

Featuring 364 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction and Children's & Teen

# KIRKUS

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VOL. LXXXIII, NO. 3 | 1 FEBRUARY 2015

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# REVIEWS

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

# What to Watch for in February

BY CLAIBORNE SMITH



Claiborne Smith

Photo courtesy Michael Thad Carter

Editors love to make neat lists of 10s: the 10 best books of the year, the 10 greatest movies of all time. There are more than 10 notable books being published this month (and more than the 16 I mention below), but these are the titles that stand out to me. Included are the final lines of our reviews of these books.

**Asali Solomon** (*Disgruntled*, fiction, Feb. 3): "Blackness, feminism and the loss of virginity have never been analyzed by a more astute and witty main character."

**Kenny Porpora** (*The Autumn Balloon*, nonfiction, Feb. 3): "As one teacher exulted after his acceptance to the Columbia Journalism School, '[p]eople with stories like yours don't end up in the Ivy League.' And yet Porpora did, and now his stories have become the material for his piercing first book."

**M.O. Walsh** (*My Sunshine Away*, fiction, Feb. 10): "Celebrate, fiction lovers:

The gods of Southern gothic storytelling have inducted a junior member."

**Rachel Holmes** (*Eleanor Marx: A Life*, nonfiction, Feb. 24): "A full-fleshed, thrilling portrait, troubling and full of family secrets."

**Anne Tyler** (*A Spool of Blue Thread*, fiction, Feb. 10): "The texture of everyday experience transmuted into art."

**Charles Baxter** (*There's Something I Want You to Do: Stories*, fiction, Feb. 3): "Nearly as organic as a novel, this is more intriguing, more fun in disclosing its connective tissues through tales that stand well on their own."

**Nick Hornby** (*Funny Girl*, fiction, Feb. 3): "Years later, Sophie is getting ready to star in a play that's intended to revive her career. 'The play is much better than I thought it was going to be,' she thinks. 'It's funny, and sad—like life.' And like this novel."

**Carole Boston Weatherford** (*Gordon Parks: How the Photographer Captured Black and White America*, illustrated by Jamey Christoph, picture book, Feb. 1): "Parks' photography gave a powerful and memorable face to racism in America; this book gives him to young readers."

**Reif Larsen** (*I Am Radar*, fiction, Feb. 24): "Imaginative, original, nicely surreal—and hyperpigmentarily so."

**Pam Muñoz Ryan** (*Echo*, middle grade, Feb. 24): "A grand narrative that examines the power of music to inspire beauty in a world overrun with fear and intolerance, it's worth every moment of readers' time."

**James McGrath Morris** (*Eye on the Struggle: Ethel Payne, First Lady of the Black Press*, nonfiction, Feb. 17): "A deeply researched, skillfully written biography about a previously underappreciated individual."

**Richard Price** (writing as Harry Brandt) (*The Whites*, fiction, Feb. 17): "In the wake of rage and sorrow, ordinary people respond by going crazy and screwing up. In this far-from-ordinary novel, Price/Brandt explores the hows and whys. Fasten your seat belt."

**Arthur Bradford** (*Turtleface and Beyond: Stories*, fiction, Feb. 3): "A jazzy, anarchic collection."

**Philip Connors** (*All the Wrong Places: A Life Lost and Found*, nonfiction, Feb. 16): "Unlike other, neater narratives of being lost and found, Connors' story—told with harrowing insight and fierce prose—is messy and incomplete and makes no apologies for being anything but."

**Katherine Heiny** (*Single, Carefree, Mellow: Stories*, fiction, Feb. 2): "These young women are sympathetic and slyly seductive, sometimes selfish and maddeningly un-self-aware, but they are beguilingly human, and readers will yield to their charms."

**Claire North** (*Touch*, fiction, Feb. 24): "The high stakes and breakneck pace of the plot will draw readers in, and the meditations on what it means to be human and to be loved will linger long after the last shot is fired."

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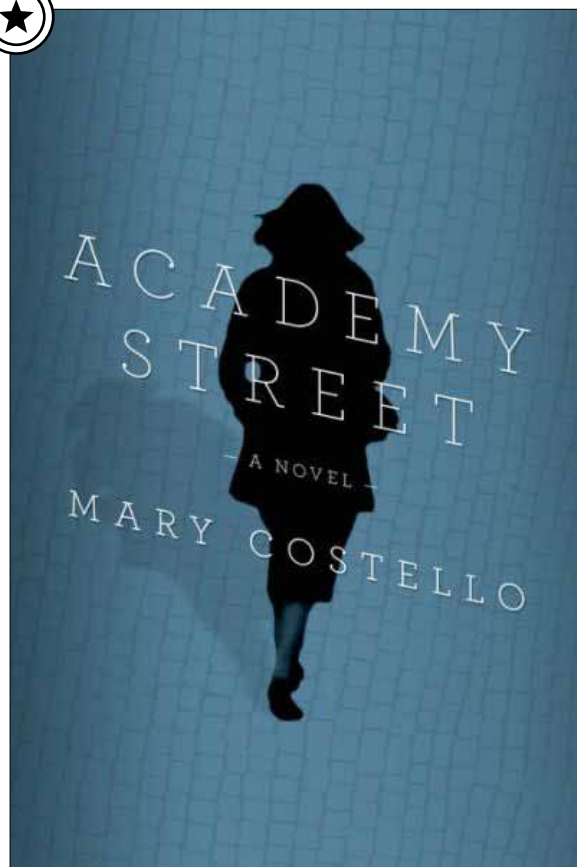
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The Kirkus Star is awarded to books of remarkable merit, as determined by the impartial editors of Kirkus.



Mary Costello has written a darkly beautiful first novel. Read the review on p. 10.

# ON THE WEB

WWW.KIRKUS.COM

Check out these highlights from Kirkus' online coverage at  
[www.kirkus.com](http://www.kirkus.com)



Photo courtesy Ron Nichols

In Asali Solomon's coming-of-age novel *Disgruntled*, Kenya Curtis is only 8 years old, but she already knows that she's somehow different. It's not because she's black—most of the other students in the fourth-grade class at her West Philadelphia elementary school are too. Maybe it's because she celebrates Kwanzaa or because she's forbidden from reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Maybe it's because she calls her father—a housepainter/philosopher—"Baba" instead of "Daddy."

Kenya does know that it's connected to what her Baba calls "the shame of being alive"—a shame that only grows deeper and more complex as she grows up. "Solomon has crafted a character of irrepressible verve and voice," says our Kirkus reviewer; check out the interview this month on Kirkus.com.



Photo courtesy George Baker IV

It's hot and getting hotter this summer in Afghanipakistan—the preferred name for the ambiguous stretch of the world where the U.S. Special Forces operate with little outside attention and the site of former soldier **Ross Ritchell's** debut novel, *The Knife*. Team Leader Dutch Shaw is missing his late grandmother. She was the last link he had to civilian life, to any kind of world of innocence. But there's no time to mourn. After two helicopters in a sister squadron are shot down, Shaw and his team know that they're going to be spun up

and sent back in, deep into insurgent territory, where a new organization called Al Ayeelaa has been attracting high-value targets from across the region. As Shaw and his men fight their way closer to the source, they begin to realize that their way may have been prepared for them in advance, and not by a welcoming host. We talk to Ritchell about his novel this month on Kirkus.com.



Lou Berney's *The Long and Faraway Gone* is a crime novel that explores the mysteries of memory and the impact of violence on survivors—in this case, dating back to 1986 in Oklahoma City. That summer, six movie-theater employees were killed in an armed robbery, while one inexplicably survived. Then, a teenage girl vanished from the annual state fair. Neither crime was ever solved. Twenty-five years later, the reverberations of those unsolved cases continue to impact the survivors' lives.

One is Wyatt, a private investigator in Vegas, whose latest inquiry takes him back to a past he's tried to escape—and drags him deeper into the mystery of the movie-house robbery that left six of his friends dead. Like Wyatt, Julianna struggles with the past—with the day her beautiful older sister Genevieve disappeared. When Julianna discovers that one of the original suspects has resurfaced, she'll stop at nothing to find answers. Our starred Kirkus review calls *The Long and Faraway Gone* "a mystery with a deep, wounded heart." Look for our interview with Berney this month on Kirkus.com.

And be sure to check out our Indie publishing series, featuring some of today's most intriguing self-published authors. We feature authors' exclusive personal essays and reported articles on how they achieved their success in publishing. It's a must-read resource for any aspiring author interested in getting readers to notice their new books.

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# FICTION



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

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## SNOWBLIND Stories of Alpine Obsession

Arnold, Daniel

Counterpoint (296 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Mar. 17, 2015

978-1-61902-453-3



This debut story collection is a gutsy, up-close look at mountain climbing around the world.

Arnold is an outdoor writer whose nonfiction work focuses on climbing (*From Salt to Summit*, 2012, etc.). He's an active climber himself, and this book rings true, examining the lives of those who are lured to the mountains. Subcultures always have their own languages, and Arnold has his down: "The angle ratchets out toward vertical. Ann pounds a half-hitch piton to the eye...threads a bight through her handle-modified GriGri, and clips the end to the piton." That writing typifies the rhythm and rich language that drive all the stories in this collection. "The Cleaning Crew" is a somber look at a climber losing his partner during an unimaginable storm on the rock. He tells the tale to find relief but receives no sympathy from the other climbers at a hostel in Argentina. "No Place for Vagabonds" feels like an epic travelogue told by a guerrilla climber who's asked to join a major, industrialized expedition to K2. Chase Vox describes the group, awestruck and repulsed: "We were a small country. The rich and powerful doing bizarre stuff at the top while the workers labored at the bottom." But there's a twist—a hippy named Wind who shadows the expedition and sets Chase's mountain ethic on its ear as he accomplishes what no one else can. "Cowards Run" is outdoor writing at its best, delivered in a tale of two 17-year-old boys living an impossible summer; it starts with the storms of the sea and ends atop Mount Fairweather. In this book, the top is the point.

Arnold has crafted a fierce book for those who know the game—and for the rest of us, who can vicariously push through our fears of the wild.

## WRITING OUTSIDE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE



ONE OF MY FAVORITE BOOKS of 2014 was *Florence Gordon*, a novel by a male writer, Brian Morton, who burrowed deep inside the psyche of a 75-year-old woman to produce a tour de force of cross-gender empathy and insight. When I went on vacation recently, I decided to catch up on a book I had missed two years ago, *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*, in which Adelle Waldman conjures a sad young literary man with such authenticity it's

hard to believe she isn't one herself.

Nate is a monster of ambivalence; he wants to find a woman he can talk to and feel comfortable with, yet he can't help looking at his new girlfriend, Hannah, through the eyes of his guy friends. Is she pretty enough, cool enough, for them to envy him? Can he ever be happy with her if he thinks his friends think they "did better" in the mating game? As a friend just said to me, if this isn't the way men actually think, it's certainly the way women think men think, and who can ever know for sure?

My other vacation book was Helene Wecker's *The Golem and the Jinni*, in which a woman made of Eastern European clay by an old Jewish cabalist immigrates to New York in 1899 and meets a Syrian-born, fire-based shape-shifter who's just been let out of the bottle where he was trapped for a millennium. Wecker's fantastical, historical New York tale couldn't be more different from Waldman's razor-sharp observation of the present-day city, but it was an interesting pairing. While both books are written in the third person, Waldman's perspective stays very close to Nate's own; it's a shock when we hear Hannah's voice in an e-mail. Wecker's omniscient narrator swoops from the Syrian desert to the Polish countryside to New York and back again, and we see the story through the eyes of not only the golem and the jinni, but those of their masters, friends and lovers (and, not to give too much away, even a spouse). Both novels are great examples of the pleasures to be had when authors risk writing outside their own experiences. —L.M.

*Laurie Muchnick is the fiction editor at Kirkus Reviews.*



### KILLER, COME HITHER

Begley, Louis  
Doubleday (256 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-385-53914-2

A veteran novelist takes an unfortunate turn with this stilted, contrived thriller.

The stylistic flair and psychological subtlety that Begley brought to his Schmidt novels (*About Schmidt*, 1996, etc.) is nowhere in evidence here. Instead, this is genre fiction that doesn't deliver the usual pleasures of the genre. The narrator is Jack Dana, an Ivy Leaguer who's also a Marine war hero and the author of three very popular novels, at least one of which has been optioned by Hollywood for big bucks. His closest living relative is his Uncle Harry, a partner at a prosperous Manhattan law firm, who was estranged from the rest of the family for reasons never quite explained. Harry's top client is a conservative-extremist Texas tycoon who's been buying elections, cultural legitimacy and government officials. The tycoon decides he no longer wants Harry as his lawyer, and then tragedy strikes. Already a wealthy man, Jack is on the verge of becoming far wealthier, but first he must solve a mystery and avenge a murder. And finish his next novel. And fall in love with Harry's protégé, a younger partner named Kerry, with whom he embarks on a whirlwind courtship though both of them are ostensibly in mourning. Jack also has a best friend from college who now conveniently works for the CIA and thus has intelligence and weaponry at his disposal. While Kerry and Jack are coming to terms with Harry's fate, they are pitching woo (as the novel might have it) in deliriously silly fashion: "Could we have a dinner plus a sleepover?" Kerry asks Jack in an email. His reaction: "A wave of such happiness overcame me that I let out a whoop." Jack also wonders whether the strange figure stalking him might have something to do with Harry but concludes, "Most of the world's population are weirdos."

Perhaps the author had some fun with this, but the result isn't likely to engage fans of either Begley or thrillers.



### THE DREAM LOVER

Berg, Elizabeth  
Random House (368 pp.)  
\$28.00 | \$13.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-8129-9315-8  
987-0-679-64470-5 e-book

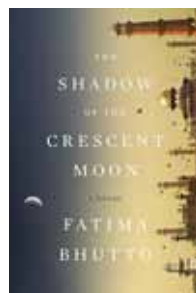
Best-selling author Berg (*Tapestry of Fortunes*, 2013, etc.) turns her attention to the life of French writer George Sand with this vivid historical novel.

The book begins twice: It's 1831, and Aurore Dupin, a free-spirited young woman, is leaving her loveless marriage in the French countryside for a creative,

bohemian life in Paris—the life that will lead her to become literary icon George Sand. Then time whips backward: It's 1804, and the scene is Aurore's birth. Her mother is fiery, passionate, low-born and beautiful; her father is handsome, musical, charming, a military star. And so Berg sets off on a project that's part biography, part George Sand fantasy, alternating between scenes from Aurore's fairy-tale childhood and tales of her adult affairs—her brilliant career, her difficult family life, her struggles with femininity and the limitations of femaleness, her complicated sexuality, and, above all, her many, many whirlwind romances. "There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved," Sand once wrote, and it is that quest that becomes the focal point of Berg's novel: We follow Aurore in and out of her loveless marriage, through passionate relationships and bright-burning assignations, many of them with historical characters famous in their own rights. Her work, we are told, comes easily and brilliantly and is met with perpetual praise and complete success; her politics are progressive and generally to be admired. A more nuanced exploration of her professional and political life might have brought Berg's Sand necessary humanity and texture, providing both a foil and a

context for her love affairs. As it is, though, Aurore—for all that she's intoxicating, beautiful, gifted, desirous, unconventional and heartbroken—never quite becomes human. She remains myth-like, and we remain one step removed.

**A thoroughly pleasant escape, if not a particularly deep one.**



### THE SHADOW OF THE CRESCENT MOON

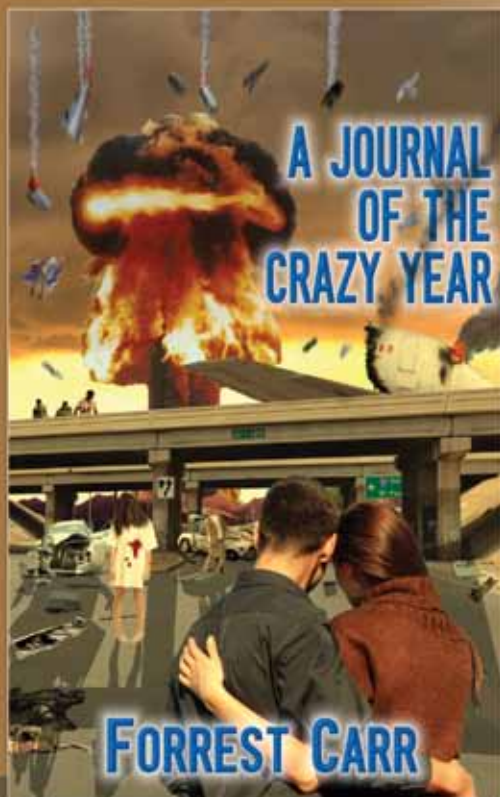
*Bhutto, Fatima*

Penguin Press (240 pp.)

\$25.95 | Mar. 24, 2015

978-1-59420-560-6

Set in the small Pakistani border town of Mir Ali, this novel rotates among the points of view of three brothers, telling stories of past and present violence and building to a fever pitch of terror.



## A JOURNAL OF THE CRAZY YEAR

by Forrest Carr

A pandemic helps humanity destroy itself in this wry apocalyptic thriller.

"[A] truly unconventional ending makes for a worthy trip"

"Author Carr does an exemplary job portraying the media circus surrounding the comet and the possibility of flesh-eating mob... A great case made for the idea that the end isn't nigh—it's already here." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Fresh thinking and feeling animate this heartfelt postapocalyptic novel...is stuffed with untrimmable, character-driven, cogent dialogue...a fascinating read all the way to its chilly, barely hopeful conclusion." —*Publishers' Weekly*

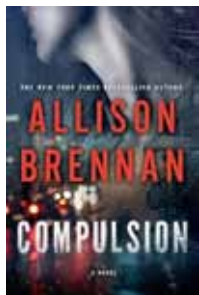
"There's education and mystification in the midst of the thrilling narrative, and they fit well.... There's a World War Z-feel to this journalistic approach..." —*Fantascize.com*

For all inquiries regarding publishing or film rights please email [forrestcarr99@gmail.com](mailto:forrestcarr99@gmail.com)



For the very first time, the brothers have decided not to pray together to celebrate Eid because “[i]t is too dangerous, too risky, to place all the family together in one mosque that could easily be hit” by bombs, even though they’re unsure whom the assailants might be. The book takes place during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and Pakistan has become a collateral battleground for America’s enemies and allies alike. It is Hayat, the youngest brother, who has decided which mosque each family member will pray at, and it is he who will bear the burden of responsibility if any of those mosques are hit, for Hayat continues the rebel activism of their departed father, Inayat, who, along with his fellow townsmen of Mir Ali, sought independence from Pakistan and its excessive injustices in the 1950s. Aman Erum, the expatriate eldest brother, turned away from this legacy to forge a business in America in exchange for passing valuable intelligence on the rebels to the state. And Sikandar, the middle brother, shunned politics in order to heal others through medicine, only to lose his young son in the political crossfire anyway. But with Aman Erum’s recent return, the truth about what happened to his fiancée, Samarra Afridi, at the hands of the Pakistani state military incites the rebel faction to dramatic action.

**Bhutto** (*Songs of Blood and Sword*, 2011, etc.) has crafted a timely, earnest portrait of a family torn apart by the machinations of other people’s war games and desperately trying to survive.



## COMPULSION

*Brennan, Allison*

Minotaur (320 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-250-03502-8

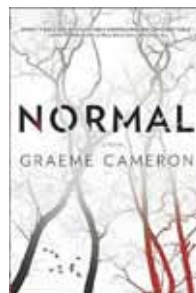
978-1-250-03503-5 e-book

Brennan gives Maxine “Max” Revere a makeover, though she’s still a rich, beautiful and brilliant TV host and true-crime crusader.

In the first novel of the series (*Notorious*, 2014), Max was a know-it-all with no friends, a monstrous ego and the conviction that she was right all the time. Brennan has taken her unlikable protagonist and turned her into a squishy, lovable curmudgeon who’s adored by everyone except criminals. This time Max is on the trail of Adam Bachman, caught nine months earlier with a girl in the trunk of his car and now on trial for five murders; she’s wangled an interview with him for her television show, *Maximum Exposure*. Max is prone to taking on dangerous assignments, going undercover to bust criminals and expose corruption. That behavior has earned her a bodyguard, David, who is now also her best friend. Max has also been looking into a couple named Palazzolo who disappeared on a trip to New York; she’s positive that they’re linked to Bachman. After calling in a favor from missing persons detective Sally O’Hara, Max insists that someone else was involved in the Bachman case and—torn between two handsome cops who both adore her—tries to balance her life while working

tirelessly, but always on her terms, for good. The first half of the book moves along nicely, though Max’s sudden transformation from obnoxious to gracious is disconcerting; but the second half, while it starts with a bang, drags on and on, with one aha moment stacked upon another until exhausted readers will find themselves wishing the whole thing would just stop. Max has a few too many close calls to be believable, and the relentless introspection slows the action, which naturally includes cops shooting out the tires of a fleeing vehicle, Brennan’s stock police response to crooks in cars.

**While Max’s original bitchy attitude needed adjusting, this incarnation makes for some embarrassingly maudlin moments.**



## NORMAL

*Cameron, Graeme*

Harlequin MIRA (304 pp.)

\$24.95 | Mar. 31, 2015

978-0-7783-1850-7

Cameron’s novel inserts readers into the life of a man who is anything but what the title implies—normal.

Nameless throughout the novel, the main character’s personal boundaries fall well outside what’s considered acceptable beyond a maximum security prison or mental hospital for the criminally insane, and Cameron wastes no time getting down to the killing. The first victim introduced is Sarah, an 18-year-old whose brief live appearance only foreshadows her larger role as a victim. But the poor killer had a bad childhood: His mother left him in the custody of his brutal father, so naturally, Daddy Dearest became the first victim. He then moved on to more interesting subjects, like young women. After slaying Sarah, he carves her up like a side of beef, because, after all, he has another mouth to feed: He’s holding Erica Shaw hostage in his specially built underground facility. Erica’s proven to be a bit of a difficult case, though. She throws the food he provides her and, wisely, as it turns out, refuses to eat it. Although the reader never knows why he insists on keeping Erica alive while stalking new prey, he even goes grocery shopping for her. And it’s there that he eventually meets the one woman who changes everything. In the meantime, he prevents a girl named Annie—originally intended as a victim—from being raped and picks up a hapless hooker who has a very different fate from Annie’s. Soon his new infatuation, his prisoner and the police collide, causing all hell to break loose in ways that even a creative serial killer couldn’t have envisioned.

**A black comedy featuring a bizarre murderer who believes he suffers for his “art.” Cameron has written a painfully funny story that’s littered with corpses, both intentional and unintentional, and proves that sometimes spotting the craziest person on the block isn’t quite as easy as it seems.**



# Like Joyce, Chaudhuri recognizes that the seemingly artless rhythms and repetitions of daily life can have the depth and breadth of true art.

ODYSSEUS ABROAD



## THE STRANGLER VINE

Carter, M.J.  
Putnam (384 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Mar. 31, 2015  
978-0-399-17167-3

Exotically detailed and sprinkled with derring-do, Carter's historical novel follows an inscrutable old hand and a well-intentioned rookie on a quest that takes them deep into the heart of colonial India.

Part manhunt for a controversial poet who has disappeared in feared Thuggee bandit country, part panorama of early Victorian India under the rule of the Honorable East India Company, British journalist Carter's debut is rooted in an impressively evoked period setting. The year is 1837, and the Indian subcontinent, ruled for profit by the British, is beginning to show signs of the discontent that will boil over as mutiny a couple of decades later. Ensign William Avery, an officer in the company's army, is in Calcutta waiting for his summons to a cavalry regiment when he is given an alternative mission: to support Jeremiah Blake, a company man who has gone native, on a secret mission to find Xavier Mountstuart, the famous Scottish writer whose latest book has fed into the mood of unrest and who has broken an agreement to leave India. Avery and Blake's journey is Carter's chance to unroll a swathe of colorful background detail, from bazaars and tiger hunts to spectacular feasts. And along the way, as Blake questions Avery's assumptions about company policy and the natives, a light is shed on the corrupt, exploitative core of colonialism. Action is intermittent until the book's later chapters, when an assassination attempt is followed by a capture, a chase, a double cross and a fight to the death. Avery and Blake are simultaneously transformed into "the toast of India" and given a tough lesson in political expediency.

Making pleasing use of the developing bromance/adventure formula and a wealth of research, Carter delivers an engaging, skeptical, modern take on empire.



## ODYSSEUS ABROAD

Chaudhuri, Amit  
Knopf (224 pp.)  
\$24.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-1-101-87451-6

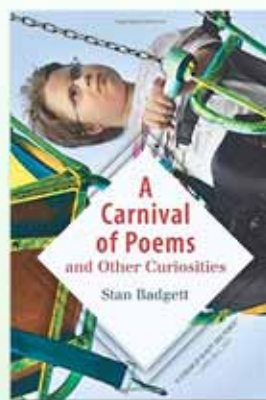
A meandering, sometimes mesmerizing quasi-novel about two Indian men living separately in London in 1985 and taking one of their regular walks together while memories arise and intrude.

Chaudhuri (*Calcutta: Two Years in the City*, 2013, etc.) returns to familiar themes of Indian émigrés, university life and music—most similar to those of the 1993 novel *Afternoon Raag* (published in the U.S. in the collection *Freedom Song*). Here, he deploys prose that has been described as Proustian in a plotless excursion with Joycean elements. It occupies

one day yet has ramifications through several branches of a family tree across three generations. The title and some chapters refer to characters or elements from *The Odyssey*, while playful allusions to *Ulysses* dot the book. The first half of the narrative follows dyspeptic 22-year-old Ananda, a singer, so-so student at University College London and aspiring poet with a weakness for Philip Larkin. He ponders his noisy neighbors, tutors, sexual frustration and homesickness piqued by his formidable mother's recent visit. He takes comfort in weekly constitutional walks with his uncle, the dominant figure of the book's second half. Radhesh is wealthy, though he retired one rung shy of his corporate goal, and is a lifetime short of losing his virginity. He lives in a modest flat and dispenses largess to relatives and a feckless neighbor. He played matchmaker as the brother of Ananda's mother and the best friend of her husband-to-be. Radhesh and Ananda enjoy a prickly affection that stems from the nephew's penury, their love of music, and the ties of heart and tongue to the homeland. Chaudhuri sprinkles Bengali words throughout the text—including Radhesh's sad refrain, translated as "There's a covering of moss on my heart." The words' strangeness may

## A CARNIVAL OF POEMS and Other Curiosities

by Stan Badgett



"Badgett has an undeniable gift for imbuing the most mundane scenes and landscapes with deep, and often dangerous, psychic implications..."

"...psychological profundity...tender and authentic..."

"A far-reaching, rambunctious collection."

—Kirkus Reviews

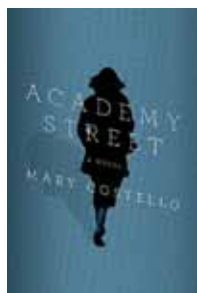
ISBN: 978-1499541755

Badgett (*Rock Dust*, 2010, etc.) exhibits impressive artistic range, under a single tent assembling poetry simple and complex, flash fiction, a short dramatic piece and a selection of graphic art including woodcut, collage and photography.

For information about publication or film rights,  
email sbadgett@sopris.net

frustrate some readers, as may Chaudhuri's ambling sense of story arc, but they add another kind of music to a work that captivates almost in spite of itself.

**Like Joyce, Chaudhuri recognizes that the seemingly artless rhythms and repetitions of daily life can have, in thoughtful hands, the depth and breadth of true art.**



### ACADEMY STREET

*Costello, Mary*

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

(160 pp.)

\$22.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-374-10052-0

In this darkly beautiful first novel, a girl finds happiness elusive and short-lived as she comes of age in Ireland and becomes a mother in the U.S. in the last century's latter half.

Tess Lohan is 7 when her mother dies in the opening pages, which recall in their capturing of a young person's drifting impressions Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. She notes the Adam and Eve pattern of the wallpaper in her bedroom when a blackbird flies in and tears off a strip for its nest. For a novel generally lean in style, it's a fat image heavy with the toll paid, the Eden lost, for the knowing of good and evil. After training as a nurse, Tess immigrates to New York City, where one night's love leaves her a single mother. Costello wrote of an illegitimate son given up in infancy in one of the fine stories from her first book, *The China Factory* (2012)—"there was nothing sweeter, ever, in her life after that." For Tess, motherhood "turned a plain world to riches," bringing a taste of joy and then a bundle of pain, a boy who rejects her in resentment of the absent, oblivious father. When he moves out, "[h]er rooms could barely endure the silence left in his wake." In the final pages, as Tess in her 60s revisits Ireland for the first time, the wallpaper returns because her family home has been razed, "the Garden of Eden...toppled by a wrecking ball." And in prose that recalls the peroration of Joyce's "The Dead," she realizes there will be no Eden, "[j]ust time, and tasks made lighter by the memory of love, and days like all others."

**Costello renders her homely, knowing heroine with craft and compassion in this sad, slim, rich novel.**



### THE POCKET WIFE

*Crawford, Susan*

Morrow/HarperCollins (384 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$14.99 e-book | Mar. 17, 2015

978-0-06-236285-8

978-0-06-236287-2 e-book

A housewife struggling to control her bipolar disorder fears she's responsible for the brutal murder of her neighbor.

Overcome by a wave of mania, Dana Catrell only remembers snippets of events leading up to the death of her friend Celia Steinhauer, who lived down the street in the quiet New Jersey suburb of Paterson. In her stumbling debut, Crawford makes the mistakes of painting every character, no matter how minor, as suspicious and setting readers up for a finale that will tie the disparate plotlines together in a tidy package (spoiler alert: Everything is connected, but it's far from satisfying). Dana lives with her attorney husband, Peter, the kind of man who'd drive anyone mad: boorish, condescending, quite possibly philandering. She longs for the company of her son, Jamie, who's just started college in Boston, and reminisces, albeit less than fondly, about her own college days at NYU, when she dated a mysterious man known only as the Poet and suffered her first bout of manic depression. Her illness waxes and wanes in service of the plot: She often ends up in a diner late at night, where a suspiciously sage waitress doles out philosophical advice along with the coffee. As Dana "works" the case on her end, the official inquiry is headed by Detective Jack Moss, a predictably troubled cop lugging predictably heavy emotional baggage. His investigation leads him to dig into Dana's life as well as Celia's, and poorly plotted intrigue ensues.

**With surprisingly little suspense and a cast ranging from unremarkable to unlikable, this tepid whodunit fails to satisfy.**



### MOBIUS DICK

*Crumey, Andrew*

Dedalus (312 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | Mar. 20, 2015

978-1-909232-93-8

Worlds collide when a university professor stumbles across a machine that threatens the fabric of the universe.

Readers with a deep interest in theoretical physics, applied philosophy and alternative histories may dig this imaginative but demanding speculative novel by Scottish writer Crumey (*The Secret Knowledge*, 2013, etc.), which was published in the U.K. in 2004 and is now available for the first time in the U.S. The central mystery is carried forward by physics professor John Ringer (whose name is just the first instance of Crumey playing with identity), who receives a mysterious text on his "Q-Phone" that simply reads "Call me: H." He wonders if H. is actually Helen, the former paramour who disappeared after



leaving him. Once Crumey has set up Ringer's visit to a remote town called Craiggarron to give a talk about noncollapsible wave functions, he introduces interstitial chapters from invented novels by author "Heinrich Behring" that concern, among other things, composer Robert Schumann's confinement in a mental hospital and the intellectual struggles of physicist Erwin Schrödinger, he of the famous cat. Crumey also introduces a "Harry Dick," who is confined to a nearby mental hospital, suffering from a new illness that causes victims to lose the ability to separate fact from fiction. Ringer soon learns that a murky corporation has launched a machine powered by quantum technology that could potentially violate the laws of physics. "We would all be like Schrödinger's cat: an unresolved mixture of possibilities, in a box from which no power of heaven or earth could ever free us," he muses. "It might take no more than a poor alignment of those nickel-tantalum mirrors to cause the fatal leak of doubt. Then once it spread, there would be no more truth or falsehood; no fact or fiction."

**An intellectually nimble doomsday scenario that makes all those worries of creating an accidental black hole at the Large Hadron Collider sound benign by comparison.**



## I WILL LOVE YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE *Breakup Stories*

Czyżniejewski, Michael

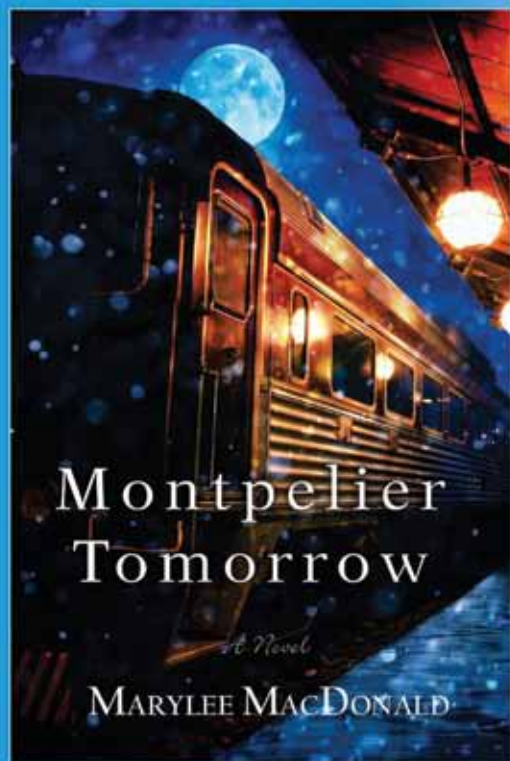
Curbside Splendor (200 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Mar. 10, 2015

978-1-940430-28-7

Love stinks in these 29 microfictions about cheating, divorce and all kinds of splitting up.

These sometimes sublime, sometimes raunchy slices of love lives coming apart by Czyżniejewski (English/Missouri State Univ.; *Elephants in our Bedroom*, 2009, etc.) can often sound like flash fiction, having largely been culled from previous publications in obscure literary journals, galleries of poetics and, yes, flash fiction websites. Taken at more than a surface level, though, they more closely resemble molecular gastronomy—a medium where a creation's parts are transformed through close attention and high pressure into something



## MONTPELIER TOMORROW by Marylee MacDonald

After a woman's son-in-law contracts amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, she tries to help the family, but the burdens of caregiving take her relationships to the breaking point.

"An affecting, deeply honest novel; at the same time, a lacerating indictment of our modern health care system."  
—Kirkus Reviews

"Each time I have read this fine novel, I have felt rewarded by the connection it offers to the central character.... I can think of no single page in which her voice is not an irreplaceable gift to the reader."  
—Kevin McIlvoy, author of *The Fifth Station*, *Little Peg*

"...a touching read that highlights not only the challenges faced by those suffering from ALS, but the resounding strength of love that unites a family in the face of overwhelming grief."  
—Literary Fiction Book Review

"...intense, honest and heart wrenching...There are a lot of nuances and complexities in the characters, and the emotions they undergo will keep readers glued to the book."  
—Mamta Madhavan for *Readers' Favorites*

[maryleemacdonald.us](http://maryleemacdonald.us)

[blog.maryleemacdonald.org](http://blog.maryleemacdonald.org)

ISBN # 978-099071581-8

"We've heard about the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, but do we really understand what ALS is all about?  
All interested in distribution or speaking engagements about ALS or caregiving, please contact: [mlmacdon29@gmail.com](mailto:mlmacdon29@gmail.com)"



completely different. In “We Were Young,” a new relationship takes a wrong turn in the middle of a long train ride: “This wasn’t where she wanted this to go. I was all love letters and she wanted to know who I’d fucked over.” “Pregnant With Peanut Butter” portrays a man using his severe peanut allergy to indulge a lover’s preoccupation with sexual asphyxiation. Introductory lines are also compulsively composed to keep your attention, as in “I flew back to Dallas when the dog died prematurely from plastic surgery” or “Instead of getting married, I insisted that Julian and I rig an election.” There are a few nods to magical realism and absurdity—superheroes in “When the Heroes Came to Town” and the “Fuzzy Stuffed Animal Candy Council” in “High Treason,” for example. Yes, a few are a bit twee—“The Braxton-Carter-Vandamme-Myers-Braxton-Carter Divorce: An Outline” unfortunately speaks for itself. Others, like “Hot Lettuce,” about the travails of the bassist-concubine of a heavy metal band, or the hopelessly titled “The Meat Sweats” are cartoonishly vulgar. Yet some, like the portrait of grief in “Bull-fighting,” do manage to get it right.

**Heartbreak delivered by a few dozen tiny paper cuts.**



### THE FINE ART OF FUCKING UP

Dicharry, Cate

Unnamed Press (256 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Apr. 14, 2015

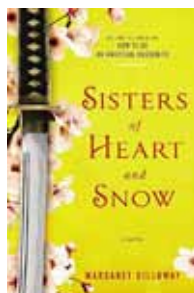
978-1-939419-25-5

In a debut novel that wallows in the angst of being 30-something and unsatisfied with life, Dicharry pulls the reader into the strange and frequently absurd world of art school while exploring the even stranger workings of personal happiness.

Nina Lanning is the administrative coordinator at the distinguished School for Visual Art, which, despite its prestige, extraordinary building and the fact that it has a Jackson Pollock painting hanging in its atrium, seems to be the home base for a collection of increasingly dysfunctional eccentrics. Nina’s boss, Ramona, the once exceptionally competent director of the SVA, falls into a cyberstalking-fueled obsession with a former romance-novel cover model and neglects her directorial duties. Nina finds herself overworked and placating a faculty that is either scheming, falling to pieces or involved in bizarre acts of revenge that include the clandestine frying of bacon in secret locations around the building. At the same time, Nina’s marriage to her handsome, “incessantly optimistic” husband strains under her stress and a growing sense of inexplicable discontent. When a catastrophic flood threatens the SVA, Nina forces herself into a mission to rescue the Pollock painting, which also makes her re-examine everything she assumes about happiness. Told in Nina’s voice, the novel suffers from an excess of mundane description and a strange lack of reflection, though its portrait of the academic art world is enjoyably cutting. As Nina says, “there’s no real consequence to the antics of institutional art, even when mean spirited. It is, literally and otherwise, all academic.” While the trials of art school reflect perhaps too

obviously Nina’s emotional malaise, they are both funny and charmingly ridiculous.

**A novel that offers a colorful and amusing portrayal of an art school’s strange quirks but trudges through the unexceptional realization that happiness is rarely straightforward.**



### SISTERS OF HEART AND SNOW

Dilloway, Margaret

Putnam (336 pp.)

\$26.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-399-17080-5

In Dilloway’s third novel (*The Care and Handling of Roses with Thorns*, 2012, etc.), two estranged sisters wonder what they can learn from a 12th-century female samurai.

Rachel and Drew Snow grew up in an unusual household. Their American father, Killian, had purchased their Japanese mother, Hikari, through a mail-order-bride catalog. Rachel always resented her father’s domineering ways; he turned Hikari into a submissive housewife and expected complete obedience from his daughters. Now in their 30s, the sisters rarely talk, and their family is permanently fractured. Their mother is suffering from dementia and living in a nursing home, Killian is battling Rachel for power of attorney so that he can put his wife in a cheaper home, and Drew is adrift, without a steady job or relationship. Only Rachel, happily married with two children, seems to have her life together. That is, until her mother, in a rare moment of lucidity, tells Rachel she must find a special book she left for the girls, a book about the legendary woman samurai Tomoe Gozen. Rachel enlists Drew’s help to find the book and get it translated. As they embark on this project together, burdened by years of conflict, hurt feelings and an impossible desire to know more about their mysterious mother, Drew and Rachel discover, in each other and in themselves, a power they didn’t know they had—a power to heal, to forgive and become sisters once again. Alternating with Rachel and Drew’s story is the story of Tomoe Gozen and her unlikely friendship with her lover’s wife, Yamabuki. In the hands of a less experienced novelist, this format might have become trite, but the two narratives don’t draw obvious parallels. The ways in which Rachel and Drew learn from Tomoe and Yamabuki and apply those lessons to their own lives are unexpected and ultimately satisfying.

**In this enjoyable novel, imperfect and at times unlikely women become lovable.**

# When novelist Ben Tierney inherits a large estate overlooking the village of Swannhaven, it seems like the perfect opportunity for a fresh start in the country.

HOUSE OF ECHOES



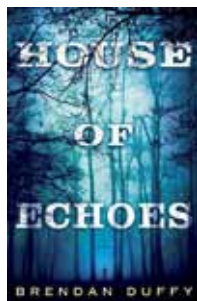
## THE CHAPEL

Downing, Michael  
Counterpoint (304 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-1-61902-495-3

Under the spell of Giotto's celestial frescoes in Padua, Italy, a waspish American widow grapples with the emotional and intellectual baggage left behind after her husband's death.

The narrative thread runs idiosyncratically in Downing's new novel (*Life With Sudden Death*, 2009, etc.), which shifts unpredictably between the real-time unhappiness of recently bereaved 57-year-old Cambridge librarian Liz Berman and the more highbrow art history analysis thrown up by the peculiar crew of intellectuals and fellow travelers she encounters on a faintly surreal trip to Europe. She's simultaneously furious at her dead husband, Mitchell, who had been unfaithful to her, and grieving over him; it was he who arranged the tour of Italy as a surprise for their 35th wedding anniversary (he had been planning to write a book about Dante). Though she never wanted to take the trip, Liz finds herself swept along by the art and the unpredictable encounters. Much of the conversation is about Dante's *Divine Comedy* and its relationship to Giotto's frescoes in Padua's Arena Chapel. Clever, acerbic Liz is both terse and obliquely flirtatious with the many men she meets who tend, surprisingly, to be voluble, kindly and sometimes sexy. Notable among them is a mysterious doctor named T., burdened with two ex-wives and a daughter who recently committed suicide. Digesting her loss and fielding her family's messages and events back home in Cambridge, Liz opts out of the tour and joins a conference studying the frescoes instead. When resolution and romance finally arrive, they are tidy, cute and no more convincingly real than the novel's entire setup.

Photos, stick-figure sketches, comical Italian-accented English, intellectual freight, metaphors that turn literal and some good jokes pepper this novel, which is playful and erudite but also self-conscious and perhaps too restlessly rarefied.



## HOUSE OF ECHOES

Duffy, Brendan  
Ballantine (400 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-8041-7811-2

In an isolated village in upstate New York, a young family finds "[d]emons in the wood and devils at the door."

When novelist Ben Tierney inherits a large estate overlooking the village of Swannhaven, it seems like the perfect opportunity for a fresh start in the country. Life in Manhattan was becoming increasingly difficult, with his wife, Caroline,

diagnosed with bipolar illness after giving birth to their infant son and their 8-year-old boy, Charlie, being brutally bullied at school. Ben moves his family into the Crofts, built in the 1700s as the original home of the Swann family, with the idea of turning the house into an inn. He and Caroline begin to forge relationships with the villagers of Swannhaven while digging into the history of the estate. On the surface, the move was a good idea. Ben gets a new idea for a novel, Caroline's manic energy helps her make progress on renovations, and Charlie is enjoying his explorations of the surrounding woods using an outdoor survival manual called *The Book of Secrets*, but there's an underlying tension in the family's interactions with each other. Ben and Caroline's relationship is tenuous, and Charlie hasn't told his parents about the "Watcher" in the woods. It's clear that the Tierneys have lost each other. Whether they can become a family again before they face tragic consequences is the real mystery. The terror builds slowly, starting with an eviscerated deer and the foreboding atmosphere surrounding the Crofts, the wind slamming doors in the house and screaming through the trees in the forest. As winter sets in, the Tierneys find themselves

## THE MAGHREB CONSPIRACY

The third spy story in Croft's Mideast trilogy



by Roger Croft

"The gripping conclusion to a spy series piloted by a relatable, enjoyable hero."  
—Kirkus Reviews

rogercroft.com  
ISBN: 978-1-5008-2332-0

### CIA-MI6 tussle over terrorist plot

"Croft's style of writing is perfectly matched to the rhythm of a good spy novel...he moves along at a good, solid pace, and his ancillary characters get just the right amount of character development..."  
—San Francisco Book Review

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# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## DAVID DUCHOVNY

### THE ACTOR MAY PLAY COOL CHARACTERS ON SCREEN BUT HE CAN WRITE LIKE A SILLY BOVINE

By Claiborne Smith



Photo courtesy Tim Palen

THE ONLY THING STRANGER than learning that David Duchovny, who's played a few memorable cool cats on TV, has written a debut novel about a cow is that the cow, Elsie Bovary, talks like a sassy Valley Girl. "Life on a farm. It's pretty chill," she explains in *Holy Cow*. "Spend a lot of time out in the field hanging with my bffs, getting the hairy eyeball from the bulls." For all her apparent vapidness, though, Elsie is an ambitious bovine. One night, she spies the family that owns the farm watching an investigation of industrial farming on TV. That's her cue to set off for India, until a pig hears through the grapevine about her plans and decides to go with her, or at least as far as Israel. There's also a turkey who would like to move to Turkey. *Holy Cow* is full of silliness, but it also has a deeper, more satirical humor. Duchovny clearly had

a lot of fun writing the novel, but he managed to do so without beating the reader over the head with a heavy, do-good message. I talked to Duchovny recently about writing the novel.

**The characters in *Holy Cow* are pretty memorable. How did the idea for the novel come to you?**

I remember thinking, 'Gee, if I were a cow, I think I'd try to get to India.' It seemed like an obvious thing. If you were a cow, why wouldn't you try to get to India? I think about animal cruelty a lot. It's not a polemical book by any means, and I hope I never write a polemical book, but I do think about such things; me thinking about a cow isn't so foreign to me. And then I guess I just started thinking about what other places might animals be safe from being eaten. A pig in Israel and the turkey came last and that was really just a play on words. If you have any others for the sequel, I'd be happy to use them.

**You're a pescatarian now?**

Very much so. I'm very nonmethodical about many things in my life, so to be completely honest with you, if I went to a dinner party and they were serving only chicken, I would probably eat it because it's better for me to eat it than for it to go to waste. I dislike waste more than anything.

**Your dad, Amram Ducovny, published late in life, and his novel, *Coney*, was received well. How do you think his writing has affected your own?**

Probably in ways I don't know or haven't really dwelt upon. I think he was an ironic comedic voice, generally. I'm not sure *Coney* is, but in his other writings, he had published political satire and other things that were humorous. He even had a column in the *Boston Globe*



titled "Slice of Wry." I think in terms of my sensibility, mine is certainly influenced by his. To publish a novel at the age of 73 was miraculous to me. It was really a testament to his perseverance. He may hold the record for the oldest debut novelist in captivity.

**There are gradations of humor in this novel—there's satire, there's pop-culture humor, there's a little bit of Borscht Belt humor. It seems like you had a lot of fun writing it....**

I'd wanted to write a novel my whole life, really. Since I've been working in show business, I hadn't thought about writing a novel. I would think about a screenplay or poem or song but never a novel. I had the idea for this novel first as an animated film a while ago, and I just woke up one morning and thought, 'I'm going to try to write that out.' I don't think it's a kid's book, but if I thought kids might read it, it liberated me to be a little freer and a little less precious, and I felt less pressure than if I'd been working on my adult debut novel, which I can tackle now that I've done this. The voices you hear in the book, because they were somewhat young in my head or accessible to young readers as well as an adult, that allowed me to be silly and Borscht Belt, and I think that was a good decision I made.

**You said the book isn't polemical, but is there something you want readers to take away from the book?**

I don't think about those things, but you asked so I'm going to. When I'm asked about my movies or TV, I always say that I hope people are entertained. But if I were to sit down and think about what I would take from this novel, it's an attitude of brotherhood not only with other human beings, but with all the animals on the planet. I think it's because of climate change that everyone is coming around to the idea that this is the finite planet and there's a lot of unnecessary pain and overconsumption on it and there are things around us that have feelings that we don't normally ascribe to having feelings. I don't think rocks have feelings; I draw the line there.

**You play some cool characters on screen, Fox Mulder from *The X-Files* and Hank Moody in *Californication*, for example. Parts of this novel are pretty silly. Do you think readers will get a totally different sense of you after reading it?**

I imagine. I don't think either of those characters you mention would've written this book. I would hope that it has merits on its own; you would come to it and discover a voice that stands on its own and not only in opposition to Mulder and opposition to me. I want to take advantage of being a public person to get eyes on the book; it's hard to get eyes on a book.

*Claiborne Smith is the editor in chief of Kirkus Reviews.*

*Holy Cow received a starred review in the Dec. 15, 2014, issue of Kirkus Reviews.*



**HOLY COW**  
**A Modern-Day Dairy Tale**  
*Duchovny, David*  
 FSG (224 pp.)  
 \$24.00 | Feb. 3, 2015  
 978-0-374-17207-7

haunted by echoes of Swannhaven's tragic history of starvation, war and bitter struggles for survival. Debut author Duffy has delivered a fluid, suspenseful yet subtle thriller, with touches of humor, evocative writing, and characters that are both familiar and uniquely fascinating.

**A wonderfully tense and heart-wrenching debut.**



### THE MISSING PIECE

*Egan, Kevin*

Forge (352 pp.)

\$27.99 | \$14.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-7653-7760-9

978-1-4668-5677-6 e-book

The New York County Courthouse at 60 Centre St. becomes the site of a world-class legal and extralegal struggle for a priceless group of antiques.

Three years ago, the battle between the Earl of Leinster and the governments of Croatia and Hungary over ownership of the Salvus Treasure ended in a mistrial after Judge Oliver Johnstone's courtroom was disrupted by a pair of masked thieves who made off with a particularly pricey piece of evidence, a silver urn. Now the disputants are back in court, and Judge Linda Conover, Johnstone's former law clerk, has been asked to hear the case. Everyone, it seems, has a stake in the matter, beyond the obvious disputants. Gary Martin, the court officer paralyzed from the waist down by a gunshot from one of the thieves, is convinced that the urn is still in the building. His fellow officers, Foxx and McQueen, have ideas of their own. Custodian Ivan Zoltar is getting played by his fellow cleaner Jessima. Jessima's ex-lover Damien Wheatley is determined to discredit Judge Conover, who's hiding a secret of her own. And neither national government is above dirty tricks. When the motives of all these interested parties, which range from avarice to revenge to national pride to something altogether darker, collide, the results are so tangled, and sometimes so confusing, that they require a whole series of denouements to unravel.

**Not as brilliantly focused as Egan's nightmarish debut (*Midnight*, 2013) but just as welcome in its more ambitious, wide-ranging way.**



### HAUSFRAU

*Essbaum, Jill Alexander*

Random House (336 pp.)

\$26.00 | Mar. 24, 2015

978-0-8129-9753-8

Between caring for three children, visiting a Jungian analyst and taking a German class, Anna wouldn't seem to have much time for extramarital liaisons, but like her namesake, Madame Karénina, she manages.

Anna, who's American, has lived near Zurich with her Swiss banker husband, Bruno, for nine years yet still can't speak the language. She gets by in elementary German but is barely competent at Schweizerdeutsch, the local variant that "leaps from the back of the throat like an infected tonsil trying to escape." She doesn't have a job or a bank account; her parents are dead; and she has only one friend, another expatriate she doesn't even like very well. Her husband is cold and distant, her mother-in-law "was usually never blatantly unkind." That double negative is vintage Anna, who parses her feelings into ever finer distinctions. A few years ago, she drifted into an affair with another American, who went home without knowing he'd fathered her third child. Now she's studying German, which her analyst suggested as a way to become more connected to the world, though Doktor Messerli surely didn't mean she should jump into bed with a Scotsman she met in class. "Anna loved and didn't love sex. Anna needed and didn't need it. Her relationship with sex was a convoluted partnership that rose from both her passivity and an unassailable desire to be distracted. And wanted." As Anna floats through her life and this novel, taking endless train rides and insomniac walks, the story is interrupted by philosophical conversations with her shrink: "What's the difference between passivity and neutrality?" is a typical gambit. There's plenty of tension—will Anna get caught?—but it's hard to be invested in the life of a woman who doesn't care much about it herself.

**A smart book that entertains page by page but doesn't add up to anything larger.**



### VIPER WINE

*Eyre, Hermione*

Hogarth/Crown (448 pp.)

\$25.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-553-41935-1

British journalist Eyre makes her fiction debut with the tale of a 17th-century beauty's dangerous quest for eternal youth.

Venetia Stanley and her husband, Sir Kenelm Digby, are actual historical figures, as are Antoon Van Dyck, Ben Jonson and a host of others from across the centuries who caper through Eyre's postmodern mashup. Andy Warhol discerns unhappiness in Van Dyck's portrait of the couple; supermodel Naomi Campbell is among those whose cautionary tales of disastrous beauty treatments lead Kenelm, deeply steeped in the mysteries of alchemy, to deny his beloved wife's request that he mix her a potion to restore her youthful freshness. So instead she goes to Lancelot Choice, whose Viper Wine soon bleaches away her age spots and plumps up her skin. But the potion is dangerously addictive and leads Venetia to new treatments that leave her face grotesquely swollen, its muscles almost immobilized. The allusion to Botox is clearly intentional, as are a flock of ghostly comments heard by Kenelm toward the end that suggest women through the ages are obsessed with their looks. Dressing up this less-than-breathtaking insight with the jarring spectacle of Kenelm quoting David Bowie and Neil

Armstrong is not very plausibly justified by the revelation that “to [Kenelm], time was circular, and alchemical Wisdom was a golden chain.” Eyre has clearly done a great deal of research, but it’s mostly employed in eye-crossingly dull passages detailing Kenelm’s esoteric studies. There are some sharply drawn characters, but too many of them are like the earthy Mary Tree, who strides into the story with promising vigor only to meander in and out of the increasingly self-indulgent narrative until she’s finally shoehorned in one last time to make the author’s very obvious final point.

**A promising idea swamped by the excesses of postmodernism: the random plundering of history and an irritating air of knowingness.**



## THE POOR CHILDREN

*Ford, April L.*

Santa Fe Writers Project (190 pp.)

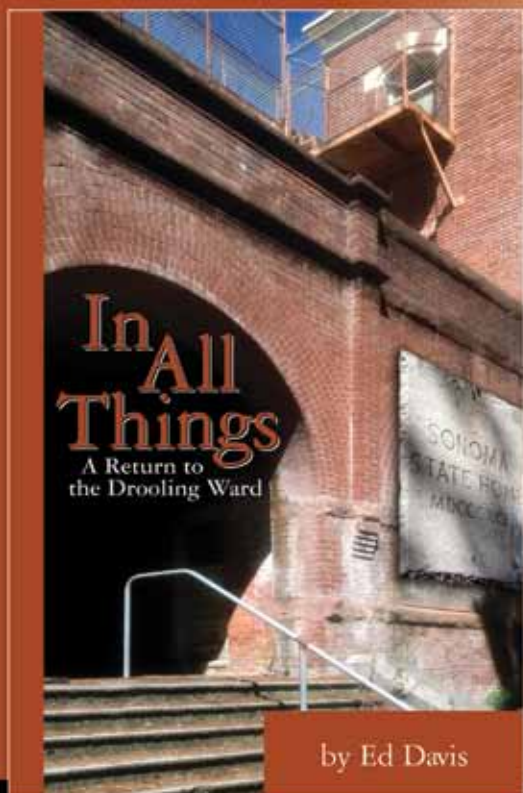
\$15.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-939650-18-4

Seven frighteningly unsentimental stories about childhood and youth.

When a story begins with two adolescent boys stringing up and torturing kittens, as in “A Marmalade Cat for Jenny,”

you get a feeling that doom is going to pervade the narrative, and it does. Jenny is being sexually abused by her father, and Mark comes to the rescue by killing him. Mark is eventually sentenced to prison until he turns 21, after which he and Jenny get back together—and Jenny quickly gets pregnant. The narrator of the story is Jenny’s brother, Scott, and Jenny reminds him at the end of the story that he’s not as pure as he likes to think. As the narrator comments in “Bleary,” the name of the Bleary Center for Today’s Youth “says it all.” The narrator here is among



## IN ALL THINGS: A RETURN TO THE DROOLING WARD

By Ed Davis

Enter the hidden world of Sonoma State Hospital beside a 17-year-old trainee; you’ll never forget what you see.

A hundred years ago Jack London’s short story, *Told in the Drooling Ward* introduced readers to The Sonoma State Home. Now Ed Davis takes you inside. The year is 1970, the old ways from London’s time are still hanging on, and your real lessons are about to begin.

A place you’ll never be . . . Choices you’ll never face . . .  
*What would you do?*

“...powerful; beautifully written, well-observed and effective.”  
—Kirkus Reviews

ISBN-13: 978-0986069727

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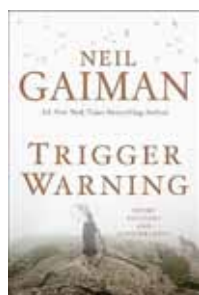


# Manet's muse ponders color, power, sex and love in vibrant 1860s Paris.

PARIS RED

the first to be sent to this correctional facility in Alberta. His offense doesn't involve hanging kittens but rather pyromania—he sets people's garbage cans on fire. Another unrelentingly grim story is “runawaybitch13,” which sets up a relationship between a 13-year-old girl (the narrator, known only as “M—”) and Justin, a clerk in his mid-20s who thinks he's a werewolf and even wears a vial of blood around his neck. For two months they hang out together, and he introduces her to WolfDen, a werewolf Internet site. Eventually, at her instigation, Justin and the girl slaughter her family, and the story ends with a flat newspaper account of the tragedy.

**Vivid writing but harsh and uninviting tales.**



## TRIGGER WARNING Short Fictions and Disturbances

Gaiman, Neil

Morrow/HarperCollins (352 pp.)

\$26.99 | Feb. 3, 2015

978-0-06-233026-0

The third collection of short fiction from a beloved modern mythmaker.

Everything that endears Gaiman (*The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, 2014, etc.) to

his legions of fans is on display in this collection of short stories (and the occasional poem): his gift for reimagining ancient tales, his willingness to get down into the dark places, his humor. Most of these stories have been published elsewhere, except for the new American Gods story “Black Dog” (which does not disappoint), but the collection as a whole does add up to something bigger than it seems (only partly because there's a TARDIS in it). Even the weakest of these tales have something to recommend them—an image, a turn of phrase, a mood. And the strongest are truly extraordinary. There's the grim implacability of “The Truth Is a Cave in the Black Mountains...,” walking steadily on to its inevitable yet unexpected ending; there's the absurd Wodehouse-an charm of “And Weep, Like Alexander”; the haunting power of “The Man Who Forgot Ray Bradbury”; and the skin-crawling, slow-building creepiness of the love letter “Feminine Endings.” Sherlock Holmes is here, explaining the real reason he started keeping bees, and Sleeping Beauty, twice, and our old friend Shadow, and even David Bowie, in a way.

**Full of all manner of witches and monsters and things that creep in the night, this collection will thoroughly satisfy faithful fans and win new ones—if there's anyone out there left unconverted.**



## PARIS RED

Gibbon, Maureen

Norton (224 pp.)

\$24.95 | Apr. 20, 2015

978-0-393-24446-5

Manet's muse ponders color, power, sex and love in vibrant 1860s Paris.

Based on the true relationship between artist Edouard Manet and model Victorine Meurent and set on the cusp of the impressionist revolution, Gibbon's (*Thief*, 2010, etc.) novel explores this landmark time in art history through the eyes of the artist's subject. Victorine lives and works with her best friend, Denise, for whom she harbors some secret attraction, until one day they encounter a mysterious and seductive stranger who turns out to be the famous painter. At first he seems interested in having both girls together (artistically and sexually), but it is Victorine, the quiet one, who harbors great hunger (both artistic and sexual), who sleeps with him and then leaves her friend and her old life in order to become Manet's model, ultimately inspiring his *Olympia*. But Victorine, like any modern heroine, refuses to serve as mere object or even as mere inspiration. Instead, it is suggested that she's responsible for triggering the creative use of color that came to define the art of this period. Her voice is sometimes immature, but she's only 17, and her self-awareness and sexual awareness are both engaging and deep. Gibbon writes in a rather fragmented style, with short chapters that often end on a “poetic” statement. (“Whatever my body wants, I give her. Bitter things as well as sweet.”) Sometimes this makes the novel feel a bit spacey, but the overall effect is lyrical and fits the shabbily gorgeous Parisian setting. There's a lot of sex, but it tends to be tasteful and concerned with equal pleasure, and it's more hinted at than described in detail.

**Fans of art history, Paris and contemporary *Kunstleroman* like *Girl With a Pearl Earring* will enjoy the new perspective and the strong female voice.**



## THE HORSE HEALER

Giner, Gonzalo

Translated by West, Adrian

Grupo Planeta (560 pp.)

\$20.99 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4976-9755-3

978-1-4804-4460-7 e-book

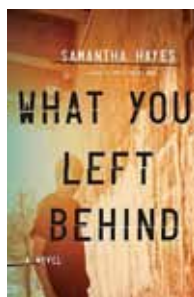
Spanish novelist Giner relates the adventures of Diego de Malagón, a young *albèitar*, or veterinarian, during the Spanish peninsula's conflict-racked 13th century.

*Albèitar* is the “noblest of professions” and is especially a healer of horses, those animals being central to medieval chivalry. Diego loved horses, especially his Arabian mare, Sabba, but he had no ambition to be an *albèitar* until Saracens attacked

his father's inn. Father dead and sisters captured, Diego was left to fend for himself and to seek revenge. In Toledo, Diego earned tutelage under Galib, a *mudajjan*—free Muslim—who suggested, “[y]our enemy is not Muslims, Diego, it is the Almohads.” As he learns the *albêitar*'s art, Diego is sidetracked by Benazir, Galib's beautiful Persian wife, who attempts to seduce him. Forced to flee Toledo, Diego's adventures continue across Spain—be aware many place names are from the 1200s—ending when Alfonso VIII of Castile names him a knight albêitar for the Three Kingdoms. Along the way, Diego humbles himself while learning more about horses at a Cistercian monastery, falls in love with Mencía, a beautiful young noblewoman, befriends Marcos, petty thief and Lothario, who betrays him at a crucial juncture, faces the gallows convicted of satanic magic because he discovered the source of an epidemic, undertakes dangerous missions to free Al-Andalus from the Moors and plays a role in the Almohad caliph's defeat at the epic Battle of the Navas de Tolosa. Other than Diego, Giner's characters are static. His writing relies on exposition, heavily detailed—albeit little about life's practicalities, like food—and it employs

straightforward rather than literary language. Battle scenes are framed rather than detailed, but Giner's historical references reflect intriguing research.

**A bit like an exotic medieval mashup of *War and Peace* and *Oliver Twist*.**



### WHAT YOU LEFT BEHIND

Hayes, Samantha

Crown (320 pp.)

\$25.00 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-8041-3692-1

978-0-8041-3692-1 e-book

Hayes cooks up a new adventure for the least interesting character in her previous venture (*Until You're Mine*, 2014), British DI Lorraine Fisher.

The last time readers saw DI Fisher and her DI husband, Adam, their marriage was cold, foundering

## The Linger Cloud

a novel

HOLLIS HUGHES

## THE LINGERING CLOUD

By Hollis Hughes

In Hughes' (*Mindful of Him*, 2014) latest novel, a young preacher discovers on his wedding night that he's married a woman with a serious mental illness—one that will devastate both their lives.

“An elegant, tenderly written story of love... Hughes is a terrific storyteller and an even better crafter of characters.”

—Kirkus Reviews

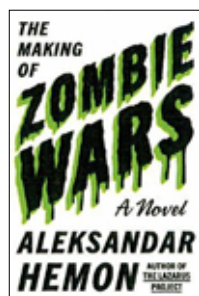
Available at Amazon.com on Kindle

ISBN: 9781496172488

For queries about publication or film rights, email [lilah\\_mac1@yahoo.com](mailto:lilah_mac1@yahoo.com)

and filled with suspicion, and their daughters were in the throes of teen angst. Hayes never explains how they manage to become a picture-perfect family again, but things are so good that Lorraine heads off on a jolly holiday with younger daughter Stella to see her sister, Jo, and Jo's teenage son, Freddie, who still live in the old family home in Radcote. Once they arrive, they find that Jo and her husband, Malcolm, have split, and there has been a spate of teen suicides in the area. Jo is concerned because Freddie locks himself in his room, cries a lot and cuts himself. What she doesn't know is that Freddie is also receiving upsetting texts instructing him to kill himself. Freddie's friend Lana stands by him, but her family has its own sorrowful past: Her brother, Simon, hung himself. Gil, Lana's uncle, is mentally slow, and he sends a couple of items to Lorraine that make her think the most recent "suicide" may not be that at all. But when she starts investigating, she finds that not only are the police not interested in her theories, but the chief investigator is an old nemesis. Hayes fills the book with people who have secrets, which is fine, but a lot of these characters withhold information for no good reason except that it gives her the opportunity to ratchet up the tension. And that quality will frustrate a lot of readers who will conclude that Radcote is populated by idiots.

**The author likes to add a twist or two at the end, but the conclusion seems contrived and a bit too neat.**



### THE MAKING OF ZOMBIE WARS

Hemon, Aleksandar

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (320 pp.)

\$26.00 | May 12, 2015

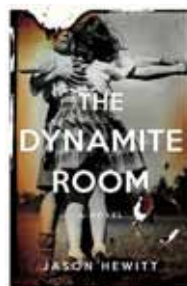
978-0-374-20341-2

One of America's finest authors of somber novels about alienation brings a newbie's enthusiasm to a comic novel—about alienation, of course.

Since the war in his native Bosnia left him exiled in Chicago in 1992, Hemon (*The Lazarus Project*, 2008; *Love and Obstacles*, 2009, etc.) has used his fiction to ruminate on the expat experience in ways that, though not humorless, emphasize distance and disconnection. (His 2013 essay collection, *The Book of My Lives*, closes with a devastating essay on the death of his infant daughter.) This madcap detour centers on Joshua, a Chicago wannabe screenwriter who has a laptop stuffed with bad movie ideas, an ill-advised crush on Ana, a married Bosnian immigrant in the ESL class he teaches, and an ex-Marine landlord who's overeager for swordplay. Hemon has a knack, it turns out, for raucous, Shteyngart-ian lines that highlight his hero's absurdist despair. ("Oh Lord, don't chasten me and make me a disposable character in your spec script!" he thinks.) Joshua's ill-advised fling with Ana gets him tossed out of his girlfriend's apartment, threatened by Ana's husband, and generally despairing for his well-being, a feeling he sublimates into his script about post-apocalyptic zombie hordes. Hemon has arranged all the right pieces for a laugh-out-loud novel—chatty Jewish relatives, impossibly nerdy writers, immigrants

with old-school and illegal notions about preserving loyalty. And zombies are a great theme for Hemon; what better symbol is there for an uncertain life than the undead? The novel lags on the level of characterization, though: Joshua is persistently passive and self-effacing, lost in his lame movie ideas. This is partly by design: "[N]either his will or his talent was ever strong enough," as Hemon writes. But it reduces the thrust of the novel, whose great lines need a plot to match.

**Fun, though, for Hemon fans who want to see him work in a different mode.**



### THE DYNAMITE ROOM

Hewitt, Jason

Little, Brown (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | \$12.99 e-book | Mar. 17, 2015

978-0-316-32765-7

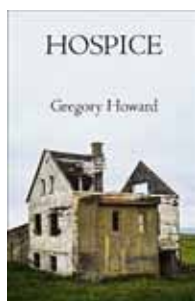
978-0-316-32763-3 e-book

In a remote English house during World War II, innocence and experience fuel the cat-and-mouse game played out between an imaginative child and a conflicted German soldier.

British actor-turned-bookseller Hewitt's debut is a claustrophobic psychological thriller, as powerfully visualized as a screenplay, that swaps between the points of view and back stories of its two central characters. First to appear is 11-year-old Lydia, who has fled back home to Suffolk from her rough, bullying evacuation billet in Wales only to find the family house and its surrounding area strangely deserted. Then, in the middle of the night, a wounded stranger arrives: meticulous German special ops commando Heiden, who turns Lydia's home into a prison and half persuades her that the German invasion has already begun. Over the course of six sweltering summer days, the two plan, watch and test each other while becoming peculiarly interdependent. Between abrupt slices of the here and now, Hewitt sandwiches multiple flashbacks to both pre-1939 and wartime days. Lydia's family background is revealed: There's an older brother who's gone to war, affectionate parents and an adopted refugee boy, Button, whom Lydia abandoned in Wales. Heiden's more morally compromised memories include his musical career; his intense, ultimately tragic involvement with his girlfriend; and, in particular, a grueling military operation in Norway. Hewitt handles this complicated narrative with assurance, juggling the reader's sympathies while adding crumbs of information, all the while pitting Heiden's tarnished ideals against Lydia's vulnerability. A sense of theatricality pervades the contemporary scenes—small cast, stifling domestic setting—but these are usefully crafted in the closing pages to deliver a jolting finale.

**An unusual, intricate drama delivered with accomplishment.**





## HOSPICE

Howard, Gregory

Univ. of Alabama (208 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | \$16.95 e-book

Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-57366-051-8

978-1-57366-855-2 e-book

In this dreamlike novel, a young woman moves through a series of strange jobs and wrestles with haunting childhood memories.

It begins with a sudden and jarring scene: a boy and a girl and a rock and a game that suddenly turns ritualistic and violent. It casts its shadow over the story that's told in the pages that follow. "Then she found herself caring for the memory of an old woman's dog," writes Howard. That "she" is Lucy, the novel's protagonist and the grown-up version of the girl encountered on the first page. In the book's first section, she takes a job watching an elderly woman's nonexistent dog and soon bonds with two neighborhood children. She tells them strange stories that read like ephemeral folk tales; in the second section, those are given a new dimension, as the story of Lucy's past relationship with her brother is fleshed out. There's a mysterious disappearance, and an even more mysterious return, as the young Lucy begins to suspect that the returnee may no longer be her brother. Identities blur here, a feeling accentuated by Howard's fondness for using descriptions ("the girl") in lieu of proper names. It lends the novel as a whole an archetypal quality, even as Lucy's progression through a series of strange jobs continues. Late in the novel, one character tells Lucy, "You're like the goddamned Mona Lisa of melancholy," and it's a brief moment of self-awareness, an acknowledgement of the book's essential mood.

As Lucy progresses through surreal landscapes, her journey highlights experiences both delightful and sinister—a haunting take on one life on society's margins.



## THE DIG

Jones, Cynan

Coffee House (176 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | \$12.99 e-book

Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-56689-393-0

978-1-56689-394-7 e-book

A badger baiter and a farmer have an existential pas de deux in rural Wales in this slim, piercing novella, the author's first to be published in the United States.

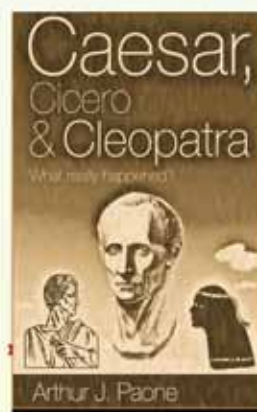
The fourth novel by the Welsh author is set in modern times—there are trucks and cellphones—but Jones' voice makes its setting feel either prehistoric or post-apocalyptic. That's mainly because his language and imagery are persistently visceral when it comes to both men they depict. One is an unnamed "big man" who roots out badgers that are illegally pitted against dogs for sport; the other, Daniel, is a livestock

farmer whose wife recently died after she was kicked in the head by a horse. In both cases, Jones' language is deep in the rank muck of rural life: He describes Daniel helping to birth a newborn lamb, grabbing its hooves in the womb, feeling "its fast heartbeat in the chicken-bone cage of its ribs, still wet in his hands from the grease of birth"; after a badger hunt, a wounded dog's artery "was a fraction above the cut and he could see it pump thickly through the dog's skin." The plot is simple, building to a climax as the "big man" encroaches on Daniel's property, but Jones' language is the main point of entry here. Like Cormac McCarthy, Jones can make the everyday sound fraught and biblical: "The townsmen were not used to such darkness nor this level of quietness and they were not restful in it." But though primal, rough-hewn imagery abounds, the novel's chief strength is its depiction of Daniel's grief; in his struggle to keep the farm running on his own and in his recurring memory of happier times with his wife, he's a deeply memorable character who's simply rendered.

**A persistently dour story that's energized by the author's command of character and mood.**

## CAESAR, CICERO & CLEOPATRA

What really happened?



BY ARTHUR J. PAONE

"A lot of history packed into a short novel."

—Kirkus Reviews

"...This is a work of historical fiction that makes history accessible."

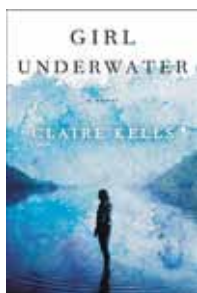
—Celina Cuadro for Bookideas

**This fictional biography portrays Julius Caesar as a brilliant military leader and strategist.**

"...clear and consistent. It is also remarkable how the scenes are vividly described...I recommend this to readers of all ages." —Review by Maria Beltran for Readers' Favorite

"Aside from being a quality read, the author has created a tale that is still politically relevant as it is historical...The balance of fact and fiction make this book fascinating and engaging simultaneously, bringing a man over 2,000 years old new life after so many years." —Michael Radon, U.S. Review of Books

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## GIRL UNDERWATER

*Kells, Claire*

Dutton (320 pp.)

\$26.95 | Mar. 31, 2015

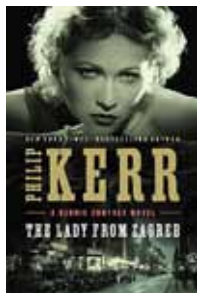
978-0-525-95493-4

A plane crash in the Rockies leaves more than physical scars on an up-and-coming competitive college swimmer.

Kells expertly ratchets up the tension in her thrilling debut novel as she shifts back and forth between the frigid

Colorado wilderness and chlorinated pools. Sophomore Avery Delacorte is excited to make her mark on the cutthroat college swimming circuit far from her native Boston and her controlling father. But when she takes a crowded flight back east for Thanksgiving, along with fellow swimmer Colin Shea, the plane goes down in the Rockies. After the first day, Avery, Colin and three little boys—Tim, 6, Liam, 4, and toddler Aayu—are the only survivors. It would be easy to keep readers in suspense about the group's overall fate, but Kells makes the more interesting choice to alternate among the events leading up to the crash, the five-day wilderness ordeal and Avery's bumpy recovery. It's clear early on that the press' version of the story and the truth are not one and the same, but Kells cleverly teases out exactly how the two accounts differ as readers come to learn more about Avery, particularly her complicated relationships with Colin and with the sport of swimming itself. The children, and their growing adoration for their surrogate forest parents in the wake of the crash that orphaned them, are integral to the story and as such are realistically depicted, much to Kells' credit.

**With its subzero temperatures that will make you reach for a blanket and a wounded but never weakened heroine, Kells' assured debut is a winner.**



## THE LADY FROM ZAGREB

*Kerr, Philip*

Marian Wood/Putnam (448 pp.)

\$26.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

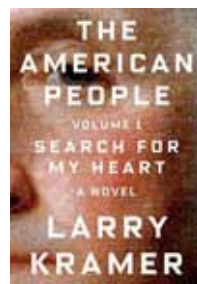
978-0-399-16764-5

Kerr (*Field Gray*, 2011, etc.) does moral ambiguity better than most; his flawed yet empathetic hero, Bernie Gunther, is a captain in the Nazi SD—*Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers*, the SS's feared intelligence service.

Once a police detective, and always a Nazi-hater, Gunther "got called back into service in thirty-eight. There wasn't much he could do about it." Haunted, conscious of the moral swamp he navigated, Gunther worked for Heydrich until that devil was assassinated. Now, in Berlin, he's being drafted into a scheme by Goebbels, Minister of Truth and Propaganda. Gunther must convince beautiful film star Dalia Dresner to return to Berlin moviemaking. However, Dresner demands Goebbels discover what happened to her estranged father, supposedly a priest in

Yugoslavia. Kerr does yeoman work with scenes and settings in brave-new-world Berlin and other Nazi environs, then he drops Gunther into "total chaos"—the genocidal maelstrom that's Croatia. In the murderous melee of Ustaše fascist militia, Communist Partisans, royalist Chetniks killing each other—and any other living soul within rifle shot—Gunther's guided by a burned-out SS captain, Geiger, who shoots first and asks no questions, all while philosophizing: "[T]hat's what makes horror truly horrible. The knowledge that God sees it all, and does nothing." Gunther soldiers on, tracing Dalia's father to Jasenovac, a slave labor camp. It's back to Berlin, then Switzerland, where the United States enters the mix. Morose, sardonic, morally compromised Gunther—"There's still a sliver of decency left in there"—falls in love with the beautiful Dalia, but happy endings are elusive for one of modern fiction's more intriguing characters.

**For setting, character, plot—and the ability to navigate a moral swamp—le Carré has a rival in Kerr.**



## THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

### Volume 1: Search For My Heart

*Kramer, Larry*

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (800 pp.)

\$40.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-374-10439-9

Vast opening salvo in a thunderous assault on the prideful prejudice that separates "us" from "them" in the time of AIDS.

"I may be going back further than necessary in laying out the backstory," writes author/activist Kramer (*Faggots*, 1978, etc.), "but if this is the prime complaint against me, I shall remain consistent to my belief that all is better than less than all....I remind you once again that this is *my* history of the plague." Our narrator is not quite omniscient, just as this huge book doesn't exactly sprawl; sometimes it lounges like an odalisque, and sometimes it huffs up to grizzly bear proportions. Ever the controversialist, Kramer doesn't hesitate to start on provocative ground: After introducing us to an alter ego-ish writer who is struggling with an equally massive history of the American people—the *other* ones, the ones who are enduring this "Plague of The Underlying Condition"—he announces that "the First American People are monkeys who ate each other." Say what? Kramer's anthropology may have its debatable points, but it points both to the antiquity of the illness and to a human condition—ahem, underlying condition—of violence and segregation, to a chronology that hurtles forward to Ronald Reagan's coded assurance that there was indeed an "us" and a "them" at play in the terrible disease. The victims are endless: "sailors, whores, orphaned children, the abscessed, the poxed, the near-dead, and yes, the dead" figure in Kramer's genealogy, which, for all of its awareness of the Grim Reaper, is defiantly lively. There is nary a dog in these pages that is

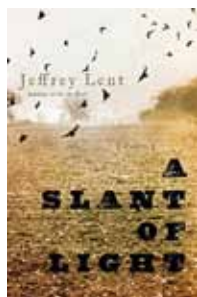


# Another keening, moving novel from Jeffrey Lent steeped in American history and the rhythms of country life.

A SLANT OF LIGHT

not supremely shaggy, never a missed opportunity to offend someone. Kramer ranges among voices, eras and styles, the dominant ones being steely anger shading into Pynchon-esque goofiness but always with serious intent.

**Breathtakingly well-written. And how could one not keep reading, no matter how endless, a book with a line such as “You don’t just drop a penis like Tibby’s into the narrative and let it go”?**



## A SLANT OF LIGHT

Lent, Jeffrey

Bloomsbury (368 pp.)

\$27.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-62040-496-6



Another keening, moving novel steeped in American history and the rhythms of country life from Lent (*After You've Gone*, 2009, etc.).

It opens with a scene of shocking violence, as Malcolm Hopeton confronts Amos Wheeler, the hired hand who plundered his farm and stole his wife, Bethany, while he was fighting in the Civil War. Hopeton kills Wheeler intentionally and Bethany by accident, injuring his young helper, Harlan Davis, who tries to stop him. Hopeton is arrested, and Harlan is taken to recuperate at the farm where his sister Becca keeps house for widower August Swartout. The complexities of relationships past and present in this small, tightly knit western New York community unfold as various powerful men maneuver to gain clemency for Hopeton as the justified avenger of marital betrayal. Though it becomes clear that Wheeler was evil to the bone and had physically abused Bethany, her own father stigmatizes her as a woman “raised in the grace of the Lord [who] turned away.” The truth is a lot more complicated, we see, as Hopeton’s memories of his early encounters with both Bethany and Wheeler suggest many unsavory secrets hidden among followers of the charismatic religion founded by the Public Friend (a female divine clearly modeled on the Shakers’ Mother Ann Lee). Questions of faith, justice and forgiveness are palpable and pressing for Hopeton, August and Harlan, the trio whose consciousnesses dominate the narrative, although Lent gently sketches Bethany, Becca, and Wheeler’s discarded lover, Alice Ann, from a further distance as women restless with their allotted roles. His prose is as magnificent as ever, capturing the light in a summer sky or the pain in a bereaved heart with equal clarity and beauty. The novel isn’t so much resolved as halted by a closing scene that makes it clear none of these poignantly rendered characters has reached the ends of their journeys.

**More fine work from a writer who stirs both the head and the heart with powerful grace.**



## ADULT ONSET

MacDonald, Ann-Marie

Tin House (400 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-941040-05-8

Assaulted by mysterious pains and bracketed by painful childhood memories, Mary Rose MacKinnon engages in power struggles with her willful toddler and endures the stresses of stay-at-home parenting while her partner, Hilary, is out of town.

An acclaimed young-adult novelist, Mary Rose is suffering from severe writer’s block, unable to complete the third volume in her popular series. Despite the surface comforts of life in her liberal, upper-middle-class Toronto enclave, she feels an inexplicable sense of alienation from her environment; she distances herself from the other mothers at her child’s preschool and avoids communication with her own parents, despite their belated acceptance of her homosexuality and loving acceptance of Hilary and their grandchildren. When Mary Rose’s charming Lebanese mother, Dolly, was younger, she had numerous miscarriages, stillbirths and babies who died shortly after birth, and she seems to be fixating on this tragic period many decades later. The effect of this sad legacy on family dynamics has never been fully explored, and Mary Rose has many vague, unspoken questions about her own childhood, the answers to which might help explain her emotional paralysis and phantom arm pains, as well as the mysterious bone cysts she suffered as a young girl. MacDonald (*The Way the Crow Flies*, 2004, etc.) integrates three narratives into this novel—Mary Rose’s mundane day-to-day existence, Dolly’s experience of severe depression as a young mother lamenting her lost babies, and Mary Rose’s novels, which parallel elements of her own family story distorted through the lens of teen fantasy fiction. While clever, the novel within the novel seems a bit forced. There is a recurring theme of impostors and doppelgängers and a shrewd twinning motif, but the reader is always conscious of the writer’s craft. Of the three, Dolly’s story is the most naturalistically and sensitively portrayed.

**Despite the too-neat Freudian implications of Mary Rose’s story, this is an affecting, multilayered account of domestic ennui and the painful effects of long-held secrets on three generations.**



## WE MAMMALS IN HOSPITABLE TIMES

Martin, Jynne Dilling

Carnegie Mellon Univ. Press (56 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Feb. 3, 2015

978-0-88748-596-1

In which a young poet travels to Antarctica, draws a direct line between environmental fragility and human weakness, and chronicles her observations under titles starting with “In which....”



# LISTENING TO VOICES

BY AMANDA EYRE WARD



Photo courtesy Cory Ryan

I HAD BEEN WORKING on my fifth novel for two and a half years when my agent told me it was terrible. I'd sent her the 10th (or 11th?) draft of the book the week before, hoping (a bit desperately) that she'd think it was done. I was driving in the rain when my phone rang with a New York area code, and I pulled over, my stomach clenched. "Yes?" I answered.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I think you need to set this book aside. It's just not working."

I'm not ashamed to admit it: I cried. I drank chardonnay every night for a month and forced friends and strangers to listen to my tale of woe. I lay awake trying to fix the book in my mind. *What if Cat moved from Savannah to Tybee Island?* I'd think about my main character. *What if the murder were the next day? What if her husband was kinder?*

After I cornered him at a literary shindig, the writer Ben Fountain told me that he, too, had once set aside a novel. The Thanksgiving following, he was watching the halftime show of a Dallas Cowboys football game and drinking a martini when he saw combat soldiers paraded onto the field. A new idea struck him, and thus was born his masterpiece, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*. Ben (probably to find a way back to the party) assured me that if I were patient, my next book would come.

A novelist not at work on a novel (or, worse, mourning a broken one) is a messy sight. For months, I stumbled around in a haze of misery and misguided plot twists. During the hours I'd previously spent working, I read everything I could get my hands on: magazines, novels, nonfiction. Slowly, I let go of my failed novel and waited for a new idea to envelop me.

I read *Enrique's Journey*, the nonfiction account of a boy traveling from Honduras to reach his mother in America, after reading a profile of Sonia Nazario in the alumni magazine of Williams College, which we both attended. The book grabbed me immediately—Nazario's research was dangerous and important, and I wanted to read more about children like Enrique. I searched the Web for stories, transfixed by kids my own children's ages who were walking away from everything they knew to try to reach their mothers and fathers in America. As I tucked him in at night, I tried to visualize my own 10-year-old son bringing my 6-year-old (and 1-year-old!) on such a dangerous trek. It was impossible to imagine.

Later that week, I tied a bandanna around my neck and attended my son's Kindergarten Cowboy Round-up. While other parents led students around the playground on a docile horse and cheered sack-race contestants, I told a friend about the desperate minors traveling through Mexico to the U.S. on top of a train they called "*The Beast*." I confided that I'd become obsessed with the children but had no idea how to find a way into their stories. I didn't even speak Spanish!

"Have you met Alexia Rodriguez?" said my friend, pointing to another mom in a Stetson. "She runs the shelters for those kids at the border."

Within minutes, I had introduced myself. Alexia was both supervising the bean bag toss and watching her phone, waiting for reports about the health of a boy who had been found in the desert outside Tijuana that morning. Border Patrol had transferred the boy to one of Alexia's shelters, and he was now stable at a San Diego hospital.

"I'm going to Brownsville later in the week," she told me. "Feel free to come along."

That Friday, as Alexia translated, I heard the stories of a dozen kids. I talked to them about why they had left, what horrors they had faced along the way and what they hoped to find. One girl told me about

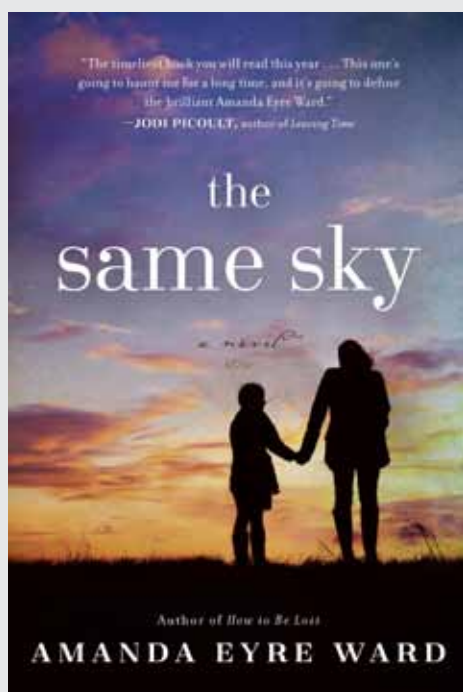
watching her friend being attacked by an alligator and being forced by her coyote to leave the ailing girl behind. I met a feisty 5-year-old whose parents had left him when he was an infant. They lived in New Jersey, and he was due to be reunited with them in the morning. I heard about boat trips, plane trips and how hard it is to sleep on *The Beast*.

And I met children who had been assaulted. Some of the girls were pregnant—their eyes dark and flat, their hair clean from the shelter showers. They wore pink sweatsuits and told me stories I will never forget.

That night, I lay awake in Alexia's parents' guest room in Brownsville. It was excruciating to think about the kids trying to sleep just a few miles away. They were so brave and so alone. They were filled with a faith I envied, the belief that God was with them and that they would find peace (and be loved) in America. I tried to think of what to do to help them but came up with nothing.

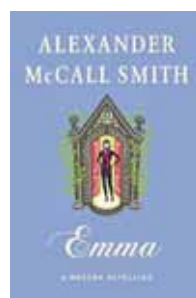
In the middle of the night, I heard a voice, the first sentences of a new novel: *My mother left when I was five years old*. And though I never thought I'd hear the voice of a young Honduran girl in my imagination, I listened. In the morning, the entire arc of the novel was clear to me. I could get one fictional girl to her mother, and that was a small something.

*Amanda Eyre Ward's new novel, The Same Sky, was published on Jan. 20.*



Martin's debut collection was written during her recent stint as Antarctica's poet-in-residence, as evidenced by the polar chill running through her work: Eco-devastation looms large, chaperoned by aching hearts and crises of faith. "[W]e've rocketed beyond the age of miracles," she suggests, and "we are doomed to orbit back into the maw of our mistakes." If this sounds a bit heavy-handed, that's because it can be. But Martin's sharp humor pops up in just the right places ("Helvetica is Satan's favorite typeface"; "The purpose of mummification / is to make a good first impression"), and her asides about love and loss offer a balance of warmth. (A dark piece with an imposing title, "Repercussions of the Current Import/Export Ratio," ends on this wistful note: "I asked the donkey / the odds you'll ever come back.") And if animals are your jam, you'll find much to enjoy in these poems full of bears, bees, horses, pigs and a surprising number of house cats. Their sometimes fierce, sometimes gentle energy drives Martin's writing and represents it well. By her account, people also spend time on all fours fending for themselves—a stark reminder of the debt we continue to owe to the natural world, which has a great champion in Martin.

**Brave the Antarctic elements with a fiery tour guide who speaks in stanzas.**



### EMMA A Modern Retelling

McCall Smith, Alexander

Pantheon (368 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-804-19795-3

In the latest installment of the Austen Project, McCall Smith (*The Handsome Man's De Luxe Cafe*, 2014, etc.) catapults snobbish matchmaker Emma Woodhouse into the 21st century.

His latter-day Emma possesses all the youth and beauty and a good deal of the wit of Jane Austen's heroine. She also shares her predecessor's less appealing qualities. Bossy and controlling as a child, she's only more so now that she's 22 and bent on launching her own interior design consultancy. In creating Emma, Austen supposedly set about depicting a character that nobody but she would like very much. McCall Smith paints a similarly challenging if ultimately fond portrait of a young woman whose hubris causes complete chaos before she's forced to acquire some humility and self-knowledge. Devotees of the original will recognize the likes of Miss Taylor, the nonsense governess who all but raises Emma and her sister after they lose their mother, and George Knightley, Emma's friend and the only person brave enough to challenge her. Mr. Woodhouse, Emma's father, has evolved from a "valetudinarian" into a germaphobe crank, though to get around questions of how he manages the upkeep on their country pile, McCall Smith also makes him a retired inventor who years earlier patented a valve for the liquid-nitrogen cylinders used by dermatologists. Modernity is mischievously accommodated elsewhere, too:

The flashy young vicar's nouveau riche wife is recast as a TV talent show contestant, while dim, pretty Harriet Smith, the illegitimate product of an affair in Austen's telling, here becomes the progeny of a single mother and a sperm donor. Emma even finds herself questioning her sexuality.

**In less capable hands, it could all seem clunky and crass. Instead, McCall Smith has written a delightfully droll, thoughtful novel that reflects on money's enduring role in relationships as well as on the nature of this meddling heroine's long-lived appeal.**



**JD**

*Merlis, Mark*

Univ. of Wisconsin (312 pp.)

\$26.95 | \$21.95 e-book | Mar. 24, 2015

978-0-299-30350-1

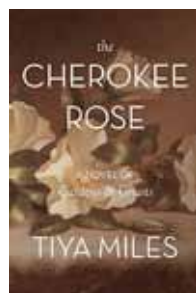
978-0-299-30353-2 e-book

Merlis' new novel deals with the tenacity of the past and one woman's struggle to reconcile her dead husband's account of their life, their marriage and the death of their son with her own

memories.

Living alone in New York in 2003, Martha Ascher is the last of her family. Her husband, renowned author Jonathan Ascher, has been dead for 30 years, and their son, Mickey, died overseas during the Vietnam War. When a hopeful intellectual asks for access to Jonathan's writings for a biography, Martha finally reads the journals her husband left behind. Much of the novel is taken up by Jonathan's chronicle of his life from 1964 to '73, centering on his struggle with his sexuality and encounters with men, as well as an increasingly complicated relationship with Mickey. Through Jonathan, the novel also examines—with varying degrees of success—what it was to be gay during a time of social upheaval. This examination, however, falls into a tedium that extends throughout Jonathan's journal entries. He's not especially likable, and his shortcomings and personality flaws tend to repel the reader in all-too-familiar ways. Often, the characters are too forthcoming with one another and seem remarkably articulate when it comes to expressing complicated emotions. Even Martha's narration tends to state emotional facts so bluntly that it eliminates room for complexity. One aspect of the novel that overcomes any shortcomings, however, is its depiction of Mickey. Jonathan and Martha don't know quite how to treat their son—they describe him as "blank" and "inscrutable"—and their fumbling attempts to connect with him are heartbreakingly genuine.

**While the novel should be applauded for its ambitious goals, it falls short of actually achieving most of them.**



## THE CHEROKEE ROSE

*Miles, Tiya*

John F. Blair (256 pp.)

\$26.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

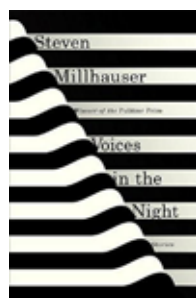
978-0-89587-635-5

A buried, early-19th-century diary, the fragrance of wild white roses and the rustling of river-cane reeds bring to life this refreshing debut novel by Miles, a winner of a MacArthur Fellowship (American Culture/Univ. of Michigan; *The House on*

*Diamond Hill*, 2010, etc.).

Jennifer "Jinx" Micco, a Cherokee-Creek reporter for the *Muscogee Nation News* in Oklahoma, Cheyenne Cotterell, a wealthy interior designer and genealogy buff from Atlanta, and Ruth Mayes, a grief-stricken home-and-garden magazine writer from Minneapolis, investigate their possible ties to the Hold House, a Cherokee plantation in the North Georgia foothills once inhabited by Cherokee-Scottish Chief James Vann Hold, his two wives, his many children and his African-American slaves. Early in the novel, the pre-Trail of Tears history of Cherokee slaveholders and Christian missionaries overwhelms the narrative. But the pace picks up after Jinx and Cheyenne discover the 1815 diary belonging to missionary Anna Rosina Gamble, whose detailed account of her and her pastor husband's establishment of a Moravian church on the plantation, along with her relationship with her favorite pupil, Mary Ann Battis, upends everything Jinx, Cheyenne and Ruth thought they knew about their heritage. Anna's vibrant voice is the most dynamic in the novel: "Our hope of bringing the Gospel here has yet to find fertile ground. It looks very dark in this land." And it's through Anna's entries that Miles' keen understanding of Cherokee slave owners and the braided lineages of Cherokee Indians and African-Americans shines through.

**An enchanting examination of bloodlines, legacy and the myriad branches of a diverse family tree.**



## VOICES IN THE NIGHT Stories

*Millhauser, Steven*

Knopf (304 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 16, 2015

978-0-385-35159-1

A master storyteller continues to navigate the blurry space between magic and reality in 16 comic, frightening, consistently off-kilter tales.

As a short story writer, Millhauser (English/Skidmore College; *We Others*, 2011, etc.) emerged in the '70s with his sensibility fully formed, taking Bernard Malamud's heady mixture of Jewish mysticism and urban life and expanding its reach to encompass palace courts and big-box suburbia. His strategy remains the same in this collection, but there's little sign that his enthusiasm has weakened. In "Miracle



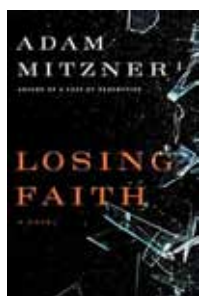


# A defense attorney is falsely accused of murder. How can he defend himself without destroying his career and his marriage?

LOSING FAITH

Polish," a man buys a mirror-cleaning chemical that makes his reflection slightly but meaningfully more upbeat and glimmering; a sly riff on the myth of Narcissus ensues. "A Report on Our Recent Troubles" describes a community wrecked by a spate of suicides, some seemingly done as perverse pleas for attention, and the narrative slowly edges toward a harrowing, Shirley Jackson-esque conclusion. That story, like many of the others here, is written in the first person plural, and Millhauser revels in upending that bureaucratic voice and making it strange; he satirizes the language of rest-home brochureware in "Arcadia," which opens gently but becomes more sinister, darkening the bland rhetoric. Millhauser does much the same with setting, complicating our notions of suburban comfort in stories like "The Wife and the Thief." As ever, he's an incessant tinkerer with ages-old myths, fairy tales and religious stories: Among the best entries here are "The Pleasures and Sufferings of Young Gautama," a tale of the young Buddha that pits foursquare language with its hero's roiling spiritual despair, and irreverent tweaks of tales about Paul Bunyan, Rapunzel, mermaids and the prophet Samuel. Millhauser intuitively modes of storytelling like nobody else, and even his satire of sports-announcer-speak in "Home Run" elevates the quotidian to the cosmic.

**A superb testament to America's quirkiest short story writer, still on his game.**



## LOSING FAITH

Mitzner, Adam

Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster

(368 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4767-6424-5

A tightly plotted, fast-paced legal thriller in which lies may serve justice better than the truth.

Defense attorney Aaron Littman should have known better. The chairman of a prominent New York law firm is a married man who once carried on a secret affair with a married federal judge. Unfortunately, someone knows. Rumor has it that Judge Faith Nichols may be in line for a Supreme Court nomination so long as the trial she's currently presiding over results in the conviction of the Russian "terrorist and murderer" Nicolai Garkov. The defendant has waived a jury trial, so his fate will be determined by Judge Nichols alone. Then Littman receives an offer of \$100,000 to represent Garkov, who is widely considered to be guilty. Absolutely not, Littman replies, until Garkov blackmails him over the affair. And then the nasty surprises begin. Littman himself is falsely accused of murder. How can he defend himself without destroying his career and his marriage? *You have to believe me* is a refrain Littman frequently hears from his clients, and now he desperately wants the court and his wife to believe him. And then a trusted colleague reminds him that "[t]rials aren't about the truth. They're about winning." That's a good thing in this case, because the truth is damning, and lies may be the only way to an acquittal. The story moves along at a brisk

clip, with a main character who's sympathetic despite his flaws. Maybe Littman will lose his wife and daughters. Maybe he'll spend the rest of his life in federal prison. Given the evidence that piles up against him, it's hard to see how he escapes a guilty verdict. The ending is startling but feels contrived, the only blip in a well-crafted story.

**A worthy courtroom yarn that fans of John Grisham and Scott Turow will enjoy.**



## SCENT OF TRIUMPH

Moran, Jan

St. Martin's Griffin (384 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Mar. 31, 2015

978-1-250-04890-5

978-1-4668-5002-6 e-book

A French perfume heiress with a gift for scent survives the trials and tribulations of World War II, and of love, in this first traditionally published novel from

indie author Moran.

Danielle Bretancourt von Hoffman, the daughter of a successful French perfume dynasty, spends most of her days thinking up new perfumes—that is, when she's not swooning over Jonathan Newell-Grey, handsome shipping magnate and her husband's close friend. Jon is helping Danielle and her husband, Max, a Polish glass manufacturer, relocate to America in the lead-up to World War II when the announcement comes that Germany has invaded Poland—and trapped Danielle and Max's son, Nicky, and Max's mother, Sophia, behind enemy lines. Pursued by the dastardly Heinrich, a boy Sophia fostered but who has fallen in with the Nazis, driven by his unreasonable hatred for the part-Jewish Danielle, Nicky and Sophia go on the run. It's no surprise when the ship on which Danielle and Max are returning is attacked by the Germans, nor when Heinrich kills Max during a dangerous undercover assignment for the British government, which Max took in order to search for Nicky and his mother. Even with Max conveniently out of the way, however, Danielle and Jon miss a number of opportunities to pursue their mutual passion, interrupted by the war, Jon's hasty engagement to an English socialite and Danielle's ill-advised marriage to a Hollywood star. Her development of a new "intoxicating" perfume with "the mystery of amber to balance the soul; the silky smoothness of sandalwood; the delicious lure of vanilla, like a lover's midnight embrace" leads to a new career in fashion as well, keeping Danielle in the spotlight, pursued by a stalker who seems obsessed with her destruction.

**A rushed and convoluted plot combines with an underdeveloped, uninspiring heroine, a love story without much spark and enough clichéd prose to sink the *Bismarck*.**



## O'HEARN

Mulcahy, Greg

Univ. of Alabama (144 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | \$14.95 e-book

Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-57366-050-1

978-1-57366-854-5 e-book

A worker bee stumbles his way through an absurdist landscape in the company of two colleagues.

The accomplished prose stylist Sam Lipsyte (*The Fun Parts*, 2013, etc.) chose this novel by Mulcahy (English/Century Coll.; *Constellation*, 1996, etc.) to receive the Catherine Doctorow Innovative Fiction Prize from Fiction Collective 2; readers with an acutely tuned ear for language may find something of value here. Readers who value plot and storytelling over lyricism and expression, however, are more likely to throw it across a room. Here, the author fleshes out the themes of many of his short stories—humiliation in the workplace and a pervasive sense of helplessness—into a novella-length manuscript about work and what it does to us both personally and as a society. There's an unnamed man who works in the office that drives the novel, but we never learn much about him; he might be ill or simply overmedicated. The man has two colleagues: Minouche, a poorly clothed co-worker given to running commentary, and O'Hearn, whose fewer comments are largely nonsensical. Mulcahy is obviously working hard to create something unique, but the overall effect can be frustrating. For example, here is the language that plays out as the man rides the bus. "Sequence played as apprehension. Repeated. No reason. The sequence was the sequence was the sequence. Any variance far against the odds, and any variance merely an interruption in the sequence of sequences to follow." Eventually, the novel introduces other avatars: the Volunteer, the Queen, and two new consultants, Madame Pompous and the Twerp, but what roles they play in the novel's social satire is open to interpretation. Eventually our man is assigned by the Twerp "to create the Awareness campaign which would increase awareness." This assignment causes a backlash the man calls "The Incident," leading to the loss of his job, which leads to "The Aftermath," which isn't much of an ending at all, really.

**An inventive but ultimately thin portrayal of workplace despair.**

## BLOOD ON SNOW

Nesbø, Jo

Translated by Smith, Neil

Knopf (224 pp.)

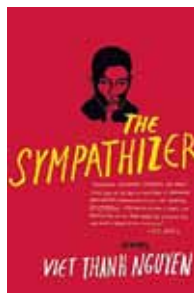
\$23.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-385-35419-6

Versatile Nesbø (*The Son*, 2014, etc.) switches gears yet again in this chilly whisper of a novella: a hit man's account of a job gone fatally wrong.

Christmastide 1977. As the Norwegian days draw ever shorter, Olav Johansen, who in Smith's translation comes across as touchingly sensitive in his banality, reflects on his limitations. He can't drive a getaway car, execute a successful robbery, or have anything to do with drugs or prostitution, and he's dyslexic to boot. The only thing he can do consistently and successfully is kill people—a skill that's made him very useful to Oslo heroin kingpin Daniel Hoffmann. But Hoffmann's latest request to his fixer is disturbing indeed: He wants Olav to fix his trophy wife, Corina. If he agrees, Olav will know far too much about his boss for comfort; if he refuses, he'll know almost just as much, putting himself in instant danger. So he temporizes, accepting the commission and settling in to watch the Hoffmann apartment. Soon enough he sees his target getting regular visits from a lover who beats and attacks her brutally. Thinking it over, Olav decides to alter the terms of the commission unilaterally, and disaster promptly ensues. The only way he can save himself, Olav decides, is to offer to fix Hoffmann himself for the Fisherman, an upstart rival in the heroin business. He's well-aware that this plan has its problems. In fact, it turns out to have additional problems he hasn't suspected, though many seasoned readers will be ahead of him here.

**A Nordic noir updating of James M. Cain's *Love's Lovely Counterfeit* (1942) with an equally sweet-natured killer at its improbably soft center.**



## THE SYMPATHIZER

Nguyen, Viet Thanh

Grove (384 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-8021-2345-9

A closely written novel of after-the-war Vietnam, when all that was solid melted into air.

As Graham Greene and Robert Stone have taught us, on the streets of Saigon, nothing is as it seems. The racist suppositions of the empires of old helped shape a culture of subterfuge; not for nothing does the hero of Nguyen's (English and American Studies/Univ. of Southern Calif.) debut give a small disquisition on the meaning of being Eurasian or Amerasian ("a small nation could be founded from the tropical offspring of the American GI"), and not for nothing does a book meaningfully called *Asian Communism and the Oriental Mode of Destruction* play a part in the proceedings. Nguyen's protagonist tells us from the very first, in a call-me-Ishmael moment, that he's a mole: "I am a spy, a sleeper, a spook, a man of two faces." Two faces, two races, neither wholly trusted. Our hero is attached to the command of a no-nonsense South Vietnamese general who's airlifted out at the fall of Saigon in 1975, protected by dewy Americans "with not a hint of a needle track in the crooks of their arms or a whiff of marijuana in their pressed, jungle-free fatigues"; whisked stateside, where the protagonist once spent time absorbing Americanness, the general is at the center of a potent community of exiles whom the protagonist is charged



FICTION

# A novel that delves into the darkest corners of human history and emerges with a tenuous sense of hope.

ORHAN'S INHERITANCE

with spying on—though it turns out he's as much observed as observer. Think Alan Furst meets Elmore Leonard, and you'll capture Nguyen at his most surreal, our hero attempting to impress upon a Hollywood hopeful that American and Vietnamese screams sound different: "I was on my first assignment as a lieutenant," he recalls, "and could not figure out a way to save the man from my captain wrapping a strand of rusted barbed wire around his throat, the necklace tight enough so that each time he swallowed, the wire tickled his Adam's apple."

Both chilling and funny, and a worthy addition to the library of first-rate novels about the Vietnam War.



## ORHAN'S INHERITANCE

Ohanesian, Aline

Algonquin (352 pp.)

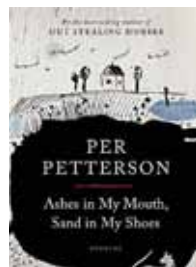
\$25.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-61620-374-0

In Ohanesian's debut novel, a Turkish man confronts secrets about his family and his country's history and is faced with an impossible choice: Should the past remain in the past, or should all stories, even the most painful, come to light?

When his grandfather dies, Orhan returns from Istanbul to the small village where he grew up and the contentious relationship he shares with his father; the tension is exacerbated when his grandfather's will reveals that he has left the family dye business to Orhan and the family house to a strange woman in an Armenian-American nursing home. While the rest of the nursing home prepares for an exhibit called "Bearing Witness: An Exhibit About Memory and Identity," Seda at first refuses to talk to Orhan about her connection to his grandfather. When she finally unburdens herself, giving voice to a harrowing tale of unimaginable sacrifice, he must decide what to do with this new information about his family and about the horrors of his country's history. In a complex balance, Ohanesian often condemns language as insufficient to convey these stories of loss and pain, while at the same time recognizing that telling the story can be cathartic and even universally necessary. The heart of the novel seems to suggest that "[t]here is only what is, what happened. The words come much later, corrupting everything with meaning." There are deep reflections on guilt, both collective and individual, and the power of memory to destroy or to heal. By rejecting the power of the written word but also, in writing a novel, relying on it to be powerful, Ohanesian explores both sides of this argument about bearing witness to Turkey's terrible legacy.

A novel that delves into the darkest corners of human history and emerges with a tenuous sense of hope.



## ASHES IN MY MOUTH, SAND IN MY SHOES

Petterson, Per

Translated by Bartlett, Don

Graywolf (128 pp.)

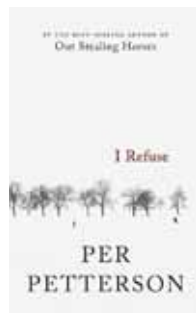
\$14.00 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-55597-700-9

Readers of Petterson's award-winning *Out Stealing Horses* (2007) will find this translation of the Norwegian author's first published book, scheduled to appear in conjunction with his latest novel, *I Refuse*, takes a gentler approach to childhood.

Ten brief stories make up this minimalist coming-of-age tale set in the 1960s. Young Arvid grows up in a working-class family in Veitvet, outside Oslo. The book's opening line—"Dad had a face that Arvid loved to watch, and at the same time made him nervous"—establishes the primary importance of Arvid's father in his life. When the local shoe industry collapses and Dad loses his position as a factory foreman, Arvid is too young to understand the financial strain and exhibits an innocent's brutal scorn at the toothbrushes Dad brings home from his new factory job. But the 6-year-old intuitively senses tensions in the household. When Arvid's sensitivity to the anxiety causes bad dreams, Dad shows great gentleness. Then Arvid's grandfather dies, and the boy's first reaction is excitement that Dad, now the boss of the family, will allow him to use a previously off-limits canoe. But at the funeral, he becomes upset imagining Dad in the coffin. By the time he turns 8, Arvid is grown up enough to face grudgingly that others, like his fat neighbor Bomann, have complicated feelings. Bullied for refusing to acknowledge that people have sex, Arvid is secretly "sad" to face the truth he's learned from Dad. A slightly older, tougher Arvid plays war games with his friends, taking boyish risks that could end disastrously but don't, any more than the actual Cuban missile crisis that rivets his attention. Maturing from early obliviousness into a conscious sense of ambivalent responsibility, Arvid finds himself offering Dad the tender care he once received as Dad fights his own demons.

Arvid's is far from an unhappy childhood, but writing within a child's limited vision, Petterson uses what's unspoken to wrench the reader's heart.



## I REFUSE

Petterson, Per

Translated by Bartlett, Don

Graywolf (224 pp.)

\$25.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

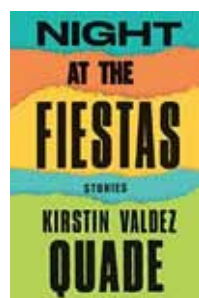
978-1-55597-699-6

Norwegian Petterson (*It's Fine By Me*, 2012, etc.) shows his considerable gift for exploring the darker crevices of boyhood in this elegiac story of two long-estranged friends whose lives have not turned out as they expected.



In 2006, Tommy and Jim speak briefly on a bridge in Oslo where Jim is fishing and Tommy is driving his Mercedes. While Tommy is a successful if lonely businessman, emotionally fragile Jim has not worked at his job at the Oslo Libraries for a year, and his sick leave has run out. More than 30 years ago, the two were best friends growing up together in the working-class neighborhood of Mørk. Back then, Jim—raised by his devoted single mom, who taught religion and instilled in Jim the belief that “you had to make yourself worthy”—seemed headed for success. Tommy’s childhood was a disaster—after his mother’s disappearance in 1964, his father abused his three younger sisters until 13-year-old Tommy attacked him with a bat and his father disappeared, too. The children were sent to different homes. While living with kindly neighbor Jonsen, Tommy tried to maintain a bond with his sister Siri, although her heavily Christian new parents considered him a bad influence. In adolescence, Siri was no longer close to Tommy but began a romance with Jim when he started attending her high school. The triangular connections became complicated, but all three had a sweetness and innocence about them. Then one afternoon Jim had a moment of what he considered cowardice while skating with Tommy and never forgave himself. Going about what turns into a trying day for each in 2006, both middle-aged men are drawn back to memories of that earlier time and each other, exposing how the scars from their (and Siri’s) pasts formed them. Don’t expect redemption here, but hope for connection.

**Without pyrotechnics, Petterson brings his characters and working-class Norway vividly, even passionately, to life; days after they finish the novel, readers may still have dreams of ice cracking.** (Author tour to Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Chicago and New York)



### NIGHT AT THE FIESTAS Stories

Quade, Kirstin Valdez  
Norton (288 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Mar. 23, 2015  
978-0-393-24298-0

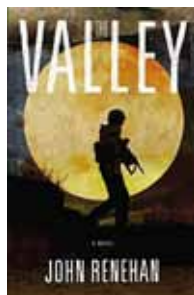
Debut collection of stories set in New Mexico from an award-winning writer.

Family ties—and family fissures—play a significant role in each piece. Catholic faith and practice are also prominent.

In “The Five Wounds,” a perennially unemployed and generally defeated man prepares to play the role of Jesus in a Passion play while trying to deal with his pregnant teenage daughter. Although the symbolic resonances are heavy, Quade’s plainspoken style and mordant sense of humor save the story from bathos: “Thirty-three years old, the same as Our Lord, but Amadeo is not a man with ambition. Even his mother will tell you that.” Indeed, many of these stories illuminate a world in which religious belief gives shape to everyday reality. “Ordinary Sins”—previously published in *The New Yorker*—features another unwed, expectant mother negotiating a religious world in which women have no authority. Corpus Christi celebrations provide a climactic turning point

in “Nemecia,” the strongest story in the collection and the one that gained entry into *Best American Short Stories 2013*. Quade offers readers a door into worlds that are likely unfamiliar, and she gives them the gift of letting them find their own ways. She doesn’t bother to describe, for example, the society of flagellants that has existed in New Mexico—just beneath the official notice of the church—for centuries, nor does she explain the different worldviews and doctrinal positions of an American priest and his more conservative African colleague. But while she grounds her stories in a specific cultural setting, Quade offers visions of family that have universal resonance. In “Mojave Rats,” a young mother is outsmarted and overwhelmed by her 7-year-old daughter, and her recognition of this fact does nothing to change it.

**Quade is a writer to watch.** (Author tour to Denver, Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Ann Arbor)



### THE VALLEY

Renehan, John  
Dutton (416 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Mar. 10, 2015  
978-0-525-95486-6

From a first-time novelist, a military thriller packed with action and mystery.

The story begins and ends with relative quiet, but the reader hungry for action need not worry. Lt. Black is stationed at the relatively safe Forward

Operating Base Omaha in Afghanistan when he gets randomly assigned a 15-6 investigation, “the commander’s initial inquiry into possible wrongdoing.” Apparently, an Afghan village chief in Nuristan complained that an American soldier accidentally killed a goat. Black’s job is to fly to Combat Outpost Vega “up the Valley” and speak to everyone, gather facts about the apparently minor case and report back to headquarters. Once Black arrives, most of the soldiers refuse to talk to him, and the NCOs are openly hostile and disrespectful. They are rough people in a rough place. There are many valleys in Nuristan “where people died hard deaths,” but “there was only one Valley....It was the farthest, the hardest, and the worst.” Surrounded by the lurking Taliban and aggrieved villagers all close by, the American soldiers (and readers) are guaranteed all the excitement they can handle. Never what it had seemed in the first place, the situation deteriorates rapidly. The combat scenes are intense, believable and frightening. The troops need to call for help, but will they get through? “Communication was life,” the narrator notes as the Americans try to fight off an attack, and “there was no pay phone in the Valley.” “What the hell,” one character asks, “is the end of the world?” Clearly, it’s the Valley in Nuristan. There are a few points of confusion in this fast-paced drama, but whether that’s in the telling, the reading or the fog of war, they detract little.

**A must-read if you want a glimpse of the turmoil Americans faced in Afghanistan or if you just want a page-flipping good yarn.**



## THE WITCH OF PAINTED SORROWS

Rose, M.J.

Atria (384 pp.)

\$25.00 | Mar. 17, 2015

978-1-4767-7806-8

Sandrine Salome flees New York and her treacherous husband to find shelter in Paris with her grandmother, but as she settles in and pursues new passions, it's unclear whether she or an infamous

ancestral witch is driving the changes.

After Sandrine discovers her husband is an embezzler, she sets sail for Europe, seeking refuge with her grandmother, a celebrated Paris courtesan, in the family's mansion. But her grandmother isn't living at Maison de La Lune; she's moved to a nearby apartment. When Sandrine discovers the older woman is secretly visiting the mansion, though, her curiosity is piqued. She visits La Lune one day after her grandmother leaves, uncovering plans to create a museum from the space, and meets the compelling architect in charge of the project, Julien Duplessi. Together, they unlock a secret room on the property, finding paintings left by an artistic couple who lived there centuries ago. The woman is Sandrine's ancestor, La Lune, a famed courtesan reputed to be a witch, after whom the house is named. Suddenly, Sandrine is obsessed with painting and with Julien. She's accepted into the École des Beaux-Arts—unheard of for a woman—and enters into a passionate affair with Julien. Her grandmother suspects she has come under the influence of La Lune's malignant spirit, who takes over women in their family when they fall in love, hoping to re-create the passionate relationship she had with her lover centuries ago. When a series of violent events happens around Sandrine, she begins to believe in La Lune, but by then, it may be too late. Rose's new series offers her specialty, a unique and captivating supernatural angle, set in an intriguing belle époque Paris—a perfect match for the author's lush descriptions, intricate plot and mesmerizing storytelling. A cliffhanger ending will leave readers hungry for the next volume.

**Sensual, evocative, mysterious and haunting.**



## THE ONLY WORDS THAT ARE WORTH REMEMBERING

Rotter, Jeffrey

Metropolitan/Henry Holt (224 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-62779-152-6

A futuristic novel set in a bleak landscape involving an eccentric family of putative criminals and, eventually, a strange odyssey across America.

At his mother's insistence, narrator Rowan Van Zandt is enrolled at the Old Miami School for Drugs and Doctors in an effort to improve his rather sorry lot in life, for

he lives in an area of urban violence and general dreariness. Pop, Rowan's father, worked at Airplane Food until he killed a threatening little thug named, ironically enough, I Murder, by throwing him in a vat of boiling eggs. Then Rowan and his twin brother, Faron, got into their own brand of trouble in an altercation at a local zoo. This is all upsetting to Rowan and Faron's hardworking mom, Umma, when a smooth *deus ex machina* named Terry Nguyen offers a devil's bargain—he'll reunite the family (and grant amnesty) if they will “volunteer” to be part of a crew to test the Orion spaceship. After some hesitation, Umma agrees to the terms. The Van Zandts start to train at an abandoned launch pad at Cape Cannibal (aka Canaveral) with Bill and Mae Reade and their daughter, Sylvia. After Umma commits suicide, Rowan goes on the lam, wandering out West to escape Terry. Rowan seeks out observatories such as Mount Wilson and Lowell, which have become historical landmarks in a culture both ignorant of and hostile to astronomical knowledge.

**Although Rotter's novel is conceptually interesting, Rowan's journey becomes tedious, and the forces he tries to evade are of little interest.**



## THE CAKE HOUSE

Salom, Latifah

Vintage (336 pp.)

\$15.00 paper | Mar. 3, 2015

978-0-345-80651-2

Hamlet, transformed into a teenage girl in Southern California.

Rosura Douglas is haunted by her father's ghost from the day he dies in the titular house—she calls it “my prison, this monstrous pink dessert”—which belongs to her new stepfather, Claude, and is her new home. Even more haunting than the ghost, though, is how her life changes when she moves in. Her mother spends many days locked in her room, complaining of terrible headaches. Her stepfather buys her lavish presents that she can't refuse, like a personal darkroom, causing her to feel trapped. And she has strong chemistry with her stepbrother, Alex, who pays attention to her occasionally and ignores her otherwise. When the ghost warns her not to trust Claude, Rosie delves into her stepfather's shady business practices and finds that he's poured his poisonous words into many ears, including her father's, leaving her to wonder how much longer the tenuous world of the Cake House can continue. Like Hamlet, Rosie is traumatized and confused, pressured by her father's ghost and prone to sneaking around to avoid her stepfather. But where Hamlet is red with depression and rage, Rosie's rebellion is pale by comparison. Salom's writing is atmospheric, and her conjuring of the many shadows of Los Angeles provides the perfect backdrop for all the skulking and sulking in the story. The plot is well-executed but ultimately lacks emotion, despite the ghost's desire for revenge. The characters are flat, as though they can't live up to the atmosphere, though the ending does satisfy.

**Evocative writing in a less-than evocative story.**



## EVERY FIFTEEN MINUTES

*Scottoline, Lisa*

St. Martin's (448 pp.)

\$27.99 | \$14.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-250-01011-7

978-1-4668-7461-9 e-book



A sociopath targets a suburban Pennsylvania psychiatrist whose success is only the prelude to a series of nightmarish reversals.

It's true that Dr. Eric Parrish doesn't have everything. His wife, Caitlin, is divorcing him and being difficult over the joint custody they've arranged for their 7-year-old daughter, Hannah, and his latest private patient, 17-year-old Max Jakubowski, seems much more in need of help than his dying grandmother does. But Eric's colleagues like and admire him—one of them, medical student Kristine Malin, is clearly in hot pursuit—and so does *U.S. News and World Report*, which is about to announce that the psych unit Eric heads at Havemeyer General Hospital ranks second in the nation. It all goes south with a suddenness that would be shocking outside the pages of Scottoline. Kristine files harassment charges after Eric rejects her come-on. Max phones Eric to say that his grandmother's died and then takes a powder. Renee Bevilacqua, a girl Max tutors in math and otherwise worships from afar, gets murdered the morning after Eric follows her home, looking in vain for a lead to Max's whereabouts. The cops haul Eric in as a person of interest, then invade his office and home looking for evidence when he demands they find Max, whom he considers a suicide risk, but won't say any more about him. The colleagues who so recently toasted Eric lock him out. And that's all before Max takes five teenagers hostage and announces that he's going to kill one every 15 minutes before he blows up the King of Prussia Mall. Who can possibly be pulling so many different strings?

A proficient, mounting-stakes actioner that proves Scottoline is just as comfortable with a shrink determined to go to the wall for a troubled teen as she ever was with Bennie Rosato's all-female law practice (*Betrayed*, 2014, etc.).



## NARCISA

*Shaw, Jonathan*

Perennial/HarperCollins (624 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Mar. 24, 2015

978-0-06-235499-0

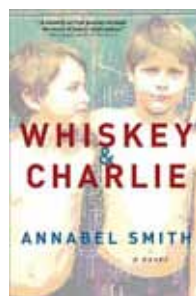
The ugly saga of the relationship between a self-professed outlaw and a psychotic crack whore.

This drug-fueled, Beat-influenced slab of a novel arrives with a bizarre pedigree.

Tattoo artist-turned-novelist Shaw (*Love Songs to the Dead*, 2009, etc.) is the son of jazz great Artie Shaw and the contemporary of kindred spirits ranging from Iggy Pop to Lydia Lunch, who

contributes an introduction. Here, his 2007 debut novel (originally published by indie Heartworm Press) has been shepherded to republication by Johnny Depp. Unfortunately, this novel about an obsessed bandito and the raging lunatic he falls for is trying so hard to mimic other writers' styles that it ultimately doesn't find much to say that is new or different from its influences. Our narrator is Ignacio Valencia Lobos, known on the streets of Rio de Janeiro as "Cigano," or gypsy. After years running heroin between Mexico and California, Cigano has kicked his habit in prison and come home. "Wide awake now. Picking up the shattered pieces of a faded, fuzzy little jigsaw puzzle nightmare called Home," he says. His life is pretty much destroyed when he meets Narcisa, a glue-huffing, babbling poet/prostitute with a psyche shattered by childhood sexual abuse, a zealous addiction to drugs and a broken patois that doesn't always sound authentic. That's pretty much it for the next several hundred pages—the damaged duo have violent, incensed sex, they fight, she leaves, she comes back, and then the cycle starts all over again. He gets a little insight into her condition from "Doc," a kind of odd paternal figure to Narcisa. But the cycle is always the same old same old when Cigano turns back up on Narcisa's doorstep. "So what if my love was for a psychotic, violent, abusive, foul-mouthed, unsanitary crack whore with a hell-bent rage and an insatiable appetite for destruction?" Ain't love grand?

A mix-and-match novel with the grunge of Bukowski, the teeth-grinding momentum of the Beats and the acidic self-loathing of addiction novels.



## WHISKEY AND CHARLIE

*Smith, Annabel*

Sourcebooks Landmark (336 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4926-0786-1

An accident leaves a man comatose and near death. Will his twin have a chance to make amends?

Growing up, twins William and Charlie Ferns were inseparable, particularly after their Aunt Audrey bought them walkie-talkies. They learned the two-way radio alphabet, from which William took his nickname: Whiskey. Always eclipsing Charlie's star, Whiskey excels at everything, so Charlie is forever seeking something of his own. Although he wins a part in the school play and bests Whiskey on the golf course, Charlie seems tethered to Whiskey's lead in other arenas. Whiskey's shadow looms over Charlie's first experiences with girls. Whiskey leaves a trail of ex-girlfriends: Some of them use Charlie to make Whiskey jealous, while others turn to Charlie's arms only to find he cannot risk dating them for fear of angering Whiskey. Even Charlie's partner, Juliet, was Whiskey's girlfriend first. As the twins grow up and further apart, Whiskey goes into advertising, creating a glamorous life for himself that repels his twin. Charlie believes he's content in his life without Whiskey until his vibrant brother is hit by a car. As Whiskey's coma drags on from days to weeks to months, Charlie's hopes dwindle. Even



# Two American spies—one retired, one active—dance around what really happened five years earlier during a mission gone horribly wrong.

ALL THE OLD KNIVES

if Whiskey does come out of it, he will no longer be the man Charlie knew, loved and—if he's being honest—hated. Smith's (*A New Map of the Universe*, 2005) chapters alternate between the vigil over Whiskey and the resurrection of Charlie's memories, which explore the apportioning of blame for their broken relationship. Can Charlie bear life without his complementary half? Can he find room in his heart for another, less hateful, version of their lives?

**A powerful, emotionally riven tale of a brother's deep, complicated love.**



## ALL THE OLD KNIVES

Steinhauer, Olen

Minotaur (224 pp.)

\$23.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Mar. 10, 2015

978-1-250-04542-3

978-1-4668-4406-3 e-book



Two American spies—one retired, one active—dance around what really happened five years earlier during a mission gone horribly wrong.

In this masterfully plotted and suspenseful stand-alone, Steinhauer (*The Cairo Affair*, 2014, etc.) pieces together the details of an event the CIA refers to only as Flughafen (after the German word for airport). Four Islamist extremists, members of the Aslim Taslam group, hijacked a plane at the Vienna airport, and, despite the presence of a low-level operative onboard—a pure coincidence—the take-over ended in tragedy. Five years later, Agent Henry Pelham is conducting an internal investigation (code name “Frankler”) into the role the CIA's Vienna office, where he was stationed at the time, played in the events of Flughafen. Complicating an already dicey situation is the fact that his main target is former flame Celia Harrison, who left the agency immediately after the Austrian debacle and moved to California, where she married an older man and had two children. Now Henry and Celia meet for dinner in Carmel-by-the-Sea, a town as innocuous as their conversation is serious. Steinhauer expertly shifts perspectives between the two spies in both their present and past lives, when Henry was a rough-and-tumble field agent and Celia wielded power behind a desk.

**It's an understatement to say that nothing is as it seems, but even readers well-versed in espionage fiction will be pleasantly surprised by Steinhauer's plot twists and double backs.**



## THE TELLER

Stone, Jonathan

Thomas & Mercer (286 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4778-2865-6

An ordinary life is turned upside down in this exploration of an impulse gone wildly wrong.

Elaine Kelly, an attractive redhead stuck in a dead-end job as a bank teller, lives with her elderly, disabled mother in Queens, New York. Nothing exciting ever happens to her until the day one of her regular customers, an elderly man named Antonio Desirio, dies in an accident after having made a deposit. Elaine has long been curious about Desirio, a shabby dresser who obviously doesn't take care of himself but has more than \$1 million in his savings account. When he's hit by a truck and killed, she impetuously transfers \$1.3 million from Desirio's account to her own. Shocked, panicked and a little thrilled at her own audacity, she knows she has only a short time to flee before bank officials catch on. Elaine makes plans to grab the cash and leave the country, but then her mother dies and she has to stick around a bit. A series of unexpected events threatens to derail her escape: The state freezes Desirio's bank accounts, a handsome police detective named Nussbaum starts asking questions, and a man claiming to be Antonio Desirio comes into the bank and tries to liquidate his funds. Afraid of being caught and with time snapping at her heels, Elaine decides to run but soon finds there are many barriers standing in her way, and most of them are very dangerous. Although Stone attempts to set up a logical reason for her protagonist to make such a foolish move and then dangle clues in front of the case detective, Elaine's decisions never seem to gel with her predicament, and her incessant contemplation of her actions slows the plot. Less self-examination and more action would have made for a better book.

**Stone's excellent writing triumphs over the novel's weaknesses.**



## TIME AGES IN A HURRY

Tabucchi, Antonio

Translated by Romani, Antonio &

Cooley, Martha

Archipelago (212 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Apr. 4, 2015

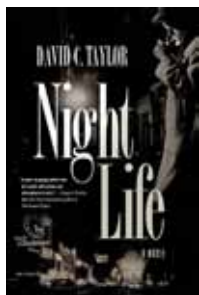
978-0-914671-05-3

A pensive, beautifully written meditation on personhood and nationhood in the new age of European unity.

Novelist, translator and professor Tabucchi (*It's Getting Later All the Time*, 2006, etc.), who died three years ago, was an Italian who loved Portugal above all other places but who always looked homeward as well. Just so, many of the characters in this joined collection—something more than short stories but not quite a novel—are stateless and uprooted; they

come from somewhere else, and they're never quite at home where they are. So it is that, in one of the most memorable pieces, a South American adoptee protests to a returning war veteran that she is as Italian as he is: "I am totally Italian like you and maybe even more than you, sir, but I like languages and I also know the Mameli anthem by heart...." The reader who is not versed in contemporary Italian society or, for that matter, European geopolitics may miss a reference or two here and there, as when the young girl continues to say that she doesn't like the politico who's threatening to abolish that anthem, said piece of musical patriotism having been taken up by fascists and communists alike back in a day that continues to haunt these pages. Other of Tabucchi's characters wander the streets of New York, London, Berlin, their personal geographies not always jibing with modern realities; thinks another young woman in Paris, "it's a Haussmann building, and Haussmann was Haussmann, and that was that, yet what did Haussmann have to do with what she was?" Tabucchi would have assumed that the reader knew who Haussmann was, among his other allusions, but one might want to read these illuminating stories with historical dictionary at hand.

**A quibble: The title might have been more idiomatically rendered *Time Gets Old in a Hurry*, getting at the paradoxes and wordplay that Tabucchi loved. A pleasure all the same for fans of modern European literature.**



### NIGHT LIFE

*Taylor, David C.*

Forge (336 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Mar. 17, 2015

978-0-7653-7483-7

978-1-4668-4343-1 e-book

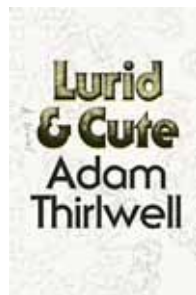
Life for NYPD detective Michael Cassidy is black and Red all over in this thriller set during the McCarthy era of the 1950s. Not only does he have a murder to solve, he's also got to rid himself of

the curse of Commie-baiting superlawyer Roy Cohn.

Cassidy, a war veteran, has an unusual background. His Russian-born father, Tom Cassidy, is a successful theater producer whose closest friend—and Michael's godfather—is a mob boss. Tom himself was involved in illegal liquor dealing. Michael's troubled mother died in a strange accident involving pills. The world of father and son come together when a show dancer is found dead in Michael's Hell's Kitchen apartment, having been tortured. He was searching for something that authorities all the way up to the CIA, not to mention Russian spies, want in the worst way. Cassidy can't trust anyone, least of all Dylan, the beautiful woman he's fallen for. After a run-in in which the hot-tempered Michael talks back to Cohn, the conniving lawyer gets even by dragging Tom Cassidy through the folly of a Senate investigatory hearing and having him arrested for deportation. Mixing fictional and reality-based characters (J. Edgar Hoover makes an appearance) and providing a wealth of period detail, Taylor works in what has become time-honored fashion since

*Ragtime*. But he works exceptionally well within that convention, and that of noir fiction, illuminating his characters and the times they're living through in a lively, light-on-its-feet, agreeably no-nonsense fashion.

**Taylor, a seasoned writer for TV and film, makes a strong debut with the first in a series of novels featuring a hard-edged but properly vulnerable detective.**



### LURID & CUTE

*Thirlwell, Adam*

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (368 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-374-29225-6

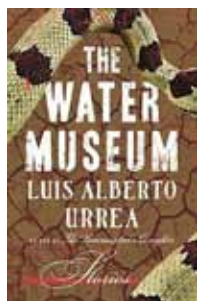
In a pallid sort of noir, a boy-man lurches through an aimless series of small adventures and stumbles into criminal behavior that eventually exacts its comeuppance.

Thirlwell (*The Escape*, 2010, etc.) starts this trying novel with a strong episode and a real sense of foreboding. His hero wakes up in a hotel with memory gaps and a friend named Romy, whose bloody, comatose state requires some quasi-comedic devices to get her to a hospital. That his sweet wife, Candy, accepts a ludicrous explanation for his overnight absence and bloody T-shirt when he returns home reflects not her credulity but the cossetting she thinks his semidepressive state requires. A spoiled only child, he's in his early 30s, has quit working, has spent time in therapy and lives with Candy in his parents' home. He attends parties and ponders his relationship with Romy, a line of thought that gets gnarly when one party turns into an orgy and one polymorphous grouping entails him, Candy and Romy. He drifts into crime, and the book's noirish side grows darker. Throughout, he indulges in an endless diet of recreational drugs—"these increasing narcotic entertainments did make the way I thought perhaps a little blurred." And there's the main problem: the squishy, doped-up, self-indulgent slacker-hipster voice and thinking of this first-person narrative is so well-rendered and so tiresome. Even if Thirlwell captures a type and time, was this a trophy worth aiming for? It calls for a tweak of Samuel Johnson's dated line on a woman preaching and a dog walking on its hind legs: It is done well, but one is still surprised to find it done at all.

**Recent years have brought drug-drenched efforts from well-established artists Pynchon and Lethem. Perhaps the kindest thing one can say is that the talented Thirlwell has gotten his literary substance abuse out of his system at an earlier age.**

# Urrea offers 13 stories that reflect both sides of his Mexican-American heritage while stretching the reader's understanding of human boundaries.

THE WATER MUSEUM



## THE WATER MUSEUM Stories

Urrea, Luis Alberto

Little, Brown (272 pp.)

\$25.00 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-316-33437-2

978-0-316-33438-9 e-book

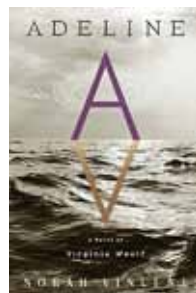


Urrea, celebrated for his historical sagas (*Queen of America*, 2011) and nonfiction (*The Devil's Highway*, 2004), offers 13 stories that reflect both sides of his Mexi-

can-American heritage while stretching the reader's understanding of human boundaries.

With spare eloquence, the opening "Mountains Without Number" conjures up a dying town near Idaho Falls, both its stark landscape and aging inhabitants. The language turns lush, Latin and slangy in the next two stories, "The Southside Raza Image Federation Corp of Discovery" and "The National City Reparation Society," which feature the bookish Mexican-American Junior, who doesn't fit in with a white college crowd any more than with the immigrant community he grew up among. The theme of young Anglos straddling class and/or cultural borders occurs, too. The adolescent white narrator of "Amapola" falls in love with a beautiful Mexican girl, naively oblivious to the source of her family's wealth. Joey in "Young Man Blues" learns the reward and price of goodness when caught between loyalty to his elderly middle-class employer and his father's criminal cohorts. While "Carnations" and "The White Girl" are brief snapshots of grief, "The Sous Chefs of Ilogua" resonates on multiple levels, exposing the uneasy complexities of Anglo-Mexican relationships in an Iowa farm town. In "Taped to the Sky," a Cambridge academic suffering over an ex-wife takes a cross-country trip to the far west and has a darkly comic encounter with Oglala Sioux Don Her Many Horses, who shows his depth in the volume's bittersweet final story, "Bid Farewell to Her Many Horses," about a white man whose marriage to Don's sister shows the power and limitations of cross-cultural love. "Mr. Mendoza's Paintbrush," about a graffiti artist in a Mexican village, was published as a graphic novel in 2010; its magical realism would make it an outlier here if not for the penultimate "Welcome to the Water Museum," a dystopian tale of Western life in an arid future when children consider water an anomaly.

Urrea's command of language is matched only by his empathy for his characters.



## ADELINE

Vincent, Norah

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (288 pp.)

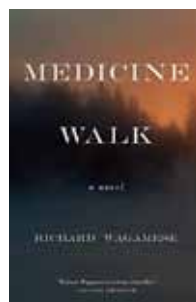
\$23.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-544-47020-0

Virginia Woolf's haunted descent into the River Ouse in 1941 is re-created here in a tale of the author's tortured last years.

Vincent (*Thy Neighbor*, 2012, etc.) re-creates the world of the fabled Bloomsbury group, emphasizing the years bookended by Woolf's triumphant release of *To the Lighthouse* and the later, less well-received *The Waves*. The spectral presence of Adeline, Woolf's childlike alter ego, who bears the name Virginia was given at birth, engages Woolf throughout the novel and accompanies her at moments marked by great insight and great pain. In dense prose, Vincent foreshadows Woolf's ultimate demise in myriad ways with references to rocks, water, milk, and the psychiatric woes of both the painter Dora Carrington (Lytton Strachey's companion) and Vivien Eliot (T.S. Eliot's estranged wife). Woolf's ultimate acceptance, or actually embrace, of her fate is detailed meticulously in the endgame conversation between the soul-sick, world-weary author and the internist from whom her desperate husband, Leonard, has sought help. Hovering in the background, much like Adeline, is Woolf's struggle with the problem of truth-telling when there is no truth to be had, only interpretation.

Readers in search of a crash course on the Bloomsbury circle and the machinations of Woolf's fevered mind will appreciate Vincent's attempts to illuminate both, but her dark portrait of Woolf's agonizing journey through a life marked by psychic pain will hold the most appeal for those already familiar with this sad story of genius and madness.



## MEDICINE WALK

Wagamese, Richard

Milkweed (256 pp.)

\$24.00 | \$24.00 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-57131-115-3

978-1-57131-931-9 e-book

Wagamese (*Dream Wheels*, 2006, etc.) sends young Franklin Starlight on a "medicine walk," a journey of knowing, in this story about the nature of manhood.

Franklin's been called to western Canada's lumber-mill town of Parson's Gap by his father, Eldon, who has lived "a life with benchmarks that only ever set out the boundaries of pain and loss, woe and regret, nothing to bring him comfort in his last days." Eldon's dying. He wants Franklin to carry him into the mountains to "a ridge...sitt[ing] above a narrow valley with a high range behind it," a place Eldon once found peace. "I need you to bury me facing east...[s]itting up in the warrior way." His father ever absent, Franklin was raised by an old man with an unexplained connection to Eldon, a farmer



who cherished him and taught him to cherish the land-centered ways of Franklin's Ojibway and Cree people. Franklin is only 16, "big for his age, rawboned and angular...grown comfortable with aloneness and he bore an economy with words that was blunt, direct." Wagamese is a keen observer, sketching places ("stars in the thick purple swaddle of the sky") or people ("He leaned when he walked, canted at a hard angle to the right as though gravity worked with different properties on him") elegantly, economically, all while gracefully employing literary insight to deftly dissect blood ties lingering in fractured families. During the trek, Franklin finally learns about his father, "the story of him etched in blood and tears and departures as sudden as the snapping of a bone"—his own father dead in WWII; how he nearly killed his mother's abusive boyfriend; his nightmarish Korean War experience; and his broken promises to Franklin's mother.

**A powerful novel of hard men in hard country reminiscent of Jim Harrison's *Legends of the Fall*.**



## POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

Willett, Marcia

Dunne/St. Martin's (304 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-250-04633-8

978-1-4668-4651-7 e-book

In Willett's latest Cornwall cozy, a trio of aging siblings is threatened—but not enough—by their erstwhile stepbrother.

Ed and Billa St. Enedoc, who live in Mellinpons, a lovingly renovated former butter factory inherited from their parents, and their half brother, Dom, who lives nearby, are all retired and settling down to a comfortable routine of tea parties, nature studies and dog walking when the postcards start arriving. These missives, postmarked in France, hail from their stepbrother, Tris, whom they haven't seen in 50 years, not since his father, Andrew, abruptly left Ed and Billa's mother, Elinor, and disappeared, along with his son. The postcards are apparently intended to goad: Ed's features an image reminiscent of a prized bicycle Tris appropriated, Billa's a dog resembling her beloved Bitser, whose euthanasia was engineered by Tris; Dom's is a reference to the fact that he is the illegitimate son of Ed and Billa's father, Harry, born of a liaison which predated his marriage. What could Tris possibly want of the St. Enedocs now? The suspense of finding out what he's up to is the book's main plot, which is not fleshed-out enough to stand on its own but must be padded with a subplot involving a 20-something university graduate, Tilly, the burgeoning IT business she runs with Navy wife Sarah and the growing affection of both young women for dishy curate Clem. Although Willett may doubt that the concerns of the older people are enough to carry the novel, in reality, Tilly's and her cohorts' predicaments seem banal and dull compared to the intriguing menace of Tris and the conflicted childhood memories he evokes. Willett's determination to portray each character fairly and compassionately causes her to paint herself into a narrative corner: By allowing Tris a voice

and evoking sympathy for him, she attenuates his power as the antagonist, thereby weakening the conflict and guaranteeing an anticlimactic denouement.

**Once again (as in *The Courtyard*, 2007), a potentially intriguing fictional family history is smothered by excessive niceness.**



## DIAMOND HEAD

Wong, Cecily

Harper/HarperCollins (320 pp.)

\$25.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

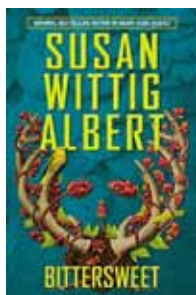
978-0-06-234543-1

The fate and fortunes of a Sino-Hawaiian family are altered by bad romantic choices.

Wong's first novel begins as members of the Leong family, the wealthiest and most influential clan on the island of Oahu, converge for a funeral in 1964. From there, the story, related by various family members, branches out to cover six decades and three generations as the Leong family curse takes shape. In 1900, Hong, a widowed refugee from the Boxer Rebellion, treks miles to find refuge in the home of her brother-in-law, Frank Leong, a shipping magnate. The family migrates to Hawaii, and Leong builds a lavish mansion in the shadow of the volcano Diamond Head for his beloved wife, Lin, and their son, Bohai. Amy Chan, 20-year-old eldest daughter of an impoverished photographer and his harried wife, is working in her father's shop when Pearl Harbor and the advent of World War II improve the family's prospects. Soldiers are clamoring for photo portraits before being shipped out, and Henry, Amy's forgotten childhood sweetheart, is among them. The two become engaged, but all that changes when the Leongs hire the Chans to photograph their family. Lin seizes on the fetching Amy as the solution for her shy, studious son Bohai's confirmed bachelorhood. (He is now 33.) Amy's mother convinces her that marrying Henry would be a mistake: She herself had married for love and now lived in a basement with a feckless husband and Amy's nine siblings. After receiving an ambiguous letter from Henry, who is stationed overseas, Amy is persuaded to marry Bohai. Her decision triggers a series of disasters for the Leong family. The enigmatic Hong and Amy's daughter, Theresa, 18 and pregnant out of wedlock, act as bellwethers and interpreters of the family's downfall. The novel's many diversions and diffuse focus make for an unwieldy structure that cannot support the explosive closing revelations. Nevertheless, Wong's pellucid prose style keeps the pages turning.

**Although it reaches for an inevitability it doesn't achieve, a promising debut.**

## M Y S T E R Y



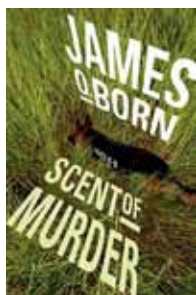
### BITTERSWEET

*Albert, Susan Wittig*  
Berkley Prime Crime (304 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-425-25562-9

An herbal expert and a game warden pool their knowledge to solve a crime.

China Bayles and her family head for remote Uvalde County, Texas, where her mother, Leatha, lives on a ranch with her second husband, Sam, who's currently in the hospital with heart problems. China, who owns the Thyme and Seasons Herb Shop, is hauling plants for a friend's garden, and she's looking forward to seeing her friend Mackenzie Chambers, a local game warden. Leatha and Sam plan to open a guesthouse for birders, but with Sam so ill, Leatha's happy to get some help from Sue Ellen Krause, a perky cowgirl eager to escape her abusive husband, who works at Three Gates Game Ranch, one of the many places in Texas where people can hunt tame animals bred for their trophy racks. There's big money in canned hunting, and Sue Ellen knows that her husband and two of his friends are involved in something illegal. Since China's still a lawyer, Sue Ellen asks her for advice but never tells her the whole story. In the meantime, Mack meets a crusty local veterinarian who says he's seen tattooed fawns on a ranch where they're not supposed to be. But he's equally stingy with details. All trophy hunt ranches must have escape-proof fences and tattoo all their animals, many of them exotic varieties that could ruin the genetics of the local animal population. When the old veterinarian is shot and killed, China and Mack compare what they know and find a disturbing solution.

Not the best of China's many cases (*Cat's Claw*, 2012, etc.) but a compelling look at the ethics of canned hunting.



### SCENT OF MURDER

*Born, James O.*  
Forge (304 pp.)  
\$25.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-7653-7847-7  
978-1-4668-6162-6 e-book

A sheriff's deputy in Palm Beach County fights for the respect due his unit and their canine colleagues as they go after the creep who's been kidnapping and assaulting local teenagers.

Tim Hallett was bounced from the detective squad to the Canine Assist Team after punching out child molester Arnold Ludner in a desperate attempt to make him reveal where he'd left his latest victim. Detective John Fusco, who kicked Hallett to the curb, has never let him forget it, and Hallett's face still

burns every time the two run into each other. But now Hallett's redemption may be at hand thanks to Junior, the lowlife who's snatched three girls from the street and molested them. The only clue, a face-mopping rag Junior left behind when the sheriff's department, with special help from the CAT, rescued Katie Ziegler from his clutches, is useless to the human members of the department. But Rocky, the Belgian Malinois who's Hallett's partner, may just be able to trace the rag to its owner—though it remains to be seen whether that owner is actually Arnold Ludner, as Hallett would dearly love to believe. While single dad Hallett is pursued by crime-scene tech Lori Tate, his CAT counterparts Darren Mori and Claire Perkins also flirt with new partners, and for a while it seems as if the entire team will find romance. Don't be fooled. However banged up they get, Rocky, Brutus and Smarty emerge from the fray in a lot better shape than their humans, who clearly seem bound for a series.

Born (*Burn Zone*, 2008, etc.) pitches this one at readers who like law enforcement infighting better than detection and who love dogs most of all.



### GAME OF MIRRORS

*Camilleri, Andrea*  
Translated by Sartarelli, Stephen  
Penguin (288 pp.)  
\$16.00 paper | Mar. 31, 2015  
978-0-14-312377-4

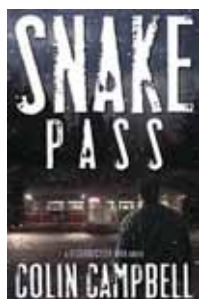
Inspector Montalbano's growing obsession with an alluring neighbor may be clouding his judgment as he pursues an elusive bomber.

On his way to work one morning, veteran Sicilian investigator Montalbano spots neighbor Liliana Lombardo fretting over her disabled car and offers her a lift to his mechanic. At the station house, he learns of the bombing of an empty warehouse, on the ground floor of a three-story building. The two investigating cops disagree on motive. Mimi theorizes that it's a reaction to nonpayment of protection money, but Fazio is skeptical and undertakes an investigation of the owner. Or perhaps the bomber was sending a message to a tenant on an upper floor. Montalbano, meanwhile, offers a morning ride to Liliana until her car is repaired and finds himself drifting toward a dalliance with the married woman, even as he realizes that she's duplicitous and probably has other lovers. Fazio learns that a couple of convicted felons list the bombed building as their addresses. Two anonymous letters implicate different people as the target of the bomb, while an anonymous caller claims it went off by accident. Montalbano can't stop obsessing about Liliana and can't resist checking her house for activity. Moreover, his longtime love, Livia, is currently in one of her rejecting phases. Divine intervention—that is, an ill-timed call from Fazio—prevents Montalbano from consummating his affair with Liliana. A second bombing with a similar M.O. and Liliana's disappearance bring the case to a head.

Brisk, biting and cleverly plotted, Montalbano's 18th (*Angelica's Smile*, 2014, etc.) is both droll and suspenseful.

# A beautifully written postmodern novel of deduction that merrily, wittily blows up its genre's conventions.

AN EXAGGERATED MURDER



## SNAKE PASS

Campbell, Colin

Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (264 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Apr. 8, 2015

978-0-7387-4346-2

A righteous Yorkshire cop can't seem to stay out of trouble.

In order to rescue brutally assaulted teen Sharon Davis, veteran lawman Jim Grant breaks into the house where her assailant, Lee Adkins, is hiding and beats him for good measure. When Jamie Hope, the young constable who assisted him, reports Grant's excesses, the gritty Yorkshire cop gets suspended. It's a cold and snowy night, to boot. Needing a sympathetic ear and hoping for more, Grant heads to the Woodside Truck Stop and Diner and waitress Wendy Rivers, with whom he's had a long-running flirtation. Sure enough, warm, sassy Wendy puts him back in a good mood. But as he's about to drive away, Grant notices the lights go out in the diner, even though the place never closes. In the shadows, he discerns that a robbery is in progress and sneaks back in, thinking, first, that he can save Wendy and, second, that this might be exciting. The ensuing action unfolds in short, punchy chapters whose titles give minute-by-minute times. Grant watches the Ukrainian head thug pummel Wendy in an unsuccessful attempt to learn the location of the safe. When the tough goes looking for the chef, high-maintenance Mickey Frevert, Grant calls headquarters for backup, then rescues Wendy, at least temporarily. Next, the last person Grant could possibly want as an ally shows up: Jamie Hope. The arrival of more Ukrainians leaves the good guys feeling seriously overmatched.

Campbell's fourth *Resurrection Man* novel (*Adobe Flats*, 2014, etc.) is crackerjack entertainment: taut, gritty and full of devilish twists.



## FALSE TONGUES

Charles, Kate

Poisoned Pen (350 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book

\$22.95 Lg. Prt. | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4642-0004-5

978-1-4642-0047-2 e-book

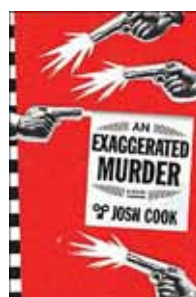
978-1-4642-0003-8 Lg. Prt.

A trip to her old college offers deacon Callie Anson (*Deep Waters*, 2009, etc.) both challenges and opportunities.

Callie hadn't planned on attending Deacon's Week, her alma mater's conference for recent graduates. Her memories of Archbishop Temple House are sweet, but her breakup with her classmate Adam is just too recent and painful. Even her budding romance with Family Liaison Officer Mark Lombardi can't take the sting out of her memories of Adam's announcement shortly after their graduation that he'd be marrying parishioner Pippa instead of Callie. But Tamsin

Howells swears that Adam isn't coming to Deacon's Week, and Callie would love to see Tamsin and her old friends Val Carver and Nicky Lamb. So she bundles off to Kings Cross station only to be bedeviled by weekend repairs on the District and Circle Lines—and finds when she finally arrives at Archbishop Temple that Adam has decided to come after all. Back home, Mark confronts his Italian family's coolness toward his relationship with Callie and their determination to find him a nice Italian girl instead. At work, he's involved in a heart-rending case: the stabbing death of Sebastian Frost, young, athletic and promising, the only child of Richard and Miranda Frost, a doctor and a surgeon. As Mark tries to guide the Frosts through the challenges of a police investigation they'd prefer was unnecessary, Callie confronts mysteries of her own: the mysteries of the human heart.

Callie has never been more appealing than in this sensitive exploration of love and loss.



## AN EXAGGERATED MURDER

Cook, Josh

Melville House (336 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Mar. 3, 2015

978-1-61219-427-1

Three things to keep in mind about this book: Travel is far more enriching than arrival, detectives are essentially professional critics, and always be very careful when you decide to quit smoking.

Trident "Trike" Augustine is a very American, excruciatingly dysfunctional variant of the "consulting investigator" who's been outsmarting criminals and out-thinking authority figures since the Victorian era. Yet even though this hip, dissolute Sherlock has managed to put away whole armies of fiends, thieves, psychos and grifters, Trike's teeming brain has hit an immobilizing speed bump: the disappearance of a reclusive billionaire named Joyce. The only substantial clues are a large pool of blood and a secret compartment within Joyce's mansion that the feds unaccountably seal off from further scrutiny by either Trike or the local cops. (By the way, it's not clear, or particularly important, what city this is, though Cook, a first-time novelist, sells books in the Greater Boston region.) Trike can't help but use such impediments as an excuse for pressing his inquiry. But the deeper he looks, the more confounded he becomes. There is, for instance, the matter of the dead pig that somehow shows up on Trike's apartment floor in the dark of night, doing nothing but bleeding on his rug. The best, if tentative, conclusion that Trike and his two Watsons, a sassy painter named Lola and a circumspect ex-FBI agent named Max, can reach about the pig is that it's one of several crass warnings to stay off the Joyce case. Which, this being a detective story, has the opposite effect on Trike. But the only thing that becomes clear about the novel's plot is that it's somewhat less and considerably more than an average detective story. Rather, it's a sustained inquiry into the nature of detecting itself—and into the process of writing.



Keep in mind the millionaire's name and the book's quicksilver references to *Ulysses*—and to Edgar Allan Poe's genre-defining mystery tale "The Purloined Letter." Such literary gamesmanship may exasperate the traditional mystery lover, but the writing throughout is so crystalline, the dialogue so acerbically funny and the characters so engaging as to make the pages seem as though they're turning themselves.

**A beautifully written postmodern novel of deduction that merrily, wittily blows up its genre's conventions while at the same time re-energizing possibilities for the 21st-century detective story.**

FICTION

### THE MERCY OF THE NIGHT

*Corbett, David*

Thomas & Mercer (452 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4778-4944-6

Ten years after her childhood escape from a homicidal rapist, a star-crossed teenager is in deep trouble once more.

Maybe that should be "even deeper trouble," since Jacqueline Garza has never been trouble-free since the day she chewed through her bonds and ran away from the isolated cabin where cab driver Victor Cope was keeping her and another girl captive. Jacqi's father is in prison. She's never gotten along with her useless mother, Nina, or her older brother, Richie, back in Rio Mirada, California. And she hasn't exactly bonded with Lonnie Bachmann, who runs the rehab center for prostitutes where she's been staying. When Jacqi takes off again, Lonnie calls her friend Phelan Tierney, an ex-lawyer who's been tutoring the girl, in the hope that he can find her and persuade her to return. But Jacqi's resumed her life on the streets, pinning her future hopes on the closest thing to a friend in her life: Michael Verrazzo, the widely reviled former head of the firefighters' union, the repeat client who's asked her to come away with him. The pair has barely climbed into his car when Verrazzo is killed under the eyes of Jacqi and dozens of other kids from the neighborhood. Since none of the witnesses will stick around long enough to be identified, much less testify, Detective Jordan Skellenger, who first met Jacqi after her more successful escape 10 years ago, seeks her again under even more menacing circumstances.

**Corbett (*Blood of Paradise*, 2007, etc.) doesn't stint on either narrative or psychological complications, and readers who can stick with Jacqi and Tierney and Skellenger will feel that they've been expertly put through a particularly foul-smelling wringer.**



### LOVE'S ALCHEMY

*Crockett, Bryan*

Five Star (392 pp.)

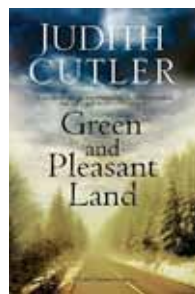
\$25.95 | Apr. 8, 2015

978-1-4328-3025-0

Meet John Donne: soldier, poet, lover, husband, spy.

The current patron of Jack Donne, as he prefers to be called, is Lady Bedford, who's interested in him for reasons other than the verse he writes to keep his family afloat. Jack's promising career was halted when he neglected to ask the Lord Keeper permission to marry his niece, clever Anne More, and her father refused to release her dowry. King James' promise of religious tolerance has been negated by wily Robert Cecil, his chief counselor and spymaster, who aims to crush followers of the old faith. Jack is a member of a prominent Catholic family who became Protestant but still suffers from doubt. A distant relative of the martyred Sir Thomas More, he opposes fanaticism and would love to see religious freedom. But he's forced to spy for Cecil by pretending to be returning to the Catholic faith in order to ferret out those Catholics who would harm England, especially one known only as Guido. Cecil forces two companions on Jack: Lady Bedford's manservant, Timothy Burr, and Sir Walter Chute, who's proclaimed his desire to become Catholic. Seeking information about the elusive Guido, Jack visits many of his Catholic friends in England and even goes with his erstwhile companions to Holland, where his mother lives in exile. Caught between his desire to see Catholics worship freely and the nefarious schemes of the untrustworthy Cecil, he returns to England surrounded by dangers he never suspects.

**Crockett's first foray into historical fiction is a compelling and plausible thriller.**



### GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

*Cutler, Judith*

Severn House (224 pp.)

\$28.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-7278-8465-7

Husband-and-wife sleuths reopen a case that almost everyone else wants to keep closed.

Mark Turner and Fran Harman have recently married and retired from their local police force in Kent. Upon returning from their honeymoon, they realize they miss the intellectual challenge of police work. They agree to be consultants for the West Mercia Police in the case of Natalie Foreman, a football player's wife who abandoned a badly deformed baby boy in a car and disappeared with her older son in a snowstorm 20 years ago. By the time Fran and Mark arrive, a recent merger of regional police has pushed the high-ranking officer who wanted them for the case out and Assistant Chief Constable Colin

Webster in. The handpicked team and the back-room support Fran and Mark were promised turn out to be three very green officers and a couple of computers; the couple even have to provide their own coffeemaker. Furthermore, Webster is annoyingly unhelpful, the files on Natalie and her son are surprisingly thin, her parents are disturbingly unresponsive, and the original members of the search are mostly retired. The general belief seems to be that Natalie and her son died in the snowstorm. As Mark tells Fran, "You almost feel that it's not just the locals who don't want us to investigate properly—it's the whole environment." As unexpected rain and overflowing riverbanks turn neighborhoods into islands, floodwaters drive Fran and Mark from two different residences. But the more adversity Fran and Mark face, the more determined they are to find out what really happened to Natalie and her sons.

**Although Cutler gets a bit carried away with the number of characters and catastrophes she introduces, Fran and Mark are as likable and capable as they were in their last adventure (*Double Fault*, 2014).**



### COLD TRAIL

Dawson, Janet

Perseverance Press (216 pp.)

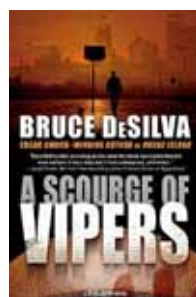
\$15.95 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-56474-555-2

When there's evidence that a PI's brother has disappeared, her professional world turns personal as she uses her skills to uncover the truth about his life.

The Sonoma County Coroner's office calls in Jeri Howard to identify a John Doe; though Jeri is a private investigator by trade, the case is personal as the body was found near a bracelet belonging to her brother. Jeri is relieved to report to her family that the body is not Brian's, though it doesn't solve the mystery of where he has been since leaving on a hiking trip the week before. Jeri tries to find out more information from Brian's wife, Sheila, but starts to get more than she'd bargained for when Sheila discloses her fear that Brian has been having an affair. Seems like this is not the only secret Brian may be hiding as Jeri digs deeper into her brother's life. Maybe there was a reason for Brian's quickie move from Sonoma to Petaluma other than just getting a new teaching job. Will a search into the true identity of the body on the boat lead Jeri to her missing brother? Is Brian's involvement not as a victim but as a potential suspect for murder? It almost feels like the more Jeri uncovers, the less she knows.

**A gentle murder mystery, if there is such a thing. Dawson's series continues with a softer side to Jeri and the Oakland scene (*Bit Player*, 2011, etc.).**



### A SCOURGE OF VIPERS

DeSilva, Bruce

Forge (320 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

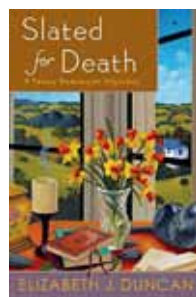
978-0-7653-7431-8

978-1-4668-4143-7 e-book

A fourth chapter in the race to the bottom between the state of Rhode Island and *Providence Dispatch* reporter Liam Mulligan (*Providence Rag*, 2014, etc.).

Ever since the *Dispatch* was purchased by General Communications Holdings International, Mulligan's career has been on life support. The only reason Managing Editor Charles Twisdale doesn't fire him is that he'd be eligible to collect unemployment while he beat the bushes for his next job. But the Ocean State is giving Mulligan a run for his money in the hard-luck stakes. Now that Mulligan's old pal Gov. Fiona McNerney, whose years in the convent earned her the sobriquet Attila the Nun, is considering a bill to legalize sports betting in Little Rhody, money is flooding into the state. The goal is to purchase—um, influence—lawmakers on both sides of the issue; the effect is to throw the state's normal racketeering-cum-bribery apparatus, represented by Dominic "Whoosh" Zerelli, Mulligan's elderly bookmaker, into turmoil. Suspecting that the time has come to turn in his chips, Whoosh urges Mulligan to take over his book—a move that doesn't sit at all well with his great-nephew Mario Zerelli. And there are murders too—not of anyone worth mourning but enough to set a pair of cops Mulligan dubs the Homicide Twins on his tail. The fade-out finds Mulligan wondering whether to stake his future on the mean streets of Providence or the online reaches of the rival *Ocean State Rag*.

**The mystery this time is no more than a pendant to a frantic, funny, unsparing account of the corrosive power of big money on print journalism, state government and the fragile souls who fill out the cast. Enjoy it on those terms, and you'll be sorry when it's over.**



### SLATED FOR DEATH

Duncan, Elizabeth J.

Minotaur (304 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-250-05521-7

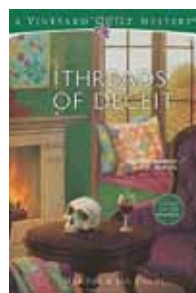
978-1-4668-5838-1 e-book

A murder in a Welsh slate mine challenges an amateur sleuth.

Canadian expat Penny Brannigan has long since become part of the community in Llanelen, where she and her harp-playing partner, Victoria Hopkirk, own a highly successful spa. Glenda Roberts, one of her customers, is organizing a St. David's Day concert in the depths of the Llyn Dhu slate mine, where her father died. The mine, which ceased operations years ago, is run as a living history museum. When Glenda is found

dead in the mine, Penny's friend DCI Gareth Davies finds that she was struck down with a slate splitter. Victoria, concerned about all the money that must be paid out even if the concert doesn't come off, begs Penny to take over its leadership. Glenda, whose abrasive personality won her few friends, leaves behind a small number of mourners: her mother, Doreen; her son, Peris; and her sister, Rebecca, who runs a market stall. When Doreen dies unexpectedly in her nursing home, Penny, who's often helped Gareth (*A Small Hill to Die On*, 2012, etc.), can't resist snooping around with the help of another nursing home resident. Gareth, ever hoping to marry Penny, is always willing to hear her theories, one of which links Rebecca and Glenda to a scheme to sell counterfeits of the spa's hand cream and other goodies. So many people disliked Glenda that you'd think Penny and her friends would be hard-pressed to pick out the one who was willing to kill. Actually, the mystery is easy to solve.

**But the tutorial on slate mining and plenty of local color make for an entertaining entry in this long-running series.**

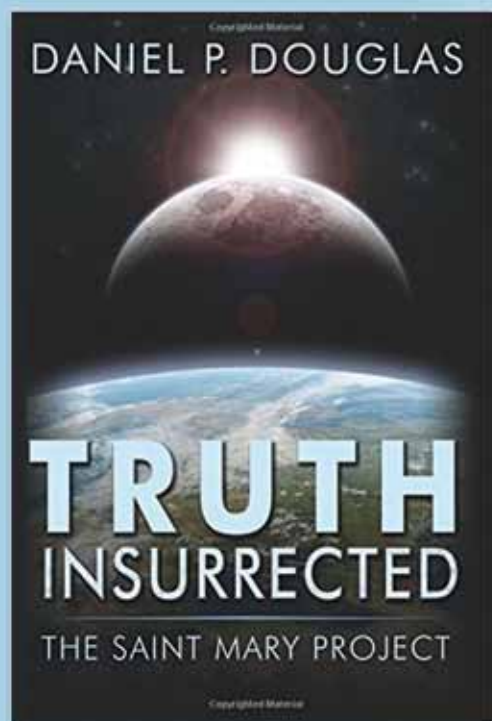


### THREADS OF DECEIT

*Fox, Mae & Fields, Jan*  
Annie's Publishing (224 pp.)  
\$7.99 paper | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-57367-477-5

An innkeeper gets involved in a historical dig and a modern murder.

Julie Ellis and her partner, Hannah Marks, used to hunt down stolen antiques. Now they're on the run from some very nasty people. It all begins when Julie applies for the job of innkeeper at the Quilt House Inn in the little Missouri town of Straussberg and Hannah agrees to do the cooking. The inn specializes in pretty sedate quilters, but things get considerably livelier when Julie agrees to house historian Daniel Franklin. Daniel's looking for the remains of *The Grand Adventure*, a steamboat he believes was buried in a farmer's field when the river changed its path. Although his interest is historical, there may be treasure involved. The first clue Daniel spots is part of the beam over the fireplace in Hannah's room.



ISBN: 978-0990737100

DanielPDouglas.com

## TRUTH INSURRECTED: THE SAINT MARY PROJECT

by Daniel P. Douglas

In Douglas' debut sci-fi thriller, an anonymous source puts a former FBI agent on the trail of a government conspiracy involving aliens.

*Will truth be mighty and prevail?*

"A multigenre espionage tale that's unquestionably entertaining." — *Kirkus Reviews*

"...a gripping read, a thriller like no other..."  
— *Readers' Favorite*

"An excellent science-fiction/conspiracy thriller... Highly recommended!"  
— *The Columbia Review of Books & Film*

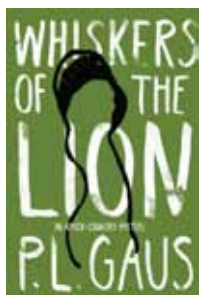
GeminidPress.com

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Even after they decipher the code cut into it, they're still faced with a cryptic message. More problems arise once Daniel starts excavating. First a local lawyer tries to buy the property. When the owner refuses, the equipment is vandalized. Then Daniel's friend George, the night guard, is murdered. Since the police have fastened on Daniel as the likely killer, Julie forgets about keeping in the background and puts her talents to work investigating. She knows she's on the right trail when she starts getting threatening messages.

**This series kickoff features a touch of romance and some interesting historical tidbits but not much exercise for your own inner sleuth.**



### WHISKERS OF THE LION

Gaus, P.L.

Plume (256 pp.)

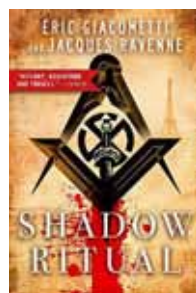
\$15.00 paper | Mar. 31, 2015

978-0-14-218173-7

The murder of Ruth Zook (*The Names of Our Tears*, 2013) continues to take its toll on the Amish community of Holmes County, Ohio.

Sheriff Bruce Robertson thinks the horror Ruth brought into Holmes County along with her cocaine-filled suitcase has ended with her death at the hands of Teresa Molina. But Fannie Helmuth, who brought a similar bag back from the Amish vacation colony in Pinecrest, Florida, is now on the run. And when newly minted police detective Stan Armbruster finds the body of Howie Dent, Fannie's companion in flight, in the basement of the deserted Jonas Helmuth farmhouse, Robertson knows it's only a matter of time before Molina goes after Fannie, too. With the help of Armbruster and computer whiz Rachel Ramsayer, Robertson tracks Fannie through a string of letters sent by Amish scribes to the Holmes County *Budget*, then persuades professor Mike Branden and his wife, Caroline, to dress Amish and go up to Middlefield to bring Fannie to safety. Meanwhile, Robertson's kept busy bargaining over the terms of Fannie's protective custody with FBI Agent Parker, who wants the Amish girl to testify against the Molina gang in federal court. Fannie has communicated with no one from her former world except Jodie Tapp, a Mennonite waitress she knew from Pinecrest. As Branden, Robertson and Parker all reach out to her, Fannie wonders whom to trust. But Robertson gets his answer in a cryptic dream dredged up from his youth: Fear the Roar, Trust the Bite.

**Out of the peaceful world of buggies and prayer caps, Gaus conjures a nail-biter that doesn't give up its secrets any quicker than the Amish.**



### SHADOW RITUAL

Giacometti, Éric & Ravenne, Jacques

Translated by Trager, Anne

Le French Book (280 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Mar. 25, 2015

978-1-939474-30-8

An international odd couple tracks a cabal of neo-Nazi assassins.

Berlin 1945. Martin Borman, facing defeat, confides a cache of crates containing invaluable cargo to Frenchman-turned-SS officer Francois Le Guermant, who then deliriously escapes an attack by the Red Army. Fast-forward 60 years to Rome, where suave French detective Antoine Marcas gives a speech on his avocation, ancient Masonic rites, while a Dachau survivor named Marek researches ancient relics. Shortly after he receives a call from Perillian, a businessman who reports a miraculous discovery, Perillian is shot dead by the mercenary Bashir, whom he unwisely trusted. Bashir promptly heads to Jerusalem to kill Marek. In Rome's French Embassy, archivist Sophie Dawes is killed by an unnamed woman. Sophie's case falls to brusque Special Agent Jade Zewinski, who also happens to be her close friend. As he dines with Marcas, French intelligence officer Jaigu asks him to consult. Jade bristles at Marcas' intervention but grudgingly admits the perceptiveness of his observations. They team up reluctantly, and Marcas turns his attention to a series of unsolved Freemason murders over the last century. Bashir muses that although he's no neo-Nazi, he'll gladly take their money. Marcas and Jade's searching takes them through Nazi diaries, the secrets of the Freemasons, and a series of captures, killings and narrow escapes.

**Though far from subtle, Giacometti and Ravenne's series kickoff has abundant visceral appeal.**



### MANHATTAN IN MINIATURE

Grace, Margaret

Perseverance Press (232 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-56474-562-0

Retired English teacher and miniature aficionado Gerry Porter returns to New York City to solve a mystery.

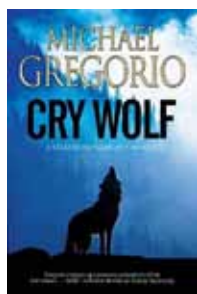
Gerry and her granddaughter, Maddie, are shopping for miniatures at their favorite crafts store in Lincoln Point, California, when Bebe, the manager, asks her to come to New York with her and help out at a trade show. Before Gerry knows what hit her, Maddie and Bebe have her convinced, and she and Maddie are packing for the trip. Before they depart, Gerry gets a call from her old friend Cynthia Bishop, who lives in New York. The aunt who raised Cynthia has died under mysterious circumstances: The police think she accidentally confused some of her pills, but a large sum of money is missing. Gerry, who's helped her police officer nephew Skip on a few of his cases (*Madness*

# A new park ranger with a secret past seeks peace in the wilderness but instead finds an organized crime blood feud.

CRY WOLF

in *Miniature*, 2014), sniffs a case of her own. Upon arriving at her old stomping grounds, she finds herself pulled between Bebe, who expects her to help with the show, and Cynthia, who wants her to find her aunt's killer. Setting up the show is a piece of cake, especially with all the help from her precocious granddaughter, but proving that Cynthia's aunt was murdered is no easy task. The suspects, all with access to her apartment, include her health aides, the doormen, the superintendent of her apartment house and an old boyfriend. Although Gerry feels guilty that Maddie is seeing few Big Apple sites, Maddie is thrilled to lend a hand at the show, where she even helps catch some thieves. Some last-minute assistance from the NYPD comes in very handy.

Not much of a puzzle, but the interaction between Gerry and Maddie is as charming as the nostalgic look at New York.



## CRY WOLF

Gregorio, Michael

Severn House (192 pp.)

\$28.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-7278-8467-1

A new park ranger with a secret past seeks peace in the wilderness but instead finds an organized crime blood feud.

In early 2011, Sebastiano Cangio, having witnessed a brutal Mafioso murder at Italy's Soverato Beach, flees to

London, abandoning his doctoral studies. Longing to return, he's lured back by the seemingly idyllic job of forest ranger in Umbria. Even as his plan is forming, crime heats up in the region as 'Ndrangheta (the Calabrian version of the Mafia) family hit man Corrado Formisano puts several bullets into disloyal drug dealer Andrea Bonnani. Despite the gathering storm, Cangio settles nicely into his new gig and even finds romance with lovely local Loredana. A more jaundiced approach to law enforcement is provided by Gen. Arturo Corsini, the special ops commander known (perhaps ironically) as "The Legend." As recently re-elected mayor Maurizio Truini prepares to double-cross his business partners by approving some unpopular building permits, his pampered wife, Cesira, who battles ennui by shoplifting, nearly discovers the rotting corpse in the boot of her husband's car. The more observant Cangio and the 'Ndrangheta notice the increased appearance of wolves in the area. After steadying himself with copious vino, farmer Roberto Casini calls police to report a body on his property. In his aversion, the mayor may have bitten off more than he can chew, and citizens begin disappearing. The turf gets even bloodier when the hit men turn on each other. Cangio finds himself caught in the middle, with little certainty about whom to trust.

This series kickoff by the author of the Hanno Stiffenii historical mysteries (*Unholy Awakening*, 2010, etc.) features some deliciously dry humor and a lively, tough-minded plot.

## FICTION

## BLOOD SWEEP

Havill, Steven F.

Poisoned Pen (306 pp.)

\$24.95 | \$14.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book

\$22.95 Lg. Prt. | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4642-0387-9

978-1-4642-0389-3 paper

978-1-4642-0390-9 e-book

978-1-4642-0388-6 Lg. Prt.

This 20th chapter in the crime annals of Posadas County, New Mexico, brings Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman (*One Perfect Shot*, 2012, etc.) up against demons past and present.

The search for whomever took a shot at Sheriff Robert Torrez from several hundred yards away and missed him by 10 inches ends with the discovery of one Miguel A. Quesada, whose Jeep is carrying a rifle that looks like the perfect candidate for the weapon. But Quesada's in no position to clear up the mystery since he's been shot to death himself. Nor is Estelle in a much better position; since she found her much-loved old colleague, retired Sheriff Bill Gastner, crouching helpless on the cement floor of his own garage with a broken hip, she's devoted herself to getting him swift and comprehensive care, despite her department's needs and crusty Gastner's brusque demands to leave him alone. Even getting Gastner to a hospital doesn't free up Estelle, because a series of apparently unrelated phone warnings alerts her to possible extortion and kidnapping threats against her son, Francisco, who's playing a concert in Mexico with an equally gifted friend from Missouri's Leister Academy. The threats against Francisco eventually bring Estelle face to face with enigmatic Benedicte Mazón, who claims to be her long-lost uncle. Is it possible that this aging jailbird, who manages to escape from police custody, could hold the key to both the gaps in Estelle's knowledge of her own early years and the shooting of Bobby Torrez?

The family-secrets angle makes this leisurely episode most likely to appeal to fans less invested in the nominal mystery than in the long narrative arc supplied by the extended family of Posadas County, in which everyone seems to be related to everyone else by blood or spirit.



## THE RUSSIAN BRIDE

Kovacs, Ed

Minotaur (320 pp.)

\$26.99 | \$12.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-250-04700-7

978-1-4668-4737-8 e-book

An elite military officer has to work his way through the Russian crime scene to rescue his sister and figure out how he fits into the larger scheme.

Though he's known as the assistant defense attaché at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, Maj. Kit Benings is basically a spy. What most of his colleagues don't know

is that Kit is working undercover. It's his American colleagues he's spying on as he tries to find a mole who's been leaking secrets to the Russians. Back home, Kit's younger sister, Staci, keeps an eye on their mother, who hasn't been the same since her husband and son died in a plane crash four years earlier. Despite his eagerness to get back, Kit fits in a meeting with crime boss Viktor Popov before leaving Russia. Viktor has an interesting proposal for Kit: cash in exchange for marrying his niece, Yulana. Kit doesn't care if Yulana is after citizenship or something more. He's not the kind of guy to sell out his government. But Viktor, who won't take no for an answer, orders the kidnapping of Staci to help convince Kit. Now Kit has to go rogue to find his sister while he's saddled with a new wife and her unknown motives. Luckily, Kit has a dependable crew of talented Army, SEAL and other experts willing to stick their necks out to help him find both his sister and the true reason for Viktor's insistence on saddling him with a Russian bride.

**Outside his familiar turf of New Orleans (*Burnt Black*, 2013, etc.), Kovacs focuses less on local history and more on quick, entertaining action. If he fails to develop very complex characters, that's a tradeoff for introducing so many specialists in what's clearly intended as the first of a series.**



### BYE, BYE LOVE

Larsen, K.J.

Poisoned Pen (224 pp.)

\$24.95 | \$14.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book

\$22.95 Lg. Prt. | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4642-0383-1

978-0-4642-0385-5 paper

978-1-4642-0386-2 e-book

978-1-4642-0384-8 Lg. Prt.

A PI reports a murder to the police only to find the victim is missing once they get there.

Cat DeLuca has a hard time staying on the right side of the law, considering that her work for her Pants on Fire Detective Agency has gotten her into some scrapes in the past. But with trusty partner and loyal beagle Inga by her side, Cat continues her main job of catching liars and cheaters in the act. While Cat and Inga are off the clock on a neighborhood run, they come upon a bigger mystery than their usual fare: the body of someone whose face has been shot beyond recognition. Cat identifies the victim from his wallet as Bernie Love, the numbers guy for the Provenzas, and she's not surprised that a connection to that family would get a guy killed. Right after she makes the call to the Chicago PD, Cat is attacked and knocked unconscious. When she comes to, all she can remember is a man with a Rolex who she's sure is Bernie's killer. The bigger problem is that, while Cat was unconscious, the body has somehow disappeared. Police Capt. Bob is not amused that Cat has once again entangled herself with trouble, although without a body, he's not even sure he believes her story. She knows she has to investigate, even if the cops won't, and she's got her quirky assistant, Cleo, and the whole DeLuca family to help her get to the bottom of the case.

**With less emphasis on the characters around Cat to provide romantic intrigue or comic relief (which is Cleo's whole raison d'être), Larsen's latest (*Some Like It Hot*, 2013, etc.) falls a little flat.**



### INNOCENT DAMAGE

Lewis, Robert K.

Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (312 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | Apr. 8, 2015

978-0-7387-4110-9

A former addict's search for a friend's missing daughter uncovers what appears to be corruption with roots in the local police force.

Thanks to the help of his mentor and informal sponsor, Eduardo "Gato" Calderon, Mark Mallen's life isn't the mess it once was. Mallen was a cop with a bright future until he went too deep undercover and the needle he was sticking in his arm wasn't just for show. Kicked off the force and out of the lives of his wife, Chris, and their young daughter, Anna, Mallen is working hard to stay clean and out of trouble. But trouble seems to know where he lives, and he keeps getting wrapped up in police business (*Untold Damage*, 2013, etc.). This time, trouble finds him in the form of San Francisco Detective Gwen Saunders. She knows Mallen's got the connections to the criminal world, especially in the Tenderloin, that she needs to solve her latest case. Mallen would love to say no—he doesn't owe her anything—but the case involves a missing kid whose mother is a fellow addict. As Mallen tries to figure out what happened to Jessie, he uncovers what looks like something much bigger, something that might indicate an overlap of criminals and officers—though hopefully not Oberon, the landlord who doubles as his police contact. Can he trust Oberon to help him uncover the seedy side of the SFPD, or has Mallen asked one favor too many?

**Even though Mallen and company sometimes come off as noir types rather than recognizable people, the plot Lewis unfolds allows him to develop his characters more deeply this time out.**



### ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Lieberman, Lisa

Five Star (216 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 8, 2015

978-1-4328-3023-6

A second-generation movie star roams the world in search of something.

Ever since her mother, the lovely and talented Vivien Grant, drowned in the family's swimming pool when Cara Walden was a child, she's been raised largely by her gay half brother, Gray, with the help of a Hindu family retainer named Geoffrey. But when the House Committee on Un-American Activities zeroes in on Gray because of his youthful support of

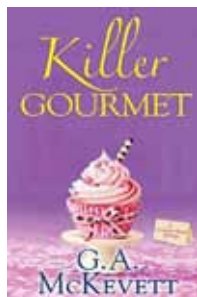


# Drilling for natural gas gets a geologist in deep trouble when she finds a body near the drill site.

SAVING CECIL

anti-Fascist forces in Spain, the trio packs up and moves to London. There, Geoffrey swoons over the coronation of the young Queen Elizabeth while Gray canoodles with bearded Bolsheviks at the New Left Book Club and Cara sings with a Jamaican band at a pub called the Crown and Two Chairmen. When bandleader Dory is killed in a brawl with some Teddy boys, Gray broods and Cara takes a course in stage acting. Soon she's in Taormina, starring in *Stolen Love*, and sleeping with her co-star, Adrian. But director Gianluca Mirano pushes the actors too far, and their passionate affair sours. Cara runs off with Luca's mistress, who develops a sudden urge to pray at the shrine of Padre Pio in San Giovanni Rotondo, but the woman abandons her in Trani, where Cara spends the night with a band of gypsies. An especially handsome gypsy violinist captures her heart, but Cara leaves, only to be united with him years later in Cannes at a screening of *Night and Fog*, where she discovers that he's actually a Polish Jew named Jakub Abramowicz. After a brief tutorial on the Holocaust, Lieberman ends Cara's adventures where they began: in Southern California.

**Cara's debut reads as if it had been written by a committee. Here's hoping Lieberman can keep her eye on the prize in any sequel.**



## KILLER GOURMET

McKeveitt, G.A.  
Kensington (304 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Mar. 31, 2015  
978-0-7582-7657-5

This time it's personal for private eye Savannah Reid and her police detective husband, Dirk Coulter (*Killer Physique*, 2014, etc.).

When her longtime friends John Gibson and Ryan Stone open a high-end eatery in San Carmelita, Savannah envisions an endless array of tasty treats coming her way. But before she can lock her lips around her first Crayfish Vol-a-Vent, ReJuvene is shuttered by the untimely death of its *chef de cuisine*. Whoever butchered Baldwin Norwood certainly had an ax to grind—along with a cleaver and a semiserrated kitchen knife. When she looks for the author of the blood bath in ReJuvene's kitchen, Savannah finds no dearth of candidates. Chef Baldwin's staff hated his guts. But Francia Fortun, Carlos Ortez and Manuel Cervantes provide each other with a time-honored restaurant-worker alibi: They were out back together grabbing a smoke. Perla Viola, Baldwin's girlfriend but not his biggest fan, was at the theater with her daughter and has the playbill to prove it. So his former partner, Yale Ingram, looks like the front-runner. He's got a grudge against Norwood for abandoning their restaurant, Villa Nuevo, to sign on with Gibson and Stone. But because Dirk has his own hunch, Savannah, instead of working for paying customers, devotes herself to helping her hubby collar a killer.

**McKeveitt proves that marriage doesn't stop the fun, as Savannah and Dirk bicker and banter their way through their 20th case before retiring to the bedroom to enjoy a generous dollop of Chantilly cream for dessert.**



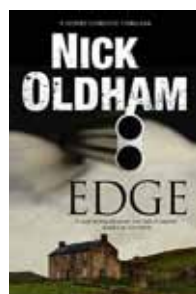
## SAVING CECIL

Mims, Lee  
Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (336 pp.)  
\$14.99 paper | Apr. 8, 2015  
978-0-7387-3427-9

Drilling for natural gas gets a geologist in deep trouble when she finds a body near the drill site.

Getting treed by a feral hog wasn't on Cleo Cooper's agenda when she agreed to serve as consulting geologist for Greenlite Energy's search for natural gas on the Lauderbach Dairy Farm. Even lower on her priority list is to come upon a body in the woods on her way back to the crew. When Cleo's longtime nemesis, Lee County Sheriff Clyde Stuckey, the man who locked up her old man back in the day, is called in to investigate, Cleo wishes she could leave the past in the past. The sheriff has other ideas that include pinning the murder on Cleo. Luckily for her, the sheriff's detective, Sgt. Chris Bryant, decides to be on her side, even if it's only because he wants the chance to sweet-talk her. Little does he know that Cleo's already spoken for. She's just weeks from remarrying her ex-husband, Bud, whose birth certificate says he's Franklin Donovan Cooper IV. Even if she were interested in Chris, he's closer in age to her kids than to her. Since his support isn't enough to get Cleo cleared for certain, a little detective work is in order to establish who had reason to kill someone who seems to have been a friendly college kid. Given the controversy over gas drilling, Cleo's worried there might be an environmental angle to the crime. But when she finds a well-preserved fossil she dubs "Cecil," she thinks she's found the real motive.

**Mims' heroine (*Trusting Viktor*, 2014, etc.) and supporting cast flesh out a rich crew of characters, although Cecil's prominence in the title is a bit too much of a spoiler.**



## EDGE

Oldham, Nick  
Seymour House (224 pp.)  
\$28.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-0-7278-8470-1

Henry Christie returns to face a psychopathic killer and a serious contemplation of retirement.

Charlie Wilder is released early from prison on the condition that he wear an electronic tag. It doesn't take long for him to rid himself of the tag without seeming to be free of it or to plan to open a brothel with his brother, Luke, and a couple of hangers-on. But Charlie's most satisfying act after his release is running over and killing the abusive prison officer who made his life hell. Detective Superintendent Henry Christie of the Force Major Investigation Team is barely informed of the case before Charlie and his gang have robbed and killed a shop owner for his money. That's supposed to be the last outrage before they

launch their new business venture, but an unexpected cash shortfall sends Charlie and his gang into hiding at an old farm he and Luke inherited. A series of cuts and consolidations in the Lancashire Constabulary have stretched the FMIT resources thin, and Christie's the ranking senior officer available to investigate a murder-suicide on a farm near the Wilder brothers'. Tired, aging and overweight, Christie would rather be home in the comfort of his fiancée's pub than getting late-night calls and dangerous assignments. How dangerous this latest case is he learns only when he and his boss are pulled by chance into a night of terror—the outcome of Charlie's murderous rage when he realizes that his girlfriend's been unfaithful.

**The fat, jaded Christie is far from the eager rookie of *Judgement Call* (2014). And this time, Oldham (*Low Profile*, 2014, etc.) seems bent on upping the bloodshed in a grim Keystone Kops gavotte of capture and escape.**



### DEADLIGHT HALL

Rayne, Sarah

Severn House (240 pp.)

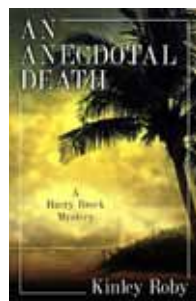
\$29.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-7278-8471-8

Ghosts from World War II haunt a Victorian mansion.

Professor Leo Rosendale is nearing retirement and moving out of his childhood home. Suspecting that the Wolvercote mansion near Oxford is haunted, he asks colleague Michael Flint to look into the matter. It's a logical choice because Michael and his ladylove, Nell, who deals in antiques, have considerable experience with the spirit world (*The Whispering*, 2014, etc.). Rosendale visits Nell's shop with an old figurine for her to sell. It depicts a golem, known from Jewish mythology as an evil figure but literally defined as "formless." Indeed, Michael does hear a child's voice in the house and briefly sees a childlike figure. He learns that the golem figure is pure silver and very valuable, dating back to 1780. How did Rosendale come to acquire it? Flashbacks to his childhood fill in the picture piece by piece. Recalling when he and young twins Sophie and Susannah Reiss debated the rumors they'd heard about children being sent east to the Angel of Death, it gradually becomes clear that the twins were in hiding from the Nazis. Michael's discovery of letters from the 19th century hints at an even darker history for the mansion, then known as Salamander House. Letters figure prominently in the story, as do painful memories that Michael's discoveries dredge up for Rosendale, who's never been satisfied with the cover story that the long-departed Sophie and Susannah were placed with a local family. Michael's unearthing of a journal confirms some of his worst fears.

**Michael and Nell's fifth thriller is skillfully structured and packed with suspense.**



### AN ANECDOTAL DEATH

Roby, Kinley

Five Star (310 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 8, 2015

978-1-4328-3024-3

A private investigator tackles a politically sensitive case that changes his life.

Lovely, wealthy Meredith Winters wants Harry Brock (*Beyond Redress*, 2013, etc.) to look into the death of her husband, Amos Lansbury, who was spear fishing with three other men when he vanished. Although no body was found, he was declared dead, and though his death is ruled an accident, Meredith thinks it was murder. Lansbury ran Prentice Foster's victorious down-and-dirty campaign for the state senate against Rycroft Tillman, and when some of the men Lansbury worked on the campaign with are also killed, Harry thinks it was murder too. Disquieted, he's tempted to retreat to his home in Bartram's Hammock, a South Florida nature preserve, where his only neighbor is Tucker LaBeau, an elderly farmer who's his friend and confidant. After several divorces and a painful love affair, Harry is in love with Holly Pike, who bought a ranch in Montana after her husband's murder made it painful for her to remain in Florida (*Death's Long Shadow*, 2011). Holly begged Harry to come with her, but he clings to his life on the Hammock, his source of solace from all his mistakes. Although he has a great relationship with the sheriff's department, political pressure keeps them from linking the murders into a single case. So Harry's left on his own as he tries to figure out why so many people are being killed.

**Although it isn't his toughest mystery or the one with the most thrills, Harry's 10th case is special because it cuts painfully close to his core.**



### MISS JULIA LAYS DOWN THE LAW

Ross, Ann B.

Viking (320 pp.)

\$26.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

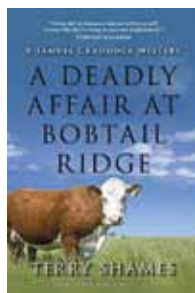
978-0-525-42709-4

A Southern gentlewoman's nerves are shredded after she finds a body—and not for the reason you'd expect.

The emphatically married Miss Julia Murdoch is beside herself after attending a coffee meeting at the home of Connie Clayborn, a newcomer to Abbotsville. Nor is she the only one offended by the oblivious Connie's rant about what's wrong with their town and how she proposes to fix it. Julia contents herself with grumbling to her like-minded friends and avoiding Connie until her pastor, swearing her to secrecy, begs her to go see Connie and ask her to apologize to his wife, Emma Sue Ledbetter, who suffers from migraines and low self-esteem. Emma Sue has been devastated ever since Connie criticized her pet project, the town park.

Much against her will, Julia sallies forth, only to find Connie dead in her kitchen. Asking the guard at the gated community to call the police, she returns home and discovers that she's the leading suspect. The police have heard all about Julia's dislike of Connie's plans, but she won't break her promise to keep the reason for her visit confidential until she sees Pastor Ledbetter, who's evidently doing everything possible to avoid her. With her husband out of town, Julia does a little sleuthing of her own with help from a likable petty criminal, but her efforts to prove her innocence only get her in more trouble.

**Can Julia, now in her 16th installment** (*Miss Julia's Marvelous Makeover*, 2014, etc.), possibly be as naïve as she continues to appear? Die-hard fans will brush this question aside and relish the surprise ending.



### A DEADLY AFFAIR AT BOBTAIL RIDGE

*Shames, Terry*

Seventh Street/Prometheus (250 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | \$11.99 e-book

Apr. 7, 2015

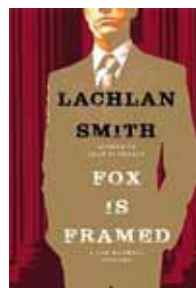
978-1-63388-046-7

978-1-63388-047-4 e-book

A semiretired lawman helps a friend and finds a murderer.

Samuel Craddock lands the job as acting chief of police when his Texas town is too broke to hire anyone else. His friend county prosecutor Jenny Sandstone is a very private person whose privacy is shattered when her mother, following a stroke, asks Samuel to find someone named Howard and protect Jenny from unspecified danger. Jenny doesn't want to talk to Samuel about it, even after her mother dies. In spite of her silence, he discovers that Howard was the father who walked out on her family years before. Jenny also refuses to discuss her estranged brother, Edward, even when he shows up claiming their mother left her home to him and only its contents to Jenny. Meanwhile, someone's harassing Jenny by attacking her beloved horses, first letting them out of their pasture, then putting a rattlesnake into one of the stalls. When Samuel gets a friend to look after the horses, he's attacked. Digging into Jenny's old cases and her closely guarded past, Samuel finds a dangerous meth cooker and his son, who have a grudge against her. When Jenny's run off the road, Samuel steps up his investigation in an effort to discover who's trying to kill her.

**Although you may beat the detective to the solution in Samuel's fourth case** (*Dead Broke in Jarrett Creek*, 2014, etc.), getting there is a heck of a ride.



### FOX IS FRAMED

*Smith, Lachlan*

Mysterious Press (256 pp.)

\$24.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-8021-2350-3

San Francisco attorney Leo Maxwell (*Lion Plays Rough*, 2014, etc.) faces another round of all-in-the-family murder when his father, convicted years ago of killing his wife, gets a shot at another trial that could turn him free—or put him away for keeps.

Since he's dead now, it's impossible to tell why prosecutor Gary Coles failed to disclose evidence that Caroline Maxwell had what appears to be bruising sex with a man who clearly wasn't her husband very shortly before she was beaten to death with her son's baseball bat. But once the suppression of this evidence is ruled grounds for a new trial, Leo and his lawyer brother, Teddy, who've kept Lawrence Maxwell at a distance for 21 years, circle the wagons around him. The shooting that left Teddy brain-damaged five years ago (*Bear Is Broken*, 2013) rules out his active participation in the trial, but Leo's determined to work with Nina Schuyler, the attorney assigned to the case. And the job promises steady work, since no sooner has Lawrence identified his ex-jail mate Russell Bell as a possible snitch who just might testify that Lawrence confessed the murder to him than Bell is shot to death, giving prosecutor Angela Crowder and the SFPD's Detective Neil Shanahan not one but two more chances to convict Lawrence of first-degree murder. Dot Cooper, the nurse who's been secretly engaged to Lawrence for 10 years, provides him with an alibi, but it's far from certain how she and Lawrence will hold up under cross-examination, especially when one of them decides to go off script and raises even more problems for the defense.

**Fans will be rewarded not by the solution, which is considerably more muddled than the mystery itself, but by some of the sharpest courtroom cut-and-thrust since *Presumed Innocent* (1986).**



### THE MOURNING BELLS

*Trent, Christine*

Kensington (432 pp.)

\$15.00 paper | Mar. 31, 2015

978-1-61773-643-8

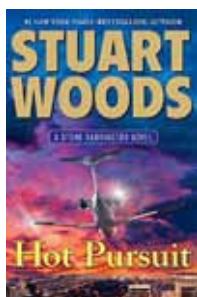
The peculiar Victorian fascination with all aspects of death causes an undertaker to ponder the good and bad features of safety coffins.

Undertaker Violet Harper does not use safety coffins herself, but her interest in them is sparked by an incident en route to a funeral at suburban Brookwood Cemetery on the London Necropolis Railway. As she waits on the platform for the arrival of the coffin for the funeral she is to supervise, she hears a safety bell suddenly ring on one of the coffins. Opening it discloses a confused but clearly living man who's quickly taken away by a physician who has offices nearby. Violet is



shocked, but when the same thing happens a second time, she grows suspicious, and when a young woman becomes hysterical upon the arrival at Brookwood of another safety coffin containing her fiancé's body—a body not prepared in any way for burial—Violet undertakes a sleuthing expedition among London undertakers with the help of her newlywed daughter, Susanna, who's visiting from Colorado with her husband, Ben. She meets varying degrees of cooperation and hostility; and Susanna meets with worse: She's attacked as the family walks home in the dark from a circus performance. So Violet goes to Scotland Yard to talk to DCI Hurst (*A Virtuous Death*, 2014, etc.), who agrees to look into her story even though he's not much interested in it. Every time Violet thinks she's found a solution, her theory turns out to have some flaw. All the while, her determination to find the truth puts her in grave danger.

**The pace is glacial, despite, or perhaps because of, the extensive and interesting exploration of Victorian mourning practices.**



### **HOT PURSUIT**

Woods, Stuart

Putnam (352 pp.)

\$27.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-399-16916-8

Who will Stone Barrington have to deal with first: the terrorists determined to assassinate his old friend, President Katherine Rule Lee, or the disgruntled ex-boyfriend of his latest conquest?

While Katherine Lee is getting sworn in—demoting her husband, Will, from president to first gentleman—and making the rounds of inaugural balls, Stone is anything but idle. He takes delivery of a new Citation M2 jet, seduces delivery pilot Pat Frank and accepts Sen. Everett Salton's nomination for membership in a New York club so exclusive it doesn't have a name. It seems only fair that Pat have a suspicious ex, entrepreneur Kevin Keyes, to add a hint of complication to Stone's generally effortless string of successes. And when someone kills two tenants in a building just deeded to Pat, and fellow pilot Paul Reeves, the drunken buddy Kevin hustles out of a London restaurant as Stone and Pat watch, keeps dogging the new lovers' airways, the plot seems headed for serious, if predictable, complications. Meanwhile, in the even-numbered chapters, dark clouds are forming over Washington. Stone's friend and sometime lover Holly Barker, assistant to the president for national security, gets wind of a trio of mysterious no-goodniks she dubs the Three Stooges, and the CIA and FBI, aided and abetted by Holly's new assistant, Millicent Martindale, promptly get to work identifying them and figuring out what they might be up to. Those are good decisions, because Curly, Larry and Moe are plotting high crimes under diplomatic cover, and someone needs to take them out pronto.

**Once again, tossing Stone (*Paris Match*, 2014, etc.) into international intrigue produces a kind of negative image of James Bond, with a lot less menace, action and suspense, and a lot more bling.**

## **SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY**



### **THE UNREMEMBERED**

Orullian, Peter

Tor (560 pp.)

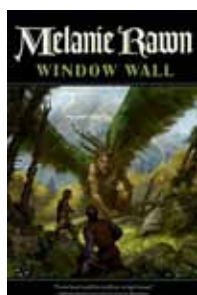
\$17.99 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-7653-7987-0

Reboot (read: author's definitive edition) of a fantasy first published in 2011, pointing the way to an upcoming sequel.

A magical Veil separates the good guys of the Eastlands from the evil Westlands. Members of a sect called the Leiholan dedicate themselves to maintaining the Veil by singing the Song of Suffering. Still, for reasons unclear, the Veil is weakening, so the good guys need to pull an army together (historically, this has been a problem) and also organize a heroes' quest, though it's far from certain what the heroes hope to accomplish. In concept and approach, then, it's a mashup of such favorite (or least favorite, depending) epic-fantasy authors as Stephen R. Donaldson, Terry Brooks, Terry Goodkind and Robert Jordan. The questers are types rather than personalities and consist of: Vendanj, a Sheason (wizard) prone to regrets and gnomish musings; young bowman Tahn Junell, who wants to recover the lost memories of his childhood; Braethen Posian, of a warrior-scholar brotherhood sworn to protect Sheason; farmer and adventure-seeker Sutter, providing comic relief while learning that he sees dead people *before* they die; Tahn's abused sister, Wendra, furnishing moments of real pathos when she howls out her pain and discovers she can work magic through the power of her song; fleet, sexy Mira, with a life expectancy of just 18 years; and good-hearted criminal exile Grant. Along their meandering way, they'll deal with obstacles that test their resolve while being harassed by opposition in the form of Velle (evil wizards), Bar'dyn (sort of knobby giants), zombies and the like. Orullian writes with facility and a confidence that too often veers into overblown description and obscure, rambling philosophical conversations: further evidence, should any be required, that fantasy fans like what they like regardless of rational considerations. Indications that he can or will address these problems in the sequel are few.

**In sum, a lumbering, gnarled behemoth that seeks to crush readers beneath its sheer mass.**



## WINDOW WALL

Rawn, Melanie

Tor (368 pp.)

\$28.99 | \$14.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-7653-7734-0

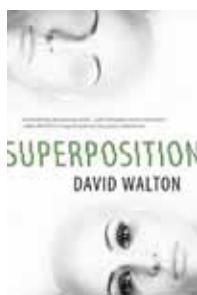
978-1-4668-5516-8 e-book

Series: Glass Thorns, 4

Another entry in Rawn's fantasy series (*Thornlost*, 2014, etc.) about a magical theater company in a sort-of Elizabethan, multispecies setting.

For more than two years, Cade, the heart of theater troupe Touchstone, has consciously denied and rejected his prescient visions, or "Elsewhens," out of a misplaced desire to be more like everybody else. As a result, Touchstone has lost its creative edge, and tensions between Cade and the other players—Mieka, Jeska and Rafe—cause grumbling and dissent. Finally, Mieka confronts Cade and forces him to admit that denying his gift is destroying both himself and the troupe. Meanwhile, in other developments, somebody's experimenting with using magic to blow things up—but why? Cade learns that his younger brother, Dery, has the magic ability to detect gold—a very dangerous talent. Touchstone finds that their agent is not, perhaps, the most reliable of folk. Princess Miriuzca's brother, Ilesko—they're both from a land that rejects the use of magic—presents a play without magic (a thinly disguised *Faust*) and impresses Touchstone despite their skepticism. Then, in one of his Elsewhens, Cade sees the royal castle exploding. He knows the futures he glimpses can be changed. But who would believe him? His deadly enemy, the Archduke Cyed Henick, that's who. The plotting and politics are well-managed if somewhat thin and shadowy. Readers will already be thoroughly familiar with the background. And the youthful characters do begin to develop some maturity, though their performances are still fueled by drugs, with heavy drinking and more drugs to relax.

**A decidedly improved outing, much more inventive and involving than the previous.**



## SUPERPOSITION

Walton, David

Pyr/Prometheus Books (304 pp.)

\$17.00 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-63388-012-2

The first volume of a near-future, science-fiction thriller duology, from the author of *Quintessence* (2013, etc.).

Jacob Kelley, a physicist-turned-Main Line academic with a violent temper, receives an unexpected visit from an old colleague, physicist and womanizer Brian Vanderhall. Vanderhall works at the New Jersey Super-Collider, a state-of-the-art facility now mired in politics and lack of funding. Vanderhall makes some wild claims about the discoveries he's made—reality can be hacked, and parts of it are conscious—and proceeds to demonstrate perpetual motion to a skeptical Kelley. Vanderhall then—stupidly,

since he knows about Kelley's violent streak—pulls out a gun and, insisting it's perfectly safe, shoots Kelley's wife, Elena. Sure enough, Elena's unharmed, though the bullet apparently passed right through her. Alarmed and furious, Kelley slugs Vanderhall. As Elena calls the cops, Vanderhall flees. In alternate chapters, we meet Kelley again—another version of him; this one's in a Philadelphia jail, accused of Vanderhall's murder, and he's unaware of Kelley No. 1. The latter follows clues left by Vanderhall and enters a secret bunker deep inside the NJSC, where he finds the physicist shot to death amid a lab full of scientific wonders. Then a weird, faceless creature with terrifying powers attacks him. He flees to the surface, jumps into Vanderhall's car—and Vanderhall, or another one of him who's very much alive, sits up in the back seat! Things rapidly grow murkier and more complicated. Dazzling puppetry indeed. But the explanation for all this—a conflation of well-known but not necessarily compatible ideas: quantum superposition, the many-worlds theory of branching realities, the Higgs field, which confers mass, and the universe-as-computer—doesn't add up. The one-dimensional characters don't help. Neither will armchair lawyers warm to the rather farcical courtroom drama.

**A thrill a minute. Just don't ask questions.**

## LANDS OF IN-KO-8 TRILOGY. 3RD EDITION

by Edward J. Fisher



"A fetching, seriocomic fantasy of faith, politics, science and death that never succumbs to cuteness."  
—Kirkus Reviews

A sci-fi saga of an alien world, recounting its wars, its near-destruction and its risky restoration.

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email [efisher@winntel.net](mailto:efisher@winntel.net)

## ROMANCE



### FALL WITH ME

Armentrout, Jennifer L.  
Morrow/HarperCollins (384 pp.)  
\$7.99 paper | Mar. 31, 2015  
978-0-06-236274-2

Roxanne “Roxy” Ark has been in love with Reece Anders for years without acting on it, but when she faces a number of threats, Reece compels her to acknowledge her danger and their attraction.

Roxy was in high school when the Anderses moved in next door, and she crushed on Reece immediately. Soon after, Roxy’s world turned upside down when she was involved in a tragic incident she still feels responsible for and which left her gay best friend, Charlie, barely alive. After graduation, Reece went into the Marines and came back wounded, and as he healed, their relationship changed,

settling them into a holding pattern as friends, despite the fact that they are clearly attracted to each other. When Reece tries to force the issue, Roxy allows a rift to form between them, since she’s determined to keep almost everyone at an emotional distance, believing she doesn’t deserve happiness. Roxy is 26, and Reece wants her to overcome her misplaced guilt and live a full life, pursuing her artistic talent and giving up an unfulfilling academic path. Around the time Charlie’s assailant is released from prison, it becomes apparent that someone is stalking Roxy, and Reece won’t let her navigate the dangers on her own. His forced proximity leads to sexual intimacy, but Roxy refuses to admit to an emotional connection. Meanwhile, the threat closes in, leading to a dangerous confrontation. Armentrout’s latest has a lot going on and is in many ways emotionally satisfying. The first quarter of the book has a confusing timeline, however, and many of Roxy’s choices come across as immature, while her decision to blame things moving around in her house on a ghost (as everyone around her—including now-cop Reece—is warning her of a possible serial rapist) is dubious. Still, the romance is sexy and conflicted, and the suspense is interesting if not enthralling.

**Not perfect but escapist and engaging.**



### THE LADY MEETS HER MATCH

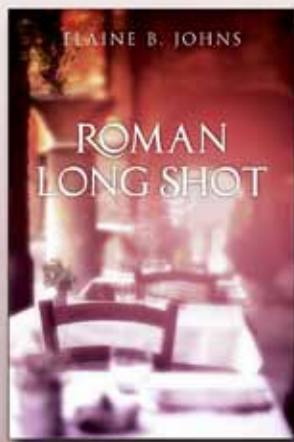
Conkle, Gina  
Sourcebooks Casablanca (352 pp.)  
\$7.99 paper | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-1-4022-9430-3

A young woman in Georgian London is determined to make her own way in the world by opening a coffee shop but must get around her wealthy and handsome landlord to do it.

The second book in Conkle’s Midnight Meeting series (*Meet the Earl at Midnight*, 2014) opens with a daring housebreaking attempt by Claire Mayhew at the home of her landlord, Cyrus Ryland, the King of Commerce. Cyrus has ascended from humble working-class roots and is now wealthy enough to buy acceptance from the nobility. But in spite of having seven sisters, he’s a sexist idiot when it comes to women. “Women need a man’s strong, guiding hand,” he tells his friend. That’s why he refuses to let a woman sign the lease to any of his properties unless she has a husband, father or brother co-sign with her. When Claire fails to get his permission to rent a shop he owns, she sneaks into his house to find a signed document so she can forge his signature on the lease. Predictably, he catches her in his office and is fascinated by her. She escapes, only to leave behind a common work-a-day shoe on his front steps. When he tracks her down, they embark on a long flirtation while Claire feebly tries to hold onto her virtue. The book is an interesting twist on “Cinderella” in which the prince is actually a commoner like his elusive love. But the prose is painfully flowery (why say “Sustenance came sparing by choice” rather than “He hardly ate?”), and many of the lower-class characters are portrayed as being shifty and incompetent at their jobs.

**This author is one to watch, especially if she’s lucky enough to find a more hands-on editor.**

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and their true  
love story...

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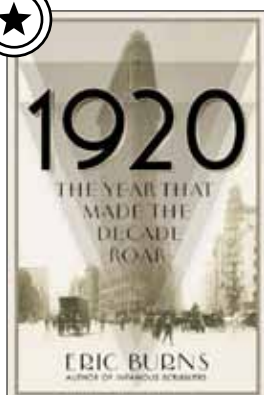


# NONFICTION

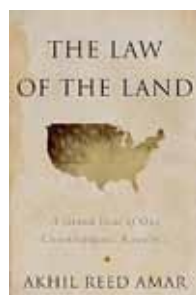


These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

<b>THE LOOTING MACHINE</b> by Tom Burgis .....	56
<b>1920</b> by Eric Burns .....	56
<b>THE INTIMATE BOND</b> by Brian Fagan .....	60
<b>FRANK</b> by Barney Frank .....	61
<b>ORSON WELLES'S LAST MOVIE</b> by Josh Karp .....	68
<b>SPLIT SEASON</b> by Jeff Katz .....	68
<b>THE MANHATTAN PROJECT</b> by David Kishik .....	68
<b>ANGER IS AN ENERGY</b> by John Lydon .....	70
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<b>THE TWO-STATE DELUSION</b> by Padraig O'Malley .....	75
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<b>"THEY CAN LIVE IN THE DESERT BUT NOWHERE ELSE"</b> by Ronald Grigor Suny .....	84



**1920**  
**The Year that Made the Decade Roar**  
Burns, Eric  
Pegasus (400 pp.)  
\$27.95  
May 15, 2015  
978-1-60598-772-9



## THE LAW OF THE LAND A Grand Tour of Our Constitutional Republic

Amar, Akhil Reed  
Basic (352 pp.)  
\$28.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-465-06590-5

In the third volume of a series that assesses the Constitution from varying perspectives, a law professor approaches the document geographically, examining it through the prism of the states.

Constitutional law, as Amar (Law and Political Science/Yale Univ.; *America's Unwritten Constitution: The Precedents and Principles We Live By*, 2012, etc.) reminds us, is not merely the province of scholars and judges, but rather "a game that many can play...if they are smart and serious." The geographical angle is itself a kind of game that, while not wholly successful, has the virtue of reminding us how much of our constitutional law is shaped by our federalism. Using 12 states from all regions of the country, Amar tells individual constitutional stories; all hold national implications, but each one is distinctively imprinted by the characteristics of a place or region. He deals first with personalities, influential constitutional decision-makers whose roots powerfully affected their thoughts on the nature of the Union (Illinois' Lincoln), the applicability of the Bill of Rights to the states (Alabama's Hugo Black) and the limits of presidential power (New York's Robert Jackson). The author then turns to signal cases—e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Tinker v. Des Moines* and *Bush v. Gore*—where the histories of the states from which each arose have inflected our understanding of civil rights, free speech and presidential selection. Finally, Amar concludes with a discussion of some constitutional principles and provisions: presidential succession (Ohio and Texas), gun rights (Wyoming), search and seizure (Massachusetts), and federalism (New Jersey). Even those disinclined to accept his thesis of geographic determinism will delight in his smooth prose, his frank confessions of bias, his frequently sharp insights and the many sparkling nuggets he scatters throughout, whether about the location of the only national park site named after a Supreme Court case or how Camden, New Jersey, got its name.

A provocative, consistently interesting take on our constitutional history.

# THE ENDLESS WAR?



FOR NEARLY A DECADE NOW, government officials (in both Republican and Democratic administrations) have stressed the need to reduce the number of American troops in Afghanistan, setting—and often ignoring—milestone reductions and continually assuring us that a complete withdrawal is on the horizon. On Dec. 31, the United States and allied forces transferred power over military operations to Afghanistan, though some American troops will remain.

While it's easy enough for us to read the headlines and question our leaders and their motivations for their seemingly constant reversals, we are also in no position to adequately judge the frequently changing diplomatic and military scenarios on which those leaders are basing their decisions. However, as dozens of books in the past few years amply demonstrate, the situation on the ground is just as complex and difficult to comprehend—and far more dangerous. Two upcoming books provide particularly potent appraisals.

On Jan. 13, intrepid journalist Graeme Smith published *The Dogs Are Eating Them Now*, a lucid yet often nightmarish firsthand account of the author's years embedded with Canadian, British and American troops. As a correspondent for the *Globe and Mail*, Smith spent more time on the ground from 2005 to 2009 than any other journalist. His memoir, which bears comparison to both *Dispatches* and *The Things They Carried*, is absolutely (as we noted in a starred review) “one of the best books yet about the war in Central Asia.”

Two weeks after Smith's book comes out, Robert L. Grenier, a former senior CIA officer, will publish his memoir, *88 Days to Kandahar*, in which he chronicles his leadership as a counterterrorism expert seeking to expel the Taliban from Afghanistan. In our review, we called the book a “catalog of occasional victories and constant missteps that is...illuminating and maddening”; the author's rapid-fire prose and honest assessments from the field will open many eyes. —*E.L.*



*Eric Liebetrau is the nonfiction and managing editor at Kirkus Reviews.*



## THREE MANY COOKS One Mom, Two Daughters: Their Shared Stories of Food, Faith & Family

Anderson, Pam, Keet, Maggy &  
Damelio, Sharon

Ballantine (336 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-8041-7895-2

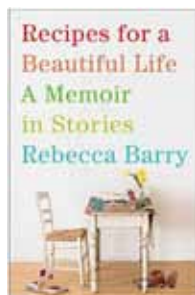
A mother and her two adult daughters explore their unified histories through themes of food, hard work and love.

Best-selling cookbook author and former *Cook's Illustrated* executive editor Anderson (*Cook without a Book: Meatless Meals*, 2011, etc.) grew up in a household “where food was revered and big meals were the main event,” so she naturally passed that devotion down to daughters Maggy and Sharon. All three co-author the food blog *Three Many Cooks*, and each describes intimate and distinctive experiences growing up in the kitchen-friendly Anderson clan and within their own extended families. A constant commonality for the trio is the timeless enjoyment of generational go-to recipes (Perfect Carrot Cake, Cheese Drawer Mac and Cheese, Pasta Carbonara, etc.). With equal heft, Anderson extolls the joys and pains of working motherhood and her evolution through the echelons of food editorship, while her daughters exuberantly share the “tragicomedy of our sisterhood” and their Christianity, related through pages of warm anecdotes. All three women exhibit charismatic, affable personalities. Anderson, raised in the Bible Belt by a doting mother and a recovering-alcoholic father, shares her father's recipe for Lemon Chicken, a dish he savored up until and throughout his elderly convalescence. Firstborn daughter Maggy, after marrying, living abroad and returning stateside, revels in her eventual appreciation for the “power of food” and a passion for cooking through her mother's long-held family traditions and talent for “conceptualizing a meal.” Youngest daughter Sharon, a former Web editor at *Fine Cooking*, writes of her courtship with her husband while at Yale Divinity School and the introduction of culinary creativity into their blossoming relationship. Mothers and daughters, especially, will find great appeal in this endearing book of heartfelt personal histories accented with accessible recipes from authors who freely exhibit an “intelligent and thoughtful approach to food.”

**A scrumptious pairing of nourishment and familial devotion.**

A book to be absorbed, marveled at and admired for the wide range of research linking events and thoughts.

FRACTURE



**RECIPES FOR A BEAUTIFUL LIFE**  
**A Memoir in Stories**

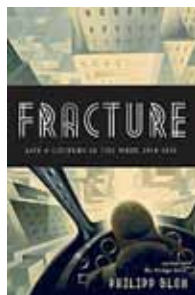
Barry, Rebecca  
Simon & Schuster (320 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-1-4165-9336-2

Short takes on life from a writer and mother of small children.

Yearning for an ideal life, Barry (*Later, at the Bar: A Novel in Stories*, 2008) and

her husband left New York City and good-paying jobs to buy a fixer-upper apartment building near the author's hometown. Barry planned to write, and her husband planned to start a magazine. They would raise children, eat good food, visit with family and friends, and have a nice home with neighbors just across the hall. What they couldn't foresee as they embarked on their dreams was the recession of 2008, which threw a corkscrew into their plans. Writing with honesty, a bit of humor and some self-despair, Barry delves into the highs and lows of being a work-at-home writer mom who struggles to balance hours spent writing a novel with the care of two small, rambunctious boys, the need for money and work at a time when no jobs were available, and the thousand other aspects that make up a normal life: trips to the coffee shop, fights with her husband and sister, maintaining a home, enjoying the holidays, etc. Her story reflects the angst felt by many women who try to juggle raising small children with having a career, whether that occupation entails leaving the home on a daily basis or working amid the chaos of a domestic household. The author also explores the overpowering joy one can feel at odd, brief moments when everything coalesces into beauty and love. Interspersed with a smattering of recipes, these short and pithy nuggets offer readers a glimpse into the fears and dreams of a modern woman who balanced work, marriage and kids to the best of her ability.

A solid addition to the growing genre of short, witty essays written by women about having a career while trying to raise a family.



**FRACTURE**  
**Life and Culture in the West, 1918-1939**

Blom, Philipp  
Basic (496 pp.)  
\$32.00 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-465-02249-6

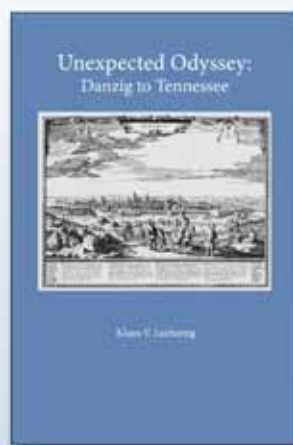
Blom (*A Wicked Company: The Forgotten Radicalism of the European Enlightenment*, 2010, etc.) undertakes a massive work explaining the changes that took place in the years between the world wars.

The author explains how World War I didn't really end; it was halted by mutual exhaustion, with one side economically weaker, only to be picked up again 30 years later. Blom extends

his work regarding the prewar years as he chronicles the world's disastrous move toward modernity. In the years 1914 to 1918, machines began to truly overpower humans, killing first the elite and then the workingmen, leaving a generation changed forever. Some readers may find it difficult to follow the myriad threads the author strings together, but most will admire his ability to compare and contrast such events as the industrial revolution in Russia and the 1929 stock market crash. The 1920s saw the rise of the automotive industry, the consumer economy and even advertising. It was a time when the new fashions of Coco Chanel reflected the physical and sexual freedoms of the flappers, but it was not to last. The lower classes no longer demeaned themselves serving the rich; they looked for less restrictive, better-paying jobs in the new technologies. The market crash collapsed what little economic recovery had occurred, and Prohibition and immigration laws illuminated the American culture wars. Modernity continued to upset social structures, moral norms and long-held traditions. Optimism was replaced by pessimism; art and science polarized communities; and cultural propaganda and oppression were rampant. The inexorable

**UNEXPECTED ODYSSEY:**  
**DANZIG TO TENNESSEE**

by Klaus V. Luehning



"Unexpected Odyssey: Danzig to Tennessee... lives up to its intriguing title - and a heck of a lot more. Luehning tells the incredible tale of his and his family's journey from war-torn Germany to the peaceful hills of East Tennessee..."  
--Rodger Castleberry, Smashwords.com

"The memoir reads like a 'bildungsroman' of a young lad in the 18th-19th C. with a youthful resolve to pursue a chosen path regardless of obstacles and without the financial means to undertake a more formal or traditional path." --Kordish, Smashwords.com



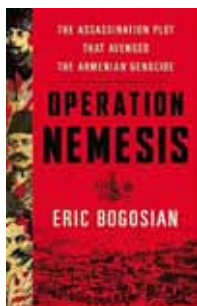
**The sweeping memoirs of a Danzig immigrant.**

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rise of Nazism and Fascism offered a Messianic sense of something greater than the individual.

A book to be absorbed, marveled at and admired for the wide range of research linking events and thoughts. (41 b/w images)



**OPERATION NEMESIS**  
**The Assassination Plot that**  
**Avenged the Armenian**  
**Genocide**

*Bogosian, Eric*

Little, Brown (368 pp.)

\$28.00 | \$14.99 e-book

\$25.98 Audiobook | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-316-29208-5

978-0-316-29201-6 e-book

978-1-47890-337-6 Audiobook

Actor, playwright and novelist Bogosian (*Perforated Heart*, 2009, etc.) retells the horrors of the Turkish attempt to eradicate the Armenians: the century's first ethnic cleansing.

The Ottoman Empire was primarily Muslim but mostly tolerated Jews and the Christian Armenians. However, they were treated as second-class citizens, required to pay extra taxes, never eligible for public office and banned from intermarriage. In an attempt to modernize, a group of "Young Turks" allied with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in 1908 to overthrow the empire. Though it was a bloodless coup, it soon became apparent that the Young Turks had no need for the Armenians. The country was ruled by the Committee of Union and Progress, a government as ruthless and cruel as the old sultan. The CUP was led by a triumvirate of Djemal Pasha, Talaat Pasha and Enver Pasha; by 1913, any semblance of democracy was lost. Then, in late April 1915, prominent Armenian leaders were rounded up and disappeared. This was the beginning of the genocide about which Hitler said, "[W]ho remembers the Armenians?" The killings, massacres, torture and deportations of Armenians went on through World War I. War-crime trials by the occupying British were ineffectual. Bogosian explores the life of survivor Soghomon Tehlirian, a young man who was fixated on revenge for the deaths of his people. In 1919, the ARF approved a "special mission" called Nemesis to find and execute the guilty parties, and Tehlirian was the perfect man for their mission. He found Pasha in Berlin and killed him, then stood trial, thereby bringing the world's attention to the fate of the Armenians. The author gives a clear, concise view of Turkey's history in the 20th century, and it's not pretty.

Difficult reading, but an extremely well-written political statement about Turkey—not just then, but as it is now.



**MOTORCYCLES I'VE LOVED**  
**A Memoir**

*Brooks-Dalton, Lily*

Riverhead (256 pp.)

\$27.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-59463-321-8

A travel-hungry young woman's memoir of her unexpected love affair with motorcycles.

It only takes Brooks-Dalton one page to exclaim her newfound passion for motorcycles. The cringeworthy statement is released upon recognizing for the first time her desire to take to the open road on two wheels: "I wanted to be the one riding that motherfucker." Notwithstanding that this attempt to sound rebellious misses the mark, the author recounts how she found herself suddenly attracted to motorcycles when, upon leaving the security of a long-term relationship in Australia, she returned home to New England after years of traveling abroad and began researching them as a diversion, a way of losing herself in a new experience. As symbols of freedom and independence, motorcycles fed Brooks-Dalton's passion for adventure and offered her a channel for her listless behavior, which included typical adolescent indulgences in drinking and drugs, and somewhat ironically grounded her. She connects her wanderlust to the memory of her family growing up, particularly her brother, who developed paranoid delusions about God and quickly left the family for the West. Without an anchor at home and following in the footsteps of her mother, who also traveled abroad at a young age, she decided to leave at 17. Conveying her travels as well as her desire for new experiences, Brooks-Dalton is seduced by aphoristiclike turns of phrase, but her writing is often cliché-ridden and melodramatic: "Transformation takes sweat and tears; it can't be bought with a plane ticket or an admission of love." The author also relies on awkwardly inserted physics terms (e.g., "acceleration," "velocity," "entropy"), also used as chapter titles, to tie in a concept related to motorcycles and her emotional state. The results are heavy-handed, and these jargon-y interludes fail to achieve their intended resonance.

Despite the interesting details of her back story, Brooks-Dalton's journey of reinvention is disappointingly mundane and uneventful.



**BE SAFE, LOVE MOM**  
**A Military Mom's Stories**  
**of Courage, Comfort, and**  
**Surviving Life on the Home**  
**Front**

*Brye, Elaine Lowry with*

*Satter, Nan* Gatewood

PublicAffairs (272 pp.)

\$25.99 | Mar. 31, 2015

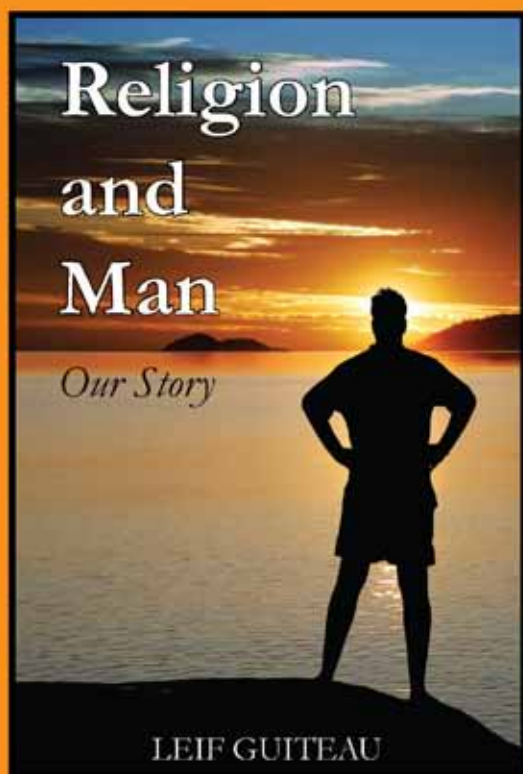
978-1-61039-521-2

The mother of four serving military officers pays tribute to the parents of children in active service, especially mothers, America's "unsung heroes."

Brye, an advocate for military families who administers the Naval Academy's Parents Listserv and Facebook page, achieved national prominence when she was chosen to introduce Michelle Obama at the 2012 Democratic Convention. The author explains that despite her own Republican convictions, she appreciates the activities of both the first lady and Jill Biden on behalf of military families. "There is the bravery required to go out and fight the battles," writes Brye, "and there is the bravery to keep the home fires burning." Coming from a multigenerational military family—her parents served during World War II, her husband is a retired officer, and she has four children on active duty—she knows the terrain. Not only do parents need to endure the worry when their sons and daughters are on dangerous deployments and out of touch, mothers also face the trauma of severe disconnection, which begins when their children go through the toughening-up process of boot camp. The author writes of her own ordeal under such circumstances as akin to "swimming under water without an oxygen tank," and she describes overcoming fighting the urge to protect a child in the military as learning to "embrace the suck." At the same

time, Brye advises mothers to cut themselves some slack, citing her own occasional meltdowns as something to be expected under stress. The author also touches on the special difficulties for women in the military, as they must demonstrate physical toughness, but not get too chummy with their male counterparts, in order to gain respect.

**A compassionate, insightful guide for military parents and the rest of us who are in their debt.**



## Religion and Man

### *Our Story*

by LEIF GUTEAU

"In short but sweeping chapters, (Guiteau) offers brief, easy-to-digest summaries of major religious belief systems...A good starting point for those wanting to learn more about what unites and separates them."

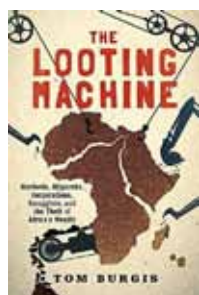
—*Kirkus Reviews*

*Learn about the history & beliefs of the major world religions, including your own, in this short & comprehensive study of the legacy of mankind*

For information on publication rights, contact [lguiteau@gmail.com](mailto:lguiteau@gmail.com)

In this delightfully readable book, the author expertly shows how those affected by the Great War linked together, nourished each other and really did change the world.

1920



**THE LOOTING MACHINE**  
**Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth**

Burgis, Tom  
PublicAffairs (320 pp.)  
\$27.99 | Mar. 24, 2015  
978-1-61039-439-0



A brave, excoriating exposé of the systematic ruination of resource-rich countries of Africa, leaving “penury and strife” for its millions of inhabitants.

A *Financial Times* journalist based at various points in Africa since 2008 (Johannesburg, Lagos), Burgis makes some astonishing assertions and revelations about the ongoing kleptocracy in the most resource-rich countries of Africa—e.g., Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. In many cases, China has been the dark force behind the extraction. The author examines the much-debated “resource curse” for countries in which “extractive industries” such as oil and mining dominate: These richest African countries also rank at the top of the world’s extreme poverty rates. The pot of resources is rife for the taking by those who control the state (“big man” politics), and because the rulers do not need to tax the people to fund government, there is no need for their consent. Burgis explains how this inversion of “no taxation without representation” ruptures the social contract between the rulers and the people, who have no ability to hold them accountable. Specifically, the author delves into Angola’s shadowy Futungo cartel, by which the family of leader José Eduardo dos Santos has amassed a “war chest” from the country’s oil industry. Burgis also looks at the destruction of Nigeria’s textile industry by Chinese imitators and smugglers, thrusting millions of Nigerians into horrendous poverty, as well as the Chinese middlemen who prey on African industries and the massive investment provided by the Chinese to spur development, mining and drilling. The author destroys the argument that a commodity boom actually creates economic growth and better lives for people—indeed, the opposite is true when one considers the human development index. Moreover, Burgis strenuously blames the West for its “complicity” in encouraging the commodity rape of Africa.

An earnest, eye-opening, important account for Western readers.



**1920**  
**The Year that Made the Decade Roar**

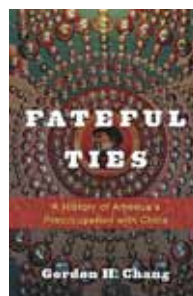
Burns, Eric  
Pegasus (400 pp.)  
\$27.95 | May 15, 2015  
978-1-60598-772-9



In a fascinating work about a remarkable year, former NBC News correspondent Burns (*Invasion of the Mind Snatchers: Television's Conquest of America in the Fifties*, 2010, etc.) shows us what put the roar in the Roaring '20s.

The end of World War I brought reactions in the form of anarchy, the birth of jazz, the first Ponzi scheme, Prohibition, women’s suffrage and the birth of “mass media.” Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his assistant, J. Edgar Hoover, fought the Red Scare against the likes of Sacco and Vanzetti and the most notorious anarchist, Luigi Galleani, who swore by the “propaganda of the deed.” Their work would lose effectiveness as their agents were diverted to enforce Prohibition, which caused its own problems. The Anti-Saloon League was the first of the special interest groups, and Prohibition cost organized crime its organization, as it became a growth industry to provide unregulated, and often lethal, liquor to the masses. The election of Warren Harding in 1920 was the first in which women voted and the first time returns were broadcast on radio. It also brought the “Ohio Gang” into Washington, a group who imported Canadian liquor by the trainload, sold Teapot Dome and ran cons that Ponzi, who made millions in a few short months, would have loved. There was also extensive birth and growth. The migration of blacks to the North looking for work brought the Ku Klux Klan in their wake, but they also brought jazz and other cultural elements. Jazz brought men like Louis Armstrong to Chicago and then New York and Harlem. The Harlem Renaissance was spurred not only by jazz, but also by literature—by Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes and countless others. Burns follows it all with verve.

In this delightfully readable book, the author expertly shows how those affected by the Great War linked together, nourished each other and really did change the world.



**FATEFUL TIES**  
**A History of America's Preoccupation with China**

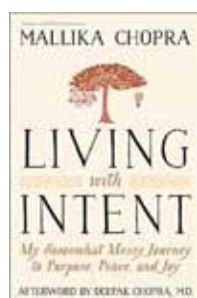
Chang, Gordon H.  
Harvard Univ. (320 pp.)  
\$32.95 | Apr. 13, 2015  
978-0-674-05039-6

Christopher Columbus carried a letter of introduction from his Spanish sovereigns to China’s emperor. Thus, the discovery of America was an accidental consequence of the European desire to reach the riches of Asia.



The American Colonies shared this yearning, writes Chang (History/Stanford Univ.; co-editor: *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, 2006, etc.) in this thought-provoking history of our 400-year preoccupation with China. One of the major causes of the American Revolution was the strictness of the British navigation laws, which allowed no direct trade between America and Asia; in fact, the tea dumped during the Boston Tea Party was Chinese. Chang reminds us that in 1800, China was by far the world's richest nation. Intrigued by this vast, ancient culture, many leading Americans (Franklin, Jefferson, Emerson) believed it "could serve as a model for their own visions of an enlightened society ruled by reason." They "believed China held promise for them not just for material enrichment but for ideas and social practices that Americans might adopt." By 1850, other observers concluded that it was backward, idolatrous and resistant to change. Worse, the arrival of Chinese immigrants produced a nasty racism, and the shameful 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act remained law until 1943. Nonetheless, encouraged by travelers and missionaries, the romantic view persisted, although the goal was now that a morally superior "America would uplift China and remake it in its own spiritual and worldly image." This closeness peaked during World War II, crashed with the 1949 communist takeover, revived with the restoration of relations after Richard Nixon's 1972 visit, and vanished after 2000 when it became clear that China, a superpower for a millennium, planned to reassume that role. The American-China romance was largely one-way.

**An intriguing exploration of a significant, if peculiar, aspect of American history.**



**LIVING WITH INTENT**  
**My Somewhat Messy Journey to Purpose, Peace, and Joy**

Chopra, Mallika  
Harmony (288 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-8041-3985-4

A lightweight self-help book about living the life you want.

"Intents," writes Chopra, daughter of Deepak, are expressions of who we aspire to be...[and] are a way of defining what we want and asking the universe or God for help." Her book, written mainly in the present tense, focuses on her own recent period of resolve to live "with intent." Finding an acronym in the word "intent," Chopra divides her work into six sections: Incubate, Notice, Trust, Express, Nurture and Take Action. She presents herself as a stereotypically harried, suburban soccer mom, prone to guilt, stress and self-image issues. The story she shares is her own attempt to redefine her priorities, and she herself becomes one of those priorities. Indeed, the author is the center of this book, and her presence often overshadows the advice given. Chopra takes readers on a wide-ranging tour of intent-related concepts, beginning with meditation, a practice which, in many ways, is foundational to intentional living. She also discusses the

importance of putting intents into words, expressing them and sharing them with others. She espouses the practice of nurture, but it's less the nurturing of others than the nurturing of self. Indeed, though Chopra pays lip service to asking, "How can I serve?" she comes off as self-absorbed. In one instance, a family friend is diagnosed with cancer. The author's common reaction is, "If this happened to one of us, how would we handle it?" On a trip to India to visit aging relatives, she wallowed in their fawning nurture. Upon arriving home, she was overwhelmed with stress by her first conversation with her family: "Later, while lying in bed, I try to figure out why I felt so instantly tense, and I realize their stories triggered that all-too familiar toxic cocktail of guilt and worry."

**Chopra is the main character in her own mini-melodrama.**

# ANNE FRANK

## Silent Witnesses

BY RONALD WILFRED JANSEN

"...a well-researched and at times jarring record of the places where [Anne Frank] lived before her untimely death...This work is best suited as a scholarly companion to Anne's own diary."

—BookLife, Publishers Weekly

**An exploration of the places and people that shaped Holocaust victim Anne Frank.**

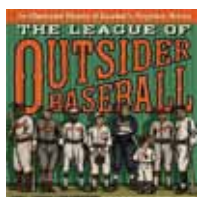
ISBN-13: 978-1499660234



All interested in inquires please email [info@rwj-publishing.com](mailto:info@rwj-publishing.com)

Presented with so many well-defined faces, there's guaranteed to be at least one Coyote, and probably more, that readers enjoy meeting.

THE RAINMAN'S THIRD CURE



**THE LEAGUE OF OUTSIDER BASEBALL**  
**An Illustrated History of Baseball's Forgotten Heroes**

Cieradkowski, Gary Joseph

*Illus. by the author*

Touchstone/Simon & Schuster (240 pp.)

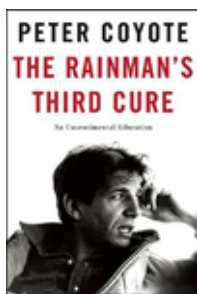
\$25.00 | May 5, 2015

978-1-4767-7523-4

In his first book, artist and writer Cieradkowski combines a passion for the sport (nurtured by his late father, who he says inspired this project) with his credentials as a graphic designer, where his credits include the graphics at the Baltimore Orioles' Camden Yards.

This book represents a natural progression from the author's *Infinite Baseball Card Set* blog, where he continues to design cards for players who never had them (as well as some who have)—not the bubble-gum cards of the modern era but “the beautiful old tobacco cards that were manufactured at the turn of the century.” Such illustrations—and others, some full page—accompany anecdotal remembrances of the famous (at early stages of their careers), the infamous (the Black Sox and more violent criminals), the little known and those better known for other achievements. If you want a baseball card illustration of Eisenhower, Castro and Sinatra, this is your book. Prodigious research informs both the art and the text, though much within the latter will be familiar to those who have read the same baseball books the artist has. But even the well-known career of Pete Reiser, “the stuff of tragic legend,” merits celebrating again, while the tales of radicals who immigrated to Russia and brought baseball with them or the hurlers who used their strong arms with hand grenades (American and Japanese alike) will be fresh for all but the most ardent baseball historians. Pretty much every country where there is baseball has its own Babe Ruth, and they're all represented here (as is Ruth). While newer generations of baseball fanatics have become more numbers oriented, the author is an old-school throwback who highlights the players in terms of their personalities. He effectively evokes a golden era of what was once the national pastime.

Baseball fanatics will love this illumination of the sport's colorful past.



**THE RAINMAN'S THIRD CURE**  
**An Irregular Education**

Coyote, Peter

Counterpoint (288 pp.)

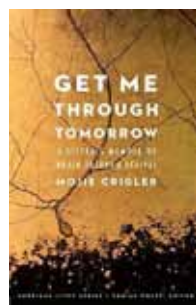
\$26.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-61902-496-0

An imperious and flawed father figure looms large in Coyote's artfully rendered chronicle of his intriguing journey from confused, privileged youth to enlightened Zen practitioner.

Not long ago, Coyote, international screen star and veteran countercultural revolutionary, had a transcendental experience that he had arguably been searching for his entire life. But while the author's Buddhist practice is a vital component of his often descriptively brilliant biographical odyssey, it is by no means the only one. Coyote's story, the follow-up to *Sleeping Where I Fall* (1998), is as much about a boy's initial introduction to the great wide world as it is about one complex human being's lifelong hunger for inner meaning. Coyote presents a fascinatingly intricate portrait of what it was like being the peculiar scion of wealth and power. As a child, the young Peter Cohon found himself languishing in neglect, floating in the staid world of his conflicted parents, Morris and Ruth. Soon, however, he was propelled headlong into a parallel existence where he met lively figures hired to run the family's Turkey Hill farm and Englewood, New Jersey, abode. “For the next ten years [caretaker] Susie Howard was the North Star around which my heavens revolved.” The impressionable young boy eventually encountered jazz legends, intellectual radicals and rough-hewn outdoorsmen. In addition to an imposing gangster uncle, each of these individuals managed to shape the boy who would later become not only a central figure in America's nascent youth movement, but also a dusty pioneer in communal living, a left-wing rabble-rouser working inside the political system, and a struggling father trying to support a family with a heroin monkey on his back. Astonishingly, well into middle age, the author accomplished another remarkable turn, evolving into the well-respected film actor many know him as today.

Presented with so many well-defined faces, there's guaranteed to be at least one Coyote, and probably more, that readers enjoy meeting.



**GET ME THROUGH TOMORROW**  
**A Sister's Memoir of Brain Injury and Revival**

Crigler, Mojie

Univ. of Nebraska (200 pp.)

\$19.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-8032-5414-5

The story of a family's triumph after a medical catastrophe.

In her moving nonfiction debut, Crigler recounts her brother Jason's arduous recovery from a burst blood vessel in his brain, a recovery that involved his wife, parents and, most intimately, the author herself. Punctuated by brief diary entries and recollections of anxious dreams, Crigler chronicles Jason's day-by-day challenges as he suffered from the consequences of the bleed—loss of the ability to move and speak—and ensuing complications: meningitis, seizures, coma and a host of infections. After three months of repeated setbacks, Jason seemed imprisoned in his body: “[a] drift on a lifeboat in the most remote sea.” As they monitored his care, the family was frustrated by confusing and mixed messages about his prognosis for recovery. They were also frustrated by

their health insurance, which “questioned every treatment and refused many of them” with the goal “to pay as little money as possible.” Depending on what they hoped would be humane and competent care, the family came to the “harsh realization that Jason’s care was driven not by what would help him but by cost.” Cowed, at first, by his physicians, the family defied their advice and brought Jason to Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston, renowned for treating brain injury. There, he made enough progress to be discharged. Crigler and Jason shared an apartment for several months while he worked with physical therapists and on his own to recapture basic skills. With the author as round-the-clock caregiver, other family members pitched in. Exhaustion and stress gave way, at times, to emotional tensions. More than a year later, Jason gained enough independence to share the apartment with his wife and infant daughter; after several more years, which included eye and mouth surgery, proton beam radiation to his brain and much exercise, he was able to resume his career as a musician.

**A heartfelt memoir of devotion and determination.**



**WAR AGAINST ALL PUERTO RICANS**  
*Revolution and Terror in America's Colony*

Denis, Nelson A.

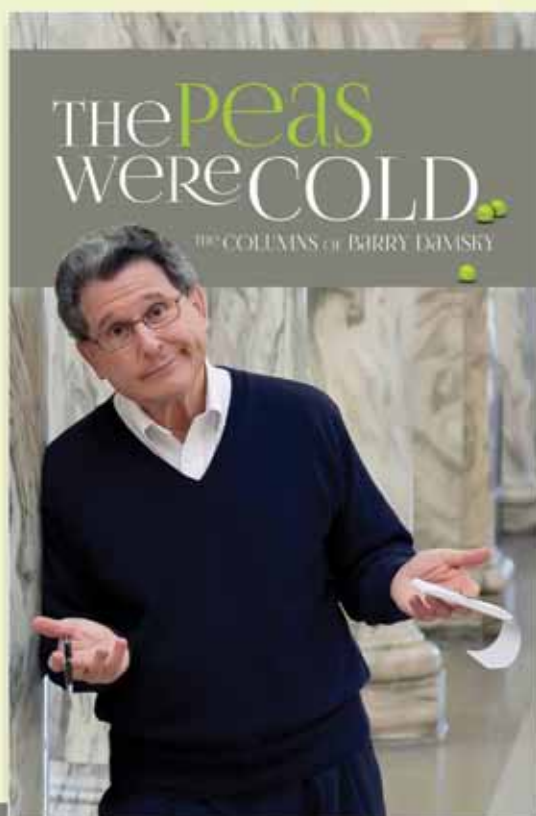
Nation Books/Perseus (400 pp.)

\$28.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-56858-501-7

Scathing examination of American colonial policy in Puerto Rico, culminating in the violent, brief revolution of 1950 and its brutal suppression.

Filmmaker, former editorial director of *El Diario* and New York State Assemblyman Denis seethes at the injustices inflicted on the small island protectorate of Puerto Rico since it was seized from Spain during the Spanish-American War of 1898 and relegated to being a base for President Theodore Roosevelt’s “big stick” policy in the Caribbean. According to the prevalent racial policy of the time, Puerto Ricans were considered too ignorant



**THE PEAS WERE COLD:**  
**THE COLUMNS OF BARRY DAMSKY**  
by Barry Damsky

“...a tone similar to those of the late  
Andy Rooney or Charles Kuralt...”

—Kirkus Reviews

“Damsky belongs in the Saturday Evening  
Post with paintings by Norman Rockwell  
depicting situations...Most of all, Damsky  
belongs on the shelves of readers who are  
looking for variety and simplicity in all of  
the little moments that add up to a life...”

—Foreword Clarion Reviews

[www.BarryDamsky.com](http://www.BarryDamsky.com)

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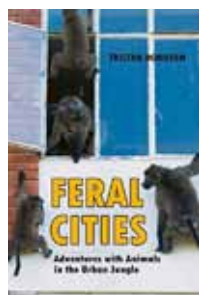


# Fagan brings consummate skill to this frequently horrifying study of humanity's interaction with animals.

THE INTIMATE BOND

and uncivilized for self-rule. Massive sugar cane-grinding mills run by American corporations would soon dot the tropical landscape, and the impoverished inhabitants were enlisted in the backbreaking labor of cutting and processing the cane for pennies a day. In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court declared the island a territory, not a state, and thus the U.S. Constitution did not apply, denying the workers any fair labor policies enjoyed by U.S. citizens. A Nationalist Party was formed at the same time, closely followed and infiltrated by the FBI, according to documents the author secured. The Ponce massacre of March 1937—when the police opened fire on unarmed cadets marching through the town square, killing 19 and wounding over 200 people—galvanized unrest and rebellion. In telling this gruesome and little-recorded history, Denis concentrates on the personalities involved: the corrupt governor Luis Muñoz Marín; the Harvard-educated Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos; the documentarian of the Nationalist cause, Juan Emilio Vigué; and the humble barber Vidal Santiago Díaz, whose Salón Boricua became the fulcrum of dissent and political organization. The 1950 rebellion concluded horrifically in violent death or imprisonment at San Juan's notorious La Princesa prison. Denis produces compelling evidence of U.S. government-sponsored radiation and other medical experiments inflicted on prisoners.

**A pointed, relentless chronicle of a despicable part of past American foreign policy.**



## FERAL CITIES *Adventures with Animals in the Urban Jungle*

Donovan, Tristan

Chicago Review (256 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-56976-067-3

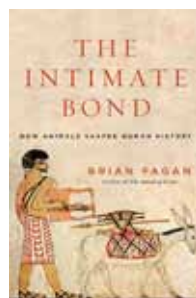
Exploration of the creatures that share our urban centers, including giant house-eating snails in Miami, leopards in Mumbai, wild pigs in Berlin and red

foxes in London.

Donovan, a British freelance journalist (*Fizz: How Soda Shook Up the World*, 2013, etc.) with a degree in ecology, chronicles his journeys with local experts in dozens of cities as they deal with the animals in their midst. In Phoenix, he accompanied a calm rattlesnake catcher responding to calls from alarmed householders. In Cape Town, South Africa, he learned about rogue baboons from the head of the University of Cape Town's Baboon Research Unit. While Donovan's outings were often with men and women coping with unwelcome intruders, such as black bears, grizzlies, lions, coyotes and rats, in Chicago, it was a different story. That city is on the Mississippi Flyway, and every year, thousands of migratory birds die from crashing into buildings. The author joined the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors as they patrolled the city's streets, gathering up, counting, examining and cataloging the bodies of dead birds. Squeamish readers, be warned: Donovan features less charming wildlife in the later chapters, in which he examines some of the undesirable insects, such as cockroaches

and bedbugs, that thrive in our cities. The author devotes a small portion of this entertaining jaunt through city wildlife to the serious question of conservation. We can use cities to supplement wider efforts at preserving biodiversity, but first we have to stop thinking of cities as barren, anti-nature zones.

**A clear demonstration that the world's cities are full of nonhuman life, best read in small doses, say a chapter at a time on one's daily commute to and from the city. (30 color photos; 12 b/w illustrations)**



## THE INTIMATE BOND *How Animals Shaped Human History*

Fagan, Brian

Bloomsbury (304 pp.)

\$28.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-62040-572-7

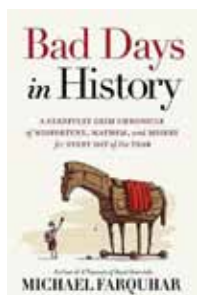
Fagan (Emeritus, Anthropology/Univ. of Calif., Santa Barbara; *The Attacking Ocean: The Past, Present, and Future of Rising Sea Levels*, 2013, etc.) brings consummate

skill to this frequently horrifying study of humanity's interaction with animals.

The author considers his book a purely historical inquiry, not simply an account of how our relationships to Earth's other inhabitants have changed over 2.5 million years, but how our interdependent relationships with eight mammals—dogs, goats, sheep, donkeys, pigs, cattle, camels and horses—have profoundly shaped human history. Fagan notes that the very word “animal” has roots in the Latin term *anima*, or “soul.” He then reveals how early humans defined their world in terms of the animals that were potent ritual partners and discusses how animals went from being respected as individuals to the modern commodification of select species as work animals and food. Eventually, traditional hunting, subsistence farming and husbandry yielded to systematic agriculture, large-scale herding, permanent settlements, cities and the Industrial Revolution. But the story is subtler and more involved than a partnership-to-exploitation narrative, involving not only Western concepts of animals as human possessions, but also a fundamental, distancing shift in humankind's relationship to the natural environment. Fagan ably explains the various mentalities and contradictions inherent in that story, and he studies a priceless archive of memory, embodied in legend and folklore, regarding associations between animals and people before wholesale domestication became subjugation. Still, our understanding of the factors that transformed wild creatures into domestic beasts owes much to conjecture and interpretation, something Fagan is keen to point out. His analysis, however, is sound, the product of an accomplished archaeological and anthropological background.

**Though reminding us of the cruelties still visited upon animals and insisting that we respect them anew—not merely as pets or idealized creatures of the wild—Fagan offers no resolutions to our conflicting attitudes toward them, but his compelling, cohesive book calls for further enlightenment.**





**BAD DAYS IN HISTORY**  
**A Gleeefully Grim Chronicle**  
**of Misfortune, Mayhem, and**  
**Misery for Every Day of the**  
**Year**

*Farquhar, Michael*  
 National Geographic (496 pp.)  
 \$26.00 | Apr. 21, 2015  
 978-1-4262-1268-0

This potpourri of pop history presents tales of bad calls and unanswered calls, of mishaps, mayhem, murder and a few innocent mistakes.

An aficionado of misfortune, Farquhar (*Secret Lives of the Tsars: Three Centuries of Autocracy, Debauchery, Betrayal, Murder, and Madness from Romanov Russia*, 2014, etc.) blithely notes something woeful for each day of the calendar. Whether these daily highlights of difficult times are the handiwork of Mother Nature, malicious despots, mysterious dastards or some feckless nincompoops, it's a tough year, to be sure. Proper governance certainly suffered under Louisiana's Earl Long (1895-1960), not to mention the congressman who voted to shut down the government and then berated a federal worker about a closed park. Folks in showbiz have had bad luck, too—e.g., John Wayne's colossal cinematic flop about the Alamo and Eddie Fisher's connubial loss to Richard Burton. There was the awful day that Ivan the Terrible knocked off his son and heir because he had objected when his father kicked his pregnant wife, and there was the pathetic case of William III, who died in 1702 after his horse tripped over a molehill. Indeed, the text is replete with the character defects of misbehaving royals, one of the author's specialties. Many of the hard-luck stories, like the adventure of the Donner Party, will be familiar to sometimes-aghast and frequently amused readers. There are the unfortunate days of Lincoln's widow, Lance Armstrong off the bike, Vlad the Impaler (aka "Dracula") and the dark times of Richard Nixon. The facts of this passing parade of perfidious knaves, nasty poltroons, incompetent liars and just some unlucky folks who slipped on bygone banana peels make for leisurely reading—and it's surely a story to be continued.

Candid snapshots of some truly bad days in the bleak annals of civilization.



**FRANK**  
**A Life in Politics from**  
**the Great Society to**  
**Same-Sex Marriage**

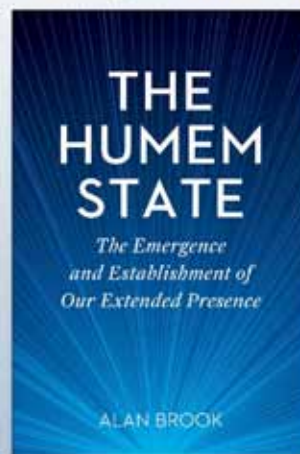
*Frank, Barney*  
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux (400 pp.)  
 \$27.00 | Mar. 17, 2015  
 978-0-374-28030-7

Now that the fiery, occasionally dyspeptic congressman has left office, he lets the air out in a memoir that feels like it's just the thing the long-serving politician has wanted to publish.

Frank tracks the nuances of two intriguing movements during his more than four decades in public life. When he was a novice politician in the late 1960s, the author had to hide his homosexuality, although nowadays—in a trend that owes some of its success to Frank's becoming the first member of Congress to come out of the closet in 1987—same-sex marriage is increasingly prevalent. But while some personal freedoms are

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 —San Francisco Book Review (5 Star Review)

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 —Kirkus Reviews

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For all general inquiries, please contact: [info@humemity.com](mailto:info@humemity.com)

# A charming but serious warning of the need to protect our natural ecosystems from heedless, irreversible destruction.

A BUZZ IN THE MEADOW

more possible now than when Frank entered politics, the concept that government can actually help citizens is decidedly on the wane. Nonetheless, the author has never stopped fighting the battle to pillory the idea that big government is inherently problematic. He writes movingly about issues of public housing and fairness that he has espoused throughout his career, but he also proves to be a barbed, exacting, witty thinker. On the topic of the “competent, uncharismatic” George Bush’s now infamous “read my lips: no new taxes” mishap, Frank writes, “[s]emantically, the phrase bothered me because it is illogical—you tell people to read your lips when they cannot hear you, and this does not apply when you are speaking to them through a microphone.” In addition to his personal story, parts of the book read like a manual for young politicians: “I think it is both legitimate and politically helpful to make my ideological opponents look not just wrong but also foolish, especially if I can use humor to do it.”

**Much more entertaining than most political memoirs, Frank’s story isn’t just revealing; it may be the most fun you can have reading about the United States Congress.**



## ROMANTIC OUTLAWS *The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Daughter Mary Shelley*

Gordon, Charlotte

Random House (672 pp.)

\$30.00 | May 5, 2015

978-1-4000-6842-5

Gordon (English/Endicott Coll.; *The Woman Who Named God: Abraham’s Dilemma and the Birth of Three Faiths*, 2007) delivers

a drama-filled dual biography of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and her daughter, Mary Shelley (1797-1851).

In an occasionally confusing style featuring alternating chapters, the author’s biographies of the two Marys show how different their lives were. The daughter of an alcoholic father, Wollstonecraft grew up constantly trying to protect her mother and siblings, circumstances that led her into a lifelong fight for independence and female rights and against marriage. Her publisher, Joseph Johnson, gave her a position as a book reviewer for his monthly *Analytical Review*, where only initials indicated the author, masking her gender. Johnson eventually sent her to Paris to write about the Revolution, and she became the first foreign correspondent and an unwed mother to boot. Her political writing, especially *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), was highly regarded. She eventually married William Godwin, a political writer with an equally dim view of marriage. Their marriage was happy but short, and Mary died giving birth to her daughter, who spent her life idolizing and emulating her mother. At 16, Mary and her half sister, Jane, ran away to France with Percy Shelley; the only poorer choice would have been his dear friend, Lord Byron. Together, society termed them the “League of Incest.” Mary and Jane vied for Shelley’s attention; Jane eventually had Byron’s child, and polite society shunned them. Mary

and Percy eventually married, in hopes of gaining custody of his children from a previous marriage. The widowed Mary successfully carried on her mother’s work, not through political writing but in novels.

**What the two women had in common was their writing talent, strength, and dedication to the fight for women’s education and rights. While Gordon tells their stories well, moving back and forth between the Marys can be perplexing. (illustrations throughout)**



## A BUZZ IN THE MEADOW *The Natural History of a French Farm*

Goulson, Dave

Picador (288 pp.)

\$25.00 | May 1, 2015

978-1-250-06588-9

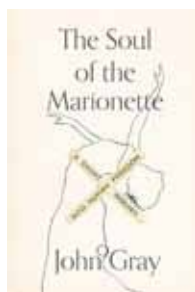
When we speak of endangered species, our focus is usually on the plight of mammals. However, writes Goulson (Biological and Environmental Sciences/

Univ. of Sterling; *A Sting in the Tale: My Adventures with Bumblebees*, 2014, etc.), they are only a small section of the “perhaps ten-million different species,” many yet to be named, that inhabit our planet and play a critical role in maintaining its ecosystems.

In 2003, the author, founder of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, purchased a derelict farmhouse and 33-acre meadow in the French countryside. His aim was to transform the run-down property into a wildlife sanctuary to shelter and preserve the habitats of “the smaller, everyday creatures that live around us.” The author’s professional specialty, the study of bees, prompted his involvement in efforts to determine the cause of the disastrous, worldwide decline in the honeybee population, which plays a crucial role in pollination. An early hypothesis blamed the introduction of a nicotine-based pesticide applied to seeds before planting, as a substitute for aerial spraying. Goulson and his collaborators confirmed that this wasn’t the case, but they found that the reproductive rates of queen bees, which ate the nectar brought back by the worker bees, were sharply reduced. Furthermore, the worker bees exhibited cognitive problems. Equally alarming, recent evidence indicates a buildup of the pesticide in soils and waterways. The pesticide has been temporarily banned in Europe but is still in use in America. On a lighter note, the author explains how the tapping of beetles in search of a mate was once fancifully compared to the devil tapping his fingers. Their residence of choice is old timber, including that of his farmhouse, which is also home to dormice and other creatures. Though he celebrates the majority of species living on his land, disease-bearing flies, he says, are less welcome. “Go outside,” he urges readers, “look and listen.”

**A charming but serious warning of the need to protect our natural ecosystems from heedless, irreversible destruction.**





**THE SOUL OF THE  
MARIONETTE**  
*A Short Inquiry into Human  
Freedom*

Gray, John

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (192 pp.)

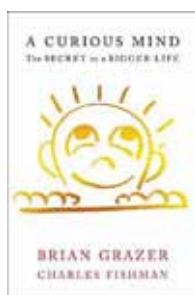
\$23.00 | May 19, 2015

978-0-374-26118-4

Within the debate between Christian and atheist authors, here come the Gnostics.

In this brain-twisting meditation on freedom, Gray (*The Silence of Animals: On Progress and Other Modern Myths*, 2013), a former professor across disciplines (at Harvard, Yale and Oxford), covers a wide expanse of intellectual territory, from the ancient Greeks to science-fiction futurism. Yet the underpinning theme concerns Gnosticism, which the author describes as “the faith of people who believe themselves to be machines,” for whom “the creator was at best a blunderer, negligent or forgetful of the world it had fashioned, and possibly senile, mad or long dead; it was a minor, insubordinate and malevolent demiurge that ruled the world.” Gray finds in this ancient belief a visionary illumination of our modern predicament, in which reason has shown itself to be more curse than blessing, progress is an illusion, and the machines man has invented might soon render mankind obsolete. He finds a kindred spirit in Philip K. Dick, “a brilliantly original writer of science fiction who uses the genre to question what it means to be human” and who once wrote, “it is not man who is estranged by God; it is God who is estranged from God. He evidently willed it this way at the beginning, and has never since sought his way home.” Gray connects the dots among science fiction (including that of Stanislaw Lem), Borges, the human-sacrificing Aztecs, global warming and the loss of privacy (and freedom) that the cyberrevolution has wrought, challenging readers to make some leaps of logic and come to counterintuitive conclusions. “Human beings may behave like puppets,” he writes, “but no one is pulling the strings.... We think we have some kind of privileged access to our own motives and intentions. In fact we have no clear insight into what moves us to live as we do.”

A brief, elliptical inquiry designed to raise more questions than anyone could answer.



**A CURIOUS MIND**  
*The Secret to a Bigger Life*

Grazer, Brian & Fishman, Charles

Simon & Schuster (256 pp.)

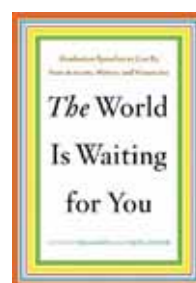
\$25.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4767-3075-2

Academy Award-winning film and TV producer Grazer ranks curiosity with innovation and creativity as keys to shaping a successful career and a happy life.

“Curiosity has been the most valuable quality, the most important resource, the central motivation of my life,” writes the author. With the collaboration of business journalist Fishman (*The Big Thirst: the Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water*, 2011 etc.), Grazer explains how a lively sense of curiosity and willingness to ask questions opened doors for him and widened his horizons. In 1974, at loose ends in the interim between college graduation and the beginning of law school, he chanced to overhear a young man describe how he had just quit a cushy job in the legal department at Warner Brothers, a job that entailed delivering legal documents. Grazer applied for the job. Rather than simply dropping off the packages, he pretended that he had to deliver them in person, giving him the opportunity to meet an array of fascinating people (e.g., Warren Beatty, Lew Wasserman) and engage them in brief conversations. At the same time, he took every opportunity to meet the higher-ups at Warner Brothers. As he gained confidence and his career advanced, Grazer made it a practice to conduct what he called “curiosity conversations” with people in all walks of life, and he has interviewed more than 500 people over the last 35 years (everyone from Barack Obama to Isaac Asimov to Tyra Banks to Amy Tan). The author explains that he did not meet with these people to get ideas for films but because he was “interested in a topic or a person.” These face-to-face encounters allowed him “to build up a reservoir of experiences and points of view” and keep him “plugged in to what’s going on in science, in music, in popular culture...[and] the attitude, the mood, that surrounds what’s happening.”

An appealing argument for maintaining open-minded receptivity, with special appeal for film buffs.



**THE WORLD IS WAITING  
FOR YOU**

*Graduation Speeches to Live  
by from Activists, Writers,  
and Visionaries*

Grove, Tara & Ostrer, Isabel—Eds.

New Press (240 pp.)

\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-62097-090-4

A collection of recent graduation speeches meant to inspire, edited by New Press education editor Tara Grove and recent Harvard grad Ostrer.

A great deal of importance is placed upon graduating from college, that day of pomp, of endings and beginnings, and colleges have become very competitive in seeking out luminaries to deliver those rousing speeches to the graduates. With nearly 2,000 speeches to be given every year—and that’s just the private, four-year institutions—it’s a tall order to put together a speech that lives on after the mortarboards launch skyward. The ones that do transcend, though, can be powerful calls to take heed of what came before. With a mix of speeches from journalists, scientists, musicians, novelists and others, the forms of inspiration found here run the gamut.

## A fine addition to the single-issue science genre.

THE TRIUMPH OF SEEDS

Thoughts from recognizable names are recognizable in content but also offer few surprises: Oliver Stone speaking about treating the mind like a garden, for example. Toni Morrison, speaking of a time when “the language at the feet of the Statue of Liberty has been paved over,” attempts to close the imagination gap required to move that notion from an impossibility to an inevitability. Tony Kushner says “hope grapples endlessly with despair,” and it rings true. Reading the speeches from before 9/11 and after is both heartbreaking and uplifting, and the tonal shifts are apparent. The contributor list is impressive and includes Anna Quindlen, Barbara Kingsolver, Noam Chomsky, Gloria Steinem, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Howard Zinn, Ursula K. Le Guin and Bryan Stevenson.

**Not all the speeches break new ground, but they are uplifting in their overarching focus: There is important work to be done in this world, regardless of the large and small events of our lives.**



### THREE KINDS OF MOTION *Kerouac, Pollock, and the Making of American Highways*

Hanick, Riley

Sarabande (288 pp.)

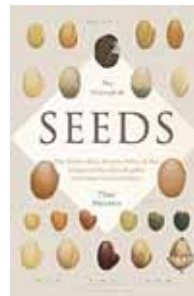
\$15.95 paper | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-936747-90-0

Imagine taking a road trip through Iowa with a chatty Jack Kerouac in the passenger seat and Dwight D. Eisenhower sitting impatiently beside a disinterested Jackson Pollock in the back seat.

The personalities contained in this book are so large that they merit their own time and space. Of course, the lives of these three significant figures have been well-documented in numerous books. What Hanick (Creative Writing/Murray State Univ.) achieves is neither solely biography nor journalistic retelling but rather the intersection of these iconic American personalities threaded together with the author's coming-of-age. Hanick explores the mysterious presence of Jackson Pollock's watershed *Mural* at the University of Iowa Museum of Art and muses on his relationship to Kerouac's *On The Road*, the original scroll of which made a stop at the same museum. The author then mixes in Eisenhower and the executive weight behind the construction of the American Interstate Highway System. The idea here occasionally proves too ambitious, and the narrative is rife with expressionistic fragments and hanging conditionals that, on the road to poignancy, are often cut off in favor of a new idea or newly introduced information. The result feels incomplete or burdened by academic conjecture, though the fragmentary nature of the work gives it an element of mystery, and its subject matter alone is enough to keep readers interested. Hanick manages to braid moments of poetic confession and biographical detail with enough skill to paint a new perspective on the history of an American vanguard.

As ambitious as our perennial desire to discover the road less traveled, as expressionistic as Pollock's action paintings, and as poetically driven as the Beat generation, this book is equal parts mystery, journalism, poetry and bildungsroman, ultimately in search of its own American voice.



### THE TRIUMPH OF SEEDS *How Grains, Nuts, Kernels, Pulses, and Pips Conquered the Plant Kingdom and Shaped Human History*

Hanson, Thor

Basic (288 pp.)

\$26.99 | Mar. 24, 2015

978-0-465-05599-9

“From tropical rain forests to alpine meadows and arctic tundra, seed plants dominate landscapes and define ecosystems.” In fact, they make up more than 90 percent of land flora.

Having caught our attention, conservation biologist Hanson (*Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle*, 2011) proceeds to tell how this happened. Traveling the world to interview experts without ignoring his own research, the author writes a delightful account of the origins, physiologies and human uses of a vast variety of objects that plants employ to make more plants. Long ago, ferns and mosses covered the Earth and reproduced by releasing clouds of tiny spores. These days, we encounter them as coal plus a scattering of survivors. Far more robust than spores, seeds are a dazzling evolutionary triumph with, Hanson stresses, five distinct qualities. They *nourish* a plant's early life with either starch (grasses, grains) or fat and protein (nuts, legumes, beans). Humans have co-opted these nutrients as the foundation of our diet; modern civilization requires them. They *unite*. Seeds are the product of sexual reproduction, an enormous, creative evolutionary advance. They *endure* from months to decades, waiting for the right combination of elements to trigger germination. Centuries ago, human manipulation of dormant seeds made agriculture possible. They *defend* the embryonic plant with shells, husks, rinds and chemicals. Humans convert these to pharmaceuticals, enjoy them in a variety of applications (caffeine, peppers, chocolate) and sometimes get sick from them (hemlock, strychnine). Finally, seeds *travel*. Whether by wind or water or the guts of animals that eat them, this allows plants and the humans that follow them to occupy every habitat on Earth. “[F]or all the fascinating tales of seeds in nature,” writes Hanson, “one of their hallmarks is that we don't have to look far to find them.”

**A fine addition to the single-issue science genre.**



## NO SUCH THING AS FAILURE *My Life in Adventure, Exploration, and Survival*

Hempleman-Adams, David

Skyhorse Publishing (256 pp.)

\$24.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-63220-707-4

An account of the British adventurer's global travels: hot air ballooning across the Atlantic, walking across the poles and climbing the highest peaks.

In his first book, Hempleman-Adams, the third British climber to complete the Seven Summits (the highest peak on each continent), proves a winning narrator of all of his feats, the numerous successes as well as the failures. Through both, he has experienced errors in orienteering and equipment mishaps, and he has been inches from death numerous times. His tale of one experience tumbles into the next, swiftly but not hurriedly. Most gripping is his account of walking solo and unsupported (without additional fuel or food) to the South Pole from the edge of Antarctica. He calls the South Pole "the most lonely place on earth" and writes of maneuvering the unpredictable, "constantly changing terrain" at the poles: shifting ice floes, avalanches and crevasses. He also chronicles how, after walking all day in snow and temperatures hovering around minus 40 degrees Celsius, his GPS indicated that he covered fewer than two miles. Hempleman-Adams shares straightforward tales of persevering through the harshest natural elements a person can face. Though some readers might expect it, the author does not deliver a treatise on transferable lessons of leadership or making the most of life. A good way to approach the book would be three different readings—one each for the "Rock," "Ice" and "Air" sections. The author believes that ballooning is technical and cerebral, but he is cheekier about his mountain-climbing and polar treks. "I'd never tell any of the fraternity to their faces," he writes, "but perhaps you don't have to be terribly clever to climb, or attempt polar challenges."

**Solidly entertaining.** Always looking for new challenges (perhaps sailing next?), he assures readers that he will "keep [them] posted" about his adventures to come.



## SPRING 1865 *The Closing Campaigns of the Civil War*

Jamieson, Perry D.

Univ. of Nebraska (300 pp.)

\$34.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-8032-2581-7

The last few months of the Civil War demonstrate just how much it was a "lost cause" for the South. In the latest installment of the Great Campaigns of the

Civil War series, Air Force senior historian emeritus Jamieson (*Khobar Towers: Tragedy and Response*, 2008, etc.) recounts the last battles, skirmishes and attempts at peace.

Ulysses S. Grant, a man who never backed down from a fight, commanded the Northern army, and his second-in-command was just as fierce: William Tecumseh Sherman, whose war of destruction starved the Confederate army of supplies, ammunition and food. The Northern army had the necessary supplies and the transport to deliver them where they were required. They had a ready supply of men to fight, as well, something the South sorely lacked. Gen. Joseph Johnston, unable to concentrate enough forces to defeat Sherman, could only check him at the battle of Bentonville; he had no way to hold ground. Jamieson devotes much of the book to the continuing campaign to take Petersburg and Richmond, a fight that lasted more than nine months and featured multiple offenses by both sides. There were two separate attempts to broker a peace agreement, but in the end, Jefferson Davis asked for peace between the two countries while Abraham Lincoln insisted there could only be one common country. Ultimately, it was almost a month after Appomattox that the last Confederate forces surrendered. The author describes each of the battles fought in early 1865 in extensive detail. Civil War aficionados will no doubt relish the descriptions of the officers, troop movements and tactics in each campaign, but the narrative may bog down for average readers.

**The true value of this book is Jamieson's in-depth portrayal of the armies and their leaders, heroes and fools as they struggled to the bitter end.**



## I WAS A CHILD *A Memoir*

Kaplan, Bruce Eric

*Illus. by the author*

Blue Rider Press (160 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-399-16951-9

Dry, droll observations from the author's childhood, with an undercurrent of understated sadness.

This could have been titled "Portrait of the Humorist as a Young Child," though *New Yorker* cartoonist Kaplan (*I Love You, I Hate You, I'm Hungry*, 2010, etc.) doesn't try too hard to be too funny. It also doesn't fit the conventions of the graphic memoir, since it has a textual format with frequent, generally small, drawings rather than cartoon panels with words. In addition to his magazine work, the author has also shown his comic sensibility as a TV screenwriter (*Girls*, *Seinfeld*), and screens small and large are more prominent throughout these pages than any memories of development as an artist. "As I guess is obvious, I loved TV," he writes. "I wanted to crawl in the TV and stay there permanently. I guess in a way when I grew up and became a TV writer, I finally did." The fact that entertainment plays such a formative role in Kaplan's life suggests how emotionally impoverished he found his family. His mother was "discombobulated" by the strains of raising three boys, while his father went off to work, his own ambitions of becoming a writer thwarted by the demands of supporting a



# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## JAN FARBOE RUSSELL

### THE JOURNALIST DISCOVERED A NATIONAL SCANDAL RIGHT IN HER BACKYARD

By Scott Porch



Photo courtesy Victor G. Jeffreys II

JAN FARBOE RUSSELL FIRST LEARNED about Crystal City in 1971 when she was an undergrad at the University of Texas at Austin. Russell, who grew up in rural Texas, was curious enough about the first Asian-American she had ever seen to ask him where he was from.

“How did you get to Texas?” she asked architecture professor Alan Taniguchi.

“My family was in camp here,” he said.

“Church camp?” she asked.

“Not exactly.”

Crystal City is a small town situated 120 miles southwest of San Antonio near the Mexican border. In the first half of the 20th century, it was the self-proclaimed “spinach capital of the world” and even had a fiberglass statue of the world’s most famous spinach eater, Popeye. Many of the migrant workers

who picked the spinach lived at a 290-acre worker camp owned by the Farm Security Administration.

In 1942, the Immigration and Naturalization Service began transporting “dangerous enemy aliens”—immigrants from Japan, Germany and Italy whom the United States government considered to be a threat to national security—to the Crystal City Enemy Detention Facility. Crystal City was a prison camp. There was a 10-foot barbed-wire fence around it, and the penalty for escaping was death.

There were other internment camps, but Crystal City was the only family camp. Alan Taniguchi grew up there. His father, Isamu Taniguchi, was a Japanese immigrant who had an apricot and almond farm in California that he lost when the FBI arrested him in 1942 for charges that were never clear because he was never given an indictment or a trial. The Taniguchi family lived at Crystal City for the duration of World War II and stayed in the area when it ended. Years later, Isamu Taniguchi built a Japanese garden near downtown Austin that is dedicated to peace and is still there.

Russell, who is a writer at large for *Texas Monthly* and author of *Lady Bird: A Biography of Mrs. Johnson*, went by Alan Taniguchi’s office several years ago for a surprise visit and learned that he had died. She met Taniguchi’s son Evan and began talking to him about Crystal City.

“Evan gave me a list of all of Alan’s friends from the Crystal City camp,” Russell says, “so I went home that night and started calling those people who were children in camp—Japanese-Americans and German-Americans who are now in their 70s and 80s. I started calling them, they started telling me about the camp, so I started getting on airplanes. That’s how this book evolved.”



German internees built a beer garden at the camp and were allowed to purchase one beer a day with camp script. The beer was made at the camp and the one-beer-a-day rule was often violated. Courtesy UTSA's Institute of Texan Culture

The book, *The Train to Crystal City: FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II*, is Russell's long-awaited answer to her question to Alan Taniguchi about how he came to Texas and a recounting of the shocking American policy during World War II of rounding up, detaining and imprisoning thousands of Japanese-American and German-American immigrants—many for little more reason than that their country of origin.

"The head of the Nazi Party in America was interned in Crystal City, and he was certainly dangerous, but most of the people there were not," Russell says. "The truth of the matter is that these people were the leaders of their communities. If you were a German engineer—like one of my main characters—then you were automatically suspected because if you could build a bridge, you could blow it up."

*The Train to Crystal City* tells the story of the Crystal City camp through two particular families—one Japanese-American and one German-American—within the broader context of World War II and the Roosevelt administration's internment policy. The U.S. government's declaration of authority over the enemy aliens that were sent to Crystal City was modeled on the Enemy Alien Act of 1798, which essentially says that anyone who was born in or was a citizen of a country we are at war with can be interned because we are at war with their country. The fear was that they were loyal to Germany and Japan and could do us harm.

"I had no idea when I started that we interned German immigrants and their American-born chil-

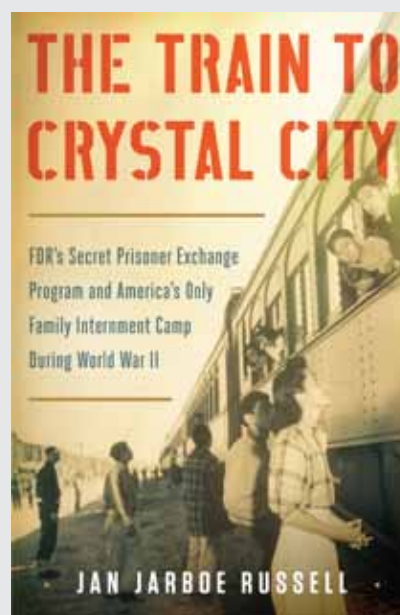
dren," Russell says. "I had no idea that we interned thousands of people from Latin America. I first listened to the stories of the people who are now the characters in my book. Then I went to the National Archives and spent about a month researching documents about the camps."

Russell also reports on the role of internment camps—and Crystal City in particular—in America's policy of exchanging prisoners during the war.

"There was a division that created a pool of people who could be changed in prisoner exchanges," she says. "Crystal City became a center for prisoner exchanges. Fathers would come to Crystal City and voluntarily agree to be exchanged so that they could get their families back together again. When the fathers were arrested, they lost everything—homes and farms and businesses."

Scott Porch is an attorney and contributes to Kirkus Reviews and The Daily Beast. He is writing a book about social upheaval in the 1960s and '70s.

*The Train to Crystal City* was reviewed in the Nov. 15, 2014, issue of Kirkus Reviews.



**THE TRAIN TO CRYSTAL CITY**  
***FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II***

Russell, Jan Jarboe  
 Scribner (416 pp.)  
 \$30.00 | Jan. 20, 2015  
 978-1-451-69366-9

A beguiling work of literary and social criticism that begins with a subverting counterfactual and moves into a deeply searching inquiry into the nature of an iconic island.

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

family. The whole family seemed to make do, letting broken things remain that way, enduring their lives rather than particularly enjoying them. The author's parents never had visitors to the house except for a neighboring couple on New Year's Eve, when they would "bring out the plastic champagne glasses. I got Cheez-Its on New Year's Eve. Cheez-Its represented total, utter wild abandon." Readers of a similar background will find that these memories strike a responsive chord, along with the desire to find something less stultifying.

Childhood memories dominate, but the last years of his parents bring to the fore the melancholy that has been there all along.



### ORSON WELLES'S LAST MOVIE *The Making of The Other Side of the Wind*

Karp, Josh  
St. Martin's (352 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Apr. 21, 2015  
978-1-250-00708-7

What became of *The Other Side of the Wind*, that crazy movie that took up the last 15 years of the life of Orson Welles

(1915-1985)?

Karp (*A Futile and Stupid Gesture: How Doug Kenney and National Lampoon Changed Comedy Forever*, 2006, etc.) puts that question to rest with this hilarious and sobering saga of one of the greatest films never finished. Almost from its official start in 1970, the last project by Welles was a shape-shifting obsession, rumored as much for its alleged uniqueness as for its constant and (so far) permanent delay. On the surface, it sounds exciting: an 8 1/2-style story of a troubled director (played by John Huston) trying to finish a movie; a neo-Godard-ian narrative, shot in a variety of formats; a seemingly Cubist editing style, "reducing each take into little bits of film and then creating a new continuity within each scene." It was meant to be both spontaneously brilliant and efficient, proof that the famously "troublesome" director could deliver a film on time and under budget. Instead, shooting ballooned from weeks to years upon years, during which it was cast and recast, shot and reshot, edited and re-edited; people were routinely hired, fired and rehired as they watched their careers consumed in the process. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the incomplete film—partly financed by the shah of Iran's brother-in-law—officially entered purgatory. Ever since then, family, heirs and financiers have been fighting for control.

Luckily, there's nothing unfinished in Karp's retelling. He follows every story, dollar and last legal battle in full detail. Whether the film sees a 2015 release on the anniversary of Welles' birth, as was speculated as of late last year, we at least have Karp to thank for the next best thing. (8 illustrations and one 8-page color insert)



### SPLIT SEASON 1981: *Fernandomania, the Bronx Zoo, and the Strike that Saved Baseball*

Katz, Jeff  
Dunne/St. Martin's (336 pp.)  
\$26.99 | May 19, 2015  
978-1-250-04521-8

Most books on a baseball year concentrate on a single legendary team (1927 Yankees, 1954 Giants). Katz, mayor of Cooperstown, New York (*The Kansas City A's and the Wrong Half of the Yankees: How the Yankees Controlled Two of the Eight American League Franchises During the 1950s*, 2007), gives multiple teams equal time while devoting half of this delightful, opinionated history to the strike that upset everyone but enshrined the free agent system that has produced spectacular salaries for even mediocre players.

The 1981 season also produced an oddball split season, the first since 1892. With the 1975 demise of the reserve clause, player salaries skyrocketed. By 1980, elite players earned over \$1 million per year, minuscule compared to the numbers today but alarming to owners at the time. Katz brilliantly describes the bitter, fruitless, yearlong negotiations aimed at determining a team's compensation for the loss of a free agent player. Despite the book's title, the seven-week 1981 strike did not save baseball but produced a complex compensation package that has long since been superseded by even more complex packages. The author shows little sympathy for the rich but mostly clueless owners who underestimated the intelligence of their players. Readers will enjoy Katz's account of their antics as much as his traditional chronicle of the 1981 season(s). It was the year when a portly Mexican rookie Los Angeles Dodger, Fernando Valenzuela, debuted with eight straight complete game victories. Nolan Ryan broke the all-time no-hit record by pitching his fifth, and Yankees owner George Steinbrenner continued his abusive treatment of players and coaches, which was not improved by the team's loss in the last Yankee-Dodger World Series.

A superior addition to the venerable genre of baseball season accounts. (8-page b/w photo insert)



### THE MANHATTAN PROJECT *A Theory of a City*

Kishik, David  
Stanford Univ. (288 pp.)  
\$35.00 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-0-8047-8603-4

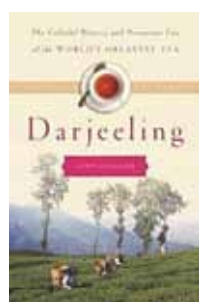
A beguiling work of literary and social criticism that begins with a subverting counterfactual and moves into a deeply searching inquiry into the nature

of an iconic island.



What if Walter Benjamin, literary critic and postmodern hero, hadn't committed suicide on the French border in 1940 but instead wound up living "on the top floor in the last building on a dead-end street" in Manhattan? That's the premise of Kishik's (*Philosophy/Emerson Coll.*; *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politic*, 2012) engaging conceit: Not only would Benjamin have lived, if perhaps not happily, but he would also have extended his Arcades Project, covering 19th-century Paris to New York, the capital of the 20th. It is that nonexistent book that Kishik is studying here. If the concept is a little head-spinning, then so are Benjamin's theories of the city, state, economy and so forth that Kishik educes from the—well, the evidence and nonevidence alike. So, "Benjamin argues that the Hegelian belief in a sovereign state that can lead us toward some form of universal reason is either wishful thinking or a cruel joke." Alas, Benjamin did not live to elaborate the idea, which Kishik then extends to a contrastive study, in brief, of the differences between a philosophy (and philosopher) of the state and one of the city, places and political constructs that the Greeks did not differentiate. "What distinguishes Athens from New York and antiquity from modernity," writes Kishik, "has something to do with the fact that today we use two words—*city* and *state*—to designate two very different entities." Kishik's criticism of a fictitious book never descends into coyness, though it occasionally gets a little tangled in ponderousness and faux profundity—e.g., "The Statue of Liberty might be seen as sacred only because it has no contact with the profane street."

Minor quibbles aside, fans of Arendt, Howe and Kazin will find Kishik's invention, and his playful seriousness in maintaining it, both a pleasure and a provocation.



**DARJEELING**  
***The Colorful History and Precarious Fate of the World's Greatest Tea***

Koehler, Jeff  
Bloomsbury (304 pp.)  
\$26.00 | May 12, 2015  
978-1-62040-512-3

From seed to auction, a detailed look at the growing, selling and drinking of India's "champagne of tea."

There is no leaf returned in Barcelona-based food journalist Koehler's (*Spain: Recipes and Traditions*, 2013, etc.) exposition on the growing of Darjeeling tea. Darjeeling is cultivated only in 87 tea estates along a slender spine of land in northeast India. It is an "orthodox" black tea, meaning it is unmixed—withered, rolled, fermented and fired in the traditional method by hand. Since there is so little of it—it takes 22,000 handpicked shoots to produce one kilo of Darjeeling—in comparison to green or other kinds of tea, the prices it fetches at auction are enormous. Koehler explores the history of *chai* (Hindi for tea), from the beginnings in China to the surprisingly late (19th-century) experimentation by the British to figure out if tea shoots brought from China would grow in northern India. At that time,

the East India Company moved into the steep, misty hills of Darjeeling, and the first British tea estates prospered. Koehler chronicles his visits to the oldest select tea estates, such as Makaibari, Castleton and Ambootia, noting how he began to understand what makes this tea so singular: the ideal climate and terroir and the "human element"—i.e., the need to be plucked by hand. Women do the plucking and get paid so little that absenteeism runs 30 percent. In a deeply researched work organized by the tea's growing season, from "first flush" through "monsoon flush" through "autumn flush," Koehler explores the initiative by some of the estates to go organic. Yet the combined crises of labor unrest, climate change and a political threat of independence from West Bengal spell a serious threat to the vulnerable Darjeeling tea.

A thorough account that tracks the growing and processing of this fine tea against the wider changes in today's India.



**THE EUREKA FACTOR**  
***Aha Moments, Creative Insight, and the Brain***

Kounios, John & Beeman, Mark  
Random House (288 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-1-4000-6854-8

"Things just clicked." "It was a spark of inspiration...a bolt of lightning...an epiphany..." Readers curious to know what happens when we solve a problem

in a flash will find the latest research here.

For centuries, the brain was accessible only during autopsy, so scientists studied it by observing behavior. This changed in the 1990s with the invention of scanners such as the fMRI that give us the ability to observe the brain as it works. Skeptics claim that inspiration is a myth. That "eureka" moment is merely the rush that comes from an answer we've been working toward during the entire problem-solving process. A host of imaginative studies, many by Kounios (Psychology/Drexel Univ.) and fellow neuroscientist and co-author Beeman, reveal that certain areas of the brain work when we consciously analyze a problem; entirely different areas light up during an aha moment, a finding that has produced media enthusiasm and probably inspired this book. The authors claim that their findings may "inspire people...to be more creative in their personal and professional lives." Kounios and Beeman describe four stages of insight. First, one reaches an "impasse" in dealing with a problem. There follows a "diversion" during which the problem "incubates," followed by a solution in a flash of "illumination." Though rewards and deadlines usually encourage analytic thought, they often suppress inspiration. To empower creativity, distract attention from the specific (the problem itself) toward the general—the further the better. "Our goal is to explain what insights are, how they arise, and what the scientific research says about how to have more of them," they write. Daydreaming, musing, fantasizing and sleeping all prime the pump.

# Alternately musical bomb-thrower and contemplator Lydon, aka Johnny Rotten, looks back on a long life of pot-stirring and piss-taking.

ANGER IS AN ENERGY

Being good scientists, the authors' secrets of success lack the dramatic specificity of more commercial authors, but readers will appreciate their ingenious, thoughtful update on how the mind works.



## MAN IN PROFILE Joseph Mitchell of The New Yorker

Kunkel, Thomas  
Random House (400 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Apr. 21, 2015  
978-0-375-50890-5

The strange trajectory of one writer's career.

Joseph Mitchell (1908-1996) joined the staff of the *New Yorker* in 1938, quickly earning praise for deft profiles of unusual figures: the bearded circus performer Lady Olga, for example, a gypsy king, and a Native American who worked high above the city on bridges and skyscrapers. The magazine's founder and editor, Harold Ross, called Mitchell "an exemplar of a Fact writer—a lovely and clean stylist, and someone who brought plenty of fresh characters to the magazine." In this illuminating biography, Kunkel (President/St. Norbert Coll.; *Enormous Prayers: A Journey into the Priesthood*, 1998, etc.), a former reporter and editor whose previous books include a life of Ross, portrays Mitchell as a driven perfectionist with a "near-obsession, cultivated over a decade pounding pavement for newspapers, with the city's 'lowlife,' as that class was known around the editorial offices of the *New Yorker*." A hugely prolific writer in the 1940s, his output waned in the next decade and ended in 1965 after he wrote a long profile of the eccentric Joe Gould, a drunk and a derelict who boasted that he had written a multimillion-word *Oral History of Our Time*. Gould had a special attraction for Mitchell, who, by the 1960s, hoping to produce an autobiography, was finding it increasingly hard to write. As he told an interviewer, he found Gould so compelling "[b]ecause he is me." With the cooperation of Mitchell's family, friends and colleagues, and steeped in *New Yorker* lore and personalities, Kunkel examines Mitchell's devotion to his family, his recurring depressions and his relationship with Ross, his successor, William Shawn, and fellow writer A.J. Liebling. Everyone was mystified by the last three decades of Mitchell's life, when he arrived each day at the magazine, closeted himself in his office and produced absolutely nothing.

Kunkel cannot solve the mystery, but he offers a finely delineated portrait of the man. (b/w photos)



## FIND THE GOOD Unexpected Life Lessons from a Small-Town Obituary Writer

Lende, Heather  
Algonquin (176 pp.)  
\$16.95 | Apr. 28, 2015  
978-1-61620-167-8

An unlikely source delivers tidbits on living well.

An obituary writer might be the last person readers would expect to provide wise advice, but *Alaska Dispatch News* columnist Lende (*Take Good Care of the Garden and the Dogs: Family, Friendships, and Faith in Small-Town Alaska*, 2010, etc.) turns out to have just the right perspective, as her job centers on finding and writing about the best part of each deceased person's life. In these short observations, the author examines what makes the people in the small town of Haines, Alaska, tick. She follows the intricate weave of relationships between family and friends that creates a close-knit community, and she expands on these ideas to create nuggets of insight universal to everyone. "Find the good" is the essence of living a noble, meaningful life, and Lende explores this mantra in a variety of ways. She writes of the fisherman who refused a good-paying state job so he could spend more time with his family; of the man who drowned because he had no life vest, which prompted the town to raise money for personal floatation suspenders for every fisherman; and of the woman diagnosed with terminal cancer who continued to teach because it brought her the greatest joy and forced her to live in the moment. Each brief life story is a distillation of the highs and lows of that person's life, and Lende considers the many unexpected ways in which ordinary people touched one another, even if they were not always aware of it. Honest and simple yet full of lasting strength, the author's prose demonstrates what makes a life better rather than worse—including something as simple as picking up heart-shaped stones on the beach with a grandchild.

Optimistic, slightly humorous reflections on living a fully engaged, meaningful life.



## ANGER IS AN ENERGY My Life Uncensored

Lydon, John  
Dey Street/HarperCollins (544 pp.)  
\$28.99 | Apr. 28, 2015  
978-0-06-240021-5

Alternately musical bomb-thrower and contemplator Lydon, aka Johnny Rotten, looks back on a long life of pot-stirring and piss-taking.

This latest installment is of a piece with the author's earlier *Rotten* (1994), though some of the caustic anger has given way to a kind of studied resignation. Which is not to say that Lydon isn't irritated; hence the title and the



subtitle, which owes to his suspicion that there's always someone who aims to enact some kind of censorship: "It's the kind of ordinance that comes down from people that don't like to think very hard and aren't prepared to analyze themselves, just judge others, and are scared of the future." Some of Lydon's well-aired hatreds have given way, too, even to a kind of—shudder—toleration: Malcolm McLaren, the entrepreneur behind the Sex Pistols, is no longer the Antichrist but instead just another schmo with an idea: "He really didn't want to move mountains at all, he wanted to rearrange piles of glitter." As for Sid Vicious, "dumb as a fucking brush," well, if there was a punk through and through, it might have been him—though he was a victim of fashion and drugs alike. Lydon delivers a few surprises, not just with his newfound ability to accept the flaws of lesser mortals, but also with his allowance of unexpected likes. Confessing a fondness for Status Quo, Arthur Brown and Can might have pegged one as (gasp!) a hippie. It is clear that, though fond of zingers (he once called Ozzy Osbourne a "senile delinquent") and political put-downs, Lydon is also a serious and thoughtful artist, bookish and unafraid of hard work, and thus serving as a model citizen in a more ideal republic than ours. Besides, he's a philosopher: We're capable of horrible evil, he writes, but "because we are also capable of analyzing that, that is exactly why we're better."

A lucid, literate pleasure.



### FINDING SAMUEL LOWE *China, Jamaica, Harlem*

Madison, Paula Williams

Amistad/HarperCollins (288 pp.)

\$25.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

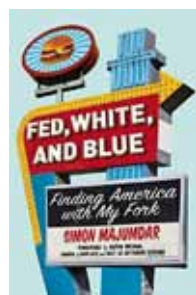
978-0-06-233163-2

A spirited pursuit of her mother's roots takes one African-American woman from Jamaica to Harlem to China.

A former NBC executive who is now CEO of a family investment group based in Chicago, Madison (who lives in Los Angeles) proves a formidable, dogged detective in tracing the complicated ramifications of her Chinese grandfather's work in Jamaica and return to China in the early 1930s. A teenager when he arrived in Jamaica in 1905, Samuel Lowe came from the Hakka minority ethnic group noted for its entrepreneurial drive; soon, he set up one thriving "Chiney shop" after another. He developed romantic attachments with the local ladies; in liaisons not unusual in Jamaica at the time, he fathered several children by different women. The first of these "outside children" was the author's mother, Nell Vera Lowe, whose distinctive Chinese look would cast her as a kind of pariah in her community. In time, Lowe married a family-designated Chinese bride sent from home, who bore him several more children. Thus, when Lowe returned with his wife to China during the business-stifling Depression, he left Nell behind, among other children, who scarcely knew him or each other. Badly treated by her mother, who resented her Chinese looks, Nell eventually immigrated to New York

and became a citizen, raising her children largely on her own when her Jamaican husband proved troublesome and unfaithful. Madison traces this tale of loss through her mother's story: Without education, Nell was doomed to a hard life of work as a seamstress, and she endured welfare and marginalization with a ferocious protectiveness toward her children. As the author pursues Lowe's family in China, arranging visits and sifting through minute ancestral details, she proves a valiant avenger of her mother's difficult past.

A well-structured memoir told in brief, punchy vignettes alternating between past and present.



### FED, WHITE, AND BLUE *Finding America with My Fork*

Majumdar, Simon

Hudson Street/Penguin (300 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

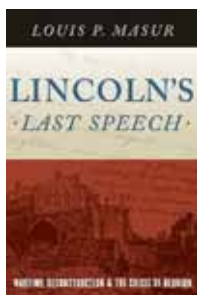
978-1-59463-215-0

A food writer's cross-country search for what it means to be an American.

Yorkshire-raised food writer and Food Network personality Majumdar (*Eating for Britain: A Journey Into the Heart (and Belly) of the Nation*, 2011, etc.) recently relocated from his beloved Britain to Los Angeles to live with his girlfriend. However, after several years of American life, he was still bewildered by the prospect of becoming a "true" American. What, exactly, does that mean? Knowing from experience that food is the easiest way to a culture's heart, the author embarked on a coast-to-coast tour seeking out culinary enclaves to find the secret to Americanness. One of Majumdar's first lessons was that ethnicity and food culture often go hand in hand, and his experiences among the burgeoning yet still largely unrecognized Filipino community of Los Angeles prove that ethnic groups eat traditional food with a sense of pride for their homeland but also incorporate contemporary style and conventions. Not all of his experiences were as gratifying. His trip to Philadelphia's annual Wing Bowl alongside competitive eater Jamie McDonald was truly an American experience: "I'd be hard pressed to think of any other nation on earth where a competition to watch twenty three men eat as many chicken wings as they could in thirty minutes would attract 23,000 spectators, including every stripper in the city, at 7am." Other highlights include goat's head in the Bronx, a Nebraska meatpacking plant, and rather expected trips to Wisconsin and Alaska for cheese making and salmon fishing. But these are only a few examples from Majumdar's diverse, patchworklike collection of foodie experiences. Regardless of where his travels took him, the author learned that if there is any constant throughout American culture, it's that we love to eat and are proud of our food.

Filled with loving portraits of quirky characters, Majumdar's series of vignettes is a candid and endearing snapshot of not only American food culture, but America itself.





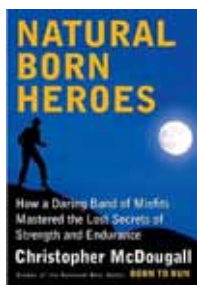
## LINCOLN'S LAST SPEECH *Wartime Reconstruction and the Crisis of Reunion*

Masur, Louis P.  
Oxford Univ. (224 pp.)  
\$24.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-0-19-021839-3

Historian Masur (American Studies/Rutgers Univ.; *The Civil War: A Concise History*, 2011, etc.) explores Abraham Lincoln's views on national reconciliation.

On April 11, 1865, shortly after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox—and just three days before his own assassination—Lincoln gave his final speech, to thousands (including John Wilkes Booth) gathered on a mud-filled White House lawn. “We meet this evening, not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart,” he said. But rather than deliver the expected victory speech after many years of civil war, Lincoln talked about Reconstruction, by which he meant “the re-inauguration of the national authority.” As Masur explains, Lincoln had refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of secession. Throughout the war, he viewed the Confederacy as the “so-called” seceded states and worked to re-establish the authority of the federal government. As outlined in his 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, he intended to offer a full pardon to participants in the rebellion and to make emancipation a key part of national healing. Masur uses Lincoln's final speech as a lens through which to recount the ongoing national debate over the reunification of North and South. In newspapers and speeches, many asked, were the seceded states still within the Union or out? Had they forfeited their rights? Should they be treated as conquered provinces? Determined to end the war and restore peace, Lincoln had been working since 1862 to re-establish national authority by appointing military governors after Union military victories in several states, including Tennessee, North Carolina, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. The author details these efforts and the extent to which Lincoln publicized his reconciliation intentions through widely distributed handbills. “Lincoln not only sought justice,” writes Masur, “he also desired mercy.”

A concise, useful analysis of Lincoln's generous hope for postwar America, seen against the failures of the actual Reconstruction that followed.



## NATURAL BORN HEROES *How a Daring Band of Misfits Mastered the Lost Secrets of Strength and Endurance*

McDougall, Christopher  
Knopf (368 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-307-59496-9

A book beyond category attempts to engage readers on a number of levels.

A less ambitious author could have focused this successfully as a World War II thriller, a nonfiction account of how a multinational band of guerrillas kidnapped a German general on the Nazi-occupied island of Crete (see Rick Stroud's *Kidnap in Crete*, 2015). Yet *Men's Health* contributing editor McDougall (*Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*, 2009) interweaves this narrative with inquiries into the uniqueness of Crete, the nature of heroism, the possibility that some Greek myths might have historical legitimacy (“Just because men and women of our era don't live up to the myths doesn't mean no one ever has, or will again”), a first-person, adventure-travel account of his attempt to solve the mystery by discovering the path of the kidnappers, and an indictment of the fitness industry, whose health clubs and diets that stress carb-loading might do more harm than good. There are compelling insights and provocative assertions throughout, but the narrative organization suggests a risky juggling act that sometimes seems arbitrary, and those preparing for a marathon might read it differently than World War II buffs will. Paraphrasing Plutarch, McDougall writes, “Heroes care. True heroism, as the ancients understood, isn't about strength or boldness or even courage. It's about compassion....[The hero] has to care so much about what's human, it brings out what's godly.” Using examples and anecdotes spanning decades, the author shows how ordinary people can display extraordinary heroism, a quality not limited by age or gender. He suggests that in “natural training,” a sense of play trumps the rigors of working out and that competition is just showing off.

A mostly engaging mix of World War II history, Greek mythology, endurance training and spiritual self-help that doesn't always cohere.



## KLANDESTINE *How a Klan Lawyer and a Checkbook Journalist Helped James Earl Ray Cover Up His Crime*

McMichael, Pate  
Chicago Review (320 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-61373-070-6

Journalist McMichael reveals far-reaching deceptions in his examination of coverups in the case of James Earl Ray (1928-1998), accused of killing Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis in 1968.

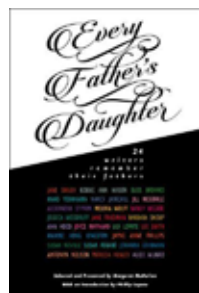
The author extensively covers King's shooting, Ray's capture and the 30-year period following his subsequent guilty plea in 1969. McMichael notes that, astonishingly, Ray's attorney Arthur Hanes was a committed anti-segregationist; in 1961, his slogan for his successful campaign for mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, was “Never”—and also served as a Ku Klux Klan “Klon-sel” (trial defense lawyer) and consulted with Klan leaders over several years before and after the Ray case. Accompanying Hanes was William Huie, a crusading journalist for *Look* magazine who was against racial injustice and was also an opportunistic,

## A thoughtful and strangely encouraging tour of an often difficult life stage.

THE PRIME OF LIFE

profit-seeking author and magazine writer. McMichael reveals how Huie lost millions with Ray's guilty plea; Italian producer Carlo Ponti killed the movie deal following the plea because "he understood that the masses weren't interested in a story about a petty criminal from Missouri; they wanted the dark heart of conspiracy." Incomplete congressional investigations of the deaths of both King and President John F. Kennedy fanned the flames of outrage of an increasingly skeptical, distrustful nation. Indeed, both assassinations were later said to have "likely resulted from well-executed conspiracies involving politically-motivated criminals"—in Ray's case, "a Cuban gun-running conspiracy." Furthermore, neither civil rights activist Jesse Jackson nor King's widow believed Ray was culpable, and a mock trial on HBO in 1993 found Ray not guilty. Because such true stories about government smoke screens and unanswered cries for justice have echoes in the 21st-century American criminal justice system, the author's narrative remains topical and relevant.

McMichael ably leads readers to the conclusion that, in this case, no one's hands were clean. (31 b/w photos)



### EVERY FATHER'S DAUGHTER Twenty-five Women Writers Remember Their Fathers

McMullan, Margaret—Ed.  
McPherson & Company (300 pp.)  
\$29.95 | Apr. 9, 2015  
978-1-62054-013-8

A collection of essays on the father-daughter dynamic.

Editor and novelist McMullan (Literature and Writing/Univ. of Evansville; *Sources of Light*, 2010, etc.) presents 24 ways of "knowing" one's father by accomplished, independent daughters, each with a folksy introduction to help situate the relationship in place and time. For many of these authors, the father was a tall, handsome, impossibly romantic character in the family, removed from the quotidian, often remote, and whose approval the daughters tried to maintain. In a twist on this theme, Jane Smiley writes how ultimately relieved she was *not* to know her father—who perhaps suffered from PTSD and divorced her mother when the author was a toddler—because his absence allowed her the space to grow up "free of preconceptions." Some of the contributors offer reminiscences following their fathers' deaths—e.g., Jill McCorkle in "My Dad." In "My Father's Daughter," Bliss Broyard fills in a deeper portrait of her philandering, brilliant, bookish father by talking to his lively, lifelong best friends in Greenwich Village, concluding ruefully that she should have paid more attention to her father when he was alive. Melora Wolff offers an excellent view of the glamorous world of visiting fathers from the first-person, plural view of young ladies at New York City's Brearley School, while Barbara Shoup describes her father's vanishing into alcoholism in her excruciating essay "Waiting for My Father." Throughout, fathers often represent the world of work, whether in the "special places" like the gambling house that Maxine Hong Kingston describes in "The

American Father" or the sacred writing den that was strictly off limits to boisterous children, as depicted in Alexandra Styron's "Reading My Father." Other contributors include Jayne Anne Phillips, Antonya Nelson, Ann Mason and Alice Munro, and Phillip Lopate provides the introduction.

Consistently elucidating portraits.



### THE PRIME OF LIFE A History of Modern Adulthood

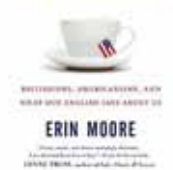
Mintz, Steven  
Belknap/Harvard Univ. (420 pp.)  
\$35.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-674-04767-9

Mintz (History/Univ. of Texas; *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*, 2004, etc.) puts into historical perspective the changes and continuities that have marked adulthood over, principally, the last 200 years.

Adulthood, writes the author in this capacious survey, has its timeless, universal qualities: economic independence, romantic relationships, fruitful multiplication and the discovery of rewarding work. But it has always been a fraught time, quixotic in its challenges and demanding in its responsibilities, even when the responsibility was to abjure responsibility. Mintz wears his scholar's hat lightly, with polish and a comfortable pace to the writing, which translates nicely into storytelling that animates a wide variety of sociocultural circumstances. The author rightly points out that assuming the mantle of an adult isn't for quitters; it has been, and likely always will be, stressful and greatly affected by class, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality. Historical moments have sometimes limited opportunities for development and sometimes expanded them, and Mintz examines a host of broad themes—from stoicism to flexibility—as well as old chestnuts ("Condemnation of the younger generation is among this country's oldest traditions") and specific situations—e.g., the ramifications of no-fault divorce, which "failed to adequately account for the inequities and disabilities that many women face." Throughout, the author scatters personal anecdotes, and he rightly notes that for every liberation from rigidity, there is a loss—of social connection, societal safety net, work stability and kinship ties. Coping with adulthood, Mintz makes plain, requires other timeless, universal qualities: candor, purpose and discipline, to name a few. "If immaturity connotes irresponsibility and abandon," writes the author, "then maturity implies responsibility, reliability, sensible judgment, and the wisdom that can be acquired only through experience and reflection."

A thoughtful and strangely encouraging tour of an often difficult life stage. (26 halftones)

## THAT'S NOT ENGLISH



### THAT'S NOT ENGLISH *Britishisms, Americanisms, and What Our English Says About Us*

Moore, Erin

Gotham Books (240 pp.)

\$25.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-59240-885-6

An author who grew up in Florida and now lives in London debuts with a breezy, and sometimes-irreverent, disquisition on the significance of certain slang locutions on both sides of the pond.

Moore elects to follow what has become a popular organizational principle—what could be called the *ten-objects-that-tell-Texas-history* model. She examines 31 expressions (each with its own chapter) that, in most cases, exist on both sides of the Atlantic but often mean something different to native speakers. Sometimes, the differences are striking and illuminating. Early on, Moore explains why she focuses on England—not the British Isles, not the United Kingdom. Some of the locutions readers will expect: *bloody*, *Yankee* and *way out* (England's meaning: *exit*). But others are surprising and sometimes revelatory. The English term *broolly*, for example (*umbrella*), permits her to expatiate upon the differences in attitudes about the weather (the English expect lousy weather; Americans grouse about it). She uses the English term *mufti* (ordinary dress) to discuss why the English are more comfortable with school uniforms than Americans are. Very early in the text, Moore shows how the word *quite* varies in meaning. In America, a sentence like *She is quite lovely* indicates high praise; in England, the term is more an expression that indicates she's really not all *that* lovely. Occasionally, Moore weighs in on touchy cultural issues. The word *partner*, for example, has in England no connotation of homosexuality. She also enjoys employing some occasional potty humor. She mentions that neither the English nor the Americans are comfortable using the word *toilet* in conversation, so we've both developed different sets of euphemisms. She ends the section with this: "[I]f you don't give a shit what anyone thinks, you know what word you can use."

Although Moore sometimes sees a bit too much significance in the differences, her brisk, self-effacing style is appealing.



### THE WORLD BETWEEN TWO COVERS *Reading the Globe*

Morgan, Ann

Liveright/Norton (336 pp.)

\$24.95 | May 4, 2015

978-1-63149-067-5

Exploring the world, one book at a time. American bookstores stock only a tiny selection of translated works, making it nearly impossible for readers to gain access to world literature. In her lively, debut book, journalist and

blogger Morgan, regretting that she has been "a literary xenophobe," recounts her project to spend a year reading one book, translated or written in English, from every country in the world. That project proved more difficult than she imagined: In many countries, publishers release thousands of translated copies of Anglophone authors, rather than support indigenous writers. The literary world, therefore, has been dominated by books from a few nations, and readers "can never entirely remove the blinkers and filters put on our reading goggles." Censorship has impeded publication, too, as Morgan discovered when she tried to find literature from North Korea. A cultural delegate responded that "he was not aware of any adult fiction produced in the entire seven-decade history of the republic" but only politically oriented works that "demonstrated loyalty, honour, and self-sacrifice for the motherland." The ubiquity of English has had an impact on academic writing as well as commercial books. Scholars worry "that other languages are denuded of the specialist terms needed to express complex ideas and discoveries" by the pressure to write in English. Some fiction writers, striving for publication, try to imitate Western-style novels rather than draw upon their own cultures. Reading indigenous works that evoke a new time and place, though—like a hugely popular young-adult series written by a Samoan housewife—confronted Morgan with ideas and views that felt startlingly fresh. An appendix lists 196 books that the author read on her journey, including selections from Bhutan, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Iraq and Sierra Leone; most were published by small, independent presses.

Morgan's intrepid literary project underscores the crucial importance of stretching the boundaries of one's aesthetic and intellectual worlds.



### IN-YOUR-FACE POLITICS *The Consequences of Uncivil Media*

Mutz, Diana C.

Princeton Univ. (304 pp.)

\$29.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-691-16511-0

A prominent political scientist asks why politicians and political advocates so often seem like "nasty, boorish sorts who somehow feel they need not obey the same social norms as ordinary citizens."

Observing George W. Bush's face on TV, Mutz (Political Science and Communication/Univ. of Penn.; *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*, 2006, etc.) realized that "[t]o obtain the same visual perspective in person, [one] would need to be either his lover or his dentist." With ample humor and sufficient exposition for a lay audience, she conducts and analyzes a series of experiments carefully crafted to study how extreme close-ups and uncivil behavior in political TV affect the public discourse. Unsurprisingly, the results suggest that incivility erodes trust in government: "[U]ncivil political exchanges prime people to think about less savory, more strongly disliked examples of politicians and politics. This,

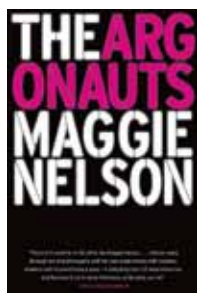


# Evenhanded, diplomatic, mutually respectful and enormously useful.

THE TWO-STATE DELUSION

in turn, prompts them to evaluate the whole enterprise more negatively.” Examining people’s political viewing habits, Mutz finds that “Republicans are exposed to fewer programs [than Democrats], a much larger proportion of which are uncivil.” (She does not make the connection that many Republican policies are themselves designed to limit the power and appeal of government, pointing to potential positive externalities of incivility for Republican actors.) Few of Mutz’s conclusions are surprising, and the most entertaining chapter is the last, in which she proffers an assortment of delightfully bizarre remedies to the fact that “[f]or most people, politics on its own merits is not sufficiently exciting...so it requires the drama and tension of uncivil human conflict to make it more interesting to watch.” Taking a page from the Korean networks, perhaps election coverage should involve “animations based on popular movies and sporting events to show who [is] surging ahead or falling behind,” or maybe candidates should compete on a season of *Political Idol*.

An approachable yet scientifically rigorous look at what passes for political discourse in America. (46 line illustrations; 2 tables)



## THE ARGONAUTS

Nelson, Maggie  
Graywolf (160 pp.)  
\$23.00 | May 5, 2015  
978-1-55597-707-8



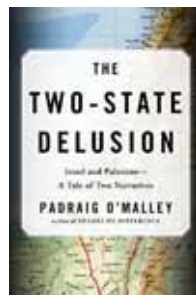
A fiercely provocative and intellectually audacious memoir that focuses on motherhood, love and gender fluidity.

Nelson (Critical Studies/CalArts; *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*, 2012, etc.) is all over the map in a memoir that illuminates

Barthes and celebrates anal eroticism (charging that some who have written about it hide behind metaphor, whereas she’s plain from the first paragraph that she’s more interested in the real deal). This is a book about transitioning, transgenerating, transcending and any other trans- the author wants to connect. But it’s also a love story, chronicling the relationship between the author and her lover, the artist Harry Dodge, who was born a female (or at least had a female name) but has more recently passed for male, particularly with the testosterone treatments that initially concerned the author before she realized her selfishness. The relationship generally requires “pronoun avoidance.” This created a problem in 2008, when the *New York Times* published a piece on Dodge’s art but insisted that the artist “couldn’t appear on their pages unless you chose *Mr.* or *Ms.*.... You chose *Ms.*, ‘to take one for the team.’” Nelson was also undergoing body changes, through a pregnancy she had desired since the relationship flourished. She recounts 2011 as “the summer of our changing bodies.” She elaborates: “On the surface it may have seemed as though your body was becoming more and more ‘male,’ mine more and more ‘female.’ But that’s not how it felt on the inside.” The author turns the whole process and concept of motherhood inside out, exploring every possible perspective, blurring the distinctions among

the political, philosophical, aesthetic and personal, wondering if her writing is violating the privacy of her son-to-be as well as her lover. Ultimately, Harry speaks within these pages, as the death of Dodge’s mother and the birth of their son bring the book to its richly rewarding climax.

A book that will challenge readers as much as the author has challenged herself.



## THE TWO-STATE DELUSION Israel and Palestine— A Tale of Two Narratives

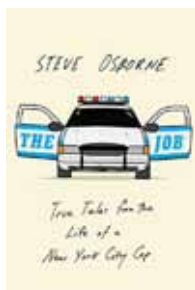
O'Malley, Padraig  
Viking (480 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Apr. 28, 2015  
978-0-670-02505-3



A thoughtful autopsy of the failed two-state paradigm.

Having worked to promote peace within conflicts in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Iraq, O'Malley (Peace and Reconciliation/Univ. of Mass., Boston; *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa*, 2007, etc.) carefully sifts through the intractable coexistence between the Palestinians and Israelis and finds both sides so traumatized by the “narrative” of their respective struggle that they are unable to view the other with respect or humanity—the beginning of true reconciliation. Both claiming to be legitimate owners of the same land, both smarting from historical injustice and both stoking their feelings of victimization, the two sides are “irreconcilable,” as they have proved through numerous failed discussions from the two Oslo Accords through recent talks held by Secretary of State John Kerry. In a work of impeccable research, featuring extensive footnotes and employing interviews of both Palestinians and Israelis, O'Malley addresses the sticking points on both sides that form the “addiction” by each to an “ethos of conflict”: the omission of the Islamist, Gaza-based Hamas from the peacemaking process, thus ignoring the “elephant in the room”; Israel’s refusal to allow Palestinian refugees or their descendants a “right to return” after the wars of 1947-1949; continued Israeli settlements by a ultraorthodox minority bent on “messianic zealotry”; a highly problematic economic sustainability in Palestine due to the “asymmetry of power” with Israel; and the “silently creeping, inexorably irreversible changes in Israel’s demographic profiles”—namely, fewer Jews and more Palestinians. O'Malley is not hopeful but rather disgusted that the two sides seem to be entrenched in their mutual hatred and absolutely unwilling to budge. To do so, he writes, requires establishing a “parity of esteem for each other’s narratives” and then perhaps a long cease-fire that would allow a new generation of leaders to step up.

Evenhanded, diplomatic, mutually respectful and enormously useful.



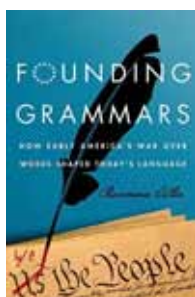
## THE JOB *True Tales from the Life of a New York City Cop*

Osborne, Steve  
Doubleday (272 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Apr. 21, 2015  
978-0-385-53962-3

Raucous recollections from a career as a New York City cop, from a veteran of The Moth storytelling series.

Osborne retired in 2003 as the commander of the Manhattan Gang Squad after 20 years of service, yet he seems more aligned with the street cop's earthy brotherhood than with the authority of command: "It's a good feeling knowing that you belong to a family [and] also the biggest and baddest gang in the city." Although his narrative approach is generalized rather than focused on concrete case histories, the author portrays a rough arc of the transformation of New York City from the decay and constant crime of the early 1980s to the historic crime reductions followed by the greater horror of 9/11 (at which he was present). In explaining his post-retirement interest in storytelling, he writes, for "twenty years my family and friends really didn't understand what I did for a living." The son of a tough cop himself, Osborne seemingly never considered any other life. Tonally, he comes off as an avuncular, world-weary tough guy, embodying the "cops know best" attitude that many find alienating. Yet he elevates his perspective by displaying empathy for the civilians, victims and even criminals he has encountered, drawing complex lines between the "lost souls" and "evil motherfuckers" of the underworld. The book has a light, episodic structure, with most chapters built around a less-understood aspect of policing (the weird dynamics of midnight tours or elite anti-crime units) or a dramatic street scene (a near riot in Washington Square Park). Osborne is often humorous, although some readers may find him frank to the point of cynicism: "People like to think cops are racists and only lock up minorities....After being a cop for a few years, you learn to dislike people equally."

Despite their anecdotal nature, these punchy policing tales seem provocatively true to life.



## FOUNDING GRAMMARS *How Early America's War Over Words Shaped Today's Language*

Ostler, Rosemarie  
St. Martin's (320 pp.)  
\$26.99 | May 12, 2015  
978-1-250-04612-3

Since Colonial times, Americans have taken grammar as a touchstone of social and educational status. Linguist and former librarian Ostler (*Slinging Mud: Rude Nicknames, Scurrilous Slogans, and Insulting Slang from Two Centuries of American Politics*, 2011, etc.) provides a history of the struggles over our language.

The author begins with Noah Webster, who, before compiling the first American dictionary, wrote a three-volume grammar text, arguing that the way Americans actually speak was the best foundation for the study of grammar. Unfortunately for Webster, Robert Lowth, an Anglican bishop and author of *A Short Introduction to English Grammar*, already occupied the high ground in the field of grammar textbooks. Lowth was among the first to pontificate against double negatives and ending sentences with prepositions, rules that remain dear to grammatical purists. Even more influential was Lindley Murray, whose grammar book became the standard during much of the 19th century. In those books, the battle lines were drawn, pitting Latinate rules against the study of vernacular speech. Ostler follows the skirmishes over the years, examining the growing influence of frontier Americans like Davy Crockett and Andrew Jackson. However, the sophisticated classes of New York and Boston carried more weight with those interested in improving their grammar. Even Abraham Lincoln had to contend with snobs who found his homespun anecdotes proof of his boorish origins. While subsequent generations learned to see the charms of Mark Twain and other vernacular writers, those with a claim to education still avoided split infinitives and shunned "ain't" as the stain of ignorance. Practitioners of scientific linguistics, who strove to describe usage rather than prescribe rules, made few inroads with the way grammar was taught, and Webster's Third International outraged purists by including "ain't" and other substandard usages. The controversies that followed get full play, as Ostler (who clearly sympathizes with the descriptive camp) brings the "war of grammar" up to the present.

Lively and revealing discussion of a battle that seems likely to continue as long as English is spoken.



## DENG XIAOPING *A Revolutionary Life*

Pantsov, Alexander V. with  
Levine, Steven I.  
Oxford Univ. (676 pp.)  
\$34.95 | May 1, 2015  
978-0-19-939203-2



A barbed biography, relentless and occasionally sarcastic, reveals the many problematic facets of the long-lived revolutionary and reformer Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997).

Unlike Ezra F. Vogel's *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (2011), which focuses on the last third of the premier's life and is faulted by historians Pantsov (Capital Univ.) and Levine (Univ. of Montana) for not being critical enough of its subject, this work by the co-authors of *Mao: The Real Story* (2012) looks more extensively at Deng's formative years under Mao Zedong, using newly available material from the Russian State Archives and other sources. Beginning their account with the bloody purging of the student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989—an order given by Deng to crush the "counterrevolutionary rebellion"—the authors take great pains to delineate

the makeup of a leader so inculcated by Maoist authoritarian ways that he would sacrifice everything to the communist cause, including his cherished reforms. Indeed, this would be the refrain of his remarkably resilient career, from his first repudiation of his adoring parents when he joined the Bolshevik movement as a student in Paris in the early 1920s to his sycophantic appeasement under Mao during the disastrous Great Leap. The authors emphasize that Deng embraced communism as a youth because he was "ready for anything that would help redress the insults and injuries inflicted upon him by the capitalist world." He became an obedient soldier of the Chinese Communist Party and, as chief of the Southwest Region during the 1950s, helped solidify the repression of Tibet and galvanize agrarian reform. Caught up in the "utopian hysteria" dictated by Mao, Deng nonetheless began to recognize the need to oppose the leader without compromising his own position. His skillful dance during the Cultural Revolution, when he was denounced, arrested and exiled, yet re-emerged rehabilitated, provides a valuable key to this enigmatic leader.

**A masterly work that advances by salient themes and vigorous strokes. (22 b/w halftones)**



## TWO

Patchett, Ann—Ed.

Photos by Pinney, Melissa Ann

Harper Design (208 pp.)

\$29.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-06-233442-8

Salt-of-the-earth collection of photos paired with loosely related essays by contemporary literary luminaries.

Using the theme of "twos" and "pairs," Pinney (Photography/Columbia Coll. Chicago; *Girl Ascending*, 2011, etc.) includes a number of heartfelt but ultimately uninspiring color photos bolstered by the essayistic efforts of some of today's most established mainstream writers. Acclaimed novelist Patchett (*This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage*, 2013, etc.) serves as the editor and provides an encomium-filled introduction. Other contributors matching words to images include Edwidge Danticat, Elizabeth Gilbert, Richard Russo, Barbara Kingsolver, Billy Collins, Maile Meloy and Susan Orlean. Unfortunately, no matter how the "two" theme is rendered, it often rings hollow: Many of the brief accompanying essays suffer from a sense of being a specially commissioned piece of workmanlike writing rather than the product of inspiration. A few of these essays, however, do leave memorable traces, especially Gilbert's musings in "Two Heads on a Pike," about the extraordinary and empathetic instincts her indispensable proofreading foil showed when considering her work, acting in both antagonistic and complementary ways to improve Gilbert's work. In "The Dollies," Elizabeth McCracken most successfully embodies the "two" theme, delivering a brief but touching portrait of an odd but abiding bond between twin sisters. "If you were twins, you *couldn't* be alike," she writes. "You had to share. Better to take all of math and forgo music than to be only so-so at both. Better to love public speaking and understand

you would never be able to carry a tune. That made sense to me. Who would want to be only average at anything?" On the whole, the book is well-intentioned. However, neither the photos nor the accompanying essays contain the sort of deep, evocative power to make for more than a fleetingly interesting project.

**A quietly ambitious multimedia production that doesn't quite live up to its potential.**



## BEAUTIFUL CHAOS A Life in the Theater

Perloff, Carey

City Lights (272 pp.)

\$16.95 | Mar. 1, 2015

978-1-931404-14-3

A memoir and artistic manifesto regarding the author's love of highbrow, "meaningful" classical theater.

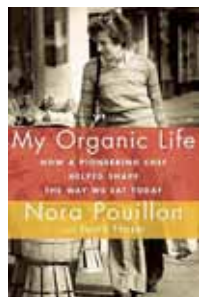
Perloff's mandate as the artistic director of the American Conservatory Theater, a classical, nonprofit theater company, is "to nurture and cultivate that which may have lasting value"—unlike popular culture, which she regards as only momentarily relevant. The author admits to being "a world-class talker" with the ability to "set a trail of words in motion and watch them quickly find their way into complete sentences, paragraphs, speeches," which is a major flaw of the book; she writes indulgently and expansively and name-drops the many actors with whom she has worked. What is clear are Perloff's twin passions: creative development through artistic collaboration and the difficult and unique challenges women and mothers face in the theater: "how hard it is for us to be resilient in the face of a doubting culture that rarely believes we have it in us to succeed at the highest levels." The author argues vigorously for the relevance of classical theater, an art form that, contrary to mainstream productions, "managed to be at the same time metaphoric and immediate, poetic and specific, linguistic and physical, political without being didactic." Perloff disdains even classic American drama for its "realism" and confessional and earnest qualities, and she declares that theater "exists only in relationship to audience." Many of the author's arguments are intellectually stimulating but likely only for a select few, and this snobbery will likely put off fans of commercial theater. When she rhapsodizes about her experience reading "the famous central Chorus of Aristophanes' *The Frogs*" in Greek class while studying at Stanford, lay readers may well close the cover and exit scene.

**A book for those who already agree with or will warm to the author's high-minded, often elitist stance.**



## An inspiring account and great fun to read.

MY ORGANIC LIFE



### MY ORGANIC LIFE *How a Pioneering Chef Helped Shape the Way We Eat Today*

Pouillon, Nora

Knopf (288 pp.)

\$26.95 | Apr. 21, 2015

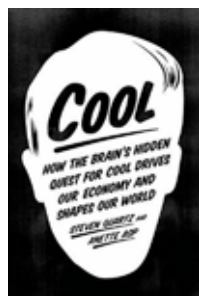
978-0-385-35075-4



In a sparkling memoir, the founder of Restaurant Nora tells of making her own journey into the food world.

From her earliest days growing up in the Austrian Alps, Pouillon was exposed to simple, fresh food. When she came to the United States with her French husband in the 1960s, she was appalled by the drab produce and packaged, processed food found in American supermarkets. A book by British food and cooking writer Elizabeth David introduced her to the importance of fresh, seasonal and natural ingredients and essentially launched her on a new career path. Pouillon quickly learned to cook and then moved on from making dinners for friends to launching a catering business, teaching cooking classes in her kitchen, and becoming chef of a new restaurant, the Tabard Inn, in Washington, D.C. Spurred by the need to earn a living—she had left her husband—the author joined with two partners to open Restaurant Nora in 1979. Finding financing was one problem, and finding local, pesticide-free produce was another, but Pouillon met her challenges head-on. As a measure of her success, in 1999, Restaurant Nora became the first certified organic restaurant in the country; in 2010, it was chosen as the site of a surprise birthday party for Michelle Obama. Much more than a memoir of one woman's career in food, the book also provides a picture of the growth of the organic food movement in the U.S.—a movement that Nora is still very much a part of. She organizes farmers markets, brings chefs and farmers together, works with consumer advocacy groups, and attends conferences at home and abroad. Pouillon's story is also a feminist one, showing a woman with young children dealing with a failed marriage, working successfully in a male-dominated business and helping other women to succeed in it.

An inspiring account and great fun to read.



### COOL *How the Brain's Hidden Quest for Cool Drives Our Economy and Shapes Our World*

Quartz, Steven & Asp, Anette

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-374-12918-7

A counterintuitive analysis suggesting that consumers instinctively know more about the value of the signals they are sending than their critics do.

Most books that cover this territory suggest that consumers are mere sheep, blindly led by the insidious forces of capitalism. That assumption, write Quartz (Philosophy and Cognitive Science/Caltech; co-author: *Liars, Lovers, and Heroes: What the New Brain Science Reveals About How We Become Who We Are*, 2002) and political scientist and communications professional Asp, is wrong. The authors' credentials provide an indication of how much ground they cover, from a variety of perspectives that transcend conventional categorization. Perhaps the key concept concerns self-image as reflected through the perception of others: "The fact that our self-concept draws on how we think others think about us presents a tremendously intriguing possibility," write the authors. Consumers proceed with an eye toward "how others might think of them *with* that product: that is, how the product might enhance their social image." Where the measuring sticks for social image might once have been wealth and conspicuous consumption, the evolution of "cool"—from anti-materialist rejection of the bourgeoisie to dot.com mainstreaming and from bebop to beatnik to rebel to hippie to ironic hipster—has changed the signals and codes that consumers send. It shows how Harley-Davidson has gone from annual sales of around 70,000 in the early 1990s to more than 325,000 in 2005 by seeing its "consumer culture evolve from a hierarchical to a pluralistic one, a 'mosaic of microcultures,'" while sales of minivans plummeted over the same period in favor of SUVs targeting the same market with a different coded message. Quartz and Asp are particularly incisive on the evolution from rebel cool to "Dotcool," encompassing the embrace of nerdiness and hipster irony as "today's knowledge worker is valued for his unconventionality, because originality drives innovation," thus transcending the rebel-cool disdain for "selling out."

Some points are more provocative than convincing, but the authors put a lively spin on an age-old argument. (12 b/w illustrations)



### DREAMLAND

Quinones, Sam

Bloomsbury (384 pp.)

\$28.00 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-1-62040-250-4

Discouraging, unflinching dispatches from America's enduring opiate-abuse epidemic.

Veteran freelance journalist Quinones (*Antonio's Gun and Delfino's Dream: True Tales of Mexican Migration*, 2007, etc.)

cogently captures the essence of the festering war on drugs throughout the 1990s. He focuses on the market for black tar heroin, a cheap, potent, semiprocessed drug smuggled into the United States from Nayarit, a state on the Pacific coast of Mexico. The author charts its dissemination throughout American heartland cities like Columbus and Portsmouth, Ohio, home to a huge, family-friendly swimming pool named Dreamland, which closed in 1993, after which opiates "made easy work of a landscape stripped of any communal girding." Assembling

history through varying locales and personal portraits, Quiñones follows a palpable trail of heartbreak, misery and the eventual demise of seemingly harmless people “shape-shifted into lying, thieving slaves to an unseen molecule.” The author provides an insider’s glimpse into the drug trade machine, examining the evolution of medical narcotic destigmatization, the OxyContin-heroin correlation and the machinations of manipulative pharmaceutical companies. His profiles include a West Virginia father burying his overdosed son, a diabolically resourceful drug dealer dubbed “the Man,” and “Enrique,” a Mexican citizen who entered the drug trade as a dealer for his uncle at 14. Perhaps most intriguing is the author’s vivid dissection of the “cross-cultural heroin deal,” consisting of an interconnected, hive-minded “retail system” of telephone operators, dealers (popularly known as the “Xalisco Boys”) and customers; everything is efficiently and covertly marketed “like a pizza delivery service” and franchised nationwide with precision. The author’s text, the result of a five-year endeavor of remote research and in-person interviews, offers a sweeping vantage point of the nation’s ever expanding drug problem. Though initially disjointed, these frustrating and undeniably disheartening scenarios eventually dovetail into a disturbing tapestry of abuse, addiction and death. Thankfully, for a fortunate few, rebirth is possible.

**A compellingly investigated, relentlessly gloomy report on the drug distribution industry.**



**WHISKEY BOTTLES AND  
BRAND-NEW CARS  
*The Fast Life and Sudden  
Death of Lynyrd Skynyrd***

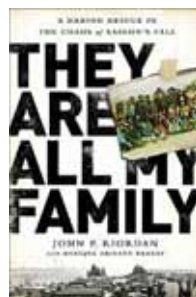
Ribowsky, Mark  
Chicago Review (288 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-56976-146-5

Straightforward biography of the Southern rock band.

Though staples such as “Sweet Home Alabama” and “Free Bird” have kept Lynyrd Skynyrd’s brand alive through recordings and reunion tours for almost three decades, Ribowsky (*The Last Cowboy: A Life of Tom Landry*, 2013, etc.) makes a convincing case that the band died with the plane crash that took frontman Ronnie Van Zant and other passengers. However, the author overstates most of what he claims for Van Zant and the hard-drinking, rabble-rousing band, who “unwittingly but inexorably...found a place among the artistic giants of the American South, their thematic content deceptively simple but as soul deep as any Faulkner novel or Tennessee Williams play.” Of Southern rock in general, Ribowsky asserts that the “songwriters had become the modern southern literati, and in their pens lay the definitions of a new reconstruction of the South and southern manhood.” Perhaps such writing is an attempt to compensate for lack of access and primary sources, as most of the quotes are from other books and articles, while those few who agreed to talk to the author—former manager Alan Walden, booking agent Alex Hodges and guitarist

Ed King—come across much better than the many who didn’t (Van Zant’s widow, the remaining, surviving band members, original producer Al Kooper). Ultimately, it’s surprising that the band lasted as long as it did, even before the tragic crash, for the musicians seemed bent on destruction, fighting and drinking and drugging beyond any bounds of self-restraint. Praised for the sensitivity of his songwriting, Van Zant would throw punches without provocation (beating at least one woman in these pages) and once tried to toss a roadie from a plane—at 30,000 feet.

**Serviceable but often floridly overwritten. Though Ribowsky accuses the band’s current incarnation and those who market the legacy of “mercenary profit motive,” the same charge could be leveled at the book. (17 b/w photos)**



**THEY ARE ALL MY FAMILY  
*A Daring Rescue in the Chaos  
of Saigon’s Fall***

Riordan, John P. with  
Demery, Monique Brinson  
PublicAffairs (256 pp.)  
\$25.99 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-1-61039-503-8

Memoir of a bank manager’s unlikely role in the evacuation of South Vietnamese from war-torn mid-1970s Saigon.

With the assistance of Demery (*Finding the Dragon Lady: The Mystery of Vietnam’s Madame Nhu*, 2013), Riordan chronicles his time as a mild-mannered manager of a bank in Saigon and his more important role as a savior of dozens of South Vietnamese families fleeing the rolling juggernaut of communism in 1975. The author first got acquainted with Vietnam through his 15-month tour of duty in the United States Army, but then he found himself in a new and seemingly passive role in international financial services. By the spring of 1975, what seemed like a routine civilian position became the last outpost of American financial interests in South Vietnam and the setting for the final airlift of Americans and South Vietnamese out of the country. Although the narrative lacks the dramatic punch of a more seasoned writer, Riordan builds his story in measured prose, giving a vivid sense of the history of Vietnam that comes from lived experience rather than research. At the height of the crisis in Saigon, the author was faced with a choice that no one should ever have to make. Although he was told to limit his evacuees to American citizens, he found an ingenious way to also save many of his longtime South Vietnamese bank colleagues—by exploiting an obscure legal loophole that involved, amazingly, passing his colleagues off as family. “I wasn’t trying to be a hero,” he writes, “but it seemed right to me to at least try to help my colleagues and my friends. When I could not stand by, they all became my family. Now they have become our neighbors, our friends, and our fellow Americans. In the case of these 106 lives, the tragic and chaotic end of the [war] became the beginning of something new.”

**A nail-biting account of one man’s quiet heroism in the face of impossible odds.**

# Another intriguing journey from Ronson, who notes that our social media dark side grows ever darker when we believe we're superior to others—and anonymous.

SO YOU'VE BEEN PUBLICLY SHAMED



## SO YOU'VE BEEN PUBLICLY SHAMED

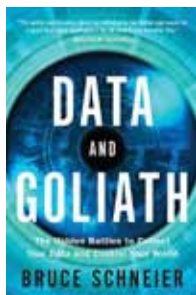
Ronson, Jon  
Riverhead (304 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Mar. 31, 2015  
978-1-59448-713-2

The author of works about everyday psychopathologies takes a hard look at the dark side of shaming on social media.

*This American Life* contributor Ronson (*Lost at Sea: The Jon Ronson Mysteries*,

2012, etc.) believes that via social media, we are creating a contemporary version of Hawthorne's Massachusetts Bay Colony, awarding scarlet letters with gleeful viciousness to people who often are more guilty of silliness and indiscretion than they are of any egregious social (or actual) felony. Ronson begins with an incident in his own life: some computer guys who adopted his name on Twitter and tweeted things that the author despised. Then he examines case studies of specific individuals, most of whom he sought out and interviewed. Among them are plagiarists and fabricators (a Bob Dylan biographer who created quotations), a woman who tweeted an insensitive racial comment, a couple of guys in an audience who said noxious things overheard by a person nearby, and a woman who posted a photograph of herself making an obscene gesture at Arlington National Cemetery. Due to the swarms on social media, virtually all of these people lost their jobs, reputations and privacy. Digging into the backgrounds of these stories, Ronson unearths relevant information about shaming in the courtroom (a principal strategy employed by lawyers on both sides), the "unshaming" process (and how it can be very effective with prison inmates), and psychological experiments that show the extent to which humans will go to shame others. He also writes about computer whizzes who, for a substantial fee, can play with your name on Google search so that your indiscretions appear in a much diminished way (several pages down, where most searchers don't look).

Another intriguing journey from Ronson, who notes that our social media dark side grows ever darker when we believe we're superior to others—and anonymous.



## DATA AND GOLIATH The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World

Schneier, Bruce  
Norton (380 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Mar. 2, 2015  
978-0-393-24481-6

A jeremiad suggesting our addiction to data may have made privacy obsolete.

Prolific technological writer Schneier (Fellow/Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School; *Carry On: Sound Advice from Schneier on Security*, 2013, etc.) clearly examines how technology has transformed every

interaction, noting how our intimate communications are now "saved in ways we have no control over." He suggests that most Americans remain unconcerned about the relationship between data and surveillance, due to the attraction of "free" products like Gmail. He focuses on the social costs of surveillance, which "puts us at risk of abuses by those in power...exacerbated by the fact that we are generating so much data and storing it indefinitely." He also argues that this "pervasive mass surveillance" will inevitably chill progressive movements—e.g., gay rights and cannabis decriminalization. The problem is more sprawling than most realize: Edward Snowden's revelations clarified "how much the NSA relies on US corporations to eavesdrop on the Internet," and corporations are using such technologies for their own ends. Yet both the NSA and corporations are blithe about how they treat the fruits of this nonstop spying. "From the military's perspective," writes the author, "it's not surveillance until a human being looks at the data." Such strange pronouncements about the common good are hard to counter, since whistleblowers such as Snowden are prohibited from explaining their actions in court. Schneier argues that all this invasion of privacy is unlikely to succeed in its alleged goal: "Even highly accurate terrorism prediction systems will be so flooded with false alarms that they will be useless." He concludes this grim catalog of privacy erosion with a set of prescriptions for governments, corporations and "the rest of us," advocating a mix of legal framework, incentives for fairer business models and a more realistic understanding of the current moment's potential for harm.

An accessible, detailed look at a disturbing aspect of contemporary life.

## AFTERWAR Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers

Sherman, Nancy  
Oxford Univ. (188 pp.)  
\$24.95 | May 1, 2015  
978-0-19-932527-6

{NONFICTION}

Sherman (Philosophy/Georgetown Univ.; *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers*, 2010, etc.)

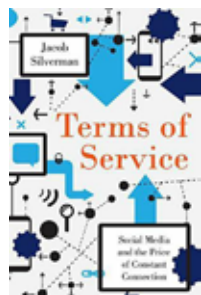
describes the many and varied struggles for inner peace after returning from war.

The author speaks to readers of those veterans with trouble reintegrating with civilian life upon return from the war front and our moral responsibility to bring some measure of understanding and engagement to them. She examines topics that are uncomfortable but undeniable—e.g., "feelings of alienation and disengagement," "resentment or disappointment or visual dislocation," and "profound moral dislocation and a consequent slipping of connectedness with family." Sherman brings into the light the hellish experiences of both men and women in theaters of war, experiences that do not dissipate after leaving. She grasps and presents these vignettes via philosophy and psychology. She calls on a host of thinkers for guidance, including David



Hume, Aristotle and Immanuel Kant, noting how “ancient stories, like that of *Philoctetes*, are our own stories through which to understand betrayal and the possibilities for trust’s renewal.” Sherman offers insightful emotional inquiries into the loss or turning from identity, the loss of dignity, the shame on top of guilt, gender betrayals, the what-ifs and could-haves, shadow feelings, and the overwhelming senses of sadness and futility. The twists and turns into a soldier’s post-traumatic renewal are complicated but essential to follow—e.g., the attachment involved in double transference, in which a familial relationship is mirrored in a professional one and where self-esteem leaks in via “a reciprocal positive moral address of trust and hope.” Readers will learn about the years veterans devote to therapeutic self-empathy and the rekindling of trust, and Sherman successfully invokes sympathy for their causes—even if the language is occasionally academic in nature.

A piercing course in sensitivity training to build a moral community upon re-entry into society. For a similar but more character-driven tale, see Helen Thorpe’s *Soldier Girls* (2014).



### TERMS OF SERVICE Social Media and the Price of Constant Connection

Silverman, Jacob

Harper/HarperCollins (436 pp.)

\$26.99 | Mar. 17, 2015

978-0-06-228246-0

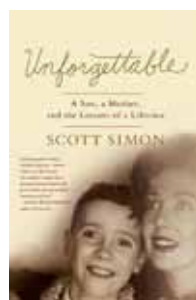


Freelancer Silverman, a celebrated *Jeopardy!* champion and contributor to *Slate*, the *Atlantic* and other publications, debuts with a deep and disquieting plunge into digital culture.

The author focuses on the online world of “I share, therefore I am”—Facebook, Twitter and other social media—where technology companies, under the guise of improving our lives, engage in relentless “exploitation, manipulation, and erosion of privacy” in the pursuit of user data and advertising revenue. Trading on our internalized informational appetite—i.e., need for voyeurism and self-display—and fear of disconnection, they push users toward standardized and mindless behaviors (“Don’t think, just share”). As a result, writes Silverman, we are “surrounded by the incessant chorus of likes, favorites, and a thousand bits of banal-but-cheerfully-good news.” At the cost of our privacy and personal data, social media allow us to indulge our need to know now, to see and be seen, and to browse randomly for news from elsewhere, writes the author, who conveys an unusually vivid sense of what it’s like to be fully engaged in this new culture, where sharing is sincerity, and reserve and introspection seem insincere. Rather than simply enjoy a performance and not take photographs, many now make photographing (and sharing) a major part of any event. Silverman examines the perils of Internet celebrity, reputational management, viral marketing, big data, the demeaning aspects of online labor markets, the meaning of privacy, the constant struggle of

users to appear authentic and the ways in which some are rebelling. Relentlessly skeptical, he captures beautifully the surreal aspects of the social media experience and details the all-too-real bottom-line priorities of Silicon Valley executives who insist they know what is best for us.

**Intelligent, provocative and illuminating in the author’s argument that social media companies must examine their ethics and find business models that don’t depend on perpetual surveillance of customers.**



### UNFORGETTABLE A Son, a Mother, and the Lessons of a Lifetime

Simon, Scott

Flatiron Books (256 pp.)

\$24.99 | Mar. 31, 2015

978-1-250-06113-3

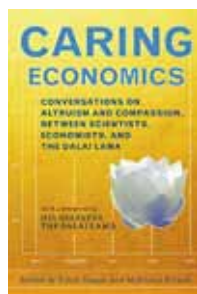
As he sat at his dying mother’s bedside in 2013, Simon (*Baby We Were Meant for Each Other: In Praise of Adoption*, 2010, etc.), the award-winning host of NPR’s *Weekend Edition Saturday*, tweeted messages to his 1.2 million followers, recording the last moments of his mother’s exuberant life.

The author had flown to Chicago after learning his mother was in the intensive care unit. She had been about to travel to California for a summer-holiday visit with his family. Troubled by an annoying cough and weight loss, she decided to get a checkup before leaving. To her dismay, she learned that lung cancer that had been in remission had returned, and she had only days left to live. Simon found her hooked up to oxygen, gasping for breath and speaking with difficulty. Nonetheless, she retained her *joie de vivre* and savored memories of times they had shared and people they knew. This book is built around the tweets that he sent during that difficult time. They became the vehicle for him to memorialize her indomitable spirit as she gave “a last great performance.” Her great love was the author’s father, whom she divorced after his out-of-control alcoholism became destructive, and she had two subsequent marriages. Although it was Simon’s father who had been a professional comedian, it was his mother’s extraordinary sense of humor, gift of friendship and love of life that dominated his life. Even in the period when she was a single mother taking modeling jobs to support her son, they lived in style. “Dress for the job you want, not the one you have,” was one of her mottoes. Another was “Never be afraid to go into a classy place.”

**A charming tribute to a remarkable woman and the bond between mother and son.**

# Essential reading for anyone concerned with human rights and the rule of law.

GUANTÁNAMO DIARY



## CARING ECONOMICS *Conversations on Altruism and Compassion, Between Scientists, Economists, and the Dalai Lama*

Singer, Tania & Ricard, Matthieu—Eds.  
Picador (256 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-1-250-06412-7

Proceedings from the 2010 Mind & Life Institute conference, featuring dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama and two collaborators founded the Mind & Life Institute to create “collaboration between modern sciences, the world’s living contemplative traditions, philosophy, humanities and social sciences.” The conference brought scientists, economists and philosophers together with the Dalai Lama to discuss how best Western science and humanities might work with Eastern philosophies like Buddhism to organize a new secular ethic based on altruism and compassion. Participants included experimental social psychologist Donald Batson, editor Singer, the director of the Department of Neuroscience at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, and Lord Richard Layard, the founding director of the Center for Economic Performance, among others. The Dalai Lama, who participated in all of the sessions of the two-day conference, made clear his view “that the entirety of humanity needs altruism or empathy, not necessarily as part of their religious faith but to reduce certain problems we are facing today due to their absence.” The proceedings were organized into three sections: scientific and related research (Singer’s work on current neuroscience and empathy, and psychiatrist Richard Davidson’s research into compassion); Buddhist and economic perspectives on compassion (Layard’s research into the economics of happiness); and examples of altruism in practical work (former Credit Suisse executive Arthur Vayloyan’s discussion of microfinance and how smart investments can generate social, environmental and financial profits at the same time). The Dalai Lama contributed his thoughts on the need for “more research...on how to introduce secular ethics into the modern educational system,” as well as on the research reported. He argues that science and secular ethics provide a more universal basis than even all major religions acting together could.

**An intriguing report on unusual objectives pursued through outreach and debate.**



## GUANTÁNAMO DIARY

Slahi, Mohamedou Ould  
Little, Brown (384 pp.)  
\$29.00 | Jan. 20, 2015  
978-0-316-32868-5

A harrowing prison memoir, the first to date by an inmate who is behind bars at the Cuban penitentiary that has become a byword for an American gulag.

Slahi was caught up early in the post-9/11 sweep, suspected of having played a role. As he admits, he did fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan, “but then al Qaida didn’t wage Jihad against America....In the mid-90’s they wanted to wage Jihad against America, but I personally had nothing to do with that.” After turning himself in for questioning in his native Mauritania, Slahi was “rendered” to Jordan and interrogated for eight months before the Jordanians decided he was innocent. A Marine prosecutor recalls that the CIA, managing Slahi’s fate, “just kind of threw him over to U.S. military control in Bagram, Afghanistan,” from which he was sent to Guantánamo in 2002. There he has remained, yet to be charged with a crime apart from that he “fucked up.” Setting aside the question of complicity, it is shockingly clear from Slahi’s account that torture was routine: “I heard so many testimonies from detainees who didn’t know each other that they couldn’t be lies,” he writes, and his own experiences bear this out. For all we know, torture still is routine: This account dates to before 2005, when his manuscript entered into the realm of formally classified military material, and it is heavily redacted, so much so that one representative page is a sea of black strike-throughs, the surviving text reading “was accompanied by an Arabic interpreter....He was very weak in the language.” Elsewhere, the prison memoir is much like other books of its kind: The guards are infantile brutes, the inmates a cross-section of humanity, and the rules and laws bewildering.

**Slahi may or may not be a reliable narrator; readers are called on to suspend disbelief. By his account, of course, he is not guilty. His memoir is essential reading for anyone concerned with human rights and the rule of law.**



## MICHELLE OBAMA *A Life*

Slevin, Peter  
Knopf (432 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-307-95882-2

A Chicago-based journalist probes the fortunate yet humble upbringing of the first lady and, in a tedious refrain, her effective blackness.

One of the themes that Slevin sounds constantly is that Michelle Obama, nee Robinson (b. 1964), the daughter of a city water-plant worker and a former schoolteacher, never betrayed her working-class black roots on the South Side of Chicago. Although she worked her way through the best

schools in the country—her brother, a last-minute crammer, got recruited by Princeton's basketball team, so superdiligent and hardworking Michelle figured she could get in as well—she and the other rare black students at Ivy League schools in the 1980s were haunted by the question, "What are you going to do for black folks when we get out of here?" Indeed, there is a pattern in her early career of genuine concern for the working-class and disenfranchised people from her community and downright discomfort with the privileged status that her Harvard Law degree conferred. Quitting her corporate lawyer job at a blue-chip Chicago firm, she plunged into public service in the mayor's office, taking a severe pay cut. By then, she had met Barack Obama, who had been elected *Harvard Law Review* president; she served as his adviser as a summer associate in 1989. While the glamour and ambition of her husband often clouded her own admirable work (creating a neighborhood mentorship-internship program at Public Allies, directing the student community service program at the University of Chicago), in time, the relationship offered a good complement to her pragmatic, strategic organizational skills. She is one of his greatest assets in public office and an important foil to criticism that he is not "black enough."

**Slevin delivers a somewhat fawning portrait, but when necessary, he is willing to criticize and reveal his subject's missteps.** (First printing of 75,000)

### PROFESSOR STEWART'S INCREDIBLE NUMBERS

*Stewart, Ian*

Basic (304 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-465-04272-2

{NONFICTION}

The erudite British math professor revels in the wonders of numbers.

Stewart (Emeritus, Mathematics/Univ. of Warwick; *The Mathematics of Life*, 2011,

etc.) adopts the framework of the chapters as subjects to elucidate the charms of the digits one to 10, adding separate chapters for special numbers including zero, negative numbers, rationals and irrationals, pi, e, the imaginary number i (the square root of minus 1) and so on. For each, the author provides historical context—e.g., many 19th-century mathematicians found the notion of infinity abhorrent. Stewart's approach works well early on, giving a nice sense of how math has evolved to ever larger number systems that have many applications beyond pure mathematics. However, Stewart *tells* about the remarkable findings of great mathematicians rather than *showing* how they were obtained. This is partly because the proofs involved are too complex or technical, requiring some knowledge of calculus or complex numbers. Yet even in simpler cases where Stewart shows steps in a proof, his explanations are terse and may assume too much on the part of readers. (On the other hand, he is expansive in giving the names and dates of those who carried out calculations of the square root of 2 or pi to a zillion places.) The degree of sophistication grows in the latter half of the text, as Stewart discourses on fractals, musical scales, packing problems, Rubik's cubes, string theory and encryption,

including an analysis of the celebrated German enigma code of World War II. The topics defy any logical sequence, so a discussion of wallpaper patterns can be followed by the famous birthday problem in which it turns out that the probability of two people in a group having the same birthday is greater than 50 percent in a group as small as 23 people.

**Stewart receives an A for telling us how vast, wonderful and useful are all the members of the world of numbers but a lower grade for his explanation of the whys and wherefores.**



### WAKING UP TO THE DARK Ancient Wisdom for a Sleepless Age

*Strand, Clark*

Spiegel & Grau (156 pp.)

\$26.00 | Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-8129-9772-9

A celebration of the life-enriching—indeed, indispensable—properties of the night.

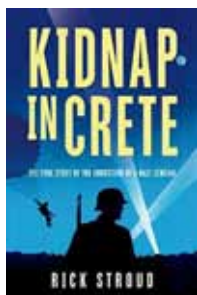
Strand (*Waking the Buddha: How the Most Dynamic and Empowering Buddhist Movement in History Is Changing Our Concept of Religion*, 2014, etc.) delivers a significant amount of experiential melding to existential thoughtfulness in this book about the sublime and elemental powers of the dark. Not the dark of cellars and closets but rather night, with "its monochrome wonders, its velvety silences and distant muffled sounds." The author expresses his distress over how we often ignore the splendor of the night, and he looks at his personal experiences with the dark, from early youth to today—especially the two hours of sleepy wakefulness between three or four hours of sleep on either side. For many, these can be fretful hours. The author, however, cherishes the vulnerability as a letting go, a transcendence to the divine, however one chooses to understand that state. Strand is passionate about the subject, displaying a blunt, fervent honesty. The advent of electricity damaged our relationship with the dark (allowing for an overflow of consciousness), writes the author, though various religious teachings had already made a significant dent—e.g., encouraging the elevation of humans above all else, inevitably leading to the abuse of the planet. The author pushes for a re-enchantment with the night, which for him means getting up, going for a walk where it is dark—as Strand suggests the ancients did—and seeing if the dark can open a numinous space in both head and heart. Throughout, the author gives a stark voice to fundamentals: "Simplicity is always the answer"; "The problem we face today is a crisis of values." In working with those fundamentals, he finds an embracing comfort. "In the dark we recover our simplicity, our happiness, and our relatedness," he writes, "because in the dark we remember our souls."

**An exigent, affecting summons to rediscover the night.**



## A stirring adventure with an exotic setting and a thrilling cast.

KIDNAP IN CRETE



### KIDNAP IN CRETE *The True Story of the Abduction of a Nazi General*

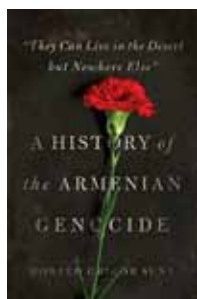
Stroud, Rick  
Bloomsbury (304 pp.)  
\$28.00 | May 5, 2015  
978-1-63286-193-1



In 1944, undercover British operatives kidnapped German Gen. Heinrich Kreipe on Nazi-occupied Crete. This is the tale of that exploit.

Stroud (*The Phantom Army of Alamein: How the Camouflage Unit and Operation Bertram Hoodwinked Rommel*, 2012, etc.) begins with the German occupation of Crete in 1941, a paratroop invasion that caught the island's British defenders off guard. After a few days of desperate resistance, the British withdrew, leaving Cretan partisans to oppose the occupation, which they did with fierce intensity. A few remaining agents from the Special Operations Executive, a branch of British military intelligence, sought ways to sabotage the Nazis. Two SOE officers, Maj. Patrick Leigh Fermor and Capt. Billy Moss, contrived the plot to kidnap the German commander in Crete. After parachute training, they were ready for their adventure. Bad weather jinxed the initial drop; Fermor arrived in Crete, but Moss was delayed. For several weeks, Fermor worked with the Cretan resistance fighters. When Moss finally arrived on the island, they set about executing the plan, with elaborate preparation and carefully arranged timing. They caught Kreipe coming home late from his office, stopped his car and took it over. The Cretans slit his driver's throat while the British, disguised as German guards, drove through numerous checkpoints to the open country, where they abandoned the car and lit out on foot to a prearranged point where they could be evacuated by boat. But the mountainous country and German pursuit slowed them down, and Kreipe was unable to keep the pace. They finally got the general away, ending the daring, audacious raid. In a final chapter, Stroud steps back to ask whether the actual results justified the loss of lives and property when the Germans retaliated against Cretan civilians—a question Moss and Fermor never really grappled with.

A stirring adventure with an exotic setting and a thrilling cast. (16-page b/w insert)



### "THEY CAN LIVE IN THE DESERT BUT NOWHERE ELSE" *A History of the Armenian Genocide*

Suny, Ronald Grigor  
Princeton Univ. (496 pp.)  
\$35.00 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-0-691-14730-7



An authoritative examination of unspeakable horrors.

A century after the elimination of millions of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire, Suny (History/Univ. of Michigan; *The Structure of Soviet History: Essays and Documents*, 2013, etc.) unequivocally calls the event "genocide," as distinguished from ethnic cleansing, purges and other forms of mass killing. "Genocide," he writes, "is not the murder of people but the murder of a people." His deeply researched, fair-minded study probes the "two separate, contradictory narratives" of the event that still persist: the Turkish denial of genocide, representing the killings as a rational response to a rebellious, traitorous population that threatened the survival of the state; and Armenian characterization of the tragedy as the ferocious determination of imperialist Turkish Muslims to rid the empire of non-Muslims. Drawing on archival sources, Suny, whose great-grandparents were victims of the massacre, thoroughly traces "the genealogy of attitudes and behaviors" and the historical context "that triggered a deadly, pathological response to real and imagined immediate and future dangers." For hundreds of years, he writes, Armenians, although subjects of the Muslim state, were integrated into a multinational empire. As nationalist and reform movements arose in the 19th century, however, Ottoman rulers legitimized their position by identifying certain populations—in this case, non-Muslim Armenians, Greeks and Jews—as inferior, devious and subversive. Armenian intellectuals' affinity for European ideas and "a powerful sense of secular nationality" made the ethnic group especially suspect. Late in the century, Armenians' victimization by Ottomans came to the attention of European powers, which further fueled Muslims' conception of them as alien and alienated. From 1894-1896, extensive massacres intimated what would occur later, when the militant Young Turks envisioned an ethnonational state that required the extermination of non-Turks, a policy exacerbated by social, political and economic chaos at the start of World War I.

Identifying the Ottomans' decisive choices, Suny creates a compelling narrative of vengeance and terror. (25 halftones)



### FIRST LADIES *Presidential Historians on the Lives of 45 Iconic American Women*

Swain, Susan  
PublicAffairs (496 pp.)  
\$29.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-1-61039-566-3

Selections from the popular yearlong C-SPAN series exploring the lives of the first ladies, each offering conversational, somewhat truncated viewpoints by various historians.

C-SPAN history consultant and author Richard Norton Smith and moderator and senior manager Swain paired up to create the TV endeavor; this book is the severely edited version. Each first lady appears in an official picture circa her husband's presidential era, and two historians take turns delineating her biography, not necessarily chronologically. A final word from each briefly

discusses the lady's "legacy." Due to the need to preserve verbatim the historians' remarks, the editing makes for clunky, disjointed reading, with the effect—more or less intentional—of a conversation rather than a history text. However, each historian offers a depth to his or her subject that helps flesh out these fairly mythical figures who inhabited the White House and give a sense of where she came from and what was truly important to her. These ladies were thrust into a national role, and how they used it to grow is fascinating: Abigail Adams was a prolific and significant writer of letters that provide enormous insight into the Revolution and early national period; savvy entertainer Dolley Madison had to "pinch-hit" as hostess in widower Thomas Jefferson's administration, laying the important connections she would need for her husband's subsequent presidency; Sarah Polk was unusually well-educated in her mid-1800s era and served as her husband's "genuine political partner" (the couple was also the first to be photographed); Lucretia Garfield was the first to keep a diary of her White House days and not to destroy her papers. Several were second wives, most had children, and many lost children, while all were "helpmates" in some fashion. Among the contributing historians are Edith Gelles, Gail Sheehy and David Maraniss.

**Though presented in a stilted fashion, all the portraits are rendered with sympathy and detail.**



**AFTER WOODSTOCK**  
**The True Story of a Belgian**  
**Movie, an Israeli Wedding,**  
**and a Manhattan Breakdown**

Tiber, Elliot

SquareOne Publishers (480 pp.)

\$24.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-7570-0392-9

Tiber picks up where he left off in *Taking Woodstock* (2007) with this memoir of the years thereafter, pivotal ones both

for him and the gay community.

At the age of 34, the author was helping his parents run the bedraggled, customer-free El Monaco motel in upstate New York. A "secretly gay Brooklyn-bred yeshiva boy," Tiber actually had a life before El Monaco—he was a successful interior designer in Manhattan—but he was a dutiful son, even if his mother was a "smug and kosher bird of prey." Woodstock, which he helped arrange by getting his neighbor Max Yasgur, "our milkman," to rent his field for the concert, was his salvation, giving him faith in humanity just when he needed it. This memoir scans Tiber's life progress since that August weekend in 1969 with a fair degree of adrenaline ("I barreled through the Midwest like a man with his pubic hair on fire"), cogency (despite the wild chronicles of all the recreational intoxicants and late-night, leather-bar sex) and straining-at-the-leash humor. There was a promising, then fizzling, stint in Hollywood, followed by a return to El Monaco, where Tiber managed to sell the place—"Is this guy actually about to make me an offer for this shit-hole?" Then there was Andre, who would become the love of the author's life and with whom he would launch numerous artistic

endeavors. Tiber writes about their life with unvarnished intimacy. Fortunately, Andre brought with him a measure of class to rein in the absurdist, wear-it-on-your-sleeve Tiber, though it has not diminished his zest. His political and literary high points are balanced by the low points of breakups and the AIDS epidemic, captured with dazed immediacy.

**Tiber squeezes life for all it is worth, ringing out the last quarter of the 20th century with the offbeat, at-times twisted humor of a survivor.** (b/w photos)



**ORCHARD HOUSE**  
**How a Neglected Garden**  
**Taught One Family to Grow**

Weaver, Tara Austen

Ballantine (304 pp.)

\$26.00 | Mar. 24, 2015

978-0-345-54807-8

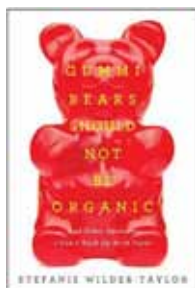
How a novice gardener became a permaculturalist and found community in the process.

When *Edible Seattle* editor Weaver (*The Butcher and the Vegetarian: One Woman's Romp Through a World of Men, Meat, and Moral Crisis*, 2010, etc.) and her mother first found an overgrown half-acre of garden in a quiet neighborhood, they didn't see the work required to turn the chaos into a cultivated garden. They only saw the potential, feeling a sense of magic as they stood among the huge rhododendrons and blackberry vines laden with berries. Some of Weaver's best memories from her childhood involved a garden, her mother, and fresh tomatoes and ripe strawberries, and she hoped those brief moments of happiness and togetherness might reappear in this new garden and orchard. Strong descriptions of the numerous vegetable plants and fruit trees Weaver planted and the work involved to reclaim this neglected oasis intermingle with her personal reflections on her childhood, her longings for a solid family life and the desire for a community of friends. Lyrical passages recount the joyous moments Weaver shared with her nieces and nephews, brief passages of time that took her breath away at the beauty of it all—when the light hit at just the right angle or when her nieces shouted with glee, their faces and hands smeared with berry juice. Her anxiety, frustration and weariness also play an integral part in this narrative, as she continued to learn that gardening is not an exact science. Nature has its own moods and quirks as much as any human, and she had to learn to be flexible and adapt or break in the process. The result was an abundance of harvests—of food, friendship and love.

**Honest and moving, one woman's initiation into intensive gardening with her mother, which changed a neglected space into something beautiful and bountiful and shifted their relationship as well.**

# A snappy, potty-mouthed guidebook for stressed-out mommies.

GUMMI BEARS SHOULD NOT BE ORGANIC



## **GUMMI BEARS SHOULD NOT BE ORGANIC And Other Opinions I Can't Back Up with Facts**

Wilder-Taylor, Stefanie

Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster

(256 pp.)

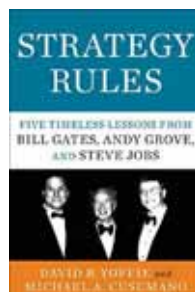
\$15.00 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4767-8730-5

A tongue-in-cheek guide to surviving modern motherhood.

Though mommy blogger, stand-up comedian and TV sketch writer/producer Wilder-Taylor (*I'm Kind of a Big Deal: And Other Delusions of Adequacy*, 2011, etc.) seems resigned to concede that she's a hyperprotective "overparent," she is getting better at loosening the reins on her three children to "get out of their way and let them live a little." The author's latest comedic assault on complacent child-rearing primarily skewers typical parental scenarios, all of which she harbors serious opinions about and isn't shy about oversharing. Resisting the label of "tiger mom," Wilder-Taylor taps into her vulnerability to the normative ideal of momdom: Is it really "overparenting" if she toasts a bagel for her more-than-capable 10-year-old daughter? Even so, the author doesn't much care and admits to adapting her own "parenting nonstyle" with much success, cheerleading others to join her. With an entertaining mixture of sarcastic snippets, self-aggrandizing admittances and clever witticisms, Wilder-Taylor creatively echoes the cares and concerns of many parents whose toddlers are perfectly flawed—yet popular culture may insist that it's due to some parental failure or oversight. She uses comedy and hard truths to soften the blow and to bond with exasperated moms and dads on the ever changing landscape of healthy eating habits (hence the title declaration), the illusion of the utopian family dinner, school-teacher negotiations, the varied "momversations" about being "doubly blessed" with twin daughters, or the importance of sharing and reading. While mostly charming, more conservative readers may feel the author's gratuitous use of expletives and often gut-punching wisdom unnecessary. Wilder-Taylor encourages all "overworked and undercaffeinated" parents to laugh at themselves and, with her snarky brand of self-help, even makes them "feel a skosh less crazy."

**A snappy, potty-mouthed guidebook for stressed-out mommies.**



## **STRATEGY RULES Five Timeless Lessons from Bill Gates, Andy Grove, and Steve Jobs**

Yoffie, David B.; Cusumano, Michael A.

Harper Business (288 pp.)

\$29.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-06-237395-3

The co-authors of the best-selling *Competing on Internet Time: Lessons from Netscape and Its Battle with Microsoft* (1999) attempt to extract timeless principles of strategic leadership from the unique business-building skills of tech titans Bill Gates of Microsoft, Andrew Grove of Intel and Steve Jobs of Apple.

Yoffie (International Business Administration/Harvard Business School) and Cusumano (Management and Engineering/MIT) revisit the careers of the three individuals perhaps most responsible for conceiving and producing the history-making shift to personal computers in the 1980s. "None of the three," the authors write, "was the type of well-rounded general manager that top business schools...try to produce." All mostly self-taught, they lacked formal business training and learned leadership and organizing skills on the job. They were strategic thinkers who put countless time and effort into the thought and research necessary to maintain their companies' rapid developments. Throughout their careers, they competed against each other—especially Gates and Jobs—as fiercely as they did their other business rivals. Yoffie and Cusumano distill from their combined histories five principles, and they address, and further differentiate, each in its own chapter. These include "Look Forward, Reason Back," "Making Big Bets, Without Betting the Company," "Building Platforms and Ecosystems—Not Just Products," "Exploit Leverage and Power—Play Judo and Sumo," and "Shape the Organization Around Your Personal Anchor." While delineating these principles, the authors don't overlook the sometimes-underhanded, borderline illegal processes of the respective companies. Microsoft's ruthless pursuit of monopoly power left a trail of vanquished competitors, and Intel achieved its monopoly through manufacturing prowess and extreme defensiveness. The circumstances each company addressed were specific enough, as was the learning process required for mastery, to perhaps undermine the authors' claims for the timelessness of their five principles, but the lessons should be useful for managers and entrepreneurs.

**A provocative account of the outsized contributions of these modern-day robber barons.**



# CHILDREN'S & TEEN



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- SIMON VS. THE HOMO SAPIENS AGENDA**  
*by Becky Albertalli*..... 89
- TROMBONE SHORTY** *by Troy Andrews; illus. by Bryan Collier*..... 90
- LAUREN IPSUM** *by Carlos Bueno; illus. by Miran Lipovaca*..... 95
- YARD SALE** *by Eve Bunting; illus. by Lauren Castillo*..... 95
- FORT** *by Cynthia DeFelice* ..... 97
- SUPER FLY** *by Todd H. Doodler* ..... 99
- EVERY LAST PROMISE** *by Kristin Halbrook* ..... 106
- UNUSUAL CHICKENS FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL POULTRY FARMER**  
*by Kelly Jones; illus. by Katie Kath*..... 109
- WILD IDEAS** *by Elin Kelsey; illus. by Soyeon Kim*..... 110
- THE WHISPERER** *by Fiona McIntosh* ..... 115
- GROUNDED** *by Megan Morrison* ..... 117
- WHERE ARE MY BOOKS?** *by Debbie Ridpath Ohi*..... 118
- THE WAY HOME LOOKS NOW** *by Wendy Wan-Long Shang* ..... 127
- CHALLENGER DEEP** *by Neal Shusterman;*  
*illus. by Brendan Shusterman* ..... 128
- RETURN TO AUGIE HOBBLE** *by Lane Smith*..... 130
- MURDER IS BAD MANNERS** *by Robin Stevens*..... 131
- ALL THE RAGE** *by Courtney Summers*..... 132
- CASTLE HANGNAIL** *by Ursula Vernon*..... 133
- GONE CRAZY IN ALABAMA** *by Rita Williams-Garcia*..... 135



## PRICES! PRICES! PRICES! *Why They Go Up and Down*

*Adler, David A.*

*Illus. by Miller, Edward*

Holiday House (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | \$17.95 e-book | May 1, 2015

978-0-8234-3293-6

978-0-8234-3368-1 e-book

You can spell math with an “a” as in angst, aghast or agog, or you can spell it with an “A” as in Adler. Your move.

Adler has been squashing math anxiety for many a season. Here he takes on some elementary economics, and everyone knows economics is where fun goes to die. While this may not be one of Adler’s merriest offerings, he has the very good sense to explain the basic laws of supply and demand with a lemonade stand as the vehicle. And everyone knows there are about as many people out there who don’t like lemonade on a hot day as there are people who thrill to credit-default swaps and Gaussian copula formulas. As Adler doles out the cups of lemonade, prices fluctuate according to supply and demand. He introduces the concepts of fixed and variable costs, revenue and variable profit. He poses the fundamentals in such a way—and Miller in colors as enticing as snow cones—that many young readers prompted to explore them further may wonder why the price of diamonds is so high when the supply runneth over (at least for now). In Adler’s capable hands, there is life in economics yet.

Adler always finds a canny way into the math game, both practical and enjoyable. (*Math picture book. 6-10*)



## THE QUEEN OF BRIGHT AND SHINY THINGS

*Aguirre, Ann*

Feiwel & Friends (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-250-04750-2

Sage is known around school as Princess Post-it for her efforts to cheer others up by sticking anonymous compliments on their lockers.

Sage, 16, lives with her aunt in the small Illinois town of Farmburg. She maintains a picture-perfect facade to keep “Shadow Sage” at bay—anger from her mysterious former life that sometimes threatens to overwhelm her. Shane is a good-looking, guitar-playing new kid in school who’s

# FICTIONAL HISTORY AND HISTORICAL FICTION



KIDS' HISTORICAL FICTION is full of cameos from historical figures, some figuring more prominently than others. Frederick Douglass never appears on stage in Christopher Paul Curtis' *Elijah of Buxton*, but vomiting on the great abolitionist marks Elijah forever. On the other end of the spectrum, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings' children take center stage in Kimberly Brubaker

Bradley's heartbreaking *Jefferson's Sons*. These books and countless others imagine events and dialogue that never happened or were not recorded, but they ground their imaginative portrayals in research that grants authenticity. But two recent books that feature real, historical figures as protagonists have me foaming at the mouth and hoping desperately that they do not portend a trend (though each starts a series, heaven help us).

Simon Nicholson's *The Magician's Fire* imagines Harry Houdini's youth—very loosely. This fictional Harry was sent alone from Hungary by his impoverished father to make his way on the streets of New York. Anyone who has read Sid Fleischman's *Escape!* or any of the many other biographies of the famed magician will know that Ehrich Weiss immigrated to the United States at the age of 4 with his family, with whom he lived for years, first in Wisconsin and then later in New York City. His father was a rabbi; the only hint Nicholson gives to his character's faith is a reference to “his father reciting prayers as the family sat by the fire.”



I understand the allure of a mystery/adventure for middle graders about a kid magician and set against a vaudeville backdrop, but why not, having decided to depart from the historical record so thoroughly, simply make the protagonist honestly fictional and apprentice him to an older Houdini? Readers' experiences with the book would be nearly identical, and history wouldn't fall victim to story.

If *The Magician's Fire* irked me, *The Case of the Missing Moonstone* sent me around the bend. It features two 19th-century girls, Mary Godwin and Ada Byron, in a sluggishly madcap mystery. “The fact,” wrote Kirkus, “that in real life Mary...was 18 years older than Ada...doesn't seem to

bother [author] Stratford one whit.” Artificially reducing the age difference, he puts the two together when Mary is sent to Ada's house for tutoring—by an incognito Percy Bysshe Shelley, presumably foreshadowing Mary's marriage to the poet in a later volume. Oh, and young Charles Dickens routinely hitches a ride in Mary's carriage through some means that is never satisfactorily explained.

The sheer pointlessness of this setup astonishes me. The intended audience of 8- to 12-year-olds will have *no clue* about the real stories behind the characters they are encountering. This saves them being skeeved out by any foreknowledge of the romance between Godwin and Shelley, but it also leaves them completely in the dark about the wink-wink-nudge-nudge hints to Shelley's real identity, a lame running joke. If Stratford's trying to plant seeds of recognition that will sprout into understanding when readers are older, he is going about it very oddly.

Stratford informs readers in a preface that his characters really existed. He confesses to distorting time to accommodate his story, but he nevertheless creates an expectation that there is some truth to it. Readers are likely to love such details as the hot air balloon that Ada keeps tethered to her bedroom window—a detail that has no evident basis in fact. (It is notably absent from the concluding, record-correcting notes, which explain that, for instance, Shelley was dead at the time that the story takes place.)

As with *The Magician's Fire*, it makes me wonder why Stratford didn't just make the story wholly fictional and feature his two historic notables in supporting roles, as aunts or mentors.

It's a time-honored device, successfully utilized by Kate Hannigan in her upcoming *The Detective's Assistant* (reviewed in this issue), which sends fictional 11-year-old Nell off on an adventure with her aunt Kate Warne, a real-life Pinkerton detective. A several-page author's note provides further background about Warne.

On his Kickstarter page, Stratford describes his book as “a pro-math, pro-science, pro-history and pro-literature adventure novel.” Too bad neither it nor *The Magician's Fire* is remotely pro-truth.—V.S.

*Vicky Smith is the children's & teen editor at Kirkus Reviews.*

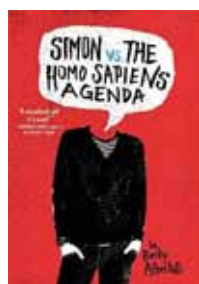


Through light and often humorous detail, readers see clearly not only each individual character, but also the complex set of group dynamics at play in Simon's loving family and circle of friends.

SIMON VS. THE HOMO SAPIENS AGENDA

bullied by football star Dylan. Sage takes Shane under her do-gooder wing when she discovers that he lives alone in a trailer on the outskirts of town. In trying to fix Shane's life, Sage falls in love with him. Meanwhile, Sage's best friend, Ryan, admits that he's been using her as cover while sleeping with a 21-year-old who thinks he's 19. Family secrets are part of most of the characters' lives, but Sage's tragic back story, when it's finally revealed, trumps them all. Stumbling through soap opera-like teen romance on her way to happily ever after, Sage's rambling narrative veers into a Wild West-style showdown with Dylan when he tries to intimidate her: "Once he has some bullets for his figurative gun, I'm going down," which Shadow Sage can't let happen. Although it touches on serious issues, the melodramatic plot isn't helped by wooden dialogue and stilted prose.

**This one's strictly for fans of lightweight romance.** (Fiction. 12-16)



## SIMON VS. THE HOMO SAPIENS AGENDA

Albertalli, Becky

Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (320 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-06-234867-8

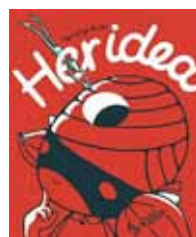
978-0-06-234869-2 e-book



A gay teen comes out to friends, family and classmates after his secret correspondence with another boy is discovered.

Ever since he discovered a post about being gay on his school's unofficial Tumblr, Simon has been corresponding with its author, an anonymous gay classmate who calls himself Blue. Their conversations, which readers see interspersed with prose chapters written from Simon's point of view, are heartfelt, emotionally intimate and increasingly flirtatious—enabled, perhaps, by the fact that neither boy knows the other's identity. Simon is impulsive, full of heart and not always as careful as he should be. When he leaves himself logged into Gmail at the school library, a boy named Martin reads Simon's emails with Blue and uses the threat of outing Simon to insinuate himself into a relationship with one of Simon's female friends. Simon's social landscape is carefully and seemingly effortlessly drawn. Through light and often humorous detail, readers see clearly not only each individual character, but also the complex set of group dynamics at play in Simon's loving family and circle of friends. While Simon is focused on Blue, other characters go on journeys of their own, and the author is careful not only to wrap up Simon's story, but to draw attention to the stories the romance plot might overshadow in lesser hands.

**Funny, moving and emotionally wise.** (Fiction. 12-18)



## HER IDEA

Alexander, Rilla

Illus. by the author

Flying Eye Books (56 pp.)

\$19.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

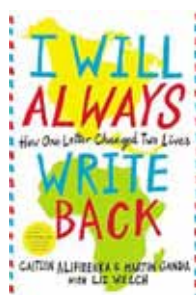
978-1-909263-40-6

The author of *The Best Book in the World* (2014), a paean to reading, brings to the art of writing the same over-the-

top exuberance.

Unfortunately, here that enthusiasm trumps not just logic, but even coherence. Ideas—rendered in the dizzyingly bright illustrations as crowds of identical, rubber-limbed homunculi clad only in bathing caps—swarm young Sozi's mental landscape by the bucketful. Forming a chorus line, they inspire her to "make a work of art." When she sits down with paper and pencil, though, the ideas wander off or are chased away by an imaginary bear (representing, one supposes, writer's block). Then a helpful codex with eyes and legs slams shut on a fugitive idea and offers it to Sozi, "squished for safekeeping." Charmed by this intellectual roadkill, she joins her new friend in a further harvest of tiny fugitives. She then sets down the beginning and middle of a story that ends with a just, if metafictional, twist when the book squishes her so that she can join "her friends" inside. Centering on a smiling, masked child, the two-tone art, along with being hard on the eyes, blandly ignores the violence of the conceptual conceit. Moreover, the narrative suddenly breaks into labored verse after a mostly prose beginning: "But she kept on regardless. She refused to quit. / When THE END came, that's when she would deal with it!"

**A perfect storm of ugly imagery, sloppy thinking and subpar writing.** (Picture book. 6-8)



## I WILL ALWAYS WRITE BACK How One Letter Changed Two Lives

Alifireka, Caitlin & Ganda, Martin with Welch, Liz

Little, Brown (400 pp.)

\$18.00 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-316-24131-1

978-0-316-24134-2 e-book

A pen-pal correspondence between an American girl and a Zimbabwean boy blossoms into a lifelong friendship.

In alternating chapters, the authors relate their story, which begins in 1997 when 12-year-old Caitlin chooses a boy in Zimbabwe for a pen-pal assignment. Caitlin's privileged life in Pennsylvania differs tremendously from Martin's hardscrabble life in millworkers' housing, where his family shares one room with another one. The top student in his class, Martin dreams of studying at an American university, but even just continuing high school in Zimbabwe seems like a long shot. Caitlin, not recognizing the extent of Martin's poverty, sends some of her



# Employing his unmistakable mixed-media collage images, Collier portrays the story of this living legend with energy and style, making visible the swirling sounds of jazz.

TROMBONE SHORTY

babysitting money with her letters, and Martin's family uses it for food. Eventually, Caitlin and her parents become Martin's sponsors for his studies and help him obtain a scholarship to Villanova University in 2003. Written with journalist Welch, the heartfelt recollections read like an overlong magazine article. The early chapters in particular have the inauthentic feel of sentimentalized adult reminiscence, and they accentuate the difference between an American whose eyes are open to the value of international friendship and her less-enlightened classmates. The action builds toward the happy climax of Martin's arrival in the United States, but at the same time, it conveys a sense of the power of do-gooder, take-charge Americans to effect change.

**A feel-good, message-driven book that may appeal to adults more than teens. (photographs) (Memoir. 12 & up)**



## DREAMS OF FREEDOM In Words and Pictures

Amnesty International UK Section

Frances Lincoln (48 pp.)

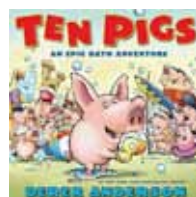
\$18.99 | Mar. 15, 2015

978-1-84780-453-2

Twenty artists from around the world illustrate many aspects of the concept of "freedom," accompanying inspirational sayings from thinkers living and dead.

Illustrations range from the representational to the surreal in their interpretations. Mordicai Gerstein paints a black figure in a yellow dress emerging from a thicket of chains, brambles and nooses into a lush, green, bird-filled paradise to illustrate Harriet Tubman's recollection of "cross[ing] that line." Illustrating a quotation from Malala Yousafzai, 2014 Hans Christian Andersen winner Roger Mello, from Brazil, offers a brilliantly colored and patterned aerial view of a boat; in its prow, a long-haired figure sprawls, reading a book. Joining such familiar voices as the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela and Anne Frank are Mikhail Bakunin, a 19th-century Russian anarchist; Chief Standing Bear, a Ponca Indian who sued the U.S. Army and won; and two former prisoners of conscience, Armando Valladares, a Cuban artist, and Jack Mapanje, a Malawian poet. Barroux's illustration of a pithy quote on freedom of expression from Ali Ferzat, a Syrian political cartoonist, gives potent visual meaning to "the power of the pen." With an introduction by Michael Morpurgo, concluding thumbnail biographies of all the contributors, and endpapers displaying a serene, starry night sky from Peter Sis, it's a handsome package indeed.

**With proceeds going to Amnesty International, this album provides much food for thought for those children—and adults—who take the time to contemplate its pages. (Picture book. 5-12)**



## TEN PIGS An Epic Bath Adventure

Anderson, Derek

Illus. by the author

Orchard/Scholastic (40 pp.)

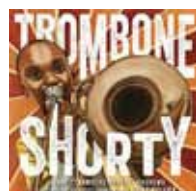
\$16.99 | Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-545-16846-5

Ten pigs in a tub?! That can't be fun.

"One pig. // One very happy pig. // 'This bathtub is perfect for just me and you,'" he says to his rubber ducky—then "along comes Pig Number Two." Two might fit in even with the beach ball the second pig is carrying, but surely that's all that can fit. It isn't too long before a third pig jumps in, snorkel, fins and all. A fourth is right behind him. "Arggh," says Five. And Six gives a toot! / Seven launches his boat with a sailor's salute." Then Eight, Nine and Ten crowd in; the bath is no fun anymore, now that it's so full of piggies. Suddenly, though, one pig spies something frightening. A count-down of moist pigs make a run for it—it's a wolf! So now there's one very happy wolf in the tub...or is that a zipper...and a pig in disguise? Anderson's joyous, porcine counting rhyme is bathtime (and storytime) fun. His bright-eyed, cartoon porkers, rendered in "ink, Photoshop and soap suds," are expressive, goofy and engaging.

**Toddlers will enjoy this, the cleanest piggy count ever. (Picture book. 2-5)**



## TROMBONE SHORTY

Andrews, Troy

Illus. by Collier, Bryan

Abrams (40 pp.)

\$17.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

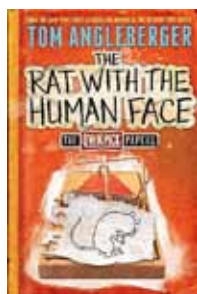
978-1-4197-1465-8

An autobiographical tale of a young man who started making "musical gumbo" at age 4.

Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews relates how he grew up in Tremé in New Orleans, American's oldest black neighborhood, where he heard music everywhere. Young Troy admires his big brother's trumpet playing and makes music without instruments with his friends. After finding a discarded trombone, the little boy teaches himself to play. Troy narrates: "I was so small that sometimes I fell right over...because it was so heavy." (Despite Collier's illustrations of young "Shorty," nothing prepares readers for his size in the parade photograph in the backmatter.) When Bo Diddley hears him playing in the crowd at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the jazz great invites him to the stage. An author's note explains that Troy started a band at age 6 and joined Lenny Kravitz's band at 19. Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, his band, tours the world, and Troy shares New Orleans music and culture through his foundation and music academy. Employing his unmistakable mixed-media collage images, Collier portrays the story of this living legend with energy and style, making visible the swirling sounds of jazz.

**This well-told and exquisitely illustrated story of a musician with a steep career trajectory will inspire young readers to pursue their passions, despite the challenges. (illustrator's note) (Picture book/biography. 4-8)**





## THE RAT WITH THE HUMAN FACE

Angleberger, Tom  
 Illus. by Wang, Jen  
 Photos by the author  
 Amulet/Abrams (160 pp.)  
 \$12.95 | Apr. 21, 2015  
 978-1-4197-1489-4  
 Series: Qwikpick Papers, 2

The Qwikpick Adventure Society files another official report on its members' derring-do.

In their previous adventure, Lyle, Marilla and Dave visited the poop fountain just before the Crickenburg sewage plant was updated; that was one smelly escapade. Now, when they hear an electrician speak of a rat with a human face at the Bent Mountain Biological Station, they think they've found their next expedition. However, transportation is an issue, and their parents would never approve. They sign up for a rec-center trip

to a hotel near Bent Mountain and make their way on foot to the station, which is closed for the season. When things go awry and all is revealed, Marilla's strictly religious parents forbid her from participation in the Qwikpick Adventure Society. Could this really be the end of the society (and Lyle's budding romance with Marilla)? Set in the year 2000 and presented as a typewritten report by Lyle, Angleberger's second tale in a trilogy is less engaging and much less amusing than his Origami Yoda series. (The trilogy's first volume also predates the folded-paper sage, having been originally published pseudonymously in 2007.) However, narrator Lyle and his friends are just as realistic as their origami-folding counterparts, and their adventure is much more true to life. Final art not seen.

**Slice-of-life exploits mostly for fans of the first.** (*Adventure*. 9-12)

## COMBAT BOY AND THE MONSTER TOKEN



Angela Joewell Purbaugh

## COMBAT BOY AND THE MONSTER TOKEN

by Angela Joewell Purbaugh

A young video gamer competes in an interdimensional tournament in Purbaugh's middle-grade debut novel.

"Like the video games that the author takes as her inspiration, the novel is a colorful, welcome distraction from the mundane struggles of the real world."

"A lighthearted middle-grade adventure filled with infectious enthusiasm."—*Kirkus Reviews*

For all general inquiries, please contact: [apurbaugh@gmail.com](mailto:apurbaugh@gmail.com)



## THE JUMBIES

*Baptiste, Tracey*

Algonquin (240 pp.)

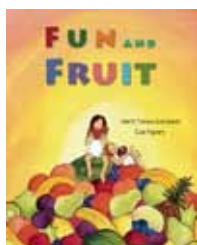
\$15.95 | Apr. 28, 2015

978-1-61620-414-3

A fantasy based in Caribbean folklore.

Corinne La Mer is a brave 11-year-old growing up on a Caribbean island. On All Hallow's Eve, when a pair of troublemaking brothers tie her deceased mother's prized necklace to a wild animal, Corinne chases the animal into the forest to retrieve it. However, this is no ordinary forest: It's known for being the abode of "jumbies," creatures "hidden in the shadows, always waiting for their moment to attack." Though Corinne doesn't believe in them, a jumbie follows her out of the forest. The third-person narration tells the back story—in bits and pieces—of this jumbie, who reveals herself to be Corinne's mother's sister. It's never satisfactorily explained why Severine (as Corinne's jumbie aunt calls herself) seeks out her niece, nearly a decade after her sister's death. In order to fight Severine—who, sympathetically, only wants a family but is bent on turning humans to jumbies to get one—Corinne must rely not only on her own strength, but that of newfound friends. The novel is based on a Haitian folk tale, according to the author's note, and it's refreshing to see a fantasy with its roots outside Europe. Baptiste never quite manages to control the story's pacing, though, and certain elements in the ending feel arbitrary.

Despite flaws, this is a book worth reading simply for its originality. (*Fantasy*. 9-12)



## FUN AND FRUIT

*Barabona, Maria Teresa*

*Illus. by Pijpers, Edie*

Cuento de Luz (24 pp.)

\$16.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-84-16078-32-5

Healthy food, healthy world.

In this Spanish import, two sisters embark on a journey of the imagination that involves changing the future in positive ways and incorporates the wonders of fruit. Vivid and colorful paintings introduce Charlotte and Claire, who live in Spain. The two sisters decide to play a very special game: Every day they will decide on a color, choose a fruit in that hue, make up stories about said fruit and then eat it for a snack. The brief stories are alternately fantastical (an apricot-skin blanket, a cloud-shaped lemon, a boat crafted from a coconut shell) and realistic (a birthday cake with plum jam, the flavor of a pear), and most include a message, whether about stopping war, feeding the hungry or helping the sick. Well-intentioned and unusual, the tales are sometimes pedantic, though they will doubtlessly appeal to budding humanitarians and may help other youngsters develop a sense of empathy. A positive message about healthy food ends the story

on a slightly shaky note, but young listeners will appreciate the energetic and imaginative pictures, brimming with frolicking children of many ethnicities, as they consider how they might use their imaginations to help make the world a better place.

A little heavy on the purposive side, but it will lend itself well to classroom extension activities. (*Picture book*. 5-8)



## THE HOMEMADE CAKE CONTEST

*Basho, Midori*

*Illus. by the author*

*Translated by Gharbi, Mariko Shii*

Museyon (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-940842-02-8

Series: Timothy and Sarah

A community bands together to revitalize a dilapidated house so old and young can gather and socialize in this Japanese import, the first in a 13-book (so far) series to be translated into English.

When Miss Flora and Mother put their heads together to come up with a way to raise money for repairs to the old beloved community cafe, their plan to hold a homemade cake contest piques the interest of twins Timothy and Sarah, who each want to enter their own creations. While the premise may initially raise excitement in young readers and listeners, the sheer length of the text and the stilted translation will likely dampen it: "That was when they realized that they were not sure how to make cake dough. So Mother taught them and helped them make the dough." Problems are solved almost as soon as they are identified ("And in the end, the old house stood revived all new like a wonder"), and one intriguing mystery involving an elderly man, his sick wife and the cafe they used to run is never satisfactorily resolved. Indeed, readers who aren't paying attention may miss this reference altogether. Still, the idea of a community coming together for a cause is a popular one, and the mouthwatering spreads of cake after cake, all elaborately decorated, are hard to resist. Basho's anthropomorphized mice are sweetly old-fashioned in their dress, mannerisms and surroundings.

A community celebration for audiences that appreciate stories that are on the long side. (*Picture book*. 6-8)



## CRINKLE, CRACKLE, CRACK It's Spring!

*Bauer, Marion Dane*

*Illus. by Shelley, John*

Holiday House (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | \$16.95 e-book | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-8234-2952-3

978-0-8234-3352-0 e-book

Bauer's imaginative first-person romp puts (some) readers right into the story, inviting them to journey with the animals in the moonlight to welcome spring.



Stevens, a master at animal portraiture, sets every creature against a stark white backdrop and poses them peering directly at readers, almost as if to dare them to say anything disrespectful.

WILD ABOUT US!

Under the eaves of a homey (and nicely untidy instead of spic-and-span) house, "you," pictured as an androgynous blond, Caucasian child, are startled by some noises and must investigate. Stepping outside, you meet a bear who says, "It is time.... Come with me." You are kept wondering what it is time for as more noises follow the first ones, and animals and plants and even the breeze join the bear's chorus that it is indeed time. Curiosity battles fear as more and more animals join the hand-in-hand parade to an unknown destination, the noises growing ever louder. Readers may start to feel their own curiosity fading in the lengthy setup to an over-too-quickly climax: A gigantic egg cracks open to spill out all things spring. Still, the text is at times lyrical and calming: "Cold mud sucks at your feet. / The moon is ice. / Even so, traveling with a bear / is rather nice...." Shelley's India ink-and-watercolor illustrations are charmingly detailed if ethnically limiting in their representation of "you." His animals are gentle and friendly, and the forest is a wonderfully textured place that harbors nothing scary.

A new perspective on the "arrival of spring" theme best suited to blond, pink-skinned readers. (Picture book, 4-7)

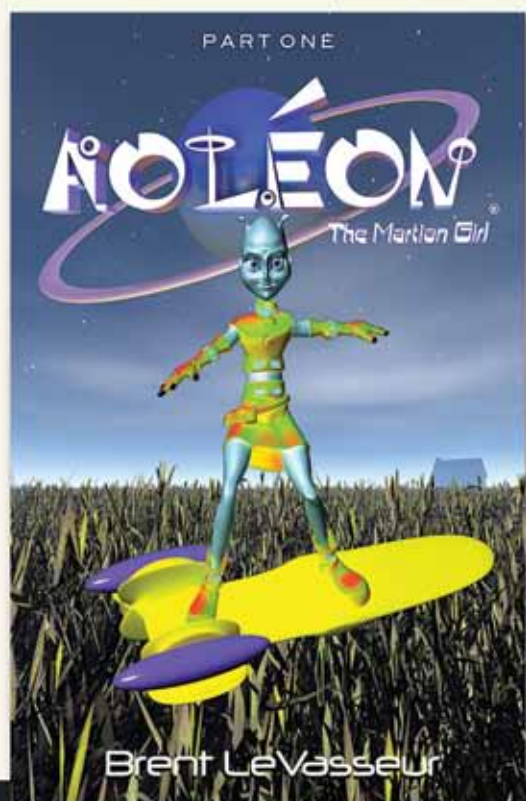


# WILD ABOUT US!

Beaumont, Karen  
 Illus. by Stevens, Janet  
 HMH Books (40 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Apr. 7, 2015  
 978-0-15-206294-1

Various zoo animals celebrate their favorite features, warts and all.

Warty Warthog proudly proclaims: "Can't be who I'm not. / I am who I am, / and I've got what I've got." He may have warts and large tusks protruding from his snout, but he *likes* them. Rhino loves her wrinkly skin, and Crocodile? You should see his toothy grin! Popping from animal to animal in snappy rhyming couplets (or delightfully slow ones if discussing Tortoise: "He's... not...meant...to...hurry... / or...scurry...you...know"), Beaumont shines in rhythmic play. Stevens, a master at animal portraiture, sets every creature against a stark white backdrop and poses them peering directly at readers, almost as if to dare them to say anything disrespectful. This effectively creates an immediate



# AOLEON THE MARTIAN GIRL

By Brent LeVasseur

"...plenty of action..."

"Mars needs milk in this tongue-in-cheek, slam-bang bit of YA escapism that's best for members of the PlayStation-playing generation." —*Kirkus Reviews*

In LeVasseur's debut middle-grade sci-fi novel, a friendly extraterrestrial girl whisks a Nebraska farm boy away for a wild adventure of Martian intrigue, rebellion and invasion.

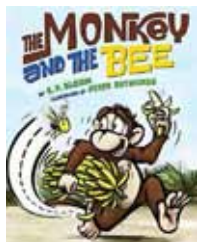
For information about publication or film rights, email [aoleon@aoleonthemartiangirl.com](mailto:aoleon@aoleonthemartiangirl.com)

# Perspective, page turns and occasional graphic panels neatly convey the physical comedy.

THE MONKEY AND THE BEE

connection: It's impossible to say that Potbellied Pig is too plump; her vulnerable gaze makes readers realize she has feelings too. Ultimately the animals conclude that they are glad for their differences. After all, wouldn't it be a shame if everyone at the zoo—or people, too—looked exactly alike?

**A gleeful look at self-acceptance (and don't forget to search for the hidden fly). (Picture book. 4-8)**



## THE MONKEY AND THE BEE

Bloom, C.P.

Illus. by Raymundo, Peter

Abrams (40 pp.)

\$14.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4197-0886-2

A comic tale about sharing and friendship.

In the sequel to *The Monkey Goes Bananas* (2014), Bloom (actually three authors in one: Carly Dempsey, Ed Bloom and illustrator Raymundo) and Raymundo offer another humorous tale with minimal text. Perhaps beginning where the last story left off, the monkey joyfully contemplates a banana on the copyright page, while an equally happy bee buzzes nearby. As the monkey is about to partake of said banana, the bee lands on it with a hopeful smile. Apparently unwilling to share, the monkey flicks the bee away, but the bee is not so easily dissuaded. What follows is a merry chase in which the monkey gets in serious trouble when a swat meant for the bee lands on a lion—but what's this? It's the bee to the rescue! In the end, the two new friends sleep off full stomachs. Using the same dark, heavy-lined style as in the first book, Raymundo places heavy emphasis on the characters by mostly isolating them against blue sky with just a little foliage for set dressing. Perspective, page turns and occasional graphic panels neatly convey the physical comedy.

**This lighthearted story has a lot to offer as a discussion starter and read-aloud. (Picture book. 4-8)**



## 5 TO 1

Bodger, Holly

Knopf (256 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$20.99 PLB

May 12, 2015

978-0-385-39153-5

978-0-385-39155-9 e-book

978-0-385-39154-2 PLB

Another debut. Another dystopia. Another leading man called by a number.

In Bodger's soft dystopia, years of legislation restricting families to one child has resulted in a significant imbalance—roughly six boys to every one girl. In Koyanagar, a walled city-state formed on the edge of India in 2042, the small coterie of women in charge has created a series of tests to select the boys who will be lucky enough to win wives.

A lottery determines competitors; girls are primped while boys compete, with death as a possible outcome; and no one is happy (sound familiar?). Sudasa narrates in poetry, and Contestant Five (readers do not learn his name until the very end, unless they read the flap copy that completely destroys that particular element of suspense) narrates in prose. They both hate the Tests and wish there were another way. Contestant Five could win but doesn't want to; Sudasa just wants to live her life. It's a match, although neither of them immediately sees how they can help each other. Set over just three days, this novel is a mishmash of tropes that have been done better elsewhere, sophomoric poetry that uses typographic elements for emphasis ("n#mber"), and weak characterization with about as much Indian flavor as the curry powder supermarkets sold in the 1950s.

**Like most of the boys in the Tests, this one can't compete. (Dystopian romance. 10-14)**



## IN A WORLD JUST RIGHT

Brooks, Jen

Simon & Schuster (432 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 28, 2015

978-1-4814-1660-3

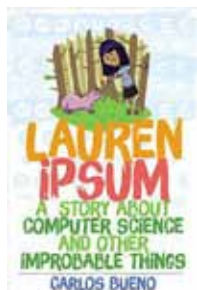
978-1-4814-1662-7 e-book

High school senior Jonathan Aubrey has a secret: He is a world-maker.

Survivor of a plane crash that killed his family and left him in a three-month coma at the age of 8, Jonathan woke up

with the ability to will new worlds into existence. Years later, a lonely and physically scarred Jonathan creates Kylie-Simms-is-my-girlfriend, a world in which the beautiful and popular Kylie Simms is his, well, girlfriend; he is sure the real Kylie has never even looked him in the eye. When Jonathan confuses the real and created worlds, the two girls begin to merge: Real Kylie becomes obsessed with Jonathan, while made-up Kylie questions her love for him. When another world-maker offers to help Jonathan set things right, Jonathan must decide whether to complete the merging of the Kylies and destroy the made-up world in which he is successful and loved and accepted by his peers. Brooks is a competent worldbuilder, adhering to the rules of her novel's world(s), but the pacing is slow and the story bland. A plot twist about 50 pages from the end finally speeds up the pace, but by then, readers aren't likely to care what becomes of the flat, one-dimensional characters.

**Though it has an undeniably thought-provoking concept, this debut doesn't reach its potential. (Fantasy. 12-15)**



**LAUREN IPSUM**  
**A Story About Computer Science and Other Improbable Things**

*Bueno, Carlos*  
*Illus. by Lipovaca, Miran*  
No Starch Press (184 pp.)  
\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-59327-574-7



A lost girl travels through a fantastical *Alice in Wonderland*-esque world filled with *The Phantom Tollbooth*-like computer-programming metaphors.

After an argument with her mother, Lauren Ipsum goes for a walk through the woods. Quickly lost in Userland, she starts to encounter physical manifestations of computer science ideas, such as the Jargon creatures, seemingly benign at first but quickly revealed to be obnoxious. The various loony characters she encounters each champion different aspects of logic—specifically, the kinds of logic and perspectives used in programming and problem-solving—giving Lauren the tools she needs for her rambling journey home. While serving as an introduction to programming for kids, it avoids the nitty-gritty of code in favor of clever analogies that guide readers toward the type of thinking that will facilitate learning computer science. The extensive backmatter—a segment titled “The Field Guide to Userland”—details how Lauren’s logic solves the various puzzles and how the solutions relate more practically to computer science, as well as providing jumping-off points for future subject exploration. The story is funny enough on its own, but the sly puns missed the first time around will keep the book fresh for those rereading after learning more programming. The intelligent female protagonist and casually multiethnic illustrations normalize inclusivity in computer science for young readers.

**Positive, smart, empowering philosophies and thinking skills couched in a wacky adventure.** (*Fantasy/philosophy*. 8-14)



**KILL SHOT**

*Bunn, Bill*  
Bitingduck Press (378 pp.)  
\$14.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book  
Apr. 6, 2015  
978-1-938463-53-2  
978-1-938463-54-9 e-book

The discovery of a sunken World War II submarine plunges a rootless Labrador teen into a whirl of weird revelations and deadly danger.

Writing as if he were paid by the plotline, Bunn takes an actual news item about a similar find and spins around it a mare’s nest of premises and genre tropes. Having been shuttled for years among successive sets of exploitative foster parents and a group home, Wednesday skeptically fetches

up in a run-down trailer with an out-of-work handyman and an airheaded beautician. Then, rambles in the nearby woods bring him encounters with Stump (aka Emily), a rough-hewn hermit’s home-schooled (but strangely well-socialized) daughter, and also the hidden hatch of a U-boat. Intercut flashbacks reveal that the German sub sank in the local river during a secret mission 70-plus years ago. The skeleton-filled sub contains both leads to a murderous spy ring still operating nearby *and* (shades of Dan Brown) an ancient weapon slated to join a cache of like mystical artifacts stolen by the Nazis. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the author leaves much unexplained (how did that sub come to be buried in dry ground?), is unable to maintain either logical or tonal consistency, and brings the tale to a confused climax that combines kidnappings, gunfire and laxatives.

**A thrown-together mishmash of fragmentary plot ideas, arbitrary events and discordant themes.** (*Thriller*. 11-13)



**YARD SALE**

*Bunting, Eve*  
*Illus. by Castillo, Lauren*  
Candlewick (32 pp.)  
\$15.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-7636-6542-5



When her parents hold a yard sale to downsize prior to moving, Callie experiences mixed emotions until she realizes she still has what’s most important.

Callie and her parents are moving from a house to a “[s]mall but nice” apartment. Shocked to see “[a]lmost everything” they own for sale in their front yard, Callie watches people sorting through their possessions and asking prices. She’s chagrined about crayon marks on her bed’s headboard that lower the price and angry as a man loads her bike into his truck. When her best friend, Sara, asks why they’re moving, Callie says it has “something to do with money.” Callie hates “people buying our stuff,” and she’s horrified when a woman jokingly asks if she is for sale. Reassured by her parents and back in their “almost empty house,” Callie realizes they “don’t really need anything they sold,” and she and her parents will “fit” into their new place—and that’s what matters. Callie’s first-person observations reveal her distress, while poignant watercolor-and-ink illustrations reinforce her emotions through deft use of white space, color washes and strong outlines that capture postures and facial expressions. Images of forlorn Callie surrounded by a yard full of possessions, sad Callie hugging Sara, distraught Callie grabbing her bike and Callie’s parents comforting her visually tug the heart.

**A simple, moving tale of a family in transition.** (*Picture book*. 3-7)





## ELLIE'S STORY

Cameron, W. Bruce

Illus. by Cowdrey, Richard

Starscape/Tom Doherty (208 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-7653-7469-1

978-1-4668-4299-1 e-book

Ellie tells the story of her training and life as a search and rescue dog.

Ellie was first introduced in the adult book *A Dog's Purpose* (2011). In this adaptation for children, the story is all her own. Starting with her earliest days in a large litter of puppies, Ellie's narration details not only how Jakob, her trainer, selected her from among her littermates, but also the fascinating, realistic details of teaching her how to Find and Work, "games" that she comes to value. But Jakob is a frustration to her. He's grieving over the death of his wife and seems unable to love Ellie. After he's wounded by a criminal, Ellie is turned over to Maya, who has much to learn about partnering with a search and rescue dog, skills Ellie patiently helps her with. Injured during a rescue, Ellie's career seems to be over until she becomes involved in a breathtaking rescue of a small child swept into a rain-filled storm sewer. Ellie's view of the world is spot-on, feeling just like the thoughts dogs must have, particularly her disdain for cats (not worth training) and her anxious concern for people who aren't busy playing with her ("It was too bad. They had nothing to do"). Additional information on how search and rescue dogs are selected and trained is appended.

A satisfying and illuminating tale. (Fiction. 9-14)



## NEON ALIENS ATE MY HOMEWORK

And Other Poems

Cannon, Nick

Scholastic (144 pp.)

\$14.99 | Feb. 24, 2015

978-0-545-72281-0

What if Shel Silverstein grew up on hip-hop?

Children's poetry meets hip-hop culture in this colorful collection anchored by street art and mixed with witty and empowering rhyme. Offering over 60 poems accompanied by graffiti-inspired illustrations from an international collective of artists, Cannon touches on all facets of youth culture in this comical assortment. He explains in an introductory note that, as a child, he found equal inspiration in Shel Silverstein and rappers, whom he identifies as "the storytellers of the street." From there, he leads readers into poems such as "Graffiti Dreams," in which he writes "Lost in my passion, I spray my heart away / I breathe graffiti and dream of a new day," celebrating street art, which many hold as a key element of hip-hop culture along with the MC, DJ and B-boy. Silly poems, such as "Halitosis" and "Funky Feet," make clever reading opportunities out of

the gross-out humor so popular with growing boys. Dedication poems such as "Mateo" and "A Champion Named Ikiaka" add a heartfelt touch. The standout "Weird Concrete" seeks to empower readers to overcome the obstacles of inner-city life.

A collection well-suited to young boys of color as well as all young fans of hip-hop culture, who often long for family-friendly content. (Poetry. 7-10)



## THE BOOK THAT PROVES TIME TRAVEL HAPPENS

Clark, Henry

Little, Brown (416 pp.)

\$17.00 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-316-40617-8

978-0-316-40615-4 e-book

Where time travel, historical fiction and nonfiction, ancient Chinese design and Morse code collide—keep up, or risk being left in the past...or the future.

Narrator Ambrose "Bro" Brody, a middle schooler with an Irish father and an Afro-French-Canadian mother, fears his family will suffer due to his father's embrace of his "trans-temp," or cross-time-dressing, identity, teaching middle school dressed as different historical figures. Shofranka "Frankie" Camlo, a Romany who travels with her father's carnival, and Tom Xui, Bro's best friend, a Chinese-American kid who loves history and uses big words as expletives, try to help Bro learn his fate. The boys accompany Frankie to retrieve the Camlo Shagbolt (a time trombone), but when trouble arises, Frankie blows the horn's "area code" for another decade and takes them back to 1852. Since the Fugitive Slave Act makes the trio a target for slave catchers, they run for their lives often, changing the future when they interact with ancestors. They are not without resources: Mr. Ganto, a *Gigantopithecus*, is their guardian; Tom can read the hexagrams in China's *I-Ching: The Book of Changes* and extract Morse code messages from them; Bro is clairvoyant; and Frankie is skilled at playing the Shagbolt. These elements combine to help the friends avert one historical disaster after another.

A worthwhile if convoluted read that will extend readers' knowledge of history and expand their concept of "diversity." (Fantasy. 8-12)

# The succession of pint-sized marvels and disasters is on such a small scale that only the most timid of hearts could find any real worry in the tale.

UH-OH!



## SOMETHING SURE SMELLS AROUND HERE Limericks

Cleary, Brian P.

Illus. by Rowland, Andy

Millbrook (32 pp.)

\$6.95 paper | \$26.60 PLB | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-4677-6035-5

978-1-4677-2044-1 PLB

Series: Poetry Adventures

Cleary presents 26 limericks (and, tantalizingly, half of a 27th) for kids.

The fun-loving poet continues his light romp through poetic forms in the third installment of the Poetry Adventures series (*Ode to a Commode: Concrete Poems*, 2014, etc.), this time focusing on a cornerstone of the nonsense verse world that seems made for him: the limerick. First popularized by nonsense master Edward Lear in the mid-19th century and traditionally illustrated with a silly picture, the limerick irresistibly combines the predictability and momentum of consistent meter and rhyme with the jarring surprise of an unexpected, usually humorous twist of meaning. Case in point, a particularly hilarious example from Cleary: "I once met an artist named Hank. / To put it quite bluntly, he stank. / Couldn't paint, couldn't sketch, / and it wasn't a stretch / to say he could not draw a blank." Rowland gleefully presents an artiste clad in polka-dot boxers intently painting a stick figure while his pet dog, paw over one eye, hesitantly watches. Other poems here rely more heavily on punning, as in the title piece or a ditty involving a wonderfully rendered spider named Deb, "who's become quite a singing celeb. / When I asked how she'd grown / to be so well known, / she replied, 'I'm all over the web!'"

**Inviting illustrations and offbeat topics showcase limericks aplenty for amusement or poetic inspiration. (further reading)** (Picture book/poetry. 6-11)



## UH-OH!

Crum, Shutta

Illus. by Barton, Patrice

Knopf (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-385-75268-8

978-0-385-75269-5 PLB

Aside from the ubiquitous "NO!" few toddler phrases are more beloved than the expansively useful "Uh-oh!"

And with the exception of a single sea gull's "Awk!" this titular phrase is the only one to be found in this charming tale of sand and sun. A gleeful toddler twosome and their color-coordinated moms, all Caucasian, head for the seashore, buckets and blankets in hand. In nearly wordless double-page spreads, each minor disaster (wet sunglasses, a naughty sea gull, dropped and forgotten items, etc.) is met with an "Uh-oh" and then a happy turnabout. Eventually the two are accidentally drenched by a rogue wave, but instead of tears, there are their mothers, ready with warm, dry towels. The succession of pint-sized marvels and disasters is on such a small scale that only the most

timid of hearts could find any real worry in the tale. Barton's pencil sketches give the storytelling its heart, her two heroes perpetually wide-eyed, and the occasional jolt of realism (waterlogged diapers have a distinctive look all their own) is as bracing as the sea air.

**Though there are as many "Uh-oh" books out there as there are fishies in the sea, this petite charmer is a fine addition to the beach-time shelf. (Picture book. 2-5)**



## HIT

Dawson, Delilah S.

Simon Pulse/Simon & Schuster (336 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4814-2339-7

978-1-4814-2341-0 e-book

To pay off her mother's massive debt, Patsy Klein becomes a government assassin.

In this modern-day dystopia, the United States is finally out of debt thanks to Valor National Bank, which now owns the government. Valor National is not only calling in its debts, but turning to helpless victims of the ongoing bad economy to serve as its debt collectors (because nobody reads the fine print when signing up for a credit card). Seventeen-year-old Patsy can either call on 10 other individuals underwater with debt and have her out-of-work mother's insurance bills wiped clean or be murdered on the spot. Her story is not for the faint of heart. Erstwhile yarn bomber Patsy instantly becomes a kick-ass killer, as each debt collection also becomes a kill-or-be-killed situation. With the police force incommunicado, it's guns that do most of the talking. The quick pace still leaves room for possible romance when Wyatt, the son of Patsy's first hit, unwittingly becomes her backup—and a potential target later on down the list. Their sexual tension and banter add fuel to the suspense, especially when Patsy starts to make connections about her hit list and uncovers clues about the new "government."

**Practically movie ready, this novel will satisfy fans of thrillers and dystopias alike. (Thriller. 14-18)**



## FORT

DeFelice, Cynthia

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

(208 pp.)

\$16.99 | May 19, 2015

978-0-374-32427-8

What preteen boy wouldn't love to build a fort in the woods?

DeFelice makes that dream come true. Wyatt, on summer vacation in upstate New York with his dad, and Augie, who lives there all year round with his grandmother, hatch a plan to build a fort in the woods. Augie's neatly depicted great-uncle and his junkyard buddy provide the necessary materials. Augie's pillow-bosomed—a trait Wyatt hilariously can't



# Dicmas' expressive, paint-splotted birds have an adventurous spirit all their own.

HOME TWEET HOME

help but notice—great-aunt gives them food. Wyatt's dad offers him the freedom to explore and grow. Augie, something of a modern-day Huckleberry Finn, has ample talent as a woodsman. The very real threat from bullies J.R. and Morrie, and their abuse of mentally disabled Gerard, a good-natured neighborhood kid, provide the impetus for Operation Doom. That plan to defend the fort and protect Gerard (and even provide some justice) leads to a glorious, feel-good climax in which all the right things work out and the bad guys get their richly deserved comeuppance. Along the way, some squirrels are sacrificed by slingshot to provide good meals, and a car-parts calendar that includes photos of attractive young women adds realistic detail, both serving to enhance the authenticity of this captivating tale.

**Upbeat, engaging and satisfying; altogether a very fine book, especially for boys looking for a bit of believable, achievable adventure.** (*Fiction. 9-14*)



## THE HUNTED

de la Peña, Matt

Delacorte (384 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$20.99 PLB

May 12, 2015

978-0-385-74122-4

978-0-375-98436-5 e-book

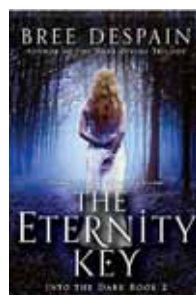
978-0-375-98992-6 PLB

Series: Living, 2

After surviving the tsunami that sank their cruise ship, escaping an island harboring a deadly secret and enduring 36 days at sea, three teens and an adult reach what's left of California—a quarantined, anarchic region devastated by earthquakes and a lethal, engineered pandemic.

Gangs control spheres of influence and prohibit travel. The dead are everywhere. Teens Shy, Carmen and Marcus suspect their families also perished. Shoeshine, the man who engineered their escape and their only guide, is a mystery himself. Inoculated against Romero Disease, the teens want to hunt for their families, but circumstances lead them to accompany Shoeshine east to Arizona, where the precious vaccine can be produced and disseminated to millions at risk. Shy and Carmen's mutual attraction grows, but she's engaged to someone among the missing. (Awkward sexuality in books for teens generally expresses a female perspective; Shy's touching, funny account makes a welcome change.) Frustratingly, there's no through-line to the plot; it doesn't so much unwind as fall apart. Horrific discoveries (babies shot in a hospital, children killing and killed) lack the weight they merit; coincidence strains credulity. Latino protagonists are all too rare in teen books, but Shy and his cohort here feel more like placeholders than developed characters. Quests and goals are abandoned without resolution as if the author, having lost interest in his story midway, has left characters—and readers—to finish it themselves.

**A disappointing sequel to the standout *The Living* (2013).** (*Science fiction. 14-18*)



## THE ETERNITY KEY

Despain, Bree

Egmont USA (368 pp.)

\$18.99 | \$18.99 e-book | May 12, 2015

978-1-60684-467-0

978-1-60684-468-7 e-book

Series: Into the Dark, 2

Teen lovers get entangled in more myths, music and mysteries in this Stygian sequel.

Unwilling to deliver Daphne Raines to the Underrealm to be a Boon bride and breeder, Haden Lord instead joins forces with her to find the lost Key of Hades. While muddling through a millennia-old mystery, testing their magical powers and combating their raging teen hormones, Daphne and Haden must also watch out for Underlords and Skylords who seek the Key for their own genocidal purposes. Hoping to redeem himself (and prevent world annihilation), Haden recruits his second-class brother, Garrick, and disgraced friend, Dax, while Daphne enlists her ex-alcoholic, deal-with-the-devil rock-star father, Joe, and classmates Lexie and Tobin. Drama of the Greek, family and high school varieties abounds. Already reworking the Persephone myth, the teens act in an Orpheus-and-Eurydice rock opera and even veer into Eros-and-Psyche territory. Flawed father figures, political coups and dating drama provide additional fodder for Daphne's and Haden's continual angst. Despite sharing narrative duties, Haden, Daphne and Tobin remain shallow and stereotypical teen protagonists. Despain offers notes of romance, adventure, mystery and rich-and-famous fantasy, but the flat characters, myth mishmash and telegraphed plot twists result in a slog instead of a song.

**A discordant soap-opera sequel filling time until the finale.** (*Fantasy. 12-18*)



## HOME TWEET HOME

Dicmas, Courtney

*Illus. by the author*

Doubleday (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-385-38535-0

978-0-375-97351-2 PLB

A family of cave swallows decides that its nest is too small.

Ten brother and sister birds pile high atop one another, squeezing beak to beak and feather to feather to fit inside the nest. If only they had a bigger home! Then there would be room for everybody, not to mention extra airspace for Rupert's smelly feet and Cecil's wheezy bagpipe notes. Big brother Burt and big sister Pippi set off to find a brand new—big—place to live. Unfortunately, it is not as easy as they hoped. The first spot, which seems nice and sturdy, is actually the shell of a turtle. The second, which appears soft and fluffy, happens to be on the back of a very bouncy cheetah. They go through many options—too pointy, too tall, too squishy, too...hungry (gulp)—until finally (as predicted with the title wordplay) they



find their original home is where they belong. It is of course difficult to not draw immediate parallels to the timeless classic *The Best Nest*, by P.D. Eastman, especially given the avian theme, but Dicmas' expressive, paint-splotted birds have an adventurous spirit all their own.

**A few choppy parts lead to an uneven read-aloud, but the page-turn reveals are their own reward. (Picture book. 3-6)**



### BABY LOVE

*DiTerlizzi, Angela*

*Illus. by Hughes, Brooke Boynton*

Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

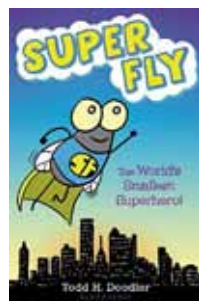
978-1-4424-3392-2

978-1-4424-3393-9 e-book

A beloved baby is the center of the universe for adoring parents.

Cute toes, ears, eyes and even chubby thighs warrant hugs and kisses galore. Every action, from playing in the mud to taking baby steps to bathtime, is viewed as precious. Even the dog seems to be part of the fan club. DiTerlizzi's little one is unnamed and could be of either gender in Hughes' illustrations, though the family is Caucasian. Verses composed of four two-word lines in abcb rhyme catalog the baby's perfect features, followed by a chorus repeated after each verse. The final line provides extra emphasis, stating the enduring love this baby will always receive. "Yes, it must be baby love" changes to "You'll *always* be our baby love." Each line stands alone on the page, sometimes against a plain white background and sometimes incorporated within the illustrations, which are rendered in pen and ink with watercolor. Hughes enhances the spare text with lots of detailed depictions of the baby's activities and the interactions with parents and pet, all in the softest of color palettes. It is a completely idealized version of family life, but it all works because it manages to avoid, albeit narrowly, being too sentimental. Adults will want to read this again and again with baby cuddled close.

**A joyful, warm and lovely bedtime story. (Picture book. 6 mos.-2)**



### SUPER FLY The World's Smallest Superhero!

*Doodler, Todd H.*

*Illus. by the author*

Bloomsbury (128 pp.)

\$14.99 | \$6.99 paper | May 5, 2015

978-1-61963-379-7

978-1-61963-378-0 paper

Series: Super Fly, 1



From the "bug-centric" burg of Stinkopolis rises Super Fly, diminutive defender of the city dump—not to mention the planet beyond.

Following in the footsteps of his renowned dad, inventor of the Poop-A-Rama ("the perfect appliance for any housefly household"), nerdy fourth-grader Eugene Flystein has developed not only a device that converts boogers into lunchroom pizzas, but the Ultimo 6-9000, a device that increases intelligence and strength by a factor of 9,000. Unfortunately, the latter's first subject is class bully Cornelius C. Roach—who races off to build giant robot rats and roaches with the aim of exterminating (wait for it) "**HUMANS!** Dun, dun, *dun*." What can Eugene do but soup himself up likewise, don a cape and his little sister's tights, and buzz off to battle? In a narrative festooned with swarms of small cartoon drawings and chapter heads like "Nice Flies Finish Last" and "Your Fly is Down," this mighty mite, with able if overcaffeinated sidekick Fred Flea, survives a series of fiendishly clever traps and attacks on the way to a win. But the triumph is short-lived—roaches being, as everyone knows, hard to kill—and further conflicts loom.

**As Fred would (does, actually) exclaim: "Ding-dong donkey donuts, Super Fly!" Fans of Super Diaper Baby will agree. (Superhero farce. 7-9)**



### ARCHIE GREENE AND THE MAGICIAN'S SECRET

*Everest, D.D.*

Harper/HarperCollins (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-231211-2

The delivery of an ancient book propels Archie Greene into a world of magic and danger: the perfect birthday present for any 12-year-old.

Fearing for his safety, Archie's grandmother sends him to stay with family he has never met. But first he must visit the Aisle of White, a bookshop that specializes in rare and magical tomes. But Archie soon discovers that the shop is also a gateway to the Museum of Magical Miscellany, where curators called the Flame Keepers of Alexandria collect and preserve magical artifacts. Archie is quickly apprenticed to Old Zeb, a bookbinder, from whom he learns about all kinds of magic. But when characters from the books begin endangering the security of the museum and the books themselves begin whispering about a dangerous presence, Archie and his cousins find that they might be the only ones brave enough or foolish enough to investigate. Forced humor, humdrum magic and a mystery that is barely mysterious—not to mention a distressingly familiar-sounding, formulaic title—all combine to create a story that never takes flight. Fans of whimsical fantasy would do well to look elsewhere (or just to reread *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*). While imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, it does not necessarily make for good fiction.

**Familiarity in fiction breeds boredom. (Fantasy. 8-12)**



## THE MISSING ZUCCHINI

Falcone, L.M.

*Illus. by Smith, Kim*

Kids Can (96 pp.)

\$12.95 | \$6.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-77138-154-3

978-1-77138-018-8 paper

Series: The Ghost and Max Monroe, 2

Max and his great-uncle Larry, who just happens to be a bumbling ghost and a formerly unsuccessful detective, solve their second case in this accessible chapter-book series.

Falcone crafts a compelling mystery title just right for newly independent readers graduating from early readers. Sensible Max moves the plot forward with his determination to find out what happened to Zeeta and Zelda Zamboni's 200-pound zucchini. The sisters are eager to find their prized vegetable so that they can enter it in the Harvest Fair. Max's keen observations along with his uncle's zany antics lead the duo to three possible suspects. Is it next-door-neighbor Mr. Leonard, whose prizewinning garden has been shadowed by the plants of the green-thumbed sisters, or possibly the wealthy and competitive Mr. Jordan? And then consider kindly Edwena Whacker, who hopes to win a bakery contract for chocolate zucchini bread and grins "so wide her eyes [disappear]." Although each of the suspects has a motive, only one leaves behind telling clues so that Max can reveal the thief in the satisfying conclusion. Even kids who may think "looking for a zucchini [is] sure to be duller than dirt" will quickly get engrossed in this humorous whodunit. The nine titled chapters are further subdivided into shorter sections to make the reading more manageable.

**Introduce Max to budding detectives or children who like to laugh as they read.** (*Mystery. 6-10*)



## FRIEND OR FOE

Feldman, Jody

*Illus. by Jamieson, Victoria*

Greenwillow/HarperCollins (432 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-221128-6

978-0-06-221130-9 e-book

Series: Gollywhopper Games, 3

The Gollywhopper Games come back for a third round of puzzlers and prizes, with the main contestant a kid who is totally into football.

Sidelined by a concussion, Zane is smart, loves math and strategy, and is deeply afraid his football days are over. For him, competing in the Gollywhopper Games is a chance to regain his edge. In this iteration of the games, contestants work alone for some tasks but must pair and team up for others—but never with the same people, creating situations in which contestants are both cooperating and opposing one another at the same

time. In the games, Zane is always thinking about how he can optimize his chances, but hindrances abound to make it tough. Zane is a good-looking, popular kid, but he recognizes the assets scrawny young genius Elijah can bring to the contest. In the background, game sponsor Bert Golliwop frets about sabotage to this spectacular publicity stunt for his company. Rule twists aside, readers will find this edition of the games similar to the first two; as before, the fun is in the puzzles and being inside Zane's head as he works out his answers. Zane is all about the strategy and what is needed to help each team member bring their best work.

**It's this altruism, combined with a competitive spirit, that will have readers rooting for these kids.** (*Fiction. 8-12*)



## I DON'T LIKE KOALA

Ferrell, Sean

*Illus. by Santoso, Charles*

Atheneum (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4814-0068-8

A boy receives a stuffed animal that he really doesn't like—and it's not hard to see why.

Koala arrives in an exciting, striped gift box, but still, Adam pulls faces and insists, "I don't like Koala." His parents don't understand, but readers will. Koala doesn't look soft or friendly, and he's alarmingly mouthless. When Adam wakes up in the morning, Koala's tiny claws are pressing into Adam's cheek. It's too bad that Santoso uses strabismus (in which one eye's focus doesn't align with the other's) to portray the cold, yellow stare of Koala's "terrible eyes." Hijacking strabismus, a real-life condition, to indicate danger or symbolize creepiness is a distinctly questionable choice. Otherwise, the tale is hilarious, especially Adam's (unsuccessful) attempts to banish Koala. At bedtime, "Adam puts Koala away. Away is a lot of different places"—inside a saucepan, atop the fridge, behind a plant and in a purse. Like that fabled cat, Koala always comes back. Even an intentional abandonment trip—over hills, around rocks, among trees—doesn't work. Meanwhile, clever artwork shows that Adam may not have traveled as far as he claims. Santoso's sly pencil illustrations, colored digitally in a mostly blue, gray and brown palette, resemble animation with shading and texturizing lines. The end features a twist and a closing line worthy of Sandra Boynton's *But Not the Hippopotamus* (1982).

**Slightly creepy, funny and fun.** (*Picture book. 4-7*)



## STICK AND STONE

Ferry, Beth

*Illus. by Lichtenheld, Tom*

HMH Books (48 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-544-03256-9

A lonely tree branch and rock find friendship and strength together.

# The children engaged in this artistic enterprise are brown-skinned and black-haired, pink-skinned and red-haired, and the dragons are just as varied.

HOW TO DRAW A DRAGON

Stick and Stone feel very alone. Isolated on separate pages, their solitary figures appear downcast, until a chance encounter leads Stick to stand up for Stone against a bullying pine cone. Now inseparable, the two explore and play. But when a storm carries Stick away, Stone must search for him and bring him back. Simple, rhyming text and visual puns keep this familiar-feeling tale light and snappy. Lichtenheld's illustrations, done in dry media on paper, possess their usual appeal. The paper's rough surface gives the natural objects a warm, organic feel that contrasts nicely with the bold, graphic drawing style. As always, details charm, from the trail of flattened grass Stone leaves behind him as the two explore to the miner's headlamp he wears during his search for Stick. With few words per page and visually expressive characters, there is much to keep young readers' interest.

**A light, enjoyable approach to a recognizable narrative about making—and helping—friends. (Picture book. 3-7)**



## REVENGE, ICE CREAM AND OTHER THINGS BEST SERVED COLD

Fimm, Katie

Feiweil & Friends (400 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 5, 2015

978-1-250-04525-6

Series: Broken Hearts & Revenge, 2

More mean-girl high jinks in the Hamptons in this follow-up to *Broken Hearts, Fences, and Other Things to Mend*

(2014).

In the first book, 16-year-old Gemma had returned to the Hamptons to stay with her father at his rich producer friend's house and make amends to her childhood friend Hallie, whom Gemma wronged when she was 11. Plans went terribly awry: Vengeful Hallie stole Gemma's boyfriend, Teddy, and then Gemma fell for Hallie's brother, Josh—but then Hallie broke them up, making Gemma out to be the bad guy. Now Gemma has decided to stay the summer to prove her innocence and Hallie's guilt to Teddy and Josh. Two new teens arrive, Gwyneth and Ford. Gemma's known them for years and has a longtime crush on Ford, who is a surfing hottie as well as a supersmart computer programmer. Gwyneth is making a documentary, so she insists that everyone in the house wear miniature cameras around their necks. The revenge plans are ratcheted up here with elaborate, multistage setups (involving the cameras, of course) that, though defying believability, are a plot complexity to behold. Readers will find Gemma's lack of romantic decisiveness frustrating; she swoons over whomever she's with. Ultimately, it's tough to stand firmly behind Gemma; though she doesn't harbor the poison that Hallie does, she's like a reality star bemoaning her fate: The fact is that she signed up for it.

**As satisfying as watching a reality show but with a finer-tuned plot. (Fiction. 13-18)**



## HOW TO DRAW A DRAGON

Florian, Douglas

*Illus. by the author*

Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (42 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-4424-7399-7

978-1-4424-7400-0 e-book

Florian's rhyming verse carries a group of children through drawing their own dragon, starting with the encouraging couplet, "Drawing dragons isn't hard. / Drag a dragon to your yard."

The front endpapers catalog dragon eyes, scales, teeth and so on, while the back endpapers display an entire dragon with parts labeled (forked tongue, sharp back toe, etc.). The children engaged in this artistic enterprise are brown-skinned and black-haired, pink-skinned and red-haired, and the dragons are just as varied, from versions that are pink with catlike faces to vaguely Chinese-style dragons in green and orange. The illustrations, while evoking children's own drawings and collages, are quite sophisticated in their use of texture, photo and fabric, as well as matte and transparent color. The final pages are a foldout of P.S. 117's "dragon art show," where all of the drawings are proudly displayed. The genders of the dragons are indicated by pronouns, so readers (and artists) are not stuck with a passel of only boy dragons. The rhyme flows smoothly with its whimsical advice: "Dragon fire has reds and yellows, / and it's good to toast marshmallows."

**This rhyming romp will no doubt spur multiple requests for rereading—and redrawing. (Picture book. 4-8)**



## FREDDY & FRITO AND THE CLUBHOUSE RULES

Friend, Alison

*Illus. by the author*

Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 5, 2015

978-0-06-228580-5

Fox kit Freddy and little mouse Frito's imaginative play dates are hampered by the rules of their respective homes, so why don't these two friends build a big clubhouse all their own?

One day, when both Frito's and Freddy's homes are unavailable for play, they schedule a meet-up at the local park to search for a place of their own: "A place with no rules!" they agree. Settling on an inviting tree, the two friends get started on a clubhouse, building with borrowed items from home. They soon find homemaking is no easy task and friendship is not without conflict, but their small spat is quickly resolved. They build bigger and announce a clubhouse-warming party, inviting their families to join in on the "No rules!" clubhouse fun. Horrified by the resultant rule-free chaos, they devise a clever scheme, brewing a foul clubhouse stew in order to drive off the guests and restore peace to their new home away from home. Lively illustrations and varied layouts add to the appeal of this story, which features descriptive language well-suited for emerging readers to grow their vocabularies.



# An engaging narrative that avoids hagiography.

NELSON MANDELA

This playful, lighthearted lesson about peacekeeping and place-keeping serves as the introduction of Friend's Freddy & Frito, and readers will look forward to their further adventures. (Picture book. 6-9)



## EVIL SPY SCHOOL

Gibbs, Stuart

Simon & Schuster (336 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-1-4424-9489-3

978-1-4424-9491-6 e-book

Series: Spy School, 3

Super-spy-in-training Ben Ripley is headed for enemy territory.

When a training exercise at the CIA's Academy of Espionage takes a wrong turn and 13-year-old Ben accidentally blows up the principal's office, he's thrown out of school faster than readers can say, "undercover." But before Ben even has the chance to settle back into civilian life, his nemesis at SPYDER, a top-secret organization of evildoers, offers him a chance to get back in the game—but this time, he'll be playing for the bad guys. Is this all part of a secret CIA plan to infiltrate SPYDER? Or is Ben running a one-man undercover operation? Gibbs (*Spy Camp*, 2013, etc.) leaves readers (and Ben!) wondering a bit too long, but fans of the series will still enjoy the ride. Ben is as witty and entertaining a protagonist as ever, and readers will get a kick out of his new "friends" at evil-spy school. Ashley Sparks, a bitter ex-gymnast robbed of her chance for Olympic gold but carrying a torch for Ben, is a particularly welcome addition. Ashley provides a nice foil to Erica Hale, Ben's secret CIA crush, though Gibbs passes up the opportunity to really capitalize on the potential for a full-fledged, superspy love triangle.

**It's not a nail-biter, but it certainly is an entertaining battle between good and evil.** (Adventure. 8-12)



## LOLA AND TATTLETALE ZEKE

Goldman, Marcia

Photos by the author

Creston (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | May 18, 2015

978-1-939547-16-3

A tiny Yorkshire terrier named Lola narrates her third entry in a series, this time focusing on a new addition to the family, her fellow Yorkie named Zeke.

The story is told in first person by Lola, although the identity of the narrator is not clearly specified. She calls Zeke her little brother even though Zeke is larger in size, a point of potential confusion for the audience despite her explanation. The plot recounts multiple incidents of misbehavior by Lola, such as leaving muddy paw prints on the floor or lying about brushing her teeth. Zeke repeatedly tattles on Lola to an unnamed authority, presumably the dogs' owner. Zeke then

unintentionally causes some minor trouble—spilling a water dish, ripping the arm of the teddy bear—and the family cat then tattles on him. Lola comforts him, and then Zeke refrains from tattling, concluding sagely that accidents will happen. The premise falls flat, as exactly how Zeke and the cat actually communicate with their owner is unclear, and the concept of one pet "telling" on another is never fully explained. The quality of the photographic illustrations is inconsistent, with some photos of the dogs rather blurry and several shots with one dog's face turned away. The photographs don't really capture either the dogs' personalities or a convincing relationship between the pair. The book concludes with a curriculum guide offering discussion questions and activities that relate to the story.

**An unfocused effort overall, both in illustration quality and in plot development.** (Picture book. 3-7)



## NELSON MANDELA

### South African Revolutionary

Gormley, Beatrice

Aladdin (256 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4814-2059-4

978-1-4814-2061-7 e-book

A young troublemaker grows up to be a civil rights activist, president of his country and world leader in this overview of the life and work of the Nobel

Prize-winning peacemaker.

In an engaging narrative that avoids hagiography, Gormley chronicles Mandela's childhood and youth as a village herder, his successful career as a lawyer defending victims of South Africa's apartheid policies, his work with the African National Congress, his imprisonment on Robben Island, his presidency of post-apartheid South Africa and his efforts later in life as an international peacemaker. She effectively describes the gross injustices and absurdities of apartheid policies, including numerous examples of Mandela's personal experiences living in a racist society. Mandela's extraordinary ability as president to ease both the fearful suspicions of whites and the vengeful impulses of long-oppressed blacks, preventing the nation from plunging into civil war, is appropriately depicted as his crowning accomplishment. The author does note that Mandela was less successful in his personal life, with two failed marriages and estranged relationships with his children.

**A complete, informative introduction to a nonviolent revolutionary and one of history's most important champions of human rights.** (photos, timeline, glossary, source notes) (Biography. 10-14)



## FERALS

Grey, Jacob

Harper/HarperCollins (288 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 28, 2015

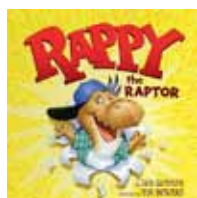
978-0-06-232103-9

978-0-06-232105-3 e-book

People who can commune with animals populate this urban fantasy for middle-grade readers.

Homeless 13-year-old Caw lives with his three loyal crows in a city called Blackstone. A recurring dream torments him: Caw's parents fling him out of his bedroom window into the air, where he's caught by crows and carried to safety. Eight years after this expulsion, Caw still doesn't understand, but a new element to the dream—an evil man with a spider ring—offers a clue. While searching for answers with his new human friend, Lydia, Caw meets a homeless man called Crumb, who informs Caw that the boy is a feral, like him: a person who can talk to and control a certain type of animal. Through Crumb and other ferals, Caw learns that the man from his dreams, the Spinning Man, is determined to return from the Land of the Dead and needs Caw as well as a band of renegade ferals to do so. It's pushing credulity that the Spinning Man's minions are as thoroughly inept as they turn out to be, and while the dangers Caw faces—and his responses to their outcomes—are believable, his ability to learn new skills (literally overnight) and succeed against those with many more years of experience may confound readers.

**This series opener is definitely not for arachnophobes or those easily frightened, but stouthearted readers happy to suspend their disbelief may enjoy the urban setting and fast-paced plot.** (*Fantasy*. 9-14)



## RAPPY THE RAPTOR

Gutman, Dan

Illus. by Bowers, Tim

Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-229180-6

A newborn dino falls from a tree and wakes up a rapping machine.

This light tale largely follows his trip to the hospital and the many tests he must endure while his sobbing, distressed parents look on. One look at the title and cover, which features a backward-hat-wearing dino kid, and potential readers will understand that there will be no way to read this, whether aloud or to oneself, without rapping. Some verses work better than others, however, with regard to rhythm, rhyme and sensibility (mind, the trip to the hospital is not due to the fall but because he can't stop rapping afterward). "My parents freaked out; / they didn't know what to do. / Should they take me to the doctor? / Or take me to the zoo? // They rushed me to the hospital; / the ambulance was screaming. / The nurse gave me a Popsicle; / I thought that I was dreaming!" Even through all the diagnostic

testing, Rappy is enthusiastic about his rapping ability, celebrating what makes him different. Bowers' brightly colored acrylic illustrations focus on the anthropomorphized dinos with their expressive faces and exuberant clothing. Many dino species are featured as medical staff, none of them scary, so those looking for a distraction for children anxious about upcoming medical tests will find it here.

**Upbeat, rhyming, rhythmic but ultimately slight entertainment.** (*Picture book*. 4-8)



## PALACE OF LIES

Haddix, Margaret Peterson

Simon & Schuster (368 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4424-4281-8

978-1-4424-4283-2 e-book

Series: Palace Chronicles, 3

Haddix continues the series that began with the alternate "Cinderella" *Just Ella* (1999) with a story about a different princess.

Princess Desmia, raised as the true princess of Suala, now rules with 12 other princesses, each raised similarly and separately. When a fire destroys their palace, apparently killing most of the other princesses, Desmia finds herself in the clutches of the evil Madame Bisset. Escaping, she finds her true sister, Janelia, along with a troupe of ragged boys who look to Janelia as their Mam. Desmia decides she must somehow travel to neighboring Fridesia to find friends Ella and Jeb, so with Janelia and two boys, Herk and Tog, she sets out surreptitiously across an open landscape that terrifies the sheltered young woman. Desmia strives to conquer her fears and to quell the princess training that constantly tells her she's superior, gradually coming to see her new friends as equals. Finally arriving at the Fridesian palace, she meets the terminally handsome but reputedly stupid Prince Charming, whom she must convince of the truth of her tale. Haddix keeps the plot suspenseful even as she delves into Desmia's new insights, providing plenty of entertainment along with some advice for life. Readers who enjoyed the earlier books will find plenty to like here, as the book even adds a hint of romance for Desmia.

**A welcome return to the *Just Ella* universe.** (*Fantasy*. 12-18)

# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## EMILY JENKINS AND SOPHIE BLACKALL

### FOUR CENTURIES, ONE DESSERT, ONE TASTY PICTURE BOOK

By Jessie Grearson



Emily Jenkins

READERS OF ALL AGES will lick their lips as they witness the preparation of the blackberry fool at the heart of *This Fine Dessert*. While leaping through time and across continents, we see the dish made by a farmer's wife and her daughter in England in 1710; a plantation slave and her daughter in South

Carolina in 1810; a woman and her daughter in Boston in 1910; and finally by a father and son in San Diego in 2010. Author Emily Jenkins says she wanted to write a food-related picture book for a while; when she happened to read somewhere that fool (a simple dish made with berries, cream and sugar) is one of the oldest desserts in Western culture, it sparked the idea of adding a historical element to *A Fine Dessert*.

The recipe for blackberry fool may be straightforward but Jenkins says learning about the historically accurate facts contextualizing the preparation of the dish through the centuries was not: She'd never written a picture book that required so much research. "It was a little daunting—I don't usually write nonfiction picture books," she says. "I had to learn about the history of refrigeration, the tools, whisking techniques." No single source had all the answers; Jenkins drew on "tiny fractions of many, many books" to provide material with which to build her story.

Though the research process was daunting, the end result was rewarding; Jenkins describes seeing Sophie Blackall's lively interpretation of her story as a "very

magical experience." As she points out, there is no digital replacement for picture books, no substitute for their "physical beauty" or for the visceral experience of "sitting with a child on your lap and sharing a book or reading to a group of children at a library or school."

Jenkins especially appreciates how

Blackall's illustrations highlight the changes in culture and technology, creating a historical context that unfolds around the making of the dessert, while still echoing one century into the next—"the ways she found to create visual echoes where I'd made textual ones," as she puts it. For example, in each century, Blackall depicts people whipping the cream; in the first, a little English girl takes 15 minutes, using a whisk made of twigs, which contrasts with the last picture where a little boy whips the cream with an electric beater in just two minutes. Finally, Jenkins admires Blackall's "wonderful way of capturing the human spirit. Her pictures never feel saccharine or faked but they're still very beautiful—beautiful and true at the same time, which takes real artistry."

The truth and beauty of Blackall's illustrations required an astonishing amount of research. "For this book, I picked blackberries in England and in America," she says; she made the dessert at least 20 times. "And I made a twig whisk," she says. The illustrator even painted the book's endpapers with blackberry juice, which Blackall learned had to be scanned "re-



Sophie Blackall



ally quickly, as it goes gray—you have to capture it when it's bright." She explains that this kind of in-depth research makes her "fall in love with the process, and then it's something I can't let go of. Just relying on the Internet—as wonderful as it is—can't quite capture it in the same way. When I delve deep, the work is better for it."

Because Blackall's work is very much in demand (she schedules projects several years out), she says that accepting and then shelving a project can be frustrating: "It feels like ordering something fantastic on the menu and not being able to eat it for about three years!" When she's finally able to begin working, Blackall approaches the project as a sleuth—one who must "unravel the mysteries of a particular book and see how it will work." Jenkins provided her with "a really wonderful structure, a blueprint, with the four centuries mapped out: what was needed for dessert, how she described each family, its members, in factual terms," Blackall says. "I had the beautiful, wonderful task of filling in all the period detail and the emotional relationships in each scene and the historical detail, re-creating a whole context for that process, finding the ingredients, making the dessert, licking the bowl...it was all very satisfying."

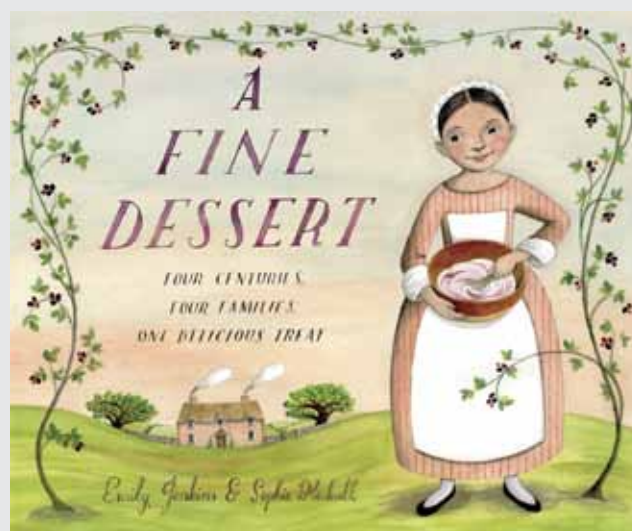
Readers will appreciate the accessibility and loving detail that Blackall employs, but few are likely to guess the pains she went to—unless they happen upon her blog, where she shares the "messy process... the decision-making...the false leads, the mistakes" she made in creating this book's art while ensuring strict historical accuracy. Reading that blog provides a wealth of understanding about, among other things, her decision to draw, erase, then ultimately draw again the "wiggly oak trees" depicted in the Charleston plantation scene.

Asked about their favorite page in the book, both author and illustrator independently chose the same one: Both are drawn to the book's final spread, in which the dessert is shared by a diverse gathering of people, a picture that celebrates an inclusive sense of family coming together over food. In that last scene, Blackall says, the world opens up. "Suddenly it's 2010, and there's an explosion of everything brighter and freer. A woman sits at the head of the table instead of a man," she says. "It's this lovely celebration of history and family and the future and of eating together and all that entails."

For her part, Jenkins loves how that final scene pictures "a boy and a dad in the kitchen instead of women; how they're living in Santa Fe and of Mexican-American heritage; and how they invite friends over to share the meal." In the book's other pictures, the meal is shared just with immediate family; here, however, it's a party, a potluck. "And you see people from all different kinds of families, so it becomes this expression of what community means to me, at least in the 21st century—which is different kinds of people coming together over food. And the opening up of the family unit to include families of choice, the people you *want* to have in your family, not just the one you're born into. That pictured moment when people all pour in the door always chokes me up."

*Jessie C. Grearson is a freelance writer and writing teacher living in Falmouth, Maine. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop.*

*A Fine Dessert received a starred review in the Nov. 1, 2014, issue of Kirkus Reviews.*



**A FINE DESSERT**  
**Four Centuries, Four Families,**  
**One Delicious Treat**  
*Emily Jenkins; illus. by Sophie Blackall*  
 Schwartz & Wade/Random (44 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Jan. 27, 2015  
 978-0-375-86832-0  
 978-0-375-96832-7 PLB



## EVERY LAST PROMISE

*Halbrook, Kristin*

HarperTeen (288 pp.)

\$9.99 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-212128-8

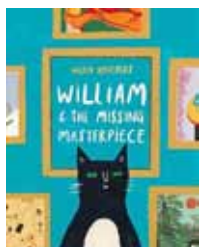
978-0-06-212129-5 e-book



A small-town girl is forced to choose between doing the right thing or fitting in after a night of unforgettable violence.

Kayla adores her hometown of Winbrooke, Missouri. While her three best friends, Jen, Selena and Bean, all dream of moving away to attend college, she hopes never to leave. But everything changes the night of Jen's party, when a boy is killed in an accident involving Kayla. After a summer spent with her aunt in Kansas City while she recovers, nothing can prepare Kayla for the way her once-beloved town has turned on her. The halls of the high school are filled with whispers, and even Jen and Selena greet her with hostility. But Kayla witnessed a rape at that party, and it led to her role in the accident—and some people know this. If she admits to any of it, she risks losing even more than she already has, forever. Lyrically written and ebbing with suspense, the story of Kayla's hometown implicates everyone involved for their silence and for the grotesque hero worship that guarantees it. Kayla's no hero, either, and her journey to finding her truth is as authentically difficult as they come. Halbrook interleaves the stories of before and after chapter by chapter, leading characters and readers to the devastating conclusion.

**A devastating, important examination of the far-reaching, insidious nature of rape culture. (Fiction. 14-18)**



## WILLIAM & THE MISSING MASTERPIECE

*Hancocks, Helen*

*Illus. by the author*

Templar/Candlewick (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-7636-7596-7

Lovers of art, runny cheese and cats will be drawn to this adventure featuring

William, "international cat of mystery."

Hurriedly summoned to Paris by museum director Monsieur Gruyère, William, a bon vivant tuxedo cat-cum-detective, is charged with solving the mystery of a stolen masterpiece. He must recover the incomparable *Mona Cbeesa*, a portrait of a mysterious woman flanked by wheels of cheese. (She also bears an uncanny resemblance to Leonardo's *La Gioconda*). William has much detection to do. He soon focuses on a mysterious stranger in a long coat and winding red scarf, who leads him on a serpentine journey through the landmarks and artist haunts of Paris. Spoiler alert! Here the cat's paw is not a human art thief but instead a clever mischief of cheese-loving mice! Kids will enjoy the bright, bold, generous double-page spreads featuring retro-looking multimedia

paintings, lots of smarty-pants detail and the debonair William. Adults will chuckle in recognition at the Parisian landmarks, cheesy puns, satiric faux newspaper stories and the clever feline painting knock-offs of familiar masterpieces by the likes of Munch, van Dyck, Seurat, Manet, Matisse, Picasso, Dalí and more.

**As with Hancocks' memorable debut, *Penguin in Peril* (2014), this will not fail to both enchant and engage. (Picture book. 3-7)**



## THE DETECTIVE'S ASSISTANT

*Hannigan, Kate*

Little, Brown (368 pp.)

\$17.00 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-316-40351-1

978-0-316-40350-4 e-book

In 1859 Chicago, 11-year-old orphaned Nell strives to make herself indispensable to her mysterious aunt.

How else can she avoid being sent to an orphanage? But Aunt Kitty seems

eager to be rid of her unexpected charge, and Nell soon discovers why: Aunt Kitty is actually Kate Warne, the first female private eye employed by the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. A series of mishaps keeps Nell firmly at her aunt's side, until Nell herself becomes a key player in madcap investigations involving disguises and false identities. Nell and Kate solve one mystery after another, even successfully protecting the new president, Abraham Lincoln, from an early assassination attempt. Meanwhile, Nell's correspondence with her best friend, Jemma, helps her to uncover the mystery of her own family, their involvement with the Underground Railroad, and the tragedies that estranged Aunt Kitty and orphaned Nell. As unlikely as all these scenarios are, Hannigan's quick pace and Nell's spunky voice successfully suspend readers' disbelief, and the author manages to pack an amazing amount of historical tidbits in along the way. A key to the playful ciphers embedded in Nell's letters follows the story.

**A rousing fictional account of the remarkable career of a pioneering woman. (author's note, sources, further reading) (Historical fiction. 9-12)**



## GENUINE SWEET

*Harkey, Faith*

Clarion (288 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-544-28366-4

A coming-of-age story starring 12-year-old Genuine (pronounced Gen-u-wine) Sweet, fourth-generation wish-fetcher from the very small town of Sass, Georgia.

Since her alcoholic father lost his job, Genuine has begun to worry a lot about how the family will stay warm and fed through the winter.

# With Pearl's present-tense narration, Heathfield paints convincing portraits of an extremely naïve girl and of a cult from the inside.

SEED

She breathes a big sigh of relief when she discovers that she can grant wishes by whistling down starlight and baking it up into wish biscuits—until she learns that the only wishes she can't grant are her own. No matter. Genuine and her new, creative friend, Jura, create a barter system to help Gen's family and then begin taking online wish requests from groups battling hunger around the world. All is well until requests for wish biscuits explode, some old family drama comes home to roost, romantic complications ensue, and then, the final straw, Genuine loses her beloved grandmother. Devastated, Gen breaks the cardinal rule of wish-fetching and loses her power just when she needs it most, but she deals with this problem too in her own style. Through it all, Genuine learns about forgiveness, responsibility and empowering others while remaining true to the humble, spunky girl at her core.

**A folksy first-person narration combined with a thought-provoking storyline makes this a good pick for solo enjoyment or book club discussion.** (*Fantasy*. 9-12)



## EDEN WEST

Hautman, Pete

Candlewick (320 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-7636-7418-2

978-0-7636-7690-2 e-book

Jacob's faith and commitment to his cult's restrictive lifestyle waver when he meets two outsider teens who introduce ideas from the outside world.

Cult leader Father Grace's fire-and-brimstone preachings about Armageddon require that followers adhere to an ascetic lifestyle. But Jacob's burgeoning sexuality and his attraction to Lynna, a Worldly girl on the neighboring ranch who provides him with tantalizing hints of life beyond the cult's chain-link fence, spur him to begin scrutinizing the cult leadership. Jacob's misgivings grow when Tobias, a troubled new arrival to the cult, bluntly and relentlessly calls the leadership and lifestyle of the cult "bullshit." Though readers may sympathize with Jacob's crisis of faith, their overall engagement with the novel may suffer from Hautman's reliance on popular stereotypes of cult lifestyles. Many of his worldbuilding tools, from the terminally boring food to Father Grace's polygamy and fixation on teenage wives, have been explored in books for teens before. Hautman does resist painting the world beyond the cult as perfect—politicians are corrupt and Lynna's uncle attempts to molest her—but these harsh realities only make Jacob's alternative of life outside of the cult sound as grim as life inside.

**Ultimately, this is no more than a surface-level exploration of nontraditional religious faith.** (*Fiction*. 14-18)



## MISS MAYHEM

Hawkins, Rachel

Putnam (288 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-399-25694-3

Series: Rebel Belle, 2

In this sequel to *Rebel Belle* (2014), the new romance between Harper and David is threatened by their supernatural abilities.

Harper has become a Paladin with a mission to protect David, the first male Oracle in a long line that have served the Ephors, a shadowy group that has survived from ancient Greece. Harper learns from the Ephor Alexander that she must pass three trials known as the Peirasmos. If she fails a test, she dies, and another Paladin will take her place to protect David. Meanwhile, her previous boyfriend, Ryan, has become the Mage who will aid Harper and David by casting spells and placing protective wards around their small town. As Harper goes about her daily routine, she encounters her first trial, at which she succeeds. The second trial seems murkier, with no discernable outcome, and for the third, readers will have to pay attention. While Hawkins sets up the premise nicely, she leaves part of her story unresolved, simply dropping certain elements of the plot. She also deviates from the standard paranormal formula; readers probably won't see the end coming but may find it satisfying. The usual passionate scenes plop themselves into the plot throughout, with satisfying kisses and burning touches, so fans will have no trouble finding what they seek in the romance subplot.

**It all seems quite ordinary supernatural stuff until it isn't.** (*Paranormal romance*. 12-18)



## SEED

Heathfield, Lisa

Running Press (304 pp.)

\$16.95 | Apr. 2, 2015

978-0-7624-5634-5

Pearl has grown up inside a cult and knows little about the real world.

Pearl experiences her first period at 15; it terrifies her, as she has been told nothing about it. Pearl believes everything she's told at Seed. She's mostly happy there as she follows the cult's leader, Papa S. She yearns to know the identity of her real mother, hoping it's Elizabeth, who's now heavily pregnant again. However, all babies belong to the cult, so Pearl has no way to be sure. Although the cult members go to the market in a nearby town to sell their produce, Papa S. has warned them of the dangers of Outside (some quite preposterous). But when Ellis reluctantly joins the cult with his vulnerable mother and younger sister, his frank remarks cause Pearl to wonder, to doubt and finally to contemplate escape. With Pearl's present-tense narration, Heathfield



# Pulse-quickenig exploits and taut descriptions will keep readers riveted.

WONDER AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

paints convincing portraits of an extremely naïve girl and of a cult from the inside, weaving in another narrative voice at the end of many chapters—perhaps Pearl's mother. The cult leader, rather like Jim Jones on a smaller scale, eventually takes all the women for himself and concocts bizarre punishments to keep the members submissive. Pearl's slow realization of the truth comes across as quite believable.

**An absorbing treatment of an ever interesting subject.**  
(Fiction. 12-18)



## THE LEGENDS BEGIN

Hegarty, Shane

Illus. by de la Rue, James

Harper/HarperCollins (416 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-231125-2

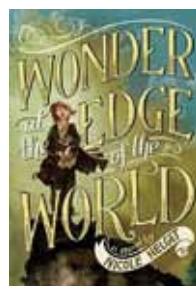
978-0-06-231131-3 e-book

Series: Darkmouth, 1

Does Finn have what it takes to be a Legend Hunter? Everyone better hope he does!

For centuries Blighted Villages across the globe were scenes of incursions by monsters from the Infested Side. Beings like Minotaurs and Manticores and worse broke through the barrier between worlds, and only the Legend Hunters, a hereditary line of human fighters in each village, stood between reality and certain destruction. Legend appearances have tapered off and subsided everywhere except Darkmouth, Ireland. Finn and his father are the last two active Legend Hunters...but Finn's training is not going so well (as the destruction around town suggests). Across the divide between worlds, a very evil monster is hatching an understandably evil plot to take over the Promised World (aka here). And there just may be a prophecy that indicates that Finn is Earth's only hope of stopping an apocalyptic invasion of monsters. Yep, Earth's likely doomed. Hegarty's debut and the first of a projected series is *Ghostbusters* meets Percy Jackson as written by Terry Pratchett. Finn, who wants to be a veterinarian not a Legend Hunter, is a put-upon Everykid and reluctant hero who'll appeal to most readers. The world Hegarty imagines for him is at once frightening and funny. (Final art and Americanized text not seen.)

**Provided the delightful Irish flavor isn't sucked dry, readers will be hunting for the sequel in short order.** (Fantasy. 9-14)



## WONDER AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Helget, Nicole

Little, Brown (384 pp.)

\$17.00 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-316-24510-4

978-0-316-24509-8 e-book

History, science, adventure and fantasy combine in this tale that carries readers from the plains of Kansas to Antarctica.

In mid-19th-century Tolerone, Kansas, the sparkingly named Hallelujah Wonder is moping: pining for her murdered scientist-explorer father, lonely for her Massachusetts roots and awakening to the moral dilemma of slavery. This last has been brought about by the growing abolitionist movement and her friendship with Eustace, an enslaved boy. Hallelujah narrates in the present tense, interspersing her accounts with asides to readers, making for a tone that is both cozy and bluntly practical (Hallelujah is determined to be scientific): "Looks like you croaked," she remarks at one point to a dead rattlesnake. The core propulsion of the plot is a mysterious, shrunken Medicine Head that Hallelujah's father brought back from an expedition and that the evil sea captain Cornelius Greeney now seeks. Charged with its protection, Hallelujah and Eustace set out on an adventure that simultaneously challenges and defends Hallelujah's scientific worldview. Pulse-quickenig exploits and taut descriptions will keep readers riveted. Some moments are too obviously teaching moments, such as when Hallelujah admonishes readers to think about not being wasteful, but they are not particularly distracting.

**Set against the growing-pains backdrop of pre-Civil War America, both reflecting and supporting Hallelujah's coming-of-age story, Helget's tale celebrates the curiosity and mystery of life.** (author's note) (Adventure. 8-13)



## THE GREAT BIG GREEN BOOK

Hoffman, Mary

Illus. by Asquith, Ros

Frances Lincoln (36 pp.)

\$18.99 | Mar. 15, 2015

978-1-84780-445-7

Busy, colorful cartoons accompany text meant to encourage environmental activism in children.

The title page shows a Quentin Blake-ish, orange-and-black-striped cat in the upper corner. The cat's speech bubble reads, "Can you find ME every time you turn a page?" The device may help retain the attention of those who begin to flag from too much information—or help more anxious children tune out the most devastating facts. Each double-page spread has a title that organizes a nonlinear movement of topics that range among praising the Earth, proclaiming its demise and saving it. The cartoons sometimes grate inappropriately against

the British, prosaic, didactic text, as when sad dogs with bursting bladders and pastel dinosaurs “queue” near the words, “If we lose too many trees...humans could end up extinct—like the dinosaurs!” Then there’s the cartoon about species endangerment: “How will Santa get to all the homes without reindeer?” The art shows much cultural and ability diversity, including an uncomfortable moment between a child in a wheelchair and a “green” family asking, “Do we really need LIFTS?” In addition to providing expected conservation prompts, the text encourages children to ask questions and to be inventive. Besides imploring kids to fight climate change, the text admits at one point, “It’s hard because usually the grown-ups make these decisions....”

**Far too hard a sell for the intended audience. (glossary, websites) (Informational picture book. 4-8)**



### ITTY BITTY KITTY

Holub, Joan

Illus. by Burks, James

Harper/HarperCollins (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 19, 2015

978-0-06-232219-7

Itty Bitty is one large kitty.

When Ava asks her parents for a cat, “Dad look[s] doubtful. ‘Cats shed.’ Mom [shakes] her head. ‘Cats must be regularly fed.’” They tell Ava they’ll revisit the subject when she’s older. While she’s moping on a park bench, Ava hears an itty-bitty “Mew.” She takes the adorable purple kitten she finds and names him Itty Bitty, since he’s so tiny. Ava thinks her parents are still in a “No” mindset, so she keeps Itty Bitty a secret...but he doesn’t stay small for long. After a couple weeks, he’s huge. Her parents’ inevitable discovery of the cat leads them to tell Ava that Itty Bitty must go. But when Ava’s perfect puss keeps her infant brother from falling down the stairs, her parents change their tune. Holub’s run-of-the-mill kid-wants-a-pet tale is enlivened somewhat by the end and internal rhymes in the text. However, it’s Burks’ bright, digital cartoon illustrations in all their big-eyed, Chuck Jones-esque glory that recommend this ponderous pussycat parable.

**Even the most avid cat lovers may feel like giving this a miss. (Picture book. 2-5)**



### THE CONFORMITY

Jacobs, John Horner

Carolrhoda Lab (312 pp.)

\$18.99 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-0-7613-9009-1

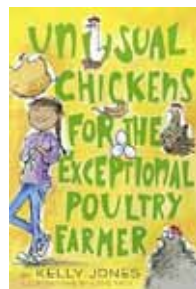
Series: Twelve-Fingered Boy Trilogy, 3

Telekinesis, flying teens, reinhabited bodies, giants and more: The Society of Extranaturals returns for the conclusion to the Twelve-Fingered Boy trilogy.

Right from the get-go readers are plunged almost too quickly into the action of Horner Jacobs’ finale. Awakened by a din of screams and crashing trees outside their bunker, Shreve

and Jack, heroes of the previous two installments, rally their troops to battle the Conformity, a conglomeration of thousands of innocent human victims fused together into a brown, jelly-like bipedal mass by “some massive and unknown telekinetic power.” The Conformity stands stories tall, wreaks havoc wherever it walks and sucks up other humans into its body as it goes. Not only is the action hard to follow from the first page, but it’s interspersed with confusing, often unattributed dialogue that is either spoken or telepathically sent, the latter set apart in bolded italics rather than with quotation marks. Just when readers have almost wrapped their heads around the flying teen heroes, strange communication signals and extensive back story and have settled into this otherwise fairly fast-paced third, Jacobs confoundingly switches gears midway through and adds multiple narrators. All this said, the novel isn’t without genuine action and exciting thrills, it’s just hard to penetrate through the ether to get to the good stuff.

**A finale that requires homework of its readers. (Super-natural thriller. 13-15)**



### UNUSUAL CHICKENS FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL POULTRY FARMER

Jones, Kelly

Illus. by Kath, Katie

Knopf (224 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$19.99 PLB

May 12, 2015

978-0-385-75552-8

978-0-385-75554-2 e-book

978-0-385-75553-5 PLB

Moving to the farm her family inherited from Great-Uncle Jim, Sophie Brown, 12, discovers a flyer from a local poultry purveyor promoting its “unusual chickens” and quickly discovers it’s not false advertising.

Sophie’s story unfolds through her correspondence with the poultry people and her letters to Great-Uncle Jim and her beloved *abuelita* (both deceased but very much alive to Sophie). While Dad’s white, brown-skinned, U.S.-born Sophie and her freelance-writer mother are frequently assumed to be migrant farmworkers, legal or otherwise, but they take it in stride. (The town of Gravenstein’s fairly diverse, but some residents need remedial multicultural ed.) The chickens Sophie acquires are plenty diverse themselves, from Henrietta, who lays glass eggs, to Chameleon, with her nifty gift for turning invisible when predators are near. The chickens’ superpowers aren’t a secret. Most who are in the know are trustworthy with one big exception: a wannabe poultry thief. Genuinely informative, entertaining chicken-raising tips are offered (and may prompt readers to lobby parents for chickens of their own). Matching the text in tone and substance, the illustrations honor the tale’s serious chicken-raising elements, portraying breeds in anatomically correct detail, while perfectly capturing that intense, slightly demented demeanor chickens, unusual and otherwise, are known for.

A delightful protagonist, interesting fowl of various breeds and a cast of appealing second-string characters make this a top pick for young readers, poultry fanciers or not. (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



### ASTRID THE FLY

Jönsson, Maria

*Illus. by the author*

*Translated by Reiss, Christina*

Holiday House (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | \$16.95 e-book | May 15, 2015

978-0-8234-3200-4

978-0-8234-3326-1 e-book

Astrid the fly introduces readers to her (huge) family and their home behind the sofa in this Swedish import.

Astrid tells readers how she loves to fly and watch “what’s happening behind the warm window” (the oven) and, most of all, how she loves to eat. Her favorite thing to eat is Danish salami! Once, she ate so much that she fell asleep in the refrigerator—although of course she doesn’t really understand what the refrigerator is. Her aunt tries to school her into sensible behavior with stories of danger, most particularly of the HORRIBLE INHALING MACHINE (young readers will recognize the universality of the vacuum cleaner) that got Uncle Abe, but Astrid is intrepid in her desire for exploration and food. She is pretty cute and, frankly, not very flylike, with her topknot and rosy cheeks. Reds and yellows and a lively black line dominate the ink-and-watercolor illustrations; the pictures look appropriately (for a fly) dashed off but are carefully composed with an eye to pattern and shape. What flies really eat besides food-stuffs children will recognize remains unmentioned, although Astrid gives a nod to changing food choices in the end.

**Not natural history by any means, but this slice of (fly) life is beguilingly, infectiously whimsical.** (*Picture book*. 4-8)



### WILD IDEAS

Kelsey, Elin

*Illus. by Kim, Soyeon*

Owlkids Books (32 pp.)

\$18.95 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-77147-062-9

Finding solutions to sticky problems can be a mind-expanding adventure.

The creative team behind *You Are Stardust* (2012) again blends science with a philosophical spark that demands thoughtful inquiry. Employing well-researched facts, Kelsey focuses on the rather remarkable adaptations and achievements of animals. Watch how chimps fold leaves to spoon water or how orangutans create a safe place in which to study a problem and make plans. Sea otters use rocks to crack crabs. Other animals cooperate to carry out actions that will provide food or safety. Animals large and small use both their natural gifts and surprising powers of invention and innovation



to negotiate their ways in the world. Kelsey speaks directly to young readers in carefully constructed, elegant, accessible language that transcends the ordinary and demonstrates not even the slightest hint of condescension. With this approach, she inspires them to observe, learn, listen to advice from knowledgeable, trusted adults, and then leap enthusiastically and let their imaginations soar to find solutions to even the most perplexing problems. Kim’s richly hued, exquisite dioramas are textured and detailed, placing realistic, accurate forms into fantastically dreamlike scenes that have depth and movement. This is a work that will be read and examined again and again, with something new to be discovered at every turn.

**Profound and entirely wonderful.** (author’s note)  
(*Informational picture book*. 5-12)



### LUNA AND ME

**The True Story of a Girl Who Lived in a Tree to Save a Forest**

Kostecki-Shaw, Jenny Sue

*Illus. by the author*

Henry Holt (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | May 12, 2015

978-0-8050-9976-8

A nature lover called Butterfly saves a redwood by living up in the tree for 738 days.

Basing her story on the actual experience of forest activist Julia Butterfly Hill, a young adult whose tree-sit took place from December 1997 to December 1999, Kostecki-Shaw reimagines it as the tale of a young girl and a tree with bright eyes and loving arms. Aided by friends who provide supplies and take away her waste, Butterfly braves a storm and the changing seasons, imagining the appreciation and support of the tree they call Luna. Butterfly shares her experience with the world through letters and radio broadcasts. She climbs to the treetop, explores every branch and meets the other tree-dwelling creatures. One dramatic spread shows a cave within the tree’s trunk, where she finds ferns, berries, birds and even a fox. The mixed-media illustrations use acrylics, watercolor, salt, pencil and collage. Vignettes and panels suggest the passage of time, and penciled comments provide a soundtrack as well as imagined conversation between girl and tree. Two spreads require that the book be turned; these emphasize the tree’s height. In spite of the title, the narrative is in the third person, perhaps reminding readers that this is based on an actual experience described in the author’s note.

**A gentle introduction to environmental activism for the very young.** (*Picture book*. 4-7)



# It all adds up to a superior sci-fi outing that doesn't need mad scientists to provide suspense.

ZEROBOXER



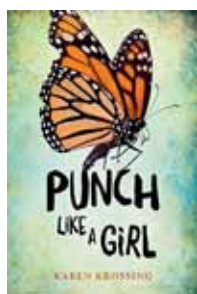
## THE SONG OF DELPHINE

Kraegel, Kenneth  
Illus. by the author  
Candlewick (40 pp.)  
\$15.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-7636-7001-6

An orphaned servant girl whose singing assuages her loneliness discovers the transformative power of compassion.

Set in a queen's palace in "the wild savannah," this gentle tale features folkloric motifs and a "kindness prevails" message. Delphine's already-exhausting workdays worsen when Queen Theodora's niece, who doesn't get on with her new stepmother, comes to live at the palace. Princess Beatrice is cruel, blaming Delphine for her own malicious actions. Singing out her loneliness one night, Delphine is surprised by gentle giraffes. Dipping their heads through her bedroom windows, they beckon her to a nighttime stroll. Tiny Delphine, perched between one giraffe's ears, marvels at the moonlit vista dotted with trees, zebras and more giraffes. Later, when Delphine is mistakenly deposited into Beatrice's room rather than her own, the princess throws a tantrum at her intrusion. Delphine, spying a bedside portrait of Beatrice's deceased mother, has just time enough to share her ready empathy and a helpful song before guards imprison her for her infraction. Beatrice pays it forward: The queen, commanding Delphine to sing, is profoundly moved by the girl's ability and appoints Delphine her singer. Kraegel creates minutely inked watercolor elements—trees, grasslands—as backdrops for simply contoured humans with brown skin, naturally textured hair and bright clothing.

As Delphine and Beatrice ride off atop two giraffes, readers of this quiet story will savor their new friendship. (Picture book. 5-8)



## PUNCH LIKE A GIRL

Krossing, Karen  
Orca (240 pp.)  
\$12.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-4598-0828-7

Unable to speak of her assault, a 17-year-old girl begins acting out.

Friends and family don't understand why Tori's shaved her head and started fighting. Sure, they know she broke up with Matt, but that's no reason to sock a

stranger right in the nose. Tori's got a lot of free time right now: Her hair-trigger rage drives her friends away, and an alleyway fight leaves her too injured for the soccer team. It's almost a good thing her parents are forcing her to do community service, if only to fill the days and distract her from the invasive, frightening text messages from Matt. As a volunteer at a battered women's shelter, Tori bonds with a particularly troubled girl, encouraging the child to reach beyond her own nightmares

and rescuing her from a deadly situation. Tori's emergence from trauma is lightly sketched, a shorthand recovery that relies on narrative conventions rather than character development—making for an easy read about a hard topic, which is no bad thing. Unusually, her coming of age requires not that she stop being violent but that she learn to apply violence appropriately.

A fast-paced book about healing through helping others, speaking up and physical self-defense. (Fiction. 13-15)



## ZEROBOXER

Lee, Fonda  
Flux (360 pp.)  
\$11.99 paper | Apr. 8, 2015  
978-0-7387-4338-7

Boxing gets an upgrade to zero gravity in this futuristic outing.

Living centuries in the future, Carr, at 17, has dreams of winning the title. Carr is a zeroboxer, trading punches in a zero-G cube. Carr was born on Earth in "balmy Toronto." As a Terran, he's low on the totem pole socially; Martians, resented on Earth for their genetic modifications, look down on Earth as a backwater. After a few wins, Carr gets a pay raise and a brandhelm to manage his career. However, he learns a secret that brings him close to a criminal conspiracy, and he can't see a way out. Lee creates a believable future world by attaching new surroundings to common experiences. Carr lives in the inner circle on a space station; the wealthy can afford outer apartments with views of Earth. Boxing keeps its familiar customs, such as loud announcers, title belts and trash-talking opponents, but includes weightless flying. As a sports hero, Carr copes with interviews and fans just as today's star athletes do. More interestingly, the book focuses on ethical issues such as the genetic modifications humans undertook to begin living on Mars and promotes social awareness, focusing on Carr's humble beginnings and his still-impoorished young friend, Enzo. It all adds up to a superior sci-fi outing that doesn't need mad scientists to provide suspense.

Top-notch science fiction and a great sports novel too. (Science fiction. 12-18)



## THE WORLD FORGOT

Leicht, Martin & Neal, Isla  
Simon & Schuster (288 pp.)  
\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-1-4424-2966-6  
978-1-4424-2968-0 e-book  
Series: Ever-Expanding Universe, 3

This conclusion to the Ever-Expanding Universe trilogy takes Elvie and her friends out to a junkyard in space.

The evil Dr. Marsden still has designs on winning control of the universe for his alien race. Elvie,

# Importantly, bathroom habits of some of the animals are included.

WEIRD & WILD ANIMAL FACTS

separated from her baby daughter, Olivia, travels with her rather stupid boyfriend, Cole, and her friends, stealing a space shuttle despite warnings from people who know better. It's nonstop action as she breaks up with Cole, unsuccessfully tries to stay inconspicuous in a space bar where the locals speak a cleverly written pidgin English, and does her best to avoid the perilous Devastators. A series of mishaps leads to capture by Marsden and encounters with new characters who bear unexpected connections to the teens. All the while, Byron, Elvie's grandfather, an alien who really was the famous poet as well as the actor James Dean, lends assistance. Leicht and Neal continue the sarcastic banter that lent most of the comedy to the first two books, but it never slows the action down. Despite the underlying lighthearted nature of the book, consequences are real and sometimes fatal, lending the adventure both suspense and gravitas.

**A worthy conclusion to an enjoyable sci-fi romp.** (*Science fiction*. 12-18)



## STOLEN MAGIC

Levine, Gail Carson

Harper/HarperCollins (336 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-170637-0

978-0-06-170638-7 e-book

Elodie takes the stage again as a mansioneer (actor) and assistant detective when a mystery interrupts her home-ward journey and imperils her friends in this sequel to *A Tale of Two Castles* (2011).

Having survived seasickness, robbery, unemployment and accusations of assassination in her first five weeks away from home, Elodie leaves the big city of Two Castles with the gentle, shape-shifting ogre known as Count Jonty Um and the erudite but illiterate dragon Masteress Meenore, intending to reassure her parents of her safety and good fortune. When a snowstorm strands the trio at the mountain hall of Oase, they discover that the Replica that keeps the island together and the volcanoes dormant is gone, and Zertrum will soon explode. Elodie dives into detective work, eager to save the island and prove her powers to Meenore, but the other guests are hostile, the host, High Brunka Marya, is an irritatingly enigmatic magical creature, and her human "bees" are less dronelike than their title of servitude suggests. The narrative shifts among Elodie, Jonty Um and Meenore are distracting, dilute an already thin plot, and in Meenore's case, run counter to previously established characterization. Despite the meager mystery, Levine still offers a detailed magical world, high-stakes action, and arch observations of family tensions and racial divides.

**The unusual blend of magical medieval mystery and disaster lite offers an effervescent but not explosive read.** (*Fantasy*. 10-14)



## WEIRD AND WILD ANIMAL FACTS

Loy, Jessica

Illus. by the author

Christy Ottaviano/Henry Holt (40 pp.)

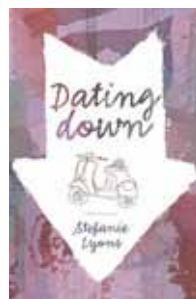
\$17.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-8050-7945-6

Fourteen (mostly) common animals are investigated to showcase their unusual talents.

There are plenty of strange animals in the world, with equally strange characteristics. But Loy doesn't focus on them. Instead, she takes a look at the kangaroo, the hippopotamus, the flamingo and others that at first appear fairly familiar, and she surprises readers by uncovering traits that they may not know. An adult giraffe, for example, is so powerful that it can decapitate a lion in one kick. A goliath birdeater tarantula can grow to the size of a dinner plate. Each fact is shown next to a supporting photo (though thankfully the decapitation is not fully depicted). Full double-page spreads are dedicated to each animal, with approximately five facts per creature. The overall design is uncluttered but sometimes feels a bit too manipulated. Sadly, the many digitally cut-out images strip the animals of their natural habitats. Highlighted words or phrases help readers discern key details, but the text is minimal; readers shouldn't need the hints. Importantly, bathroom habits of some of the animals are included—children will never fail to appreciate that!

**An entertaining beginning photo essay that appeals to children's insatiable curiosity about the natural world.** (introduction, fun facts, resources) (*Informational picture book*. 4-8)



## DATING DOWN

Lyons, Stefanie

Flux (336 pp.)

\$9.99 paper | Apr. 8, 2015

978-0-7387-4337-0

A teen falls into a damaging romance.

"I will call him X," says Sam about her narrative choice not to name this story's boy, "for the number of times I plunged into self-destruction." She meets X at the coffeehouse where he works. He's lanky, and he's also 22 to her 17; he "wants to ride his Vespa / through the coffee fields of Columbia." Sam's a painter and projects an undeserved bohemian-artist image onto X. When he mentions desiring a media empire like Hugh Hefner's—not the naked girls, he adds, just the empire—Sam doesn't bat an eye. X's heady allure pulls her headlong out of her world of SAT prep, presided over by a pearl-wearing stepmother and a father who cares only about his reputation as an aspiring politician. The real X lies and cheats. He's a drug user and a dealer; the Vespas he drives are stolen. Sam does drugs with him, steals her stepmother's diamond earrings and gives them to a random fellow

partier. "Is this what love is? / A jerky jagged jumpy ride?" The nonuniformity of Lyons' prose poems, which continually shift form and style, employing choppiness, odd spacing and fast beats ("Meet a guy / butterflies // then come lies / systemized"), among other devices, matches Sam's lack of grounding. Give this to Ellen Hopkins fans.

**Turbulent love via turbulent poems.** (*Verse fiction*. 14-18)



### THE REVELATION OF LOUISA MAY

MacColl, Michaela  
Chronicle (256 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-1-4521-3357-7

Fifteen-year-old Louisa Alcott cares for her family while protecting a fugitive slave, coping with a budding romance and solving a puzzling murder.

Louisa's philosopher father refuses to earn a living, forcing the Alcotts to live in perpetual penury despite mother Marmee's endless economizing. In 1846, Marmee temporarily leaves her family in Concord to work in New Hampshire. A hot-tempered, strong-willed "force to be reckoned with," Louisa would rather be scribbling stories, but Marmee relies on her to keep house for her father and sisters as well as a runaway slave the Alcotts are hiding. When a slave catcher named Finch discovers the Alcotts are ardent abolitionists, he stalks and threatens Louisa. Her distant cousin Fred arrives for a visit with romantic intentions, further complicating Louisa's life. After Finch is murdered and her father implicated, Louisa's determined to find the real murderer. Artfully integrated quotes from *Little Women* and biographical facts transform this fictitious plot into a tantalizing glimpse of the real Louisa May Alcott's life, including her complex family relationships, unconventional convictions, and famous neighbors, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. A summary of this period in Alcott's life separates fact from fiction.

**An intriguing introduction to young Louisa May Alcott as a spunky heroine.** (author's note, further reading) (*Historical fiction*. 12-18)



### ROBOT SMASH!

Martin, Stephen W.  
Illus. by Solon, Juan Carlos  
Owlkids Books (32 pp.)  
\$16.95 | Apr. 15, 2015  
978-1-77147-067-4

The title sums it up: This mechanical man is a total wrecking machine.

Anything is fair game for the spherical hands that carry out this automaton's single-minded mission—petunias, toilets, Brussels sprouts and (presumably included for adults) "All-talk radio." At the culmination of his rampage, scores flash

on the page, as in a video game. Solon's designs are intentionally pixelated, so that nearly every shape has a zigzag contour, appropriate for his subject. The look lends energy and a sense of movement to the robot as he crashes his way against solid, changing background colors. He is accompanied by a spare—but bold and exclamatory—text. (Warning: Repeated readings may lead to an enthusiastic young listener's first spoken or sight word being "SMASH!") The protagonist's life changes when he catches sight of a gigantic, purple robot destroying skyscrapers and automobiles. It is love at first sight for the twosome: Her thought bubble displays the proverbial baby carriage; he depicts a shared meal. Although the method that "Super-SMASHY girl robot" chooses to show affection gives new meaning to the term "crush," the two appear to be made for each other. They definitely have a lot in common.

**With demand for STEM-themed books for toddlers at an all-time high, this will undoubtedly prove popular with both ends of its intended audience.** (*Picture book*. 2-5)



### TOUCH THE BRIGHTEST STAR

Matheson, Christie  
Illus. by Matheson, Christie  
Greenwillow/HarperCollins (40 pp.)  
\$15.99 | May 26, 2015  
978-0-06-227447-2

A nocturnal companion to Matheson's *Tap the Magic Tree* (2013), this interactive picture book illuminates nighttime's wonders while shepherding readers toward sleep.

Dusk falls in waves of pink, blue and purple watercolor; lightning bugs glow, stars twinkle and fall, deer skedaddle, constellations shine—all with the touch of young readers' fingers. Rhymes offer clear instructions: "Now let's blow a quiet breeze. // Pat the deer / and say goodnight, please." An implicit sense of power (and even a hint of magic) follows each page turn, imbuing these soft, simple collages with a quavering excitement. With a whisper, the moon appears in the (now) very dark sky—a signal that it's getting to be time for owls to go to bed and probably past time for little readers. A soothing, somnolent narrative voice nudges, "Close your eyes and breathe in deeply. / Nod your head if you feel sleepy." Caregivers will surely appreciate the suggestion, as well as the gentle lesson in preparing for and accepting sleep. More learning lies on the final page, which delivers a glossary that offers rich information about the nighttime occurrences, animals and plants featured earlier.

**A delightful bedtime book that encourages both imaginative play and restorative rest.** (*Picture book*. 2-6)





## 15 THINGS NOT TO DO WITH A BABY

McAllister, Margaret  
 Illus. by Sterling, Holly  
 Frances Lincoln (28 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Mar. 15, 2015  
 978-1-84780-506-5

A list of silly “don’t”s culminates in loving “do”s for one big sister in McAllister and Sterling’s collaboration.

An opening illustration depicts an interracial family basking in the joy of welcoming a new baby into the family. The dad has brown skin and tightly curled, dark hair, and the mom’s pink complexion is offset by her blonde hair; their little daughter looks more like her dad, as does the new baby, though their hair is less tightly curled. Once this family constellation has been established, readers never see the parents again. Instead, ensuing pages depict the big sister with her baby brother in a series of silly scenarios telling her (and readers) what *not* to do with a baby. Some interactions are more plausible than others. For example, “Don’t...play the trumpet when the baby’s trying to sleep,” appears across the gutter from the admonition “don’t send him to play with an elephant.” Apart from indicating race, cartoonish art rendered in watercolor, pencil and printed textures opts simply to reflect the text, and all of the spreads depicting “don’t”s lead up to closing spreads showing the big sister lovingly engaged with her baby brother. “Do...cuddle your baby, give him a kiss, sing to him, make him laugh, / play with your baby, read to him, and most of all... // give your baby lots and lots of love” is the sweet closing.

**Sibling love, equal parts sweet and silly.** (*Picture book.* 2-5)



## THE PROM GOER'S INTERSTELLAR EXCURSION

McCoy, Chris  
 Knopf (304 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$20.99 PLB  
 Apr. 14, 2015  
 978-0-375-85599-3  
 978-0-375-89711-5 e-book  
 978-0-375-95599-0 PLB

A sad sack has just secured his first date—to the senior prom, no less—when she’s kidnapped by extraterrestrials.

Bennett considers himself a “worthless, ramen-eating, day-sleeping, I-think-I-wore-these-boxers-yesterday-but-I’m-not-even-quite-sure pile of dirt right now.” He’s been wait-listed at Princeton, and for reasons he can’t quite explain, he didn’t apply anywhere else. Enter neighbor Sophie: Despite popularity and hotness, she needs a prom date. Sophie, who exists purely to be The Girl for Bennett, is half Manic Pixie Dream Girl—she wears vintage dresses, rides a motorcycle and does mud runs—and half damsel in distress. Hitching a ride with a boozy, past-their-prime extraterrestrial band in order to rescue Sophie from the outer-space reality television

show that captured her, Bennett bops around McCoy’s kooky galaxy, solves his songwriting block and makes it home in time for prom—with Sophie in hand. Bennett’s ironically detached first-person voice is very funny but sometimes offhandedly callous (taking potshots at “a scoliosis-riddled troll” just feels cruel). His college prospects (or lack thereof) loom amusingly large, as does prom, undiminished by views of “all of creation,” which looks “a bit like a computer screen saver from the early nineties.” In McCoy’s universe, Earth is oblivious about extra-terrestrials, but outer space offers Coca-Cola, pork fried rice and plenty of television. An E.T.-ex machina conclusion suits the story well.

**Not particularly meaningful but entertaining nonetheless.** (*Science fiction.* 13-16)



## STRANGLED SILENCE

McGann, Oisín  
 Open Road Integrated Media (372 pp.)  
 \$13.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
 978-1-4976-6579-8

A university student, a vet and a conspiracy theorist unravel a dangerous government plot in a near-future England.

In this dystopian London, the endless War for Freedom has led to a gradual erosion of civil rights, with heavily armed police officers and a Military in Schools Scheme that has army officers teaching geography via shoot-’em-up computer games. Amina is on work experience, a junior, coffee-fetching flunky hoping to prove herself as a journalist. A fluffy human-interest story introduces her to Ivor, a paranoid loner, lottery winner and recently injured veteran of the war in Sinnostan (a fictional country vaguely reminiscent of Afghanistan). Amina doesn’t want to believe Ivor’s tales of false memories and faceless stalkers, but Chi Sandwith, a UFO-obsessed hacker, tracks her down with disturbingly convincing evidence. The trio unearths terrifying evidence of a bizarre scandal involving countless maimed soldiers. In shifting points of view, the prose spoon-feeds details of 20th- and 21st-century geopolitics to readers who lack required context. Ultimately this is an espionage thriller for older teens and adults; the protagonists’ concerns (career-building, being thoroughly alone in the world, post-military PTSD) skew the book older. U.S. readers may balk at the recurring use of “oriental,” which has less negative connotations in the U.K. than in the States, as well as other stereotypes and slurs sometimes (but not always) spoken by unsavory characters.

**A good crossover thriller for conspiracy-theory lovers.** (*Science fiction.* 17 & up)

Cunning villains and diverse helpers, including a clever girl, a loyal guardian, a wily dwarf, a feisty lady pirate and a brave centaur, add dimension to this adventure.

THE WHISPERER



# THE WHISPERER

McIntosh, Fiona

Knopf (400 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$19.99 PLB

Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-553-49827-1

978-0-553-49834-9 e-book

978-0-553-49833-2 PLB



Two 13-year-old strangers living in the land of Dretonia find themselves communicating through their minds as their perilous lives become surprisingly intertwined.

A laborer in Master Tyren's Marvels of Nature Traveling Show, Griffin can hear people's thoughts. Discovering Griffin's talent, greedy Tyren forces him to perform a mind-reading act. When Tyren also exploits an orphan girl named Tess and her magical creatures, Griffin convinces Tess to escape with him. Meanwhile, Lute, Dretonia's crown prince, finds his sheltered life shattered when his ruthless uncle, Janko, deposes the king and attempts to kill Lute. As Griffin flees Tyren and his paid Stalkers and Lute evades Janko and his mercenaries, Griffin hears Lute's cry for help in his mind, and soon they are connecting. Inexplicably drawn together, they realize each faces grave danger and discover how connected they truly are. The rapid-fire plot alternates between Griffin and Lute as their lives become increasingly linked, the danger surrounding them mounts, and the mystery unfolds. Cunning villains and diverse helpers, including a clever girl, a loyal guardian, a wily dwarf, a feisty lady pirate and a brave centaur, add dimension to this adventure.

A gripping, first-rate tale of a prince and a pauper. (Fantasy. 8-12)



# PRISON BOY

McKay, Sharon E.

Annick Press (232 pp.)

\$21.95 | \$12.95 paper | Mar. 15, 2015

978-1-55451-731-2

978-1-55451-730-5 paper

What chances have abandoned children to survive the hazards of life on the mean streets of an unnamed developing country riven by civil war?

Here, slim and none. In a novel shot through with suffering both physical and psychological, small, hard-won victories alternate with vicious reversals of fortune. Teenage Pax's years in a slum's squalid group home seem almost idyllic after the death of the overwhelmed English woman who had raised him forces him to flee police and scavengers. With him he has only the home's cash box—soon stolen—and 6-year-old fellow orphan Kai. In desperation, Pax takes a job making mysterious deliveries for a man known only as "Mister." When one package turns out to be a terrorist's bomb, Pax is arrested, beaten, tortured over months and sentenced to death. The narrative sometimes takes on a rhetorical slant ("Those who torture are damaged forever. They are

filled with poison"), and a 10-years-later epilogue starring Kai as the adopted son of a British couple and a gifted Oxford student reads like a tacked-on happy ending. Still, though readers may find Pax's delirious visions near the end more distracting than poignant, they are likely to be as moved by his fierce, selfless devotion to Kai as by the story's brutal and troubling events.

Another gut-wrenching tale from McKay (*War Brothers*, 2014, etc.) focusing on children victimized by war and poverty. (Fiction. 12-14)



# FLIRTY DANCING

McLachlan, Jenny

Feiwel & Friends (192 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 28, 2015

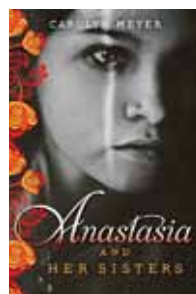
978-1-250-06148-5

Series: Ladybirds, 1

In this debut, a shy girl finds herself thrown, literally, into the arms of her dream boy, the boyfriend of a girl who's bullying her.

Bea may be shy, and she may not cope well when former friend Pearl mercilessly mocks her and sends her threatening text messages, but she can't help dreaming about Ollie. Pearl has become the queen bee of the school, leaving Bea hiding in the shadows. Even Bea's best friend, Kat, has entered Pearl's orbit. Sadly, Ollie appears to be on the verge of becoming Pearl's official boyfriend. When Bea reluctantly agrees to enter a televised dance contest Pearl is also in, she learns that Ollie will be her partner. The two learn jive dance from Ollie's big sister, Lulu, who owns a dance studio. Bea turns out to be a natural jive dancer, and her shyness melts away while she dances. She and Ollie get along well, but Bea's awareness of his relationship with Pearl keeps her from trusting him completely, threatening their success. Many of Pearl's pranks feel more appropriate to middle school than to high school, but McLachlan takes the bullying seriously. American readers may find a few British references unfamiliar, but they should have no difficulty accessing the story, particularly as it offers plenty of humor to leaven the bullying storyline.

Spunky fun. (Fiction. 12-18)



# ANASTASIA AND HER SISTERS

Meyer, Carolyn

Paula Wiseman/Simon & Schuster

(320 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-4814-0326-9

978-1-4814-0328-3 e-book

Anastasia and her siblings may be kept in ignorance about most of the tragedy and upheaval affecting Russia in the early 20th century, but that doesn't stop them from worrying about the world beyond their daily lives.

# Gently rhythmic measures create a properly soporific tone for this look at animal downtimes.

*SWEET DREAMS, WILD ANIMALS!*

The czar's family is kept in luxury, but Anastasia, Olga, Tatiana and Marie Romanova still complain occasionally about their lives, either in their secret diaries or to one another. And they do have reason for complaint. They are expected to sit for long state dinners and formal parties, and even worse, they can't decide for themselves whom they will marry. As World War I and subsequent riots begin to erode the only world they've ever known, they try to protect themselves from the growing threat. Even as the people they thought loved them disappear or join the rebellion, they still have one another. Meyer weaves historic details with precision and flair, creating a private world for Anastasia and her sisters that any teenage girl will recognize, one fraught with longing, demands for independence and romantic regret. Those readers who are already familiar with the family's final destination will be able to catch moments of foreshadowing and get the most out of the tale.

**A richly detailed introduction to the tragedy of the last royal family of Russia.** (*Historical fiction.* 13-17)



## **SWEET DREAMS, WILD ANIMALS!**

Meyer, Eileen R.  
Illus. by Caple, Laurie  
Mountain Press (32 pp.)  
\$12.00 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-0-87842-637-9

A cozy combination of restful rhymes, natural history notes and close-up pictures of snoozing creatures.

Meyer's verse goes ahead of itself in the first stanza—"The sun has set; the sky is dark. / Bright stars shine in the night. / It's time to rest, to dream sweet dreams, / then wake with morning's light"—and elsewhere favors sound over sense, but despite these small miscues, its gently rhythmic measures create a properly soporific tone for this look at animal downtimes. As the prose commentary accompanying each of the 14 rhymed entries makes clear, sleeping patterns vary widely, and scientists are often hard put to find them at all: Horses and giraffes tend to take only short naps; grizzly bears can fall into a long sleep that resembles hibernation; dolphins and mallards rest half their brains at a time; fish rest but may not truly sleep. Other animals presented include koalas, owls, flamingos, brown bats, giant anteaters, magnificent frigatebirds, black-tailed prairie dogs and walruses. Meyer nonetheless bids all the chosen creatures "Sweet dreams," and Caple depicts them in accurate detail and quiet settings yawning (where appropriate) or posed fetchingly with younglings.

**Slumber and science in harmonious combination, equally suitable for bedtime reading or for sharing with wakeful groups.** (*Informational picture book.* 5-7)



## **I AM HER REVENGE**

Moore, Meredith  
Razorbill/Penguin (336 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Apr. 4, 2015  
978-1-59514-782-0

A girl raised to be a weapon by her brutal mother must decide whether she's willing to ruin a boy's life for the sake of revenge.

For most teenagers, the first day at a prestigious boarding school in England would be fraught with nervous energy, but Vivian feels only duty and determination to please her mother as she begins to explore Madigan School in Yorkshire. When she was a girl herself, Vivian's mother's heart was broken by the now enormously wealthy creator of a digital doll program called Ava. Now Vivian's mother has sent her to Madigan to ruin the life of her former beau's son, to teach him a lesson in a new kind of heartbreak. Though Vivian sees herself as a weapon, distance from the cruel woman who tortured her as a child now gives her pause. The only friend she ever had mysteriously appears at Madigan, and suddenly it's her own heart she's at war with. Though given ample space for depth and development, Vivian never feels like a true product of her upbringing and her twisted mission. Instead, she's distant and waffling, with all of her lovelorn beaus and school-hall bullies standing out as vivid players in her story in unfortunate contrast. Though there are countless nods to mythic tragedies, well-earned emotion eludes this drama.

**More soap operatic than Shakespearian.** (*Thriller.* 14-18)



## **THE WONDROUS AND THE WICKED**

Morgan, Page  
Delacorte (352 pp.)  
\$18.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$21.99 PLB  
Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-385-74315-0  
978-0-307-98083-0 e-book  
978-0-375-99097-7 PLB  
Series: Dispossessed Trilogy, 3

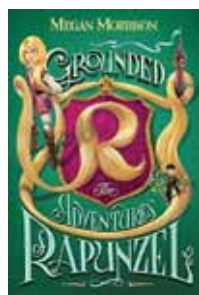
This book concludes the trilogy that began with *The Beautiful and the Cursed* (2013) and continued with *The Lovely and the Lost* (2014).

Once again, human-demon hybrids Ingrid and Gabby, daughters of an English earl (of course), battle the evil angel Axia. Axia wants to control all the demonic denizens of the Earth, create more and, apparently, rule the world. Naturally, all the principal characters are in love. Ingrid can't abandon her forbidden love, Luc, the gargoyle formerly assigned to protect her. Gabby loves Nolan, who has become a target of the Alliance, a secret organization formed to fight the demons. The girls' brother, Grayson, loves diminutive fighter Chelle. The real question here is not whether the heroes will win, but will they wind up with happy romantic endings? Despite the soapy



premise (underscored by the made-for-daytime-TV title) and sometimes outrageously purple prose, Morgan focuses the book mostly on action, although she includes several steamy scenes for the three main characters. Most of the action takes place in Paris, and the author imparts a solid sense of its geography; Edwardian-era sartorial details also abound.

**Standard-issue paranormal romance with lots of descriptions of dresses.** (*Paranormal romance*. 12-18)



### GROUND The Adventures of Rapunzel

Morrison, Megan

Levine/Scholastic (384 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$17.99 e-book | Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-545-63826-5

978-0-545-64270-5 e-book

Series: Tyme, 1



"Stop calling her *that* witch. She's *Witch*," Rapunzel insists; she enjoys her easy life in a tower—and Witch's frequent, apparently loving, visits—until Jack Beanstalker tricks Rapunzel into leaving.

Rapunzel knows that she possesses something called "innocence" that is important to Witch, and the text deftly translates that into naïvete, keeping things middle-grade-appropriate. Rapunzel's love for Witch is Jack's leverage for involving the braid-laden teen in what becomes an intricate quest. Orchestrated by the fairy Glyph, Jack and Rapunzel find themselves on a joint journey, with multiple goals. The novel does not miss a beat in creating Tyme, a beautifully described world with a seamless fusion of magical and non-magical beings, scenery and objects. Although there are dark, suspenseful moments and some acts of violence, there is also plenty of humor, including a frog's wine-influenced exploits and Jack's clumsy attempts to explain pregnancy to Rapunzel. The playful use of Ubiquitous products—acorns that temporarily change into whatever one has paid for—is a pleasing nod to the author's stated admiration of Harry Potter. The characters are refreshingly three-dimensional, helping readers empathize with Rapunzel as she wrestles with universal feelings of love and betrayal—and priming readers of fairy tales to anticipate such novels as *Wicked*.

**Readers will be eager for more episodes of the intrepid team of Rapunzel and Jack.** (map) (*Fantasy*. 10-14)



### FRIENDS OF A FEATHER

Myracle, Lauren

Illus. by Henry, Jed

Dutton (144 pp.)

\$12.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-525-42288-4

Series: Life of Ty, 3

Now that his best friend, Joseph, is out of the hospital and returning to school, second-grader Ty hopes things will be just as they used to be, but he finds that change is a normal part of life.

Excitement and trepidation govern Ty Perry's mood in the first weeks at school when Joseph returns. Ty's expectations that their relationship will resume uninterrupted are confounded when Joseph's recovery induces much curiosity and attention from the rest of the class, leaving Ty confused, sometimes jealous and wondering if he can share his longtime friend. Focused on his own feelings and thoughts, Ty seems to ignore Joseph's reticence about his return and what he missed at school. An incident at a nursing home where Ty is visiting with his mother and the rescue of an injured wild bird force Ty to approach life more realistically, learn about responsibility, and in the end, appreciate and understand Joseph better. Ty is a somewhat self-centered 7-year-old; while this is developmentally appropriate, it also makes him hard to relate to, unlike such chapter-book age-mates as Stephanie Greene's Owen Foote and Lenore Look's Alvin Ho. Given his solipsism, his insightful revelation at the end—"Things change and life goes on and it's not always easy"—is quite the mature conclusion.

**Humor and humility mark Ty's arc in his third outing.** (*Fiction*. 6-9)



### FISHFISHFISH

Nordling, Lee

Illus. by Bosch, Meritxell

Graphic Universe (32 pp.)

\$6.95 paper | \$25.26 PLB | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-4677-4576-5

978-1-4677-4575-8 PLB

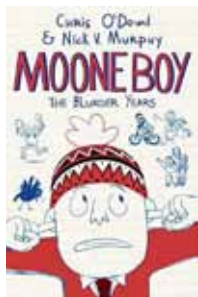
Series: Three Story Books

Fish—big, small and many—visually tell their tales as three underwater adventures converge in a cleverly developed wordless graphic format.

Following the design of its predecessor, *BirdCatDog* (2014), the book presents three different narratives that can be read individually or as one cohesive story. The first thread follows a bright, lemony yellow tang fish (think a yellow version of Dory from Disney's *Finding Nemo*) as it swims through a vast ocean, determined in its solitude. Next, a large, menacing barracuda confidently prowls the depths looking for its next meal, thinking itself nearly invincible in its place at the upper echelon of the food chain. The third story offers myriad different fishes banded together to gain protection as a group. When the

barracuda goes after the smaller fishes, it learns the small can be mighty, and there may always be some bigger than you. (Echoes of *Swimmy* resound.) Like peering into an aquarium, Nordling and Bosch's tale is quiet, but it's swimmingly bright with the vibrantly vivid spectrum of underwater life. Readers may well feel they can "hear" the fish gliding through the water. For those familiar with *BirdCatDog*, some of the tripartite format's novelty may have worn off, but this exercise in character point of view is still sharply evinced.

**A peaceful meditation that should delight readers with its multiplicity of composition.** (*Graphic adventure. 4-8*)



**MOONE BOY**  
***The Blunder Years***

*O'Dowd, Chris & Murphy, Nick V.*

*Illus. by Giampaglia, Walter*

Feiwe! & Friends (384 pp.)

\$14.99 | May 5, 2015

978-1-250-05707-5

Martin Moone, a dimwitted 11-year-old Irish boy with three difficult older sisters, decides to take on an imaginary friend, or IF.

As Martin, a sad-sack lad who is bully bait for the mean Bonner brothers, learns, procuring an imaginary friend is not for the faint of heart. His first IF is a failure, an annoyingly jokey, balloon-animal-making fellow named Loopy Lou, who turns out to be needy and exceptionally hard to fire. In this effort, Martin is assisted by a lazy, bearded, customer-service representative for the Corporate League of Imaginary Friends Federation, who later succeeds to the position of imaginary friend. The other story thread concerns Martin's efforts to combat the Bonner brothers by enlisting an older tough, who agrees to help in exchange for a feel of Martin's sister's boobs, which turns out to be challenging for our idiot hero to arrange. Based on an original Hulu series starring author O'Dowd, the book has an amusing tone; although it sometimes strains for the joke, it is intermittently funny—even very funny in spots. But despite its clever premise, enhanced by Giampaglia's witty illustrations, it could use a good sharp clipping, as it's repetitious and bloated with unnecessary exposition and explanation.

**This story should keep its target audience of pre-pubescent boys giggling but is unlikely to find fans outside of this demographic.** (*Fiction. 8-12*)



**WHERE ARE MY BOOKS?**

*Obi, Debbie Ridpath*

*Illus. by the author*

Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | May 12, 2015

978-1-4424-6741-5

978-1-4424-6742-2 e-book



When young Spencer's beloved books begin to disappear, the boy devises a plan to catch the culprit (although not before suspecting his toddler sister).

Muted shades of purple, blue and pale green are the background colors for the appealing opening, in which Spencer—in narwhal-themed red pajamas—is cuddled up with his mother, stuffed narwhal toy tucked under his arm; his and his mother's wide, comic-strip eyes focus on an open book. "Spencer loved books. His favorite bedtime book was *Night-Night, Narwhal*. Sometimes he read it aloud." No doubt it's the kind of read-aloud done by 4-year-olds who've heard their favorite story many times. When *Night-Night Narwhal* disappears, Spencer's father reads him *Tenacious Todd*, but it doesn't quite work for bedtime: "But Todd was a toad, and toads were amphibians, and amphibian books were supposed to be for right-after-lunch story time." The humor and charm continue as more of Spencer's books, which he keeps so carefully on his shelf, begin disappearing—even *Send in the Clown Fish*! Astute readers will notice tulip petals and screws replacing the confiscated codices. Although the thief's identity may be suspected, no one will expect the funny, sweet and original ending. Fans of Mo Willems will especially appreciate the family dynamics and expressive artwork.

**The brilliant combination of art and text will capture the imaginations of both bibliophiles and less-than-enthusiastic readers.** (*Picture book. 3-7*)



**A PIG CALLED HEATHER**

*Oulton, Harry*

Holiday House (192 pp.)

\$16.95 | \$16.95 e-book | May 1, 2015

978-0-8234-3290-5

978-0-8234-3376-6 e-book

When her "[b]est two-legged friend" moves away to London from a farm in Scotland, Heather follows—earning national celebrity on the way.

Heather can't talk, except to other animals, but she's a clever pig who can scrunch her nose fetchingly, read a bit, thanks to tutelage from Rhona the goat, and recognize almost any apple variety from a single bite. Having known and loved young Isla since the child was in the diapers-and-mud-eating stage, she is sad when Isla and her widowed father have to sell the farm and move to the city in the wake of a devastating fire. But Heather is caught on camera feeding the new owner's neglected chickens ("It's *Animal Farm* without the politics"), and in no time she's the star of an advertising

Often spanning double-page spreads, cut- and torn-paper images jump out in bold colors and patterns, occasionally complemented by monotone engravings for interest and contrast.

A CHICKEN FOLLOWED ME HOME!

campaign that whisks her to London and a happy reunion. Troubles aren't over yet, though, because keeping a large pig in a small city flat is not in the cards. Can Isla find a proper domicile for the doughty Duroc before the "pest controller" catches up?

Stocked with flashes of wit, unlikely twists and narrow escapes from capture, this amiable ramble slides smoothly into the literary sty occupied by Wilbur, Babe, Mercy Watson and like talented porkers. (*Animal fantasy*. 8-10)



**A CHICKEN FOLLOWED ME HOME!**  
**Questions and Answers About a Familiar Fowl**

Page, Robin

*Illus. by the author*

Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | May 19, 2015

978-1-4814-1028-1

978-1-4814-1029-8 e-book

In her first foray as solo writer and illustrator, Page, Steve Jenkins' frequent collaborator (and spouse), presents a child-friendly Q-and-A to prepare children for the titular eventuality.

Starting with the all-important "What will my chicken eat?" the book goes on to answer more questions, such as "Will my chicken lay eggs?" and "What if I want baby chickens?" Readers will learn to tell the difference between a hen and a rooster and how to identify chicken breeds, as well as how to keep predators at bay. The answers given are concise but a little dry, but this in no way takes away from the book's value. Done in a collage style similar to Jenkins', Page's illustrations are no less artful. Often spanning double-page spreads, cut- and torn-paper images jump out in bold colors and patterns, occasionally complemented by monotone engravings for interest and contrast. Younger readers will be drawn to the bright, bold images, and older readers will enjoy the chicken facts. Two further pages of facts at the book's end satisfy those who might be curious about how fast a chicken can run or who might enjoy a step-by-step visualization of a fertilized egg's life cycle. Plus, a short bibliography allows readers to seek more information.

A delightful and informative book for families wanting to raise chickens or learn where eggs come from. (*Informational picture book*. 4-9)



**STILL WATERS**

Parsons, Ash

Philomel (320 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-399-16847-5

A down-on-his-luck teen is made an offer he can't refuse.

Jason and his sister, Janie, are stuck with their abusive, alcoholic father in the worst part of town. The pair scrimp and

save anything they can and dream of one day having enough cash to strike out on their own. So when high school it boy Michael drives up in his vintage Mustang and offers Jason \$50 a day to hang out with him, Jason has little reason to turn him down. The results of this arrangement prove to be less than advantageous. The author weaves a web of lies and deceit around Jason, so much so that readers will barely know whom to trust less, Michael or the enigmatic and impossibly sexy Cyndra. As Jason tries to figure out who's playing what and for whom, readers get a look at a fully formed but terribly damaged individual. Less interesting are most of the other characters, all drawn with broad strokes. This makes the novel a bit repetitive in the middle, when Jason gets into a cycle of brooding, then trusting a bit, and then brooding again once new information comes to light several times over. The novel's ending is also far too "happily ever after" considering all the angst that came before, making for a jarring tonal experience.

An uneven debut, but Parsons shows real promise with Jason's characterization. (*Fiction*. 12-16)



**THE FEARLESS**

Pass, Emma

Delacorte (368 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$20.99 PLB

Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-385-74447-8

978-0-385-39014-9 e-book

978-0-375-99168-4 PLB

Society falls after an attempted cure for PTSD manifests terrible side effects.

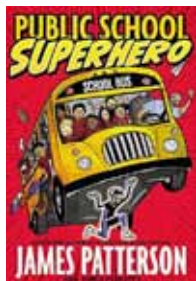
When Cass was 10, the military administered a wonder drug to prevent PTSD that eliminated not only anxiety, but also fear itself. But the Fearless then lost their consciences, and enemies obtained the drug to create a concentrated dose. A Fearless invasion begins; they inject anyone they catch. Cass is a lucky one, taken by a wealthy neighbor to a private island where survivors create a small, insular society. After this intense first act, the book's pacing slows, and the main plot begins. Seven years later, Cass dodges her childhood best friend's affections before developing a connection to a new boy, Myo, who sneaked onto the island. Then some Fearless abduct Cass' baby brother from the island, leading Cass and Myo on an off-island rescue mission during which Cass learns that much of what she's been told since the collapse of society is a lie. She encounters fellow survivors, the Fearless and a paramilitary group trying to rebuild society as she tries to save her brother. Occasional chapters from Myo's viewpoint elaborate on his own mission. The leads lack chemistry, creating a rote, obligatory-feeling relationship, and character motivations and the drug's rules both bend to the plot's requirements. The abrupt ending isn't a cliffhanger but doesn't rule out a sequel.

Post-apocalyptic paint-by-numbers. (*Post-apocalyptic adventure*. 12-17)



# Where a traditional field guide might provide a Latin name, the author uses Inuktitut, recognizing that these are birds of the Inuit world.

A CHILDREN'S GUIDE TO ARCTIC BIRDS



## PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERHERO

Patterson, James & Tebbets, Chris

Illus. by Thomas, Cory

Little, Brown (304 pp.)

\$13.99 | Mar. 16, 2015

978-0-316-32214-0

Kenny's dreams of superpowered heroics provide a respite from his tough school.

Kenny Wright loves his grandma, chess and superheroes. Less loved is his school, an overcrowded, underfunded cinderblock straight out of the fourth season of *The Wire*. A string of peculiar circumstances puts Kenny in the position of teaching his enemy, Ray-Ray, how to play chess, but this crummy state of affairs may be just what Kenny needs right now. Just as Patterson (*Middle School*, *The Worst Years of My Life*, 2011) used comic observations to explore a culture ruled by test scores, this outing is an examination of inner-city schools, a subsection of our educational system plagued by budget cuts, principal-hopping and a society that may have written them off entirely. Thankfully, the authors never get too preachy for their own good. The cultural analysis is secondary to Kenny and the relationships he has with his friends and his grandmother. Told with the humorous style characteristic of Patterson when he's in preteen mode, the novel fits right in with *I Funny* (2012), *Middle School...* and the like. Adding to the book's charm is a periodic collection of comic-filled pages that help further illustrate Kenny's inner workings as well as present just plain fun superhero stories.

A smart and kind story topped with just the right amount of social justice. (Fiction. 9-12)



## A CHILDREN'S GUIDE TO ARCTIC BIRDS

Pelletier, Mia

Illus. by Christopher, Danny

Inhabit Media (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-927095-67-6

An Arctic ecologist introduces a dozen bird species that take advantage of the food available in the brief but bountiful summer to nest and raise their young in the far north.

After a brief introduction and description of bird measurements, as well as the feathers, bills and feet that distinguish them, the author presents her examples, from cliff-dwelling thick-billed murres to tundra-hopping snow buntings. She includes ducks, a loon, swan, hawk and owl, a member of the grouse family called a ptarmigan and the ubiquitous raven. Each species gets a spread: A detailed, layered painting showing the bird (or birds) in a bit of its Arctic habitat sits opposite the text. As the title indicates, it reads like a field guide. A general description is followed by neatly organized facts: where to see them, what they eat, how they

sound, nests, eggs, chicks and winter habitat. Length and wingspan are given in centimeters. Where a traditional field guide might provide a Latin name, the author uses Inuktitut, recognizing that these are birds of the Inuit world. The writer also introduces (and defines) other interesting but probably unfamiliar words such as "polynyas," sea-ice openings where common eiders winter, and "cygnets," baby swans. She warns against disturbing nests.

Interesting for bird lovers whose homes are in temperate climes as well, especially those who might see some of these intriguing Arctic nesters in winter. (Nonfiction. 8-15)



## MY FAMILY TREE AND ME

Petričić, Dušan

Illus. by the author

Kids Can (24 pp.)

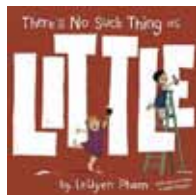
\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-77138-049-2

This dos-à-dos book looks at both sides of one little boy's ancestry.

Children are often interested in but confused by the notion of great-great grandparents. Happily, Petričić's droll watercolors make this idea both understandable and amusing. Starting with "My father's side," readers meet the narrator's great-great-grandparents, sitting in their Tin Lizzie. The sepia tones, with a touch of red for great-great-grandma's lips and orange for great-great-grandpa's ample moustache, let the young reader know that this image is from a very long time ago. As the pages turn, the time moves toward the present, with each preceding generation appearing as a photograph on the wall in the background. New wives and husbands arrive, but careful readers will notice familial physical traits are repeated through the generations, especially that ample moustache, the need for glasses, and winningly oversized, unbalanced ears on the males. Once readers reach the present, a double-page spread of his extended, diverse family greets them. Reading backward, the mother's side of the family is shown. Repeated careful readings of the illustrations will reveal interests and hobbies as well as physical similarities. (The father's side loves vehicles, for instance.)

Budding genealogists will enjoy poring over this illustrated family history. (Picture book. 4-9)



## THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS LITTLE

Pham, LeUyen

Illus. by the author

Knopf (48 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-385-39150-4

Pham's latest relies on readers' first understanding "little" as a synonym for "trivial" or "unimportant" and then resisting this implication by seeing good, significant things in small packages.

Unfortunately, the achievement of the charming digital artwork is undermined by the execution of the book's central idea, which establishes that littleness might be seen as problematic. A frontmatter page opens with a statement from a smiling child: "Everyone says I'm little. / I really don't agree. / If only they could see what I see / When I look at me," but this doesn't go far enough to explain *why* being perceived as little is something that needs correction. On ensuing pages, recto page die cuts provide glimpses of underlying reveals, as the first page questions the littleness (insignificance) of one thing, and the page-turn establishes its importance. "A little light?" for example, shows a candle in the first spread, its flame peeking through the die cut, but then the page-turn reveals "No, a welcoming light," with the candle now situated in a lighthouse guiding a ship. Ironically, this belies the book's very message, since the little thing (a candle) is revealed as a big thing (a lighthouse), which is a problem that dogs other spreads, too.

**There is such a thing as little, after all, and can't it be just right?** (Picture book. 3-5)



### MISS HAZELTINE'S HOME FOR SHY AND FEARFUL CATS

Potter, Alicia

*Illus. by Sif, Birgitta*

Knopf (40 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | May 12, 2015

978-0-385-75334-0

978-0-385-75335-7 PLB

A caring young woman who takes in homeless cats finds her kindness rewarded when she suffers in turn.

The plot is slight and straightforward, if delightfully far-fetched, and Potter's use of clever language further enhances its appeal. Whether given up by their previous owners because of perceived deficiencies ("He runs from mice!") or strays who find their ways to Miss Hazeltine's house on their own, each and every cat is welcomed and rehabilitated. Miss Hazeltine teaches them to pounce, climb, stretch and "think good thoughts." She even shares her own secret fears with Crumb, the smallest, most frightened cat of them all. Meanwhile Sif's quirky, pencil-drawn, digitally colored illustrations create a vaguely fairy-tale feel, especially in Miss Hazeltine's cozy home in the forest, which suits the traditional trope of the least likely hero overcoming obstacles to save his beloved. In contrast, touches of modernity and humor, like the heroine's red high-tops or her use of yoga postures (cat and cow, anyone?) to encourage the strays' skill-building, add visual interest and a charming freshness. Vignettes, single- and double-page spreads are perfectly paired with the text and offer plenty of details—and cats—to pore over.

**Listeners of all stripes, feline fanciers or not, will be pleased and amused as the mild adventure winds to a happily-ever-after ending.** (Picture book. 5-8)



### THE SHARK RIDER

Prager, Ellen

*Illus. by Caparo, Antonio Javier*

Mighty Media Junior Readers (326 pp.)

\$9.95 paper | May 1, 2015

978-1-938063-51-0

Series: Tristan Hunt and the Sea Guardians, 2

Mysterious fish kills lead a team of young Sea Guardians to the British Virgin Islands for a round of investigative dives, brushes with disaster and, yes, shark riding.

Newly promoted to "Snapper," Tristan, who can talk to sharks and rays, joins four teammates with similarly unusual powers for a second summer of training. Hardly has the course work begun, though, than worrisome reports send the Snappers to an idyllic archipelago. There, along with tours of magnificent reefs and other local wonders, a series of odd accidents, a scary encounter with a pair of remote-controlled bull sharks and captivity on the private island of an unscrupulous pharmaceutical tycoon ensue. Despite a questionable decision to have some characters, human and otherwise, speak in caricatured dialect ("Watch out for them, they'll stick ya bads"), Prager concocts an absorbing yarn in which vivid descriptions of marine beauties and rousing feats of derring-do mingle. Likewise, though Tristan's klutziness out of the water is oversold, he and the multispecies supporting cast—notably a 5-inch mantis shrimp with an "anger management issue" and built-in clubs powerful enough to sink a submarine—are memorably diverse and colorful. A nighttime break-in (at the edge of a hurricane, for added drama) neatly saves both captives and environment while leaving the bad guys all in jail or flight.

**A few leaky seams aside, a seaworthy sequel to *Shark Whisperer* (2014). (maps, afterword)** (Adventure. 10-12)



### LOOK OUT FOR BUGS

Prokopowicz, Jen

*Illus. by the author*

Craigmore Creations (32 pp.)

\$19.99 | Apr. 8, 2015

978-1-940052-14-4

Photographs of a series of cut-paper dioramas form this seek-and-find puzzle book starring hidden creatures in the natural world.

The format of this appealing nature title is straightforward. First, a double-page spread shows a shadowy habitat in which insects, spiders and other creepy-crawlies are hidden. The next spread shows and describes the five creatures in short paragraphs that include interesting facts about their behavior. Roughly stretching from east to west across the United States, the habitats include a forest, marsh, desert, creek, meadow and flower-filled backyard. Except for the backyard view (through a window), the vantage point is ground-level, which viewers will find unusual. True bugs and pill bugs, bees and grasshoppers,

scorpions and beetles, and various insects with “fly” in their names are among the creatures shown. One or two may be obvious in the image. After turning the page and seeing the individual illustrations, readers might turn back and discover more, but most are likely to need the “bug key” that concludes this title to find them all. (Figures in the dioramas’ foregrounds are artily out of focus, making discernment difficult.) The author’s point is simple and effectively made: These tiny creatures cleverly conceal themselves by matching their environments. The creatures are recognizable, and the descriptive information is generally accurate though unsourced.

**For appreciation rather than information, this is an interesting addition to the environmental shelf.** (Picture book. 5-9)



### FLORABELLE

Quinton, Sasha

*Illus. by Barrager, Brigitte*

*Photos by Tcherevkoff, Michel*

Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$15.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-229182-0

Meet Florabelle, “a little girl with big rosy-red dreams.”

Florabelle has wondrous visions of herself as queen, ballerina and cowgirl, festooned with flowers and awash in loveliness. But with her head always in the clouds, she is often late and seldom hears or listens to what others say. Whimsical, gently humorous text depicts Florabelle’s dreams and struggles, while sparkling, pink illustrations replete with sweetness spill over the pages as Florabelle decides to show she can be serious in order to go on a trip to the beach with her caring but exasperated family. When the ocean proves more daunting than she’d supposed, Florabelle ends up stranded on shore. Can she use her imagination to help her through? Perhaps a mermaid daydream will do....The pinkalicious renderings of fairylike daydreams are created by collaging Tcherevkoff’s photographs of flowers into Barrager’s cartoons; the often overwhelming effect does get across Florabelle’s consuming distraction. This candy-coated selection escapes princess clichés by allowing Florabelle to overcome her fears, rescue herself and learn how to focus to boot. And that focus comes in handy when it’s time for sleep—she hears every loving word her mother says while tucking her in bed.

**A celebration of girlyness with a strong female character, this is sure to be a favorite of all who daydream in pink.** (Picture book. 3-6)



### SPACE BOY AND HIS DOG

Regan, Dian Curtis

*Illus. by Neubecker, Robert*

Boyd’s Mills (32 pp.)

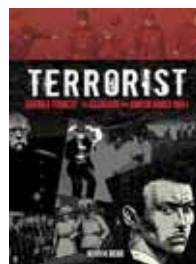
\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-59078-955-1

A trip to the moon in search of a neighbor’s lost cat is all in a day’s work for Niko and his crew.

Space hero Niko puts the finishing touches on an elaborate cardboard-and-tape construction on the title page. His mom and dad “let him park his spaceship in the backyard.” When Niko, his dog, Tag, and his co-pilot, Radar (whose robot expressions vary from worried to happy/worried), spot a “lost cat” poster, they blast off to search the moon for the missing feline. But this heroic account has a glitch—Niko’s sister, Posh (who “lives on Planet Home, too”), stows away. The third-person narrative adds to the humor, as Niko’s voice breaks through to declare—erroneously—about Posh: “...she is not in this story.” Neubecker’s illustration shows Niko’s enormous hands in the foreground, trying to block readers’ views of Posh. While Niko and crew search the cratered surface (where a tiny moon creature peers from the edge of the page), Posh strategically deploys Tag’s treats, and readers may anticipate what happens. Eight brief chapters nicely pace the action: “To the Moon!”; “Lost Sister”; “Home in Time for Dinner.” Neubecker’s solid lines and bright colors channel comic-book art, with multiple frames carrying the narrative on several pages.

**The themes of imaginary play and sibling rivalry provide good-natured support for a lighthearted, easy-to-read adventure.** (Picture book. 4-7)



### TERRORIST

**Gavrilo Princip, the Assassin Who Ignited World War I**

Rehr, Henrik

*Illus. by the author*

Graphic Universe (232 pp.)

\$11.99 paper | \$33.32 PLB | Apr. 1, 2015

971-4677-7284-4

978-1-4677-7279-2 PLB

Graphic novelist Rehr offers a fictionalized biography of Gavrilo Princip, who killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand and started World War I.

Whether it actively intends to or not, this book might end up reducing violence in the world, because it makes the life of a terrorist seem incredibly dull. As imagined in this book, revolutionaries spend their time lecturing one another on politics and arguing about strategy. Sample dialogue: “Courage as such doesn’t exist. It’s all a matter of pressures and rewards.” Pages are filled with black-and-white illustrations that have the look of scratchboard, many spreads entirely wordless. This often has the effect of slowing the action down and drawing out an already-sluggish script. But the final scenes are surprisingly



The five friends explain, deliver tips and ask readers questions that will get them thinking about their own communities and how they can identify them, participate in them and make them stronger.

LOOK WHERE WE LIVE!

powerful. Rehr shows the entire war in a series of strange, fragmentary images: a sky filled with biplanes, an armless Jesus suspended against the cross in the ruins of a church, a crowd raising its hats into the air. In these moments, the stark illustrations become appropriately frightening. Elsewhere, the book is too dry and matter-of-fact for its own good, but maybe that's the point. Late in the book, Princip says, "No *one* person causes the wheel of history to turn. The war would've come anyway. Me...I just pulled the trigger!"

Princip, in this contemplative version of history, isn't evil, and he isn't heroic. He's just a hapless man who fired a gun. (*Graphic historical fiction. 12-18*)



### EMANCIPATED

Reyes, M.G.  
Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins  
(400 pp.)  
\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | May 12, 2015  
978-0-06228895-0  
978-0-06-228897-4 e-book

A group of emancipated minors, many hiding secrets, share a house in LA's Venice Beach.

Candace and her stepsister, Grace, go to LA in hopes of furthering Candace's acting career. John-Michael, who spent a year living on the streets, leaves home for good after his homophobic father dies, apparently by suicide. Paolo, an all-American tennis pro, is emancipated so he can stay in California when his father's job moves to Mexico. Talented punk rocker Lucy Long keeps her past a secret, and the group's youngest, Maya, claims to be busy developing an app but may have a hidden agenda. Meanwhile, a mysterious woman named Ariana makes phone calls to a former child star who may have witnessed a murder. With so many point-of-view characters and not quite enough of anyone's checkered past revealed to pique readers' interest early on, the pace is initially slow. Action picks up, however, as the group throws boozy parties, romantic entanglements develop, and John-Michael is investigated by the police. When readers learn the story's secrets, it is often less from skillful plotting than because a character happens to mention a previously undisclosed detail. A few larger reveals tumble out by the end, but the conclusion is far more cliffhanger than resolution.

Enjoyably gossipy at times, but it takes some patience. (*Fiction. 14-18*)



### LOTS OF BOTS

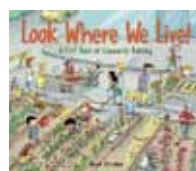
Richards, C.J.  
Illus. by Fujita, Goro  
HMH Books (224 pp.)  
\$13.99 | May 5, 2015  
978-0-544-33934-7  
Series: Robots Rule, 2

Having just saved the world from criminal mastermind Dr. Charles Micron (*The Junkyard Bot*, 2014), George Gearing is just starting an apprenticeship at Tin-

kerTech headquarters.

It's a particularly exciting time for George to be fulfilling his dream of working in TinkerTech's cutting-edge robotics workshop, as the company is days away from introducing the world to the Multifunctional Ocular Device, revolutionary technology that will allow people to access information with their minds. While the bulk of the story focuses on George's pursuit of his suspicions that Dr. Micron is back and somehow plotting to use the MOD in a second attempt at world domination, the more compelling plotline follows George's quest to uncover information about his parents' suspicious deaths and their involvement in the secret "Project Mercury." This is where the heart of the story lies, but far too little time is spent with it. An additional side story in which his personal robot, Jackbot, suffers hopelessly from unrequited love is humorous at first but rapidly grows tiresome. Still, it's an easy narrative accompanied by illustrations that provide some visual interest. Fans of the first book will uncover more of the same in the sequel. It is also well-suited for young readers looking for an accessible introduction to the science-fiction genre.

More entry-level fun for the robot-loving set. (*Science fiction. 8-11*)



### LOOK WHERE WE LIVE! A First Book of Community Building

Ritchie, Scot  
Illus. by the author  
Kids Can (32 pp.)  
\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-77138-102-4

The five friends from Ritchie's mapping expedition (*Follow That Map!*, 2009) now explore their community, helping out along the way.

A local street fair to raise money for books and computers for the public library is the means by which Ritchie moves the five friends around the town, introducing community topics, helpers and locations. Though this "street fair" is less a street filled with food vendors, art, entertainment and schlock-hockers than a community open house, it will still hold kids' interest and introduce them to some vital members of the neighborhood. In double-page spreads that address topics such as shopping locally (at yard sales), waiting in line, donating time and

Former Disney designer Rodríguez takes the *coquí* frog, the Puerto Rican national symbol, and uses bold, opaque colors to capture it in a caricature that will be familiar to cartoon-savvy youngsters.

KIKI KOKÍ

money, supporting local businesses, cleaning up and beautifying the neighborhood, and appreciating the elderly, the five friends explain, deliver tips and ask readers questions that will get them thinking about their own communities and how they can identify them, participate in them and make them stronger. An activity in the backmatter gives directions for turning a community drawing into a jigsaw puzzle. As a bonus, readers can seek and find each of the five friends in the busy spreads; though they lack the chaos of Waldo's adventures, there are many details to amuse.

An excellent addition for the community shelf, this minimizes didacticism while encompassing many aspects of the topic that are missing from other entries. (glossary, table of contents) (*Informational picture book. 4-8*)



**KIKI KOKÍ**  
***La Leyenda Encantada del Coquí***

Rodríguez, Ed

*Illus. by the author*

Roaring Brook (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$8.99 paper | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-62672-104-3

978-1-62672-132-6 paper

An insolent Taíno boy learns a valuable lesson in cooperative behavior when he is magically transformed into a tree frog in this Spanish-language retelling of a Puerto Rican folk tale.

The good children living on the island of Borikén help their mothers and fathers with the daily fishing and fruit gathering and then attend the full moon festival. Kiki Kokí is lazy and indifferent, declaring that the festival is stupid and that helping is no fun. Forbidden from attending, Kokí runs away and is turned into a golden tree frog by the angry moon goddess. Kokí must show, for 30 days, his willingness to help the other frogs, or he will remain a tree frog forever. The chastened Kokí works with his new amphibian friends to clean, gather food and cook, and even demonstrates a newfound selflessness when he helps them escape a group of rat pirates. Impressed, the moon goddess sends him back home as a boy, and he becomes the best helper while still having fun. Former Disney designer Rodríguez takes the *coquí* frog, the Puerto Rican national symbol, and uses bold, opaque colors to capture it in a caricature that will be familiar to cartoon-savvy youngsters. The dense tropical forests contain both breech-clad Indians and fanciful amphibian villages with modern conveniences.

Previously self-published, this tale ably uses a modern artistic approach to tell an age-old tale of virtue and its rewards. (*Spanish picture book. 5-8*)



**WHEN YOU LEAVE**

Ropal, Monica

Running Press Teens (336 pp.)

\$9.95 paper | Apr. 7, 2015

978-0-7624-5455-6

A skater girl-turned-private school coed investigates the death of her two-week-old hookup in this debut.

After her single mom remarries and moves Cass to private school, the teen copes by maintaining her friendships with the male skateboarders from her old neighborhood, including her best friend, Mattie, who has become mute after a bout with throat cancer. In spite of her disdain for St. Bernadette's, Cass falls for Cooper, an attractive peer counselor who has the bad luck to be murdered two weeks after he and Cass meet. When Cass' skater friend Gav is accused of the murder, she is determined to clear his name. After many accusations and much lying and sneaking out, Cass ends up getting her biggest clue from a dream, and the murderer is no one readers ever could have guessed. While the story has some satisfying moments, the text is littered with clichés and laughably clunky sentences like "Reality stroked my stomach like a hot poker." The dialogue is awkward, the secondary characters are hard to distinguish from one another, and it's difficult to believe that independent Cass would so easily fall for a "[t]ypical pretty boy" who woos her with phrases like "I like you....You have a virtual, I don't know, rainbow of emotions without even talking." The most interesting character by far is Mattie, who carries a torch for Cass and communicates with finger taps and shoulder shrugs. Their slowly unfolding romance is the engine that drives this otherwise uninspired mystery.

One great big whodontcare. (*Mystery. 11-14*)



**YOUNG-HEE AND THE PULLOCHO**

Russell, Mark James

Tuttle (256 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | May 12, 2015

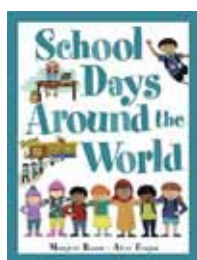
978-0-8048-4497-0

In this portal fantasy, a Korean teenager must complete a dangerous quest to save her annoying younger brother.

For Young-hee, 13, nothing about her family's return to Seoul after five years in Canada has been pleasant. When she discovers a hidden door to a vibrant magical land, it's a welcome escape from her life's depressing realities. Young-hee's younger brother accompanies her on her second trip through the portal, and during that trip, he falls for a trap set by a crafty *dokkaebi* (goblin). So Young-hee makes a desperate deal with the *dokkaebi*: She will go on a journey to find a *pullocho*, a rare magical plant, and exchange it for her brother's freedom so they can both return home. Russell enriches his debut novel with many details borrowed from

Korean folk tales. Fans of stories within stories will enjoy the tales included here, but young readers may find it difficult to keep track of the numerous Korean terms, as no glossary is provided. The novel's pacing suffers from Russell's decision to open with Young-hee's bargain with the *dokkaebi* before backtracking to her move to Seoul; it takes nearly a third of the book to get back to the first scene. It's also hard not to find it ironic that sullen Young-hee's default complaint is "So annoying."

**More mundane than magical.** (*Fantasy*. 9-13)



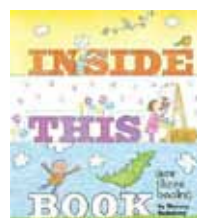
### SCHOOL DAYS AROUND THE WORLD

Ruurs, Margriet  
*Illus. by Feagan, Alice*  
 Kids Can (40 pp.)  
 \$18.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
 978-1-77138-047-8  
 Series: Around the World

Third in a series of informational picture books for preschoolers and early elementary readers about children around the world (*Families Around the World*, 2014, etc.).

Children often wonder what it would be like to go to a different school. Each spread of this oversized picture book explores that question. Starting with Tamatoa, who attends a Cook Island school (where the children learn the Ura language and dance the *bupa*), the page turn finds Raphael in an international school in Singapore (where lo mein is just one of the canteen's many lunch offerings). Further page turns bring readers to China, Kazakhstan, Ethiopia, Kenya (where Mathii lives in an orphanage), Turkey, Germany (a boarding school for Johannes), Denmark (part city school, part forest school), Venezuela, Honduras, the USA (home-schooled twin sisters) and finally, a First Nations school in Canada. There's more than a bit of sameness to the flat, brightly colored, paper-doll-like illustrations, an irony given that the author has gone out of her way to present a welcome diversity of backgrounds. Each school looks well-funded, and there are no overcrowded or single-sex classrooms pictured. This volume could provide a starting place for classrooms that study children around the world, as the back-matter points children to organizations that raise funds for building schools and libraries internationally. These excellent resources give a more honest view of the state of international education than the book itself.

**The picture-book equivalent of "It's a Small World."** (*Picture book*. 3-8)



### INSIDE THIS BOOK (Are Three Books).

Saltzberg, Barney  
*Illus. by the author*  
 AbramsAppleseed (40 pp.)  
 \$15.95 | Apr. 7, 2015  
 978-1-4197-1487-0

Every child has a story inside...or two

or three or more.

A little boy named Seymour has made a book. Its four sides are each about 2 inches smaller than the book readers hold, so it fits right inside. Seymour's mom had made him and his brother and sister books with blank pages, prompting the children to fill them up. Seymour records his feelings and observations and a story about a furry little monster, with a long striped nose that looks like a knitted stocking cap, who eats everything in sight. And following Seymour's book is another, smaller one, written by his little sister, Fiona. She fancies herself an artist and a poet. About her dog, Fleabee, she writes: "A wagging tail / And a cold wet nose, / This is how / My morning goes." And after Fiona's supersmall book is one even smaller, by the family's youngest child, Wilbur. He can't read or write yet, so he draws the pictures—of himself, of a dinosaur, of his family—and tells Fiona what to write. "Books are better when they are shared," concludes the whole. Using simple, bold type and illustrations that look convincingly childlike and are developmentally keyed to each sibling, Saltzberg's clever conceit makes the metaphorical literal—and palpable—for very young readers.

**An absolutely nifty invitation to children to create and share their own wee books.** (*Picture book*. 3-6)



### LEAFLETS THREE, LET IT BE! The Story of Poison Ivy

Sanchez, Anita  
*Illus. by Brickman, Robin*  
 Boyd's Mills (32 pp.)  
 \$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
 978-1-62091-445-8

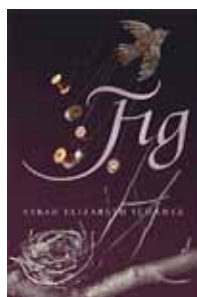
Sanchez introduces a new perspective on this potentially itch-causing plant: Poison ivy plays a vital role in providing food for forest animals throughout the year, especially at times when other food is scarce.

While Sanchez litters the text with warnings about staying away from poison ivy ("Hairy vine—a warning sign!"), the focus is mostly on the plant's importance to mammals, birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles. Urushiol, a chemical in its sap, may give humans an itchy rash, but animals are immune to its effects, so they can safely nibble its leaves, vines and berries, collect the nectar from its flowers, hide under its leafy, moist shade, and use its rootlets to line nests. Brickman nicely shows both the diversity of the leaves of the poison ivy plant ("Like snowflakes, no two poison ivy leaves are exactly alike") and how it changes through the seasons. An artist's note explains how the illustrations were created;



surprisingly, no materials from nature were used—only painted paper cut and shaped and glued in place. The result is surprisingly realistic, though some of the larger mammals look a bit stiff. Back-matter answers some common questions about poison ivy.

**While most readers won't become cheerleaders for poison ivy, they will at least come away with a greater understanding of its importance and an increased ability to identify it.** (*Informational picture book. 4-8*)



### FIG

Schantz, Sarah Elizabeth

McElderry (352 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

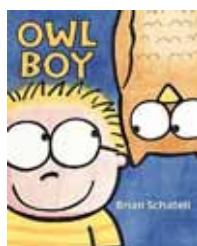
978-1-4814-2358-8

978-1-4814-2360-1 e-book

A girl grows from 6 to 18 on a Kansas farm, methodically trying to fix her mother's mental illness.

Explaining that "today," on her 19th birthday, she'll "finish a story that must be told," Fig holds her breath, crosses her fingers and opens the tale in 1982, when she's 6. Fig's idyllic farm life changes on the day Mama makes them race home from an unseen terror outdoors. Mama thinks a dingo chased them, but Fig remembers a television program about that infamous Australian murder trial and begins to doubt Mama's grip on reality. Mama has schizophrenia; Fig has an extremely high IQ, an unshakeable commitment to her mother and a reliance on magical thinking. She also suffers from OCD and a compulsion to self-injure. If she follows her calendar of self-punishing rituals, she can cure Mama. Fig's narration epitomizes showing without telling. From wildflowers to animals to the blooming blood of her self-inflicted injuries, everything Fig describes is wildly poetic and tender. Schantz's exquisite prose brims with nature, blood, literary references and intense emotional silence. Unfortunately, a structural letdown seriously weakens the ending: Despite the opening frame's promise, full of gravitas, of a story that would reach Fig's critical 19th birthday, her story stops at age 18 1/2 with no hint of what the next six months might bring.

**Achingly gorgeous, with a baffling end. (author's note)** (*Historical fiction. 14-18*)



### OWL BOY

Schatell, Brian

*Illus. by the author*

Holiday House (32 pp.)

\$16.95 | \$16.95 e-book | May 15, 2015

978-0-8234-3208-0

978-0-8234-3324-7 e-book

Al loves owls.

With the passion of a zealot, Al makes decisions about his life based on the habits of his favorite bird. Call a friend? No, owls are solitary birds. Play outside?

Not now: Owls are nocturnal. Meatloaf for dinner? Of course not! Owls eat mice. Summer camp is awful until Al gets lost on a hike and meets his favorite bird face to beak. Al explores all things owl with his feathered host in an "owl extravaganza!" The bah-humbug boy is transformed in his joy, wearing a smile from ear to ear. That is, until he gets hungry. With a slight nod to Sendak, Al has journeyed to the wild and returns to his bedroom with a changed perspective. It is, however, the illustrations that take flight in this funny read-aloud. With strong black lines and simple images, shapes are repeated until Al's entire room is covered with rectangular owl posters. A child with Al's eccentric proclivities may count all the squares on each page or the circle-shaped eyes of all the birds and Al's black glasses. With a cartoonish quality, the drawings confidently capture Al's focus and obsession while sharing his joy.

**An offbeat tale about following your dreams, no matter where they might lead (though older readers will note the cautionary tale of taking your passions a bit too far).** (*Picture book. 3-7*)



### THERE IS A CROCODILE UNDER MY BED

Schubert, Ingrid

*Illus. by Schubert, Dieter*

Lemniscaat USA (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | May 1, 2015

978-1-935954-08-8

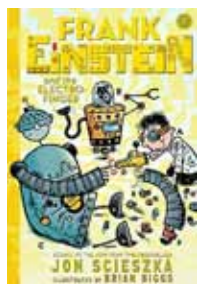
Far from being frightened, a small child is utterly delighted to find a green, toothy monster under her bed.

It's Carl the croc who is startled at the appearance of Sophie—a tiny lass with a mop of orange hair and a plush "wild thing" tellingly clutched in her hand—and has to be talked down from the top of the dresser. Wild rumpuses in bedroom and kitchen ensue ("They flip at least a thousand pancakes"), leaving both empty egg cartons just right for turning into a painted toy crocodile and Carl, at least, in real need of a splashy bath. After that, he tucks his bossy new buddy into bed, regales her with tales of past silly pranks until she drifts off to dreamland, and tiptoes away. Along with Sophie's fearlessness, this genial addition to the populous "bedtime bugaboo" genre features cleanly drawn illustrations that offer neat but comical messes and central figures who sport magnetic personalities, as well as, after those first anxious moments at least, clear signs of mutual affection. Both girl and croc are equally lovable—though the endpapers hint subversively at a less-than-upstanding agenda for Carl, as well as explaining his presence under Sophie's bed in the first place.

**A deftly upbeat encounter that should go a long way toward quelling any nascent nighttime anxieties.** (*Picture book. 4-6*)

# A fine story of family, loss, growing up and learning to play baseball, raised to a higher level by gracefully incorporated themes of feminism and kindness.

THE WAY HOME LOOKS NOW



## FRANK EINSTEIN AND THE ELECTRO-FINGER

Scieszka, Jon  
 Illus. by Biggs, Brian  
 Amulet/Abrams (176 pp.)  
 \$13.95 | Mar. 17, 2015  
 978-1-4197-1483-2  
 Series: Frank Einstein, 2

Kid genius Frank Einstein's back for a second shocking (and silly) science adventure.

While his parents travel around the world, Frank stays with Grampa Al and conducts science investigations with his human friend Watson and his two robot buddies, smart, literal Klink and music-loving, hug-addicted Klank. While Watson tries to perfect his pea shooter, Frank and the robots learn about forces and energy, Newton and Tesla, and they invent a wireless electricity generator. This is a good thing, since evil, not-quite-as-much-of-a-kid-genius T. Edison and his sidekick, er, partner, Mr. Chimp, are buying up and destroying various types of power plants in order to create a monopoly for their hydroelectric dam. Can Frank and his pals stop Edison, or is Midville doomed to have its own energy crisis? Scieszka's second of six science-themed tales is more fact than fiction in the first half. The science-saturated storyline is buoyed by occasional jokes and a plethora of humorous two-color illustrations and diagrams by Biggs. Once the action begins, it doesn't stop (except for the jokes). Amusing and informative aftermatter includes more science facts and recipes, poetry and experiments, as well as a guide to ASL's manual alphabet (Mr. Chimp communicates with sign). Final art not seen.

There's so much actual information here that the story could pass as a textbook, but science and Scieszka fans won't likely mind. (Science fiction/humor. 8-10)



## THE WAY HOME LOOKS NOW

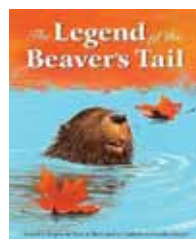
Shang, Wendy Wan-Long  
 Scholastic (272 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | \$16.99 e-book | Apr. 28, 2015  
 978-0-545-60956-2  
 978-0-545-60958-6 e-book

Twelve-year-old Peter Lee hopes that baseball might help his grieving mother regain a measure of interest and happiness in life.

The last best day Peter can remember as a family, before his bright, athletic brother was killed in a car accident, was the occasion of Taiwan's thrilling victory in the Little League World Series. It's 1972, and his father had been hard on college-age Nelson, whose ideals occasionally clashed with those of his Chinese-born father. But Nelson's death turns everything upside down. Peter and younger sister Elaine are helpless before their mother's silence and depression. Peter lets almost everything

go, including school and friendships, until he grasps at something he believes he can offer his mother: baseball. When Ba, as Peter calls his father, steps up to coach Peter's team, Peter learns to his astonishment that not only does his father know the game, but he also has depths of courage and fairness Peter had not realized, even in the face of occasional, casual bigotry. His father offers support to a boy on the team who is bullied at home, and he finds a way to let another talented player stay with the team. The first-person narration is smooth and believable.

This is a fine story of family, loss, growing up and learning to play baseball, raised to a higher level by gracefully incorporated themes of feminism and kindness. (Historical fiction. 9-13)



## THE LEGEND OF THE BEAVER'S TAIL

Shaw, Stephanie  
 Illus. by van Frankenhuyzen, Gijsbert  
 Sleeping Bear Press (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Apr. 1, 2015  
 978-1-58536-898-3

Shaw puts an ecological spin on an Ojibwa fable about pride and its

consequences.

Instead of joining obnoxious Beaver in admiring his big, fuzzy tail, Bird, Deer and Fish go off about their businesses—and so are not around when a tree falls on it. Dragging the tail free leaves it flat and furless. Repenting both pride and bad behavior, Beaver works busily on building a dam as winter comes, and when he apologizes to his animal friends in spring, they commend him for leaving twigs for Bird's nest, clearing woodland spaces for Deer's forage to grow, and creating a warm pond for Fish. Along with adding this last part to traditional versions—and explaining in an afterword that beavers, as a "keystone species," actually perform these functions in woodland ecosystems—the author retells the tale in contemporary language. "I'm just saying," Beaver informs Fish, "this tail of mine is absolutely the most magnificent tail a creature could have." Mirroring the changing seasons with a rich color scheme, van Frankenhuyzen poses large, realistically rendered animal figures in idyllic outdoor settings. He communicates Beaver's emotional state largely through body language, though a few subtle facial expressions occasionally sneak in. There is no sourcing aside from the statement that the story is from the Ojibwa tradition.

An easily digestible fable with a simple moral and added classroom value as a natural science add-on. (Picture book/folk tale. 6-8)



Except in the heights of Caden's delusions, nothing is romanticized—just off-kilter enough to show how easily unreality acquires its own logic and wit.

CHALLENGER DEEP



**JACK**  
***The True Story of Jack and the Beanstalk***

*Shurtliff, Liesl*

Knopf (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$19.99 PLB

Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-385-75579-5

978-0-385-75581-8 e-book

978-0-385-75580-1 PLB

Boom! Boom! Boom! Giants are real!

Jack sees them slide down from Above to raid his farm. Worse, they take his Papa.

Inspired by stories about his seven-greats-grandfather, Jack the Giant Killer, Jack vows to climb Above to rescue his Papa. After he grows a giant beanstalk he has the means. Only he hadn't been expecting his bothersome little sister, Annabella, to tag along. In a land where even a bird poses a threat and poisonous pixies abound, this actually turns out to be a good thing. Annabella has a way with animals and understands the pixies. New friend Tom Thumb helps too. Shurtliff skillfully weaves Jack's tale together with other classics about giants and elves as well as her own previous book, *Rump* (2013). It turns out that the kingdom Jack enters belongs to King Barf, and the reason for the giants' raids is famine. Greedy King Barf is using magic to create gold, and the magic is pulling all the power out of growing things. If the story meanders a bit and the moral about treasuring what we grow feels tacked on, there are still enough boisterous adventures about a wee boy (and girl) overcoming big obstacles and defeating greed to keep youngsters hooked.

**Fans of retold fairy tales will be well-satisfied. (author's note)** (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



**CHALLENGER DEEP**

*Shusterman, Neal*

*Illus. by Shusterman, Brendan*

HarperTeen (320 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-113411-1



Fantasy becomes reality in an exploration of mental illness based partly on the experiences of the author's son, who is also the book's illustrator.

For 14-year-old Caden Bosch, his gradual descent into schizophrenia is a quest to reach the bottom of Challenger Deep, the deepest place on Earth. In an internal reality that's superimposed over Caden's real life—where his behavior slips from anxiety to hearing voices and compulsively obeying signage—an Ahab-like captain promises riches in exchange for allegiance, while his parrot urges mutiny for a chance at life ashore. Shusterman unmoors readers with his constant use of present tense and lack of transitions, but Caden's nautical hallucination-turned-subplot becomes clearer once his parents commit him to Seaview Hospital's psychiatric

unit with its idiosyncratic crew of patients and staff. However, Caden's disorientation and others' unease also make the story chillingly real. Except in the heights of Caden's delusions, nothing is romanticized—just off-kilter enough to show how easily unreality acquires its own logic and wit. The illustrator, who has struggled with mental illness himself, charts the journey with abstract line drawings that convey Caden's illness as well as his insight. When the depths are revealed with a dream-logic twist and Caden chooses an allegiance, the sea becomes a fine metaphor for a mind: amorphous and tumultuous but ultimately navigable.

**An adventure in perspective as well as plot, this unusual foray into schizophrenia should leave readers with a deeper understanding of the condition. (author's note)** (*Fiction*. 14 & up)



**SNIFF! SNIFF!**

*Sias, Ryan*

*Illus. by the author*

abramsappleseed (32 pp.)

\$14.95 | Apr. 7, 2015

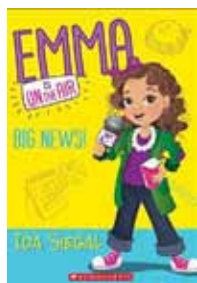
978-1-4197-1490-0

A little brown puppy follows his nose and has an aroma-filled day.

One energetic puppy with an oversized nose and overactive olfactory glands makes for a lively book for the youngest readers. From the moment he wakes up, this ebullient pup sniff-sniffs his way through the world. On each right-hand page, he smells something (shown in, for lack of better words, smell bubbles) that leads him rushing off the page to...where? That's for readers to figure out. First, the aromas of bacon, pancakes and oranges in his smell bubble lead his nose down the stairs to "BREAKFAST!" There, he causes quite a mess, scarfing down bacon and ruining the meal for everyone else. Before anyone can clean up, he smells flowers, dirt and tomatoes and is off like a shot to dig up the garden, of course. With minimal text and maximum action, this colorful volume is a dog lover's delight. Naughty toddlers will enjoy giggling along with the action, guessing the next destination at each page turn. Eventually, this little puppy ends up in the tub, with all the smells of the day washed away. Colorful cartoon illustrations, including the endpapers, are filled with exaggerated action that perfectly matches the energy of both puppies and preschoolers.

**Young readers will sniff their ways to this one again and again. (Picture book. 2-5)**





## BIG NEWS!

*Siegal, Ida*

*Illus. by Peña, Karla*

Scholastic (128 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$4.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book

Apr. 28, 2015

978-0-545-68693-8

978-0-545-68692-1 paper

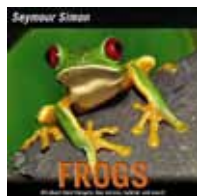
978-0-545-68694-5 e-book

Series: Emma Is On the Air, 1

Third-grader Emma Perez is obsessed with becoming a famous star, and inspired by a news reporter on TV, Emma decides becoming a reporter is her path to fame; now she just needs to find her first story.

As it turns out, Emma's father is also a reporter—the boring kind (you know, print)—and he instructs her in the basics of journalism. Emma's big break arrives when a classmate finds a worm in his hamburger. Emma interviews witnesses and tries to uncover the truth of what happened before the health inspector fires one of the cafeteria staff. Her father patiently guides her through the steps, helping her record news segments in videos posted to the school's online bulletin board. Emma is confident, outgoing and tenacious. Her dual Dominican and American heritage is acknowledged, but culture is not a main plot point. Emma does occasionally speak Spanish, but it's usually to get something she wants from an adult, and she provides readers with an immediate translation, “*¿Por favor?*” That means ‘please’ in Spanish. Papi likes it when I speak Spanish.” Emma's lively personality is evident in the cartoonish black-and-white illustrations. The predictable plot wraps up neatly, setting the stage for more in the series.

**Light on substance but an entertaining series debut nonetheless.** (*Fiction. 6-8*)



## FROGS

*Simon, Seymour*

Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$6.99 paper | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-228912-4

978-0-06-228911-7 paper

Frogs and toads, amphibians who lead a double life on water and on land, are the subject of this veteran science writer's latest nature exploration.

In the pattern of many of his recent titles, Simon's introduction to these interesting creatures consists of thoughtfully arranged exposition that moves smoothly from topic to topic without any interruptions to the narrative flow. He covers their development, habitat, physical characteristics, senses and behavior (especially seasonal changes and reproduction), concluding with mention of the chytrid fungus and frog population decline. He presents a few specific and unusual species. Unfamiliar words and concepts such as ectothermic, metamorphosis, estivation and hibernation are emphasized in boldface, explained in the text and defined in the backmatter. From a

splendid opening display of all stages in a wood frog's life, from egghood to adulthood, striking photographs from various sources illustrate Simon's points. Beautifully reproduced and interestingly arranged, these images don't have captions but will be clear to readers who understand the text. In the process of describing his approach in an introductory author's note, Simon offers readers good suggestions for their own science writings: drawing helpful comparisons, using strong verbs and descriptive detail, asking questions, engaging both the senses and the imagination, and making science fun.

**A grand addition to any elementary-age collection of nature titles. (index, websites)** (*Nonfiction. 6-10*)



## TALLULAH'S TAP SHOES

*Singer, Marilyn*

*Illus. by Boiger, Alexandra*

Clarion (48 pp.)

\$16.99 | May 5, 2015

978-0-544-23687-5

Series: Tallulah, 4

To toe or to tap—that is the question for Tallulah.

Tallulah happily looks forward to summer dance classes except for one hitch. She will have to take tap lessons. Younger brother Beckett is eager for them, but Tallulah is disdainful. As expected, she does well in ballet, even receiving compliments from the teacher. A girl in her class, Kacie, is also not a happy camper. She is a tap dancer and loves it because it is “so much cooler.” In her continuing tales of the Brooklyn balletomane, Singer sets up a see-saw scenario that sees Tallulah struggle with tapping and Kacie grapple with ballet. Self-confidence takes a direct hit as both girls refuse to face less-than-stellar class performances. When Kacie turns up as a surprise dinner guest, Beckett prods the two girls into admitting their fears. They help each other with steps and exchange friendship bracelets. Boiger continues to provide lovely watercolor paintings; summery greens for the camp setting and for costumes are just the right touch. Endpapers depict the four moves in tap's flap step. Kacie demonstrates them at the beginning of the book, and Tallulah joins her at the conclusion. And, of course, Tallulah's front-cover green-and-pink tutu is satisfyingly glittery.

**The ballerina-to-be explores new and challenging steps—successfully.** (*Picture book. 4-7*)



## THE PRETTY APP

*Sise, Katie*

Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (352 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-06-219529-6

978-0-06-219532-6 e-book

The classic tale of how a beauty finds inner loveliness gets a modern take.

Blake Dawkins is the queen bee of her high school, using her beauty and connections to rule. But of course, on the inside she's troubled by how empty her life is, with a politico father focused on the family's image and a broken relationship with her former best friend, Audrey (of *The Boyfriend App*, 2013). Then the Apple-esque Public Corp. unveils its newest product: the Pretty App, which allows users to upload their photos to be rated by other users, leading to a reality show in which one contestant will be voted the Prettiest Girl. To complicate Blake's inevitable participation, she falls for mysterious new student Leo, who encourages her just to be her real self, only for Blake to discover Leo has a connection to Public and the show. When Blake realizes her participation has been compromised, she resolves to prove she's not the mean girl she used to be by making sure the right girl wins—with some help from old and new friends. Unfortunately, the shallow Blake and her so-called struggles aren't likely to capture readers' interest, always a risk with this particular premise. Compounding this liability, the plot is both predictable and arbitrary, and the stilted dialogue doesn't pass muster.

**A clichéd, unrealistic look at teen lives in the mobile age.** (*Fiction. 14-18*)



## RETURN TO AUGIE HOBBLIE

*Smith, Lane*

*Illus. by the author*

Roaring Brook (288 pp.)

\$16.99 | May 5, 2015

978-1-62672-054-1

The award-bedizened illustrator offers up his first novel.

Mildly offbeat setting aside, it all starts on recognizable ground. Son of the manager of a seedy theme park dubbed Fairy Tale Place, Augie faces both bullying from local thug Hogg Wills and summer school because he's failed Creative Arts ("Who fails Creative Arts?"). Also, dazzling classmate Juliana has joined the park's colorful cast of costumed "hosts" as Cinderella, and along with allergy-prone best buddy Britt, he discovers that building a treehouse—in a tree, at least—is harder than it seems. Readers set by this opening for a moderately amusing summer idyll are in for a series of unsettling shocks as Smith then proceeds to vigorously knock expectations askew. He chucks in sudden death, a rash of missing pets, initially garbled but increasingly coherent and



revealing messages from the great beyond, clairvoyant visions, robbery, lycanthropy and even mysterious government agents. It takes Smith to keep what could become a hot mess percolating happily along toward a just conclusion. Portraits, collages, hand-drawn comics and other illustrations done in a range of styles add characteristically postmodern notes to this roller-coaster ride.

**Great fun, with hardly a trope or theme left unspun.** (*Fantasy. 10-13*)



## MAMA SEETON'S WHISTLE

*Spinelli, Jerry*

*Illus. by Pham, LeUyen*

Little, Brown (40 pp.)

\$17.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-316-12217-7

Lauren Bacall's quote about whistling is classic, but when it comes to puckering, no one tops Mama Seeton.

Mama's whistle to her family is heard throughout the neighborhood, letting her troops know it's time to come home for dinner and chocolate cake, even as they grow older and roam farther afield. At last, all grown, they leave and settle in far-flung places; frequent letters don't fend off Mama's loneliness. When Papa Seeton suggests she put her lips together and blow for old times' sake, she thinks he's daft but does so anyway; of course, no one arrives—at first. Miraculously, the marvelous sound travels around the world and summons every Seeton scion home. In time, the Seeton children summon their own offspring with a clarion whistle that brings the new generation running. This is a sweet but odd tale, and readers may have to suspend quite a bit of disbelief to buy into the premise. The audience is unclear; frequent references to time passing and an aging parent's wistfulness over her empty nest may be more resonant for adults than children. The ink-and-watercolor illustrations are charmingly cozy and retro; they easily evoke both a happy, close-knit family and the passage of time with carefully chosen details. In a nice nod to currency, she presents biracial grandkids.

**If nothing else, the book will make kids eager to practice whistling.** (*Picture book. 4-7*)



## BLANK

*St. Jean, Trina*

Orca (312 pp.)

\$12.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-4598-0807-2

A 15-year-old suffers amnesia after a brain trauma.

After being attacked by a bull buffalo on her family's ranch, Jessica can't remember any of her previous life: not her family, not her home, not her friends.

She looks in the mirror and sees "the Girl," someone else she

There are clues, red herrings and suspenseful chases galore, as well as heaps of boarding school trivia that amuse and delight.

MURDER IS BAD MANNERS

doesn't know. She retains general knowledge, but her own past remains a complete blank but for the family dog. Once she returns home she must find a way to cope with her new life among strangers who love her. She gets along best with her little brother, Stephen, but struggles to relate to her parents, who are clearly anguished. Best friend Megan tries to help, but an overwhelmed Jessica continually acts out. She finds herself drawn to Tarin, a rebellious girl with issues of her own. As she becomes more discouraged, Jessica begins to take irresponsible risks. St. Jean cleverly contrasts the effects of real amnesia with the condition as laughably depicted on soap operas, writing a highly effective, realistic story about a good girl struggling to fit in with her new life, a life that may never knit together with her old one. Her characters, especially Jessica, Stephen and Tarin, come across as full and credible.

**Both an absorbing coming-of-age tale and a medical-suspense drama. (Fiction. 12-18)**



### MURDER IS BAD MANNERS

Stevens, Robin

Simon & Schuster (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-1-4814-2212-3

978-1-4814-2214-7 e-book

Series: A Wells & Wong Mystery, 1

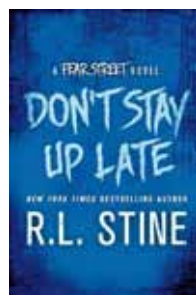


A pair of eighth-grade girls, admirers of Holmes and Watson, expose a real murderer in a tony English boarding

school in 1934.

This splendid school story/murder mystery opens with a map and a helpful cast of characters: the staff and students of Deepdean School, where Hazel Wong, daughter of an Anglophile Hong Kong banker, and Daisy Wells, golden-haired member of the English nobility, have formed the Wells & Wong Detective Society. From Part One, "The Discovery of the Body," to Part Eight, "The Detective Society Solves the Case," Hazel, as the society's secretary, worriedly but methodically recounts the case. Her account begins on Oct. 30, 1934, one day after finding Miss Bell's dead body, runs through the end of November, when the murderer is arrested, and wraps up during their Christmas holiday. Her narrative is punctuated with occasional handwritten updates of their suspect list. Hazel's outsider status allows her to comment humorously on the curious customs of the English world, while cheerful Daisy's need to know and her privileged assumption that everyone will love her and do her bidding earns them access to places and information that help them solve their first serious case. There are clues, red herrings and suspenseful chases galore, as well as heaps of boarding school trivia that amuse and delight.

**An irresistible English import with sequels to come. (Mystery. 10-14)**



### DON'T STAY UP LATE

Stine, R.L.

Dunne/St. Martin's Griffin (304 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 7, 2015

978-1-250-05162-2

978-1-4668-6674-4 e-book

Series: Fear Street

A teen babysitter encounters monstrous demons as the nightmares on Fear Street continue.

Lisa Brooks is new to Shadyside, but she's been able to make friends and form romantic entanglements pretty quickly. When a devastating car accident leaves her with nightmarish hallucinations, Lisa's world is turned upside down, her only respite her babysitting job. Her charge, Harry, is sweet and adorable. He only comes with one rule: Harry absolutely cannot stay up late. Unfortunately, Lisa's problems seem to follow her to the boy's house, with grisly murders and creepy creatures on her heels. Stine's macabre sensibility and threadbare narrative approach are on full display here. After a successful return to Shadyside with *Party Games* (2014), Stine wastes no time continuing to wreak havoc on the horrifying town he knows so well. Longtime readers will chuckle and squirm at all the right places, only rolling their eyes at the melodrama Stine seems to feel is obligatory. Why should readers care that Lisa kisses a boy who isn't her boyfriend when her father is dead and a bloodthirsty animal is on the loose? Stine also stumbles a bit when it comes to the explanation for the monster, which is weird and gross but comes about 50 pages too late.

**Despite a strong start, the book doesn't stick the landing, but it's still suitably scary for fans. (Horror. 10-14)**



### SLEEPLESS KNIGHT

Sturm, James, Arnold, Andrew & Frederick-Frost, Alexis

Illus. by the authors

First Second (40 pp.)

\$14.99 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-1-59643-651-0

Series: Adventures in Cartooning

How is a Knight supposed to fall asleep without his beloved teddy bear?

The Knight decides to take his trusty steed, Edward, on an overnight camping trip. The nutty Knight loads Edward with everything but the kitchen sink (but does make sure to include a ukulele, a scooter and a box of rocks). Finally, the pair sets up camp—complete with a cozy-looking pink tent—and after feasting on delicious marshmallows, calls it a night. But while Edward promptly falls asleep, the Knight cannot! Upon discovering that his favorite teddy is missing, the Knight determines to find him. Seeking help from a rabbit, the Knight is led to a bear—but not the soft, cuddly one he was expecting! Eventually, all are reunited, and a forest frolic follows. This simply drawn charmer features illustrations with smooth, rounded edges,

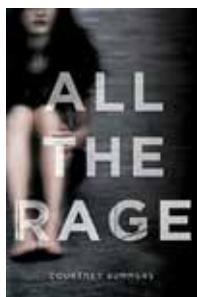


The small, close-knit town of Grebe is a seething cauldron of grudges and loyalties, and each character is not only carefully drawn, but deeply rooted in generations of history.

ALL THE RAGE

cleanly boxed into a clearly delineated panel structure. The small cast (just four characters) and economy of words make for an engaging and easy flow for beginning readers. Those interested in taking the experience one step further can follow the endpaper instructions for drawing the four main characters and making up their own stories about the Knight and his friends.

**This Knight may be sleepless, but he certainly does shine.** (*Graphic early reader. 4-7*)



### ALL THE RAGE

Summers, Courtney  
St. Martin's Griffin (336 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-1-250-02191-5



In a small town, one girl is raped, and another girl disappears.

In the aftermath of her rape, Romy Grey lost her only friend and gained a reputation as a liar and a slit—“[b]ecause ‘slut’ was just too humanizing, I guess.”

Beyond the poetic, searing recollection of the rape that opens the book, however, this back story is never directly recounted. Instead, readers stumble with Romy through locker-room viciousness, long shifts at the diner, and constant microaggression from sneering teachers and cruel, powerful Sheriff Turner, the father of her rapist. After an alcohol-soaked party, Romy wakes up bewildered by the side of the road with no memory of the night before. The same day, a popular girl goes missing. Around these twin mysteries runs a tight, unrelenting plot that brings into sharp, brutal relief the difference between reviled Romy and a girl who suffers “a fate no one thinks she deserves.” Tough, weary, hurt and scared, Romy makes believably flawed choices, sometimes hurting others and herself. The small, close-knit town of Grebe is a seething cauldron of grudges and loyalties, and each character is not only carefully drawn, but deeply rooted in generations of history.

**Unflinching and powerful.** (*Fiction. 14-18*)



### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EMILY H.

Summy, Barrie  
Delacorte (256 pp.)  
\$16.99 | \$10.99 e-book | \$19.99 PLB  
Mar. 12, 2015  
978-0-385-73943-6  
978-0-375-89756-6 e-book  
978-0-385-90790-3 PLB

A 13-year-old who sees memories tackles the mystery of a missing girl.

Starting eighth grade at Yielding Middle School, Raine knows about “all the yuck that goes along with being the new girl.” Because her single mom is constantly starting over, Raine has attended five schools so far and longs to make friends, fit in

and settle down. Raine’s ability to see “sparkles” that convey the memories of others gives her special insights. At school, Raine quickly identifies Jennifer as leader of the mean girls who bully vulnerable classmates. She also learns that her family has moved into the house where Emily Huvar, an unpopular girl who mysteriously disappeared two months earlier, used to live. As Raine discovers things about her classmates from their “sparkles,” she sees a link between Jennifer’s bullying and Emily’s disappearance. Eventually, Raine realizes Emily’s not dead, but she’s also not out of danger, which now spreads to Raine. Speaking in a colloquial, feisty, humorous first-person, Raine recounts her vulnerable longing to belong, her bold stand against class bullies and her resolve to unravel Emily’s disappearance—they all ring true, despite the “sparkles.”

**Magic exposes the extent of vicious school bullying in this arresting middle school mystery.** (*Magical realism. 10-14*)



### VIETNAMESE CHILDREN'S FAVORITE STORIES

Thi Minh Tran, Phuoc  
Illus. by Thi Hop, Nguyen & Dong, Nguyen  
Tuttle (96 pp.)  
\$16.95 | Apr. 14, 2015  
978-0-8048-4429-1

While publishers in recent years have paid some attention to Asian folk tales, there has been a paucity of stories from Vietnam. This collection of 15 tales will fill the gap.

This Vietnamese-American storyteller’s tales are a mix of variations on familiar tales and tropes, cultural pourquoi stories and legends. Familiar folk-tale elements can be seen in many, such as “The Legend of the Mosquito,” “Why Ducks Sleep on One Leg,” “Why the Sea is Salty” and a “Cinderella” variant, “The Story of Tam and Cam.” Others are rooted in Vietnam. “Da Trang and the Magic Pearl” offers an explanation for the scuttling of crabs on the beach; “The Legend of Banh Chung and Banh Day” reveals the origins of the traditional foods of Tet; “Why One Shouldn’t Sweep the House on Tet Nguyen Dan” explains another Tet tradition. An introduction explains the significance of several key elements in Vietnamese tales. A publisher’s note at the beginning describes its mission: to provide books that connect East and West. Attractive watercolor illustrations by two Vietnamese artists are scattered throughout, and the appealing cover should invite readers.

**A welcome addition to any collection of folk tales.** (*Folk tales. 6-9*)



### ASK THE DARK

Turner, Henry  
Clarion (256 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Apr. 7, 2015  
978-0-544-30827-5

An unlikely hero saves missing boys in this debut thriller.

From his hospital bed, 15-year-old Billy Zeets recounts his part in the mysterious disappearances of teenage boys from his small town. "I ain't no hero, and I aim to prove it," he declares in his haunting, first-person dialect. Once a juvenile delinquent who vandalized and stole from his neighbors, Billy has since reformed, but his reputation still precedes him. When his single, out-of-work father faces the loss of their house, the teen takes up odd jobs to try to raise enough money to keep them in their home. This coincides with the disappearances of several local boys, one of whom is found murdered. Tempted to go back to thievery in order to make money fast, Billy inadvertently uncovers clues that may lead him to the killer. Due to his reputation, this teen outsider knows he must track down the killer on his own, prove his guilt and hopefully find the missing boys in the process, because no one will believe the word of a former lying thief.

**Flawed but observant and courageous, Billy and his taut storytelling will engage readers of all stripes.** (*Thriller. 14 & up*)



### LITTLE RED HENRY

Urban, Linda  
Illus. by Valentine, Madeline  
Candlewick (40 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Apr. 28, 2015  
978-0-7636-6176-2

A picture book about a youngest child who wants to grow up...but the rest of the family isn't ready to let him.

Little redheaded Henry is the adored baby of the family. Mama, Papa, sister Mem and brother Sven all can't do enough for him. They cart him and coddle him and dote on him—but "[f]rankly, little redheaded Henry [is] sick of it." When Henry insists on doing for himself, the family is at loose ends—until they rediscover long-neglected personal creative interests that foster healthier familial bonds. Striking a balance between lively and atmospheric, Valentine's illustrations lend a depth to the lighthearted story of cosseted Henry's insistence on independence. Her design sense is sophisticated—vignettes are used to great advantage to show movement and time passing, and gutters are expertly utilized in double-page spreads to underscore division. Additionally, readers' eyes are skillfully navigated through each illustration and to the page turn. Urban's narrative tone matches the illustrative tone in its sophistication. Relatively complicated sentence structures are combined with simple ones, and the result is an energetic text—although the rule of three is applied with perhaps a bit too much regularity.

A story that humorously but gently reminds overprotective families that it is natural and necessary and healthy for a child to learn to do for himself. (*Picture book. 4-8*)



### THE FEAST FOR THE KING

Verbelst, Marlies  
Illus. by Faas, Linde  
Lemniscaat USA (32 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Apr. 1, 2015  
978-1-935954-44-6

Someone has snatched the tender roast from the top of King Lion's meaty birthday "cake," so chef Tarantula sets

out to find the culprit.

To a chorus of "Who is the beef thief?" (reminiscent, to parents and grandparents at least, of the old "Where's the beef?" meme), Tarantula investigates by intrepidly climbing into the notably unclean mouths of Gorilla, Giraffe and other invited guests. The prose clumsily switches between past and present tense, and Bat's reply when Tarantula asks permission to look in his mouth—"I'd rather not"—isn't the only off-kilter line. Still, Tarantula's loud "Busted!" when he catches King Lion sneaking a further chew gives the ensuing messy party an appropriately emphatic kickoff. Faas illustrates the quest with scribbly, lightly spattered cartoon scenes featuring a small, very untarantulalike spider in a toque and a menagerie of much larger creatures. These are first seen engaged in assembling party dishes of their own, then amicably gathering at an outdoor table to sip aperitifs and chow down.

**Despite the awkward writing, children will have no beef with King Lion's inability to wait for the guests.** (*Picture book. 5-7*)



### CASTLE HANGNAIL

Vernon, Ursula  
Illus. by the author  
Dial (384 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Apr. 21, 2015  
978-0-8037-4129-4

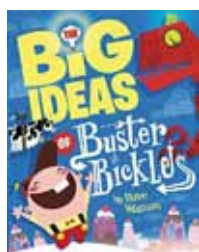
Castle Hangnail is in desperate need of a new Master; 12-year-old budding Wicked Witch Molly might be just the person to fill the position.

The crumbling castle is in real danger of being decommissioned, and the resident minions fear the loss of their longtime home. It's fairly easy to overlook the fact that the short, rather kindly girl in the witchy boots seems a somewhat unusual candidate for the job. That might just be because she stole the invitation to apply from a nasty young sorceress and is, therefore, something of a fraud. In a droll, ironic style that fans of Terry Pratchett will appreciate, Vernon (*Dragonbreath*, 2012, etc.) creatively—even joyfully—explores the well-worn trope of young teen witchcraft. Molly, fiercely defensive of her new home and loyal followers, is just beginning to understand the nature of



her power. Her successes are engaging, hard-won and fully believable. Characters as unusual as a steaming teapot spirit, mother-and-son Minotaurs who ably manage the castle kitchen, a near-empty suit of armor, a Frankenstein-like castle manager and a lively stuffed doll that does all the sewing come fully, sometimes hilariously to life. Illustrations liberally sprinkled throughout add yet another satisfying dimension.

**An appealing protagonist, lots of action, clever, witty writing, witchcraft and evildoers who get nothing but what they deserve—what's not to love?** (*Fantasy*. 10-16)



### THE BIG IDEAS OF BUSTER BICKLES

Wasson, Dave

*Illus. by the author*

Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-229178-3

A boy with a hyperactive imagination encounters a machine that can bring to life his zany ideas in an assured if manic debut.

Buster Bickles, who unfortunately looks like a crazed, one-toothed baby, has worn out the patience of his mom and his classmates with his exhausting stream of messy, makeshift inventions, such as a robot suit with eggs as eyes (for “eggs-ray vision,” of course). Buster loses confidence after a disastrous episode at school but finds his purpose when his scientist uncle Roswell unveils the “What-if Machine,” which can transform thoughts into reality. Soon, rocket-powered cows and invisibility powers are just the start of an action-packed and slightly dangerous day. It’s hard to overstate the polish of the illustration and design, everything from the wild typefaces to the abundant background details and distinct character looks. Wasson is a veteran of animation for the likes of Nickelodeon and Disney, and the energized, go-for-broke style of the art suits his premise and shows his confident visual storytelling skills. There’s little time for subtlety of emotion, but it doesn’t matter because the story moves so quickly through each bursting-with-activity page.

**By the time giant robot dinosaurs invade the city, parents of kids with tornado tendencies may find much that is recognizable—and their young ones reading along may find a kindred spirit.** (*Picture book*. 4-8)



### SHARKS HAVE SIX SENSES

Waters, John F.

*Illus. by Barner, Bob*

Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$6.99 paper | May 12, 2015

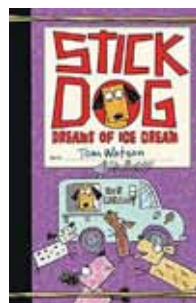
978-0-06-028140-3

978-0-06-445191-8 paper

Paper-collage portraits with only an occasional flash of jagged dentifrice illustrate this appreciative description of how sharks use their extraordinarily sharp senses to find prey.

In Common Core–friendly fashion, an incomplete portrait gallery (“Just some of the sharks you’ll meet in this book!”) opens, and a true/false quiz closes, this Level 2 entry in the venerable Let’s Read and Find Out series. Following a brief lead-in scenario, Waters explains how each sense—smell, hearing, sight, taste, a particularly sensitive “distant touch” and finally electroreception—helps the predators locate fleeing, hiding or injured fish. Barner pairs views of a dozen sharks (each attended by a label) rendered with simplified markings and, usually, closed mouths cruising through a variety of open, brightly colored marine settings. Only the hammerhead is shown eating, and that from a top view so that its mouth cannot be seen. Ruminative readers may have trouble buying the author’s “common sense” argument that sharks seldom attack people because they “know that people don’t live in their world,” but his twin messages that they are both fascinating creatures and, in many cases, at risk from pollution and other human activity will likely be taken to heart.

**A distinct and refreshing change of pace from the usual melodramatic shark fare. (glossary, websites)** (*Informational picture book*. 6-8)



### STICK DOG DREAMS OF ICE CREAM

Watson, Tom

*Illus. by the author*

Harper/HarperCollins (224 pp.)

\$12.99 | \$8.99 e-book | May 19, 2015

978-0-06-227807-4

978-0-06-227808-1 e-book

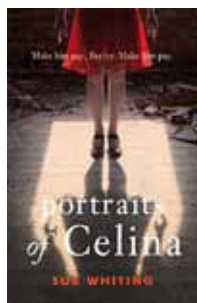
Series: Stick Dog, 4

Will Stick Dog and his buddies find a way to beat the heat?

Stick Dog and his canine friends—spotted Stripes, dim-bulb Mutt, poodle Poo-Poo and Karen—are tired of the heat. They need to find some food, some water and a way to stay cool. Their hunt for water is interrupted by Poo-Poo’s squirrel obsession, until Stick Dog tricks him by playing to his vanity. They find a bunch of small humans playing with an odd contraption that the dogs decide is some kind of water weapon, but it’s too slow with the water to cool them down. (It’s a sprinkler.) When they hear annoying music and see a strange truck that makes the humans act oddly, they wonder what this “ice cream” is (dogs can read) and how it leaves delicious rainbow puddles behind. Can they get some for themselves? Stick Dog’s fourth food-centric adventure brings nothing new to the series. The slightly clueless Stick Dog leads his totally clueless friends to eventual success in finding food in a human world they don’t understand. The Wimpy Kid–like stick drawings on faux lined paper (why?) do little to keep the pages turning.

**The single joke now in its fourth retelling is only for fans of the series...they may prefer squirrel watching to joining Stick Dog this time.** (*Graphic/fiction hybrid*. 7-10)





## PORTRAITS OF CELINA

Whiting, Sue

Switch/Capstone (352 pp.)

\$16.95 | Apr. 1, 2015

978-1-63079-024-0

What happens when the ghosts that haunt us want revenge?

After the accidental death of her father, Bayley and her family move to a new town in the Australian countryside, to the lakeside house her family owns. Bayley's grief over her father's death, however, seems less important than a 40-year-old family mystery: the disappearance of Celina O'Malley. Her mother's cousin, 16-year-old Celina vanished on her way to school. At first, Bayley, who's also 16, just dresses in Celina's old clothes and asks one of Celina's old friends to tell her about her missing relative. But soon, a ghostly Celina is pressing Bayley for more—to make her killer pay. It scares Bayley, and it affects her relationship with Oliver, the cute boy who lives on the other side of the lake—especially when Celina reveals that her killer has a connection to Oliver. Will Bayley be able to help Celina rest, or will Celina's quest for vengeance subsume her? The failure to better connect the deaths of Bayley's father and Celina is a missed opportunity for this novel. Lacking this thematic resonance, the ghost story is fairly standard, as are the characters and other plot elements.

**Perfectly serviceable but nothing special.** (*Paranormal suspense. 14-18*)



## GONE CRAZY IN ALABAMA

Williams-Garcia, Rita

Amistad/HarperCollins (304 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-06-221587-1

978-0-06-221590-1 e-book

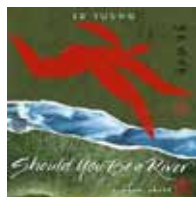
The coping skills of three sisters are put to the test as they leave Brooklyn for a rural summer in 1969 Alabama.

Delphine, Vonetta and Fern, the sisters who captured readers' hearts in *One Crazy Summer* (2010) and *P.S. Be Eleven* (2013), are off to spend the summer in Alabama with Big Ma. This visit comes at a time of great awareness for almost-13-year-old Delphine as well as looming change in her family. Delphine is still in charge, but Vonetta seeks to step out of her older sister's shadow. The trip also means the girls will confront their Uncle Darnell, who let them down during his stay in Brooklyn. Hurts and grudges go even deeper as the story of the girls' great-grandmother and her estranged sister is gradually disclosed, revealing family dynamics shaped by racial history. All the conflicts fade when a tornado threatens an unbearable loss. Character development again astonishes, the distinctive personalities of the girls ringing true and the supporting cast adding great depth and texture. Indeed, the girls'



cousin Jimmy Trotter is so fully realized it seems unfair to think of him as secondary. This well-crafted depiction of a close-knit community in rural Alabama works beautifully, with language that captures its humor, sorrow and resilience.

**Rich in all areas, Delphine and her sisters' third outing will fully satisfy the many fans of their first two.** (*Historical fiction. 8-12*)



## SHOULD YOU BE A RIVER A Poem About Love

Young, Ed

*Illus. by the author*

Little, Brown (40 pp.)

\$18.00 | Apr. 14, 2015

978-0-316-23089-6

Startling collages of torn photos, cut paper and calligraphy seek to describe love's many forms and feelings through comparisons found in nature.

Ripped photographs and Matisse-like figures and shapes converge, overlap and cohere to create stirring compositions that call for scrutiny. Young readers might feel a bit disoriented by jagged, kaleidoscopic artwork, as dizzying and confounding as love itself. Fold-out panels contribute to an ongoing sense of playful mystery that dances across these spreads depicting nature's swirls, undulations and power. Thunderstorms, waves, rain storms, clouds, fire and forests surge. Young's poetry, both puzzling and poignant, follows the flow of the pictures, dragging eyes across the illustrations' challenging, serried landscape. Some lines seem to speak to a lover rather than a child, leaving little readers out. "Should you be a great forest, I'll caress your branches and make you sway"; "Should you be a gentle wave, I'll wait for you to lap my shores." The aching vulnerability and deep-seated love evident in every line, however, echoes the unabashed love children transmit to the world (their parents, friends, teachers, coaches) around them. An author's note and the poem printed again in its entirety provide clarity at the book's close.

**Mystifying and ultimately uplifting, this book challenges all of us to seek out the dizzying scope of love.** (*Picture book. 10 & up*)



## THE REMEDY

Young, Suzanne

Simon Pulse/Simon & Schuster (416 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$10.99 e-book | Apr. 21, 2015

978-1-4814-3765-3

978-1-4814-3767-7 e-book

Quinlan has an uncanny ability to become someone else, especially if that person is dead.

Working for an elite government program, Quinlan is a "closer." She enters the lives of the bereaved and temporarily plays the role of the deceased in order to bring closure to the grief-stricken. Having

had this job since she was a child, 17-year-old Quinlan is starting to feel hairline fissures in her psyche, finding it increasingly difficult to recall her own personality. Quinlan is driven both by compassion to help the despairing and pressure from her father, who is the head of the grief department. Her latest assignment requires deeper immersion than ever before, and her father is secretive about the details. She becomes Catalina, a beloved daughter who died of mysterious causes. Catalina's boyfriend, Isaac, is included in the assignment, and Quinlan, her own loneliness heightened by his need, finds herself drawn to Isaac's desperation and passion. As the melancholy and eerie story unfolds, Quinlan realizes that no one is telling her the truth, and her life has never been her own. Exploring the topic of memory manipulation as a cure for distress, this stand-alone prequel offers shadowy references to Young's previous novels, *The Program* (2013) and *The Treatment* (2014).

**A visceral exploration of the eternal and misguided search for pain-free happiness in an almost-now Brave New World.** (*Dystopian romance. 14-18*)



### **SOPHOMORE YEAR IS GREEK TO ME**

*Zeitlin, Meredith*

Putnam (336 pp.)

\$16.99 | Apr. 21, 2015

978-0-399-16746-1

A dyed-in-the-wool New York teen discovers her Greek roots in this breezy novel by the author of *Freshman Year* & *Other Unnatural Disasters* (2012).

At first, 15-year-old Zona Lowell is devastated when her investigative-journalist dad informs her that they will be spending her sophomore year of high school in Greece so he can research the economic crisis and she can connect with her deceased mother's extended family. She's angry and nervous about meeting the people who rejected her mother for running away to America and marrying Zona's much-older father. But after quickly making friends at the Greek International School in Athens and spending a raucous spring break getting to know her animated Greek family on Crete, Zona realizes that "I have a family now—a big, boisterous, funny, kind, complicated family. And I can't pretend that it's just me, Dad, and [the dog] any longer." Zona, an aspiring journalist, frequently interrupts her narration with short, humorous news items, such as "Op Ed: Life Before Skype—Was It Worth Living?" and "Obituary: Death of First Official Greek Crush Confirmed," and her wide-eyed observations of the argumentative, life-loving Greek people she meets perfectly illustrate just how transformative travel can be.

**Fans of Sarah Mlynowski, Stephanie Perkins and Louise Rennison will enjoy this squeaky-clean travel adventure about the strength of family and the power of new experiences.** (*Fiction. 11-15*)

## **EASTER & PASSOVER PICTURE BOOKS**



### **IS IT PASSOVER YET?**

*Barash, Chris*

*Illus. by Psacharopulo, Alessandra*  
Whitman (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Mar. 1, 2015

978-0-8075-6330-4

Spring's arrival ushers in budding trees, chirping birds, and the sprucing up of house and home that lets Jewish children know the holiday of Passover is almost upon them.

Soft paintings in pastel hues create a refreshing palette for this family as they eagerly work together to prepare for the upcoming holiday. The simple, rhyming text provides a successive level of gentle anticipation with each turn of the page as the time before the upcoming holiday decreases, and each new activity announces another step closer. "When our fanciest dishes come out of the drawer / And Elijah's cup sparkles like diamonds galore... / Passover is on its way." From cleaning to setting the table to cooking the special foods, children will begin to recognize the annual rituals that lead to the holiday itself. And while the story ends just as the family settles around the table and does not include explanations for any of the dinner's ceremonial aspects, children will nevertheless be inspired, particularly as the rhyme spreads itself out over three successive page turns for the climactic moment when everybody sits down to the meal. "When the Seder is ready and candles are lit // And Nana's shown everyone just where to sit... // Passover is here!"

**A joyful and inviting prelude to the weeklong celebration and observance.** (*Picture book/religion. 3-5*)



### **ENGINEER ARI AND THE PASSOVER RUSH**

*Cohen, Deborah Bodin*

*Illus. by Kober, Shabar*

Kar-Ben (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | \$7.95 paper | \$6.99 e-book

Feb. 1, 2015

978-1-4677-3470-7

978-1-4677-3471-4 paper

978-1-4677-6201-4 e-book

On his last run to Jerusalem before the Passover holiday, Engineer Ari manages to gather all the necessary items for his Seder plate, arriving home exhausted just before the holiday's ceremonial dinner begins.

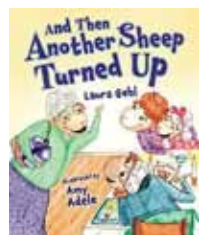
Ari is in a hurry, rushing to keep his train on schedule while trying to gather everything on his Seder shopping list. Luckily, his many friends along the way are more than willing to help. Neighbor Miriam will roast a fresh egg and leave it on his doorstep; Moshe, picking dates and almonds from his orchard, will

The illustrations establish the friendly, good-natured mood enjoyed by these curly-topped, round-eyed ovines, dressed in holiday garb and sitting around a nicely set Passover table.

AND THEN ANOTHER SHEEP TURNED UP

make him some extra *charoset*; friend Shifra gives him a bunch of parsley from her abundant basket; Aaron shares his horseradish root by breaking it in half. Once the train arrives in the Old City, Ari quickly finishes his shopping with a shankbone from the butcher, as well as enough matzo from the factory to bring back as a thank-you to all his neighbors and friends. The action plays out on the now-familiar, earnest Israeli's short train ride from Jaffa to Jerusalem in the late 19th century, while neatly folding in the key components of the annual weeklong spring celebration. Nostalgia, companionship and cooperation are emphasized in the simple text and winsome retro-style illustrations.

**Children and adults will be charmed by the latest in this amiable series. (glossary, author's note) (Picture book. 3-5)**



### AND THEN ANOTHER SHEEP TURNED UP

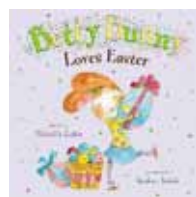
Gebi, Laura  
Illus. by Adele, Amy

Kar-Ben (32 pp.)  
\$17.95 | \$7.95 paper | \$6.99 e-book  
Feb. 2, 2015  
978-1-4677-1188-3  
978-1-4677-1189-0 paper  
978-1-4677-1190-6 e-book

Preparation and plans for a small family Seder are altered when the Sheep family of four is continually interrupted by unexpected guests who successively show up throughout the evening.

Papa, Mama, Hannah and Noah Sheep have just sat down when Grandma Sheep hurries through the door with macaroons and wine. As the first cup of wine is poured, *karpas* (parsley) is passed out, and as each remaining portion of the ceremony proceeds, another sheep comes to the door with either an excuse or a gift. Kids will stay engaged with this rhyming, cumulative tale and its refrain: "Mama set another place. / Papa found an extra seat. / Hannah squeezed to make more space, / thrilled to have a guest to greet." They will sympathize as Noah's yawns grow increasingly larger and quickly join in with the repeated punch line, "And then another sheep turned up!" The illustrations establish the friendly, good-natured mood enjoyed by these curly-topped, round-eyed ovines, dressed in holiday garb and sitting around a nicely set Passover table. By the time Elijah's cup is filled and the door is opened to welcome him, all the sheep have finally arrived, the youngest has fallen asleep, and the singing of songs concludes the evening's festive dinner.

**An amusing and appealing way to enlist little ones in the holiday's rituals. (Picture book/religion. 3-6)**



### BETTY BUNNY LOVES EASTER

Kaplan, Michael B.  
Illus. by Jorisch, Stéphane  
Dial (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Feb. 10, 2015  
978-0-8037-4061-7  
Series: Betty Bunny

That mischievous handful known as Betty Bunny is back for her fifth exploration of the boundaries of acceptable bunny behavior.

In her previous escapades, Betty learned lessons in patience, accepting limits, honesty and persistence. These behaviors all come into play in this latest story when Betty attends an Easter egg hunt with her family. Her three older siblings help Betty find lots of eggs to put in her huge Easter basket, but Betty is dissatisfied with her impressive egg-gathering results because she didn't actually find the eggs herself. She starts over and finds just three eggs on her own, taking pride in her solo accomplishment. This praiseworthy attitude is totally upended by the unfortunate conclusion, in which Betty gets into her mother's purse and is caught taking money to buy an even bigger Easter basket. Betty's rationalization for stealing is to repeat her parents' earlier encouragement during the egg hunt: "It means so much more if I find it myself." Funny, yes, but distressing too, as this is the end of the story. This latest caper may be just a bit too sassy for some adults, though others may consider it an acceptable teaching point. Betty and her family and friends are visually as charming as ever in cleverly detailed watercolor illustrations that bring the anthropomorphic rabbits to life.

**This story's theme of self-reliance fails to adequately address keeping one's hand out of purses (and pockets) that belong to others. (Picture book. 3-6)**



# SHELF SPACE

## Q&A with Allison Hill, President and CEO of Vroman's Bookstore and Book Soup

By Karen Schechner

THIS MONTH, WE TALK TO ALLISON HILL, the president and CEO of Vroman's Bookstore, Southern California's oldest and largest independent bookstore and *Publishers Weekly's* "Bookseller of the Year" for 2008, as well as Book Soup, the legendary "Bookseller to the Great & Infamous," located in the heart of the world-famous Sunset Strip.

### What is Vroman's famous for?

Staying in business so long! One hundred twenty years this November!

### If Vroman's were a religion, what would be its icons and tenets?

I love the idea of Vroman's being a religion. But I think we're more of a cult. Many of us have drunk the Kool-Aid, so to speak. I have several employees who have worked here for 20-plus years. A dozen employees who worked here for a few years left to pursue other work but quickly returned because they missed Vroman's. And I have employees who have been "on call" for years—filling in at events and the holidays—because they don't want to sever ties even though they've since earned Ph.D.s or even moved out of state. We joke that no one ever really leaves Vroman's. And with all due respect to Adam Clark Vroman, the founder of Vroman's, he did look a little like a cult leader! Beady eyes. Beard. I'm just sayin'.



Allison Hill

### Which was your favorite all-time event and why?

My all-time favorite Vroman's event was hosting former President Bill Clinton. And really, it was after the event that was my favorite part.

When President Clinton was finished signing, he asked to spend some time shopping. The president, one secret service agent and I spent an hour wandering the aisles, talking about books. The secret service agent was sucking on a Dum Dum lollipop—the kind you get free at the bank—and I remember being jealous because after working the event all day, I was starving. President Clinton talked nonstop about books. He had read everything! And he was clearly so passionate about books. At one point, the hunger clearly inducing delusion, I remember thinking, "We could really use this guy on the sales floor at Christmas!"

We walked down the biography aisle, and I tensed when I realized we were going to pass by a recent, not so nice, biography about the former president and first lady. I was hoping he wouldn't notice it; then he

picked it up and started chuckling. He showed it to me and the agent, then put it back down and kept walking and talking. He collected a dozen books while we walked, handing them over to the Secret Service agent to pay. And when he was finished shopping, I continued accompanying him to the loading dock so he could exit through the back, where his car was waiting. He stopped just short of the door. He turned to me, put his hand on my arm and said, "I hope we see each other again real soon." I was torn between crying—the kind of crying you see in old footage of girls standing in front of Elvis on stage—and laughing, as in: "You have got to be kidding me. We will never in a million years see each other again!" After he left, Jen (the Vroman's promotional director) and I went out for Mexican food with a couple of the Secret Service agents who were off duty. The whole thing seems like a dream now, but I asked Jen, and she assures me that it really happened.



### What are some of the bookstore's top current handsells?

*El Deafo* by Cece Bell [a finalist for the 2014 Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature]. Vroman's is in love with this book! It's a funny, poignant, charming children's graphic novel about feeling different, making friends and declaring one's place in the world.

### What is your ideal busman's holiday?

There's a small, used bookstore in Wellfleet on Cape Cod, Massachusetts: Herridge Books. I would happily spend my vacation working in their charming, well-curated bookstore, reading, writing and hanging out at the beach.

*Karen Schechner is the senior Indie editor at Kirkus Reviews.*

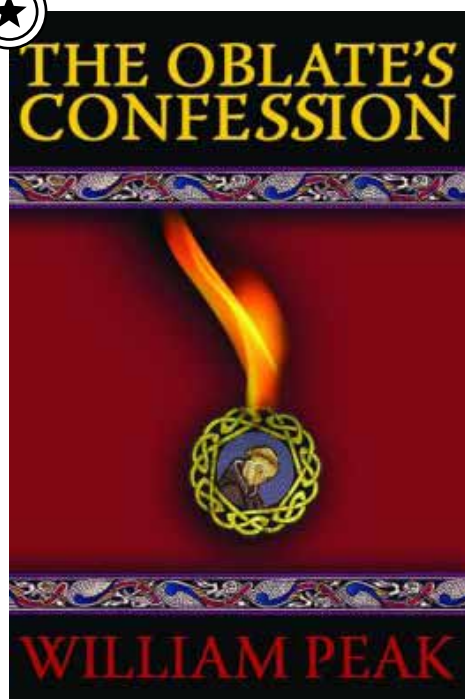
# INDIE



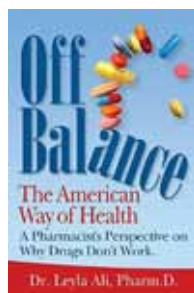
These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

**EINSTEIN'S BEACH HOUSE** by Jacob M. Appel..... 140

**THE OBLATE'S CONFESSION** by William Peak..... 154



**THE OBLATE'S CONFESSION**  
*Peak, William*  
 Secant Publishing (404 pp.)  
 \$25.99 | \$9.99 e-book  
 Dec. 1, 2014  
 978-0-9904608-0-0



**OFF BALANCE: THE AMERICAN WAY OF HEALTH**  
*A Pharmacist's Perspective on Why Drugs Don't Work*

*Ali, Leyla*  
 Self (290 pp.)  
 \$19.95 paper  
 978-0-9853452-0-4

An American-trained pharmacist discusses the shortcomings of traditional Western medicine and advocates natural approaches to health care and wellness.

Ali writes with refreshing candor about her disillusionment with traditional medicine. After receiving her degree as a doctor of pharmacy and taking a position as a well-paid pharmacist, the author found herself unfulfilled and “essentially working a retail job” instead of using her knowledge to help sick people. Her career dissatisfaction led to financial and personal setbacks, until eventually, Ali read a book recommended by a friend—*Cleanse and Purify Thyself* by Richard Anderson, which claims “that 99 percent of known human disease is caused by what we eat.” The book changed her life and led to personal and professional epiphanies: She was “off-balance” and so was the American health care system. Ali writes, “[i]t eventually became very clear to me that many standard medical treatments are manufactured in order to: Create long-term customers; Provide patients with temporary comfort; Specifically, NOT treat the underlying cause.” In 15 chapters, Ali addresses topics such as “What’s Wrong with American Medicine?”; “Cleansing and Detox”; “Weight Loss”; “Pain”; and “Starting Your Holistic Journey.” She believes that, for centuries, people used natural remedies; however, the early 20th century brought about a paradigm shift in health care treatment in which the American Medical Association, the Food and Drug Administration, and large pharmaceutical and insurance companies created a profit-driven system that doesn’t prevent illness or cure it but perpetuates customers who “will turn to drugs in their time of sickness.” The book includes insightful interviews with alternative healing practitioners as well as individuals who’ve reclaimed their health through natural means after the American health care system failed them. Chapters begin with pithy quotes and color cartoon illustrations, and there are colorful charts, interview balloons and chapter summaries, too. In an age of mandated American health insurance, in which “drugs are covered by insurance, [but] holistic solutions are not,” Ali offers a thoughtful guide for those seeking another path.

**Insightfully portrays an ailing American health system and ways to improve one’s health.**

# ADDING TO THE HISTORICAL RECORD



WITHIN INDIE PUBLISHING, voices or stories that might otherwise be ignored get the opportunity to be heard. We often see titles that explore some corner of social-justice or civil rights issues, adding detail and diversity to the historic record.

*In Destiny's Child: Memoirs of a Preacher's Daughter*, Taylor Gibbs gives a firsthand account of her family's work

with Eleanor Roosevelt, Thurgood Marshall, a young Martin Luther King Jr., Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Clintons and the Obamas. And it's not just hagiography; Gibbs candidly describes visiting a condescending Marshall, who, she says, patted her ass as she left his office.

In Zita Cabello-Barrueto's memoir, *In Search of Spring*, she describes bringing a civil suit against Armando Fernandez Larios, the Chilean death-squad commander who murdered her brother during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. The damages awarded were \$4 million, but for Cabello-Barrueto, money was never the point. "By sharing the testimonies gathered for our lawsuit," she writes, "I hope to awaken a sensibility in readers that will help change behavior, so that together we can prevent such dark times from recurring."

Henry M. Ramirez's *A Chicano in the White House: The Nixon No One Knew* appeared on our Best Indie Books of 2014 list. Ramirez, whom Richard Nixon appointed chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People, names Nixon as the American president who worked hardest for the Latino community. While the president may have had his own agenda, "Nixon was the man who grew up with us Mexicans. He knew us, cared about us, and included us," Ramirez writes. —K.S.

*Karen Schechner is the senior Indie editor at Kirkus Reviews.*



## EINSTEIN'S BEACH HOUSE Stories

Appel, Jacob M.

Pressgang (188 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | \$5.99 e-book

Dec. 5, 2014

978-0-9849405-8-5

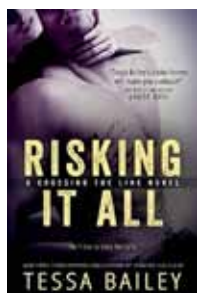


Winner of Butler University's Pressgang Prize, this collection examines the dangers and seductions of fantasy and lies.

Hardworking Appel (*The Man Who Wouldn't Stand Up*, 2014, etc.), an attorney, physician, bioethicist, essayist and fiction writer, published a strong story collection in *Scouting for the Reaper* (2014). Now, in the eight stories comprising this volume (some previously published in literary magazines), he offers an equally strong, striking follow-up. Many of the stories here involve characters being asked to participate in some kind of deception, ranging from children's fibs to murder. In the title story, a travel guide identifies a family's run-down bungalow as the cottage where Albert Einstein spent his Princeton summers. When tourists arrive, the narrator's father puts up a blackboard with equations scribbled from a math textbook and starts charging money. But then an old woman shows up claiming to be Einstein's niece—and claiming, therefore, ownership of the house. Bewilderingly, she succeeds: "That marked the end of Papa's clever ideas." In the superb "La Tristesse Des Hérissons," Josh, the narrator, humors his girlfriend Adeline's obsessive caretaking of a pet hedgehog, such as keeping quiet during sex lest "an errant moan...alarm our barbed roommate. Actually, the word she used wasn't alarm. It was traumatize." Expensive veterinarian and pet psychiatrist visits follow. Diagnosis: hedgehog depression. Treatments include complete darkness, so Josh light-proofs the apartment, "while Adeline tend[s] to the hedgehog in a rented darkroom at the Manhattan Institute of Photography." Appel brilliantly contrasts Josh's pungent wit about the situation's absurdities with the couple's real, mostly unspoken needs, conflicts and sad family histories. By the end, it's clear Josh values the hedgehog, too, exactly for its prickly, stabbing neediness. "Paracosmos," a very different story, shows a similar ambiguity about fantasy. A woman meets her daughter's imaginary friend's seemingly real father and has an affair with him. She doesn't question his reality—why would she: "[W]hether Steve was the product of a coincidence or a hoax or a paranormal vortex, she did not want to lose him."

Sharp, observant, darkly funny and deeply humane. Another winner from Appel.





# **RISKING IT ALL** **A Crossing the Line novel**

Bailey, Tessa

Entangled: Select (400 pp.)

\$14.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book

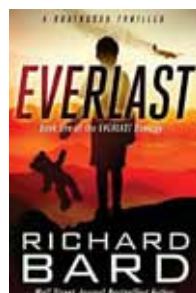
Jan. 27, 2015

978-1-62266-564-8

An undercover policewoman falls for the criminal assigned to protect her in a taut romantic thriller by author Bailey (*Staking His Claim*, 2014, etc.).

Seraphina Newsom, a former nurse, has wanted to be a cop since childhood. After the death of her brother, rookie cop Colin, at the hands of crime boss Trevor Hogan, she's determined to avenge him—without official sanction from the New York Police Department. Working as a waitress (and not a very good one) at Hogan's nightclub, Rush, she hopes to find an incriminating ledger that will put him in prison. Sera's uncle, Police Commissioner Newsom, knows Sera has gone rogue and offers a deal, which might be construed as blackmail, to criminal Bowen Driscoll to protect his niece and free her from Hogan's clutches. From their first meeting, Sera and Bowen are immediately hot for each other, and he quickly stakes his claim, nicknaming her "Ladybug." Sera, a practicing Catholic and a virgin, lusts for Bowen despite his reputation (she knows nothing of his arrangement with the NYPD), and she finds herself doing things that good girls don't usually do. The pair even attends church together, a place Bowen seldom visits; but in Sera's presence, he is called to be a better man. The two bond at Bowen's apartment (he paints murals) and fall into a steamy, but respectful, affair. An element of distrust lingers—she knows he's a criminal—even when Bowen proves to be reliable. After overhearing talk about a shipment of stolen goods, Sera is a marked woman, and the line believably blurs between good guys and bad. It's a well-conceived setup, with virginal Sera a counterpoint to rough and raw Bowen, who craves her so much he's in pain. The structure might be described as formulaic, but the dynamic between the two main characters is so well-developed as to make any formulaic elements nearly indiscernible. Although it appears a sequel is in the works, thankfully the author doesn't leave the reader hanging but sufficiently resolves the current plotline while sparking interest in the novel to come.

**This intense, erotic romance pairs brisk action with well-developed characters.**



# **EVERLAST** **Book One of the** **Everlast Duology**

Bard, Richard

Self (300 pp.)

\$13.69 paper | \$0.99 e-book

Dec. 6, 2014

978-0-692-32136-2

The first volume of a two-part thriller series brings back Jake Bronson, who's determined to find out why an unknown group has been abducting his family and friends, in Bard's (*Beyond Judgment*, 2013, etc.) latest.

Jake has already saved the world using his superior mental abilities, like transmitting thoughts. But he'd rather sidestep any publicity drawn to him or his similarly gifted 7-year-old son, Alex. Someone, however, has targeted him: A text from his wife, Francesca—"NOW!"—means that danger has necessitated a contingency plan. When Francesca and their kids go missing, Jake realizes that none of the 13 people, including friends all around the world, have checked in at a website per their emergency-response plan. Spearheading the attack may be the Everlast Institute, whose most recent venture is the preservation of a human consciousness on a computer chip. Jake makes his way to Everlast in Holland, hoping the company's founder, Frederik de Vries, can explain what the company wants from him—and where his family is. Readers unfamiliar with Bard's previous trilogy featuring Jake need not fret: While the book heavily references the protagonist's earlier adventures, it provides clear elaboration without saturating the story in plot details. For example, the origins of the "mini"—a miniature, magical pyramid—aren't important, but it's unmistakable that Jake's mental powers are slowly waning without it. Once readers have caught up with returning characters, such as couple Marshall and actress Lacey, as well as the main villain, who has retribution on the mind, the story ignites pages with scenes of action and suspense. There are shootouts, car chases and even a pursuit on foot; meanwhile, Ahmed and Sarafina (Jake and Francesca's other kids) are aboard a plane headed for an unwelcome crash landing. The baddies are just as diverse as Jake's group—they have to be since they're stationed globally, from Hong Kong and Rome to the U.S.—but standouts are Lin, Min and Zhin, triplet sisters known for their beauty yet in possession of much more. Zhin has an exceptional intellect, and Min is a skilled fighter, while all three have their own reasons for vengeance against Jake and company. Bard doesn't give readers time to breathe, and while it's unfortunate that not every good guy makes it to the end, there's a solid cliffhanger.

**High-speed espionage thriller with sci-fi touches that'll have readers impatiently waiting for the next installment.**



## EVERY SECRET THING A Ross Duncan Novel

Bartley, Christopher

Peach Publishing (278 pp.)

\$12.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book

Dec. 18, 2014

978-1-78036-260-1

In Bartley's (*A Bullet to Dream of*, 2014, etc.) latest historical novel, a 1930s gangster with a conscience finds himself tangled up in big small-town mysteries involving murder, drugs and—most dangerous of all—young love.

In the book's very first paragraph, Ross Duncan drinks Old Overholt rye, checks his pistol and reads his Bible, which provides a succinct snapshot of his character: a man with a hard past who's willing to do hard things but who's also looking for a redemptive path through life. Unfortunately for Ross, his path out West, after a couple of flat tires, leaves him stranded in Gentryville, a small California town that's a hotbed of noir suspense. There's a young, up-and-coming boxer whose trainer uses some unorthodox methods, including narcotics; a blowsy drunk with a hard-luck tale of an embezzling husband; and a good-time mayor with the muscle to enforce his special rules who's facing an imminent election against his old mentor. As a bartender tells Ross, "There are a lot of things about this town you wouldn't guess." Ross, who stands up to bullies, becomes drawn to the tragedy of the boxer and his girlfriend; finally, he ends up working for the shady Mayor Vargas. The mayor has a blurry past, a mysterious wife and a plan for a big score. The mysteries of Gentryville soon stretch to San Francisco, with its scandal-ridden Hetch Hetchy plan to bring water from Yosemite, and to Detroit, with a tale of missing drugs and a missing wife. Bartley's writing is confident throughout, moving smoothly from the clean prose of action scenes ("I shot him once in the chest") to poetic asides on small-town sin; Gentryville, for example, is described as "a confined space that allowed the whispers to echo." Ross, in particular, is a curious character: a bank robber who talks about physicists, evolution and psychiatry ("In prison I'd read some writings by a guy named Freud: 'No mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore'"). Although he sometimes seems overly informed, he's an intriguing guide for a redemptive tale that's also a meditation on love.

**Another solid, entertaining noir thriller from Bartley.**



## NICKERBACHER The Funniest Dragon

Barto, Terry John

Illus. by Sponaule, Kim

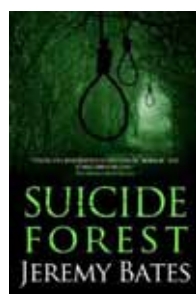
AuthorHouse

978-1-4969-5454-1

In Barto (*Gollywood, Here I Come!*, 2014) and Sponaule's children's picture book, a young dragon slays his captive princess, her prince and finally his own disapproving father—with laughter.

Young readers will identify with the sad-eyed main character from the start—a dragon named Nickerbächer who's guarding an imprisoned princess "because his papa told him to." As he does so, however, he practices his jokes on her, as he yearns to be a stand-up comedian. Most of them involve clever wordplay: "Why did it take *me* forever to cross the road?...Because I'm always a-draggin'." Just as Gwendolyn tells him that he must pursue what gives him pleasure, the authors show woodland animals fleeing in terror as Papa Dragon approaches. The young dragon tells his father about his dream and is sternly reminded of his dragonly duty. That afternoon, Prince Happenstance arrives to rescue the princess and repeatedly challenges Nickerbächer to fight after the dragon calls him "Prince Fancypants." Instead, Nickerbächer torches some nearby trees. Soon, Happenstance admits his squelched desire to be a baseball player, and the opponents realize their common ground. Later, in the city, Nickerbächer finds the courage to step onstage for his first comedy act. It will be hard for readers not to laugh along as they see the audience's delighted, upturned faces. Later, after receiving his father's approval, the dragon tells one last joke: "You know what happened to the dragon whose dream came true? He lived happily ever after." The text of this book is full of body language and voice cues and, as a result, often begs to be read aloud, such as when the princess tells Nickerbächer, "You'd make a great comedian." "Nickerbächer looked over his shoulder. 'Don't let my papa hear that.'" The book's expressive, jewel-toned illustrations also pack an emotional punch. Overall, this dramatic story about a dragon stand-up comedian will likely entertain readers of all ages.

**A well-illustrated dragon tale that may help bridge the gap between young and old readers.**



## SUICIDE FOREST

Bates, Jeremy

Ghillinnein Books (440 pp.)

\$12.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book

Dec. 16, 2014

978-0-9937646-2-2

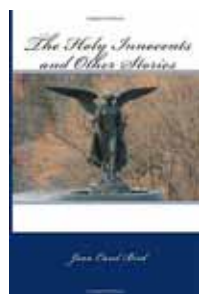
In Bates' (*The Taste of Fear*, 2012, etc.) horror novel, a simple excursion into a reputedly haunted forest turns into a nightmare when people start dying in conspicuously unnatural ways.

## Readers who enjoy a scare or two would do well to pick up this collection of memorable campfire stories.

A STRANGER TO THE DARKLANDS

Ethan Childs, an American teaching English in Tokyo for the last four years, plans to climb Mount Fuji with girlfriend Mel and a few pals. But when a looming storm nixes the outing, Israeli tourists Ben and Nina convince the group to join them on a hike through nearby Aokigahara Jukai. The forest is infamous for an incredibly high number of suicides, reportedly in the hundreds per year, and some believe the ghosts of the dead haunt it. What begins as an unsettling ambience (there are no sounds of animals or any trace of wind) quickly gives way to serious, tangible threats when one of the party members dies from an apparent suicide. Ethan and company are soon lost, and the noises they hear in the woods either confirm the existence of ghosts or, perhaps worse, mean that a murderer is tracking them down. Readers may recognize a slasher-film vibe—people willingly go into the creepy woods—and familiar characters, like the smart friend, Honda, who stays behind and the obnoxious jerk, John Scott, who reaps much of Ethan's animosity. But Bates' approach to the story is surprisingly restrained, cultivating impressive frights in the unnerving environment: The trees have "skeletal hands," for instance, and the forest is so dense that the sky practically disappears on a hike that's hardly begun. The latter part of the novel becomes a desperate fight for survival as the group runs out of water and is further burdened by both an ailment and severe injury. The story's ambiguity, however, is retained throughout: No one is sure whether the unseen villain is human or apparition or whether they are simply victims of unfortunate circumstances. Back stories help shape the characters, including Ethan and Mel's relationship, hampered by possible infidelity, and the protagonist tormented by the death of older brother Gary, killed by a robber. The story, decelerated by its big reveal, loses some of its steam near the end, but the conclusion is potent and not easily anticipated.

**Bates' choice to avoid brazen scares makes for an understated horror story that will remind readers what chattering teeth sound like.**



### THE HOLY INNOCENTS AND OTHER STORIES

Bird, Joan Carol

CreateSpace (88 pp.)

\$5.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book | Oct. 5, 2014  
978-1-4991-8210-1

Short story writer Bird (*Nightmare and Nostalgia*, 2013) offers five tales of the fantastic, most involving haunted (or haunting) females.

The author makes ghost stories her specialty in this collection, and hers are of an especially gentle variety, grounded more in emotion than horror, with very few things likely to say "boo." However, it's not the sole genre in her repertoire. In the title tale, *Holy Innocents* is a Catholic convent/orphanage in Cincinnati, taking in children during the depths of the Depression as a flu epidemic ravages the city. The narrator, Agnes, lovingly looks after one newcomer, Lizzie, but seems to never interact with the other nuns or children.

(Readers get one guess at the benevolent Agnes' true nature.) Bird distinguishes her tales with pleasing, well-chosen language, and the second, "Magnetic Attraction," is a standout: an imagining of the fractured family relationships of scientist-spouses Marie and Pierre that uses wordplay and terminology derived from physics and chemistry (although it's set during a séance, naturally). "A Serpent in Paradise" is the lone sci-fi entry and also the only one from a male point of view. In it, a developer despoiling Brazilian rain forests encounters a fungus that normally infects ants and alters their behavior; now, however, it's aiming higher up the food chain. In "Monster," the spirit of a dancer resents her early death and forcibly and grotesquely reincarnates itself in a random woman, resulting in a medical anomaly. The closer, "Walk-In," describes an eager ghost possessing a willing host—a mentally unstable wife and mother. Readers can finish this collection in the time it takes to watch a *Creepshow*-style horror-film anthology. The tales don't have that movie's gore, but they do offer consistency, intelligence and a few haunting notions.

**An offbeat set of horror stories that impart subtle, rather than raw, shocks.**



### A STRANGER TO THE DARKLANDS And Other Tales

Blackehart, Stephen

CreateSpace (338 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book

Nov. 13, 2014

978-1-5029-7051-0

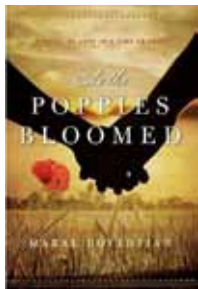
Vampires, witches and zombies share top billing in Blackehart's creepy debut collection of three novellas in screenplay form.

In this book's first tale, set during World War II, the U.S. military enlists a wisecracking art thief named Bernie Ross to travel to Romania and impersonate Nazi officer Rolf Fleischer, whom he strikingly resembles. However, Ross and his companions don't know that the German possesses a powerful relic that's turned him into a vampire. This results in an entertaining, supernatural adventure story that's reminiscent of the Indiana Jones movies. However, none of this tale's lighthearted moments are to be found in the second—a gut-wrenching horror story about a witch in modern-day New Mexico. Real estate investor Sara Ramos Hollister's child is abducted one snowy night by a shadowy figure, and five years later, Sara's appraiser husband, Leonard, puts a tax lien on the home of a mysterious old woman, unknowingly invoking the hag's dangerous wrath. This tale, like the first, is brilliantly frightening and sure to cause more than a few readers to think twice before turning off their lights at night. The third story, unfortunately, falls comparatively flat due to its cast of rather bland and sometimes-irritating characters. In it, U.S. State Department intern Charlie Wager is rendered a quadruple amputee after a bombing in Iraq, and he later becomes a voodoo-oriented superhero. He then tries to save his fiancée from dark forces that are turning hundreds of



Brazilians into zombies. Author Blackehart, an actor by trade, says he decided to publish his tales as screenplays, as he originally wrote them, in order to maintain their authenticity. For the most part, this format works, thanks to the author's agile prose and imagination. However, they do suffer from moments of forced dialogue and awkward interactions, due in part to the limitations of screenplay storytelling, in which characters must often voice plot exposition. These flaws aside, readers who enjoy a scare or two would do well to pick up this collection of memorable campfire stories.

**A spooky, inventive and compelling compilation.**



### AS THE POPPIES BLOOMED

*Boyadjian, Maral*

Salor Press (281 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Jan. 4, 2015

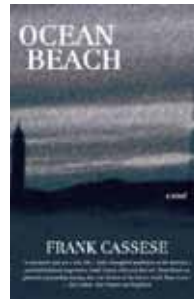
978-0-9911241-0-7

On the eve of war and destruction, an Armenian family tries to maintain its traditional way of life in this historical novel.

As this luminous, doom-tinged tale begins, it's 1913 in eastern Turkey, and in the little Armenian village of Salor, the

headman's teenage daughter Anno is hiding in an abandoned well, not only to escape from war or soldiers, but to evade prying eyes on this busy day when her sister is getting married and to steal a moment with Daron, the young man she loves. Their Romeo-and-Juliet story occupies much of the novel. Anno's father objects to the marriage; he wrongly believes that Daron's father has been sexually immoral. As this knot gets unraveled, the villagers go about their daily, age-old agrarian routines. And some men quietly make dangerous trips to gather arms and ammo, especially after 1915, when the Ottoman government begins rounding up and murdering Armenian intellectuals and political leaders. Armenians remember the massacres of 1894 and wish to be prepared this time. "But," as one *fedayee*, or freedom fighter, observes, "how will a tiny band of men such as ourselves, with nothing but the guns we can smuggle, protect our people from the whole of the Turkish army?" They can't, and this knowledge hangs over the reader like the clouds veiling Salor's nearby Mount Maratuk. In her debut novel, Boyadjian vividly conjures the specific sensory details of the Armenians' lost world—food, drink, nature, daily tasks, and handmade objects, such as a rug given for a wedding "with such a joyous blend of deep reds, oranges, and yellows that everyone gasped." The story is fiction but is based on memories from the author's four grandparents—all survivors of the 1915 Armenian genocide. Their survival adds a note of hope.

**Powerful and sensitive, this tragic novel helps illuminate a historical episode still too little known or acknowledged.**



### OCEAN BEACH

*Cassese, Frank*

Manuscript

Jun. 1, 2014

A forbidden love affair threatens to destroy an aimless college student and his precocious sister.

Peter Niletti and his younger sister, Severine, are students at a respected liberal arts university, where their father is a philosophy professor. As children, Peter was in awe of Severine's talent and beauty and jealous of her name, which he believed she embodied "as though having emerged from the womb with a preternaturally precocious awareness of who she was." The siblings forged a close bond, but as teenagers, the bond takes a darker turn as they begin a passionate, sexually charged affair. For Severine, the shift in the relationship is a mistake; however, the affair triggers for Peter an all-consuming obsession that fills his every waking hour with thoughts of Severine. When she begins dating a fellow student named Spencer, Peter's jealousy leads him on a downward spiral of unpredictable behavior and drug use with his friend Don. Overwhelmed by Peter's obsession, Severine embarks on a desperate course of action. Cassese's novel is an ambitious and challenging effort that struggles to deliver on its disturbing premise. Cassese expertly renders the permissive, free-thinking milieu that shapes Peter's and Severine's intellectual developments. Although their father is a relatively minor character, his influence as a philosophy professor can be seen in their interests and, especially, their speech. Cassese's development of the two lead characters yields more mixed results. Peter is a fairly static character whose primary interest is maintaining the relationship he has with Severine, an interest that ultimately comes at the expense of continuing his education or developing relationships with anyone other than Severine or Don. The lack of character development actually helps the novel by reinforcing Peter's single-minded focus on Severine. Despite being the object of Peter's, and later Spencer's, desire, Severine remains a bit of a mystery. Cassese offers occasional glimpses into Severine's motivations, but her reasons for beginning a relationship with Peter remain elusive.

**A harrowing character study of a dissolute young man destroyed by obsession, the underlying nihilism of which might be off-putting to some readers.**

# Alison is enjoyably relatable as a self-deprecating but kindhearted heroine.

ATLANTIS RISING



## PSALMANDALA

Collins, Michael Patrick

ELJ Publications (84 pp.)

\$16.14 paper | Oct. 16, 2014

978-1-942004-06-6

Combining cosmic visions with earthy anecdotes, this hallucinogenic collection of poems tells of a moody man finding his place in the universe.

Much of Collins' book is grounded in the physical world, where the first-person narrator smokes cigarettes, gets caught in the rain and struggles with love. But many of the poems are dreamy, combining nightmarish images with pop-culture references and political rants. Collins peppers epic phrases with complex and even made-up words: "America, America, / you soulavoric, luxaphobic pyrophile, / I will sing my dream until I am finished." Some pieces read like stage monologues, direct and relatable, while others are broken up and surreal, alienating the reader with Collins' wild expressions. His most enjoyable poems are also the easiest to follow, as with "To a Thief," a haunting elegy to a late grandfather: "we / laughed like his body would never be ashes. This is just to say we / are still laughing in that remembrance, in that Cadillac I'll never ride / in again, in that memory you will never take away." In work thick with motifs—e.g., mysterious children, vivid dreams and the presence of supernatural beings—Collins uses such diverse references as "Waltzing Matilda" and Google searches in the same poem. He sometimes directly addresses the reader or other characters, as in the poem "Don't get mad at me, Jesus." The most interesting and frustrating aspect of Collins' style is his use of fictional compounds, including "other tongues," "enerdreadful" and "herenow's allpulse," among scores of others. The writing is free and inventive, building its own vocabulary, but the language is often so confusing and abstract that it struggles to make sense. Collins uses this lexicon to describe his relationship with big ideas and higher powers, as if more ineffable concepts require ever stranger words. His ponderous narrators struggle with fiery emotions, some flirting with violence. For readers of the New York School of poets, the avant-garde tone will likely sound familiar, even nostalgic.

**An ambitious, blustery debut that establishes a distinct and often arcane style.**



## THE MASTERS WORKSHOP COLLECTION

Cornelius, James Bryan

CreateSpace (140 pp.)

\$10.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book

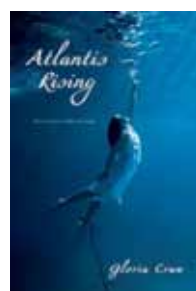
Oct. 18, 2014

978-1-5008-8110-8

Diverse, stimulating assortment of nine short stories by a veteran short story writer and English professor at Texas A&M University.

This brief collection features a variety of themes and plotlines, but most of the stories share some commonalities: settings in the southwestern United States (mainly in the author's own state of Texas) and characters who either drink too much themselves or are affected by the drinking habits of others. In the opening story, "Atonement Circle," Roger, a priest currently without a flock, is camping out at his mother's pristine, white-colored ranch while dealing with the aftermath of his divorce; ostensibly, he's writing his book, but primarily, he's drinking scotch from a coffee mug. His peaceful retreat, not to mention his mother's virginal decor, is destroyed by two housebreaking ex-cons. In "Playa Conchal," Danny is called to a nursing home where his father, Donald, suffering from a rare form of dementia, believes he is vacationing in Costa Rica. Cornelius takes a familiar enough theme—the heartbreaking effects of dementia—and twists it into a story of hope and living one's last days to the fullest. Even "Black Stag," despite a dubious beginning featuring a stag as the protagonist and narrator, emerges as another inspiring tale of two species caring for one another. "The Art of Brunch" is an enjoyable, if slightly predictable, cautionary tale illustrating the old saying "you can't buy class." Most unique, and perhaps least successful, of the nine stories is the eponymous and final offering, "Masters Workshop," about three afflicted children who gather at the behest of Logan Stane. In this story, Cornelius tries too hard to build suspense, constructing unnecessary back stories that detract from the simple tale of a miracle. Cornelius excels at creating memorable and generally likable (despite some flaws) characters. His writing is clean and free of errors, as one would expect from an English professor.

**Entertaining, well-written stories that carry a deeper message.**



## ATLANTIS RISING

Crow, Gloria

Entangled Teen (352 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$7.59 e-book | Jan. 6, 2015

978-1-62266-519-8

In Crow's YA fantasy debut, a teenage girl discovers she's part of a magical race—and she may be key to saving humankind.

Alison McKye didn't think her ability to plant thoughts in others' minds was anything special. But when she was 14, a stranger in the park noticed her magical abilities and left her with the ominous warning that her powers could attract the attention of dark forces, and she and her adoptive family might be at risk. Now 17, Alison avoids social connections, dresses inconspicuously and uses her power to deflect those who notice her, hoping to remain invisible from anyone who may wish her or her family harm. But when several newcomers show up at her Las Vegas school, Alison finds her powers are no longer working as they should—and she soon learns that there are others like her. Alison is one of the magical beings who call themselves the dewing. The dewing originated in Atlantis many centuries ago and lived peacefully until a civil war forced them to sink their

# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## BRIAN KILEY

### THE COMEDIAN GOES FROM LATE NIGHT TO THE PRINTED PAGE

By Nick A. Zaino III

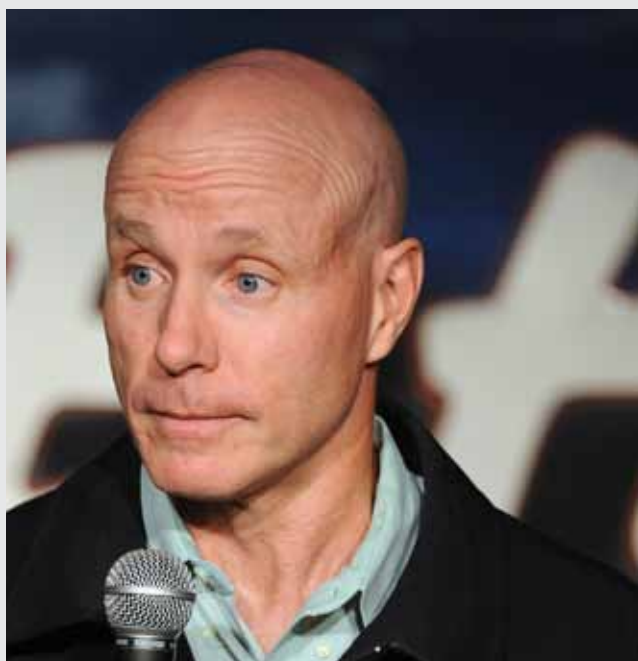


Photo courtesy Michael Schwartz

BRIAN KILEY HAS BEEN A WRITER his entire professional career. He has penned jokes for his own stand-up act and for his longtime employer Conan O'Brien, whom he has been with since O'Brien's original *Late Night* show. He is currently head monologue writer on *Conan*. And almost by accident, Kiley is now a novelist, having released his first book, *The Astounding Misadventures of Rory Collins*, in November.

The book started in a writing class Kiley took after moving to Los Angeles from New York when O'Brien took over *The Tonight Show*; it was supposed to be just an exercise. "I wrote what I thought was a short story," he says. "And the teacher said, 'Well, that's not a short story, that's a first chapter of a novel.'" Kiley said, "It is?"

He started adding chapters in his spare time, but it would soon become a daily pursuit. O'Brien's ten-

ure as host of *The Tonight Show* was short and fraught with drama, lasting only seven months. Kiley was in limbo. He knew O'Brien would eventually land another job and he'd be employed again, and he still had stand-up comedy, but he had no day job. He had just moved his family across the country and bought a new house, and his wife had left her job.

Writing the book got him through a dark period. To keep himself going, he stuck to his morning routine of getting up and getting dressed, but instead of driving to a studio, he sat down to work on his novel. "When the whole *Tonight Show* thing happened and we were suddenly out of work, I didn't want to just wake up and not shave and be in my sweatpants all day," he says. "I would spend three or four hours working on it. It was good for me to have something to do to stave off the depression."

It wasn't that Kiley thought he'd never write a novel. He's an avid reader of novels and history books, and he'd had a passing notion that he might write a book. In the past, he would write a few pages and then abandon the idea. With *Rory*, suddenly he was following through. "I think it was something that I always thought, 'Someday I'm going to do this,'" he says. "And then it was like, 'Oh, this is actually the day.'"

On stage, Kiley is a kindly presence. He talks about his family and his daily life without being confessional. On *Conan*, he writes jokes for a mass audience that have to pass the muster of television censors. He is a first-class wit. Given his history, he has written a surprisingly dark tale. *Rory Collins* leaves a home with a suffocating mother who drove away his friends and potential dates (in one case, spray-painting "slut" on a young girl's house under cover of darkness) and browbeat his father. In college, he has a brief career as an awkward lothario, helping equally awkward women



lose their virginity. Then he finds himself in the role of a potential father and breadwinner.

The dark streak was a purposeful choice. "The jokes we write [on *Conan*] and the stuff I do in my act...is very light," Kiley says. "I didn't want to do that. I actually wanted it to be something kind of meaty." To some degree, that surprised people familiar with Kiley's career who read the book. "I think people were expecting it to be a jokey book. They were like, 'Oh, this is actually a real novel as opposed to just characters saying jokes as they come in.'"

There are still plenty of funny moments and funny lines in the book, but Kiley was careful to make sure the humor wasn't gratuitous. It had to arise naturally from the story and the characters. Looking to authors like John Updike and Richard Russo, Kiley sought to preserve a sense of believability and still find some laughs. "I read Richard Russo's *Nobody's Fool*, and all the dialogue is just insults," he says. "Yeah, you cheap prick, when are you going to dust off your wallet,' all that kind of stuff." Kiley realized that "Oh, people do joke in conversation and that actually is realistic dialogue."

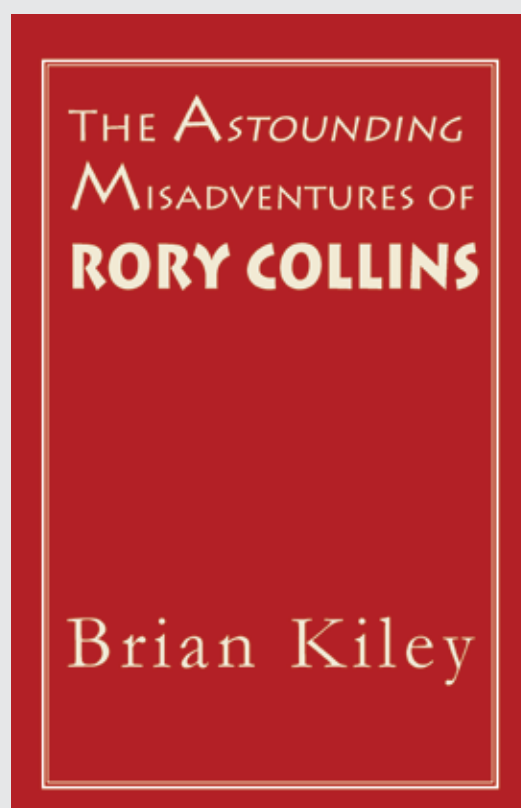
Still, he says that "incredibly little" of the story is autobiographical. He did lose his mother to cancer when he was 22, which influenced the story. And while Kiley describes his mother as "quirky," she was nothing like the family terrorist who is Rory's mother. "It's funny, because when they were talking to me about putting together the press release, the guy was like, 'So, you decided to draw on your college experience,'" Kiley recalls. Not so, he insists. "I just kind of made the stuff up."

When the book was finished, Kiley did shop it around, eventually finding management and an agent. He got good feedback from major publishers but the book never landed with them. "It was pretty positive, but nobody was quite willing to pull the trigger," he says. His agent pushed for the book to get published, and it wound up with Beverly Drive Press, an imprint of Agency for the Performing Arts. He did a few rewrites before it was published, and his agency handled most everything after that, a process Kiley is unsure about. "I don't get hung up on the details," he says, laughing.

The book seems like perfect fodder for a quirky indie drama like *Skeleton Twins* or *Nebraska*. Kiley says his agents are shopping the idea, but nothing is forth-

coming. "If Alexander Payne wanted to call me and work out something, I'd be more than happy," he says. It's an appealing idea to someone who spends so much time writing jokes about ephemeral topics, the events of a particular day or week. "We write our jokes and Conan does them, and then they're gone and that's it," he says. "There's nothing that I write that anyone's going to want to see in a week or a month, never mind years from now. I would want to have something where I can say, 'Yeah, I did this,' and 20 years from now people will say, 'Oh, I saw that movie.'" Kiley is also working on a follow-up novel, but no one should expect to see it anytime soon. "Unfortunately, now I have a job," he says. "It kind of gets in the way."

*Nick A. Zaimo III is a freelance writer based in Boston covering the arts for Kirkus Reviews, The Boston Globe, BDCWire.com, TheSpitTake.com and other publications.*



**THE ASTOUNDING MISADVENTURES OF RORY COLLINS**

*Kiley, Brian*

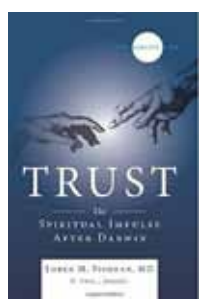
Beverly Drive Press (270 pp.)

\$23.00 | Nov. 11, 2014

978-0-786-75620-9

own island. Now the dewing clans are at war once again, and Alison's ability—called thoughtmaking—is desperately needed, not only to save the dewing, but to protect all of humankind from enslavement. Can she master her ability in time to rescue those she loves? Craw's prose is crisp and accessible, and though the plot is a touch predictable at times, Atlantis serves as an exciting, fresh inspiration for this supernatural fantasy. On top of that, the mechanics of the dewing's powers are quite intriguing. In general, the novel is tightly constructed, with each detail building to the novel's roaring climax. Alison is enjoyably relatable as a self-deprecating but kindhearted heroine, and a romantic subplot dovetails nicely with the main action without overwhelming the story. The novel's conclusion seems to hint at a sequel; the lush mythology Craw has created certainly warrants additional pages.

**An enchanting debut from a promising new author of paranormal YA.**



**TRUST**  
**The Spiritual Impulse**  
**After Darwin**

Fishman, Loren M.

CreateSpace (404 pp.)

\$14.23 paper | May 1, 2013

978-1-4825-8470-7

A sweeping, scholarly investigation of the main ligature that connects religion and science: trust.

Fishman (co-author: *Yoga and Multiple Sclerosis*, 2007, etc.) wrestles with a notion that has always flummoxed philosophers: the relationship between religion and science, i.e., faith vs. reason. Bucking a trend to interpret the two as mutually exclusive or two parallel modes of discourse too different to effectively communicate with one another, he argues that they share a common core: the “mysterious phenomenon of trust.” In fact, Fishman contends that science blossomed from the seeds planted by religion; science, he says, refined religion's preoccupation with the investigation of ultimate causes and the underlying demand of doctrinal consistency. Religion focuses on the “uncreated creator,” while “science traces the skein of all causes back to, yes, exactly one cause.” The common and fertile ground of both (as well as in law) is trust. “The Scholastics, with what many still consider utterly vain arguments, were actually doing the groundwork, the essential preparation for the social institution of science,” he says. The key was “satisfying a necessary precondition for a large group of somewhat different peoples to appreciate the same problems, and be able to agree about the conditions for their solutions.” Broad in its scope, Fishman's approach is a deeply philosophical mediation. While he focuses on Christian sources of theology, he also discusses Islam, Confucianism, Taoism and other non-Western schools of thought. While the prose is lucid, this isn't a book for a layperson; it presupposes a strong understanding of the development of Western philosophy. In the end, science ends up much more reliant on mutual trust within a community than one might

think; meanwhile, religion, also dependent upon trust, can be much more rationally rigorous.

**A scrupulously researched and timely investigation for those with backgrounds in philosophy and theology.**



**HARD CHARGER**  
**The Rebel Guardians MC**  
**Series Book 1**

Fobes, Tracy

Amazon Digital Services (172 pp.)

\$2.99 e-book | Nov. 7, 2014

In a novel from prolific author Fobes (*Touch Not the Cat*, 2012, etc.), a helicopter pilot back from Afghanistan reunites with a former love in a hometown controlled by the Russian mob.

As an 8-year-old in Rockport Grove, New Jersey, Jake Gal-lent witnessed a humdinger of a fight between mother Laurie and father Kurt, who rode away on his motorcycle and later washed up on a New Jersey beach. After almost 10 years as an Airborne Ranger, Jake returns to a town devastated by Hurricane Sandy to work in construction; he might have PTSD. At Rowdy Ray's Roadhouse, Jake learns that his friend Alex has joined the Rockport Grove Rebel Guardians, a motorcycle club of which Kurt was a member. Alex tells Jake that the town is now run by the Russian mob, which provided disaster relief not covered by insurance and government programs, and it's time for payback. He also glimpses Alex's sister Sofia; they were lovers before he left for boot camp. Although Alex warns Jake to stay away from her, the attraction between the two remains, and they drift dangerously close to where they left off a decade ago. Rowdy Ray, who owed the *bratva*, the brotherhood, is found dead with his head bashed in, and Laurie is also seriously indebted and endangered. With the police under the mob's thumb, Jake is forced to join the Guardians as the only viable solution. Fobes' novel is a pleasingly diverse mix: a decorated soldier with a father void and a thing for the woman who affects him like no other; a resurrected town shackled by nasty Russians; and a secret society in need of a new recruit. The story moves quickly and has a couple of unexpected twists as well as a violent pair of goons with the gift of gab. Dubbed Ugly and Uglier by Jake, they effectively place him back in the battlefield. One letdown: At book's end, the town's fate is unknown, presumably to be addressed in a future installment.

**Entertaining blend of erotic romance, Russian baddies and revved-up motorcycles.**

Fans of Tony Hillerman's Jim Chee novels will find a great deal to enjoy here, and the deep-seated injustices of the historical setting give the tale a pleasingly complex texture.

WHITEWASH



**THE SLUMS OF PALO ALTO**  
**How to Be Ecstatically Happy**  
**After Ten Failed Startups**

Fussell, Mark L.  
CreateSpace (188 pp.)  
\$38.95 paper | Oct. 3, 2014  
978-1-5003-2851-1

A California Institute of Technology alumnus too smart to be unemployed, Fussell (*Hello World!*, 2014) finds happiness through failure in this lighthearted,

contemporary memoir.

Fussell brims with intelligence and has a wholly realistic, hard-knocks sense of how business and stock options work in California's tech epicenter, where startups bloom and often quickly fade away. His experiences with a string of 10 such companies will be of interest to others entering or already in this arena. But those throughlines are only part of this wide-ranging expedition into personal philosophy, social responsibility and family values. The titular joke is that there are no slums in Palo Alto, only those neighborhoods where cracker box houses command seven figures for the privilege of residing in and around Silicon Valley. Even renting, as the author and his family do, costs absurd amounts of money but ensures that children go to superlative schools and breathe the rarefied air of these environs, where everything is top-notch. In these brief, colorfully illustrated pages, the author seems convincingly not neurotic and truly happy. He loves his wife deeply, adores his two daughters, welcomes relatives with open arms, volunteers his valuable time to technical programs for young students and endlessly pounds tennis balls to perfect his serve. He also regards women as "clearly the superior gender" (though badly treated in business), favors Eastern over Western culture, drives the freeway like a maniac, and reveres huge motor homes, preferably with two bathrooms. Otherwise, he diligently refills the ever draining (metaphorical) aquarium that is home to his "koi," aka his wife Rebecca and two daughters, using what must be the eye-popping hourly flat rate he charges any high-tech startup or suitable enterprise that needs his services. His forays into the rudiments of programming will alert most readers that they are out of their depths. For instance, when describing binary, he says: "With just the digits '0' and '1,' you can represent any number that you need. Say you needed to pay an eight-dollar tab. You would pay that with what might look like a *thousand* dollar bill." An expensive distinction!

**A pleasure from start to finish and evidence that really smart people often have a lot of luck.**



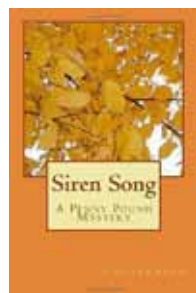
**WHITEWASH**

Gordon, Stan  
iUniverse (218 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book | Sep. 2, 2014  
978-1-4917-3792-7

A police procedural thriller set on an Apache reservation in 1935.

The latest novel from Gordon (*Moon in the Water*, 2014) centers on an investigation into a series of kidnappings of Catholic missionaries across the American Southwest. The crimes bubble up amid well-sketched tension between federal authorities and the population of the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation. One Native American character connects the tension to a long-simmering resentment over the land: "We got one or two places on the whole reservation that's got water, that's green," she says. "The rest is for scorpions, tarantulas, lizards, cactus." The kidnappings come to the attention of four men: Jake Callis, the reservation's superintendent of Indian affairs; Archbishop Julio Cervantes, whose clerics are being targeted; Albert Chata, the Apache reservation chief of police; and FBI agent Dan Strather, who's assigned the case because the kidnappings are federal crimes. A grudging respect grows between Chata and Strather, but Chata never really understands the white, Christian world ("No structure, no matter how it was designed or implemented, could pay a real god homage," he thinks when standing in an ornate Christian church. "That came from the sky and sun and earth and all living things"). Gordon skillfully unfolds his plot with a fine ear for dialogue and considerable skill at action sequences. He also engagingly evokes the dark injustices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the era. The beliefs and culture of the Apache people may be new and strange to many of Gordon's readers, but he sketches it with authority. He does telegraph some key aspects of the crime spree's origin, but he solidly constructs a multilayered conclusion, and Chata is a compelling hero. Fans of Tony Hillerman's Jim Chee novels will find a great deal to enjoy here, and the deep-seated injustices of the historical setting give the tale a pleasingly complex texture.

**A fast-paced, gripping cross-cultural crime novel.**



**SIREN SONG**  
**A Penny Pound Mystery**

Greenwood, Jo  
CreateSpace (326 pp.)  
\$14.99 paper | Nov. 7, 2014  
978-1-5006-0452-3

Penny Pound, divorced mom, schoolteacher and church organist, gets caught up in the investigations that follow a deadly blaze at a student's home in this first installment of a planned series.

Penny Pound is a third-grade teacher in Redfield, Ohio, in 1990. She also serves as organist at the nearby Episcopal church,



led by the kindly Rev. Huddleston. Offbeat, yet deeply engaged with her students, Penny feels under scrutiny since she doesn't always follow the school's curriculum. It doesn't help that her professor ex-husband convinced their 15-year-old son, Sam, to live with him and only visit her on weekends. Still, she has supportive friends—African-American school psychologist Glory, fellow newbie teacher Robin and choirmaster Andrew. Her retired cop father calls to tell her about a fire at the home of her student Keith. The circumstances are peculiar: Keith's mother is acting strangely, her current boyfriend and ex-husband have criminal pasts, and Keith's brother, who perished in the blaze, was drugged. A multilayered investigation ensues. Penny soon meets firefighter Jake Richards and experiences combustible attraction. Then her caring outreach to Keith prompts its own suspicions, leading to a final fiery showdown. First-time novelist Greenwood has created an appealing world that has elements of a cozy as well as the small-town charm and spirituality found in Jan Karon's Mitford series. Keith's home life proves to be quite dark and disturbing, which lends a somewhat jarring undertone to this largely folksy narrative. Greenwood addresses this issue squarely, providing several beautifully written, touching scenes that point the way, as do sprinklings of excerpts from prayers and hymns, to this planned series' focus on redemption, hope and light. Overall, a skillful debut.

**An accomplished launch of a promising new spirituality-focused small-town series.**



### AWAKEN FROM THE DARKNESS

*Harker, Kevin M.*

CreateSpace (214 pp.)

\$9.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book

Nov. 28, 2013

978-1-4927-7567-6

An angry teen must clear himself of murder in Harker's YA debut.

Adrenalin is Mitch Blais' drug of choice. It keeps him away from the other substances enjoyed by his high school peers, but it comes with problems all its own. For instance, when someone baits him or disrespects his nerdy best friend, Charlie, Mitch may be inclined to throw a punch. When the fight turns against him, Mitch may accidentally push his opponent into a campfire. When the cops show up to stop the party, Mitch may opt to run for it. And when a cop tries to apprehend him, Mitch may respond by kicking her in the chest. It's the adrenaline that makes him do these things. Mitch believes it will come in handy next year, when he graduates from high school and joins the Marines. His goal in life is to serve in Afghanistan and fight against the people he blames for his father's death: "He wanted to make his dad proud by avenging his death. He wanted to go straight into the infantry in Afghanistan and seek revenge against the Muslims who had hurt his father." When his probation officer, Mr. Rooney, warns Mitch that if he keeps getting into trouble he's more likely to end up in prison orange than Marine Corps blues,

Mitch responds with the typical threats and profanity. Therefore, when Mr. Rooney is found murdered in his apartment, it's no surprise that the cops turn to Mitch as their primary suspect. He's sent to await his trial at a menacing rehabilitation center where inmates have been known to disappear. If Mitch can't uncover the truth of the crime and prove his innocence, it's not only a military career that he'll forsake, but the rest of his life. Harker writes in quick, propulsive prose that keeps the pages turning, and he has a knack for writing action sequences like chases and fights. However, it's when the movement slows and more cerebral scenes are required that the story falters. Harker does a serviceable job depicting the opaque, inarticulate anger of youth, but sometimes that opaqueness and inarticulation cloud out plot logic and character motivation. Though Mitch is forced to confront some of his own demons and expand his narrow worldview, many of the other characters are a bit too flat to remain long in the reader's mind.

**A fast-paced teen mystery that mimics the confusion of youth.**

### SECRET OF THE WARLOCK'S CRYPT

*Hayes, Tom*

ATBOSH Media Ltd.

978-1-62613-019-7

{ INDIE }

A 12-year-old working with his uncle, a historian, unearths clues to an old, macabre unsolved mystery while searching for a deceased millionaire's missing artifacts in this middle-grade novel.

Mike Hilliard works alongside his uncle Robert "Otto" Hilliard, an employee of the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland. Otto's research into the life and death of the ruthless Titus Morley attracts the attention of Lawrence Piddle, a professor of religion at Dartmouth College, but Mike begins to suspect Piddle's interest in the case is more than educational, especially after one of Morley's journals under the society's care suddenly goes missing. A priceless collection of masks and books disappeared following Morley's demise in 1872, when his oil refinery exploded. Cryptic drawings, maps and symbols in Morley's voluminous journals lead Mike to the location of Morley's mausoleum. Secretly teaming up with his uncle's colleague Billy Hayworth, Mike pays a late-night visit to the tomb, where he uncovers a secret room in which literally soul-stirring horror awaits. Dedicated to author John Bellairs, Hayes' debut novel offers age-appropriate chills, including death masks, rotted corpses and the walking dead, as well as flashes of mildly queasy terror ("A sickening sound filled Jeremiah's ears: the sound of cracking sticks and crushed hen eggs"). Hayes writes ably about the architecture of the story's pivotal locations, but his main character is inconsistently drawn. Mike is said to like ghost stories, and he perks up at the thought of an adventure, but his reactions suggest he wouldn't be especially eager for thrill-chasing. At one point, when his uncle casually mentions body hopping, Mike "choked on his soda and nearly spit it out." And

In response to his family's silence—and to the silence of a whole people still shellshocked by their grim treatment—Kalajian has become a professional storyteller and an excellent one at that.

STORIES MY FATHER NEVER FINISHED TELLING ME

while a tauter pace and more humor would liven things up, a solid foundation has been laid for a series of further adventures with Mike and Otto; Otto proclaims, "The Western Reserve Historical Society will get to the bottom of it....Rest assured. We'll get to the bottom of it all."

For young readers who, like Mike, are "always up for a good story, especially an historical one."

{ INDIE }

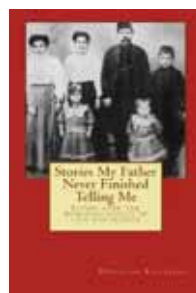
### GARY SEES HISTORY *A Child's Journey*

Hooker Jr., Gary  
Illus. by Doyle, Rachel  
SEE Entertainment  
978-0-615-57176-5

In this illustrated political memoir for kids, debut author and fifth-grader Hooker learns about politics and experiences history firsthand.

When Hooker's mom is selected as a delegate for the Democratic National Convention, her son is less than thrilled. After all, being around for the start of fifth grade seems much more important than traveling to a boring old convention, and Hooker is doubtful that voting for America's first black president matters since "things are better now" that Dr. King has changed the face of civil rights. He changes his mind about attending the convention after a serious talk with his parents and the promise of bringing along his friend Cameron, and before he knows it, Hooker is off to Denver for a life-changing brush with history. The city is full of new sights and sounds for Hooker, from a scary brush with protesters to crowds as big as 80,000. He and Cameron are awestruck. In spite of all the excitement, the boys must wait until the last day for the most exciting moment of all—the chance to see Barack Obama speak. As the boys await the big moment, there's plenty to learn, including the most powerful lessons of all. Warm and educational, this book is an ideal tool for elementary lessons in current events and politics. The author's enthusiasm for his candidate is tempered by an evenhanded, diplomatic explanation of protesters and their ability to exercise their constitutional rights. Young readers will be excited to discover that the book documents its young author's actual experiences, and Hooker's political engagement makes him a strong role model for a generation of future voters. Digitally minded youngsters will enjoy the accompanying DVD, which visually documents Hooker and Cameron's trip to Denver in low-key detail. From dips in the hotel pool to footage of the convention speeches, the digital bonus brings modern history to life even beyond the book's final pages.

A refreshing antidote to political cynicism.



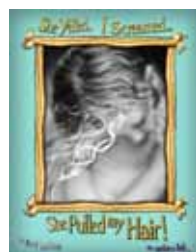
### STORIES MY FATHER NEVER FINISHED TELLING ME *Living With the Armenian Legacy of Loss and Silence*

Kalajian, Douglas  
8220 Press (258 pp.)  
\$16.95 paper | \$7.95 e-book  
May 31, 2014  
978-0-615-97902-1

Kalajian's (co-author: *They Had No Voice: My Fight for Alabama's Forgotten Children*, 2013, etc.) "ethno-memoir" is an elegiac reflection on growing up under the specter of the trials a family, and a whole people, experienced.

Kalajian, in his third book, touches upon both his upbringing as an American boy and his being a bearer of a tortured Armenian past. The remembrances are deeply personal meditations on what it was like to live distanced from a world with which he had very little direct contact even as it powerfully shaped his life. Readers will sense the author's background as an investigative journalist as he tries to wrestle the facts of his history from his family's laconic resistance to speak openly about it. Kalajian's inscrutable father is a near mystery; only slowly, in fits and starts, does Kalajian learn about his adventurous but hardship-ridden life. He had no idea his father went to China or Borneo and no idea his father grew up in Greece or that he was raised in an orphanage. Even his more voluble mother's tales were carefully edited and studiously redacted. While not intended as a work of rigorous scholarship, Kalajian's book contains considerable discussion about the history of Armenians, and much is revealed about their experience with Turkish persecution and global neglect. However, this is largely an autobiographical tale. "I am not a historian, and this is not a book of facts and dates and sober analysis," he says. "This is a story told by a man born in midair whose only hope for a good night's sleep is to close his fingers around the frayed cord of history and tug with all his might." His polished, sometimes even poetic prose evokes a sense of curiosity and lament. In response to his family's silence—and to the silence of a whole people still shellshocked by their grim treatment—Kalajian has become a professional storyteller and an excellent one at that.

An affecting account of an American man attempting to uncover his Armenian heritage and history.



### SHE YELLED. I SCREAMED... SHE PULLED MY HAIR! *An Unfair Tale*

Lesbay, Tracy  
Again Again Books (40 pp.)  
\$9.99 e-book  
978-0-9899988-3-3

In rhymed couplets, this debut book displays the challenges of sharing with a little sister.

Narrated by Phoebe—who has a sister, Audrey—this first story in a planned series begins in summer, when heat is making the girls so irritable that they are no longer kind to each other. Every time Phoebe asks Audrey to share their teapot, Audrey yells, Phoebe screams, and Audrey pulls Phoebe's hair. Soon, Phoebe grabs and then throws the teapot, hitting Audrey's foot. Without saying sorry, Phoebe heads for the shade of a tree and voices aloud her wish for Audrey to share. Immediately, a winged lady appears and reveals a sharing spell that involves giving Audrey leaves from a magical tree, coupled with kisses. Phoebe expects everything to be easy now that she has a magic spell, but it takes perseverance—as well as magic, a whole lot of leaves and kisses, and a change of seasons—for the sisters to finally get along. The text doubles as a playground for graphical elements by Leshay and James Renald: The word “burn” is on fire, while “shake” imitates quivering. The impressive black-and-white photographs invite deeper attention, but they can sometimes feel separate from the story. For example, depending on mood and angle, Audrey looks so different that young readers may find it difficult to figure out whom to follow. At times, the text is also confusing, as when Audrey rather randomly tells a stuffed bunny it can't have a car—“No car for Woo Wabbit!” Still, as part of a read-along, the uncommonly artful photos plot a refreshing path toward a heartfelt message.

**Little girls who are willing to work a bit for their understanding are likely to enjoy this wonderfully illustrated story with its successful treatment of text as graphics and some fresh ideas about sharing.**



**FIRST CREATURES**  
***A Journey Through Grief***

*Liberati, Tami*

Pewter Press (286 pp.)

\$11.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book | Aug. 5, 2014  
978-0-692-26618-2

In Liberati's debut novel, seemingly magical creatures visit an amnesiac grandmother and help her put her life—and mind—back together.

Beloved schoolteacher Ruth Lily has struggled for the past year, crippled by grief-induced dissociated amnesia after the death of her husband, Roger, in a violent car accident. Her therapist, Dr. Brooke, urges her to turn her attention to the garden that she and her husband cultivated together, as “grief work” to help her cope. Within that garden, she encounters the First Creatures, childlike entities who offer her emotional support as she begins to forge new friendships, attend social functions, and connect better with her now-distant son, Bryce, and his wife, who are expecting a new daughter. Not every First Creature in the garden brings easy comfort, however; for example, an amphibianlike entity called Mr. Gabriello slowly returns Ruth's missing memories in exchange for notes that her grandson, Hayden, has hidden around the garden. Mr. Gabriello helps her recall her times with Roger, from their first meeting to their wedding and beyond. Finally, most

chillingly, she remembers the car crash—and the other shocking fatality that struck her family that day. The novel uses short, rapid-fire chapters and a simple prose style; its muted tone in the face of fantastical events only accentuates its magical realism. The story is as much about coping as healing, as it explores the emotions, such as love, hope, peace and joy, that people often lose after tragedies. The First Creatures act as avatars of these feelings, and they're odd but nonthreatening. Velo, a tutu-wearing rabbitlike creature, is likely to become a favorite of many readers, but several characters outside the garden are equally quirky, like an overly frank girl who lives next door and a stammering priest with a haunted past. Each effectively serves as a reminder of the life that Ruth is missing. The author puts great care into portraying how grief alters relationships and turns day-to-day minutiae into insurmountable struggles, yet the novel ultimately offers a hopeful, cautious message of healing and compassion.

**No-frills prose underscores a charming, heart-wrenching tale about confronting and surviving grief.**



**HALO FOUND HOPE**  
***A Memoir***

*Matzelle, Helo*

Manuscript

Sep. 1, 2014

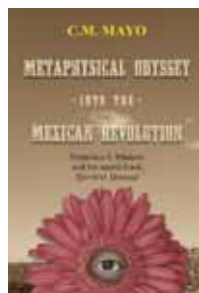
One young woman's story of leaning on her faith to get her through a medical catastrophe.

Heloise Matzelle, nicknamed “Halo,” the daughter of a Surinamese father and a German mother, grew up in Seattle with her parents and her younger brother, Henk; lived an ordinary, happy teenage life; and attended the University of Washington, where she met her future husband and eventually settled with him in Seattle and raised three children. “Life was busyness, blessings, and excitement,” she writes in her engaging nonfiction debut. “I had a beautiful home, a great husband, incredible children, and a cute dog named Grace.” That quick inventory leaves out her Christian faith, which she also possessed in abundance during these days of happiness and which would become far more important to her when her peaceful life was suddenly brought to a “complete and terrifying halt” by the diagnosis of a rare brain tumor. She'd had some temporary and troubling signs—auditory hallucinations, a metallic taste in her mouth, etc.—but the actual medical reason catches her and her family completely by surprise (she very movingly recounts the moment when she and her husband gathered the children around the kitchen table to break the news; she notes a little wistfully that “typically we sat there to share a meal, play games, tell stories, and laugh”). As is typical in such severe cases as this (her tumor was quite large), there was no time to waste: Almost immediately after her diagnosis, she underwent the complicated, delicate surgery designed to save her life (the book's descriptions of medical procedures are straightforward and gripping). Throughout her ordeal, Matzelle's religious faith sustained and guided her—this is as much a religious memoir as a medical one—and she attributes her survival and recovery to God as



much as to her neurosurgeon and her loving family. Christian readers will find in these pages a powerful testament to the power of faith in dark times, and even agnostics will be uplifted by the *joie de vivre* of this remarkable woman.

A medical emergency combines with a spiritual journey in this memorable account.



**METAPHYSICAL ODYSSEY  
INTO THE  
MEXICAN REVOLUTION**  
*Francisco I. Madero and His  
Secret Book, Spiritist Manual*

Mayo, C.M.

Dancing Chiva (298 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | \$4.50 e-book

Jan. 23, 2014

978-0-9887970-0-0

An introduction to and translation of Mexican revolutionary Francisco Madero's *Spiritist Manual*.

In the winter of 1911, as Mexican revolutionaries battled to oust the dictator Porfirio Diaz, an author identified only as "Bhîma" published *Manual espirita*, a slim volume that promised to provide readers with "the foundations of a very lofty philosophy" known as Spiritism. The human spirit, the author wrote, "is a higher entity than our body," its life not limited to one incarnation but reincarnated repeatedly as it evolves into ever greater states of consciousness. Bhîma, it turns out, was not some Eastern mystic but none other than Francisco Madero, who helped depose Diaz and served as president of Mexico from November 1911 to his murder in February 1913. In her book, Mayo, the pen name of Catherine Mansell, wife of a prominent Mexican economist, provides not only an English translation of Madero's *Spiritist Manual*, but also a lively introduction to a text that had sunk into "almost complete obscurity" but, she argues, is essential to "understanding Madero himself, why and how he led Mexico's 1910 Revolution, and the seething contempt of those behind the overthrow of his government and his assassination." Madero discovered Spiritism, Mayo writes, as a student in Paris in 1891 when he stumbled upon a magazine called *La Revue spirite*. After reading the works of Spiritism guru Allan Kardec, he became convinced "he had incarnated on this planet in order to usher in a golden age." But while he was motivated by his Spiritism and detailed messages he believed were sent to him by the dead, Madero had to promote his philosophy anonymously in Catholic Mexico, remaining "coyly, and sometimes very lumpily, behind the curtains." In one message, a spirit named José purportedly reminded him, "You have been selected by your Heavenly Father to fulfill a great mission on Earth." Mayo's frequent digressions may irritate some readers, but she makes an effective case for taking Madero's Spiritist beliefs seriously rather than simply dismissing them as "plumb crazy." "One does not have to be a Spiritist to champion freedom and democracy," Mayo concludes, "but for Madero, Mexico's Apostle of Democracy, metaphysics and politics were inseparable."

The author argues effectively that Madero's manual is essential to understanding his revolutionary zeal.



**GARBO'S LAST STAND**

Miller, Jon James

Manuscript

Mar. 17, 2015

In Miller's novel, a dying former tabloid reporter tells the story of his 1939 cruise-ship adventure—involving Greta Garbo, Nazis and a beautiful British secret agent—to a young journalist hoping for an exclusive.

In 2000, James Pressman, a hustling young documentary film producer, sits down to interview Seth Moseley. The ancient, emphysema-ridden ex-reporter claims to have a never-before-told story about Greta Garbo from September 1939. Moseley was a struggling New York City newshound then, on the run from gambling debts and desperate to snap a candid photo of the elusive star. Pressman is disappointed—and fired—when Moseley gives him a shaggy dog story instead. Then a slip on black ice lands Pressman in Moseley's hospital room. Moseley just didn't like Pressman's boss, he says, and to make amends, he'll share the full story of how he stowed away on the SS *Athenia* and encountered her secret cargo: Garbo. Moseley narrates a romantic, dangerous adventure aboard the ocean liner—the first ship to be downed in World War II—including a liaison with a gorgeous barmaid who's hiding a secret, tangling limbs with the glorious Garbo and thwarting evil Nazi thugs. Listening to this tale of dawning heroism, Pressman is inspired to make his own bold plan that will fill in the pieces of more than one puzzle, get the story, and win Sarah, his beautiful raven-haired nurse. Miller (*Adapting Sideways: How to Turn Your Screenplay into a Publishable Novel*, 2010) writes a fast-paced, humorous story well-grounded in fascinating historical details. The characters have more depth than usual for ripping yarns: Both the young Moseley and Pressman have mother issues (James' died when he was 8); both long for connection while they fear responsibility. Miller adeptly provides historical background and vividly evokes Garbo's on-screen magic. It's a drawback that only gorgeous women are worthwhile in this story (an innocent fat woman's photographic humiliation is played for laughs), but this could be seen as consistent with the star-struck, glamour-dazed natures of both narrators.

An appealing blend of hard-boiled noir and action-movie excitement with a romantic, worshipful heart.

# The tale picks up momentum/mayhem and puts an intriguing, nonstereotypical lead character through pitfalls and deadly perils of parahumanity.

FREND



## FREND

Miller, Jonathan R.

CreateSpace (256 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book

Oct. 10, 2014

978-1-5027-6115-6

After accepting a Faustian bargain to be transformed into a full-body cyborg serving a nonhuman race, heroine Anomie realizes she's part of a conspiracy deeper than she can imagine.

Miller's tricky blend of cyberpunk, intrigue, action, racial politics and morality begins with heroine Anomie, a black woman in future San Francisco, lying mangled in a hospital room. A shady firm called Silk Road approaches her with a repugnant but evidently well-known offer: In exchange for a payout in millions of euros, she will allow her wrecked body to be replaced by a full, superstrong cybernetic prosthesis known as a "frend"—Finite Robotics Enhanced Neurosensory Development. Miller describes the long, grueling surgical process without gore but with just enough detail to get the reader's (presumably organic) teeth grinding. Thus reborn, Anomie discovers she has leased herself to be a veritable plaything of the lumen, a noncorporeal race of software-based intelligence—think Skynet from the Terminator movies—inhabiting the bodies of various robots who have a yen for devising hideous ordeals. Apparently, if it weren't for the physically toughened frends to amuse the powerful lumen, their whims would viciously turn on the entire human race. Anomie comes to realize that she has actually been carefully inserted into this nightmarish servitude and also in a mission to infiltrate the lumen and exploit their weaknesses. But how? And by whom? Canny readers may too easily decode the surface plot as Robert Ludlum stuff blended with Ray Kurzweil's vision of *Homo sapiens* combining with machines. A big reveal at the end becomes painfully obvious midway through—*Bourne Identity Theft*, one might say. Nevertheless, Miller's skillful economy of language and penchant for playing the cards close to the vest—or chest plate—works to his advantage as the tale picks up momentum/mayhem and puts an intriguing, nonstereotypical lead character through pitfalls and deadly perils of parahumanity. *Ghost in the Shell* fans will have a blast.

A lean, well-oiled narrative speeds this multilayered sci-fi story through occasionally obvious circuitry.



## MONSTER SQUAD The Iron Golem

Page, Christian

New Generation Publishing (296 pp.)

\$12.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book

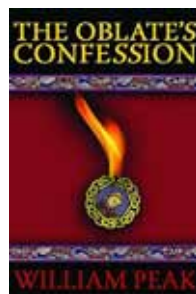
Nov. 25, 2014

978-1-78507-151-5

A mad scientist and his minions seek superpowered children in this debut middle-grade novel.

This novel harkens back to a time when thrills and chills for youngsters meant man-made monsters, werewolves and their ilk—not Japanese robots, magical realms or deranged killers. As this story begins, something is going very wrong in the town of Autumn's Hollow, Oregon. There are reports of a mysterious creature; something is leaving a faint green glow all over the place; and a local boarding school, Grimm Academy, is teeming with unusual students. Strange things are happening to seventh-grade friends Blaine, Dash and Shelley; for example, Dash is turning into a werewolf, and Blaine is becoming invisible. In addition, Grimm Academy's creepy headmaster seems unusually interested in them. Meanwhile, a new student named Drake joins the group and soon shows that he's also not what he seems. They soon fall into the headmaster's evil clutches; will the kids escape, or are they doomed to spend their lives locked in a dungeon? The novel follows two main stories: One is set in modern times, and the other's an origin story set decades ago. Overall, the book contains more references to classic horror films than you can shake a mad scientist's beaker at; there are characters with last names like van Helsing and Harker, a mad scientist and his laboratory, and even an assistant named Igor who gets to say the immortal line, "Yes, Master," as actor Dwight Frye did in the 1931 movie *Dracula*. Page is obviously a fan of this and other great Universal films of its era. The book is well-written and briskly paced; the author is clearly having fun, and the story reflects it. But as much as the novel is a throwback to yesterday, Page also adds contemporary touches, such as metallic creatures that use cutting-edge nanotechnology. The young characters also have snappy comebacks and contemporary humor that will make the story more relevant to today's youth. The only disappointing thing is the ending, because it sets up an obligatory sequel—but even classic monsters must bow to today's publishing realities.

Young readers will likely enjoy this nostalgic monster mash.



## THE OBLATE'S CONFESSION

Peak, William

Secant Publishing (404 pp.)

\$25.99 | \$9.99 e-book | Dec. 1, 2014

978-0-9904608-0-0

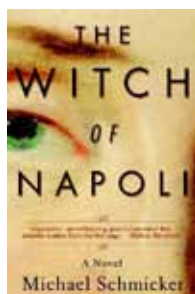
A debut coming-of-age novel set in a monastery in medieval England.

In Peak's understated but entirely spellbinding debut novel, Winwaed's warrior father, Ceolwulf, gives him as an offering, or oblate, to the monastery at Redestone, near the border between two warring kingdoms in seventh-century Northumbria. The novel's central structure is that of a fairly standard bildungsroman, in which young Winwaed must learn the ways and rituals of the monastery, navigate the personalities of the various monks who have control over his life, and grapple with the inner struggles of a spiritual life. It also addresses the broader realities beyond the abbey's fields, where war and plague stalk the land



and where Christianity, newly come to the country, rests uneasily alongside native pagan beliefs that have held sway for millennia. With a sure hand and a formidable amount of research, Peak brings to life the day-to-day realities of the monastery, its food and drink, its dress, and its duties tied to the seasons. But Peak's strongest suit is people, and his characters are unfailingly well-realized; for example, a protracted scene in which Ceolwulf and Winwaed have their first conversation is a masterpiece of insight. The novel is told entirely from a much older Winwaed's point of view, and although this has the expected effect of sapping the action, Peak captures his characters' inner dimensions so well that it more than compensates. In one beautiful little moment, for example, Winwaed looks out his window and sees an empty space where a cherry tree stood during his boyhood: "They don't live long, do they, the fruiting trees?" he says. In his acknowledgments, the author thanks "first and foremost" the famed monk known as the Venerable Bede in a gesture that's guaranteed to endear him to medievalists. Fans of the quieter moments in Ellis Peters' Brother Cadfael novels, not to mention aficionados of Bede, will find a great deal to like in these pages.

**A vividly realized story of one boy's attempt to live a life of faith in a time of war.**



### THE WITCH OF NAPOLI

Schmicker, Michael

Palladino Books (342 pp.)

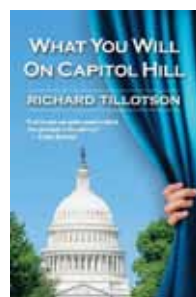
\$12.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book | Jan. 2, 2015  
978-0-9909490-2-2

This debut historical fantasy chronicles the life and times of a famous psychic medium during the late Victorian era.

It's 1918 in Italy, and the incomparable psychic Alessandra Poverelli has died. Tomaso Labella, editor of the newspaper *Messaggero*, is one of the people who knew her best. He fondly remembers meeting her in 1899, when he was a young photographer and she was an up-and-coming medium. She did more than talk to the dead, however—she could also levitate tables (with a poorly understood telekinesis), which brought her attention from scientific circles. She and Tomaso eventually toured Europe alongside the evolutionist and spiritualism skeptic Camillo Lombardi. This helped Alessandra escape her abusive husband, Pigotti, to whom she never planned to return. Yet, as her reputation soared, she became the target of those who aggressively tried to discredit her. Soon, the pace of touring and nightly séances started to ruin Alessandra's health—and she could only perform when in high spirits, surrounded by positive onlookers. When the church learned of her abilities, they endeavored to expose a tragic secret from her past. Little did her enemies know that the psychic could also channel a demonic presence that didn't suffer fools lightly. Author Schmicker (*The Listener*, 2010) delivers an enchanting, graceful narrative that will absorb readers from the first page. Historical elements help ground the story and highlight psychic events when they do happen; we learn, for example, that there "were a

lot of dead for [Alessandra] to talk to. Cholera swept through Naples all the time, and every family had lost a child...and hoped to make contact one last time." The novel is bittersweet as the teen Tomaso pines for a love twice his age. He tells us she "was the first *woman* in my life." Also impressive is how Schmicker captures the tone of the era: "The English rarely bother to learn any other language...why should they, they run the world." In a tale this robust, readers shouldn't take offense at the few slurs used in context.

**A fully transporting debut that should whet appetites for a follow-up.**



### WHAT YOU WILL ON CAPITOL HILL

Tillotson, Richard

Arlington Avenue Books (288 pp.)

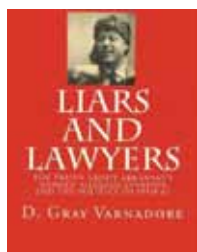
\$14.95 paper | Jan. 5, 2015  
978-1-5055-8168-3

Unlikely allies in the nation's capital promote legislation penned by a young peace lobbyist in this novel by Tillotson (*Acts of God While on Vacation*, 2011).

Karen Mackenzie is a Washington, D.C., peace lobbyist desperate to put forth an amendment to a Senate appropriations bill known as Amendment 132-B, which seeks to engage defense contractors in the work of building infrastructure rather than weaponry. Karen gets help from a group of people whom she meets haphazardly as a result of attending a production of *Twelfth Night*. Her new acquaintances include a best-selling travel writer; a bitter, divorced Shakespeare scholar; a jaded Hungarian diplomat; an unctuous young slam poet; and Jonathan Kidwell, an understudy whose big break comes as he takes on the role of Count Orsino in the play. As this grab bag of unlikely activists persists in its efforts to promote Karen's amendment, its members' lives and philosophies collide, leading to romantic infatuations, rivalries and self-revelation. Tillotson's commentary on the performative aspects of politics, media and even personal relationships is as astute as it is timely. The characters, for instance, critique the aesthetic elements of television news programs just as they do a production of Shakespeare. Tillotson's dark humor and satire are also delightful, as when Jonathan, starring as Alexander Hamilton in a dramatic re-creation of the Battle of Yorktown for a TV documentary, finds himself acting alongside a fragile GI with bloodlust in the role of a fellow Revolutionary soldier. Tillotson playfully draws on elements of a classic comedy of manners, such as serendipitous meetings, reversals, mistaken identity and frustrated couplings. While Tillotson is clearly paying tongue-in-cheek homage to outmoded literary and dramatic forms, such tight control and manipulation of the narrative (coupled with the sometimes-protracted philosophical and academic musings of the characters) may appear stiff and contrived to modern sensibilities—if a lot of fun, nonetheless.

**A witty and energetic novel in which the personal is the political.**





## LIARS AND LAWYERS

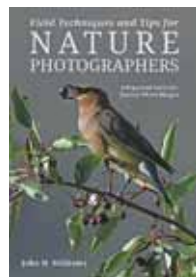
*Varnadore, D. Gray*  
CreateSpace (106 pp.)  
\$9.95 paper | Nov. 7, 2012  
978-1-4791-7507-9

A personal memoir that recounts a chilling tale of bureaucratic dysfunction and governmental corruption.

In his debut book, Varnadore painstakingly documents, with all the rigor of an investigative journalist, the way in which his one thriving landfill business in Arkansas was decimated by politicized regulation. The author starts by describing the origin of his business, which, ironically, was created in response to a local politician's request. Meeting a demand for more capacity, Varnadore's landfill quickly flowered into a lucrative venture. As a mark of its burgeoning success, state representatives from Pennsylvania contacted Varnadore to begin sending their own trash to his landfill since they were unable to locate more dumping space in their own state. However, his expanding business threatened the monopoly another company, Waste Management, had on landfill prices, and then-Gov. Bill Clinton, a major recipient of campaign financing from that company, pushed new regulations that limited the amount of garbage any company could import into the state. This

effectively ran Varnadore's company into bankruptcy. Some of the anecdotes related are extraordinary; after Varnadore caught up to Gov. Clinton to plead his case, the future president experienced a meltdown: "You're interrupting my day!" He turned to me and screamed, not a yell but a scream, in my face as if he was having a temper tantrum. Clinton's nose was less than an inch from my face and he was screaming, 'You're interrupting my day!' " Varnadore's lawyers argued, to no avail, that such legislation was both unconstitutional and economically unwise; apparently, it even created serious ecological challenges since Waste Management was a less-than-green company. The author accurately describes this work as a "scrapbook" since it includes numerous photocopies of newspapers articles covering his travails, letters to and from political functionaries, and official documents that catalog both his financial and legal woes. While the story itself is too small in scope to appeal to every reader, the microcosmic lessons about the often craven nature of politics are compelling and transcend Varnadore's pitiable plight.

**A snapshot of political corruption, including a moral indictment of Clinton pre-White House.**



## FIELD TECHNIQUES AND TIPS FOR NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS A Practical Guide for Quality Photo Images

*Williams, John H.*  
CreateSpace (328 pp.)  
\$44.95 paper | Jul. 30, 2014  
978-1-4961-0910-1

An informative guide that tackles important topics, from what nature photography is to perfecting technique to caring for equipment.

Williams, a nature writer and photographer for over four decades, wrote this guide to help photographers of all experience levels improve their craft. Refusing to rely on Photoshop, the book explains the skills and attention required to truly "see" the natural beauty of a subject and to successfully record it as a digital image. While Williams doesn't go over the mechanical nuts and bolts of a camera, he does explain the fundamentals, such as the relationship between shutter speed, f-number (aperture) and ISO (film speed) for correct depth of field, especially in landscape shots. Once a frustrated shutterbug himself, Williams dispenses advice, using his own professional experience to relay habits and techniques. At times, the tone can seem a bit critical in regard to the ways of others, but the information is clearly related, uncluttered by extraneous information or needless data; often, it's also illustrated with a personal story or anecdote. The book is split into various categories—Landscapes, Still Life Photography, Photographing Mammals, Photographing Birds, etc.—in which Williams shares his secrets, tips and tricks for good photos of a particular subject. For instance, Williams says, the key to a good landscape photo is a powerful foreground. The text also carefully addresses common mistakes made in nature photography, usually pertaining to color representation, critical

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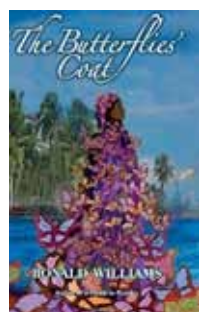
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# Yakimov writes evocatively and with lush expressiveness.

CAFÉ "THE BLUE DANUBE"

focus or a lack of attention to the focal point of an image. In the chapter on equipment, Williams focuses on service above status. Some photographers feel only top of the line will do, but Williams helpfully discusses where bare minimums are acceptable and where frugality should never be considered; he even points out how certain bells and whistles can create issues. At the end of each chapter is a "Project" section, which ranges from enumerating important tips, further suggestions and advice, exercises to improve technique, and actual projects such as how to make your own reflectors and light-blocking screens. Amid all its solid advice and encouragement, the book centers on a key idea: Always improve, not just your technique; learn to see as a photographer and critically analyze your work. Make your best shots better. As Williams says, "Perfection should be your goal if you take your photographic work seriously."

**A clear-sighted, useful book for photographers looking to turn their snapshots into more compelling, meaningful photographs.**



## THE BUTTERFLIES' COAT

Williams, Ronald

CreateSpace (500 pp.)

\$19.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book

Oct. 22, 2014

978-1-5003-5524-1

In Williams' (*A Voice from the Tomb*, 2013, etc.) thriller, a murder on a Caribbean island may be related to the construction of a plant to build fuel-efficient cars.

Cancer survivor and former painter Anis Watson grew up on the island of Saint

Euribius, but the crush of tourists there sometimes makes her and her friends feel out of place. One day, however, Anis finds that she's strangely linked to a foreigner, a wealthy American named Neil Erickson who was recently mutilated and murdered. A painting she sold to Erickson over a decade ago has somehow wound up in her own shed full of unsold pieces. Meanwhile, attorney Aurelius St. John has questions about a multimillion dollar project: Erickson, his client, was a chief investor in an auto plant, but there's unexplained government money hidden in its construction costs, which include outlays for dual-reinforced steel walls. An increasingly snoopy Aurelius thinks he might be on the right track when he checks out the nearly completed plant and gets himself arrested for trespassing. It turns out that something secret and sinister may lurk behind its walls, leading to blackmail, betrayal and more murder. This mystery takes its time establishing its lead characters. At first, the book centers on Anis and how she's avoided romance since losing a breast to cancer years before; no longer inspired by painting, she now works as a part-time art teacher. Her pal Marjorie initially mentions Erickson's murder only in passing, but it gradually dominates the plot. Anis fears it may be connected to the puzzling disappearance of another man, a village regular who once lived with her. The identity of the killer(s) isn't surprising, but the motive behind the murders is, as are other related illicit activities. The author also drops in a late twist that most readers won't

see coming. He renders the local dialect phonetically, but words such as "wid" (for "with") and "sheself," while unusual, will be clear enough to readers. Much of the story reads like poetry, verbose in the most beautiful way: Anis recalls, for instance, listening to the Moody Blues on the radio with a former lover and entering a "Moody Blued world of softness, mystery, and possibility."

**An assiduous but emotionally vibrant thriller.**



## CAFÉ "THE BLUE DANUBE"

Yakimov, Radka

iUniverse (180 pp.)

978-0-5957-1410-0

A collection of short stories about the Eastern European experience in both the old country and the new.

As the Iron Curtain descended over Eastern Europe in the mid-20th century, a steady flow of emigrants fled to begin new lives in North America. Yakimov (*Ashes of*

*Wars*, 2011) imagines a series of personal histories for both those who ventured west and those who stayed behind. Part I paints a picture of a modern Canada, a melting pot of ethnicities where there's tolerance for cultural differences but perhaps not yet true mutual understanding and equality. In an apparently autobiographical story, "Resume of an Engineer," a female engineer struggles to regain the respect and professional footing she enjoyed in Europe. In the title story, a man, despite having mixed feelings about both the old country and the new, acts as a go-between for fellow immigrants. Part II explores lives that continue to be lived in a changed Europe amid political upheaval, from the

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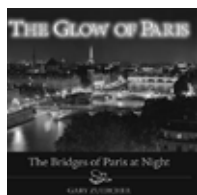
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forced redistribution of land to the pervasiveness of alcoholism. “Zorah’s cottage,” the defining story here, is a history of a family home in which hope and contentment briefly rekindle, flicker, then die out. Yakimov writes evocatively and with lush expressiveness: “Thick, heavy mist hangs over the flanks of the peak and the mountains, spread out to both sides of it like a white shroud suspended from the sky.” Yet bleakness pervades her narratives. Her characters suffer—both from internal and external causes—and moments of happiness are tempered by troubles that remain unchanged by fortune or geography: family conflict, addiction, loneliness, difference, etc. A recurring theme throughout the stories is the emigrant returning to his or her homeland in the post-Communist era only to find that the reality no longer matches the memory. It’s a familiar motif, but Yakimov (who, like many of her characters, immigrated to Canada as an adult) handles it deftly, managing to avoid the obvious clichés.

**A thoughtful, intense read that will appeal to fans of the short story format, used here to great effect.**



**THE GLOW OF PARIS**  
***The Bridges of Paris at Night***

Zuercher, Gary  
 Marcorp Editions (208 pp.)  
 \$49.95 | Jan. 15, 2015  
 978-0-9906309-0-6

Pictures of Seine River bridges frame nighttime views of the French capital in this striking coffee-table collection of photographs.

Zuercher, a businessman and professional photographer, presents black-and-white photos of all 35 of the Seine bridges in Paris. The structures run the gamut of ages and architectural styles, from the Pont Neuf, built in 1607 of masonry, with many barrel-vaulted arches and circular Renaissance bastions projecting from its sides, to the Passerelle Simone de Beauvoir, a foot-bridge completed in 2006 with undulating, gracefully interwoven convex and concave spans. It also includes the Pont Des Arts of 1804, a spindly iron spiderweb that’s a favorite of couples, who festoon it with commitment locks; the Pont Alexandre III, an elegant 1900 edifice with neo-Baroque statuary and beaux-arts streetlamps; and the undistinguished steel girders of 1974’s Pont de l’Alma. Zuercher supplies brief, sprightly accounts of each bridge’s construction and the history of its site. Many of the bridges are heirs to predecessors that burned or collapsed, with the results made even more tragic by the pre-modern custom of building houses right on top of the spans. Others have been the locations of colorful scenes; the Pont au Change, readers learn, “has also been known as *chemin des rois et de la guillotine*” because it was both the processional route of royals into Paris and the exit for condemned prisoners, who were taken across it to have their heads lopped off. But the book’s centerpieces are its ravishing photos, which are overexposed to give the scenes a palette of bright but warmly luminous highlights, shading into slate and black backgrounds. Zuercher takes several shots of each bridge, capturing both the long sweeps of the spans and the close-up details of stonework, décor and gargoyles; looming

in the backgrounds are Notre Dame Cathedral, the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower and other landmarks, all set off to spectacular effect against the riverscape. The end result is an iconic visual record of the heart of Paris.

**A superb pictorial evocation of the City of Light, full of dazzling images and intriguing lore.**



# Appreciations:

## *Manchild in the Promised Land* at 50

BY GREGORY MCNAMEE

"LET'S BREAK SHIT." Thus, in Silicon Valley CEO-speak, the epitaph for the *New Republic*, chiseled out a few weeks back. But quoth the fastidious *New York Times*, that executive "told the staff that he intended to break stuff—though he used a profanity."

It's not because no one swears or does adult things in New York that the *Times* circumlocuted, though it's in good company in doing so. Only recently did the *New Yorker* allow words unbecoming to the proverbial little old lady in Peoria, and it was not so long ago that Lucille Ball had to keep foot on floor lest the bed she shared on television with Desi Arnaz appear too marital.

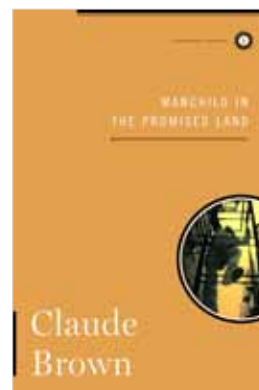
Half a century ago, long after *I Love Lucy* had begun its run, a book by a New Yorker shocked readers on several counts. One was its language, vigorously and unapologetically embracing the range of the seven words that George Carlin famously said could never be uttered on TV. More provocatively still, Claude Brown's autobiography *Manchild in the Promised Land* followed up on Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family* to describe a country that Americans outside what was euphemistically called "the inner city" scarcely knew existed.

*Manchild* is aptly named. Its author, Claude Brown, was not yet in his teens when he became a familiar in the Harlem demimonde of drugs, prostitution and minor crime—minor at first, that is, for in time, smoking a joint on the roof gave way to more serious undertakings, and people were hurt and killed in the bargain. It was an eye-opening upbringing for a pre-adolescent, a scene that made a person old before his or her time and that took countless victims. One young woman keeps getting into trouble, for instance, precisely so that she can go back to a juvenile detention center upstate. "She said she liked it there," Brown writes. "It was the first place she'd been where people didn't make her feel she was out of place."


It was also safer than the streets, which Brown describes in unblinking detail. Yet, for all the crime and degradation and punishment, the dreams and values of the Harlemites were no different from those of Americans in the so-called mainstream. Says one of Brown's friends, "I want to have me a refrigerator that's always full of food, you know?" And, says Brown's father, at about the time Brown himself lands in a spot of trouble with the law, "Hard work ain't never killed nobody, unless they was so lazy thinkin' about it killed 'em."

Claude Brown got in trouble, and he pulled himself out of it, going on to make a life as a lawyer, counselor and writer. Published in 1965, *Manchild in the Promised Land* was shocking indeed, but it made people pay attention. More than that, back when Americans weren't scared shitless of words and ideas, it made its way onto high school and even middle school curricula across the country, teaching us about unpleasant realities. It has lost none of its power to shock but only because the inequality and ethnic division that Claude Brown chronicled flourish half a century later. For that reason, among many others, it merits reading and rereading today.

Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor at Kirkus Reviews.



# RANDOM RECOMMENDS

Staff Favorites from  Random House Library Marketing



*Elizabeth*  
RECOMMENDS



Sara Gruen

**At the Water's Edge:**  
A Novel

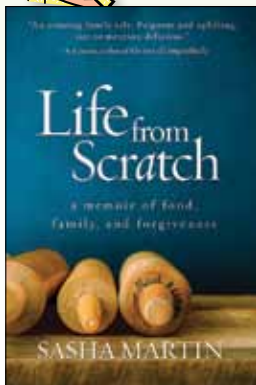
When a colleague described Sara Gruen's newest novel as having the feel of a Scottish *Downton Abbey*, I knew I had to pick it up. Like her phenomenal bestseller, *Water for Elephants*, *At the Water's Edge* is a spell-binding period piece, one that captures the opulence of *The Great Gatsby* and the charm of *Guernsey*. A gripping and poignant love story about a privileged young woman's awakening as she experiences the devastation of World War II in a tiny village in the Scottish Highlands, this is a novel perfect for fans of historical fiction and page-turning novels of love, war, family, and class.

978-0-385-52323-3 | \$28.00  
150,000 | Spiegel & Grau | HC | March  
978-0-385-66448-6 | \$32.00C  
Bond Street Books | HC

📞 978-0-8129-9789-7  
📻 CD: 978-1-101-88938-1  
📻 AD: 978-1-101-88939-8  
📻 978-0-804-19481-5



*Kelly*  
RECOMMENDS



Sasha Martin

**Life from Scratch:**  
A Memoir of Food, Family, and Forgiveness

As Sasha Martin unlocked the memories of her tumultuous childhood and the loss and heartbreak that came with it, she became more determined than ever to find peace and create her own new beginning. Her journey culminates into a challenge that took 195 weeks to complete; she cooked a meal from every country in the world. The cooking is more about healing than eating, and her story is more about love than food. A book that breaks your heart, heals it, and makes you hungry all at once. For readers of *Comfort Me with Apples* and *Julie and Julia*.

978-1-4262-1374-8 | \$25.00/\$25.00C  
75,000 | National Geographic | HC  
March

📞 978-1-4262-1375-5



*Hugo*  
RECOMMENDS



Elizabeth Berg

**The Dream Lover:**  
A Novel

A lush historical novel from bestselling author, Elizabeth Berg. Aureore Dupin leaves a loveless marriage and her family's estate in the French countryside to start a new life as a writer in Paris. She gives herself a new name—George Sand—and embraces an unconventional and, in the nineteenth century, scandalous lifestyle. Brilliantly written in luminous prose, *The Dream Lover* tells the unforgettable story of a courageous, irresistible woman considered to be the most gifted genius of her time. Perfect for fans of Nancy Horan and Lisa See.

978-0-8129-9315-8 | \$28.00/\$34.00C  
75,000 | Random House | HC | April

📞 978-0-679-64470-5



*Jen*  
RECOMMENDS



Paolo Bacigalupi

**The Water Knife:**  
A Novel

I'm a sucker for dystopian fiction so I couldn't resist this book's description: a scorching thriller born out of today's front-page headlines preying on our worst fears about potential catastrophic failures awaiting us in our resource starved future. This novel from multi-award winning author Bacigalupi is action packed, cinematic at times, and unputdownable. Not just for dystopian fans, it reads like a thriller. It is an intriguing look at a future that seems all too possible. And there is a steamy love story too—I ended up with a book crush on the "bad" guy.

978-0-385-35287-1 | \$25.95/\$30.00C  
150,000 | Knopf | HC | May

📞 978-0-385-35289-5



*Erica*  
RECOMMENDS



Kirsty Logan

**The Gracekeepers:**  
A Novel

Inspired in part by Scottish myths and fairytales, *The Gracekeepers* tells a modern story of an irreparably changed world: one divided between those inhabiting the mainland ("landlockers") and those who float on the sea ("dampings"), several generations beyond the catastrophes of global warming. North works as a circus performer upon the Excalibur, a floating troupe. As a Gracekeeper, Callanish administers shoreside burials, where she has exiled herself to escape a long-ago mistake. Both young women are caught up in a sudden storm that brings change to their lives. For fans of Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter; readers of *The Night Circus*, *The Snow Child*, *The Age of Miracles*, and *The Dog Stars*.

978-0-553-44661-6 | \$25.00/NCR  
50,000 | Crown | HC | May

📞 978-0-553-44663-0

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