARVIN & JAMES

Broach, Elise
Illus. by Murphy, Kelly
 Henry Holt (112 pp.)
 \$16.99 | Apr. 7, 2020
 978-1-250-18609-6
 Series: The Masterpiece Adventures, 5
 (Fiction. 6-9)

DINNER TIME FOR ZAZA

Freeman, Mylo
Illus. by the author
 Clavis (24 pp.)
 \$14.95 | May 26, 2020
 978-1-60537-496-3
 Series: Zaza
 (Picture book. 2-5)

ROCKS

Kastner, Emmy
Illus. by the author
 Roaring Brook (32 pp.)
 \$18.99 | \$7.99 board | May 5, 2020
 978-1-250-31219-8
 978-1-250-31224-2 board
 Series: Nerdy Babies
 (Informational picture book. 1-3)

THINK BIG

Kronenberg, Kat
Illus. by Miles, David
 Greenleaf (48 pp.)
 \$15.95 | May 12, 2020
 978-1-62634-711-3
 Series: Live Big, 3
 (Fiction. 4-8)

GOODBYE A Story of Suicide

Lamberth, Hailee Joy with Zuiker, Anthony E.
Illus. by Hudson, Donald with Kubina, Monica
 Zuiker Press (88 pp.)
 \$12.99 | Apr. 14, 2020
 978-1-947378-27-8
 Series: Zuiker Graphics
 (Graphic memoir. 10-14)

BECOMING BRIANNA

Libenson, Terri
Illus. by the author
 Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (320 pp.)
 \$22.99 | \$12.99 paper | May 5, 2020
 978-0-06-289454-0
 978-0-06-289453-3 paper
 Series: Emmie & Friends, 4
 (Graphic/fiction hybrid. 10-14)

EXECUTION

Marino, Andy
 Scholastic (176 pp.)
 \$6.99 paper | May 5, 2020
 978-1-338-35904-6
 Series: The Plot To Kill Hitler, 2
 (Historical Fiction. 8-12)

IT'S RAINING BATS AND FROGS!

McGee, Joe

Illus. by Long, Ethan

Aladdin (112 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 7, 2020

978-1-5344-3684-8

Series: Junior Monster Scouts, 3

(*Fiction. 7-10*)

COSMO TO THE RESCUE

Schimmel, Courtney

Illus. by Kurilla, Renée

Andrews McMeel (160 pp.)

\$12.99 | Apr. 7, 2020

978-1-5248-5573-4

Series: My Pet Slime, 2

(*Fantasy. 6-9*)

MY LIFE AS A CODER

Tashjian, Janet

Illus. by Tashjian, Jake

Henry Holt (272 pp.)

\$13.99 | Apr. 7, 2020

978-1-250-26179-3

Series: My Life as..., 9

(*Graphic/fiction hybrid. 9-12*)

GOAT IN A BOAT

Trasler, Janee

Illus. by the author

Acorn/Scholastic (48 pp.)

\$4.99 paper | \$23.99 PLB | May 5, 2020

978-1-338-54042-4 paper

978-1-338-54045-9 PLB

Series: Frog and Dog, 2

(*Graphic early reader. 4-6*)

THE STAR DUNES

Trueit, Trudi

National Geographic Kids (216 pp.)

\$16.99 | May 10, 2020

978-1-4263-3681-2

Series: Explorer Academy, 4

(*Science fiction. 8-12*)

THROUGH THE STORM

Zee, Ginger

Disney-Hyperion (224 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 21, 2020

978-1-368-00218-9

Series: Chasing Helicity, 3

(*Adventure. 10-14*)

YOUNG ADULT



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- A SONG OF WRAITHS AND RUIN** by Roseanne A. Brown 157
- EVERYTHING'S NOT FINE** by Sarah Carlson 157
- THE SCAPEGRACERS** by Hannah Abigail Clarke 158
- THIS IS WHAT I KNOW ABOUT ART** by Kimberly Drew 158
- CALL ME AMERICAN (ADAPTED FOR YOUNG ADULTS)**
by Abdi Nor Iftin; with Max Alexander 162
- YOU SHOULD SEE ME IN A CROWN** by Leah Johnson 162
- AGNES AT THE END OF THE WORLD** by Kelly McWilliams 165



THE SCAPEGRACERS
Clarke, Hannah Abigail
\$17.95 | May 12, 2020
978-1-64566-000-2
Series: Scapegracers, 1



THE DAUGHTERS OF YS

Anderson, M.T.
Illus. by Rioux, Jo
First Second (208 pp.)
\$24.99 | August 11, 2020
978-1-62672-878-3

An ancient Breton folktale finds new life as a graphic novel.

King Gradlon won his wife's hand by murdering her first husband. Upon her mysterious death, their two daughters, Rozenn and Dahut, are sickened by their father's debauchery and consumed by grief. Several pages of wordless panels show the girls growing up and growing apart. Rozenn retreats to the countryside, meets Corentin, a "holy hermit," and falls in love with a fisherman. Dahut commits herself to learning her mother's magic, including seducing, murdering, and sacrificing a string of young men to protect the city. Dahut's ultimate betrayal of her sister brings about the deadly denouement. Anderson drew on multiple sources to retell this story of Ys, a "famed city of pleasures" stolen from the sea and doomed to destruction. Overtones of other tales, from the lost land of Lyonesse to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, echo through the pages of this morality tale. Blood and betrayal permeate the plot while natural sounding dialogue and perfect pacing draw readers along smoothly. Rioux's art adds a suitably Celtic feel, with swirling patterns, medieval costumes, and a red-haired sorceress at its center. While nudity and sexual activity both occur, as do beheadings and drowning, neither the text nor the pictures are particularly explicit. Main characters are white; clothing and textual references indicate contact with Near and Far Eastern nations.

Intriguing and accessible, this thought-provoking tale will be new to many. (source note) (*Graphic fantasy. 16-adult*)



SCRATCHMAN

Baker, Tom & Goss, James
Penguin UK/Trafalgar (352 pp.)
\$11.99 paper | May 26, 2020
978-1-78594-391-1
Series: Doctor Who

Doctor Who and companions go to the Devil.

Writing with Goss, Baker, the fourth and most renowned of the long-running TV series' Time Lords, spins

TEEN BOOKS FOR SUPPORT IN ANXIOUS TIMES



THE FALLOUT FROM COVID-19 continues to affect our lives in ways both expected and unexpected. For teens, many of whom are now physically isolated from peers and unable to go to school, the toll is obvious. School can be a vital source of regular meals, access to caring, attentive adults, as well as technology not available at home. Millions of high school seniors

have been eagerly anticipating their final months of bonding with friends before everyone is launched into the world, not to mention dreaming of graduation day. Social distancing means that access to support groups and therapists may have vanished right at a time when anxiety, depression, stress, and grief are at an all-time high. The financial impact on so many families' incomes exacerbates all these concerns. Here are some books that may offer guidance and comfort and help teens feel less alone.

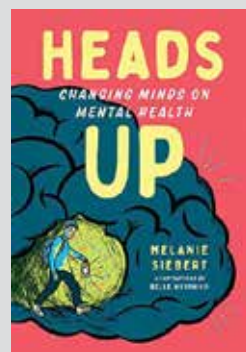
Rewire Your Anxious Brain for Teens: Using CBT, Neuroscience, and Mindfulness To Help You End Anxiety, Panic, and Worry by Debra Kissen, Ashley D. Kendall, Micah Ioffe, and Michelle Lozano (Instant Help Books, April 1) offers a thorough introduction to anxiety: what it is in neurological terms, along with practical exercises and tips for lessening its impact. The book's relatively short length and accessible tone make it an excellent choice for those who may not have access to real-life professional support or who wish to supplement it.



Katie Henry's *Let's Call It a Doomsday* (Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins, 2019) is a touching, respectful novel about a young white woman, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose anxiety interferes with many aspects of daily living. In particular, she is fixated on the impending end of the world—and the new friend she believes knows how and when the end times will unfold. Far from bleak, this is a story that

humanizes the struggles many live with and shows the importance of unconditionally loving family and friends.

Combating stigma around mental health challenges is critical as a first step to encouraging people to seek the help they need. Readers will come away from *Heads Up: Changing Minds on Mental Health*, written by Melanie Siebert and illustrated by Belle Wuthric (Orca, April 21), better understanding the broader context (including the impact of various forms of marginalization), treatment avenues to explore, and—perhaps most critically—the comforting realization that they are not alone. This valuable resource is compact yet unusually inclusive.



Who Put This Song On? by Morgan Parker (Delacorte, 2019) focuses on a high school student whose depression



and anxiety are inextricably intertwined with the stresses of being a black girl in a mostly white suburb. Parker drew on her own life to create an unexpectedly hilarious novel that is filled with heart and imbued with the small, telling details and texture that can only come from lived experience. The result is a story that is relatable to those who critically need this representation and broadly appealing—after all, who hasn't

made it through high school without experiencing feelings of alienation?

Rae Earl is beloved for her hilarious teen fiction, but readers may not be aware of her history of grappling with mental health. In *Your Brain Needs a Hug: Life, Love, Mental Health, and Sandwiches* (Imprint, 2019) she shares her own experiences, tips from a mental health expert, and a variety of resources, including apps, books, and a playlist. The power of adult role models who don't minimize the difficulties yet show that one can live successfully with mental illness cannot be underestimated.

Laura Simeon is the young adult editor.

Brown's complex plot winds and races from beginning to end.

A SONG OF WRAITHS AND RUIN

a never-produced film script into a two-part, save-the-world adventure. The Doctor and human friends Sarah Jane Smith and Harry Sullivan first find themselves on one of the Scilly Isles, where a mysterious contagion is turning all the residents into "primally terrifying" scarecrows, then pass through an ominously expanding dimensional rift to the volcanic slopes of the Land of the Dead for dust-ups with metal Cybermen, giant spiders, and other foes faced in episodes down the years (but, strangely, not Daleks)—culminating in a duel with Lucifer himself in the guise of Scratchman, a nattily attired businessman with a globe of fire for a head. The Devil, it seems, uses and feeds on fears, and it's the Doctor's ultimate challenge du jour to find a way to keep him from turning Earth into a physical as well as emotional wasteland. Along with many nods to series foes and fixtures, the exploit features cameos from no fewer than four other Doctors, including the current one (the first woman to play the role), and generous measures of the show's characteristically whimsical horror. Multiple postscripts in the wake of the good guys' eventual triumph include a history of the original script and reminiscences from its authors.

A jolly romp with tidbits for new fans and generations of old ones alike. (*Fantasy*. 15-adult)



A SONG OF WRAITHS AND RUIN

Brown, Roseanne A.

Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (480 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-06-289149-5



Two teens, destined to destroy each other, are caught up in romance, palace intrigue, and magic.

Seventeen-year-old, silver-haired, dark brown-skinned Karina is the reluctant crown princess of Ziran. After losing her sister and father to a mysterious fire, then her mother to an assassin, Karina is desperate to resurrect a suitable ruler for Ziran—even if that means taking a dark path into necromancy. Brooding, light brown-skinned Malik is a refugee from the mountain territories of Eshra, where his family is oppressed by Zirani occupation. He travels with his two sisters seeking work during the festival of Solstasia, a celebration that happens every 50 years and ushers in a new age of leadership under one of the patron deities. After tangling with a malevolent spirit, Malik finds himself promising to kill Karina in order to save the life of his little sister. There's no time for readers to catch their breath as Brown's complex plot winds and races from beginning to end. Still, the story never feels rushed or underdeveloped, and her exceptionally well-built world is infused with North and West African tricksters, naming conventions, and religious traditions. Matrilineal heritage dictates who rules in Ziran, a place where peripheral queer representation is accepted and celebrated.

Revitalizing and exciting, Brown's debut breathes life into ancient but still relevant folk stories. (map) (*Fantasy*. 14-18)



CATEGORY FIVE

Cardinal, Ann Dávila

Tor Teen (240 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-250-29612-2

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, Lupe returns to Puerto Rico to solve another paranormal mystery in this follow-up to *Five Midnights* (2019).

Lupe has spent the last year since defeating El Cuco back home with her recovering alcoholic father in Vermont—while worrying about her loved ones back in Puerto Rico as they grapple with their new normal. Marisol has turned her frustrations toward activism, rebuilding homes, and defending land from buyouts by mainland corporations. Javier, meanwhile, is just trying to make ends meet while struggling under a dark cloud of unresolved trauma. When Lupe returns to spend the summer on the island, however, all are quickly wrapped up in a murder mystery with ghostly ties. On the island of Vieques, developers putting in a new resort seem to have raised the dead, and ghostly sightings are being reported amid violent deaths. The pacing is tight as each chapter focuses on the developing plot through the shifting perspectives of the main characters. The climactic moment feels a little cheesy and *Scooby-Doo*-esque, but there is a tongue-in-cheek self-awareness of the "meddling kids" trope. Though not explored in depth as the mystery unfolds, themes of colonialism, trauma, and recovery are woven throughout. Most of the cast is Puerto Rican; there is also some light romance between two male characters.

A page-turner: part mystery, part ghost story, with touches of romance and social commentary. (*Paranormal mystery*. 14-18)



EVERYTHING'S NOT FINE

Carlson, Sarah

Turner (304 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | May 26, 2020

978-1-68442-410-8



A 17-year-old artist's world is knocked sideways when her mother overdoses.

High school senior Rose Hemmersbach's life is occupied by shifts at Walmart, looking after her three younger siblings, and healing from a freshly broken heart. Rose dreams of the day she can leave the mundanity of rural Sparta, Wisconsin, to attend art school. But then she discovers her heroin-addicted mother overdosed on the kitchen floor and her life spirals out of control with feelings of guilt and helplessness as she begins to suffer from artist's block; that which used to bring life to her days no longer sustains her. The family, already teetering on the edge of poverty, is evicted, and her parents are being investigated by child protective services. Rose blames herself

Deeply personal and boldly political.

THIS IS WHAT I KNOW ABOUT ART

for everything. Can she box up the thoughts of things she can't control and focus solely on what she can? Rose's first-person narration is a roller coaster of believable emotions and inner conflict: Feelings of love for her mother and the desire to have her back home get twisted up in her anger and the desire for Mom to stay away. Rose, whose artistic hero is Frida Kahlo, describes the world in colors; she doesn't see red, blue, and brown, but alizarin crimson, phthalo blue, and burnt umber. Rose's art partner and possible new love, Rafa, is Mexican American; assume whiteness for everyone else.

Alive with vibrant, raw emotion. (Fiction. 14-18)



UNDER THE RADAR

Clark, Judith

DCB (272 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Apr. 28, 2020

978-1-77086-566-2

A restrained rural coming-of-age and coming-out story.

Clark's novel positions Alberta high school senior, wrestler, and farm kid Gunnar as determined to keep his gay identity private until he graduates. The

story balances Gunnar's self-awareness with concerns over what and who he has to lose, worried as he is that he has nothing in common with the out-and-proud crowd. Armed with a wardrobe update, things change when Gunnar protects an openly gay friend and assumptions about his sexuality swarm. His actions get him barred from sports and kicked out of P.E. Gunnar suspects homophobia is to blame, but he adapts to his new school cooking classes, takes a job with local gay farmers, and focuses on broadening his horizons and being himself. When Gunnar comes out to a friend, he faces some social ostracism but also benefits from gay role models, savvy teachers, and a supportive family. The slow pacing of this rural drama borders on flat, but Gunnar's brooding inner narrative dovetails nicely with descriptions of the landscape and horseback riding. Unlike Gunnar's cooking skills, nothing quite reaches a boil, but what the story lacks in tension is made up for in nuanced attention to interpersonal dynamics. Gunnar's family members are Canadians of Icelandic descent, and most characters are white.

A quiet tale of a young man learning to speak his truth. (Fiction. 14-18)



THE SCAPEGRACERS

Clarke, Hannah Abigail

Erewhon (416 pp.)

\$17.95 | May 12, 2020

978-1-64566-000-2

Series: Scapegracers, 1

Since becoming an orphan at 7, it's mainly been Sideways Pike and her spell book—until a raucous Halloween party blasts her world open.

In the West High social hierarchy, Jing, Daisy, and Yates are the queen bees who rule the roost. When they hire Sideways—offering her \$40 in exchange for casting a spell to make their party the best of the season—the result isn't only memorably spooky, thanks to the unbelievable creep factor à la Sideways, but also a disturbing mystery that bonds all four girls. To Sideways' utter bewilderment, the triumvirate fiercely claims her, and she's now a member of the most badass girl clique. Their camaraderie strengthens with each narrow escape as they curse toxic males and witch hunters and build their collective power. Readers will love the spooky pop-culture easter eggs and appreciate a fresh spin on the mean girls theme: Readers won't despise, but will root for, this cunning, crass, and fiercely caring coven. Bitingly honest, fast-paced dialogue is a solid strength, as is the lyrical language, which is so intimate that readers will viscerally know how magic and emotions feel in Sideways' body. Jing is cued as Chinese American, Yates is black, and all other characters are presumed white, including Sideways, who is lesbian, and her two adoptive dads.

Teenage girl magic is palpable, urgent, and simply marvelous in this must-have debut. (Paranormal. 15-18)



THIS IS WHAT I KNOW ABOUT ART

Drew, Kimberly

Penguin Workshop (64 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-593-09518-8

Series: Pocket Change Collective

Curator, author, and activist Drew shares her journey as an artist and the lessons she has learned along the way.

Drew uses her own story to show how deeply intertwined activism and the arts can be. Her choices in college were largely overshadowed by financial need, but a paid summer internship at the Studio Museum in Harlem became a formative experience that led her to major in art history. The black artists who got her interested in the field were conspicuously absent in the college curriculum, however, as was faculty support, so she turned her frustration into action by starting her own blog to boost the work of black artists. After college, Drew's work in several arts organizations, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, only deepened

her commitment to making the art world more accessible to people of color and other marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, and widening the scope of who is welcomed there. Drew narrates deeply personal experiences of frustration, triumph, progress, learning, and sometimes-uncomfortable growth in a conversational tone that draws readers in, showing how her specific lens enabled her to accomplish the work she has done but ultimately inviting readers to add their own contributions, however small, to both art and protest.

This deeply personal and boldly political offering inspires and ignites. (*Nonfiction*. 12-18)



THE NEW QUEER CONSCIENCE

Eli, Adam

Penguin Workshop (64 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-593-09368-9

Series: Pocket Change Collective

A miniature manifesto for radical queer acceptance that weaves together the personal and political.

Eli, a cis gay white Jewish man, uses his own identities and experiences to frame and acknowledge his perspective. In the prologue, Eli compares the global Jewish community to the global queer community, noting, "We don't always get it right, but the importance of showing up for other Jews has been carved into the DNA of what it means to be Jewish. It is my dream that queer people develop the same ideology—what I like to call a Global Queer Conscience." He details his own isolating experiences as a queer adolescent in an Orthodox Jewish community and reflects on how he and so many others would have benefitted from a robust and supportive queer community. The rest of the book outlines 10 principles based on the belief that an expectation of mutual care and concern across various other dimensions of identity can be integrated into queer community values. Eli's prose is clear, straightforward, and powerful. While he makes some choices that may be divisive—for example, using the initialism LGBTQIAA+ which includes "ally"—he always makes clear those are his personal choices and that the language is ever evolving.

Small but mighty necessary reading. (resources) (*Nonfiction*. 14-18)



STEAM

Ford, Drew

Illus. by Leslie, Duane & de la Cruz, Eva

Dark House (144 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Jun. 9, 2020

978-1-50671-726-5

A young boy is flung into a steam-powered world as he searches for a way to save his lost father and an entire planet in Ford, Leslie, and de la Cruz's debut collaboration.

Neglected and abused since his father Henry's disappearance, young Arlo finds a strange machine and is thrown into an alternate world called Pother. New friends explain that Henry has been kidnapped and Arlo is also in serious danger. Two feuding factions—one worships a machine, the other an unseen deity—and spectral planet natives that inhabit the dead would be enough, but there's also the malevolent corporate force from Earth called the Prerogative that is draining Pother's natural resources and killing the planet. Worst of all? Arlo's father is responsible for bringing it to Pother in the first place. Now Arlo must seek out the planet's natives to save both his father and Pother. Despite lively art and a decent stab at steampunk worldbuilding, this graphic novel falls short thanks to an already overdone premise. Plot serves action rather than vice versa and sprints toward a sequel-desperate conclusion, leaving readers with underdeveloped characterization and a confused tangle of plot detail fragments. And even with the benefit of two planets to populate, the novel features a single, extremely peripheral, character of color.

Action-packed but fecklessly flat. (*Graphic novel*. 12-14)



NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU

Forest, Kristina

Roaring Brook (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-250-29502-6

When an aspiring actress wrecks her big shot, she needs her grandmother's help to salvage her career.

Right before high school graduation, Evie Jones finally gets her big break, and it's a starring role. But when her jealous best friend, who also auditioned for the part, posts a video of Evie impersonating the director, she is fired. Desperate to continue her family's legacy—her parents are documentary filmmakers; her grandmother Gigi is a legendary actress—Evie makes a deal with her grandmother's least favorite person, James Jenkins, who is Gigi's ex-husband and Evie's former step-grandfather. The former couple co-starred in a film that became a cult classic, and he wants to remake it, but without her grandmother's approval, he won't cast Evie as the female lead. When Gigi disappears, Evie enlists her grandmother's handsome, 19-year-old musician friend Milo to help find her before time

INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

DEAN ATTA

HIS YA NOVEL IN VERSE CAPTURES THE COMING-OF-AGE OF MICHAEL, A YOUNG QUEER BLACK BOY AND DRAG ARTIST IN THE MAKING

By Stephan Lee



Tene Atton

THANK GOODNESS FOR *The Black Flamingo* (Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins, April 14), the fierce, heart-rending YA novel in verse about a black gay boy's turbulent coming-of-age that it turns out we all needed. Letting us in on Michael Brown's journey from a boy wishing for a Barbie but receiving a Ninja Turtle instead to a young man discovering authentic self-expression trying out drag in college, *The Black Flamingo* serves up a bildungsroman of a beautiful outsider in epic poetic form. British writer Dean Atta talked to Kirkus about creating his fabulous drag artist in the making and how the world has changed for Michael (or kids like him) today.

First of all, *The Black Flamingo* must be one of the all-time great titles. Where did it come from?

It came from seeing a black flamingo while visiting family in Cyprus among all the pink flamingos on the salt lake and feeling like that was how I felt so often in my life: being the

odd one out, standing out from the crowd. But it was also kind of cool. That looked so awesome. It made me think about how being different could be a really cool thing as well.

How does writing in verse help capture the voice of a young character and how he remembers key moments in his life?

I think approaching [Michael's story] one poem at a time was a good way to check in and ask, "How old is he? What words would he use? How can I lay it out on the page to reflect his age? I let the language reflect how he was thinking and how he would speak. In terms of memory, poems are good at zooming in on certain details and moments rather than necessarily filling in the whole picture and scene. You get a focal point of what was really important, and usually, that's the emotion more than anything.

I think this is the first YA origin story of a drag queen I've ever read. How did your own experiences with drag inspire the novel?

I didn't do drag until I was 30, so the moment I did it, I was like, "I've been missing out for so many years!" But it was also difficult in lots of ways. Doing makeup is really hard. But it's not the walking in heels or wearing the dress that's empowering for me—it's how it changes how you feel about yourself. When you take it off, there can be a sense of loss of that empowerment, but the more you do it, the more you learn to carry it with you even when you're not wearing it. So that's something that came to me: the origin story of how Michael would get to feel empowered and how that would transform him, give him a lot more confidence and fierceness. I wanted to show how that happened.

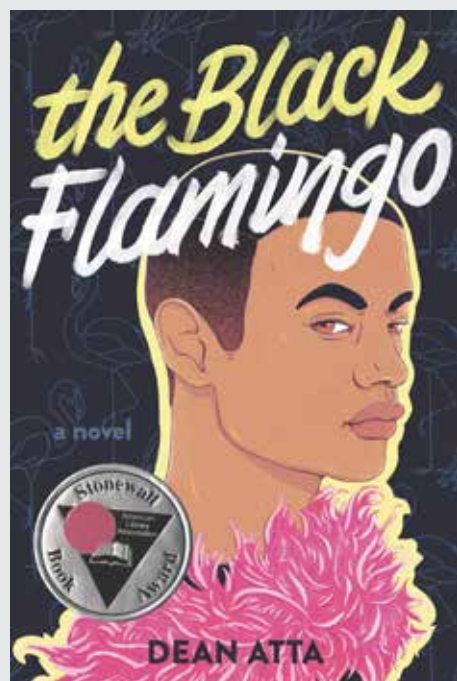
How has it felt to see your ideal audience discover this book?

I wouldn't even say there's an ideal audience. You can read it to see yourself in it, whether you're black or queer, or you could read it to understand and to be empathetic. I know so many young people who are showing it to their families to help them better understand them, but I also know there are aunts, uncles, parents who are going out of their way to get this book to understand their child or niece or nephew.

Michael has to go through so much bullying in school for being different, especially for being queer. Have you seen this change in schools now?

Oh, definitely. Schools in the U.K. are doing an amazing job around LGBTQ+ inclusion, and many of the schools I visited have LGBTQ groups for students to meet at lunchtime and after school. I've been invited to do whole-school assemblies as well as to talk about my poetry and my writing. The whole time I was at school, our government had stopped that from happening. There was something in place called Clause 28, which meant that schools were not allowed to talk about LGBT people or same-sex relationships. It's so different now. My book is in school libraries and being taught. There's so much visibility—badges and posters and flags. It just makes such a difference. I mention in the book the rainbow laces that the sports teacher wears. Those kinds of things make a student feel so much safer and accepted. I'm seeing that happening, and it's great.

Stephan Lee is a writer in New York. The Black Flamingo received a starred review in the March 1, 2020, issue.



runs out on her comeback opportunity. Evie's character development is slow, and she comes off as self-centered for most of the book; Milo, by contrast, stands out, and readers may be disappointed that more time isn't spent on him and his hilarious, quirky friends. The pacing is also off, with the most interesting action packed into the final chapters, but the novel is a light, sincere look at parental expectations and artists' dreams. The main characters are black, and there is a diverse cast of supporting characters.

Predictable but pleasant, with a swoonworthy ending straight out of the movies. (*Fiction. 14-18*)



WISHBONE

García, Anna Christina

Piñata Books/Arté Público (320 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | May 31, 2020

978-1-55885-894-7

Pilar and Pili are two young women with a generation separating them and family secrets between them in this multigenerational family drama.

Pili lives in 1970s Laredo, on the Mexican border in South Texas. She has a flammable personality and routinely flouts the cultural expectations of femininity in her machismo-oriented Mexican American community. Pilar, her granddaughter and namesake, is a high schooler in contemporary Houston with a vivid imagination and dreams of making it as an actress. Yet Pilar struggles with her own self-worth, as she is regularly bullied for her weight. While Pili pushes for her sister to leave her emotionally abusive husband in the historical storyline, Pilar faces down her bullies and reveals herself to be both a talented actress and true friend in the present day. As the narrative perspective shifts between the dual protagonists, the revelations of family secrets demonstrate the inner strength of Pili, Pilar, and a long line of ambitious and feisty women before them. Intergenerational conflict and clashes in values also become a frequent theme in the novel. While the structure keeps the pace brisk, the intertwined stories explore the family's history through the facets of sisterhood, motherhood, and friendship, creating a character study in family dynamics.

A family coming-of-age story of fierce females, at once broad and intimate in scope. (*Fiction. 14-18*)

This remarkable, nuanced story facilitates a deeper understanding of immigration today.

CALL ME AMERICAN



THE COURT OF MIRACLES

Grant, Kester

Knopf (416 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-5247-7285-7

Series: Court of Miracles, 1

A young thief defies a brutal crime lord in this reimagining of 1820s Paris.

The French Revolution has failed, and the royals have restored order by day. But at night, it is the city's criminals who

rule, forming guilds bound by the laws of the Miracle Court. When famine strikes, young Nina's avaricious father sells her older sister to the Tiger, the Lord of the Guild of Flesh, and Nina flees and becomes a burglar—the Black Cat of the Guild of Thieves. In time, Nina's exploits win the admiration of allies from all classes of society. Meanwhile, the poor still starve, the royals poison them to suppress uprisings, and the other Lords cannot stop the Tiger from enslaving women. When the Tiger tries to seize Nina's beautiful, innocent, young friend, Nina orchestrates a plot to kill him and save his victims, whatever the price. Grant's debut is crowded with characters and events; the action feels rushed, with leaps of logic and time that can leave readers puzzled. But the narrative shines in its depictions of the gritty criminal underworld and its fierce and resourceful heroine. Nina has olive skin and black hair from her Algerian mother, and several characters are brown-skinned and dark-eyed. The Miracle Court is described as a place where race doesn't matter (along with social class and religion), unlike the all-white royal court.

A raw, spirited, sometimes uneven tale of adventure and intrigue. (map, Miracle Court guide and laws) (Historical fantasy. 14-18)



CALL ME AMERICAN

(ADAPTED FOR
YOUNG ADULTS)

**The Extraordinary True Story
of a Young Somali Immigrant**

Iftin, Abdi Nor with Alexander, Max

Delacorte (272 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 16, 2020

978-1-9848-9711-4

Somali-born Iftin presents a narrative of his journey from a war-torn homeland to his current life in Maine.

The story begins with the catastrophic drought and war of the late 1970s that interrupted his young parents' carefree and wealthy nomadic life in a lush region of south-central Somalia. Neither they nor the country ever managed to recover as one cycle of conflict led to another, raging on until the present day. These waves of violence reduced everyday Somalis' lives to ones of chronic poverty, displacement, uncertainty, and fear but failed to extinguish hopes or dreams. Iftin, who was probably

born in 1985, and his beloved brother schemed moneymaking enterprises together, skipping school to sell snacks to moviegoers. Under the noses of religious authorities, he arranged secret rendezvous with his first crush. Given the circumstances, Iftin's boyish escapades involved a level of daring that maintains suspense. Later, as a college student in Mogadishu, he recorded reports for NPR's *The Story* despite potentially life-threatening repercussions from al-Shabaab. Chief among Iftin's dreams was to live in America, his impressions of the country fed by black pop culture and American movies, which did not prepare him for the complex racial realities that he encountered and recognized as a form of tribalism when he eventually made it to the U.S. This remarkable, nuanced story facilitates a deeper understanding of immigration today.

A triumphant memoir that offers hope for Somalia's and, indeed, America's futures. (glossary) (Memoir. 12-18)



YOU SHOULD SEE ME IN A CROWN

Johnson, Leah

Scholastic (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-1-338-50326-5

A wallflower runs for prom queen.

After being snubbed by her best friend, Jordan, in favor of his new football friends on the first day of high school, Liz Lighty felt acute shame about being herself and all the things that made her different: her height, being black and queer, and not having enough money. She began wearing her hair pulled back, chose less colorful clothing, and did her best to blend in so no one would notice her. But now, as a senior, Liz has to put herself in the spotlight to secure her future. Because despite doing everything right—excellent grades, solid extracurriculars, and playing first-chair clarinet—she doesn't win a much-needed scholarship at her dream school. When her brother convinces her that running for prom queen—with its \$10,000 scholarship prize—is the answer, she enters the competition. The race for the crown gets complicated when Liz falls for one of the other competitors, Jordan tries to rekindle their friendship, and a friend urges her to change everything about herself in order to win. While the hullabaloo around prom seems far-fetched, the lead-up to the dance is pitch-perfect rom-com. Johnson does an excellent job of portraying the anxiety and internalized self-hatred from being different in a mostly white, affluent small town. Liz and Jordan are black; supporting characters appear white by default.

The queer prom romance you didn't know you needed. (Fiction. 14-18)





KISSING LESSONS

Jordan, Sophie
HMH Books (288 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-328-97707-6

A teen with a promiscuous reputation is hired for lessons on seduction and falls for her client's brother.

Independent 18-year-old Hayden Vargas looks forward to leaving behind her judgmental high school classmates and neglectful mother to pursue her dream of becoming a tattoo artist. Every penny counts toward her dream, and when Emmaline Martin offers her money to teach her how to attract boys, Hayden struggles to turn her down. Popular classmate Nolan Martin has made it his mission to care for his family since his father's death, so when he notices his younger sister, Emmaline, hanging out with Travis High School's bad girl, he becomes suspicious and overprotective. But his attempts at intervention only result in him growing fonder of Hayden, who surprises him as she opens up. Points of view mainly shift between Hayden and Nolan but also focus, less frequently, on Emmaline and Beau—Nolan's best friend, whose reputation at school mirrors Hayden's. Despite cookie-cutter characterization, Jordan's handling of themes surrounding teen relationships, such as the double standard of girls being sluts versus boys being players, is honest. The only kissing lessons involve girls practicing on one another at a sleepover, which later leads two of them to explore their mutual attraction. The sweetness of the happy ending does not make up for its abruptness, unfortunately. Characters are assumed white except for Hayden, who is cued as Latinx.

A steamy, straight-to-Netflix teen romance. (Fiction. 14-17)



ON THE PLUS SIDE

Kurch, P.A.
West 44 Books (96 pp.)
\$19.95 | Jun. 1, 2020
978-1-5383-8518-0

A high school senior is shocked to discover he's going to be a father.

Bryan Parker and Alyssa Holbrook have been dating since junior year. They're "good kids" with bright futures ahead of them. Then Alyssa shares that she's pregnant, with the baby expected to arrive right around when they will graduate. The couple experience an emotional roller coaster, initially keeping their big news secret from their families and wondering whether or not to keep the baby. Even though they had always envisioned a future together, this wasn't what it looked like. Both teens have supportive families, but will they be able to juggle school, medical appointments, work, and discrimination from classmates and school administrators and still be good parents? Useful for igniting

classroom discussions, this issue-focused book uses first-person narration to center Bryan's experience. Brief chapters, occasional text message conversations, and its short length make it an accessible read that pulls no punches in portraying the consequences of teen parenthood. Personality, rather than appearance, is the basis for most character descriptions. Bryan has a Korean mother and white father; other characters are assumed white. Alyssa's support system includes her two moms and her father. Unfortunately, there's no discussion of ways to practice safe sex nor any backmatter with resources for teen parents.

A hard-hitting reluctant reader title about a young couple in crisis. (Fiction. 14-18)



NO RIGHT THING

Langston, Laura
Crwth Press (256 pp.)
\$9.95 paper | Apr. 27, 2020
978-1-7753515-8-0

A teen's selfless act has unintended consequences.

Kindhearted 16-year-old Cate Sheridan works at a grocery store and often saves leftover food for Max, a homeless man she's befriended. That is, until the day Cate and her classmate Noah Fox rescue him from an accident—and in the ensuing commotion it turns out that he's Max Le Bould, a rich and famous British rock star who disappeared years ago after his tour bus crashed. The press hounds Cate and Noah for information about Max—and soon enough Cate's mother, a famous reporter whom Cate hasn't seen since she was 2, turns up in their small town. Cate gets overly involved in helping Max get back on his feet, causing tension, as Noah suspects he may have intentionally ridden his bike into traffic. Meanwhile, Cate's been accepted to culinary school, but she can barely afford the deposit, let alone the tuition. Her father doesn't want her to go, insisting she attend a traditional college, and her dad's longtime partner, Parker, refuses to take a side. The family drama takes center stage but is marred by one-dimensional characters and a predictable plot. While Cate is sweetly altruistic, the story bypasses the opportunity to delve into the issues faced by those experiencing homelessness. Most characters are presumed white.

An enjoyable tale for less discerning readers. (Fiction. 12-18)



AGAIN AGAIN

Lockhart, E.

Delacorte (304 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-385-74479-9

A rising senior's summer follows diverging romantic trajectories in parallel timelines.

Adelaide Buchwald is spending the summer dogsitting for her teachers at Alabaster Prep, an elite New England boarding school—and processing both her recent breakup and her brother Toby's opioid addiction. Soon she runs into Jack Cavallero, a boy who wrote a poem about her two years prior—"She contains / contradictions," he wrote—and whom she's idealized ever since. The narrative then breaks into several possibilities of how their relationship might progress. Adelaide also works to complete a set design for Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love* to save a failing grade from the previous year and tremulously starts to rebuild her bond with her brother despite her feelings of betrayal after the pain his addiction has caused the family. In addition to the fractured timelines, Adelaide's narrative voice occasionally fractures with added line breaks when her emotions are most heightened. Adelaide is white, Jewish, and on reduced tuition at the largely wealthy and WASPy Alabaster; Jack is olive-skinned, and several secondary characters are racially diverse. What begins as a typical YA romance becomes a thoughtful exploration of the expectations Adelaide places on herself and others; in each timeline, she must confront her own fears and shortcomings. Toby's addiction is sensitively portrayed; the sibling relationship emerges as the true heart of this story in any timeline.

A thoughtfully subversive exploration of the diverging pathways of the human heart. (Fiction. 14-18)



THE UNSTOPPABLE WASP Built on Hope

Maggs, Sam

Marvel Press (320 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 26, 2020

978-1-368-05465-2

The Wasp fights a hive mind in this Marvel tie-in novel.

Sixteen-year-old Nadia Van Dyne has a superpowered suit, assassin training, and an infamous father but also wants to be a Cool American Teen. Following her escape from the Soviet Red Room and a life-changing bipolar diagnosis, Nadia strives to control her mental health and form her own family. She's got her friends and lab partners—Priya Aggarwal, Taina Miranda, Shay Smith, and Ying Liu—and an awesome stepmom, former Wasp Janet Van Dyne, but yearns to know more about her real parents: scientist mother Maria Trovaya and Ant-Man father Hank Pym. Yet in her quest to forge connections and advance

science, Nadia follows the standard superhero comic-book arc: befriending bad people, alienating allies, and almost unleashing an apocalypse. Incorporating Nadia's canonical origins, powers, and problems, Maggs focuses on mental health issues and gender inequality. Nadia is a white Hungarian Russian émigrée, and her teammates are diverse in ethnicity, physical ability, and sexual orientation. By opting for prose over graphics, this too-long tale sacrifices some of the best elements of comic books, with once-brief fight scenes taking place over pages, not panels; lengthy dialogue substituting for succinct speech and thought bubbles; and repetitive character and place descriptions replacing visual shorthand. Non-English words are italicized.

An overly busy girl-power adventure. (Action. 12-18)



WHEN THE STARS WROTE BACK Poems

Mateer, Trista

Illus. by Cruickshank, Jessica

Random House (208 pp.)

\$14.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-593-17267-4

Free-form poetry about the struggle to find agency is paired with softly rendered illustrations.

Alternating in style from brief, punchy verses to lists to longer pieces that read like confessional vignettes, these poems explore difficult relationships (romantic, platonic, and familial) through a feminist lens and examine the ways in which they can result in a loss of self. A trigger warning at the beginning preps readers for content that includes topics such as eating disorders, sexual assault, mental illness, and emotional abuse. These issues and more are woven throughout this collection that simultaneously embodies tough wit and vulnerability and is sectioned into four parts—"Half-light," "Midnight," "Starfall," and "Dawn"—that reflect the emotional arc of the narrator. Queer romantic relationships are a subject of discussion, but there is no mention or examination of race or ethnicity as a facet of identity and experience. Understated grayscale drawings and handwritten phrases mesh well with verses that move with fluidity across the pages. While there are some stylistic embellishments, these poems are at their core distinctly message-driven, often taking on the tone of self-help literature. This will likely resonate with some readers who share the experiences being parsed but may not pull in those who don't.

An earnest but didactic collection that is both personal and political. (Poetry. 14-18)

Ornate, complex: an excellent read.

AGNES AT THE END OF THE WORLD



THE MALL

McCafferty, Megan
Wednesday Books (320 pp.)
\$18.99 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-1-250-20995-5

The mall takes center stage in this '90s coming-of-age tale.

Cassie Worthy works at a New Jersey mall while counting down the days until she heads off to college. After being stuck at home with mono for the past six weeks, she plans on triumphantly returning to her job at America's Best Cookie with her boyfriend, Troy—but it goes horribly wrong when she finds herself attacked by Troy's new girlfriend with a spritz of cucumber-melon fragrance to the face. Cassie manages to get hired as a bookkeeper at an upscale boutique. The owner's gorgeous daughter, Drea Bellarosa, needs nerdy Cassie's help searching for a rumored stash of long-hidden drug money, and they spend the summer following clues hidden in Cabbage Patch Kids that point to locations around the mall. Drea also promises to help Cassie with her heartbreak, saying "the best way to get over someone is to get under someone else." In the first-person narration, elitist Cassie makes numerous judgmental remarks about other women and their clothing and behavior, frequently referring to them as sluts and bimbos, as well as being dismissive of boys she regards as less intelligent than she. The narrative is rife with pop-culture references, quirky characters, and over-the-top ridiculous comedy—which unfortunately falls flat. The majority of the cast is white apart from Cassie's Japanese American mall-employee crush.

Light and nostalgic but lacks depth. (Fiction. 14-18)



AGNES AT THE END OF THE WORLD

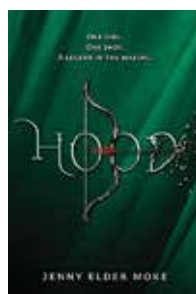
McWilliams, Kelly
Little, Brown (432 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-0-316-48733-7

The story of a 16-year-old's journey to freedom at the end of the world.

Raised in the ranch commune of Red Creek, Agnes has always followed the Prophet's adage, "perfect obedience produces perfect faith." With a mother in the depths of depression, Agnes dutifully takes care of her father and younger siblings and the household chores; she is the perfect follower. Her one sin is the lifesaving insulin she receives from Matilda, an Outsider nurse, for her brother Ezekiel, who has Type 1 diabetes. Agnes' 15-year-old sister Beth is her complete opposite—questioning the cult's strict laws for women and sneaking around with a boy. Events ramp up as Agnes becomes aware of the Prophet's lies and a viral pandemic ravages the outside world. As the Prophet forces his followers into an underground bunker, Agnes realizes

she must leave with Ezekiel. With the help of Matilda's son, Danny, who exposes them to life outside, and prayers in which Agnes communes with God, they escape into a dying world. The novel unfolds in chapters alternating between Agnes' and Beth's perspectives, blending science fiction with the harsh realities of life in a cult. The ornate, complex text takes readers through Agnes' and Beth's journeys of reconciling their faith and desires, imbuing the well-rounded characters with purpose. Residents of Red Creek are white; Danny and Matilda are black.

An excellent read. (map, author's note) (Dystopian. 13-18)



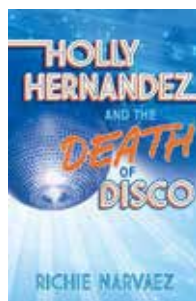
HOOD

Moke, Jenny Elder
Disney-Hyperion (320 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 9, 2020
978-1-368-04745-6

With one loosed arrow, Isabelle finds herself fleeing the only life she has ever known to search for the one person who can help her and save her mother.

Isabelle knows little of life outside the priory of Kirklees. Up until now, her life as the daughter of the prioress, Marien, has been relatively quiet. But in defense of her village she shot a soldier, and now she needs the help of a man she has never met: her father, Robin Hood. Each step on Isabelle's path to Sherwood Forest reveals to readers a bit more of her history, painting a clearer picture of where she came from and what she is up against. Thanks to old grudges and politics, she was born with a target on her back, and all she can do now is to put on a brave front, as her mother always advises her, and find a way to save them all. But donning the Lincoln greens of the Merry Men won't fix everything. With a strong and appealing female lead and the younger generation of Merry Men at the center of this novel, readers will be engaged and excited by this new look at a familiar story. The quick pace, daring rescues, and, of course, plenty of archery will keep the pages turning. All characters are cued as English or Scottish and white.

An exciting read from beginning to end. (Adventure. 14-17)



HOLLY HERNÁNDEZ AND THE DEATH OF DISCO

Narvaez, Richie
Piñata Books/Arté Público (248 pp.)
\$12.95 paper | May 31, 2020
978-1-55885-902-9

A teen mystery set in an elite public school in 1970s New York City.

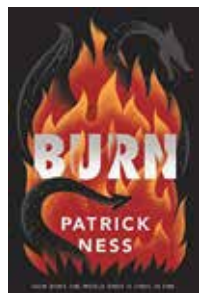
When two faculty members of the prestigious Flatbush Technical High School are murdered, bright freshman Holly Hernández is immediately on the case, her amateur sleuthing skills honed by her love for crime novels and the

A warm, sweet, lovely tale.

ALWAYS HUMAN

example set by her homicide detective mother. Meanwhile, Xander Herrera is a socially awkward but equally astute student who finds himself regarded as the initial suspect; his determination to prove his innocence is nearly as great as his need to beat the insufferably perky Holly to the punch and solve the mystery first. What neither of them expects is to be embroiled in a lethal disco contest at the infamous Mission Venus nightclub in Manhattan. The novel alternates between Holly's and Xander's perspectives as the danger mounts and the two investigate the case in parallel. This fast-paced, skillfully developed murder mystery offers equal billing to both characters, their separate lives, and their individual problems while also examining gender inequality and social injustice and providing an interesting look at the history of disco as a safe place for queer people and people of color. Part of the novel's charm is that Xander sees Holly as his nemesis while Holly is blissfully oblivious to the boy's competitive feelings. Holly, Xander, and their families are Latinx.

A fun murder mystery with a side of disco fever. (*Mystery.* 12-18)



BURN

Ness, Patrick

Quill Tree Books/HarperCollins

(384 pp.)

\$18.99 | Jun. 2, 2020

978-0-06-286949-4

A young woman finds herself in the center of a struggle involving a prophecy about a coming war between humans and dragons.

Despite constant hard work, Sarah Dewhurst and her father find themselves in dire straits on their farm near Frome, Washington. Even though tensions exist between the two species, the dragon her father has hired seems to be their final hope. Nevertheless, Sarah and the dragon, Kazimir, forge a connection—even though he's a blue dragon of Russian extraction, it's 1957, and the Cold War is raging. Sarah, a biracial teen with a white father (her deceased mother was black), has enough difficulties in their community; she befriends Japanese American Jason Inagawa, whose family returned to the area after being interned during World War II, but without his mother, who died in Minidoka. At the same time, Malcolm, a young white man from a cult that worships dragons, is on the road, pursuing a mission and being trailed by two mysterious FBI agents who seek to halt whatever the Believers are planning. It becomes clear that Sarah is to play a central role in the prophecy's dénouement. This fast-paced narrative has elements of alternate history, fantasy, multiverse, and apocalyptic literature. The many plot twists and multiple perspectives create an intensity that makes this a page-turner. In addition to the action, themes of teens coping with racism, homophobia, and grief are interwoven.

A gripping, powerful novel of courage and resilience. (*Fantasy.* 14-18)



ALWAYS HUMAN

North, Ari

Illus. by the author

Little Bee (256 pp.)

\$24.99 | May 19, 2020

978-1-4998-1110-0

In a not-so-distant future where changing one's physical features is as easy as purchasing nanobot mods, Sunati falls for Austen, a girl who always looks the same.

Since Austen never changes, Sunati admires what she assumes is her bravery and confidence. As Sunati and Austen chat more, Austen bluntly asks Sunati if she only wants to get to know her more because of her medical condition, which prevents her from using mods. As they gradually grow closer, Sunati learns how to interact more respectfully with those who have overactive immune systems as well as to share her feelings more honestly. Austen, in turn, learns to trust Sunati. This beautifully illustrated slice-of-life tale that shows two young women of color getting to know each other and creating a relationship is so warm and charming that readers will hardly notice how much they are learning about how to better interact with folx who are different from themselves and the importance of not making assumptions. The story also successfully weaves in agender, genderfluid, and asexual characters as well as the subjects of parenting and colorism into the natural arc of Sunati and Austen's developing story. The soft, romantic artwork evokes hazy watercolors. The speech bubbles are predominantly pink and blue, and the varied layout will maintain readers' interest.

A warm, sweet, lovely tale of a world readers will want to live in. (*Graphic romance.* 12-18)



THE LOST PRINCESS OF AEVILEN

Payson, D.C.

Month9Books (302 pp.)

\$17.99 paper | May 12, 2020

978-1-951710-27-9

Series: Kingdom of Aevilen, 1

A blonde California teen finds herself trapped in a fantasy world besieged by evil.

When 17-year-old Julia loses her house to wildfires, her family moves in with her grandmother Ina, who reveals to Julia that she is actually royalty and a refugee from somewhere called Aevilen. While snooping for evidence to confirm this unlikely tale, Julia discovers an enchanted necklace that transports her to an alternate dimension; before she can return home, she has to help Aevilen find the champion it so desperately needs. Clunky, clichéd prose describes a painfully generic, vaguely medieval European setting. Julia immediately bonds with Thezdan, a brooding, auburn-haired, green-eyed Guardian (read "Ranger"); other nonhuman races,

like the Sylvan and Rokkin, fill the niches of stereotypical elves and dwarves. The narrative follows the beats of a video game, including plot tokens, puzzles, and side quests. Julia has the bland personality of a reader-insert, and her plot-convenient magic is all performed by her necklace with a hand-waving “somehow.” Other characters show more depth, but all view Julia solely through her ancestry. The chief antagonist—the All Aevilen People’s Party, which overthrew the (uncritically “good”) monarchy with random rhetoric of “Revolution”—is an obviously corrupt, sadistic front for a cartoonishly evil deity, a depiction that will baffle contemporary readers. Nonetheless, the action moves smartly, the violence is satisfyingly gory, and the volume ends with a textbook cliffhanger. All characters seem to be white.

Meh. (*Fantasy*. 12-18)



BOOKISH AND THE BEAST

Poston, Ashley
Quirk Books (320 pp.)
\$18.99 | Jun. 16, 2020
978-1-68369-193-8
Series: Once Upon a Con, 3

A small-town girl transforms a spoiled star in this third installment in the Once Upon a Con series.

High school senior Rosie Thorne loves the science-fiction space opera *Starfield*, connecting with her recently deceased mother through the old TV show, the newly rebooted movie series, and the tie-in novels. In real life, though, Rosie is struggling with her grief, her college essay, and the unwanted attentions of Gaston-stand-in Garrett Taylor. When Rosie’s unfortunate run-in with the town’s newest resident leads to her cataloging the library of an eccentric castlelike house, she also must deal with the beastly moods of Hollywood bad boy Vance Reigns, who is staying there. Seventeen-year-old co-narrator Vance is a self-proclaimed prisoner, exiled to North Carolina by his stepfather after filming the newest *Starfield* movie. Spoiled, sulky, and self-loathing, publicity-shy Vance fears that he’s irredeemable. Tying in 2017’s *Geekerella* and 2019’s *The Princess and the Fangirl* but expanding outside the enchanted bubble/fever-pitch world of conventions, Poston adds a dash more reality to this romance. The world of *Starfield*—initially, a *Star Wars*/*Star Trek* knockoff, with a rebel princess, too-good hero, and cocky bad boy—begs for a TV adaptation. Despite the setting, both Rosie and Vance are white; their sidekicks are more diverse, in gender, if not race; nonbinary Quinn is a scene stealer while Rosie’s bisexual, former-punk rocker, librarian dad is adorkable.

A satisfying fairy-tale nerd love story. (*Romance*. 12-18)



IT'S YOUR FUNERAL

Riesbeck, Emily
Illus. by Kramer, Ellen
Iron Circus Comics (200 pp.)
\$15.00 paper | Jun. 2, 2020
978-1-945820-52-6

After her sudden death at home, 19-year-old Marnie, now a ghost, learns to work with otherworldly beings in the Department of Spectral Affairs.

X'lakthul, or Xel, is the upbeat, optimistic case manager who tries to place Marnie in a “post-life assignment.” When Xel finds that Marnie isn’t particularly attached to any location from her home dimension, she isn’t sure where to place her, so she suggests an unconventional move: appointing Marnie DSA intern. As an intern, Marnie works with other case workers, office managers, and supervisors in the disorganized and barely functional office. She judges and speaks to them harshly, all the while assuming they will dump her somewhere when she’s too much trouble. But eventually Marnie comes to appreciate each of them, with all their faults, because they care about her. This comic uses humor to address serious questions of mental illness (particularly depression), acceptance, and belonging, an approach that will work for some readers but may rub others the wrong way. While the developments of relationships between characters are portrayed well, Marnie’s characterization is superficial, leaving the ending without the emotional power the story deserves. The colorful illustrations are clean and clear, making for a pleasant visual experience. The few scenes involving humans feature ethnically diverse groups of people.

Comes close but doesn't quite meet its potential. (*Graphic fantasy*. 14-18)



SISTERS OF SWORD & SONG

Ross, Rebecca
HarperTeen (480 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-0-06-247141-3

An ancient Greece-inspired fantasy starring two very different sisters.

Halcyon was destined from an early age to become legendary, plucked from lower-class obscurity to rise through the hoplite ranks. But the night before her first scheduled visit home in eight years, she shows up in her younger sister Evadne’s room—haunted, hunted, and on the run. She’s followed by her former commander, Lord Straton, ending up on trial for the accidental murder of her shield mate, Straton’s son. Evadne pleads to take part of Halcyon’s sentence, ending up serving Straton’s family. Always longing for magic and jealous of her sister’s specialness, Evadne’s drawn to Straton’s younger son, Damon, a mage. From his family, Evadne learns of a mage

conspiracy behind the queen's unpopular decrees—unmanageable taxes, banning commoners from owning magical relics of the gods—and of a secret group opposing them. Meanwhile, in a hard-labor quarry sentence, Halcyon—whose identity as a member of the pro-queen faction is uncovered—is challenged to keep the group's secrets from the conspiracy. While athletic Halcyon physically languishes, Evadne, whose abilities are underestimated due to an old ankle injury that causes her to limp, must step into a quest that challenges the heroes' magical resources, cleverness, and strength of character. While flawed and capable of mistakes, the heroes are quintessentially good. The characters default to white.

Classical heroism in a magical antiquity makes for a fresh read. (*Fantasy*. 12-adult)



PRIVATE LESSONS

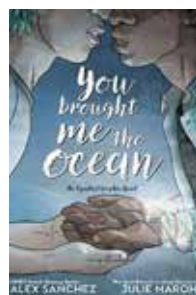
Salaysay, Cynthia
Candlewick (320 pp.)
\$17.99 | May 12, 2020
978-1-5362-0960-0

A high school student pursues musical excellence and experiences the high cost of gaining her piano teacher's favor.

Seventeen-year-old Claire Alalay dreams of attending a college where her love of classical music will not distance

her from her peers. She knows that tuition at her top choices is too high for her and her widowed mother to afford. After her guidance counselor suggests that she participate in music competitions, which would enhance her college applications and potentially lead to scholarships, Claire seeks instruction from Paul Avon, one of the best piano teachers in the Bay Area. Paul maintains high standards for his students; though Claire strives to satisfy Paul's expectations, her best efforts are not always enough, and she becomes increasingly sensitive to his critiques. Salaysay captures the mindset of a girl steeped in self-consciousness, craving praise while expecting criticism, torn between fitting in and just being herself. The leisurely paced plot allows tension to build slowly, almost imperceptibly, until things take a troubling turn in the second half of the book and Claire becomes a victim of sexual assault. The writing is poetic in the moments when Claire reflects on the music she hears and plays. Her vivid descriptions convey a deep appreciation for the genre that will resonate with readers. Claire is Filipina; Paul is white.

A cautionary tale that pays tribute to the allure of classical music. (*Fiction*. 16-18)



YOU BROUGHT ME THE OCEAN An Aqualad Graphic Novel

Sanchez, Alex
Illus. by Maroh, Julie
DC (208 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Jun. 9, 2020
978-14012-9081-8

Finding yourself is difficult enough, but it's more complicated when you have magical powers.

Jake Hyde already has enough to worry about—fretting over being accepted to his dream university to study oceanography; wondering if he'll ever leave Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, his small town in the middle of the desert; and finding the courage to come out. In the midst of all that, he connects with Kenny—a jock and the only openly gay kid in school—and finds out that the “birthmarks” on his body that he self-consciously keeps covered grant him the power to control water. Jake is keeping secrets from his helicopter mom and best friend, Maria, who's in love with him, and in living his truth he learns more about the father he believes drowned 17 years ago. In a universe with superheroes and supervillains, Jake must decide who he's going to be. Sanchez's text lends authenticity to Jake's conflicted emotions surrounding his identity and future; he doesn't shy away from showing the hostile bullying that Kenny and Jake face for daring to be openly gay. Maroh's realistic sketches in muted tones are infused with bursts of color with generally pale scenery. The illustrations and text work in concert, each amplifying and complementing the other. Jake is African American, Maria is Latinx, and Kenny is Chinese American.

A worthy, diverse addition to the DC Universe. (*Graphic romance*. 12-18)



YOU'RE NEXT

Schachte, Kylie
Jimmy Patterson/Little, Brown (480 pp.)
\$17.99 | Jun. 23, 2020
978-0-316-49377-2

A teen's investigative skills lead her through school secrets, small-town mysteries, and murder.

Sixteen-year-old Flora Calhoun doesn't worry too much about college applications, even if college could be her ticket out of Hartsdale. Instead, she's busy with unsolved crimes, hunting down criminals who escaped justice and seeking closure for those affected. Although she is at odds with the local police force, has a tense relationship with her younger sister, and feels let down by her mother (who is a painter living in Germany), Flora's connections with her grandfather and best friend, Cassidy, are rewarding, complex, and nuanced. Her run-ins with romance, with vibrant Ava and clichéd bad boy VT, round out her character while also slowing down the story. When Flora's latest run-in

Delightfully brash and no-nonsense.

THE FALLING IN LOVE MONTAGE

with danger hits too close to home, she's sent deep into a mystery that reaches further than she ever expected. Flora's mission takes her on a journey that delves into issues of socio-economic inequality dividing Hartsdale and neighboring Whitley as well as the long-term effects of trauma—accompanied by some convoluted teen drama. The treatment of the subjects of trust and emotional vulnerability between friends adds an extra dimension while some elements of the mystery may feel familiar to aficionados of the genre. Flora is white and bisexual; Cassidy is Chinese American, Ava is black, and there is diversity among supporting characters.

A thriller that delves into society's darkness. (Thriller. 14-18)



STUFF THAT'S LOUD *A Teen's Guide to Unspiraling When OCD Gets Noisy*

Sedley, Ben & Coyne, Lisa W.

Instant Help Books (120 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | May 1, 2020

978-1-68403-536-6

Series: Instant Help Solutions

A guidebook that seeks to empower those living with OCD. Clinical psychologists Sedley and Coyne give an authentic look at how different minds dealing with OCD function, including personal stories from teens and their family members. Incorporating techniques from Exposure Response Prevention and principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, this book provides tools and activities aimed at helping affected teens figure out how to live the lives they want. The direct, matter-of-fact approach runs the risk of triggering readers, something the authors acknowledge and even note as intentional; they explain that they trust readers to be able to handle the material and that not feeling ready to plunge in is an inherent part of the cycle of remaining trapped and anxious. The book does not proclaim to be a cure for OCD or even that any easy, external fix exists. That clarity in itself offers relief as it preempts the pressure readers may feel if they don't feel fully transformed after using the book. The book, which the authors encourage readers to use along with therapy, puts faith and the power to change in the hands of teens. A supportive, empathetic tone is present throughout, making it a useful guide for young people who may need help identifying and overcoming intrusive thoughts.

An honest look at OCD, offering help in managing and overcoming it. (resources) (Nonfiction. 12-18)



THE FALLING IN LOVE MONTAGE

Smyth, Ciara

HarperTeen (368 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 9, 2020

978-0-06-295711-5

A girl-girl rom-com packed with all the standard cheesy moments and raw emotions.

Having just completed her final exams, 17-year-old Saoirse heads into summer after high school with a lot on her plate: not wanting to attend prestigious Oxford, though her father's set on it; navigating the anxiety and struggles of a mother suffering from early-onset dementia; and her father's upcoming marriage to his new girlfriend, Beth. To postpone dealing with any of that, she heads to a party. There, she finds a cute girl to kiss—Ruby, visiting the seaside Irish town from her native England. Ruby adores romantic comedy films. To convert horror-loving Saoirse, Ruby proposes they try to complete a list of rom-com clichés over the summer. Commitment-phobic Saoirse's keen to promote wholesome lesbian romance and to keep things casual. As they spend time together, however, it gets harder for Saoirse to follow her own relationship boundary rules. The novel's voice is delightfully brash and no-nonsense while it simultaneously reveals Saoirse's vulnerabilities as she deals with various feelings of betrayal. Smyth paints each character as a complex, messy, lifelike individual. Irish slang adds cultural texture to the story. Most characters are cued as white; Beth is English and brown-skinned.

Pleasantly and audaciously fills a gap in queer romance. (Romance. 13-18)



THIS COVEN WON'T BREAK

Sterling, Isabel

Razorbill/Penguin (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 19, 2020

978-0-451-48035-4

Series: These Witches Don't Burn, 2

All witches are now in danger in this magic-laced action/mystery sequel.

Hannah, from *These Witches Don't Burn* (2019), is starting her senior year of high school, but that's not what's foremost on her mind. Instead, she's concerned with the Witch Hunters who are attacking more frequently with a refined version of their "cure" that robs witches of their magic. After exposure to an earlier version of the drug, Hannah's having trouble accessing her Elemental magic and wants to be part of the collective covens' retaliation. She's also committed to seeing her dad's murderers brought to justice. When the witch Elders ask Hannah to recruit some key players to their counterattack plans, she's all in even though the first recruit recently tried to kill her. Internally, Hannah is still dealing with grief and trauma

Deliciously heavy on fluff but also delves into more complex subjects.

DATE ME, BRYSON KELLER

as well. Thankfully, she can talk openly about her troubles with Gemma, her now-in-the-know nonmagical best friend. She also finds comfort with her girlfriend, Morgan, a Blood Witch whose abilities give Hannah's stoppered powers some relief. Despite sweet, heartfelt romance and some emotionally genuine scenes for Hannah, the sensational roller coaster of a plot leaves these moments feeling disjointed rather than a natural part of the overall story. Apart from the white main characters, there are a few secondary characters of color; a trans secondary character; and a married, pregnant lesbian couple who are role models for Hannah.

Offers quality moments despite some weak links in the narrative chain. (*Paranormal*. 13-18)



THE SELF-LOVE REVOLUTION Radical Body Positivity for Girls of Color

Tovar, Virgie

Instant Help Books (184 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | May 1, 2020

978-1-68403-411-6

Series: Instant Help Solutions

An inclusive, compassionate guidebook that champions girls and women of all ages and challenges the status quo.

Tovar pens a guide for learning to accept and love oneself, inside and out, despite cultural messages to the contrary. While providing historical and cultural context for hurdles to self-acceptance faced by girls and women of color such as sexism, racism, and fatphobia, Tovar encourages readers to show up as their best selves within their communities and to make suitable and necessary changes to themselves, their communities, and society at large. Tovar, a proud, fat babe and fat activist of Mexican and Iranian descent, uses anecdotes from her own life and merges them with findings from scientific and sociological studies to amplify her points. With journal prompts following each chapter, Tovar includes the often missed element of some self-help or motivational books—actionable suggestions for how to make the shifts in lifestyle or mindset that readers may desire or need. This element supports readers in becoming more empowered and mentally, emotionally, and physically healthier versions of themselves. Her style is educational and accessible without being condescending; her warm, friendly tone treats readers as her equals and as whole people while acknowledging that we are works in progress. A fantastic introduction to/reminder of self-love and self-advocacy.

Informative, affirming, and necessary. (endnotes) (*Nonfiction*. 12-18)



DATE ME, BRYSON KELLER

van Whye, Kevin

Random House (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 19, 2020

978-0-593-12603-5

A dare sets up a gay teen with his school's star athlete.

Kai never intended to come out of the closet—at least not until going off to college. But when detention presents a surprising opportunity, Kai kicks “the closet door open” and asks his classmate Bryson out. Because of a dare, Bryson must date a new person each week. He says yes to Kai. The catch? Each relationship only lasts from Monday until the final bell on Friday. Kai decides to keep everything a secret—even from his best friends, Priya and Donny. The more time Kai and Bryson spend together—rehearsing their drama scene, seeing their favorite band in LA—the more the boys' fake relationship starts to feel very real. But will it last after Friday? Or will Bryson move on to the next dare date? Like Jenny Han's *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (2014), this #ownvoices debut is scrupulously romantic. The plot is deliciously heavy on fluff, but it also delves into more complex subjects like faith, racism, and homophobia. Kai's lighthearted first-person narration and the lovable cast of characters keep the momentum going. Kai is mixed race, with a white mother and a biracial (black/white) South African dad who occasionally slips in Afrikaans phrases. Bryson, who is white, may be the poster child, but his questioning sexuality and family troubles add dimension.

A solid blend of swoonworthy moments and minor injustices. (author's note) (*Fiction*. 14-18)



THE LADY ALCHEMIST

Vitale, Samantha

Month9Books (384 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 26, 2020

978-1-951710-17-0

Alchemists battle magicians and a skilled young woman and her country are caught in the middle in this “Rumpelstiltskin” adaptation.

Sepha's town of Three Mills is counting on her unusual alchemy skills to keep their jobs—and her abusive father will make her pay for any mistake. But when things go wrong, desperation gets Sepha into deep trouble, first with the dangerous Magistrate and then with an evil magician who offers to save her for the price of her firstborn child. Her only way out is to create a new life for him in lieu of a future baby. As she attempts to use her alchemy skills to create a body for the magician, she makes discoveries about herself, her few allies, and her country that turn her world upside down and place her at the center of a plan that will either save or destroy her homeland. This complex fantasy hits the ground running and never slows down, with complicated twists,

turns, and discoveries in every chapter. Sepha is a sympathetic protagonist whose bad decisions are easily overlooked; readers will follow her trials with interest even if some obstacles feel a bit contrived and overly drawn out. While Vitale's writing is lovely in places and hackneyed in others, most readers will get through the nearly 400 action-packed pages with pleasure. Most main characters seem to be white; Sepha's love interest has brown skin.

Engaging; despite some flaws, this is a successful debut. (*Fantasy*. 12-18)



IF WE WERE US

Walther, K.L.

Sourcebooks Fire (368 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 1, 2020

978-1-7282-1026-1

A dramatic and secret-filled senior year at boarding school through the eyes of two childhood friends.

Sage and Charlie have known each other forever, and all their friends think they're secretly in love. While new

romance does bloom during their senior year, the fear of changing relationships and pressure from their peers cause anxiety within their friend group. As Sage and Charlie repress their emotions and identities to maintain the status quo, they dream of being free to live true to themselves. While there's a wide cast of characters, the focus stays on Sage, Charlie, new student Luke, and Charlie's twin, Nick. Covering their entire senior year at the Bexley School, the story is at times confusing to follow, with key events being related as reminiscences, lessening their emotional impact for readers. The protagonists' families' influence on their decisions, from Sage's divorced, high school-sweetheart parents to Charlie and Nick's elite, old-fashioned family, adds necessary character depth. The emotional stress of coming out is depicted in an empathetic manner. While the story unfolds slowly, the storylines become gripping and realistically convoluted. The book situates whiteness as the norm for most characters; Luke's mother is Japanese (his late father's ethnicity is not specified). Several minor characters are cued as racially diverse.

Surprisingly and entertainingly depicts mature views on life, friendship, and romance. (*Fiction*. 13-18)



MY EYES ARE UP HERE

Zimmermann, Laura

Dutton (352 pp.)

\$17.99 | Jun. 23, 2020

978-1-9848-1524-8

Greer Walsh wishes she were one person...unfortunately, with her large breasts, she feels like she's actually three.

High school sophomore and math whiz Greer is self-conscious about her body. Maude and Mavis, as she's named her large breasts, are causing problems for her. When Greer meets new kid Jackson Oates, she wishes even more that she had a body that she didn't feel a need to hide underneath XXL T-shirts. While trying to impress Jackson, who has moved to the Chicago suburbs from Cleveland, Greer decides to try out for her school's volleyball team. When she makes JV, Greer is forced to come to terms with how her body looks and feels in a uniform and in motion as well as with being physically close with her teammates. The story is told in the first person from Greer's point of view. Inconsistent storytelling as well as Greer's (somewhat distracting) personified inner butterfly make this realistic novel a slow but overall enjoyable read. The story contains elements of light romance as well as strong female friendships. Greer is white with a Christian mom and Jewish dad; Jackson seems to be white by default, and there is diversity among the secondary characters.

A sweet, slow-paced novel about a teen learning to love her body. (*Fiction*. 12-18)

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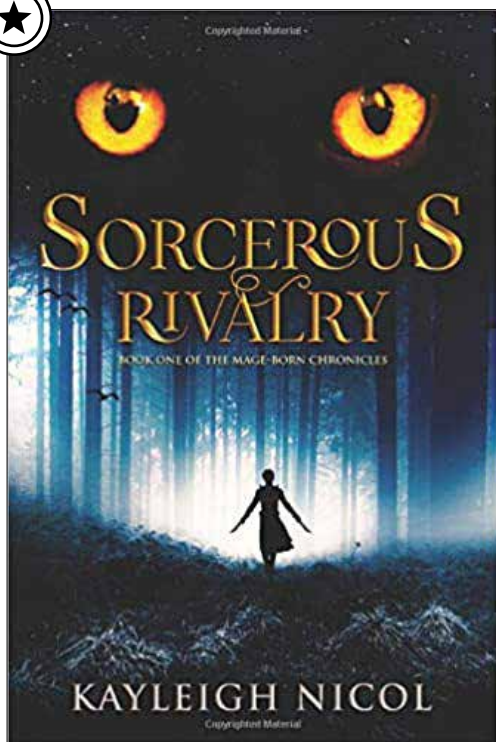
(*Science fiction*. 13-18)

INDIE

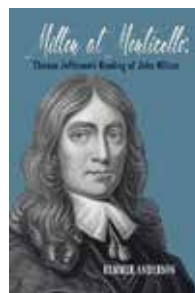


These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- A QUIET HERO** by Dwight Harsbarger 182
- DISCUSSION MATERIALS** by Bill Keenan 185
- SORCEROUS RIVALRY** by Kayleigh Nicol 188
- THE LAUNDRESS** by Barbara Sapienza 191



SORCEROUS RIVALRY
Nicol, Kayleigh
 Blue Feather Publishing (292 pp.)
 \$10.99 paper | Apr. 7, 2018
 978-1-73213-171-2



MILTON AT MONTICELLO *Thomas Jefferson's Reading of John Milton*

Anderson, Kemmer
 Xlibris Corp (100 pp.)
 \$15.99 paper | Oct. 15, 2019
 978-1-79606-590-9

A scholarly analysis focuses on the intellectual debt Thomas Jefferson owes to a celebrated poet.

Anderson delves deeply into the influence John Milton exerted over Jefferson, considering them “two seeds in the cross pollination of liberty between England and America.” Jefferson read Milton and made notes in a commonplace book—a kind of general intellectual diary—and quoted both *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. The author argues, through an intriguing combination of exegetical rigor and the “intuition of a poet,” that Milton provided the categories from which Jefferson could develop his argument against the establishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia and the “spiritual tyranny” of politically sanctioned religion in general. In addition, Jefferson borrowed from Milton’s “language of natural rights” in crafting foundational political documents like the Bill for Religious Freedom and the Declaration of Independence. Similarly, Anderson convincingly argues, Jefferson’s reflections on equality and his “painful insights” into slavery also evince a reliance on his reading of Milton. The author’s scholarship is as careful as it is creative—he imagines how Jefferson interpreted Milton’s *Lycidas* with impressive sensitivity. And while he generally focuses on Jefferson’s political philosophy, Anderson conjectures that the founder was inspired by *Samson Agonistes* to manage his own personal trials, his feelings of “betrayal and suffering.” This is a brief but far-reaching essay—the author also considers Milton’s impact on Jefferson’s writing style and even his tastes in horticultural design, asserting that “we can imagine the glimpse of Milton’s Eden incarnate in Monticello.” Writing in consistently lucid but impassioned prose, the author makes the argument that Milton remains a subject of great contemporary relevance: “At this time in our history, we still need John Milton as a voice for liberty.”

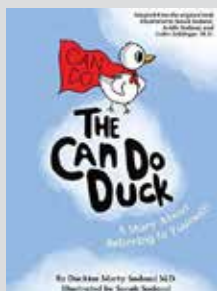
A persuasively argued work of Milton scholarship—meticulous and wise.

DUCKS AMOK



IN 1941, Viking Press published Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings*, a wonderful picture book about a mallard family that received the 1942 Caldecott Medal. It remains hugely popular today. Why? Simply put: Kids love ducks—and this inarguable fact has inspired countless other authors and illustrators. Here are three fine, feathered duck tales that Kirkus Indie can recommend:

The Can Do Duck by “Ducktor” Morty Sosland, with illustrations by Sarah Sosland, tells the story of Little One, a small, white duck who has a fear of trying new things—including such useful duck activities as swimming and flying. However, Little One’s mother teaches the bird that planning and visualizing tasks can make them less scary. Kirkus’ reviewer praises the book’s “Positive advice for helping kids set and meet personal goals.”



Joy Heyer’s *Duck, Duck, Moose* features “charming illustrations and an animal story that nicely models emotional intelligence without being preachy,” according to Kirkus’ reviewer. In it, a grown duck is looking for an animal with whom to play the game duck, duck, goose, because the local goose has gone south for the winter. He tries to play with a pig, a porcupine, and a moose, among others, with little success—until they find a new game to play.



In *All Ducks Are Birds (But, Not All Birds Are Ducks)*, which received a Kirkus star, author/illustrator Tara Michele Zrinski teaches young readers basic logic concepts—noting, for example, how all ducks are birds, but not all birds are ducks; that geese and swans are also birds but are not ducks; and that although ducks, geese, and swans can take flight, not all birds can. Kirkus’ reviewer writes that “children may learn the building blocks from sheer enjoyment rather than considering these useful points formal lessons.”

David Rapp is the senior Indie editor.



SHADOWSHINE An Animal Adventure

Armstrong, Johnny

Guernica World Editions (284 pp.)

\$25.00 paper | May 1, 2019

978-1-77183-460-5

In Armstrong’s debut fantasy, a possum undergoes a harrowing journey to get help when savage bipeds threaten the existence of forest creatures.

Zak became an orphan when, as a baby possum, he fell from his mother’s pouch. As a family of gray squirrels adopted him, Zak is bilingual, able to speak “the Rodent language” incomprehensible to most “forest-folk,” consisting of the varied species who thrive in a dense forest. In the forest, there’s been concern about bipedal creatures called *sans-pelages* (roughly translatable as “without animals’ fur coats”), as they make campfires. But a leader named Mungo, one particularly sadistic *sans-pelage*, has been attacking other *sans-pelages* with fire. A possum named Zak offers to go on a journey northward to learn how other regions have dealt with these problems. He faces many potential threats other than predators, including glaciers and raging river currents. Things turn even more burdensome when it’s fairly evident that Zak is lost. Fortunately, he stumbles upon a few four-legged allies, from Elbon the skunk to Sark the mammoth-esque mastodon. Meanwhile, Zak’s bobcat pal, Sena, and others back at home may be in danger as Mungo continues to lead his army of warriors down an infernal path. Before long, the forest-folk will have to take a stand against the *sans-pelages* to save their homes. Despite the variety of predominantly furry characters, Armstrong’s novel is not for children, as there are a number of bloody confrontations. Nevertheless, this environmental story often manages to be lighthearted. Zak, for example, is a self-described poet with a sophisticated manner of speech and an unusual preferred exclamation: “Incomprehensible!” A sharp focus on the forest-folk wisely keeps the land, the time period, and the humans relatively vague. At the same time, the narrative periodically slips into the otherworldly, with characters interacting with spirits in the Shadow World. Armstrong expressively details the animals’ perspectives: an upland sandpiper who witnesses “an unbalanced sky” or Zak’s first seeing Sark upside down as he dangles from the mastodon’s trunk.

A memorable cast of animals leads a tale with a strong environmental message.



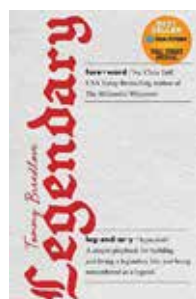
THE PROVIDENTIAL ORIGINS OF MAXIMILIANO RUBÍN

Battersby, Lawrence
Tre Cappelli Editions
Mar. 5, 2020
978-1-913332-00-6

A debut historical novel set in 19th-century Spain offers a trove of philosophical, social, and political clashes.

On April, 18, 1886, Cayetano Galeote Cotilla, a defrocked priest, shot and killed the bishop of Madrid in front of hundreds of witnesses. The murderer and the crime are real, and Battersby's tale revolves around the punishment for the deed. Will Cayetano live or die? Enter two protagonists, also historical figures. One is the novelist Benito Pérez Galdós, "the most famous Spanish writer whom many English-speaking readers may not know by name or reputation." The other is the eminent alienist (as psychiatrists were then called) Luis Simarro. Benito and Luis are former friends. Luis is a scientist with a special interest in the care of the mentally ill, called at the time degenerates. He is also a determinist. Benito is a fierce humanist, a believer in free will. Luis is convinced that Cayetano is mad, a degenerate born of a family with a sketchy genetic history. Benito wants to show that Cayetano is rational even though a finding of insanity might save his life. Cayetano is sentenced to death, but the judgment is later overturned. The real point of the engrossing story is the intrigue that is hinted at throughout. The political situation in Spain pervades everything and affects the outcome of the trial. The cast includes leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Royalists, the revolutionary Progressives, and others. Alliances are formed for convenience and broken for the same reason. Fortunes are ever shifting, mistrust abounds, and the country is weary. In the end, it is Benito who becomes Battersby's intuitive hero, holding humane values and puzzling things out. Luis is deftly portrayed as a good man, but his research brings him to the brink of eugenics, the scariest of 19th-century pseudo-sciences. The author's enthusiasm—and proselytizing—for Galdós' books is touching and admirable (Maximiliano Rubín is one of the Spanish novelist's characters). And Battersby's rich details will transport readers to the turbulent era of his complex protagonists.

This worthwhile read brings a little-known tragedy to vivid life.



LEGENDARY A Simple Playbook for Building and Living a Legendary Life, and Being Remembered as a Legend

Breedlove, Tommy
Morgan James Publishing (204 pp.)
\$27.95 | \$16.99 paper | Feb. 25, 2020
978-1-64279-953-8
978-1-64279-553-0 paper

A guide offers an inspirational prescription for living life to the fullest.

In this impassioned debut, Breedlove explains why he left a career at a leading financial consulting firm to become a "mind-set coach" who empowers people to "build and live Legendary lives." The notion of becoming a "Legend" is arguably one of the more aspirational approaches in self-improvement literature, and the author's brimming enthusiasm for the concept pervades every paragraph. Fourteen chapters cover familiar self-help territory, such as living with purpose, developing a positive mindset, creating a personal mission statement, and making the right choices. Each chapter incorporates the author's own anecdotes, a smattering of examples, references to other contemporary sources, lots of chatty advice, and a bulleted closing section that combines suggested actions with a summary of key points. One of the more useful chapters concerns time management. Breedlove's technique of "time blocking" (assigning a period of time to focus on one important thing) is not unique but it is applicable to anyone who struggles with setting priorities and boundaries. Another relevant chapter addresses noise control: "All the distractions in life keeping us from living our purpose, truly being ourselves, and following our passions are noise." The author has a nifty way of turning a phrase and explaining a concept. In discussing a positive mindset, he writes: "The word *try* is code for 'I will never do this as it is not important.'... When we say we will try, we aren't committing to the action and therefore never reach our goals." As for the ability to focus, Breedlove advises that "we must commit to living and working where our passions and talents intersect. I call this sweet spot our 'zone of brilliance.'" The content of this work is not markedly different from typical power-of-positive-thinking books, but the author's friendly, first-person writing style makes for an enjoyable reading experience. He capably writes about some of the more common impediments—such as fear, worry, and distrust—to living a successful life and supplies legitimate, helpful suggestions for improvement. Throughout, Breedlove comes across as compassionate and generous—qualities he reinforces in his well-executed manual.

Ebullient and uplifting advice.



A BAKER'S DAUGHTER *Recipes & Memories From a Family Bakery*

Brenner, Marcy & Donnan, Kristin

Marcelle R. Brenner Publishing (289 pp.)

978-0-9915449-6-7

Part memoir and part cookbook, this debut blends the story of a loving baker/father with more than 50 of his recipes.

When Brenner collaborated with her longtime friend Donnan to pen the history of Brenner's Bakery in Alexandria, Virginia, her intention was to showcase some authentic recipes and pay homage to her father, Max. And that is exactly what happens in this buoyant family story, in which colorful characters—like a graceful Southern mother, Miss Charlotte, who laughed so hard she “let loose” on a pile of newspapers—intertwine with Brenner's Bakery recipes, such as an award-winning Pumpkin Pie. To add even more flavor to already spicy life stories, many eye-catching family photographs (both black and white and color) are sprinkled into the mix. While researching this book, Brenner spent much time testing and adapting her father's handwritten recipes for smaller kitchens. The recipes in these pages have easy-to-follow instructions and use accessible ingredients. For example, the famous Chocolate Top butter cookies are made with simple ingredients like shortening and cake flour. Mouthwatering recipes include hearty breads, doughnuts, biscuits, and cakes, like a seven-layer chocolate concoction. An appendix offers some useful tips—including one about shaping cookie dough. But the rich stories—including Brenner's discovery of her Jewish heritage—may be even more delicious than the actual treats. In addition to compelling portraits of immigrant grandparents, there are many tales of Max—a beloved man who hired mentally disabled workers and took breads and pies to neighbors during the blizzard of 1966. Best of all, the simple but poetic prose is full of memorable sensory images: “Each night, Dad came home with dried chunks of sugar and dough down the front of his white T-shirt and pants. The family dog would lick his shoes clean every night.”

A lively family account delivers a sweet, lingering taste of nostalgia.



CURSED BY ATHENA

Cerrano, Sherry

Self (390 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Jan. 20, 2020

978-1-67372-544-5

In Cerrano's debut novel, a girl with an incredible scientific secret seeks help from a skeptical security expert.

In New York City, a homeless young woman who goes by the nickname “Colors” tries to keep out of sight of surveillance cameras and pursuers. She attempts to purchase no-questions-asked protection from security expert and retired

Army colonel Sam Hennessy. He initially doesn't believe her paranoid accounts of being hunted for the world-shattering information she possesses, even after she gives him a fortune in cash. But other people's deaths and his own encounter with a hail of gunfire change his mind. In other chapters, the plot goes back 12 months to the St. Louis household of retired professor Helen Merrick and her distant, workaholic husband, Joseph, a Greek-mythology buff and research scientist who's so engrossed in a clandestine “Athena Project” that he largely ignores his own family. He even seems unconcerned with the fact that a young daughter, away in Africa, appears to have been abducted. Helen gets Joseph's attention, however, when she announces that she has stage 4 uterine cancer. In the present-day storyline, Colors stubbornly refuses to reveal anything concrete about herself, her background, or her dilemma, so it's a minor puzzle how the two plotlines fit together, but it's one that won't be too taxing for even casual SF fans. Cerrano's novel should appeal to aficionados of Robin Cook's medical thrillers (especially 2012's *Nano*), although this book has more of an on-the-run chase narrative. The author also works hard to get into the mindsets and emotions of the desperate players, who aren't sure whom to trust or how to protect loved ones. Cerrano's spirit harkens back to the days when such character-oriented SF material could be found in the fiction sections of mainstream magazines such as *McCall's*.

Strong characterizations uplift a somewhat old-school SF/medical thriller.



THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL *Employee Engagement = Higher Profits*

Couillard, Dana

FriesenPress (105 pp.)

978-1-5255-5520-6

978-1-5255-5521-3 paper

A professional educator and mentor offers advice on keeping employees engaged in the workplace.

In this business book, Couillard uses a stool as a metaphor for the elements of worker engagement that employers should understand and strive to improve. The stool's three legs are control, competence, and connection while its base represents the uniting force of purpose. In the author's formulation, frustration is the main hurdle workers face, leading to disengagement and low performance, so managers can achieve success through developing a shared sense of purpose and keeping employees motivated. The guide often relies on extended metaphors, like a World War II battleship (staffed by a crew united by a common goal) and the first man labeled “Public Enemy Number One” (less notorious than Al Capone or Bonnie and Clyde but extremely dangerous), that vividly depict common workplace problems and solutions. In addition, Couillard's taste for dramatic language (“That is the first sign of engagement, the first spark from the fire that burns beneath the surface”) keeps the text from becoming a dry read

Gleisser's fast-paced SF thriller is bolstered by a dynamic heroine.

DIANASAURUS REX

as it delves into the facets of employee performance. The manual delivers both specific action items, such as surveying workers to find out what they think the organization's purpose is, as well as more general platitudes on leadership and management. Quotes from several of the author's corporate clients provide real-world context for many of the concepts presented in the volume. The text is concise and well organized, making it easy to digest in a single sitting or to focus on a discrete section. While many of the notions will be familiar to frequent readers of books on management, less advanced bibliophiles will find plenty in the guide to learn from and implement in their own workplaces. The information is presented effectively and with clarity, and Couillard writes with the tone of an enthusiastic mentor. Additional materials are available on the author's website (rippledynamics.com), as he reminds readers throughout the manual.

An easy-to-follow introduction to motivating employees and maximizing performance.



DIANASAURUS REX

Gleisser, Sheldon

Hydra Publications (328 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Sep. 26, 2019

978-1-948374-21-7

An act of sabotage gives a teenage girl some remarkable new abilities in this debut SF novel.

Diana Dunphy is a normal 16-year-old girl whose parents' work is anything but ordinary. Her divorced parents, Rita

and Aaron Dunphy, are scientists collaborating on a project called the Tachyon Chamber, affectionately nicknamed the "Crock Pot." Designed to tackle the twin problems of oil scarcity and waste disposal, the Tachyon Chamber sends discarded materials back in time, where they will become oil for present-day use. But on the night of the project's demonstration, terrorists posing as high school friends of Diana's attack the attendees in an effort to download the software that makes the chamber possible. Diana tries to intervene, but she is pushed into the chamber. Her parents rescue her; then, her father is killed trying to dispose of a bomb left by the terrorists. While recovering in a hospital, Diana notices something is different about her. She craves rare meat and uses her tongue to smell. Her mother tests her DNA and discovers similarities with a *Tyrannosaurus rex*'s genetic material. Diana must keep her new powers and instincts under control as she returns to high school, but her efforts are complicated by her desire to seek revenge against the terrorists responsible for her condition and her father's death. Gleisser's novel is a fast-paced SF thriller bolstered by a dynamic heroine and well-staged action scenes. The narrative is anchored by Diana, whose world is turned upside down when her DNA is spliced with that of a dinosaur. She is surrounded by a strong supporting cast, including her mother and Chuck Leadingham, a classmate who eventually develops a romantic interest in Diana. The investigation into the sabotage that led to Diana's

transformation leads to some of the tale's most intense action sequences, particularly her use of her sense of smell to uncover the location of the terrorists. That said, there are a few minor editing inconsistencies. For example, the name of the institute supporting the Dunphys' research is spelled both "Gotelle" and "Gottelle."

An engaging and unconventional thriller with a vibrant heroine.



THORNED TALES AND OTHER MADDENING HAUNTS

Grinslade, Dakota

Self (133 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Apr. 20, 2019

978-1-09-532696-1

A debut volume of experimental poetry offers tantalizing mysteries.

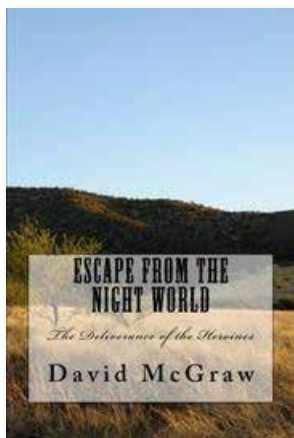
When Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel planned their touchstone avant-garde film, *Un Chien Andalou*, they tried to

avoid building any logical connections between scenes. Chance and dream would hold the film together—not reason. And any meanings would be purely fortuitous. One can't help thinking of Dalí and Buñuel when reading Grinslade's daring new collection of verse. Though the author has been on Earth for just three short decades, his poetry harks back to the heady days of early modernism and that iconoclastic movement's experiments with form and style. As such, the poet's work often has the feel of a collage, or of stray scraps of fabric woven together into a ragged blanket. His opening poem, "Moments Before Dying," is a good example; it begins: "This time you will learn / it hides its knives between / reality and my trust in all / nevermind the bullets / here's the new machine web / they'll be wiring our heads/necks / to covet our innermost visions." A Mary Oliver poem, this is not. In this representative piece, Grinslade sparks so many more questions than he answers: What hides its knives? Shouldn't readers mind the bullets after all? What happened to the old machine web, and who plans to wire "our heads/necks"? Yet the result of this accumulation of mysteries is simultaneously confounding and thrilling. For Grinslade, like Dalí and Buñuel before him, hides a careful design in the appearance of randomness. The first line of his fine work "Crypture"—"Visions presented in spurts like a faint pulse"—supplies a key to that design: The author's images arrive in "spurts," but the fleeting thrum of a heartbeat lies underneath, providing both structure and rhythm. And readers will find that there is a dark joy to be had in probing these mystifying, bracing, and thoroughly satisfying poems with their calloused fingers, searching for evasive signs of life.

Dark, jagged, and compelling poems.

DISCOVER INDIE READS

[SPONSORED]

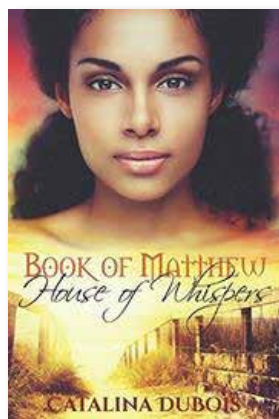


THE DELIVERANCE OF THE HEROINES

by David McGraw

"In this debut fantasy, a young woman's destiny involves saving her world from a long-standing evil."

A curious tale with a religious theme.



BOOK OF MATTHEW

by Catalina Dubois

"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."

A complex thriller that offers intense romance and suspense.

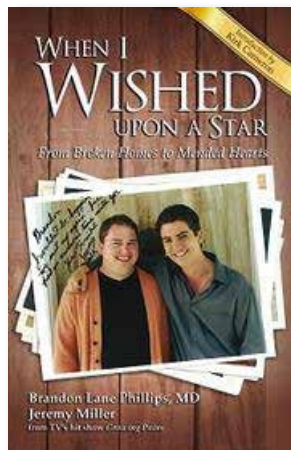


STARMAN'S SAGA

by Colin Alexander

"An American on humanity's first voyage to another star system discovers peril, romance, and considerable mayhem on the contentious project."

A vigorous, intelligent reworking of familiar SF elements featuring an American veteran who makes a long, international space voyage survivable.

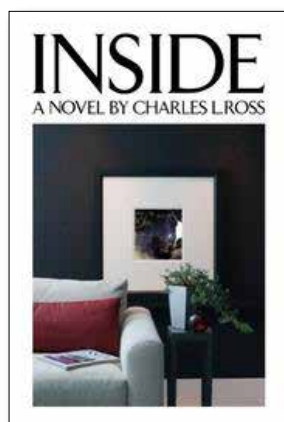


WHEN I WISHED UPON A STAR

by Brandon Lane Phillips & Jeremy Miller

"Phillips' debut memoir tells the story of how a wish when he was an ill child led to his career as a successful doctor."

An earnest, inspiring memoir for Christian readers and fans of *Growing Pains*.

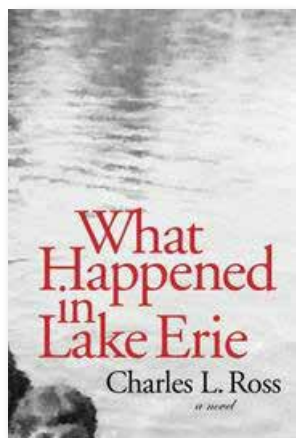


INSIDE

by Charles L. Ross

"In this debut mystery, an ambitious young man's rise in the magazine world is stymied by a secret history of murder and betrayal."

A sexy, scathing insider's view of an interior design magazine that hardly needs its murder plot to keep readers enthralled.

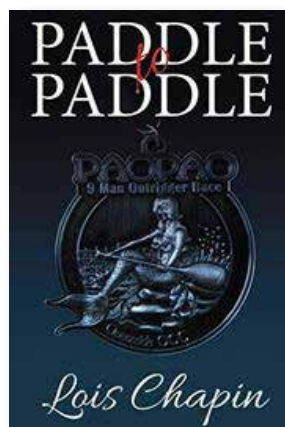


WHAT HAPPENED IN LAKE ERIE

by Charles L. Ross

"Ross' (*Inside*, 2013, etc.) literary novel considers the fraught relationship between a young gay man and his father."

A carefully wrought study of a gay boy's coming-of-age.

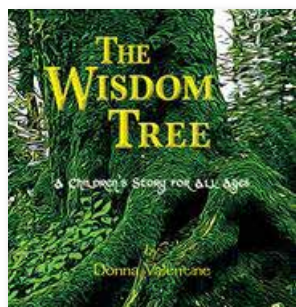


PADDLE TO PADDLE

by Lois Chapin

"Chapin's masterful poetry collection traces the arc of a lifetime—growing up in a violent household, teenage rebellion, parenthood, and reuniting with an estranged mother."

Acutely observant writing; unsettling and life-affirming in equal measure.

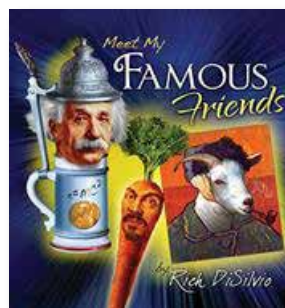


THE WISDOM TREE

by Donna Valentine

"A woman shares the enlightening lessons she gathers from a stately tree in this debut picture book."

A highly personal tale for nature and poetry fans.

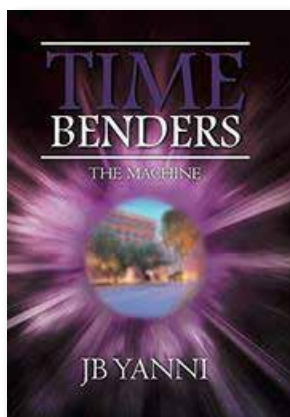


MEET MY FAMOUS FRIENDS

by Rich DiSilvio
Illus. by the author

"A veteran author jokingly creates puns on the names of famous figures in this brief introduction to history makers."

An amusing picture book with strong illustrations that should whet readers' appetites for heftier historical fare.



TIME BENDERS

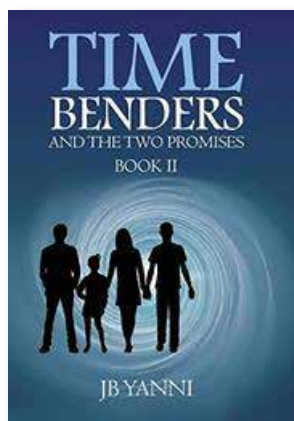
by JB Yanni

"In Yanni's debut YA adventure, four siblings discover a way to travel through time, giving them the opportunity to possibly prevent their parents' deaths."

A breezy, straightforward approach to time travel featuring unforgettable characters.

DISCOVER INDIE READS

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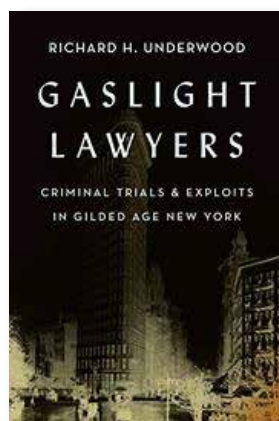


TIME BENDERS AND THE TWO PROMISES

by JB Yanni

"Time travelers revisit the past to help a friend and fix a mistake in this YA SF sequel."

Appealing siblings fortify a time-bending tale that offers plenty of drama.

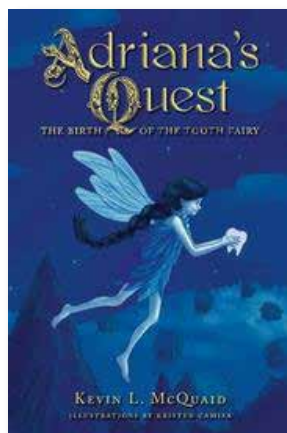


GASLIGHT LAWYERS

by Richard H. Underwood

"A historical study of the often dysfunctional judicial system in late-19th-century New York City."

An accessible, marvelously rigorous account of a bygone legal era.

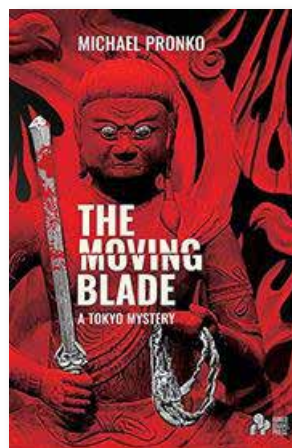


ADRIANA'S QUEST

by Kevin L. McQuaid
Illus. by Kristen Camisa

"Where did the first tooth fairy come from? (Hint: Squirrels play a major role.)"

An imaginative but convoluted tooth-fairy origin tale with some plot points in need of streamlining.

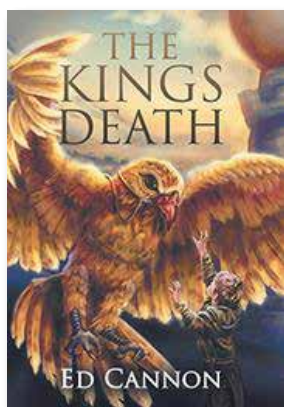


THE MOVING BLADE

by Michael Pronko

"Pronko's (*The Last Train*, 2017, etc.) Tokyo-based thriller follows a detective's search for a manuscript so valuable some will kill for it."

A tight, rock-solid installment in a series that's only getting better.

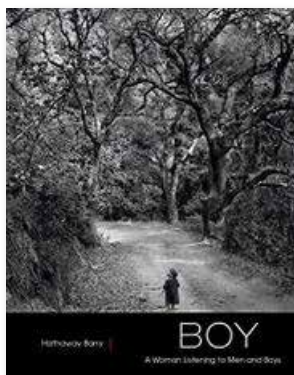


THE KINGS DEATH

by Ed Cannon

"This sequel sees a far-reaching demonic conspiracy throw the world into chaos."

A successful, high-stakes fantasy that delivers riveting action scenes and bold characterizations.

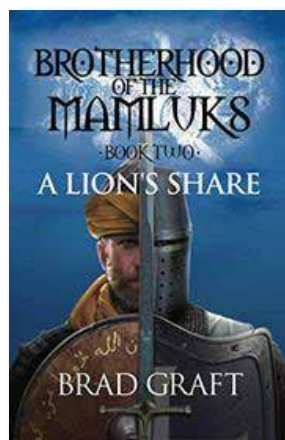


BOY

by Hathaway Barry

"A collection of interviews of men, conducted by a woman, about what it means to be male in today's world."

An intriguing look into the male psyche.

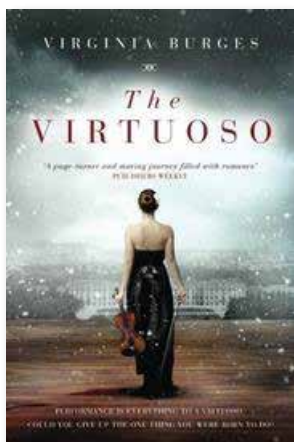


A LION'S SHARE

by Brad Graft

"This second installment of a historical fiction series focuses on 13th-century Muslim warriors."

While backstories can be dense, this Muslim war tale delivers gripping action scenes.



THE VIRTUOSO

by Virginia Burges

"In Burges' debut novel, a professional violinist searches for meaning in life after a tragic incident leaves her unable to play."

A poignant melodrama with a heroine that readers will root for.



THE FRIDAY EDITION

by Betta Ferrendelli

"In Ferrendelli's debut mystery, a reporter desperate to solve her sister's murder must face demons of her own."

A smart, nimble treat of a mystery that provides ample foundation for growth.



THE COAT

Grunspan, April

Black Rose Writing (198 pp.)

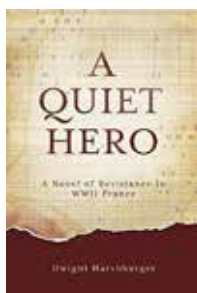
\$17.95 paper | Apr. 23, 2020

978-1-68433-438-4

A young man's inheritance from his grandfather—a Holocaust survivor—ignites a desire to learn more about his own Jewish identity in this debut novel.

Seth Feinberg grows up in a thoroughly Jewish home, but it's one defined by ceremony and custom more than an obviously deep well-spring of faith. Seth's paternal grandfather and grandmother are both Polish survivors of the Holocaust. (The teenager calls them Saba and Savta, "their Hebrew honorifics.") But they rarely speak of their World War II experiences, which remain "shadows in the twilight, barely perceptible in the fading light of memory." When Seth turns 18 years old, Saba promises him a gift, a leather coat worn by a Nazi officer. But when Saba dies, Seth is deprived of the full story behind that coat—a "single tangible piece of my family's history"—so he's compelled to investigate his grandparents' backgrounds and the tragedy that tormented them. In the process, he begins to write short stories, fictional vignettes that imaginatively explore the different roles the coat could have played, some sad and others redemptive. Grunspan delicately charts Seth's search for some fuller sense of his family's identity, and, by extension, his own, and his struggle to understand what his grandparents endured and how they carried on. He's poignantly baffled by the optimism that seemed necessary but impossible for their survival: "When did optimism peek through the clouds of despair? When people found surviving family or friends? With the promise of three meals a day, even if those meals were small and unfamiliar?" The author chronicles Seth's investigation with exceeding sensitivity and thoughtfully raises questions about the healing abilities of fiction. In addition, the embedded short tales are a surprising delight and make up for the plot's occasional tendency to lag.

An intelligently conceived meditation on the curative powers of storytelling.



A QUIET HERO

Harshbarger, Dwight

Mascot Books (376 pp.)

\$18.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2019

978-1-64307-276-0

This historical novel features the true story of Gen. René Carmille, "the world's first ethical hacker," who saved thousands of French Jews from Hitler's

Final Solution.

Carmille is just one of the many historical figures in this World War II tale. The fictional protagonists are Miriam Meijer,



a Dutch Jew, and her eventual lover and husband, Charles Delmand (aka Charles Secœur). Miriam is in Paris when her family perishes during the destruction of Rotterdam. Charles, who is with the Resistance, arranges a new identity—Miriam Dupré—and gets her a job at the Military Recruitment Service in Lyon. Her formidable talents lead to her working directly with Carmille. This is highly classified work—right under the noses of Nazi agents and associates. The question of whom to trust runs through the story like a leitmotif. Everyone knows that the Vichy government is a bad joke that eagerly collaborates with the Nazis. But to round up Jews, the Nazis need to correctly identify them. Carmille has engineered a way to sabotage the IBM punch cards that are used. The hacking and the deliberate stalling are successful. But later, Miriam, having killed a Gestapo officer, is on the run. She and Charles ultimately reunite while Carmille is arrested and tortured by the infamous Klaus Barbie. Harshbarger has a riveting story to relate, and he tells the tale superbly. Miriam—who narrates most of the chapters—is well drawn and braver than she thinks. Charles leads his double life with aplomb. As Delmand, he is a *Times of London* journalist; as Secœur, he is a French art consultant. How the punch card hacking works, the German occupiers' arrogance, the daily anxiety that the Jews feel—all of this comes across very convincingly. During moments of heightened drama, the author deftly uses the brevitas trope. At one point, Miriam's friend Simone has just seen a Jew killed by a German soldier and recounts her reaction: "Bit my fist till the soldier was out of sight. Then I ran. Through alleys. To the hotel." Simone burst into tears. She put her hands over her face. 'I escaped from Warsaw,' she sobbed. 'My family's there. Trapped.' The useful backmatter bolsters the history and clearly shows that IBM's complicity with the Third Reich was amoral at best, monstrous at worst.

A vivid, dramatic, and believable tale of a courageous and self-effacing war hero.



MISS WORLD 1970

How I Entered a Pageant and How Up Making History

Hosten, Jennifer

Sutherland House (200 pp.)

\$22.95 | Mar. 15, 2020

978-1-989555-23-1

A debut memoir recounts how a black woman's unprecedented win in the Miss World competition resulted in stardom.

Hosten went into the 1970 Miss World contest feeling unexpectedly confident. A flight attendant who had recently been named Miss Grenada—a competition she had only entered after being scouted by the Grenada Tourist Board—the author saw the whole affair as an adventure. She was proud to represent her tiny island nation alongside the 57 other contestants at London's Royal Albert Hall vying for the Miss World title—though she knew that a woman of color had never been chosen. Hosten and the others were not expecting the feminist protesters who greeted their bus with

Suffused with vibrant imagery and subtle nuance, Hussman's poetry makes for an engrossing read.

LAST THINGS

banners and placards: " 'We Are Not Ugly, We're Angry,' 'You Poor Cows,' 'Miss World, Man's World.' Some of them pounded with clenched fists on the sides of the bus. Others were pushing hard, trying to shake the coach. At one point, they all started singing, 'We Shall Overcome.' " Halfway through the show, protesters in the crowd began shouting down the jokes of the host, comedian Bob Hope, blowing whistles and pelting the stage with flour bombs, among other items. Despite the uproar, the moment that really made history was the judges' decision to crown Hosten as Miss World. It turned out that the night was just the beginning of a decade that would include USO tours of Vietnam, a revolution in her homeland, and the author's meteoric rise, as she became an icon of black womanhood around the world. Hosten tells her story in simple and lucid prose, recalling the weirdness of her immediate fame: "I was very suddenly a celebrity....A freelance photographer who was a friend of mine obtained from my parents a photograph of me as a small baby. He asked to borrow it and promptly sold the photograph to the newspapers without my permission or knowledge." The book is not quite riveting though there are delightful moments sprinkled throughout. The author largely resists analyzing the conflicting movements of the period, but her tale is an intriguing look at the intersection of race, gender, business, and politics from a unique perspective.

A candid and engaging account of the 1970s from the first black Miss World.



LAST THINGS Poetry

Hussman, Lawrence E.

Inkwater Press (46 pp.)

\$10.52 paper | Oct. 17, 2019

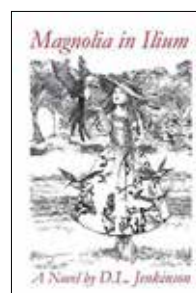
978-1-62901-678-8

Loss, longing, enigmatic critters, and the downside of paradise are among the subjects explored in this volume of poems.

Hussman, an American literature professor emeritus, crafts densely packed, alliterative verse to explore the depths and heights of Creation. Many of the sometimes-luminous, sometimes-astringent poems spotlight the wildlife around his Oregon home, from a comic tableau of eagles who, "looking a bit abashed...share a beached crab with a lowly crow," to sea gulls whose scramble for food holds mordant lessons. ("Bags of crumbs or scraps of salmon / make a mayhem of wings and beaks. / Feel for those that sadly lose out, / but losing is what life is finally about.") While nature can be an arena of conflict, the poet also sees it as a cyclical wholeness: "Driving rains create these sudden ponds, / with help from nimbus farther up, / and higher still the clash of ice and dust, / begun as sun warms earth's waters." Human desire and grief enter into other poems that memorialize a dog's death ("Then came the cruelest needle, the one that sends / a dozing dog into paroxysms that portend the end....Then sobbing to wrench the guts and unease the mind"), an elderly man's hopeless devotion to

music ("He would sit at his dust-covered piano and 'play.' / Disconnected notes making no sense, / stone deafness leaving little to inform his fingers, / pushing too lightly for sustained sound"), and a woman's impenetrable suicide ("Friends wondered about her choice, / which lacks or losses pushed her to call it quits in this so final way / Father that raped her as a child? / Mother who silently watched?...Useless to apportion blame for THE END. / Just roll the credits"). And there's spirituality mixed with irony here, including visions of an unsatisfying heaven—"What if you get your fill of fulfillment, / can't take perfection anymore? / ... Better to tread this stunning earth, / relish the feel of mortal flesh"—and a seductive circle of hell. ("Pity straight males of the innumerable legion, / endlessly airborne through this nether region. / Limitless strumpets winging fore and aft, / eternally foiled come-ons driving us daft.") Suffused with vibrant imagery, subtle nuance, understated emotions, and a spaciousness of conception grounded in evocative details, Hussman's poetry makes for an engrossing read.

A first-rate collection of poetry that celebrates things both earthy and exalted.



MAGNOLIA IN ILIUM

Jenkinson, D.L.

Self (310 pp.)

\$18.00 paper | Aug. 29, 2018

978-1-980621-17-1

A girl and her friends band together to save their magical world from destruction in this fantasy for middle schoolers.

In the realm of Faraway, Magnolia is a 12-year-old girl with a prodigious gift for magic and a penchant for hoop skirts and crinolines. She is dismayed when her magician parents decide to send her to Gryndells, a boarding school in the great city of Ilium, to hone her powers. She hates leaving her parents' steam-powered showboat, which transports magicians up and down the Mississippi, and her social circle of sprites, centaurs, talking trees, and catfish the size of city buses. After her arrival at Gryndells, five students disappear, and Magnolia discovers—with the help of one of the school's ghosts—that something is very wrong in Faraway. Joined by three fellow students and Joe, her anxious parrot familiar, the determined Magnolia sets out to find the missing kids. Plotted with unforced humor and a dash of horror, Jenkinson's richly textured fantasy involves astral projection, transport portals, evil Imps, giant ogres, a mystical forest with a mind of its own, and stolen dragon teeth with the potential to destroy the entire world of Faraway. There are a few misused words, such as "simpered" for whimpered and "shuttered" for shuddered, but the book's pleasures, in addition to the well-realized characters, are many. They include references to fairy tales and fantasy literature woven throughout the narrative. In addition to Harry Potter tributes (confusing staircases, sentient books, eccentric professors), there are a mini-Mad Hatter, size-altering potions, quarreling twins (faces on a spinning

coin), mentions of hobbits, a powerful magic ring, ceramic Oz figurines, guards in emerald green uniforms, and a witch's feline familiar named Paiwacket, inspired by Pyewacket in the play/film *Bell, Book and Candle*. But at its heart, this first installment of a series is a buddy story (and the pals include Joe and Paiwacket), as Magnolia and her companions bond, working together to try to prevent the Imps' horrific plans for Faraway.

A witty, well-conceived, entertaining fantasy featuring a memorable young heroine and genuine chills.



FALLIBLE
A Memoir of a Young Physician's Struggle With Mental Illness

Jones, Kyle Bradford
 Black Rose Writing (348 pp.)
 \$20.95 paper | Apr. 2, 2020
 978-1-68433-455-1

A young doctor valiantly juggles the stresses of a medical career and the agonies of chronic mental illness.

Family physician Jones' debut memoir portrays the author as a man struggling with "major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder" while pursuing a demanding career. Narrated with an affable, conversational tone, the book begins with an enlightening tour of Jones' workplace, where the smells of a hospital are "so pervasive that you can't wash it out of your scrubs." The mental distortion of the disorders complicated his relentless physician residency, which stretched over many years. Able to identify several possible contributing factors to his condition, the Utah-born author saw his episodes of extreme stress begin to worsen while a teenager on a two-year Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints mission in Ukraine in 2000, which Jones meticulously details with great dexterity. This condition intensified further in medical school and well into a marriage that spawned four children, with the accompanying worries that he would pass his condition to his offspring. The author dubs his anxiety the "gargoyle forever watching me," a monster responsible for uprooting what should have been placid moments throughout his life. Chapters where he explains his condition with statistical data and personal opinions and history are confidently and honestly written. Readers who have these types of psychiatric ailments will find those sections greatly relatable and resourceful. Anecdotes from his compelling medical career and assorted patient stories further personify and enliven a memoir that has a unique combination of both troubling and inspiring elements. Even for a man of devout faith, the hard truths about his mental illness became evident when he pleaded for help from his higher power, which resulted in negligible change to his condition. "Sometimes the answer is no," he acknowledges. Jones also writes about the social stigma of mental illness, which many cultures consider a "moral failing." For physicians battling psychiatric issues, his illuminating, forthright memoir closes with proven methods to improve doctors' well-being. But the author encourages all

readers to cultivate their inner strength and "be content and successful despite ongoing weakness."

This immersive, eye-opening journey reveals the effects of mental illness on a physician.

{ INDIE }

THE VANISHING TRIAL
The Era of Courtroom Performers and the Perils of Its Passing

Katzberg, Robert
 Mascot Books (240 pp.)
 \$24.95 paper
 978-1-64543-218-0

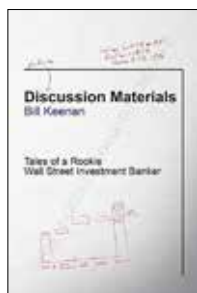
An attorney recalls his courtroom experiences and laments the disappearance of criminal trials from the federal justice system.

There is at least one thing that a visitor to a federal courtroom is now very unlikely to see—a jury trial. Between 1990 and 2010, the number of criminal cases decided in the United States federal courts by a jury dwindled from 9.2% of all cases to only 2.1%. For veteran trial lawyer and debut author Katzberg, the "troubling reality" of the "vanishing trial" has implications not only for the criminal justice system, but also for American democracy. If the average citizen is no longer able to serve as a juror and "the effectiveness of the criminal defense function enshrined in the U.S. Constitution is meaningfully diminished, where does that leave the rule of law?" he asks in this provocative, lively combination of memoir and polemic that may have limited appeal to readers outside the legal profession. Katzberg is a well-qualified guide, having tried cases as both an assistant U.S. attorney in New York and a defense lawyer. The memoir portion of his book is laced with vivid episodes and vignettes from the "world we are slowly but surely losing." "When done at the highest levels, trial work is performance art in the purest sense of the term," he writes. He recalls such "old school" practitioners as the lawyer Jerry Lewis ("not the legendary comedian"), who "fearlessly used his distinct personality to dominate the courtroom" and would start cross-examinations by asking in a Brooklyn accent: "Are you a *truteful poyson*?" Katzberg points to two culprits in the demise of the jury trial—federal sentencing guidelines that have caused a steep decline in the number of defendants willing to risk a trial and technological advances that have tipped the evidentiary scales even more toward prosecutors. The author doesn't address the substantial costs to taxpayers of jury trials—or whether America should follow the lead of countries like Switzerland and replace juries with judicial panels. But it's hard to quarrel with his warning that "like the loss of the oceans' coral reefs, the ongoing disappearance of federal criminal trials signals an increasing imbalance in our nation's criminal justice system that must not be ignored."

Colorful incidents and anecdotes effectively capture the performance art of trial lawyering.

The author dramatizes his time at Deutsche Bank with colorful anecdotes.

DISCUSSION MATERIALS



DISCUSSION MATERIALS *Tales of a Rookie Wall Street Investment Banker*

Keenan, Bill
Post Hill Press (320 pp.)
\$25.00 | Mar. 31, 2020
978-1-64293-408-3



A memoir offers a warts-and-all insider view of the high-stakes investment banking world.

This new book from Keenan chronicles his experiences at Deutsche Bank in Manhattan as an associate after a stint as a professional hockey player. Here readers see him apply for the job, get it, attend the long orientation sessions alongside his many fellow new hires, and begin his work as an investment banker in the cubicles, hallways, and late-night bars of the finance world. "Can you imagine if people knew what corporate finance was really like?" asks a cohort at one point in the account, to which the author replies: "I feel like only a fiction writer could show this world, what *really* happens here." Some of his colleagues have on their shelves untouched copies of business classics like *Den of Thieves*, *Liar's Poker*, and *Barbarians at the Gate*. Although Keenan's memoir is every bit as informative as those earlier titles, it's also game and accessible, coming across at all points as the most readable kind of *The Firm*-style fiction, complete with sharp personalities and lively dialogue. The author dramatizes his time at Deutsche Bank with colorful anecdotes but also grounds things in industry details. When mentioning something called a "football field sheet," for instance, he footnotes: "A summary output of all valuation methods used. The name is derived from the fact that the output resembles a football field—or at least what bankers think a football field looks like" (adding, in his signature iconoclastic style, "I don't see it"). His own experiences in the trenches are far less the shark-tank glamour of *Wall Street* and far more the squalid desperation of *Boiler Room*, and he's always ready to offer a sardonic counterpoint. "Was I getting crushed?" he asks early in the story. "I couldn't even tell. And if you stayed past 3:00 am one night, all that mattered was working it into every conversation you had the next day." The result is a book that's informative, hilarious, and dramatic, well deserving of a place on that shelf of Wall Street classics.

A gripping and revelatory behind-the-scenes look at investment banking.



THE NEW TEAM HABITS *A Guide to the NEW School Rules*

Kim, Anthony & Mascarenaz, Keara & Lai, Kawai
Corwin (176 pp.)
\$28.95 paper | Nov. 21, 2019
978-1-5443-7503-8

A hands-on guide for implementing the ideas discussed in education consultant Kim's previous manual for school administrators.

In *The NEW School Rules* (2018), Kim, who's the CEO of consultancy Education Elements, and co-author Alexis Gonzalez-Black outlined strategies for school managers to break out of rigid structures and embrace more effective ways of getting work done. In this supplemental volume, Kim, with Education Elements managing partner Mascarenaz and designer/consultant Lai, provides further guidance on how to put the six rules laid out in the previous work into action. The new book is "specifically focused on teams and helping them build habits as a unit, instead of as individuals," the authors write. The aforementioned rules, which include "Managing Roles: Define the Work Before You Define the People" and "Aim for 'Safe Enough to Try' Instead of Consensus," are only briefly discussed here; the main focus is on how to make use of the rules as a team. As teams embrace change, the book asserts, the ways that they approach learning, meetings, and projects will evolve; in this way, teams will become more responsive, which will improve overall outcomes. The authors use a workbooklike approach to walk readers through specific techniques as they embrace a five-step "SEPAD" approach: "SPARK inspiration, EXPAND your knowledge, PRACTICE the habit, and make a plan to APPLY the habit in real life." Finally, the group comes together to "DEBRIEF on what worked, what didn't, and what you want to try next." There are simple, uncredited pen-and-ink illustrations, and the spaces for taking notes about the processes discussed effectively make the book an interactive process. Although the authors' ideas are specifically aimed at readers who work in the educational sector, those who work in other fields may also benefit from the authors' advice, particularly the suggestions on how to break out of an institutional rut. That said, this is truly meant as a companion to the first book, and much of the material here won't be particularly useful to those who aren't already familiar with it.

A clear, concise guide to using *The NEW School Rules* on a team basis.



THE GREAT AMERICAN DRUG DEAL *A New Prescription for Innovative and Affordable Medicines*

Kolchinsky, Peter

Evelexa Press (292 pp.)

\$18.00 paper | Jan. 17, 2020

978-1-73305-891-9

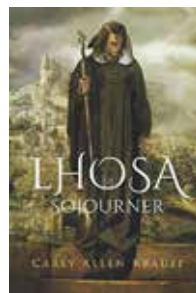
In this authoritative survey of the biopharmaceutical industry, a scientist and investor diagnoses current problems and prescribes solutions.

Kolchinsky initially trained as a virologist, but he joined the biotechnology industry later on, and ever since, he says, he's been on the "receiving end of a fire hose of knowledge." He sees his current work as a biotech investor as providing a valuable contribution, but part of his book's agenda is to state a mea culpa: "For too long my utopian view of the biotechnology industry omitted the perspective of patients who couldn't afford their medications." He then articulates what he calls the "Biotech Social Contract," describing the relationship between the pharmaceutical industry and society. This contract would have the drug industry strive to make affordable versions of drugs (as generics) and have a health insurance industry providing universal coverage to keep costs down for patients. The author then enumerates the ways in which the contract has been breached by looking at the cryptic world of drug patents; how health insurance has the overburdened sick subsidize the more fortunate healthy; and the predatory practices of pharmacy benefit managers, who, according to the author, run "a complex shell game." His main point is that although the biotech industry gets a bad rap for hunting big profits, it's the insurance industry that's the real problem; "drug companies must charge temporarily high prices for new drugs," he argues, as long as their drugs go generic in a timely manner—but insurers, not patients, should bear that cost.

This meticulously organized and extensively supported book offers a thorough introduction to the factors and politics of drug pricing. In clear, deliberate prose, the author engages with and explains a range of concepts to lay readers. Even when Kolchinsky details rather elementary principles—one subsection is titled "How Insurance Is Supposed to Work"—he never strikes a condescending or pedantic tone. It's hard not to share his ire toward insurance companies, although many readers may see his transfer of blame from the biotech industry and pharmaceutical companies to insurance providers as a self-serving maneuver. Still, his frustration with a dysfunctional system that allows patients to slip through a "patchwork of gaps" is unquestionably warranted. In the final chapter, he calls upon the biotech industry to continue linking revenue to innovation. This lacks the righteous punch of simply stating, "Let's be ethical actors," but the writer clearly knows that his industry has to uphold its end of the bargain. Kolchinsky stocks his pages with evidence, explanatory sidebars, and clarifications in regular footnotes. Sometimes, the most interesting point gets buried in the fine print. For instance, in one footnote, the author

addresses a hot-button issue of the feasibility of a single-payer system. In the main text, he states that the single-payer model is "beyond the scope of this book," but he expresses a firmer opinion in the footnote: "Basically, for a country the size of America, a single-payer system is likely only appealing in theory...but would be a tragedy of human incompetence in practice."

A serious, impassioned, and informed call for change.



LHOSA *Sojourner*

Krause, Carey Allen

Bowker (534 pp.)

\$18.95 paper | Feb. 8, 2020

978-1-73454-260-8

In this epic fantasy by the author of *The Sword of God* (2009), a boy ascends into adulthood in a world tarnished by others' bigotry and thirst for political power.

The 12-year-old Olei (who eventually uses his full name, Ologrin, instead of that nickname) lives in Halrin's Spur, a herding village in the land of Lhosa. When hideous creatures with "twisting masses of horn growing from their disfigured heads" suddenly raid the village, the boy survives, but many, including his mother, do not. Under the tutelage of Tobin, a man who makes cheese for trading, Ologrin is shocked by a bladed attack by a woman he later learns is named Thania. "I know what you are," she cryptically tells him. Years later, as an apprentice priest in the city of Antola, he nearly succumbs to another assault with lethal intent. Ologrin encounters a friendly soul in Vireo, a woman who's a Polfre, one of the humans who, according to legend, had lived on Lhosa first and wielded magic. Based on Ologrin's tanj (a knifelike object from his long-ago vanished father) and subtle physical traits, Vireo determines he's half Polfre and, as an outsider, is a probable threat. This makes it especially challenging when Ologrin is unavoidably embroiled in politics: Can he change Lhosa for the better when powerful men want to kill him? Krause packs this bulky tale with fully developed themes involving topics such as religion and discrimination. Ologrin, for example, whom some call by the Polfre slur, "*maleugenate*," has brown skin, unlike the pale-skinned citizens in other cities. The cast of characters, however, is relatively small. The author concentrates more on relationships than on accumulating characters, so he develops Tobin as a convincing paternal figure and allows a delightfully complex romance between Ologrin and Vireo to unfold. Dialogue throughout is sharp and generally contemporary, which is perfectly suited to the largely familiar world and people of an unspecified time. While Krause leaves room for a sequel or even a spinoff, this novel is wholly gratifying as a stand-alone fantasy.

An enthralling coming-of-age story that unfolds in a land both strange and recognizable.

McGrouchpants presents a keenly subversive portrait of workplace social psychology.

CROUCHING SCHUYLER, HIDDEN DRAGON



BIG MONTY AND THE LUNATIC LUNCH LADY

Maxx, Matt

Self (90 pp.)

\$14.99 | \$9.95 paper | Mar. 9, 2019

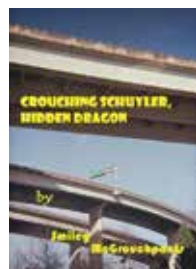
978-1-73374-352-5

978-1-73374-350-1 paper

A school cafeteria worker creates a monster to get revenge on disrespectful students, and a fifth grader and his sister work to stop her in this middle-grade novel.

This series opener introduces young Merlin Montgomery, who prefers to be called “Big Monty.” An African American fifth grader at Washington Carver Elementary School in Memphis, Tennessee, Big Monty loves Pokémon, astronomy, explaining things to others (such as what the acronym “laser” means), and Taco Tuesdays at the school cafeteria. But on this Tuesday, lunch lady Mrs. Findlehorner serves nasty leftovers from Meatloaf Monday. The boy makes an enemy of her when he quips that “it isn’t leftovers if it wasn’t food to begin with.” He compounds the error by participating in a lunchroom food fight with school bully Antavius LaRoyce “A’lo” Jenkins. Big Monty’s punishment for the fight is cleaning the cafeteria after school, during which he discovers Mrs. Findlehorner talking to an extremely unpleasant monster made of decomposing lunch leftovers. Big Monty flees, but afterward, adults refuse to help him investigate further. Luckily, his clever, popular kid sister Josephine joins him in his quest. Later, during a confrontation with the monster, the siblings discover that Mrs. Findlehorner has good reason for her bad attitude, and things end on a happy note. The book includes an appendix of Big Monty’s explanations of scientific concepts as well as instructions for a science experiment. In this debut novel, Maxx tells a highly entertaining story that has a relatable narrator and plenty of warmth. Although Big Monty sometimes has a know-it-all streak, he’s also friendly, confident, and open: “For some reason, all the cool kids liked A’lo. And hey, I’m down with them too.” The story models experimenting and research skills, as when Josephine searches the internet and learns that “Strawberry milk is just milk” with added sugar and red dye. The book also offers good characterization, even for minor figures such as Coach Hamhock, “a three-time Olympic deadlift champion” who’s never been the same since she failed to qualify again during tryouts.

An enjoyably amusing story that’s sometimes gross but also wholesome.



CROUCHING SCHUYLER, HIDDEN DRAGON

McGrouchpants, Smiley

Self

A feckless young man struggles with precarious jobs and a general failure to connect in this bleakly comic novel of alienation.

McGrouchpants’ narrative follows his antihero Chris Schuyler’s progress through the 1990s as he moves from his home in Rochester, New York, to college as an English major at the University of Chicago and into a series of dead-end jobs that are the tale’s focus. They include a high school summer job as a lawn mower; a five-and-a-half-year accounting stint that Chris loses when the slot is upgraded to require an MBA; a copy-editing position that ends when he takes too many sick days; a desperate, farcical stab at selling vacuum cleaners; and a gig as a fundraising canvasser in Portland, Oregon, after which he slides toward homelessness. Chris’ story is a bildungsroman in reverse about a peculiarly ’90s brand of eternal adolescence. He’s obsessed with indie rock bands, zines, and avant-garde movies—the title refers to Ang Lee’s art house action flick—as part of his rebellion against the “stultifying suburban” lifestyle his domineering father urges on him. Yet Chris’ lot is eternally stultifying work, infrequently relieved by awkward lurches at romance, with the longed for life of urban hipster intellectualism forever just beyond his reach. Chris’ closed-in, second-person ruminations could have been claustrophobic, but McGrouchpants expands them into a keenly subversive portrait of workplace social psychology, unfolding in long convolutions threaded with scabrous attitude. The result feels a bit like *The Office* might if David Foster Wallace and William S. Burroughs rewrote the scripts: “Tina, who’s training you, hardly notices that you’re five minutes late (you fell asleep for 40 min. in the front seat, drooling on your steering wheel—you got back from your ‘approved’ dentist appointment early, and put that time to good—if hardly anticipated, or, even, hardly avoidable (as soon as you pulled into the place, you beelined to a spot, and fell down like a ton of bricks) use)—and, instead of remarking on your slight tardiness, with a wave of her hand (*Abhh!*) and a practiced, commiserative co-worker grin, buckles down to the task of your 3-hr. block of training.”

A funny, caustic tale of a slacker’s dejected resistance to mainstream success.



SORCEROUS RIVALRY

Nicol, Kayleigh

Blue Feather Publishing

(292 pp.)

\$10.99 paper | Apr. 7, 2018

978-1-73213-171-2



In this fantasy series starter, a mage makes unlikely friends and foes while discovering his lineage.

Reshi was the youngest of seven illegitimate children sired by the king with his sorceress mistress, Laurana. After the Great Mage Hunt, Laurana was imprisoned and her children scattered. Reshi, who's now around 20, grew up in an orphanage but now lives in a nameless town where he makes use of his shape-changing abilities. There is, however, a bounty on Reshi's head as well as on the heads of his magical siblings, whom he's never met. In the Broken Wing tavern, he watches Miss Chesawick provide a room for a strapping, young ex-soldier named Kestrel. In cat form, Reshi sneaks into Kestrel's room as he sleeps and siphons some life force from him, which fuels his own magic. The next day, the traveler is none the worse for wear, so Reshi is intrigued. A bet with Miss Chesawick—who's secretly a fairy—over whether he can make Kestrel laugh results in the mage showing the warrior around town. Then vicious pigoblins attack, and Reshi fears for Miss Chesawick's life, as pigoblins pose a major threat to fairies like her. During the battle, in which Reshi performs capably, Kestrel realizes that his new acquaintance is a son of Laurana—and Kestrel, as it happens, is a bounty hunter. Soon afterward, Reshi answers the telepathic call of his sister Cera. From her, he learns more about Laurana's other children, including the war-hardened Kila and her monastic twin, Laki. Reshi and Cera decide to stick together to fight against bounty hunters. Their lives are further complicated by the fact that any sibling's death releases their magic to the rest of Laurana's surviving brood.

Nicol's fantasy novel is set in a streamlined medieval realm that requires no map to enjoy, and it runs on a fiendish series of cascading betrayals. She employs a strict show-don't-tell policy which keeps the storytelling crisp throughout the novel. In the playful opening chapter, for example, Reshi, the narrator, climbs onto Kestrel's bed and licks his mouth—and readers don't immediately know that he's a cat as he does so. From there, readers learn the major characters' backstories in tantalizing slivers. Kestrel has the potential to be Reshi's romantic companion or his killer, and to that end, Nicol teases readers mercilessly, as when one of the warrior's former colleagues regards Reshi and says, "You really do like the pretty boys, don't you, Captain?" The character development throughout is excellent, and it shines all the brighter because Nicol eschews wordy descriptions of traveling, eating, and humdrum aspects of medieval life. The lengthy but discrete chapters create a satisfying, immersive narrative flow. The introduction of each sibling is thrilling, and Nicol shows herself to be unafraid to kill off characters before readers know them too well. Indeed, she has creativity to spare; an appendix includes additional "Mage-Born

Bounty Information." The magical and romantic cliffhangers at the end of the tale make the next volume unmissable.

A free-wheeling, clever, and joyful debut that should be on every fantasy reader's shelf.



THE MUSIC BOOK

Osborn, Karen

Livingston Press (264 pp.)

\$25.95 | May 31, 2020

978-1-60489-250-5

978-1-60489-249-9 paper

A young woman attempts to enter the elite and mainly male world of professional classical musicians during the 1950s in this literary novel.

In 1953, cellist Irena "Reenie" Siesel has just graduated from a conservatory. There, she'd been called gifted, exceptional even, but so far she's only had offers for teaching positions—a path reserved for those unworthy of performing for a living. Making it as a performer is particularly hard for a woman because, as one female musician puts it, "the problem with women performers was they lacked the single-minded devotion necessary to sacrifice everything to their instruments." Then Reenie gets a call out of the blue to replace the cellist of the Modern Strings, an avant-garde New York ensemble, at a music festival in Newport, Rhode Island. The group will play a selection of pieces, "from the Baroque to the moderns," culminating in a new work by the ensemble's difficult but brilliant leader, composer Arthur Cohen. During the four-day festival, Reenie attempts to navigate the tense, interpersonal dynamics of the Modern Strings while learning the material and demonstrating her talent and professionalism. After all, she may be invited at the end of the festival to join the group and move to New York, where the real musicians live. Reenie's future with the ensemble quickly becomes complicated when, against her better judgment, she sleeps with Cohen in a fit of impulse—losing her virginity. Interspersed with her account of that weekend are scenes from decades later, when Reenie is in the memory unit of an assisted living facility. She receives a composition left by Cohen in his will—a work that he planned to have destroyed if she died before him. Her daughter and Cohen's niece are arranging a performance in the hopes it will jog Reenie's failing memory—but are these recollections worth recovering?

Osborn writes with incredible polish and subtlety, toggling between Reenie's lush, moment-to-moment accounts from the '50s and retrospective appraisals of the era: "The festival in Newport took place at a time when classical music was at its height in America, with Leonard Bernstein's orchestra program and large concert audiences. Just ten years later, the audiences would shrink dramatically, but now no one knew that future." The characters—particularly Reenie but also the demanding Arthur and the ensemble's messy violinist Charles Breedlove and aloof violist Patrick Dempsey—are deftly rendered, and the author manages to capture seemingly every shifting tension in

The author skillfully demonstrates how her personal and professional lives have been enriched by connecting with her feminine self.

NETWORK MARKETING QUEEN

each relationship. Osborn also succeeds in writing about music in a way that elucidates and elevates an art form that is not easily put into words, particularly the ways in which the members of the group play together. The plot moves slowly, but it quickly teaches readers to appreciate its rhythm, which—like the sea that surrounds the festival location—is somewhat tidal. The narrative is unexpectedly suspenseful, particularly once readers have a grasp of the intensity of the personalities involved. The result is a meditation on art, aspiration, jealousy, and selfishness, all placed against the backdrop of gender and shifting trends in the mid-20th-century classical music scene.

A gripping, precisely composed tale about music and those who give their lives to it.



A GOAN HOLIDAY

Perinchery, Anitha

Self (556 pp.)

\$19.99 paper | Nov. 25, 2019

978-1-73379-864-8

The reappearance of an old boyfriend complicates the failed marriage of two physicians—and raises many ghosts from the past—in this romantic mystery.

For the first time in 11 years, Dr. Anjali Joshi finds herself back in Vagator in the coastal Indian state of Goa, where the famous beaches bring tourists from all over the world. She is here to check on her family's medical clinic, which has been attracting some rumors of criminality. While she's in town, Anjali goes on a blind date at the behest of a meddling cousin only to arrive at the restaurant and see Dr. Joe D'Acosta sitting at the table. Joe is Anjali's medical school boyfriend who disappeared from her life without a word 11 years ago—her last trip to Goa was to search for him only to hear that he didn't want to be found. Enraged at the sight of him, she storms off. Anjali is recently divorced from Dr. Rishabh "Rishi" Rastogi, Joe's old medical school roommate. Rishi used Anjali's family's political clout to protect himself from a blackmailer, but now that he is single again, the letters have begun to reappear, threatening to out him for a crime he committed many years ago. The return of the blackmailer causes Rishi to quit his job and rush to Goa to try to convince Anjali to forgive his past indiscretions and take him back. Meanwhile, Joe feels just as shaken by the blind date as Anjali and wonders what she knows about his disappearance: "The most important question of all was one Joe didn't dare ask: was there a chance she knew the real reason why he left Delhi, the terrible truth of what he'd done?" As both men attempt to win back Anjali while escaping the mistakes of their youth, she, too, seeks emancipation from the past—at least, the past as she understands it.

The narrative leaps back and forth between two timelines: the present in Goa and the past when the three protagonists were still in medical school. Perinchery's prose is smooth and fluid, and it succeeds in capturing the muddled emotional states of her characters: "An Ambassador car waited at the entrance of the jetty. Joe hesitated only a second or two before stumbling into the backseat.

If he tried to run, he wasn't gonna get far, and what the agent said about the criminals going after Joe's loved ones... he watched the streets fly past, not really seeing any of it." While there are some high-stakes happenings and big reveals, the book is essentially a three-part character study (with some supporting personalities as well). It feels long at over 500 pages—a slimmer novel would have more momentum—but the world and the characters are generally compelling. In addition to universal themes of love and betrayal, the author explores some particular South Asian concerns relating to marriage, gender roles, and familial expectations. The ending is perhaps a bit too neat, but those who have gotten that far are likely onboard with Perinchery's tidy brand of storytelling.

An engaging tale about a love triangle featuring doctors set in beautiful Goa.



NETWORK MARKETING QUEEN

Your Guide To Creating Massive Success by Owning Your Feminine Power

Pollinger, Erin

Lioncrest Publishing (158 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | Jan. 17, 2020

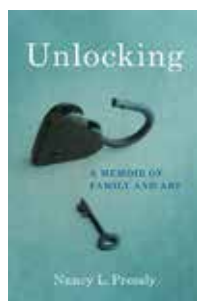
978-1-5445-0640-1

A highly inspirational lifestyle guide offers advice to women.

The title of this debut is somewhat misleading. The book is not purely a how-to for aspiring network marketers but rather a manual for empowering women to live life their way. In fact, network marketing itself, while always present in the background, seems secondary to Pollinger's core message: "As women, we *can* have what we desire." The author skillfully uses the guide as a platform for demonstrating how her own professional and personal lives have been enriched by deeply connecting with her feminine self. The "feminine principles" she writes about revolve around four "Seasons of Well-Being": Discover, Awaken, Transform, and Integrate. Pollinger, a chiropractor-turned-life coach and network marketer, weaves together descriptions of each of these phases as she tells her own story, provides examples, and suggests exercises to complete. She encourages readers to become a "Queen," an effective code for the confident, vibrant, and empowered woman. The volume consists of six chapters that largely address the emotional side of achieving success. The first chapter, "Wombspace," unashamedly focuses on the distinct differences between men and women, making a case for the womb as the concentrated center of feminine power. The author writes that a woman's success in virtually all aspects of life "is achieved 40 percent through what I call 'wombset,' 40 percent through mindset, and 20 percent through structure." Subsequent chapters build on and expand this concept, addressing the needs to feel, be, and create. Network marketing is not overlooked. For example, Pollinger describes the daily rituals she consistently applies and the action steps she takes to triumph in her own network marketing business. A refreshingly candid chapter explores strategies for dealing with the sometimes uneasy relationship

women seem to have with earning money. Still, the thrust of the book is to supply a kind of emotional safety net to women. In this regard, the author is the supreme cheerleader, intermittently gushing, egging readers on to strive, succeed, and thrive in all aspects of life. In her view, every woman has the ability to become a “network marketing queen.”

While effusive at times, this manual for women delivers motivational and truly energizing tips.



UNLOCKING A Memoir of Family and Art

Pressly, Nancy L.

She Writes Press (224 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | May 5, 2020

978-1-63152-862-0

A memoir explores an art lover's family life and career.

This account begins with photographs in Pressly's attic showing her ancestors from the shtetls of Eastern Europe. Her first-generation parents were hard workers who eventually made a comfortable life for themselves, the author, and her brother, Bobby, in America. Pressly describes her school days, first love—which brought out her father's scary, protective nature—and college life. In graduate school, she met and married a man named Bill. The author began a career as a museum curator, and Bill became a professor of art history. He remained a professor while the author sometimes adjusted her focus but stayed in the fields of art and curation. They confronted all sorts of career hurdles and, more importantly, health issues. Bill had serious heart problems, among other things. Pressly fared little better. In her 70s, she faced ampullary cancer, necessitating the very radical Whipple procedure and a long convalescence. Eventually, the couple moved to Atlanta to help their only child, David, cope with being the single parent of their two grandchildren. This is the author's second book; the first—*Settling the South Carolina Backcountry* (2016)—chronicles Bill's roots. She writes well. This is a woman of extraordinary passion and enormous energies. The test of a person (and for that matter, a marriage) is how the individual handles and overcomes the challenges of life. Pressly time and again passes the test with flying colors in this candid memoir. A side benefit: the illuminating chapters devoted to her thoughts on what it means to experience great works of art. (The volume features copious illustrations, both art plates and family photos.) In Florence, she admired Jacopo Pontormo's “enigmatic, strange, and beautiful” painting *Deposition From the Cross* (1526-28): “I was absolutely stunned by the intense, almost strident, pastel colors of the drapery, which in places clung so tightly to the grieving figures as to appear translucent.” The author is a truly marvelous guide on a tour literally around the world, insisting that art reproductions in books are a poor second to the in situ experience that she convincingly describes as life changing.

A wrenchingly honest account that deftly combines a marriage story and an art tour.



STRANGE WORLDS

Ridge, Jennifer

Lulu.com (308 pp.)

\$17.99 paper | Jan. 22, 2020

978-0-359-90880-6

In this fourth installment of a YA series, a group of heroes confronts the Wild King.

In Tir na nÓg, the Faery Realm, the Wild King hosts his army in the Dead City. With a mark from his antlers, the monarch can mutate fae beings, turning them savage and loyal. One person in the Dead City not directly affected by the Wild King's magic is Feya. She uses her healing skills to help fae, like Ivy, who suffer from painful mutations. Elise, meanwhile, is a Seer from the Mortal Realm who's been recruited by Sirius, leader of the elves, to help end the Wild King's reign. But the Summer Queen believes that the Wild King is “an elf who had glamourised himself to look like a monstrosity,” despite countless missing fae. Sirius plans to visit the Seelie Court to summon Galahad, the Golden Knight, to battle. Galahad is willing to commit soldiers to the cause only if Sirius can learn the Wild King's exact location in the Dead City and the size of his army. As Galahad joins Sirius' expedition, Elise hopes to clarify her feelings for Finch, a female elf. Finch, being pure of heart, wants Sirius to tell Elise “that you love her.” Ridge unleashes chaos on her beloved cast in this Faery Realm fantasy, ensuring that characters who have starred in other adventures, like Lark, Alexis, and Jaxith, make appearances. The battles feature grisly moments, as when a Wild fae, already impaled by one arrow, has a second “explode through its eye.” The author does balance the gore with humor, as when the heroes encounter a Wild fae with a duck's bill. A solid backstory humanizes the Wild King and layers deeper emotions onto Feya's arc. During the momentous final third of the narrative, Ridge uses Lark to set up a further adventure that may or may not fold in events from the finale. Though the cast is diverse, readers may need patience as characters shuffle tumultuously between the foreground and background, *Game of Thrones*-style.

This engaging epic fantasy makes effective use of the tension built up in previous volumes.



WHO'S THERE? A Collection of Stories

Rio, Dimas

Trans. by the author

Self (189 pp.)

\$7.80 paper | Dec. 16, 2019

978-1-67617-410-3

A collection of five suspense-driven tales delivers ghosts, creatures, and general malfeasance.

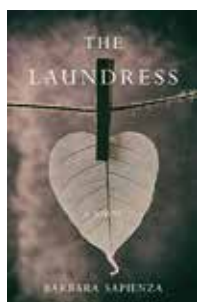
In the title story, Adam is a tourist on an Indonesian island, just a week away from his wedding. But

Wistful yet uplifting, the book mourns the fading past while celebrating the intricate beauty of each passing moment.

THE LAUNDRESS

his constant drinking sparks fights with his fiancée, Gita. It also jumbles his memories, and he recalls only a few details of Gita's storming off and apparently ending their engagement. When Adam later discovers Gita's belongings still in their hotel room, he may have to face a bleak, unwelcome truth. All the tales here thrive on anticipation and primarily implied horror. This results in meticulously paced pieces, such as "The Wandering," the book's longest and best story. In it, Badrun is working security in a Jakarta office building. During his routine night patrol, he occasionally pilfers items, like petty cash, to cover expenses for his pregnant wife-to-be, Ningsih. But he's understandably disturbed by unexplained noises he keeps hearing on the supposedly vacant seventh floor. Making matters worse is a series of letters Badrun gradually finds, each one more revealing and unsettling than the last. Though this collection is mostly grim, "The Voice Canal" is a lighter offering that centers on Gio, a university student in Scotland, who's apparently using modern tech to communicate with a dead family member. Originally published in Indonesian, Rio's English-translated tales are concise and descriptive. For example, Badrun's patrol is persistently chilling, even when he doesn't see a visible menace: "The man was still deep in thoughts when another loud crack was heard, breaking into his ears. His body jolted as if electrocuted." The stories feature well-developed characters that slowly draw readers in, making plot turns resonate, including predictable ones. The audience, for example, may foresee the violent eruption in the book's closing tale, "The Forest Protector," as a woman named Alma suffers her husband's physical abuse.

Dark stories that entrance and unnerve.



THE LAUNDRESS

Sapienza, Barbara

She Writes Press (304 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | May 19, 2020

978-1-63152-679-4



A young woman reconnects with her Italian heritage and attunes to her inner self in this coming-of-age novel by Sapienza.

Lavinia Lavinia (who was given the same first and last name as part of an "old custom in Italy") is sauntering

through the streets of San Francisco from her home in the Mission District when this novel opens. Her Uncle Sal "scooped her away" from Naples before she was 5 years old and moved with her and her aunt Rose to the West Coast. Soon after Rose died, Sal hurriedly returned to Italy, leaving the 26-year-old Lavinia feeling abandoned. After dropping out of San Francisco State University, she set up as a laundress, "detailing" clothes for a range of offbeat clients from lawyers to sculptors. Lavinia has a habit of tipping with bubble gum, a gesture that catches the eye of an attractive barista. Her playful demeanor conceals that her lost past tugs heavily on her emotions. With the help of others, she starts to recover memories of her infancy and, in doing so, sets out on a journey of self-understanding. Sapienza's writing is delightfully descriptive as it evokes the streets of the

Mission District: "Mothers with shiny black hair, dressed in flowing skirts and sandals, push their babies in strollers. Lavinia sidesteps past old cars parked on the sidewalks." Connective forces stretch out across space and time as Lavinia recalls her Italian past: "The old ladies scream from their windows for *pane*, *prosciutto*, *mozzarella di bufala*, the groceries to be hauled up to their second- and third-story apartments." As Lavinia breezes through the streets of San Francisco, she evinces the freedom of youth. This effervescence is beautifully balanced by the wisdom of experience, as proffered by Mercedes Montoya, the mother of a close friend. She counsels Lavinia: "La *querencia* is a safe place in the bull ring, the place where the bull goes to stay alive, to stay away from the lance of the matador...it's a place to regain his power." Mercedes adds that "this is the place you will find within yourself." Wistful yet uplifting, the book mourns the fading past while celebrating the intricate beauty of each passing moment.

An acutely observed, tenderly philosophical novel that tells a wonderfully bittersweet story.



ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SUBMARINE

Schnabel, Eileen

Wonder Jumps Press (296 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | Oct. 22, 2019

978-1-73386-810-5

In Schnabel's YA debut, four kids go on an amazing time-travel adventure to foil a saboteur who's trying to make sure that the United States never comes to be.

In the present day, four youngsters are enrolled in a peculiar Wisconsin "Revolutionary War reenactment camp," where they're forced to endure authentic recreations of hardships that people faced during the American Revolution. Thirteen-year-old Kep Westguard and his younger brother, Max, are mainly there to win a monetary prize for "best historical skirmishing" so that Kep can attend a swim camp instead. Adolescent animal rights firebrand Tela has more enthusiasm for the Revolutionary War camp—and skill with firearms—but she refuses to wear fur or leather or eat meat. T.J., who's African American, doesn't like that the reenactors, like Kep, Max, and Tela, are disproportionately white, as many free people of color took part in the historical fighting. He's also sure that the place is actually a hidden-camera reality TV production. Then camp authorities tell the four kids that they're being groomed to be time voyagers to head off an incredible crisis. A rogue, adult time traveler named Fox, they say, aims to sabotage events on the key night of April 18, 1775, when the famed "midnight ride" of Paul Revere took place (as well as a similar ride by the lesser-known William Dawes). Without foreknowledge of approaching British troops, the Colonial uprising in New England will be crushed—and the United States will never be conceived. The four kids possess the proper DNA for time travel, so they're America's best hope to go back in time and carry out the crucial warnings themselves. A short

particle-accelerator-assisted trip later, the kids are outside Boston in 1775, bewildered and facing a seemingly impossible challenge.

In this hybrid of YA historical classic *Johnny Tremain* (1943) and Michael Crichton's popcorn-SF tale *Timeline* (1999), Sch-nabel sacrifices gee-whiz science-fictional awe in favor of semicomical bickering over whether time travel is real or not. She follows this with cliffhanger after cliffhanger as the kids eventually realize that their anachronistic adventure is actually happening. The author particularly scores points by focusing on some somewhat lesser-known players of the Revolutionary War, such as British Army Gen. Thomas Gage, the poet Phillis Wheatley, and black Freemason Prince Hall. More familiar figures, such as George Washington and Revere, barely have walk-ons, but John Hancock and John Adams do take part, with the former amusingly portrayed as a brave but rather clueless figure. Perhaps most strikingly, the novel has its young characters argue over whether the United States is worth saving given that its birth guarantees a continuation of slavery—as well as animal abuse, Tela points out. This move certainly takes the story out of Esther Forbes territory, and young readers may find that this discussion makes the American Revolution more relatable. There are a few loose ends at the story's conclusion, especially regarding the rather weakly defined villains, which leaves open the possibility of a sequel.

Rambunctious YA educational entertainment that reimagines the American Revolution as a time-travel escapade.



**DON'T THROW ME IN THE CHOLLA PATCH!
A Woodrat and Coyote Adventure**

Severson, Marc

Illus. by Orazzini, Francesco

The Small-Tooth Dog Publishing Group
(32 pp.)

\$9.99 paper | Feb. 9, 2019

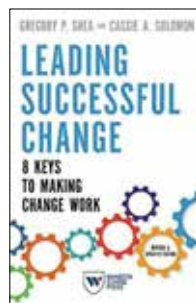
978-1-947408-06-7

A familiar folktale gets a new Southwestern setting in this picture book.

Woodrat's larder is almost empty, and even though hunting for his family under the full moon in the desert is dangerous, he decides to go out for supplies. It's not long before Coyote catches him and traps him beneath a paw. Mixing techniques from the Brer Rabbit stories and "The Billy Goats Gruff," Woodrat baits Coyote with images of his "sweet wife, bless her roly-poly self, and my chubby little children, all ten of them." Then he begs for mercy, asking Coyote not to throw him into the prickly, dangerous cholla patch. Readers familiar with these tales will be quick to recognize that the cholla patch is exactly where Woodrat and his family will be safe, but youngsters encountering this type of story for the first time will enjoy Severson's adroit use of suspense until Coyote gets his just deserts. Italian fine artist Orazzini's paintings deftly capture the nighttime hues of the desert, although the clothing choices

(bandannas around Woodrat's head and Coyote's neck) feel superfluous. The cartoonish animals have an abundance of personality, and Coyote is wicked but never overly scary for young lap readers. Severson, who is also a novelist and performance storyteller, uses fairly dense text with some challenging vocabulary for newly independent readers ("precious," "shriveled"). But the tale's smooth flow will beautifully aid adults reading the book aloud.

Fans of trickster stories will appreciate this clever rendition featuring American desert animals.



LEADING SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

8 Keys to Making Change Work

Shea, Gregory P. & Solomon, Cassie A.

Wharton School Press (108 pp.)

\$17.99 paper | Feb. 11, 2020

978-1-61363-094-5

A management guide designed to help leaders introduce change into their organizations and tap into their full potential.

In their revised and updated nonfiction collaboration, business consultants Shea and Solomon, who both teach management classes at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, present a strategy based on the Work Systems Model. That model, developed in part by Shea, is itself based on the concept of sociotechnical systems, created in the 1950s. The aim is to help teach "change leaders" to become "system thinkers," and, to that end, the book introduces eight Levers of Change of the Work Systems Model, from "Organization" and "Workplace design" to "Information distribution" and "Decision allocation." Within these, the authors offer an array of sound approaches to revitalizing and reenvisioning the corporate environment, such as "*Become the Screenwriter of Your Future*" ("Why does the account manager care? Why does the person on the other end care? Who decides on a course of action, if any?") and "Pulling the Task Lever" to streamline the manner in which something gets done ("Laying out the flow of work *and* converting it into a formal practice can help make it a habit—the way we do what we do"). Shea and Solomon analyze variables of various Task Levers by using real-world examples, and they reliably ground these in broader principles: "Inevitably," they write, "the behavior of employees reflects the confluence of powerful forces. Aligning those forces through thoughtful application of the 8 Levers of Change in the Work System Model will precipitate behavioral change." The book explains all aspects of the model in a succinct, compressed style, which may leave some readers wanting more; given the density of the material, the book is surprisingly short.

A highly specific yet highly readable schematic for organizational change.

The third volume of Stevens' middle-grade series is a perfect balance of education and entertainment.

DRAGON LAD



TERRIBILITA

Shore, Ben Wyckoff

Cinder Block Publishing (258 pp.)

\$13.99 paper | Mar. 18, 2020

978-0-578-63203-2

In Shore's debut historical novel, two men from a famous family prove their worth in the battles of 19th-century Italy.

At the age of 31, Enzo Ferrando is the leader of the longshoremen in the Port of Genoa. He is respected for his abilities—and is also known to be impulsive. When he sinks a ship full of guns belonging to a powerful politician, the fallout leaves his father—an old war hero who served under Garibaldi—dead.

Enzo himself is forced to join the Italian army in Eritrea. There he becomes captain of a company in the Galliano Battalion. “I profess that putting eighty-two souls in the hands of a dockworker seems to me dangerous and irresponsible,” he is told by his commanding officer. “But this commission came down from the top, and I am a man that follows orders. Your father had powerful friends.” Enzo soon establishes himself as the rare officer who will work and fight harder than any enlisted man, though his impulsiveness has not much subsided. Against the backdrop of Italy's misadventures in Africa, Enzo attempts to live up to the name and deeds of his father—and leaves a legacy that his own son, Lucca, will have to live with once he is grown. Shore captures not only the war and politics of the time period, but the romantic lens through which the characters view their world: “The 540 men of Galliano Battalion called the garrison many things but never called it home. When it was not oppression by dust, it could be oppression by fog. Even the fog was dry and hit the lungs more like smoke than vapor, and it rolled in like a sinister mist, sometimes pervading the garrison for days on end.” As the story unfolds, that romanticism—and the heroism, colonialism, and violence it contains—is slowly called into question as the story shifts from the life of Enzo to that of Lucca. The book has a satisfying, unpredictable shape, and the plot—contrived as it often is—is always entertaining. Fans of historical fiction will enjoy this adventure set in a less well-known part of 19th-century Europe.

A swashbuckling and often surprising novel of Risorgimento Italy.



DRAGON LAD

Wand of the Black Sphere

Stevens, J.C.

Illus. by the author

Dragon's Egg Books (238 pp.)

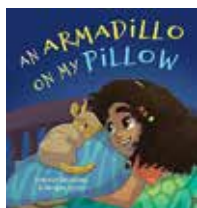
\$9.99 paper | Oct. 23, 2019

978-0-9963839-8-1

Stevens' middle-grade fantasy-trilogy conclusion sees his titular hero revisiting loved ones and battling his sorceress nemesis.

Thirteen-year-old Dirk lives with his family on a farm in Britannia, which is under Roman control. Last year, he escaped a curse, created by the sorceress Ethelda, and, thanks to Beldor, the High Wizard of the West, he can use a magic ring to change between human and dragon forms. He's restless for adventure and misses his friends, so he sneaks away to visit Beldor at his cave. The wizard and his companion, Ydda, help the boy forge a magical sword. Dirk then plans to visit the island of Codhaven, where his beloved Galinda lives and is about to celebrate her 13th birthday. However, a strange white bird has been observing Dirk—an extension of Ethelda, who craves revenge for the death of her husband, Augurald, who was killed by dragon fire. She's also manipulating other people who might help her find the Wand of the Black Sphere. It turns out that a cracked, black orb is now in the possession of Roman commander Lucius Cassius Taurinus—and that Dirk may have a second, intact wand. The third volume of Stevens' middle-grade series is a perfect balance of education and entertainment. A few light opening scenes reintroduce readers to the city of London before it became a teeming metropolis. Unusual terms, such as “triclinium”—a room for lounging and eating—are unobtrusively defined in the story. Along with vibrant history, the author ably develops two major themes. The first is that animals should be treated like people; Dirk can speak with various fauna and has friends among them, such as Pinkfoot, a goose. The boy protagonist also longs to visit the wild while toiling on his family's farm. The second theme is that family is about more than mere blood relationship; Dirk still considers his dragon-mother, Gernith, to be an important part of his life regardless of the curse that initially bound them together. Detailed illustrations by the author enliven scenes throughout.

The lively final volume of a charming series.



AN ARMADILLO ON MY PILLOW

Stevenson, Deborah

Illus. by Spicer, Morgan

Pigs Fly Books (32 pp.)

\$18.95 | \$12.95 paper | Feb. 29, 2020

978-1-73254-105-4

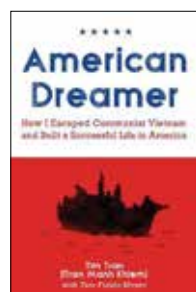
978-1-73254-106-1 paper

A young girl encounters assorted wild animals in the house in this rhyming picture-book adventure.

Brown-skinned, poofy-haired Miranda wakes up in a menagerie, discovering an armadillo, capybara, and more invading her bedroom. A speedy mongoose wearing Miranda's sneakers streaks across the room while a hippo tries on the child's new scouting vest and a sloth reads in the underwear drawer. The creatures don't stop with the bedroom: There are lemurs performing a synchronized swim in the pool, chinchillas cavorting in the sink, and a platypus lounging in the tub. When Miranda's mother calls, the child wakes to discover only the family dog and her own stuffed animals in the room. But that doesn't keep her from protesting morning tasks: Mom "adds, 'brush your teeth. Don't forget.' / 'Okay Mom, but chinchillas are gonna get wet!'" In this imaginative tale, Stevenson's

silly rhymes scan beautifully, and unfamiliar animals and words will be easy for independent readers to guess and sound out from the context. Lap readers are likely to linger over Spicer's hilarious animal illustrations. Miranda's range of expressions and reactions makes for an appealing protagonist; the gray-haired mother shows a wider parent-child age differential than is common; and the Disney-worthy animal images are sure to grab and hold young readers' attentions.

With amusing, delightful rhymes and entertaining illustrations, this morning story should be a hit.



AMERICAN DREAMER How I Escaped Communist Vietnam and Built a Successful Life in America

Tran, Tim with Fields-Meyer, Tom

Pacific University Press (390 pp.)

\$18.99 paper | Jun. 20, 2020

978-1-945398-02-5

A debut memoir recounts life under Communist rule in Vietnam and a man's daring escape to America.

Tran's life was always shadowed by the political tempestuousness of his native Vietnam. Born in a small coastal village in 1950, he was later forced to flee with his family, transformed into a refugee at the age of 4. The author's father, Nguyen Dinh Muu—he eventually had to change his name—joined the Viet Minh nationalist cause but abandoned it after it took an aggressive Communist turn, compelling him to relocate out of fear of retribution. Tran and his family would have to move yet again, this time to Saigon, once the war between the northern and southern portions of the country finally caught up with them. But the author's father, seeing promise in Tran's aptitude, rigorously prepared him for academic success and a way out. Later, the author won a scholarship to attend college in the United States. He studied at Pacific University in Oregon and the University of California at Berkeley and was confronted with a terrible choice, poignantly depicted here: Return to Vietnam as required, or defy the terms of his scholarship. He chose to fly back, confident that harmony and stability were achieved with the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 and committed to marrying his girlfriend, Thuy. But the minute he returned, his passport was confiscated, and for the next four years, he languished under Communist rule, always looking for a way out. Tran writes simply, even journalistically, describing in vividly powerful detail the horror of the despotism he survived. In the airport the day he returned to Vietnam, "the military presence was immediately palpable. All around me, I saw hundreds of sandbags, barbed wire, and soldiers armed with M-16 rifles.... Within seconds of arriving, I knew I had gone from the Land of the Free to the Land Under Military Control." Still, this is not a dour lamentation but rather an inspiring story of personal triumph. The author not only fled Vietnam in a wooden fishing boat and made it back to the United States, he also ultimately prospered both personally and financially. Furthermore, Tran's book—written

This Issue's Contributors

ADULT

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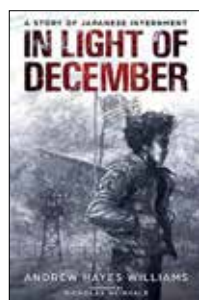
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One of the novel's greatest strengths is the dynamic between the various Yamaguchi family members.

IN LIGHT OF DECEMBER

with Fields-Meyer—delivers an astute synopsis of a chaotic period in Vietnamese history and an intelligent commentary on the perspectives of Americans during that time.

A candidly moving and historically thoughtful account.



IN LIGHT OF DECEMBER A Story of Japanese Internment

Williams, Andrew Hayes
Illus. by McInvale, Nicholas
Self (358 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Sep. 19, 2019
978-1-73404-660-1

A debut novel follows a Japanese American family dealing with the events of World War II.

As he approaches his 18th birthday, innocent and aimless Yoshi Yamaguchi's largest concerns are his performance on the baseball team and whether his crush will finally notice him. After graduation, he begins working in the family grocery store with his father, a quiet, stoic man with strong political convictions. When Yoshi voices his desire to join the Army (the only military branch open to Japanese citizens), his father flatly rejects the idea. He acquiesces only after America enters World War II, when Yoshi's mother points out the potential merits of enlisting versus being drafted. But Yoshi's application is denied on racial grounds. Soon, he and his family are forced to sell their possessions, leave their home, and travel to the Manzanar internment camp (originally known as the Owens Valley Relocation Center). With little information about their future and mindful of the horrors of European concentration camps, the Yamaguchis experience not only the sadness of relocation, but also fears for their lives. Inside the camp, the Yamaguchis struggle to get medical attention for their ailing grandmother. With the little autonomy granted him, Yoshi must make a decision that could affect the rest of his life. The historical aspects of the narrative are well researched, such as the contentious politics of the Japanese American Citizens League. For instance, membership in the JACL was only open to American citizens, excluding many issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants), such as Yoshi's mother and grandmother. This angers people like Yoshi's father, who was finally granted citizenship "almost two decades" after his military service in World War I. One of the novel's greatest strengths is the dynamic between the various Yamaguchi family members. Williams' writing is generally straightforward and unembellished, but the tale's incidents often evoke strong emotions. Yoshi's characterization as a naïve, somewhat awkward young man allows readers to see historic events through the lens of an accessible narrator. Included in the book are several poignant images by debut illustrator McInvale.

A heartfelt read that illuminates an important chapter of American history.

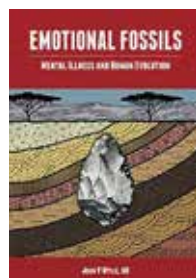


BEAUS AND ARROWS

Williams, Rashida T.
Red Adept Publishing (396 pp.)
\$16.99 paper | Nov. 9, 2019
978-1-948051-41-5

A supernatural matchmaker faces a series of troubles in Williams' debut fantasy romance.

Emory has become bored with his work; although his role as Cupid comes with great responsibility, he finds himself becoming increasingly disillusioned with the messiness of human emotions. Before long, this results in an abuse of power, as Emory begins to shoot his arrows randomly, causing all sorts of mismatched relationships. His carelessness results in Blair, his favorite human, getting a broken heart, and to his astonishment, it seems as if she's lost all hope of finding her true love. But the bad news doesn't stop there; Emory has also been selected by "the Powers that Be" for an audit, which will evaluate his effectiveness as Cupid on Earth. Desperate to keep his job, Emory scrambles to fix Blair's troubles—even if it means suppressing his own feelings for her. An unexpected turn of events then forces him to redefine his definitions of love and devotion. This witty, charming fantasy romance feels best suited to a younger adult audience, who will appreciate the book's accurate portrayal of the dating scene. Emory's sarcastic sense of humor and slight traces of pessimism are consistently amusing: "The last wedding he would ever attend in the Earth realm was going to be at a courthouse. On a Thursday. It was a fitting conclusion to his miserable career." These human qualities are what make Emory such an engaging and relevant character despite his tendency for arrogance. Likewise, Blair's tailspin into depression and loneliness feels authentic and unpretentious; after all, as everyone knows, there's no quick fix for a broken heart. In the story, the color of a character's aura indicates their readiness for love, and this device provides plenty of entertainment as Emory surveys his hunting grounds for suitable targets. Throughout, the plot zips along, providing intriguing developments with each new chapter.



EMOTIONAL FOSSILS Mental Illness and Human Evolution

Wylie, John V.
Self (150 pp.)
\$8.00 paper | Jan. 1, 2020
978-0-578-60167-0

A psychiatrist finds an evolutionary explanation for common mental illnesses.

In this science book, Wylie draws on Darwinian evolutionary theory to present a new framework for understanding the origins of depression, bipolar disorder, and other such conditions. In a volume that combines both the work of biological theorists and his

own clinical observations, the author argues for an interpretation in which mental illnesses are caused by the inability of humans' "new" and "old" brains—the behaviors that developed as *Homo sapiens* became modern as opposed to the remnants of earlier stages of evolution—to work in concert. Wylie's goal in developing his theory is twofold: Understanding the causes of mental illness makes it easier to treat, and this knowledge allows the general public to react with empathy instead of fear. The author's empathy for his patients is evident throughout these pages, as he recounts cases in (anonymized) detail without delving into sensationalism or objectifying the people he has treated. Wylie's interpretation of behavioral anomalies in the context of "a decisive shift in natural selection's target from fitness of individuals to productivity of relationships among individuals in which the language of expressed emotions plays the central role" seems plausible, particularly as he cites evolutionary biologists, including E.O. Wilson and Richard Prum, in the development of his case. The book is well written, with frequently vibrant prose ("white-hot caldrons of emotion radiating inner fragments of the nature of our nature"), and it is fairly easy for nonscientist readers to follow. The work's brevity is not a shortcoming, as Wylie makes a fully developed argument and presents evidence without becoming repetitive. The volume's central thesis is outside the norms of current psychiatric teachings, but the author makes a solid case for why it is plausible and how it can change methods of treating and understanding mental illnesses, delivering a challenge to orthodoxy that is worth considering and exploring further.

A singular approach to understanding mental disorders that is thoughtfully presented and offers new possibilities.

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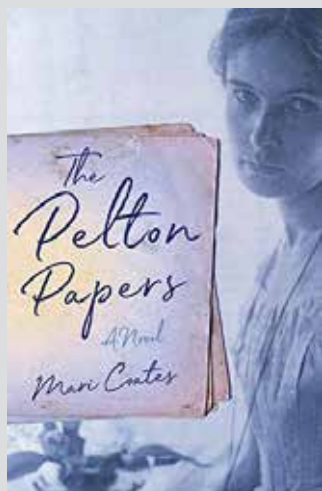
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BOOKS OF THE MONTH

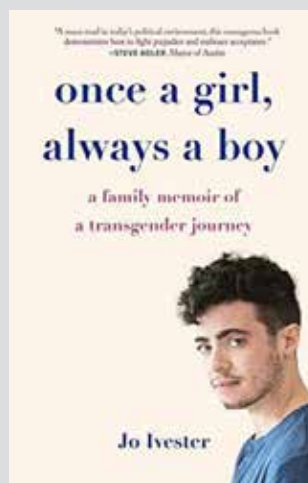
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THE PELTON PAPERS

Mari Coates

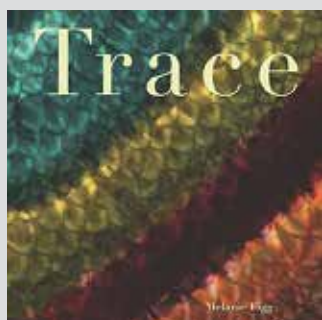
An in-depth, highly personal portrait of a remarkable talent.



ONCE A GIRL, ALWAYS A BOY

Jo Ivester

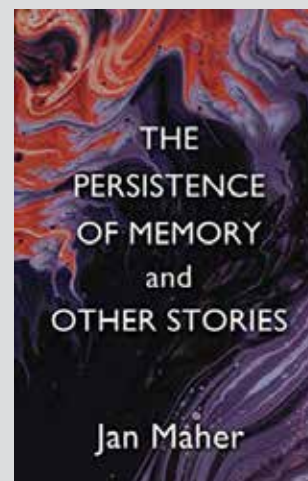
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Melanie Figg

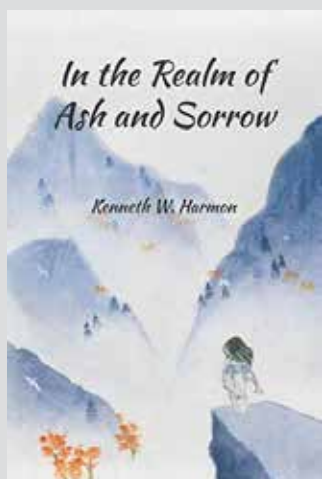
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Jan Máher

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IN THE REALM OF ASH AND SORROW

Kenneth W. Harmon

Thorough research and stylish execution make for a striking tour de force.



GOING BACK

Andrea Von Treuenfeld
Trans. by Cathryn Siegal-Bergman

A vital, understated contribution to the body of Holocaust literature.

SEEN & HEARD

By Michael Schaub

BETTY WHITE, OTHERS READ TO KIDS

Reading books to your kids is one of life's greatest simple pleasures, but in these days of self-quarantining and sheltering in place, you might get sick of putting on a performance of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* 10 times a day. So why not let some celebrities do the heavy lifting for a little bit?

Betty White, Jimmy Fallon, and Jennifer Garner are among the stars who have posted videos of themselves reading children's books to help bored little ones (and their stressed parents) get through the day, *USA Today* reports. The SAG-AFTRA Foundation set up a website called Storyline Online, which features videos of actors reading stories to kids.

In a similar project, the charity Save the Children has established an Instagram account called Save With Stories, where you can stream videos of Ron Howard reading *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, Kerry Washington reading *Mae Among the Stars*, and "Weird Al" Yankovic reading his own *When I Grow Up*.



ROBYN BECK/AFP via Getty Images



Taylor Hill/Getty Images

DAVID BYRNE WRITING BOOK BASED ON AMERICAN UTOPIA

David Byrne is working on a new version of his hit Broadway play, and it's definitely not the same as it ever was.

Bloomsbury will publish a book version of the Talking Heads frontman's *American Utopia* in September, the press said in a news release.

Byrne is collaborating on the book, also titled *American Utopia*, with artist and author Maira Kalman. The text of the book will be adapted from the lyrics to the Broadway show, itself based on Byrne's 2018 solo album. It will feature artwork by Kalman that the publisher describes as "composed of small moments, expressions, gestures, and interactions that together offer a portrait of daily life and coexistence."

American Utopia is scheduled for publication on Sept. 18. There's no word on whether the book will feature a comically large jacket.

LENA DUNHAM LAUNCHES SERIALIZED ROMANCE NOVEL

Actress and writer Lena Dunham's newest book is a serialized, interactive romance novel published on the *Vogue* website.

Verified Strangers follows Ally, a 32-year-old Angeleno who's frustrated by the city's dating scene. "Suddenly, Ally goes from tragic dry spell to juggling relationships like she's Don Draper, ignoring the job she needs and pissing off the friends she loves," Dunham writes. "And are any of these dudes even worth it?...What does a wealth of men mean if you have no idea what you really want and no sense of your own worth?"

In a Choose Your Own Adventure-style twist, readers can vote on *Vogue*'s Instagram page to determine how the novel turns out.

Dunham says the inspiration to write a serialized novel came from a well-known 19th-century author. "[Charles] Dickens wrote serial stories through all sorts of public crises, including the London cholera outbreak of 1854," she explains.



Vince Buccia/Getty Images for Friendly House

Michael Schaub is a Texas-based journalist and regular contributor to NPR.

Appreciations: *Walden* and the Indie Spirit

BY GREGORY MCNAMEE



John Turnbeck/The Boston Globe via Getty Images

ANYONE WHO SURVIVED high school English remembers Henry David Thoreau, who, 175-odd years ago, went back to the land, building a rough cabin outside Concord, Massachusetts, away from better-kept neighbors. We remember him and his story because *Walden*, the book that grew from his life-simplifying experiment, is now hailed as a classic of American literature and is a staple of the curriculum, selling tens of thousands of copies each year.

Many readers view Thoreau as a pre-modern eccentric, a bookworm-ish Ichabod Crane with better hammering skills. He was more than all that: He was competent at putting two boards together, better at bringing tomatoes forth from his rustic garden,

better still at putting words on paper: “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived,” he wrote, famously, inspiring generations of readers.

But like so many fine writers of his era and ours, Thoreau had trouble getting publishers to bite. Thoreau’s first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, published in 1849, had failed, selling just 200 copies in four years. When the publisher shipped the unsold copies to him, Thoreau wrote, ruefully, “I have now a library of nearly 900 volumes over 700 of which I wrote myself.”

He also paid for them himself. As Thoreau took *Walden* through draft after draft, publishers offered much the same deal: pay for the printing, share the proceeds. He finally selected one, and in August 1854, *Walden* came out, 2,000 copies at \$1 a pop. All 2,000 found buyers, though it took five years to do so. Thoreau professed not to mind, and when a royalty check for \$51.60 arrived, he used it mostly to buy books—and books like the *Rig-Veda* and the *Mahabharata*, exotic and unknown in this country. When he died at age 44, eight years after *Walden* first appeared, his last words were “moose,” then “Indian.” The first was eminently local, but whether he meant an Indian of the nearby forests or one of the Upanishads is something we can only guess at.

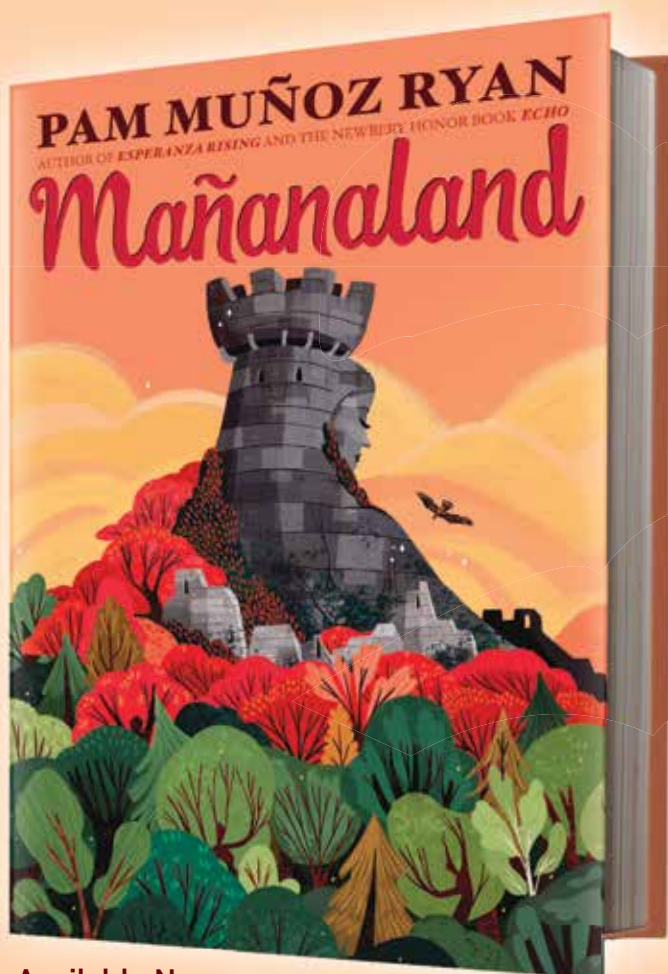


For all the rigors he describes, Thoreau didn’t really have such a hard life at Walden. His days were full of reading, walking, writing, and thinking. His cabin was on land owned by Ralph Waldo Emerson and within earshot of the Emersons’ dinner bell, to which he often responded. My old friend Ann Zwinger, inspired by reading *Walden* to become the eminent naturalist and nature writer that she was, never tired of pointing out that Thoreau’s sojourn at Walden Pond was made easier by the fact that his mother did his laundry for him.

Even so, *Walden* continues to teach readers lessons about economy, simplicity, and a life lived on one’s own terms. He stands as an inspiration to writers, too, not just for his words, but for daring to take risks to see them into print—a patron saint of the counterculture, then, but also of indie authors everywhere.

New from *New York Times* bestselling author and Newbery Honoree

PAM MUÑOZ RYAN



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★ “Ryan beautifully layers thought-provoking topics onto her narrative while keeping readers immersed in the story’s world.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “A lyrical, fablelike tale of love, loss, community, and standing up for what is right. Unforgettable work from a master storyteller.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Richly tiered novel... wrenchingly real.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

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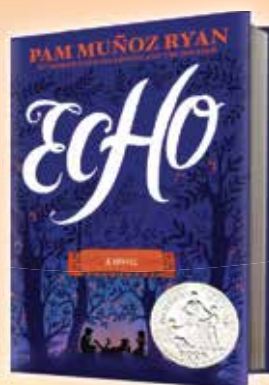
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—*The New York Times Book Review*

★ “Triumphant.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review



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—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “Belongs in all collections.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review



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