

Featuring 484 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction, Children's and YA Books

# KIRKUS

VOL. LXXXVI, NO. 15 | 1 AUGUST 2018

# REVIEWS

U.S. Olympic medalist **Ibtihaj Muhammad's** memoir, *Proud*, released simultaneously in two versions—one for young readers, another for adults—is thoughtful and candid. It's also a refreshingly diverse Cinderella story at a time when anti-black and anti-Muslim sentiments are high. p. 102



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:  
**Excellent August Books**

BY CLAIBORNE SMITH



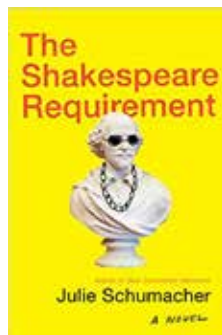
Photo courtesy Michael Thad Carter

Claiborne Smith

**Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World** by Anana Giridharadas (Aug. 28): “Give a hungry man a fish, and you get to pat yourself on the back—and take a tax deduction. It’s a matter of some irony, John Steinbeck once observed of the robber barons of the Gilded Age, that they spent the first two-thirds of their lives looting the public only to spend the last third giving the money away. Now, writes political analyst and journalist Giridharadas, the global financial elite has reinterpreted Andrew Carnegie’s view that it’s good for society for capitalists to give something back to a new formula: It’s good for business to do so when the time is right, but not otherwise....A provocative critique of the kind of modern, feel-good giving that addresses symptoms and not causes.”

**Sweet Little Lies** by Caz Frear (Aug. 14): “When a young London detective delves into the life of a murder victim, she finds out that the woman may have deep connections to her own family’s past in Frear’s debut. Cat Kinsella remembers the summer she spent as a child in Mulderrin, Ireland, because it was then that glamorous Maryanne Doyle went missing. Cat has always suspected that her father, a charming ne’er-do-well who owns a pub and has connections to organized crime, may have played a sinister role in Maryanne’s disappearance, but she’s never been able to prove anything....A truly satisfying—and gritty—mystery.”

**The Shakespeare Requirement** by Julie Schumacher (Aug. 7): “Beleaguered English professor Jason Fitger, the unlucky protagonist of the Thurber Prize-winning novel *Dear Committee Members* (2014), returns to Payne University to fight another day. Schumacher abandons the epistolary style of her previous novel for a straight narrative but retains all of its acid satire in a sequel that is far more substantive and just as funny. Our malcontent professor Fitger has been promoted to chair of his deeply dysfunctional English department. But his dwindling domain is in the crosshairs of villainous economics chair Roland Gladwell, who is trying to push English out of the basement of his precious Willard Hall and—if a troubling new quality assurance program comes to fruition—out of the curriculum entirely....A witty but kindhearted academic satire that oscillates between genuine compassion and scathing mockery with admirable dexterity.”



**Baby, You’re Gonna Be Mine** by Kevin Wilson (Aug. 7): “Wilson triumphantly returns to short stories, the medium of his first book, *Tunneling to the Center of the Earth* (2009), ruminating once more on grief, adolescence, and what it means to be a family. The opener, ‘Scrolling Through the Weapons,’ finds a guy and his girlfriend looking after some nearly feral nieces and nephews. The tricky bond between father and son is revisited in the stark ‘Housewarming.’... Evocative, compassionate, and exquisitely composed stories about the human condition.”

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 REVIEWS**

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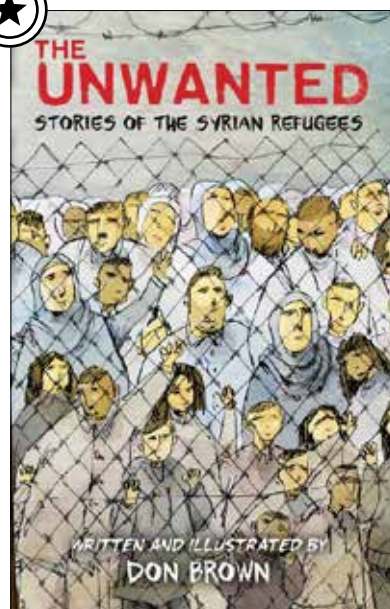
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The Kirkus Star is awarded to books of remarkable merit, as determined by the impartial editors of Kirkus.



Exhaustive research—including visits to refugee camps in Greece—distinguishes **Don Brown's** desperately moving young-adult graphic novel about the Syrian refugee crisis. Read the review on p. 163.

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# FICTION

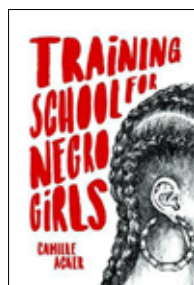


These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- FRIDAY BLACK** by *Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah* ..... 5
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**BITTER ORANGE**  
Fuller, Claire  
Tin House (328 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-947793-15-6



## TRAINING SCHOOL FOR NEGRO GIRLS

Acker, Camille  
Feminist Press (232 pp.)  
\$17.95 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-936932-37-5

In her debut collection, Acker pays tribute to Washington, D.C.—the Chocolate City—and the changes it went through during the last years of the 20th century.

The 11 stories, each centered on the life of a black woman, depict D.C. life beyond the monuments and government antics outsiders normally associate with the city. In fact, the tourist D.C. is barely background scenery in Acker's milieu, which manages to go more local without alienating readers who are unfamiliar with life inside the Beltway. For instance, in "Mambo Sauce," a sample of that local condiment becomes the catalyst for Constance, who's just moved to D.C. from Brooklyn, to try to stave off gentrification in her new neighborhood—and the reason she begins to reconsider her interracial relationship. And in "Strong Men," a high school graduation becomes the occasion for a D.C. crab bake. Acker is strongest when she's excavating the interiority of her characters. This is especially true in "Cicada," which chronicles a young girl's experience as she participates in her first piano competition, and "Now, This," in which Acker astutely describes the inner thoughts of Rae, a premenopausal woman who has to care for her ailing mother while coming to terms with the reality of her own aging body. Yet the collection is uneven. Sometimes the ancillary figures are more interesting than the main characters; in "Strong Men," the protagonist is 13-year-old Bit, but her older brother, Ronnie, whose alleged drug dealing, obsession with local basketball legend Len Bias, and desire to see the world puts him at odds with their father and jeopardizes his enrollment at Howard University, is quite a bit more interesting than Bit, who has trouble with boys and best friends. Acker's exploration of the inner workings of Washington's black middle class in the title story comes off as heavy-handed, resulting in exaggerated characters that might have been better suited for satire. Nonetheless, the collection ends on a tender and memorable note in "You Can Leave, but It's Going to Cost You," as a father and daughter cruise the city to the accompaniment of the music of its native son Marvin Gaye.

Acker shows that the lives of black girls and women are vast and varied, pushing back on the monolithic ways they are often portrayed while giving readers everything but go-go music in a generally lovely ode to D.C. life.



**FRIDAY BLACK**

*Adjei-Brenyah, Nana Kwame*  
 Mariner/Houghton Mifflin  
 Harcourt (208 pp.)  
 \$14.99 paper | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-328-91124-7



Edgy humor and fierce imagery coexist in these stories with shrewd characterization and humane intelligence, inspired by volatile material sliced off the front pages.

The state of race relations in post-millennial America haunts most of the stories in this debut collection. Yet Adjei-Brenyah brings to what pundits label our “ongoing racial dialogue” a deadpan style, an acerbic perspective, and a wicked imagination that collectively upend readers’ expectations. “The Finkelstein 5,” the opener, deals with the furor surrounding the murder trial of a white man claiming self-defense in slaughtering five black children with a chainsaw. The story is as prickly in its view toward black citizens seeking their own justice as it is pitiless toward white bigots pressing for an acquittal. An even more caustic companion story, “Zimmer Land,” is told from the perspective of an African-American employee of a mythical theme park whose white patrons are encouraged to act out their fantasies of dispensing brutal justice to people of color they regard as threatening on sight, or “problem solving,” as its mission statement calls it. Such dystopian motifs recur throughout the collection: “The Era,” for example, identifies oppressive class divisions in a post-apocalyptic school district where self-esteem seems obtainable only through regular injections of a controlled substance called “Good.” The title story, meanwhile, riotously reimagines holiday shopping as the blood-spattered zombie movie you sometimes fear it could be in real life. As alternately gaudy and bleak as such visions are, there’s more in Adjei-Brenyah’s quiver besides tough-minded satire, as exhibited in “The Lion & the Spider,” a tender coming-of-age story cleverly framed in the context of an African fable.

Corrosive dispatches from the divided heart of America.



**BUDDHISM FOR WESTERN CHILDREN**


*Allio, Kirstin*  
 Univ. of Iowa (284 pp.)  
 \$17.00 paper | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-60938-596-5

An adolescent boy’s life is irreparably changed when his parents join a religious cult.

When Daniel is 10 years old, his parents make the drive from Halifax to Maine to become followers of the Guru, Avadhoot Master King Ivanovich. Daniel and his sister, Violet, spend the rest of their childhood and teenage years attempting to find their place within the Guru’s community, which includes his many

wives, his lieutenant, and the spiritual adviser from Halifax who suggested the Guru to Daniel’s parents. Daniel and Violet are home-schooled intermittently, but otherwise any sense of normalcy quickly recedes as their parents struggle to pay their tithe to the Guru, and the community engages in numerous fasts (especially when food is scarce). After several years, the Guru tells Daniel he has been chosen and his new name is Jubal, after which he becomes more deeply connected to the Guru’s inner circle. Jubal is assigned the task of recording the Guru’s followers’ “Leelas,” or the stories of how each person came to join the Guru, a task which proves emotionally treacherous as Jubal learns that the lieutenant is in love with the Guru’s first wife, and the Guru’s fifth wife left behind a daughter whom she has never forgotten. After an abrupt break with the community and his family, Jubal drives across the country to Santa Fe and begins working with a therapist named Ruth so he can acclimate to the world outside the cult and begin to piece together an understanding of all that transpired during his years in Maine. Author Allio skillfully invents a world of ritual, language, and culture unique to the Guru, which is in turns absurd and

**Kidnapped**  
 The Disappearance of Christian McKinley  
 by Richard A. Erickson



ISBN: 978-1-5434-6562-4

A tense kidnapping thriller that takes a deep dive into the murky waters of criminal psychology.

**“...solid... emotionally razor-sharp...”**

**“...those who like psychological profiling in their crime fiction will enjoy its depth.”**  
 —*Kirkus Reviews*

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**THE RESERVOIR TAPES IS A  
“REMARKABLE EXPERIMENT  
IN STORYTELLING”**



SOMETIMES IT'S FUN to immerse yourself in a familiar fictional world, returning year after year to the scene of happy reading experiences. If you enjoy spending time with a particular detective, it almost doesn't matter if the later books in the series feel a bit thin; you're just happy to be walking the beat. Or perhaps you can't wait to

find out what Karl Ove Knausgaard has been up to since his last volume of autofiction. Or you want to slip back into Westeros or Earthsea or Narnia. But occasionally authors find an unusual way to write a companion volume to an earlier book. Ali Smith, for instance, has been writing a quartet of novels pegged to the seasons; they have totally different plots and characters, but as our review of the second volume in the quartet, *Winter*, says, "Smith has also forged intriguing links between them from history and current events, including fences and protests, female visual artists, and the fallout from Brexit."

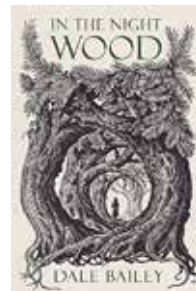
British novelist Jon McGregor has published two novels in the past year that play particularly intriguing games with each other. *Reservoir 13*, which came out last October, is spurred by the story of Rebecca Shaw, a 13-year-old girl who goes missing from the English village her family is visiting on holiday, but what it's really focused on is the village itself and the effect of Rebecca's disappearance on the people who live there, as told by an omniscient narrator. In a companion book, *The Reservoir Tapes* (Aug. 7), McGregor now complicates the story, sending an interviewer to the town soon after Rebecca's disappearance to interview people about the girl, with each chapter written in a close third-person from a different character's perspective. Our review says, "On its own, this book is a noteworthy event. When put in conversation with *Reservoir 13*, it is nothing short of a remarkable experiment in storytelling. McGregor is a must-read writer." Reading both books together would make a great late-summer experience. —L.M.

*Laurie Muchnick is the fiction editor.*



engrossing, especially as seen through Daniel's eyes. Though events are often obscured, presented in perplexing dreamlike sequences, there may be no other way to convincingly capture the mystery of being wholly taken up by forces entirely of another world.

**An enigmatic and fervent read.**



**IN THE NIGHT WOOD**

*Bailey, Dale*

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (224 pp.)

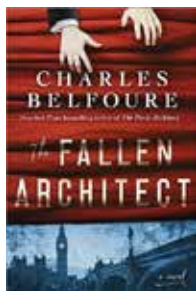
\$23.00 | Oct. 9, 2018

978-1-328-49443-6

A couple in crisis moves to an old manor house for research on a Victorian fantasy novel and finds the story may not be as fictional as it appears.

Charles and Erin Hayden fell in love in a university library soon after discovering that the obscure Victorian book that's been haunting Charles' life was written by an ancestor of Erin's. Soon after the death of their young daughter in an accident, they learn that Erin has inherited Hollow House, the former home of Caedmon Hollow, the author of *In the Night Wood* and the man Charles has spent his career researching. With nothing to keep them in the U.S., they move to Yorkshire and find themselves ensconced in the manor house with a groundskeeper, cook, and no idea what they're doing. Charles throws himself into his research, connecting with the young woman who runs the local historical society and her daughter, almost a twin of the daughter he lost, as Erin drowns herself in wine and pills. As stranger and stranger things begin happening around the manor, though, they'll have to face their grief to prevent another tragedy. Bailey's (*The Subterranean Season*, 2015, etc.) novel has every aspect of gothic horror: the drafty manor, the shady servants, the tortured protagonists. The writing is dense with allusions and details, the narrative twisting and turning in the same way the *Night Wood* distorts the senses of anyone who wanders into it. The writing does get a bit convoluted and hard to follow at times, but it's in keeping with the atmosphere of subtle dread that permeates the novel. The book is surprisingly short, and there's a lot of buildup to a very quick climax, which would have benefited from more time. The succession of reveals in the frantic last 30 or so pages, however, is tense and disturbing, satisfying for any horror fan.

**A modern gothic horror done right.**



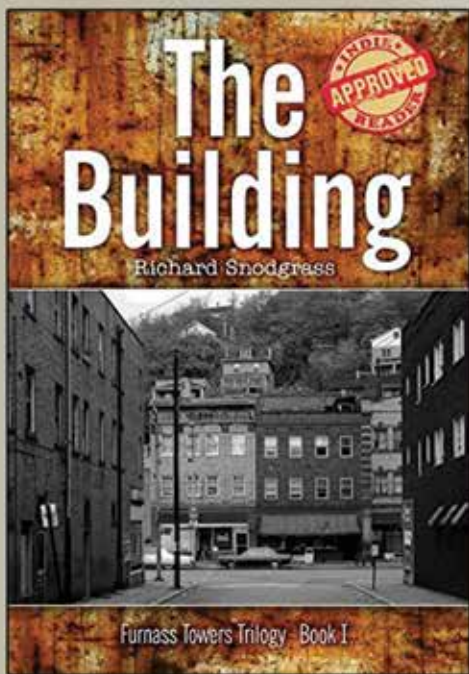
**THE FALLEN ARCHITECT**

*Belfoure, Charles*  
 Sourcebooks Landmark (336 pp.)  
 \$25.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-4926-6271-6

A disgraced architect struggles to clear his name in Belfoure’s third architecture-based thriller.

In 1900, Londoners flock to the gala opening of the new Britannia Empire Theatre. During a comedian’s routine, a balcony collapses, killing 14 and maiming countless others. Douglas Layton, a prominent architect who rose from humble roots to marry into the aristocracy, designed the Britannia and is blamed for the carnage. After serving five years in prison, Layton, divorced and barred from seeing his son, is adrift and a drunk. When he lands a job as scene painter for the Grand Imperial Theatre in Nottingham, he seizes this opportunity to reinvent himself. Under an assumed name, he wins

the affections of the “artistes” whose backdrops he paints and the love of Cissie Mapes, who runs the theaters of the powerful MacMillan Empire syndicate, which turns out to have included the ill-fated Britannia. With trepidation, he soon accepts a transfer to MacMillan’s London circuit. Despite his new identity, his reputation as “The Butcher of the West End” has preceded him; he’s bedeviled by a builder whose career also ended with the Britannia job, a blackmailer, and at least two unseen attackers. But Layton’s architect’s eye is ever attuned to minor details, and when he notices plaster and mortar anomalies in two MacMillan venues, his digging unearths skeletons in each location. Telling clues point to the fact that those interred were his two former associates. Could they have been murdered because they realized the balcony defects were deliberately engineered? Layton sets about trying to learn who stood to gain from the Britannia collapse by researching possible ties linking the 14 casualties to the likeliest culprits—the MacMillan owners, the head of a rival syndicate, and the aggrieved builder. Once Belfoure embarks on this expansive fishing expedition, another structural failure looms: Since the suspects’ imputed



ISBN: # 978-0-9997249-4-1  
[www.RichardSnodgrass.com](http://www.RichardSnodgrass.com)

**The Building**

by Richard Snodgrass

In Snodgrass’ (*Kitchen Things*, 2013, etc.) novel, a complex construction project teeters on the brink of failure, pitting workers against each other.

“...artistically unflinching and morally unsentimental...”

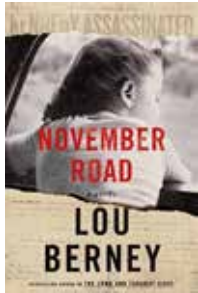
“An audacious, gripping, and wise novel.”  
 —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)



For information about publishing or film rights, email [Kim@MagpieLLC.com](mailto:Kim@MagpieLLC.com)

motives conflict, a few of the deaths have to be coincidental—but which ones? It is a cul de sac from which Belfoure, himself an architect, cannot design a convincing exit.

**The music hall décor and atmosphere help distract from the flawed whodunit.**



### NOVEMBER ROAD

*Berney, Lou*

Morrow/HarperCollins (320 pp.)

\$26.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

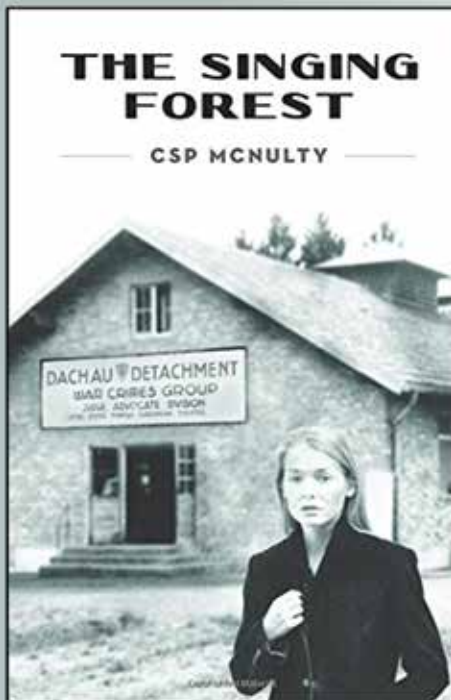
978-0-06-266384-9

As a shocked nation mourns the assassination of John F. Kennedy, two lost souls looking for a new chance at life find each other along the wide-open Western highways.

In Berney's (*The Long and Faraway Gone*, 2015, etc.) latest, Frank Guidry's skills have made him an



invaluable part of Carlos Marcello's illegal New Orleans empire, but they don't protect him when he becomes a loose end. On the run and struggling to stay one step ahead of a terrifyingly proficient hit man, Frank meets Charlotte Roy and her two daughters. Charlotte has made the impulsive decision to leave her alcoholic husband and her claustrophobic hometown and start a new life in California when she runs her car into a ditch. With a well-honed sense of self-preservation, Frank realizes that traveling as a man with a family would be the perfect cover, so he skillfully manipulates himself into the role of savior. As he and Charlotte begin to care for each other, Frank has to decide whether he can safely take her and the girls with him on his escape. Charlotte, for her part, is no delicate flower; she'll do whatever it takes to provide opportunities for her daughters to grow up as strong, independent women. Any novel that invokes the era following the death of JFK inevitably illustrates the moment our country's zeitgeist changed. The 1960s, of course, were rife with revolution and change, from music to relations between men and women to the start of the Vietnam War. Berney's gentle, descriptive writing brilliantly reflects these times



Paperback ISBN: 978-0-9993788-4-7

Ebook ISBN: 978-0-9993788-3-0

## THE SINGING FOREST CSP MCNULTY

A historical novel brings readers deep into the agonizing battles of World War II's final year on the European front and the war crimes trials in Germany following the Allied victory.

**"RIVETING"**

**"A brutal, mesmerizing, and historically compelling war story with a fully drawn protagonist."**

**—Kirkus Reviews**

**"Thoroughly engaging..."**

**—San Francisco Book Review**

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## An exuberant collection.

WHITE DANCING ELEPHANTS

of both disillusionment and hope. The men in the novel, including Frank and Barone, the hit man, also symbolize the Romantic notion of a time that has come to an end. As the title suggests, there is an autumnal, melancholic sense of loss at the heart of the novel, yet still, the loss is not destructive or debilitating. It is the kind of loss that gives way to a new world order.

**Perfectly captures these few weeks at the end of 1963—all that was lost and all that lay tantalizingly and inevitably just beyond the horizon.**



### WHITE DANCING ELEPHANTS

*Bhuvaneshwar, Chaya*  
Dzanc (208 pp.)  
\$16.95 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-945814-61-7



The 17 stories in this debut collection take place around the world, exploring queer and interracial love, extramarital affairs, and grief over the disappearances of loved ones.

The book provocatively probes the aftermath—the aftermath of death, of grim diagnoses, of abandonment, of monumental errors in judgment. Passages jump back and forth in time to dissect how the consequences of a fraught event shape and unravel the lives of innocent casualties. In the searing title story, which references the Buddha’s birth, the narrator wanders around London while mourning her recent miscarriage. “I lie down now and feel the weight of it on me, a white dancing elephant that I can see with my eyes closed, airy and Disney in one dream, bellowing despair and showing tusks in the other.” In the evocative “Talinda,” among the strongest in the collection, a South Asian scholar named Narika attempts to justify her affair and pregnancy with her terminally ill best friend’s husband, George. “By thinking of Talinda as always being high above me, I could sometimes think of her as being untouched by what I had been doing with George. Like she had too much pride to be hurt by it. Like she had better things to do.” In the electric “A Shaker Chair,” Sylvia, a “polished, calm, perfect” biracial therapist, is both troubled by and obsessed with her newest client, the “slovenly” Maya. “Revulsion is what she makes me feel,” Sylvia confesses to a former supervisor. “The Bang Bang” incisively portrays the transformation of a crotchety father named Millind, whose “immigration history was spotted with failures,” into an acclaimed poet and “great man” at the same time his only son disappears. Millind’s daughter bears witness, though bitterly, to his newfound fame and resents his apathy toward her missing brother. “As if, because our father had found joy, my brother and his quiet sadness had to become invisible.”

**An exuberant collection.**



### RUBY DREAMS OF JANIS JOPLIN

*Blew, Mary Clearman*  
Univ. of Nebraska (240 pp.)  
\$19.95 paper | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-1-4962-0758-6

A young woman tries to make sense of her shattered past through music.

A decade after she ran away to sing in a country-western band, Ruby Gervais’ life is up in flames. Her band has come apart after drug issues and betrayal; she is desperately ill and troubled by a lack of clear memories. With nowhere to go but back to her hometown of Versailles, Montana, Ruby, now nearly 27, is taken in by her former piano teacher, who helps her get a job at the local community college to get back on her feet. As Ruby attempts to slip back into her old life, ghosts of the past keep popping up: the co-worker who was once Ruby’s foster sister, the lawyer now married to Ruby’s estranged mother, and

### CONFRONTING *the* PAST

by Carlota Hernández Siso



In Siso’s debut novel, a German doctor who resisted participating in the medical experiments conducted during World War II is tried for war crimes.

While some characters are fictional, many are historical, providing a strong backdrop of reality. *Confronting the Past* brings forth the best and the worst in each of their natures. Their kindness, personal affairs, struggles and worries about their contribution to humanity and the Jewish people, show that some of them did make a difference.

“The uniquely sympathetic portrait it paints of these influential German central characters offers an interesting counterpoint to most World War II narratives.”

**“A high-stakes family drama...”**  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

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the band mates who, one by one, come to find her. As Ruby's past slowly unclouds, she understands that, to the town, she is a pariah for false testimony she gave as a child that resulted in the convictions of several townspeople (including Ruby's own mother) for shocking crimes. As her band mates search her out and she must deal with the complicated relationships that threaten to overwhelm her, Ruby turns to the only comfort she has—music—in the hope that it will heal time's wounds. *Blew* (*This Is Not the Ivy League*, 2011, etc.) is not afraid of drama: The book contains many subplots, including several rapes, secret identities, domestic violence, murder, and even Satanism. This excess in plot is matched by a structure rife with flashbacks, which make sense when Ruby is "time traveling," or recovering buried memories; but when *Blew* is, for example, just flashing back to breakfast, it weighs an already heavy story down further.

**Like an overproduced song, *Blew's* novel suffers from too many bells and whistles.**

## STARLING

D.D. O'Lander



ISBN: 978-1-4923-2001-2  
ddolander.com

This ambitious first installment of O'Lander's World War II-set trilogy features a brave hero, an equally stalwart heroine, and espionage involving prowling German U-boats in the icy North Atlantic.

"...[O'Lander's] command of military lingo and technical details is truly awe-inspiring."

"...[an] absorbing thriller that will likely entertain readers for hours."  
—Kirkus Reviews

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## LOVE IS BLIND

Boyd, William  
Knopf (384 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Oct. 11, 2018  
978-0-525-65526-8

Romance, deceit, revenge, missed opportunities, and piano-tuning are the central themes of an immersive new novel from a much-praised British writer.

After 14 novels and many literary prizes, Boyd's (*Sweet Caress*, 2016, etc.) storytelling abilities are beyond dispute and are clearly on display in this latest tale that follows its hero, Brodie Moncur, on a restless journey from Scotland to Europe and beyond as the 19th century shades into the 20th. One of 14 children (nine living) born to a bruising Scottish preacher, Brodie is blessed with perfect pitch, a gift which frees him from his oppressive home and leads to work at the expanding Channon piano company in Edinburgh. Promoted to a post at the new Paris showroom, Brodie suggests that the company widen its name recognition by giving an instrument to a famous concert pianist, which is how he comes to meet John Kilbarron, "the Irish Liszt," and his lovely Russian girlfriend, Lika. It's Brodie's all-consuming love for Lika which now propels the story forward, as he loses his job at Channon's (falsely accused of embezzlement) and joins Kilbarron and his entourage on a luxurious sponsored trip to pre-revolutionary Russia. Layers of secrecy are both laid down and exposed as Brodie and Lika pursue a secret affair, yet Lika remains a shadowy figure, partly intentionally, partly through Boyd's failure to fully flesh her out. This and Brodie's desultory progress in life leave a sense of hollowness at the core of the story, although Boyd's tale-spinning is never less than enjoyable, dotted as it is with odd plot turns and much engaging detail. Its conclusion is perhaps the oddest turn of all, a departure that leaves the reader hungry for answers to some questions, especially those relating to Brodie's family, that are left dangling.

*All for Love* or *The Road Not Taken* might have served as alternate titles for this largely good-humored, not especially deep-digging, quality entertainment.



## THE CHILDREN'S WAR

Boyko, C.P.  
Biblioasis (390 pp.)  
\$14.95 paper | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-1-77196-213-1

In his fourth collection, Boyko (*Novelists*, 2014, etc.) plumbs for absurdities in war, childhood, parenthood, politics, revolution, and campus demonstrations.

Boyko's six-story collection is full of crisp prose, absurdist humor, delightfully atypical craft, and—when aggregated—pessimism: In every story the characters prove incapable of enacting positive change in their lives or societies. In the first (and least impressive) story,

a childish high school teacher tries to “tear the [school’s] walls down” but instead becomes “every teacher he had ever hated.” In the brilliant and moving novella *Andrew and Hillary*, the title characters move through childhood and into war—Hillary as a doctor; Andrew, who “never grew up,” as a reckless ambulance driver and profiteer—where they fail to do what the very structure of the story seems to suggest: fulfill each other. In “Year-End,” discontented workers overthrow their factory’s management, break into factions, emulate their former tyrannical bosses, and end up worse off than they started. In “Birth Pangs,” a woman who has every reason not to have another child—her husband is a manipulative chauvinist; her previous pregnancy was downright brutal (here, as in *Andrew and Hillary*, Boyko demonstrates his mastery of the lengthy, gory medical scene); and her son is an unhealthy nightmare—has to decide what to do. In “Infantry,” two armies composed of women wage a bloody (and evidently pointless) conventional war, and the women behave just as history tells us male soldiers do: They curse, swear, drink and do drugs, visit whorehouses, are cruel to replacements, kill noncombatants, make terrible mistakes, feel fear, feel nostalgia, die beautifully, die horribly,

and fight on. In “The Takeover of Founders’ Hall,” hundreds of students storm a university administration building and begin making wild and disparate demands: “Troy Rosswind wanted smaller classes...Sanders Brand wanted an end to world hunger...Langdon Bellhouse wanted all telemarketers killed.” Here, as in the previous stories, the revolutionary event accomplishes real change; but the changes are not the ones that any participant, on any side, desires.

**Ironic, absurd, pedantic, graphic, tragic, beautiful, surprising, nuanced, polyphonic, exhausting, and unmistakably genius—Boyko’s latest has its flaws, but oh boy does it capture the cacophonous slide toward personal and societal incoherence.**

**TRIO**  
THE SCHUMANNS AND BRAHMS  
(A NOVEL BIOGRAPHY)  
BOMAN DESAI

*It is perhaps Schubert's greatest achievement that the great composers of the Romantic Age appear as full-bloodedly as if they might have been his neighbors.*  
ZUBIN MEHTA

**THE BEST BOOKS OF 2017**  
KIRKUS REVIEWS

**“A Magisterial Work ... Astonishingly Thorough Research...  
A Riveting Dramatization of Musical History.”**  
—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

**“BRAVO!”**  
Zubin Mehta

**“A Story Tolstoy Might Have Told.”**  
Vernon Howard (Harvard University)

**“Charming and Readable ... a Massive Achievement!”**  
Bapsi Sidhwa

**A Narrative of Love, Insanity, Suicide, Revolution,  
Politics, War - and Music.**

**A novel for people who hate novels (who want to  
read about only “real” things) and a biography for  
people who hate biographies (for the  
footnotes and other intrusions).**

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and on order from any bookstore.

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### THE LITTLE SHOP OF FOUND THINGS

*Brackston, Paula*  
St. Martin's (320 pp.)  
\$27.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-250-07243-6

When Xanthe Westlake and her mother, Flora—who's been blindsided by a nasty divorce—leave London to purchase an antiques shop in Marlborough, a 17th-century silver key belt, or chatelaine, begins to sing to Xanthe, pulling her into a time-traveling mission to save a wrongly accused servant girl.

Xanthe, gifted with psychometry, sometimes feels an emotional tug from the antiques she and Flora sell. Yet no artifact has sung so loudly and insistently as the chatelaine. As Xanthe clears the gardens behind their store, she discovers that the chatelaine's energy increases the closer she moves toward a strange, rounded building, which turns out to be a blind house, a jail for suspected

criminals awaiting trial. Local legend says the blind house sits at the intersection of two powerful ley lines. Although Xanthe is curious about the ley lines, the overwhelming sense of anguish in the blind house concerns her until she begins to be harassed by the ghost of Margaret Merton, a woman burned at the stake for Catholic beliefs. Mistress Merton desperately needs Xanthe to use the chatelaine and blind house to travel back in time to save the life of Alice, a maidservant accused of theft. Once she falls back in time, however, Xanthe's task is complicated by the difficult machinations of a legal system that undercuts the poor, not to mention the possibilities of love with Samuel Appleby, a talented architect drawn to Xanthe's unconventional ways. Attentive to historical detail as well as beautifully delineated scenes, Brackston (*The Return of the Witch*, 2016, etc.) has crafted rich characters with plausible concerns: Xanthe is not simply a time-traveling woman in search of love; she has wrongfully suffered jail time herself because of her no-good, drug-addicted ex-boyfriend and worries for her feisty yet arthritic mother, saddled with frozen bank accounts. Fans of Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* collection will delight in Brackston's new series and eagerly await its second installment.

**A bewitching tale of love across centuries.**

## SHARKBAIT

A Flight Surgeon's Odyssey in Vietnam  
by Guy Clark

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A thorough memoir of a flight surgeon's adrenaline-filled experiences in the Vietnam War.

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Author: [www.guyclarksharkbait.com](http://www.guyclarksharkbait.com)  
Publishers: [www.weepingwillowbooks.com](http://www.weepingwillowbooks.com)

ISBN 978-0-99656-393-2

"He writes intelligently, illuminating events and the insights they evoked."

**"...rich with vividly recalled episodes of aerial warfare."**

*—Kirkus Reviews*

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[info@weepingwillowbooks.com](mailto:info@weepingwillowbooks.com)



### THE DREAM DAUGHTER

*Chamberlain, Diane*  
St. Martin's (384 pp.)  
\$27.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-250-08730-0

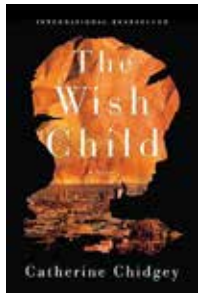
A devoted mother is forced to make a terrible choice when 9/11 glitches her brother-in-law's time-travel calculations in Chamberlain's (*The Stolen Marriage*, 2017, etc.) latest.

Caroline "Carly" Grant is a physical therapist in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Her patient Hunter Poole refuses to use the crutches he needs to walk while his broken leg mends. Carly soon discovers Hunter isn't the suicidal accident victim he's presumed to be. In fact, he's a time traveler from the future. Hunter meets and marries Carly's Beatles-obsessed sister, Patti, fixing him in the late 1960s. That proves convenient when Carly, pregnant and recently widowed by her husband's death in Vietnam, is told her baby has a fatal heart defect. Hunter arranges for Carly to time travel to 2001. With the grudging assistance of Hunter's mother, Myra Poole, who runs a time-travel research program, Carly has fetal surgery and delivers her baby. Newborn Johanna Elizabeth proves so unhealthy she's hospitalized for most of the next four months, forcing Carly to time travel back to 1970 without her. Traveling through time is fraught with danger for not only the traveler, but also the reader, who's asked to suspend a lot of disbelief, accept arbitrary and at times inconsistent rules of time travel, and try not to guess several obvious plot twists. Still, Carly is a likable heroine, and if many of her difficulties are easily overcome, she's nonetheless caught in a heart-wrenching dilemma as she realizes time travel is, "if anything, an inexact science."

**The story is well-paced and the ending satisfyingly sweet despite its predictability.**

# Chidgey slowly unspools the parallel stories of two children growing up in Germany as Hitler's wartime grip becomes a stranglehold.

THE WISH CHILD



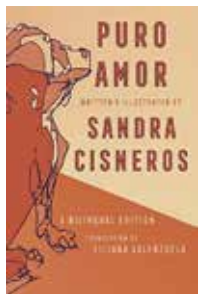
**THE WISH CHILD**  
*Chidgey, Catherine*  
 Counterpoint (384 pp.)  
 \$26.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-64009-097-2



The spectral voice of a wistful, mysterious narrator conveys not only the plot, but also the elegiac tone of this chronicle of the acute and lingering damages wrought by blind adherence to ideology.

Chidgey (*The Transformation*, 2006, etc.), winner of New Zealand's Acorn Foundation Fiction prize for this work, slowly unspools the parallel stories of two children growing up in Germany as Hitler's wartime grip becomes a stranglehold. Siggie is the daughter of a comfortable middle-class family in Berlin. Her father works as a government censor redacting words like "freedom" and "defeat" from books and newspapers. "I make things safe," he tells young Siggie. Erich, a dreamy child with the perfect "German face," is being raised on a farm near Leipzig by nationalistic parents who censor their family's past. As war's relentless devastation mounts in both children's homes, their worlds become increasingly more surreal, and an element of magical realism surrounds their stories. Their lives briefly entwine during the war in an intense struggle for survival, but they are soon traumatically separated. In adult life, Siggie searches for clues to Erich's post-Cold War whereabouts, while her career as a "puzzler"—a specialist responsible for restoring documents destroyed by the Stasi before the fall of the Berlin Wall—inversely echoes her father's wartime responsibilities. Chidgey's understated and poetic revelations of the banalities of day-to-day life under siege, as the German war effort fails, communicate the corrosive horrors of war with an unrelenting catalog of loss and diminution, leavened only by an occasional dialogue between two hausfraus—*fraus Müller and Miller*—who vie for moral superiority while spouting malapropisms and vapid, occasionally appalling, protestations of loyalty.

Chidgey's controlled revelation of the identity of her shadowy narrator gradually illuminates the true horrors endured by the rest of the characters in this devastating work.



**PURO AMOR**  
*Cisneros, Sandra*  
*Illus. by the author*  
*Trans. by Valenzuela, Liliana*  
 Sarabande (32 pp.)  
 \$10.00 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-94644821-7

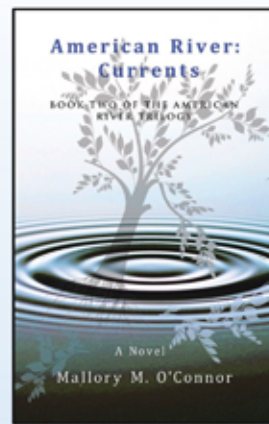
A short story about love, animals, art, and Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.

Cisneros' (*A House of My Own: Stories from My Life*, 2015, etc.) first published fiction for adults since the novel *Caramelo* in 2002 tells the story of Mr. and Mrs. de Rivera and their house full of love, animals, and

art. Published as Volume 15 of Sarabande Books' Quarternote chapbook series and featuring simple but evocative line drawings by the author, the story is presented in the original English and a facing Spanish translation by Valenzuela. Even though they're never named, the main characters are clearly Kahlo and Rivera. "Mister" is a famous artist known for his drinking, womanizing, and his "frescoes taller than their blue house." "Missus" paints at times but is mostly concerned with taking care of her husband and managing the menagerie of dogs, monkeys, cats, birds, lizards, a single fawn, and all manner of other creatures. The animals come to represent all the love and emotion present in Mr. and Mrs. de Rivera's life and their refusal to conform to societal expectations. Why do they adopt every stray animal they can? Why do they invite famous people and Communists to parties that last all night? Because they want to. The writing is sharp and vivid, and the animals can be felt on the page. "The animals consumed more than food. They devoured Mrs. de Rivera's attention from the moment she opened her eyes. Even before she opened her eyes. The dogs pawed and rubbed themselves on her belly and spine. They slept on her starched pillow embroidered

## American River: Currents

BOOK TWO OF THE AMERICAN RIVER TRILOGY  
 A Novel by Mallory M. O'Connor



In the second book of the American River trilogy, a cavalcade of disasters both personal and public threatens to overwhelm the scattered members of the McPhalan, Ashida, and Morales clans during the tumultuous 1960s.

"American River: Currents, Book Two of the American River Trilogy, is filled with passionate and resolute characters who refuse to let go of their unique visions of success—even as life's tumultuous currents threaten to sweep them all away."  
 —Archway Publishing

"The complex relationships and family crises effectively parallel the turbulence of the era that provides the backdrop for addictive melodrama."  
 —Kirkus Reviews

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# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## DAVID CHARIANDY

### HIS RIVETING NOVEL *BROTHER* IS ABOUT THE FRUSTRATIONS AND JOY FOUND IN A TORONTO PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLEX

By Rachel Sugar



Photo courtesy Maya Chariandy

“I DON’T KNOW IF I’m the sort of writer who starts with a theme or with a character,” says Canadian novelist David Chariandy. “I’m really the type of writer who gets struck by an image or an arrangement of words.”

For *Brother* (July 31), which won Canada’s Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize last year and is now being released Stateside, the image was this: two young brothers looking upward, discussing the possibility of climbing a utility pole. “I think that’s what kicked it off, that moment between them when they are struggling to figure out if they dare do something this reckless in order to see—to simply see. Maybe that’s all the novelist hopes to do as well,” he proposes. “To simply see and see truthfully with a sense of authenticity regarding the characters and voice and situation.”

It’s the scene that opens the novel, a sleek one-page prologue. The brothers are Michael and Francis. “You had to watch your older brother and follow close his moves,” observes Michael, watching Francis. “You had to think back on every step before you took it. Remembering the whole way up.”

When the novel picks up again, it’s 10 years later: Michael is an adult, still living in the public housing complex in Scarborough, on the outskirts of Toronto, caring for their mother. Francis is dead. The book weaves seamlessly between the past—Michael and Francis growing up; Michael and Francis as teenagers—and the haunted present. It is, our reviewer writes, a “slender volume with the heart of a family epic.”

“I understood that it needed to be a nonlinear narrative, a narrative in which the story of the past ghosted in to what is occurring in the present,” says Chariandy, who himself grew up on the eastern edge of Scarborough, not so far away from his characters. What choice did he have, really? “That would seem to me to be the only way I could be faithful to the mental condition of the speaker of the book.” The kind of calamity Michael experiences as a teenager really isn’t the kind of thing that can be neatly contained by time and distance, Chariandy explains. It’s “a calamity that continues to intrude into the present.”

You could say, if you wanted, that *Brother* is “about” life in Toronto’s suburbs or state-sanctioned violence or intolerable grief, and he wouldn’t disagree with you. It is about all that. But what he wants to talk about is people. “This book is not a political tract; neither is it a work of history or sociology,” he says. “It’s about lives and how people make sense of their lives before, during, and after violence is inflicted upon them.”

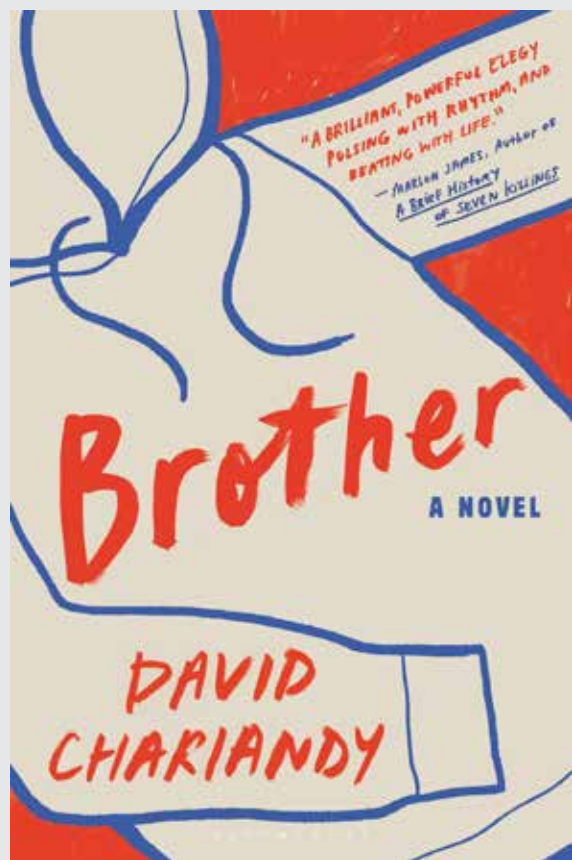
And so it’s not an accident that the novel’s pivotal act of brutality takes up just a few sentences. “I did not want to reduce the book to that violence,” Chariandy says. It is the engine for the novel, not the point of it.

"I would put it this way: I would say my novel is about life. And life that is all the more precious and important to honor even because there is a tragic death in the story."

Which, of course, is its own kind of political statement. "I felt, personally, in this story a responsibility to affirm life," Chariandy says. "To affirm black life. In its complexity. In its grief. In its beauty. In its genius."

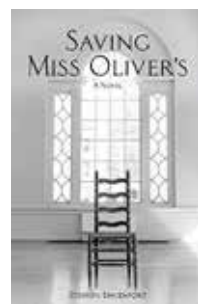
And in its tenderness. He wanted to capture the enduring affection between young black men—a careful kind of tenderness. "The young men in my book often assume they have to adopt postures of toughness," he says, pointing out that "there's really nothing wrong with being tough and being sufficiently guarded about your emotions, especially if you're being hurt all the time." But alongside that toughness is profound tenderness. "That's a whole other story of the lives I wanted to capture. Another enduring story."

*Rachel Sugar is a writer living in New York. Brother received a starred review in the May 15, 2018, issue.*



in silk thread—'Amor Eterno.' They brought dirt into her bed, nosed their way under the blankets, curled themselves in the nook behind the knees, the swell of her stomach, the soles of her feet." This story first appeared in the 2015 *Washington Post* Fiction Issue and has been a staple of Cisneros' live readings for years. Cisneros manages to be one of America's most respected authors despite her relative paucity of new work in the past 16 years. This is a good, touching story about the power of bonds and unreasonable love, but to a certain extent it leaves the reader wishing for more.

**A solid short story in a beautiful, thin volume from an author we wish we heard more from.**



**SAVING MISS OLIVER'S**

*Davenport, Stephen*  
WestWinds Press (380 pp.)  
\$16.99 paper | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-1-5132-6131-7

A year in the life of a New England boarding school on the brink of dissolution.

This book begins on graduation day for Miss Oliver's, an independent boarding school for girls, and it's also the last day for Marjorie Boyd, the headmistress for the last 35 years. When she is replaced by Fred Kindler, a chaotic year ensues. It was the board's decision to fire Marjorie and hire Fred, and the staff is divided on their feelings about the new headmaster's presence. The change is most traumatic for Francis and Peggy Plummer, a married couple who have devoted their lives to the school—he as a math and English teacher, she as librarian. Partly to avoid being confronted by this change and partly as a personal journey of discovery, Francis leaves for the summer on an archaeological dig—and this, coupled with Francis' disdain for the new headmaster, may mean the end of his marriage. It comes to light that Fred was brought aboard because the school is in danger of shutting down; enrollment has drastically declined, and the budget appears irreparable. The question of how to solve this problem and save the school is the thrust of the entire novel. At its center is a debate about whether boys should be allowed to attend—for some people, going coed is the obvious solution, while others would rather see the school shut down than witness such a horror. Most of the drama comes from unnecessary misunderstandings between people who fail to effectively express themselves and from unexplained—but convenient—disasters, such as the library burning down. There are moments here that indicate that Davenport, who, as his bio notes, "had a long career in education," was probably an excellent teacher, like a scene in which Francis explicates a Robert Frost poem with his class, and there are some wonderful students, like the head of the school newspaper who is conducting research about the sex lives of students. But those attributes are overshadowed by the book's focus on bureaucracy and the boardroom, and the narrative suffers for it.

**A book for anyone who's wondered about the inner workings and worries of a school administration.**



### NEWS OF OUR LOVED ONES

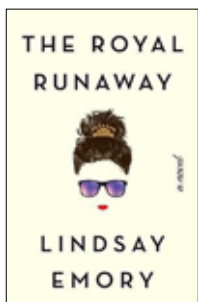
*DeWitt, Abigail*  
Harper/HarperCollins (240 pp.)  
\$25.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-06-283472-0

The experiences, perspectives, and secrets of a French family during the Nazi occupation and after World War II.

DeWitt (*Dogs*, 2010, etc.) spins a complex web of memories as she tells the story of the Delasalle family. Early in the

book we meet Geneviève, who has gone to Paris to audition for the National Conservatory. Her younger sisters, Françoise and Yvonne; her grandmother; her mother; and her stepfather, Henri, live in occupied Caen, Normandy; her brother, Simon, and her aunt Chouchotte also live in Paris. On D-Day, Caen is bombed, and some family members are killed. The book centers on how the characters who are left recall those times. The postwar sections focus on Geneviève as a grown woman, married to an American and returning to France every summer with her children, and about what became of the others. These sections move between the past and present as the characters remember. The chapters in which Françoise and Chouchotte revisit memories are compelling and successfully portray the indelible impact of the war on people who lived through it. A few friends of the family have their own chapters, and those, while interesting, seem somewhat tangential. Polly, Geneviève's youngest daughter, lives the war through her mother's stories and her other relatives' silences, and her chapters reveal the war's impact on the next generation. DeWitt successfully conveys the way memories vary from one person to the next, so that for example, Simon, Geneviève, and Chouchotte have different recollections of the moment they met on a Paris street and Simon's wife blurted out the news of the deaths in Caen. The Jewish characters here are mostly admired by the French gentiles, and one Jewish man, a pediatrician in the Delasalle's hometown, has young mothers fawning over him. Perhaps because widespread anti-Semitism features in much of the fiction set in World War II-era France (such as Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française*), its absence, especially among the Delasalle family, is notable.

**A war story that focuses on the psychological aftermath rather than the wartime experience itself.**



### THE ROYAL RUNAWAY

*Emory, Lindsay*  
Gallery (304 pp.)  
\$16.00 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-5011-9661-4

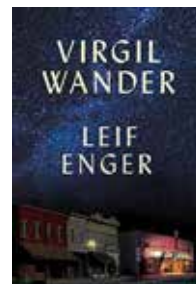
Jilted at the altar, a princess teams up with a tempting stranger to find her missing fiancé.

Princess Theodora Isabella Victoria is second in line to the crown of the fictitious Kingdom of Drieden, described as a



“tiny coastal nation on the bony shoulder of Europe.” When her fiancé, Christian Fraser-Campbell, the ninth Duke of Steading, fails to show up to their wedding, Thea's grandmother, Queen Aurelia, has her spend four months on Perpetua, an island in the North Sea where “they used to send the women who couldn't be controlled.” One night shortly after her return, Thea slips away to a pub and meets Nick, a “dark and rough, but not altogether objectionable” Scot who flirts with her, kisses her, and then tries to blackmail her into getting him information about a lost family property. But she soon learns that Nick is actually Christian's brother, and the information he seeks could overturn the entire Drieden monarchy. With everything to lose and no one to trust, Thea decides to join Nick in his quest to find out what happened to Christian before anyone else is hurt. The royal family lore is charming, from King Henry III, who in 1650 condemned colonization as “a foolish, wasteful enterprise,” to the court astrologer, Sybil, who consults the stars (and other intel) to advise Thea. The progressive princess proves to be as resilient as she is rebellious. Even when her throne is threatened, she insists that “human lives are more important than our culture!” Under her reign, “happily ever after” gets a refreshing update.

**This imaginative, absorbing, and empowering story is a must-read.**



### VIRGIL WANDER

*Enger, Leif*  
Grove (352 pp.)  
\$27.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-8021-2878-2

Minnesota novelist Enger (*So Brave, Young, and Handsome*, 2008, etc.) takes readers on a magical mystery tour of a fictional town on the shores of Lake Michigan, near Duluth.

One of the subplots of this parable about the rebirth of both the titular narrator and his North Shore hometown concerns a minor-league prospect who had one moment of glory that he was never able to equal. An eccentric young pitcher with a fastball so uncontrollable it had its own nickname—the “Mad Mouse”—he pitched a no-hitter and then disappeared into the ether. It's easy to read that as a metaphor for the author himself, who made a bestselling breakthrough with his debut (*Peace Like a River*, 2001), wasn't able to sustain a major-league reputation with his follow-up, and has now returned with his first novel in a decade—perhaps his most ambitious. Or at least his most overstuffed. Among its elements is the first-person narrator with the portentous name who has survived a near-death experience, plunging with his car into Lake Superior. And a kite-flying Nordic codger who has come in search of the son he never knew (the disappeared pitcher). And a pet raccoon named Genghis, half-domesticated, half-feral. And a homicidal sturgeon. And the wayward son of the town founder who has become a film director of disrepute and brings ill fortune to others by his very presence. And a

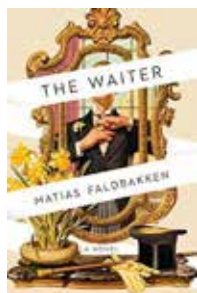


# Disturbances in the routines of an old restaurant unhinge the head waiter in this droll, understated debut novel.

THE WAITER

mythically beautiful young mother and her son, who are hoping for the return of their Odysseus (again, the disappeared pitcher) but will perhaps find new love with Virgil. And an annual festival called Hard Luck Days to which the story builds and which eventually attracts regional son Bob Dylan (who proclaims the pie he is served “better than the Nobel”). There’s also a bomb. Virgil himself provides the best summary: “Why am I still surprised when it turns out there is more to the story?...A person never knows what is next—I don’t, anyway. The surface of everything is thinner than we know. A person can fall right through, without any warning at all.”

**Like Garrison Keillor on hallucinogens, this novel has a lot more imagination than coherence.**



## THE WAITER

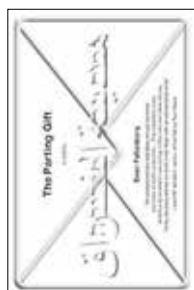
*Faldbakken, Matias*  
*Trans. by Menzies, Alice*  
 Scout Press/Simon & Schuster (256 pp.)  
 \$26.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-5011-9752-9



Disturbances in the routines of an old restaurant unhinge the head waiter in this droll, understated debut novel by a Norwegian artist and writer.

The Hills restaurant in central Oslo dates from the mid-1800s and aspires to a Continental ambience, although it has succumbed to grubbiness and grime over the years. As the unnamed waiter opens the narrative, he mentions tradition, alludes to regularity, and defines his role: “I wait. I please.” But something is off. A normally punctual regular known as “the Pig” is 11 minutes late. Worse: One of his expected guests is even later. When she does appear, she’s an attractive young woman who “looks like debauchery dressed as asceticism.” Is the waiter smitten? There are other disturbances over the course of several days. The Pig wants to do business with another patron. Regulars leave their usual tables and commingle. A meal is ordered in reverse, starting with the cheese trolley. The waiter makes a serving error, then another. He injures his hand in the cellar, and the chef performs surgery on the resulting blood blister in a stomach-turning scene. The waiter inexplicably finds himself in the kitchen putting cherry tomatoes through a garlic press. The chef orders him to get replacements from the cellar, and there begins the odyssey of the Romanesco, a sort of cauliflower that tickles the waiter’s fancy. He presents it to the chef instead of the tomatoes. He carries it with him to wait on the young lady. He leaves it on the bar. It’s all so out of character. And what horror does the waiter discover on the mezzanine, where Johansen plays piano nonstop?

**Bringing to mind Mervyn Peake and Wes Anderson, with some of Nathanael West’s deadpan grotesque, this is a beguiling, quirky entertainment.**



## THE PARTING GIFT

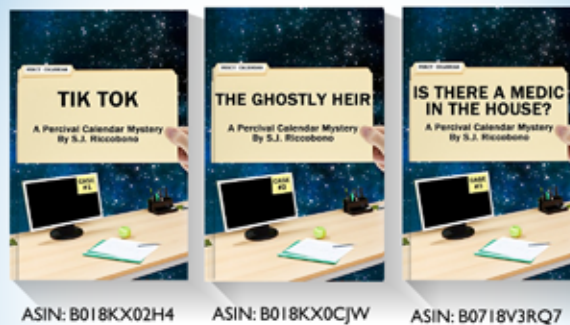
*Fallenberg, Evan*  
 Other Press (256 pp.)  
 \$19.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-59051-943-1

A novel about sexuality, acceptance, and Middle Eastern culture.

National Jewish Book Award winner Fallenberg’s (*When We Dance on Water*, 2011, etc.) most recent novel starts when an unnamed narrator decides to write a letter to Adam, his old college friend, who’s sitting across the room from him. Months before, the narrator arrived at Adam’s doorstep in a “middling city of America,” providing no explanation as to why, how, or for how long. Launching into a 100-plus-page letter, the narrator explains the events that led up to his arrival. The narrator was visiting Tel Aviv with his friends when he met Uzi, a spice merchant whose smell was “meaty, truly pungent and ripe.” Compelled by the pheromones

## Percival Calendar Mysteries

by S.J. Riccobono



A sleuth in the distant future works a case involving an actress proclaiming her innocence—despite security footage that shows she killed her husband—in this sci-fi mystery.

“Traditional genre trademarks and a stellar backdrop invigorate this tale, the first in a series featuring the whip-smart gumshoe.” —*Kirkus Reviews* on *Tik Tok*

For information on publishing and film rights,  
 email [sj.ricco@mail.com](mailto:sj.ricco@mail.com)

Uzi was releasing, the narrator decides to leave his friends and stay with Uzi. Immediately, the two engage in an animalistic, uncontrollably sexual relationship: “We were a mess, a heaving, sweating, panting, quivering mess.” Uzi, the typically macho laborer, welcomes the narrator into his home, to the surprise of his family, namely his ex-wife, who lives across the property. But homosexuality, however stigmatized it may be in Israel, doesn’t seem to be that important to Uzi’s family—their main concern is why now. Uzi and the narrator lead a typical life from then on, with the narrator spearheading the expansion of Uzi’s spice business. Everything is going well until Ibrahim, the son of Uzi’s friend, arrives for an apprenticeship. Filled with jealousy and resentment, the narrator progressively loses his mind. Fallenberg’s story is one of heartbreak in which guilt and feelings of inadequacy ultimately cause his characters’ downfalls. Written entirely in the form of a letter to Adam, the story is magnetic, drawing readers in from the first crotch-grab to the last goodbye. But more important, this is a complicated study of the ways in which religious heritage—from codes of honor to familial expectations—interacts with business and acceptance, family and lovers, and self-realization.

**A beautiful novel whose only fault is ending too soon.**



### THE DOGS OF DETROIT

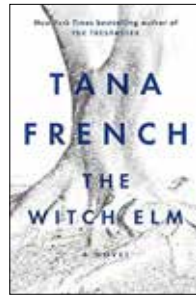
*Felver, Brad*  
Univ. of Pittsburgh (200 pp.)  
\$21.95 | Sep. 9, 2018  
978-0-8229-4542-0

A story collection exploring issues of anger and loss.

The 14 stories gathered in Felver’s debut take place in rural settings throughout the Midwest, with a few exceptions set in urban locales. Though uniformly well-crafted, these are gritty stories that often touch on brutal subject matter. In their depiction of men dealing with hardship and loss, it’s the raw, sometimes-violent emotions of anger and regret that the author closely examines, and yet there are also genuine moments of poignancy. In “Queen Elizabeth,” one of the standout stories, an unlikely couple’s loving and passionate marriage is increasingly threatened by their class and educational differences until their bond unravels following the death of their young daughter. In “Hide-and-Seek,” the narrator is a middle-aged man who likes to hang out at airport lounges fantasizing about weekend trips with imaginary girlfriends. When he suddenly meets up with his long-estranged brother, they begin to reminisce about their past and a brother who died in an accident in their youth. The narrator slowly gathers that his differences with his brother are less defined than he had imagined, and memories of their brother’s death are equally painful for them both. “It’s sad, but my brother and me can only really talk about three or four different things, and one of them is our dead brother. It’s sad how I can’t punch him either, or maybe how I don’t really want to anymore. I guess I’ve always wanted to know someone else was still miserable about all of

it, but now that it’s happening, it’s a nasty business.” Felver’s writing is sharp and insightful. His stories evoke the style and themes of writers ranging from Richard Russo to Rick Bass to Andre Dubus III and, in the particularly brutal surrealist title story, “The Dogs of Detroit,” Cormac McCarthy.

**A substantial debut by a promising and confident new writer.**



### THE WITCH ELM

*French, Tana*  
Viking (464 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-7352-2462-9

A stand-alone novel from the author of the Dublin Murder Squad series.

French has earned a reputation for atmospheric and existentially troubling police procedurals. Here, the protagonist is a crime victim rather than a detective. Toby Hennessy is a lucky man. He has a job he enjoys at an art gallery. He has a lovely girlfriend named Melissa. And he has a large, supportive family, including his kind Uncle Hugo and two cousins who are more like siblings. As the story begins, Toby’s just gotten himself into a bit of a mess at work, but he’s certain that he’ll be able to smooth things over, because life is easy for him—until two men break into his apartment and brutally beat him. The damage Toby suffers, both physical and mental, undermines his sense of self. His movements are no longer relaxed and confident. His facility with words is gone. And his memory is full of appalling blanks. When he learns that his uncle is dying, Toby decides that he can still be useful by caring for him, so he moves into the Hennessy family’s ancestral home, and Melissa goes with him. The three of them form a happy family unit, but their idyll comes to an abrupt end when Toby’s cousin’s children find a human skull in the trunk of an elm tree at the bottom of the garden. As the police try to solve the mystery posed by this gruesome discovery, Toby begins to question everything he thought he knew about himself and his family. The narrative is fueled by some of the same themes French has explored in the past. It’s reminiscent of *The Likeness* (2008) in the way it challenges the idea of identity as a fixed and certain construct. And the unreliability of memory was a central issue in her first novel, *In the Woods* (2007). The pace is slow, but the story is compelling, and French is deft in unraveling this book’s puzzles. Readers will see some revelations coming long before Toby, but there are some shocking twists, too.

**Psychologically intense.**

Fuller's disturbing novel will entrap readers in its twisty narrative, leaving them to reckon with what is real and what is unreal.

BITTER ORANGE



**BITTER ORANGE**

Fuller, Claire  
Tin House (328 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-947793-15-6



Fuller's (*Swimming Lessons*, 2017, etc.) latest novel is seductive on the outside, but hidden within is a sinister story that considers the terrifying lengths people will go to escape their pasts.

It's the summer of 1969, and for the first time in 39 years, Frances Jellico is free of any routine. One month ago, she buried her mother, the callous woman she'd been bound to since birth. When she's commissioned to survey and write a report on the garden architecture of Lyntons, an old English country house outside London, Frances leaves her home, and turbulent past, to settle into the mansion's furnished attic for the summer. From the moment she meets Cara and Peter, the attractive couple staying in the rooms below hers, Frances is besotted. Peter, she learns, has been hired to assess the foundation and state of the house, which, after years of neglect following the war, is in poor condition. Frances becomes enraptured by the carefree, unbridled passion Peter and Cara seamlessly exude. All her life, she has yearned for that sense of freedom—to be unburdened of her loneliness, her insecurities, her endless guilt. After discovering a peephole in her bathroom floor, Frances takes to watching their intimate lives play out from above. Equally intrigued by Frances, the couple invites her into their lives, eager to share their desires and secrets with a captive audience. The three spend their languid days indulging in decadent meals, drinking, sunbathing, and reveling in the frivolity of one another's company. But as Fuller's novel progresses, Frances' friendship with the couple turns claustrophobic. The stories Cara and Peter have fed Frances slowly begin to unfurl, revealing a labyrinth of deceptions that Frances finds herself in the middle of. When strange things begin to happen throughout the house, Frances realizes she knows nothing about Cara and Peter. Much like Lyntons, they're "beautiful on the surface, but look a little closer and everything is decaying, rotting, falling apart." In the vein of Shirley Jackson's bone-chilling *The Haunting of Hill House*, Fuller's disturbing novel will entrap readers in its twisty narrative, leaving them to reckon with what is real and what is unreal.

**An intoxicating, unsettling masterpiece.**



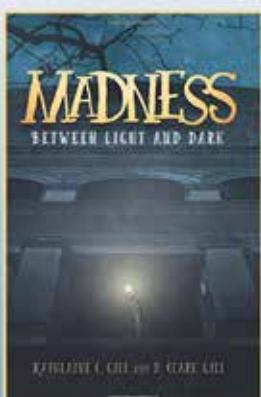
**THE WINTERS**

Gabriele, Lisa  
Viking (320 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-0-525-55970-2

With his first wife, Rebekah, dead, Max Winter brings another young woman to Asherley.

"Last night Rebekah tried to murder me again." With that close echo of one of the most famous opening lines in literature, Gabriele (*The Almost Archer Sisters*, 2008) pulls back the curtain on her update of Daphne Du Maurier's 1938 classic, *Rebecca*. Manderley in Cornwall becomes an opulent estate called Asherley, on Long Island; the nameless heroine's nemesis is not a resentful housekeeper named Mrs. Danvers but a prospective 15-year-old stepdaughter named Dani; Rebekah has died in a fiery car crash rather than by drowning. But water remains an important factor. When she first meets millionaire

**MADNESS**  
BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARK  
by Kathlaine C. Gill and D. Clark Gill



ISBN 13: 978-164110709

This *Alice In Wonderland* inspired tale "offers a coming-of-age story in a most unusual setting: a brutal sanitarium."

"Unexpected humor and an unusual but endearing heroine..."  
—Kirkus Reviews

For information on publishing or film rights, contact [dkcgill@gmail.com](mailto:dkcgill@gmail.com)

New York State senator Max Winter, our orphaned, naïve, and hardworking heroine is living on Grand Cayman, where she is employed by “one of the richest women in the Caribbean,” the owner of boat charter companies all over the islands. Some of the more amusing lines in the book are the narrator’s representation of her boss’s Australian accent: “Oym an idiot for baying sore ginerous. Oy aughta foyer you both.” Though celebrity client Max Winter is old enough to be the narrator’s father and she believes herself hopelessly plain and uninteresting, the two are launched almost instantly into a smokin’ hot affair that soon enough leads to a diamond ring and a return to Asherley. There, she must contend with the specter of Rebekah, the woman who nabbed Max the first time around and who has left behind her unbelievably bitchy and precocious daughter. Dani texts her father as soon as she gets word of the new relationship: *if you bring ur fucking fling home daddy ill kill myself*. Just wait till you get a load of the kid’s 31,000 follower Instagram account.

**A harmless parlor game of a book but a little lacking in the skin-crawling suspense department.**



### THE STRANGER GAME

*Gadol, Peter*  
Hanover Square Press (304 pp.)  
\$25.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-335-94391-0



When Rebecca’s boyfriend goes missing, she learns that he may be caught up in the stranger game. So she, too, begins to play. Rule No. 1: Choose random people to follow, and don’t get caught....

Gadol’s (*Silver Lake*, 2009, etc.) novel explores the inherent loneliness of modern life and suggests that, in our desperate search for meaning and connection, we are willing to do almost anything. When Ezra disappears, Rebecca finds a copy of an article in his desk written by A. Craig (a pseudonym) about how, in his own desire to escape the crushing isolation of his life, he begins to follow total strangers. Eventually this “game” becomes all-consuming. According to the detective to whom Rebecca reports Ezra’s disappearance, more and more people are dropping out to play the game. Even more troubling, there are underground versions of the game in which people break into empty houses or hire “stagers” to create potentially violent confrontations. The police may even be involved, so Rebecca has to be careful whom she trusts—and that includes her new lover, Carey. The irony, of course, is that while the founder of the stranger game claims that following strangers helps him develop empathy, players actually just impose their own assumptions on the narratives they craft to explain the motives of another. In other words, we don’t truly see other people for who they are; instead, we filter what we see through our own experiences, preventing us from learning new perspectives on the world. Perhaps the best we can do, Gadol suggests through Rebecca and Ezra, is “to know one

person as completely as possible” and ask, “How could you draw a line connecting you and this one great love? How could you make that line indelible?”

**Beautiful, thoughtful meditation on the invisible ties that bind us—even to strangers.**



### THE BEGGAR AND OTHER STORIES

*Gazdanov, Gaito*  
*Trans. by Karetnyk, Bryan*  
Pushkin Press (224 pp.)  
\$18.00 paper | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-78227-401-8



Appearing for the first time in English translation, these stories describe the struggle to find happiness and mean-

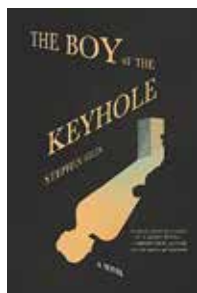
ing in one’s life.

Gazdanov (*The Spectre of Alexander Wolf*, 2013) was born in St. Petersburg in 1903; during the Russian Revolution, he fought with the White Army before fleeing to Paris in 1920. There, he worked a series of more or less menial jobs, the longest lasting as a late-night taxi driver. When the Nazis occupied Paris, Gazdanov joined the Resistance. As for his writing, it has long gone overlooked, but a recent revival has begun to shower Gazdanov with the attention he deserves. This latest translation of his work into English collects a number of stories from Gazdanov’s early and late career, edited and arranged by his translator, Karetnyk. The collection is neither comprehensive nor representative, but, taken on its own, it forms a lovely little introduction to Gazdanov’s work. The stories range in date from the early to late 1930s; the last two were written in 1962 and 1963, respectively, just before Gazdanov’s premature death. In “Happiness,” a 14-year-old boy observes his new stepmother with suspicion; in “The Mistake,” a young woman grows bored with her husband’s “callous estimations of people, although they were almost always proved right”—to escape the tyranny of his “monstrous” intellect, she dives into an affair. In Karetnyk’s excellent translation, Gazdanov’s prose appears at the height of elegance. But as these stories reveal, that elegance can belie a certain heavy-handedness in theme and worldview. In “The Beggar,” Gazdanov describes “an old man in rags” who lives in a crate on the outskirts of Paris. No one would guess that he’d once directed one of the city’s wealthiest firms. “When everything he was obliged to do wearied and vexed him...he did retain one desire—freedom.” Gazdanov’s equation of homelessness with freedom may have aged badly, but his critique of power and wealth is more relevant than ever. We’re lucky to have these stories.

**A fine introduction to the short prose of a modernist master.**

## In a world with few survivors and fewer rules, words become a lifeline.

SCRIBE



### THE BOY AT THE KEYHOLE

*Giles, Stephen*  
 Hanover Square Press (272 pp.)  
 \$25.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-335-65292-8

A young English boy living in an old house with his housekeeper begins to suspect that she may have murdered his mother.

In Giles' debut novel for adults, he poses a psychological puzzle with its roots in Du Maurier and other gothic fiction. Samuel Clay runs home from school every day, excited to see whether he's received a new postcard from his mother. She has traveled from Cornwall to America, where she was born, to try to raise money—as he's only 9, Samuel is hazy on the details—after the death of Samuel's father left them struggling. So Samuel is staying with Ruth, the faithful housekeeper. They have a rather complicated relationship; Ruth keeps Samuel fed and clothed, and she's trying to make ends meet, but she's also abusive to the boy at times. For his part, Samuel seems somewhat afraid of Ruth, though he also goes out of his way to defy her sometimes. When his best friend tells him a story about a housekeeper who murdered an entire family and stashed their bodies in the cellar, something clicks, and Samuel becomes certain that Ruth murdered his mother. He begins to search for evidence of her crime, earning her wrath in the process. But at the same time, he begins to remember certain things about his mother that may explain her extended absence. Giles creates a mystery rife with slowly unspooling tension; the fact that most of the novel centers on Samuel means that his childish perspective gives adult readers the opportunity to read between the lines and interpret the truth of situations that the boy doesn't fully understand. In the end, the mystery is not as layered or complex as it could have been, because of this same perspective, but Giles succeeds in crafting a surprising climax.

**Subtle and haunting.**



### ELEVEN MILES TO OSHKOSH

*Gubl, Jim*  
 Univ. of Wisconsin (317 pp.)  
 \$24.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-299-31910-6

A Midwestern boyhood marked by tragedy and triumph.

Guhl's charming debut novel, set in 1960s small-town Wisconsin, shares many thematic concerns with Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, an affectionate homage underscored when the protagonist is assigned that classic novel in his English class. Delmar, our hero, is a bullied, underweight high school sophomore struggling with persecution from the school's burnout "grits" and, more dramatically, the recent murder of his policeman father and the worrying decline of his seriously ill mother. Del's journey from frightened

pushover to confident, resourceful young man is aided by an endearingly ragtag group of allies, including his irascible grandfather, a brash juvenile delinquent, a churchgoing English teacher, and the school's sole black student, a serious-minded young beauty named Opal. Their campaign against the town's corrupt police department provides mild thrills and gentle life lessons in equal measure, all made palatable by Guhl's control of tone and way with character details; the narrative never pushes its progressive agenda, instead allowing the reader to inhabit Del's richly drawn world and draw his or her own conclusions. The setting of Neenah, Wisconsin, is vividly rendered, skirting simple nostalgia with well-observed, specific peculiarities of time and place, and Del and his companions are fully drawn personalities whose hopes, fears, and embarrassments resonate with the familiar, sweet ache of teenage growing pains.

**This tale of a teen's maturation doesn't reinvent the wheel—Harper Lee can probably rest easy—but Guhl's familiar story rolls by with enough charm and heart to make it a worthwhile ride.**



### SCRIBE

*Hagy, Alyson*  
 Graywolf (176 pp.)  
 \$16.00 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-55597-818-1



In a world with few survivors and fewer rules, words become a lifeline.

Set after a civil war and deadly fevers decimate the country, Hagy's (*Boleto*, 2012, etc.) new novel is a slim and affecting powerhouse. The nameless main character is a scribe who lives alone in her family's Appalachian farmhouse. Under the watchful eye of local overseer Billy Kingery and the Uninvited, a migrant group living on her land, she finds a way to exist in relative harmony with the people who worshiped her late sister but only tolerate her. In order to protect herself from her neighbors, she barbers her gift of writing letters "on behalf of the guilty and possessed." When a mysterious man named Hendricks asks her to write a letter for him, an unknowable (yet devastating) series of events is set in motion. As Hendricks and the narrator each fulfill their end of the bargain, the secrets they have been keeping from themselves and each other are unearthed. When the letter is completed, she must journey through the wild and dangerous terrain to a crossroads to deliver it. Hagy is a careful writer; each sentence feels as solid and sturdy as stone. The descriptions of nature are especially lush: "air-burned hints of lightning" and "the sunset was the color of persimmons." Steeped in folklore, the mystical and unexplainable lace themselves throughout the novel: Dreams bleed into reality; apparitions appear; time becomes malleable. Stories—whether written, oral, or biblical—are at the book's center. In this post-apocalyptic world, the stories we tell about ourselves and others can be a matter of life or death.

**Timely and timeless; a deft novel about the consequences and resilience of storytelling.**



## AN UNTOUCHED HOUSE

*Hermans, Willem Frederik*

*Trans. by Colmer, David*

Archipelago (120 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-939810-06-9



At the tail end of World War II, a partisan soldier finds a quiet sanctuary that delivers a brutal lesson about humanity at its worst.

In his informative afterword to this slim but potent war story, Cees Nooteboom writes that Dutch author Hermans (1921-1995; *Beyond Sleep*, 2007) adopted the credo of “creative nihilism, aggressive pity, total misanthropy.” All of those dark moods are on full display here, but Hermans conjures them so subtly that the full force of his despair doesn’t arrive until the closing pages. The narrator is a Dutch soldier in an unnamed patch of Europe making a final push against the Nazis. Assigned by his sergeant to hunt for booby traps, he stumbles across a quiet town and an abandoned house, where he quickly makes his weary self comfortable; it is “the first time in a very long while that I had entered a real house, a genuine home.” His solitary domestic AWOL existence doesn’t last long, of course: German soldiers arrive, mistaking him for the house’s owner, and ask him to take in troops. That opens the question of how complicit in evil we are willing to be for the sake of a soft bed. Quite a bit, Hermans suggests: After the home’s owners emerge and his stay is threatened, the narrator is willing to kill to keep his perch: “If the whole world disappears, I won’t even notice as long as this house, this grass, and all the things I can see around me stay the same,” he selfishly opines. Hermans doesn’t deliver an explicit moral judgement on the narrator (indeed, he’s sweetly reasonable throughout), but the thundering violence of the closing pages sends its own message. Fire, a suicide attempt, torture, and hanging are all shadowed by men killing with a cynical, mocking cruelty, stressing Hermans’ point that dreams of peace can easily become entangled in violence.

**A dark wartime vision that evokes Koestler, Orwell, and Vonnegut.**



## WHEN THE MEN WERE GONE

*Herrera Lewis, Marjorie*

Morrow/HarperCollins (240 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Oct. 2, 2018

978-0-06-283605-2

In 1944, a Texas town gets its first female football coach.

Brownwood, Texas, is a town that loves football. But with World War II raging and all the potential coaches off fighting, it’s looking like the high school team may have to call it quits. That is, until Tylene Wilson steps up. She spent her childhood watching games with her father, and she’s the closest thing to a football expert the town has. Brownwood

has lost so many young men to the war, and Tylene knows that football has the power to bring the whole town together. She understands the game inside and out, but will the town—and the team—actually accept a woman as coach? Although she has the support of her husband, almost everyone else is in opposition. Men in town yell at her from car windows, friends desert her, and even the football players are wary of playing for a woman. Tylene knows she has to be a perfect coach if she wants anyone in town to respect her, but with limited time and limited support, the odds are against her. At just over 200 pages, the story feels thin in parts—many side characters who seem interesting are never quite fully developed. Tylene herself, though, is a complex and engaging character. Although she does love football, most of her desire to coach comes from the protectiveness she feels toward the high school seniors. If there’s no football team, then most of them are likely to enlist early, and Tylene wants to save them from that fate. Based on a true story that most people probably don’t know, readers will find plenty to love in Herrera Lewis’ debut.

**A feel-good story about one woman’s persistence, strength, and love of the game.**



## BROKEN FIELD

*Hull, Jeff*

Arcade (356 pp.)

\$24.99 | Oct. 3, 2018

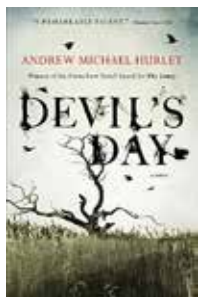
978-1-62872-978-8

The second novel from Hull (*Pale Morning Done*, 2005) poignantly depicts a hardscrabble town in northern Montana as seen through a high school hazing scandal.

Tom Warner—an outsider recently transplanted to Dumont after a personal tragedy and the divorce that followed—is a highly successful coach of eight-man football, and his team has just completed an undefeated regular season and is looking to the playoffs. In a tiny burg like Dumont, the prospect of a state championship galvanizes everyone, even those with scant interest in sports. But first there’s the five-hour drive back to town after their final game. Tom gives his assistant permission to drive home with his bride, and then—sitting up front near the bus driver, the only other adult aboard—he dozes. Meanwhile, in back, a scrawny underclassman is taped nude to a luggage rack and tormented. Such incidents—“boys being boys,” townsmen keep insisting—have long been a “tradition,” but this one’s been recorded on a cheerleader’s phone, and the story not only spreads across Dumont, but attracts media attention from away. The book’s other point-of-view character is a promising, outgoing student named Josie Frehse, sister of the team’s star runner and girlfriend of the quarterback, who is the hazing incident’s instigator. Through Hull’s nimble, empathetic prose, we see Tom and Josie negotiate the incident’s aftermath: the scandal it’s ignited and the fault lines—ethnic, romantic, and generational—it’s exposed. Toward the end, the novel veers from the quiet psychological subtlety that’s distinguished it into splashier, more conventional territory. But that

small defect doesn't mar Hull's real achievement in depicting life in a remote, threatened prairie town—and doing so without stooping either to nostalgia or cynicism.

**A sharp-eyed, often touching portrait of a fractured community and a harshly beautiful landscape.**



**DEVIL'S DAY**

*Hurley, Andrew Michael*  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt  
(304 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-328-48988-3



Farmers clinging to an old way of life in Lancashire, England, also seem to cling to old legends and rituals featuring the devil in this compelling novel.

John Pentecost has a new wife and a job as a teacher in Suffolk when he returns to his family's sheep farm in a "wild corner of Lancashire" for his grandfather's funeral. The Pentecosts are one of three close families in an area called the Endlands that have shared good and bad fortune for several generations. This time of year they also come together to help with harvest work, including the Gathering, when sheep are brought in from the moors for the winter, and the rituals of the Devil's Day, which recalls a deadly blizzard after the Great War. The local tradition of attributing misfortune to the "Owd Feller" takes fresh fuel from recent events—a fire in the woods, a mauled dog, a teen's strange behavior. Hurley (*The Loney*, 2016) has a lot going on here beyond harvest myths and rites. John questions his departure from the Endlands and from a family history bound up with the region's history of shared struggle after the locals bought their spreads from the landowners. The Devil's Day lore is, for John, part of his story, which he shares with his son, Adam, in a framing device that also spotlights in a special way the value of oral tradition. Meanwhile, Hurley explores the mysteries of human behavior and how they might explain strange events—not to mention the evil that men do—better than demonic influence. He delivers all this with consistently strong scenes, a few fine surprises, and good writing that often sparkles: "When the rain cuts deep into the upper slopes, the peat slips off the gritstone skull beneath and great wedges of the fellside end up in the clough."

**A complex and highly satisfying work.**



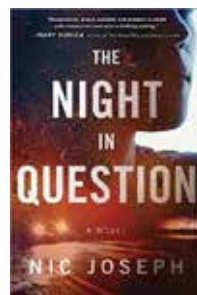
**DEPTH OF WINTER**

*Johnson, Craig*  
Viking (304 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-525-52247-8

An extended battle for kin and spirit in the Mexican desert.

This 14th installment of Johnson's Longmire series follows Absaroka County's redoubtable sheriff, Walt Longmire, deep into the Chihuahuan desert in search of his daughter, Cady, who has been kidnapped by Tomás Bidarte, the head of a drug cartel and a very bad guy. After a preliminary skirmish with American authorities, who try to restrain him from entering Mexico, Longmire acquires a band of companions and sets off across a forbidding landscape, hoping to reach Bidarte's stronghold before Cady is killed. In a nice early episode, Longmire is passed off to a Mexican colonel as Bob Lilly, the Dallas Cowboy star; other obstacles are not so easily overcome, and as Longmire nears his objective, the dead mount. Several characters warn Longmire that he will need to be ruthless to succeed, but even as the dead accumulate, Longmire adheres to his own moral code. He refrains from killing expat David Culpepper, one of Bidarte's lieutenants, when he has the opportunity because Culpepper is at his mercy, and the contrast between Bidarte's amoral readiness to kill for little or no reason and Longmire's reluctance to take a life if not compelled to do so is possibly overdrawn. The action spans a few days around the Día de los Muertos, which provides somewhat stereotypical opportunities for masked shenanigans and drink-addled confusion. Longmire himself is a nice creation, as ready with a reference to antiquity or a quote from literature as he is handy in a brawl; his allies are satisfyingly varied and colorful, and the bad guys are ruthless and unprincipled. This is a rip-roaring adventure, and if Longmire seems uncannily able to recover from blows to the head and other injuries that would disable a lesser man, well, that's what it takes to defeat this "monster among monsters."

**The sheriff as the spirit of Quixote, riding a mule to the rescue.**



**THE NIGHT IN QUESTION**

*Joseph, Nic*  
Sourcebooks Landmark (322 pp.)  
\$15.99 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4926-6800-8

A ride-share driver might make much more than her usual fare in this humorous Chicago-based thriller.

Paula Wilson is an artist by training and a Drive Away Car ride-share driver by necessity. One night, she picks up a fare who calls himself "Lotti," whom she fails to recognize as Grammy Award-winning pop singer Ryan Hooks. Paula sees that he's gone

## SEVERANCE IS A HUMANE POST-APOCALYPTIC — AND PRE-APOCALYPTIC — DEBUT

IN LING MA'S DEBUT NOVEL, *Severance* (Aug. 14), Candace Chen is living the life of many of her fellow New Yorkers: She works a job she doesn't particularly enjoy in order to afford to reside in a city that doesn't make it easy. Born in China, she moved to the United States at a young age, and as the years passed, her connection with the country of her birth becomes something stretched and different. But when she assumes the responsibility of overseeing the mass printing of boutique bibles for a publishing company, Chen finds herself building a new type of connection with China...until a mysterious new disease begins infecting the workers.

"Originally," Ma says, "I started writing an apocalyptic short story, just for the fun of breaking things down." The company Ma was working for when she began writing was downsizing, and she was one of the many people let go, which left her with time to look at what she was leaving behind. "I would walk around during lunch hours," she says, "and I just wanted to knock things over a bit. A lot of that stemmed from the rage of working, but I was also feeling bad on behalf of the other employees, people who had been with the company for decades." That, Ma explains, was how her "apocalyptic office novel" originated.

Through writing about the breakdown of the current world order, Ma offers thought-provoking insight into society. And in building a pre-catastrophe narrative around such ubiquitous symbols of capitalism as New York City and Chinese manufacturing, watching them crumble in a post-apocalyptic world is as thrilling and unexpected as it is unsettling. Yet despite the freedom with which Ma writes of the death of one society and the slow birth of another, certain things remain recognizable. "Power structures," she says simply, "just keep replicating themselves." —J.F.

*James Feder is a writer based in Tel Aviv. Severance received a starred review in the June 1, 2018, issue.*



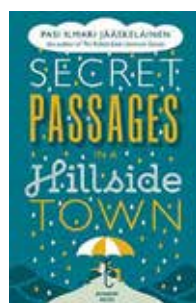
Photo courtesy/Liliane Calfee

Ling Ma



to meet a beautiful woman, and when she spots his face on TV the next day and realizes who she'd had in her car, she also realizes he must be cheating on his jealous wife. Paula sees an opportunity to help her husband, Keith, who is wheelchair-bound because of an auto accident. Paula had found a phone on the car's back seat, and she now realizes it belongs to Ryan. An operation that might allow Keith to walk again would cost \$180,000 that they don't have. Paula "would do whatever it took" to help Keith get back on his feet, but she is an honest woman in her own mind: When she finds a passenger's left-behind phone she usually waits two weeks to see if it's claimed before selling it online. Not with Hooks, though, because she knows his secret. She meets him backstage at a concert and lets him know she has his phone and that maybe he will give her a \$180,000 "reward." "The telephone and my silence" might be coercion, she tells herself, but "Hell, I'd call it a *suggestion*." She wants the reader to know she's a good person, that she only lies "about the tiny, unimportant things," such as her identity when she meets Hooks' secret lover, Emma Bentley, at a dog park. Emma invites her—"Chris"—to "a little dinner party," where Paula gets soused senseless (she *really* likes her wine) and a woman gets murdered. Detective Claire Puhl leads the homicide investigation and tries to decide how seriously to take Paula.

**A light story with nice twists and imperfect but strong female characters.**



### SECRET PASSAGES IN A HILLSIDE TOWN

*Jääskeläinen, Pasi Ilmari*

*Trans. by Rogers, Lola*

Pushkin Press (418 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-78227-337-0

Publisher, umbrella connoisseur, and accidental film-club member Olli Souminen fears he may be having a midlife crisis. It's actually much worse: He's being pulled into an alternate storyline in which he plays the cinematic hero.

Like Walter Mitty, Olli drifts into daydreams riddled with mermaids, voluptuous umbrella saleswomen, and his long-lost love, Greta. Bored with his wife, Aino, and their son, Lauri, Olli accidentally reconnects over Facebook with Greta, who has become a bestselling author. Her book, *A Guide to the Cinematic Life*, has inspired countless readers to remake themselves in the images of Veronica Lake, Grace Kelly, and other glamorous artists. Hoping to buttress his foundering publishing house, Olli pursues Greta, gaining not only a contract for her next book—the first in a series of magical travel guides—but also a shot at rekindling their romance. Yet events spiral quickly out of control as Olli's wife and son disappear, kidnapped by the Blomroos siblings, Olli's erstwhile childhood friends: Anne, Leo, and Riku. Every summer, Olli had palled around with the Blomrooses and their cousin, Karri, seeking secret tunnels throughout Finland's countryside. Only Karri could ever find the tunnels, yet they all



## A startling, disturbing portrait of teenage friendship.

MINA

wriggled their way through the claustrophobic wormholes, no one remembering the strange happenings underground. Thirty years after Karri disappeared and a terrible summer morning splintered their friendship, the Blomrooses have returned, whisking Olli's wife and son offstage, determined to orchestrate the final scenes of Olli and Greta's great love affair. Finnish novelist Jääskeläinen (*The Rabbit Back Literature Society*, 2015) deftly channels the tropes of the big screen—from saturated colors and chiaroscuro to stolen lines and melodramatic scenes, he stages the glittering affair doomed by the secrets of that fateful summer, the mystery of Karri's disappearance, and the truth about what happened in the secret tunnels.

**A beguiling, unexpected blend of whimsical romance and suspenseful noir.**



### MINA

*Kim, Sagwa*  
 Trans. by Fulton, Bruce & Fulton, Ju-Chan  
 Two Lines Press (280 pp.)  
 \$14.95 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-931883-74-0

Kim's English debut is a descent into the dark world of a teenage girl.

Crystal lives in P City, South Korea, where she attends high school, cram school, and extra tutoring. Her life, full of intense academic pressure and economic privilege, is devoid of much adult oversight. We meet her in a living room with her best friend, Mina, and Mina's brother, Minho. They listen to Kim Gordon, order pizza, and, as "a game, a joke," Crystal begins to strangle Mina, leaving marks on her neck. In some ways, Crystal comes across as a typical, confused teen. She has a boyfriend who she thinks may be immature. She's a good student who feels she may merely tell adults what they want to hear. But she has a warped and widely vacillating self-image: "She is perfect because she is unfeeling and doesn't know love." Still, Crystal may not be unique in her numbed, fragile mental state. Suicides are common among her peers, and a classmate's suicide ruptures Mina and Crystal's friendship. Throughout the novel, teen dialogue is rendered realistically, perhaps to a fault; it is nearly impossible to distinguish the voices of friends who come to sound so much alike. As Crystal slips further into delusions, pagelong paragraphs pull us deep into her mind, an uncomfortable, claustrophobic place to be. "There are too many people who ought to be killed," Crystal writes in an assignment and then deletes. Kim's prose is focused, sharp, and unflinching, even—and especially—in the novel's gruesome scenes. We see the color of blood mixed with milk, for instance. It is "the color of strawberries." The novel is full of such vivid details, difficult to read and more difficult to forget.

**A startling, disturbing portrait of teenage friendship.**



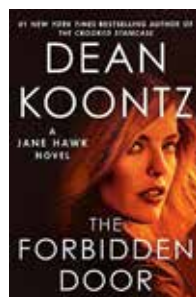
### NO GOOD ASKING

*Kimmel, Fran*  
 ECW Press (288 pp.)  
 \$16.00 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-77041-438-9

An overwhelmed family living in the rural plains of western Canada begins to change when an abused 11-year-old enters their lives.

The quietly powerful second novel by Canadian author Kimmel (*The Shore Girl*, 2012) takes place over a bitterly cold week at the end of December. Eric and Ellie Nyland have been living in the small town where Eric grew up for about a year, and neither of them is entirely satisfied with their decision to move there. Eric has given up a position with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to work as a security guard. Ellie, deeply depressed, is grieving a series of miscarriages. Their 14-year-old son, Daniel, has been grounded for smashing his grandfather's old truck, which he had taken without permission and without a license. Their 5-year-old son, Sammy, somewhere on the autism spectrum, doesn't cope well with any kind of change. They are stuck in this domestic bog when Eric sees a girl struggling through the snow on the road near their house. As it turns out, Hannah's mother has died, and she is being cared for by her mother's ex-boyfriend. After he beats Hannah and locks her in the cellar, he is arrested, and Eric is persuaded by an old friend in Child and Family Services to take her home for a few days. Kimmel painstakingly describes the impact of Hannah's presence on the family and their effect on her, moving smoothly among the points of view of Eric, Ellie, Daniel, and Hannah. She lingers over small scenes—a trip to church, an excursion to chop down a Christmas tree, a family dinner—and allows them to reveal the characters gradually. In addition to the tensions within the family, the brutal weather outside becomes a credible source of danger.

**In less careful hands, this story could have come across as sentimental or melodramatic; instead, it takes shape as a guardedly hopeful tale of resilience.**



### THE FORBIDDEN DOOR

*Koontz, Dean*  
 Bantam (480 pp.)  
 \$28.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-525-48370-0

With evil forces closing in on her hidden-away little boy as a way of getting to her, disgraced former FBI agent Jane Hawk (*The Crooked Staircase*, 2018, etc.) intensifies her one-woman campaign against a full-blown mind-control conspiracy.

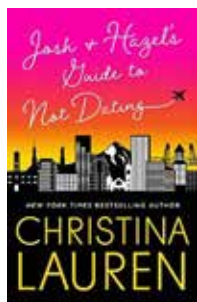
Still traumatized by the death of her husband, a war veteran who was programmed to kill himself, Jane has stashed her 5-year-old, Travis, with friends in Southern California's Orange

# Stories in which laughter is sometimes the only response to sorrow, beauty is strange, and love is fierce and unending.

WILD MILK

County. With her super fighting and undercover skills, she has out-thought and out-fought the malevolent Techno Arcadians, whose plans for remaking the world include enslaving innocents by injecting them with nanoconstructs. Wrongfully indicted for espionage, treason, and murder and demonized by the media, Jane, America's most wanted fugitive, is forced to alter her stealth strategies to save her son. Her ardent foes include Egon Gottfrey, an imbalanced agent with a Homeland Security background who follows the orders of the Unknown Playwright, and Ivan Petro, "a hit team all by himself." But though this is "a Jane Hawk novel," our heroine spends much of the book off-stage. And when she is in action, the once dominating Jane can seem as programmed as any of the living victims. ("It's all like one big video game," says Gottfrey, perhaps speaking to us as the book's Unknown Critic.) The best scenes are reserved for a plucky 12-year-old girl named Laurie, who is in the clutches of a sadistic, brain-altered female FBI agent, and sweet young Travis, whose emergency Plan B has him and his dogs staying with a kindly, autistic recluse who made millions developing apps.

Having begun so impressively with *The Silent Corner* (2016), Koontz's four-title series still has its share of excitement but seems to have run out of ideas for its cagey heroine.



## JOSH AND HAZEL'S GUIDE TO NOT DATING

Lauren, Christina  
Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster  
(320 pp.)  
\$16.00 paper | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-5011-6585-6



Insisting that they're not a couple, two best friends try to help each other find love.

Hazel Bradford and Josh Im first met in college, and it was not love at first sight. Seven years later, they're reunited when Hazel ends up teaching at Josh's sister's school. Josh is already in a relationship, and it's no surprise to Hazel that she's still single. Her high-energy quirkiness is not for everyone, and it's definitely not for a nice, normal guy like Josh—or so she thinks. Despite their mutual attraction, they agree to be just friends. After Josh's relationship falls apart, Hazel takes him on a series of blind double dates to help them both get back in the game. Meanwhile, Hazel's apartment floods, and Josh agrees to take her in. The dates—eight altogether, all of them bad—fly by in a blur of awkward conversations and uncomfortable reunions with exes. Really, they're excuses for Hazel and Josh to flirt without the risk. They're in love, but they're not ready to admit it just yet. Josh's mellow vibe balances Hazel's electric personality to great effect. "Does it make sense that I put my vases in the oven when it's not in use, so that my parrot doesn't knock them over?" she asks herself. "These are things other people might question—but not Josh." Hazel thinks she's undatable, but Josh thinks she's hilarious, and she proves him right on each failed double date.

With exuberant humor and unforgettable characters, this romantic comedy is a standout.



## THE KENNEDY DEBUTANTE

Maher, Kerri  
Berkley (384 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-451-49204-3

In her debut, Maher follows the exploits of a young Kennedy daughter before and during World War II.

In the 1930s, Kathleen "Kick" Kennedy—one of the nine Kennedy children, including JFK—is taking London by storm as the daughter of the U.S. ambassador. As an American and an Irish Catholic, she's out of place in Protestant London. Still, Kick finds a group of friends who enjoy nothing more than partying every night as her father tries to convince everyone that entering into war with Hitler is unwise and unnecessary. Kick falls for Billy Hartington, the future Duke of Devonshire, although their different religions make it hard for her to imagine a future with him. When war inevitably breaks out, Kick and her family retreat to America, where Kick works in Washington as a secretary and then a journalist, desperately trying to get back to Billy as the world around them crumbles. Eventually, Kick is able to join the Red Cross and make her way back to London, but being reunited with Billy brings up hard choices. Is love worth giving up her religion, her family, and possibly her soul? Maher paints an immersive picture of America and London during wartime, full of remarkably vivid details—what people were eating, drinking, listening to, and wearing. Kick emerges as an immensely likable character, and casual readers and history buffs alike will love getting to know her. Her headstrong, lively personality propels the book forward even when it does get bogged down with slightly too much detail. Although Kick's life is often full of glamour and wealth, she also deals with more than her share of tragedy. Maher shows the true cost of war, both for those fighting and those left behind.

A romantic and heartbreaking look at an often forgotten American figure.



## WILD MILK

Mark, Sabrina Orab  
Dorothy (168 pp.)  
\$16.00 paper | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-0-9973666-8-6



Mark (*Tim Tsum*, 2009, etc.) turns her poet's eye to the sublimely surreal in this collection of domestic oddities.

Over the course of 24 short, strange tales, Mark exposes the reader to the woman who loses her baby in the blizzard created when his caretaker begins to snow; the woman who marries Poems; the woman who becomes a tree to float her giant daughters to safety; the woman who does not eat the child. Though each of these characters is embroiled in a different danger, the sense of them as archetypes (*the* woman rather than *a* woman) and further as facets of the author's own

lived experience filtered through a private symbology renders the stories at once both more universal and more personal. It is a fine slight of hand which Mark performs over and over throughout the collection: Language as precise and bitter as a pill is used to describe both the unknown and the unknowable; utterly impossible characters remind us uncomfortably of ourselves. The stories drift in the way of the best fairy tales—released from dependence on narrative sensibility to become both more odd and more true than any mere fiction. Many utilize a dream's abrupt authority. "Louis C.K., my husband, piles all my seahorses in the middle of our king-sized bed and starts shouting," begins "Let's Do This Once More, But This Time with Feeling." Other stories deploy a poet's love of words for words' sake in long, luxurious taxonomies: "The husband doesn't want his seventh wife to be sad and so he brings her Flounder. He brings her Mullet, Snook, Pickerel, Salmon, and Perch. He brings her Grunt. He brings her Bitterling and Milkfish. He brings her Tuna." Regardless of their form or feel, each is a fully rendered exploration of impossibility that loses nothing in its translation from the author's imagination to the reader's eye. It is a common cop-out to label the vagaries of nontraditional fiction written by women as experiments in language or voice and thus dismiss their agency in the "real" world in which plot-based fictions thrive. This collection, however, through both its humor and its sorrow, rings a universal chord. How to make sense of a world that refutes all sense and yet murders us when we cannot anticipate its next move? How to love in a world that uses our love as a weapon?

**Stories in which laughter is sometimes the only response to sorrow, beauty is strange, and love is fierce and unending. A necessary book for our perilous age.**



### THREE LITTLE LIES

*Marshall, Laura*

Grand Central Publishing (320 pp.)

\$26.00 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-4789-4856-8

A woman attempts to retrace the steps leading up to her best friend's sudden disappearance, and all paths lead to a rape that occurred more than a decade ago.

In 2005, 17-year-old Ellen was fascinated with her new neighbors, the bohemian Monktons. Olivia was a celebrated opera singer, her husband, Tony, a talented bassoonist, and their two teenage boys, Nicholas and Daniel, were both musically gifted. But the most fascinating one of all was the ethereally beautiful Sasha, Olivia's goddaughter, who lived with them. Olivia and Tony regularly threw lavish parties where alcohol flowed freely among the adults and the teenagers, and Ellen eventually became close with Sasha, much to the chagrin of her best friend, Karina, who was pushed to the side. When Daniel was accused of raping Karina, all hell broke loose, and Sasha, Karina, and Ellen all had to testify at his trial. Now he's out of prison and Sasha has gone missing from the apartment

she shares with Ellen. Ellen is terrified that Daniel has carried out the threats he's made against them in the past, but as she questions their friends and families and revisits the night of the rape, the line between truth and lies begins to blur. The narration moves between past and present and the viewpoints of Ellen, Olivia, and Karina. Olivia's observations during Daniel's trial are poignant, as she struggles with the urge to protect her beloved son and the horror that he just might have done what he's been accused of. Marshall (*Friend Request*, 2017) knows her way around the complicated, sometimes-fraught nature of female friendship, and she doles out plenty of expertly placed red herrings. The Monktons are like something out of a V.C. Andrews drama: Their foibles affect nearly everyone in their orbit, with disastrous consequences. Ultimately, this road is well-traveled, but Marshall is a competent storyteller, and readers will be mostly content to ride along to the slightly contrived, but satisfying, finale.

**Suspenseful fare that will resonate in the #MeToo era.**



### FOUR SOLDIERS

*Mingarelli, Hubert*

*Trans. by Taylor, Sam*

New Press (160 pp.)

\$19.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

978-1-62097-440-7

Four young soldiers find comfort and a sense of belonging with each other that at least one of them has never experienced before.

French novelist Mingarelli (*A Meal in Winter*, 2016, etc.) focuses tightly on a winter in 1919 when the Red Army is encamped near a forest while awaiting the spring that will surely bring the battalion's movement and the resumption of violence within the Russian civil war. The first-person narrator is named Benia, though the reader doesn't learn this until almost a third of the way through the novel, within the dialogue he recounts. The first chapter shows how quickly, coincidentally, and almost accidentally he bonded first with another young soldier, then another, and then with a fourth they recruited. "I thought to myself: That's it, I'm not alone in the world any more," he says. "And I was right." The reader learns little about Benia, perhaps because Benia doesn't think there is much worth knowing. He's an orphan who had little sense of connection or purpose before joining the army and being sent to the Romanian front. There, he meets Pavel, another young soldier, who changes Benia's life when he says, "Let's stay together." The narrator intuits that Pavel is smarter, more experienced, and more of a leader, a contrast underlined when Pavel subsequently befriends the larger and more impulsive Kyabine, who will do the heavy lifting for the group, and the more compassionate and intuitive Sifra, who says little and reveals less of himself than the others. Though the winter is harsh, its interlude is almost idyllic, at least in terms of what the four men know is coming—the endless march toward violence. They find a pond that they keep secret from the others. They pass around a watch that has a woman's face, which

they consider lucky. They play dice games, gamble with cigarettes, share meager rations. They are joined by another, whose intrusion changes the dynamic. And then they are ordered to move, and Pavel insists, “Where we’re going there won’t be any good moments, because all that is behind us now.” And he is right, as the foursome’s bond cannot survive.

**Spare, matter-of-fact and masterfully controlled, this is a novel as noteworthy for what it leaves out—politics, purpose for fighting, anything that reflects on the world at large—as for what it includes.**



### ONCE AND FOREVER

*Miyazawa, Kenji*

*Trans. by Bester, John*

New York Review Books (288 pp.)

\$15.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-68137-260-0

Best known as a poet, Japanese writer Miyazawa (1896-1933) turns to folklore and European modernism alike in this welcome collection of short fiction.

It’s a pleasing sign of cultural flexibility that Japanese pop culture, by way of anime, has found room for Miyazawa as inspiration and model; it’s hard to imagine an American superhero comic making similar room for, say, Sherwood Anderson. Yet Miyazawa is certainly playful enough to sustain a cartoon or comic, even when his purpose might be darker than it would seem at first glance. Consider his story “The Restaurant of Many Orders,” whose title does not refer to the rush of customers to keep the cooks busy but instead to a bossy establishment that instructs would-be patrons to go through a series of mandates, from combing their hair to spreading cream over their faces and ears, and lots of it, too. Finally, one of the well-groomed hunters who wanders into the place comes to a realization: “I’ve an idea that ‘restaurant’ doesn’t mean a place for serving food, but a place for cooking people and serving *them*.” Spot-on. Some of Miyazawa’s enigmatic stories seem to conceal hints of Kafka, as with “Gorsch the Cellist,” in which a not so very accomplished musician finds that his best audience is a studious cuckoo: “In fact, the more he played the more convinced he became that the cuckoo was better than he was.” Badgers, cats, rabbits, and other critters figure in the story, as they do in many of Miyazawa’s pieces—and it’s a stroke of Kafkaesque brilliance that in one of them, a trap that catches a rat should have a speaking role. A hallmark is “The Fire Stone,” a story in which a family of puzzled rabbits comes into possession of a dazzling jewel that burns “like the fires of a volcano...[and] shone like the sunset” and that touches off all kinds of discord before it takes flight like a bird and disappears.

**A marvelous writer who deserves to be much better known in English.**



### SHE WOULD BE KING

*Moore, Wayétú*

Graywolf (312 pp.)

\$26.00 | Sep. 11, 2018

978-1-55597-817-4

An ambitious, genre-hopping, continent-spanning novel that uses the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade as the backdrop for a magical realist adventure.

Following four characters from far-flung corners of the African diaspora, debut novelist Moore tells the story of Liberia’s formation in the mid-19th century. When a Virginia slave named Charlotte dies while trying to protect a fellow slave, her death sets in motion a series of supernatural events that changes the tiny West African nation’s history. Her son, June Dey, flees from the plantation and soon discovers he has superhuman strength. He boards a ship for New York only to find himself headed for Liberia. Meanwhile, a white British scholar named Callum Aragon arrives in Jamaica to study Maroon communities and forces the Maroon slave Nanni to assist him. Nanni soon saves Aragon’s life with the help of a peculiar ability: She can become invisible under certain circumstances. Nanni eventually gives birth to Aragon’s son, a boy named Norman who possesses abilities similar to his mother’s. Across the Atlantic, in a West African village called Lai, a little girl named Gbessa is born on a day that the village elders have proclaimed cursed; as a result, she garners a reputation as a witch. The reputation isn’t entirely unearned: Gbessa has abilities that allow her to return from the dead. Cast out from her village, she becomes anathema to everyone but Safua, a little boy who promises to help her. June Dey, Norman, and Gbessa eventually find themselves united in Liberia as the fledgling nation is being wracked by incursions from French slave traders and tensions between black American settlers and African natives. Their desires for freedom and family drive them into each other’s arms—and toward a major event in the history of Liberia’s formation. Moore is a brisk and skilled storyteller who weaves her protagonists’ disparate stories together with aplomb yet is also able to render her sprawling cast of characters in ways that feel psychologically compelling. In addition, the novel’s various settings—Virginia, Jamaica, and West Africa—are depicted so lushly that readers will find themselves enchanted. Unfortunately, getting these characters’ stories to intersect at the back end of the book requires a level of narrative contrivance that sends the tale careening out of myth and into the realm of clumsiness.

**A sweeping and entertaining novel encumbered by an unwieldy plot.**

# Murakami returns with a sprawling epic of art, dislocation, and secrets.

KILLING COMMENDATORE



## THE TATTOOIST OF AUSCHWITZ

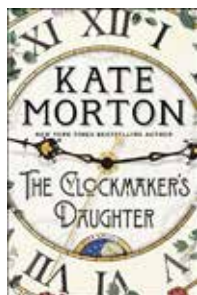
Morris, Heather  
Harper/HarperCollins (272 pp.)  
\$16.99 paper | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-06-279715-5

An unlikely love story set amid the horrors of a Nazi death camp.

Based on real people and events, this debut novel follows Lale Sokolov, a young Slovakian Jew sent to Auschwitz in 1942.

There, he assumes the heinous task of tattooing incoming Jewish prisoners with the dehumanizing numbers their SS captors use to identify them. When the Tatowierer, as he is called, meets fellow prisoner Gita Furman, 17, he is immediately smitten. Eventually, the attraction becomes mutual. Lale proves himself an operator, at once cagey and courageous: As the Tatowierer, he is granted special privileges and manages to smuggle food to starving prisoners. Through female prisoners who catalog the belongings confiscated from fellow inmates, Lale gains access to jewels, which he trades to a pair of local villagers for chocolate, medicine, and other items. Meanwhile, despite overwhelming odds, Lale and Gita are able to meet privately from time to time and become lovers. In 1944, just ahead of the arrival of Russian troops, Lale and Gita separately leave the concentration camp and experience harrowingly close calls. Suffice it to say they both survive. To her credit, the author doesn't flinch from describing the depravity of the SS in Auschwitz and the unimaginable suffering of their victims—no gauzy evasions here, as in *Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. She also manages to raise, if not really explore, some trickier issues—the guilt of those Jews, like the tattooist, who survived by doing the Nazis' bidding, in a sense betraying their fellow Jews; and the complicity of those non-Jews, like the Slovaks in Lale's hometown, who failed to come to the aid of their beleaguered countrymen.

The writing is merely serviceable, and one can't help but wish the author had found a way to present her material as nonfiction. Still, this is a powerful, gut-wrenching tale that is hard to shake off.



## THE CLOCKMAKER'S DAUGHTER

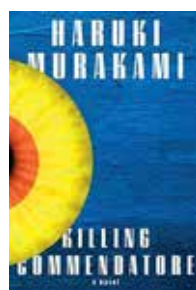
Morton, Kate  
Atria (496 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-4516-4939-0

Morton's interest in houses as repositories of secrets (*The House at Riverton*, 2008; *The Lake House*, 2015) reaches full flower in her latest novel.

The author's current architectural bellwether is Birchwood Manor, a country house on the Thames. Successive generations have inhabited Birchwood, which was the summer home, briefly, of Victorian artist Edward Radcliffe,

member of a Pre-Raphaelite-esque painting cabal. All the people for whom Birchwood holds a special attraction are, in some way, abandoned children. The unifying presence at Birchwood is Lily, whose connection, presumably romantic, with Edward is not immediately revealed. She is also the only permanent tenant, since she is a ghost. Lily spies on the other guests, most recently Jack, a photojournalist, and occasionally meddles. At 5, Lily was consigned to a more genteel version of Fagin's den of thieves by her clockmaker father, who then decamped for America. The characters across different time periods are enmeshed with each other and with Edward and the murky circumstances—including a murder and a diamond heist—preceding his death. In 2017, Elodie is an archivist who sees Lily's photo among Edward's effects and experiences a shock of recognition. Elodie's mother, a famous cellist, also died under suspicious circumstances near Birchwood. In 1899, Ada, a young Anglo-Indian, is dropped off at the girls' school that occupied Birchwood for a time, with no explanation by her parents, who then head back to India. Lucy, Edward's sister, inherited the house and founded the school. In 1928, Leonard, a historian still grieving the loss of his brother in the Great War, arrives at Birchwood to research Edward, aided by the now elderly Lucy Juliet, in 1940, escapes the London Blitz for the shelter of Birchwood. The ratcheting between eras makes sorting the many characters all the more challenging, while the powerful theme of bereft childhood gets lost in an excess of exemplars. Nevertheless, those who appreciate a leisurely and meditative read, with lush settings, meticulous period detail, and slowly unfurling enigmas, will enjoy this book.

Overpopulated and overworked.



## KILLING COMMENDATORE

Murakami, Haruki  
Trans. by Gabriel, Philip & Goossen, Ted  
Knopf (704 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-525-52004-7

Murakami (*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, 2014, etc.) returns with a sprawling epic of art, dislocation, and secrets.

As usual with Murakami, the protagonist of his latest, a long and looping yarn, does not bear a name, at least one that we know. As usual, he is an artist at loose ends, here because his wife has decided to move on. And for good reason, for, as he confesses, he has never been able to tell her "that her eyes reminded me so much of my sister who'd died at twelve, and that that was the main reason I'd been attracted to her." A girl of about the same age haunts these pages, one who is obsessed with the smallness of her breasts and worries that she will never grow to womanhood—and for good reason, too, since she's happened into an otherworld that may remind some readers of the labyrinthine depths of Murakami's *1Q84*. Dejected artist meets disappeared girl in a hinterland populated by an elusive tech entrepreneur, an ancient painter, a mysterious pit, and a work

of art whose figures come to life, one of them “a little old man no more than two feet tall” who “wore white garments from a bygone age and carried a tiny sword at his waist.” That figure, we learn, is the Commendatore of the title, a character from the Italian Renaissance translated into samurai-era Japan as an Idea, with a capital I, whose metaphorical status does not prevent him from coming to a bad end. The story requires its players to work their ways through mazes and moments of history that some would rather forget—including, here, the destruction of Nanjing during World War II. Art, ideas, and history are one thing, but impregnation via metempsychosis is quite another; even by Murakami’s standards, that part of this constantly challenging storyline requires heroic suspension of disbelief on the reader’s part.

**Altogether bizarre—and pleasingly beguiling, if demanding. Not the book for readers new to Murakami but likely to satisfy longtime fans.**



### AFTER THE WINTER

*Nettel, Guadalupe*

*Trans. by Harvey, Rosalind*

Coffee House (264 pp.)

\$16.95 paper | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-56689-525-5

Mexican author Nettel’s (*The Body Where I Was Born*, 2015, etc.) third novel tells the intersecting stories of a man and a woman living, respectively, in New York City and Paris.

Misanthropic, Cuban-born Claudio holds the rest of humanity in contempt, adheres to a rigid routine, and keeps his New York apartment free of any visitors. “Every morning, as soon as the menacing noise of the world penetrates my window, the perennial questions arise: how to protect myself from contagion? How to avoid blending in, becoming corrupted?” Robots appeal to him, and at one point he yells, in a restaurant, “I want to be an infallible machine!” He barely tolerates his rich, long-suffering girlfriend, although “her eyes always look as if she is about to cry and this gives them a certain allure.” Instead he dreams of an ideal woman with whom he will one day achieve happiness. Meanwhile, Cecilia, a Mexican graduate student in Paris, struggles with loneliness and the feeling of being useless. She spends her time watching the funerals that take place below her window in Père-Lachaise cemetery. Both Claudio and Cecilia are immigrants, and both see themselves, for different reasons, as outsiders removed from the other denizens of the cities they inhabit. The novel is told in first-person chapters that alternate between their points of view. As he endures emotional and physical pain, Claudio’s arrogance becomes tempered, somewhat. “I, who had always had my life and my emotions under control, had now turned into a poor specimen of a human like those wretches the street teems with, sniveling on the escalators in the subway.” Nettel writes with compassion for her flawed, unhappy characters and the isolation they feel within their adopted cities. As they navigate life’s losses and disappointments, both gradually integrate more fully

into humanity. “I myself formed part of the hordes of neurotics and schizophrenics who frighten the tourists,” Cecilia realizes toward the end of the book. Though the characters’ paths do cross, the book’s greater concern is their individual journeys toward a provisional, imperfect belonging.

**A compassionately written portrait of urban loneliness and the human impulse to belong.**



### MALVA

*Peeters, Hagar*

*Trans. by Glass, Vivien D.*

DoppelHouse Press (224 pp.)

\$28.95 | Sep. 18, 2018

978-0-9997544-0-5

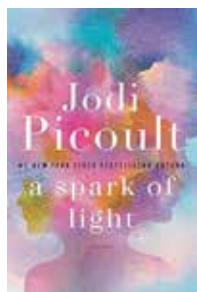
The abandoned daughter of a famous poet finds her voice beyond the grave.

This phantasmagoric novel by the celebrated Dutch poet Peeters (*Maternity*, 2011, etc.) is a strange experience, poetic in word and verse but somewhat hesitant about finding its point. Our narrator is Malva Marina Trinidad del Carmen Reyes, Malvie to her friends. Except the real-life Malva never found her voice; the only child of the legendary poet-diplomat and politician Pablo Neruda was born in 1934 with a severe disability caused by hydrocephalus and died in 1943. Not a single line of Neruda’s work is devoted to the child. Here, she writes her story herself through Peeters, able to pass back and forth through time and space. “Oh Hagar, you’ll find out when your time comes: the hereafter is all about going over old ground,” she confesses. Her “afterparty of the dead” is a colorful one, populated by characters that include Oskar Matzerath, “the droll dwarf with the tin drum from the novel by Günter Grass,” as well as James Joyce’s schizophrenic daughter, Lucia, and Arthur Miller’s son, Daniel, who had Down syndrome and who thinks Malva is trying to posthumously earn her father’s love. She also bonds, in a way, with Socrates (a father figure of sorts) and with the late Polish poet Wisława Szymborska, whom Malva secretly aspires to make her grandmother. Stylistically flamboyant prose may overshadow a sadly common theme as both Malva and Peeters explore what it means for a child to be abandoned by a parent. There is some resonance in making reparations for this long-lost daughter. While there’s not much narrative substance here, Malva’s voice is intriguing, having evolved beyond revenge or anger into a deeper acceptance.

**An evocative portrait of a lost girl demanding agency even in the face of death itself.**

# A day at a Mississippi abortion clinic unfurls backward as a self-appointed avenging angel wreaks havoc.

A SPARK OF LIGHT



## A SPARK OF LIGHT

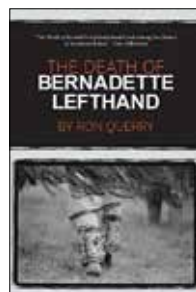
*Picoult, Jodi*  
Ballantine (384 pp.)  
\$28.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-345-54498-8

A day at a Mississippi abortion clinic unfurls backward as a self-appointed avenging angel wreaks havoc.

Picoult's latest takes the unusual tack of proceeding in reverse. At 5 p.m., the Center, Mississippi's last remaining

abortion clinic, is awash in blood as Hugh McElroy, a Jackson police negotiator, is still bargaining with George Goddard, the deranged gunman who has occupied the Center for hours. Five hostages have been released, two gravely wounded: Hugh's sister, Bex, and Dr. Louie Ward, the Center's surgeon (whom, according to her author's note, Picoult based on the outspoken abortion provider Dr. Willie Parker). One person inside is dead, and Hugh is still waiting for word of his teenage daughter, Wren, who had gone to the Center for a prescription for birth control pills, accompanied by her aunt Bex. As the day moves backward, several voices represent a socio-economic cross-section of the South; a few are on the front lines of the anti-abortion vs. abortion-rights war—but most are merely seeking basic women's health care. Olive, 68, is at the Center for a second opinion; Janine, an anti-abortion activist, is there to spy; Joy is seeking an abortion; and Izzy is pregnant and conflicted. George wants revenge—his daughter recently had an abortion. A third father-daughter story runs parallel to the hostage crisis: A teenager named Beth, hospitalized for severe bleeding, is being prosecuted for murder after having taken abortifacient drugs she'd ordered online at 16 weeks pregnant. At times, Picoult defaults to her habitual sentimentality, particularly in describing the ties that bind Hugh, Wren, and Bex. This novel is unflinching, however, in forcing readers to witness the gory consequences of a mass shooting, not to mention the graphic details of abortions at various stages of gestation and the draconian burdens states like Mississippi have placed on a supposed constitutional right. For Dr. Ward, an African-American, "the politics of abortion" have "so much in common with the politics of racism." The *Time's Arrow*—or *Benjamin Button*—like backward structure adds little except for those ironic tinges hindsight always provides.

Novels such as this extensively researched and passionate polemic are not necessarily art, but, like Sinclair Lewis' *The Jungle*, they are necessary.



## THE DEATH OF BERNADETTE LEFTHAND

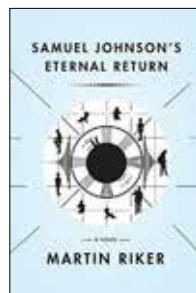
*Query, Ron*  
Cinco Puntos (232 pp.)  
\$17.95 paper | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-1947627-08-6

Gracie Lefthand is in mourning. Her beautiful, elegant sister, Bernadette, has been murdered, and Gracie and her father are left to raise Bernadette's child—and tell her story—in this poly-

phonic Native American novel.

Told in the first person by both Gracie, a 16-year-old Apache/Pueblo girl, and Starr Stubbs, a bored white model-turned-rock star's wife who hired Bernadette, a traditional dancer and well-educated young woman, as a housekeeper, and occasionally in a poetic third-person narrative voice, Bernadette's story takes place in the New Mexico town of Dulce. The novel moves back and forth in time, never losing the thread that moves us closer and closer to Bernadette's brutal murder. The novel is filled with poetic detail, and both Starr and especially Gracie punch forward with their strong, unique voices. They tell not only Bernadette's tragic story, but her husband's, who is Diné/Navajo—and that of the man so jealous of their relationship that he'd pursue dark witchcraft to destroy it. This book was originally published in 1993, and although Query's work precedes the current trend in Native letters that has writers speaking to their own, or neighboring, Native nations (Query is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and his characters are from various Southwestern Nations), Query has lived for years in the Southwest. His characters are complex and achingly human. He depicts traditional Diné ceremonies, and though this is also a departure, what he does depict is respectful and adds much to the richness of the story. It is often taboo for Diné to write or speak of certain traditions, and it's awkward when someone white does. But for Query, he is both outsider and insider.

This powerful, sad, but ultimately beautiful story deserves to be back on the bookshelves of American readers with its innovative, organic use of Indigenous prose form and strong, lovely personalities.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON'S ETERNAL RETURN

*Riker, Martin*  
Coffee House (256 pp.)  
\$16.95 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-56689-536-1

A man torn forcefully from his son lives many lifetimes trying to return.

This debut novel by Riker is an odd philosophical meditation on life itself and can be dryly funny and emotionally frustrating in turns. Our narrator is Samuel Johnson, a young father living in picturesque Unityville, Pennsylvania, circa

## A detective travels to the heart of a mysterious snow forest in this existential mystery.

THE TAIGA SYNDROME

1960—and no evident relation to the eminent 18th-century English writer. After his wife dies in childbirth, Samuel's only salve is his young son, Samuel Jr. But one night a maniac with a gun grabs the child, there is a struggle, and...Samuel Johnson is shot in the head and dies. Unpredictably, he is immediately thrust into the body of the man who killed him. That man dies soon after in a car accident, flinging Samuel once more into the body of the nearest person. "I tried every possible escape...but what was there to try?" he says. "No actions to take, no choices to make. Just awareness of myself as a being in nonspace, witness to a life that was not mine and had nothing to do with me." What follows is something of a comedy of errors as Samuel lives out the lives of various hosts, mostly of poor character, including a long stretch with a heroin-addicted sex worker. There are some hints at redemption—Samuel gets a clue about what happened to him and meets another trapped soul who teaches him to gain some control over his host body. But there's something unsatisfying about the narrative, be it Samuel's judgmental, catty voice or his hosts' pitiable, very human arcs. Riker makes some interesting observations near the end, using Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return as a touchstone, but the many lives of Samuel Johnson just don't add up to a satisfying denouement.

**A quirky novel that uses the transmigration of the soul to meditate on the human condition.**



### THE TAIGA SYNDROME

Rivera Garza, Cristina  
 Trans. by Levine, Suzanne Jill &  
 Kana, Aviva  
 Dorothy (128 pp.)  
 \$16.00 paper | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-0-9973666-7-9



A detective travels to the heart of a mysterious snow forest in this existential mystery about desire, hauntings, and the failure of language.

When the unnamed narrator of Mexican author Rivera Garza's (*The Iliac Crest*, 2017, etc.) gothic noir accepts the case of a missing couple, she feels haunted by all the cases she has failed to solve. "The case of the woman who disappeared behind a whirlwind. The case of the castrated men. The case of the woman who gave her hand, literally," she thinks. Intrigued and alarmed by her client's tragic description of the Taiga Syndrome, in which "inhabitants of the Taiga begin to suffer terrible anxiety attacks and make suicidal attempts to escape," she sets off with a translator to follow in the missing couple's footsteps. When they arrive at the village where the couple was last seen, they're brought to "a hovel...a habitable structure made from wood, cardboard, and lots of dry branches." Here, the boundaries between prose and poetry, reality and myth—both already tenuous—begin to blur even further. A wolf spied waiting outside the couple's cabin door might have been a wild boy captured by passing lumberjacks. A miscarriage witnessed by a village child might be the origin story of "two miniature creatures" used in a bawdy bordello show. The miniature creatures might, after all, be real. If haunting is a kind of repetition, the

narrator and her translator begin their own ghost story, following in the footsteps of the couple before them, falling in love—if only briefly. This novel, in a translation by Levine and Kana, is taut, lyrical, and strange, and it fits right in with Dorothy, A Publishing Project's commitment to work that challenges what genres and forms can do. Like the best speculative fiction, it follows the sinuous paths of its own logic but gives the reader plenty of room to play. Fans of fairy tales and detective stories, Kathryn Davis and Idra Novey, will all find something to love.

**An eerie, slippery gem of a book.**



### CAR TROUBLE

Rorke, Robert  
 Harper Perennial/HarperCollins  
 (416 pp.)  
 \$15.99 paper | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-0-06-284849-9

A charming, self-destructive Irish-American father takes his family on a troubled joy ride.

"Vintage car" is a loaded phrase in *New York Post* TV editor Rorke's evocative debut, which introduces the Flynns, a working-class family struggling to stay afloat in 1970s Brooklyn. Patrick Flynn is a charismatic, impulsive drunk who grandly brings home a string of cars with nicknames like The Black Beauty—a '58 Pontiac Parisienne—bought on the cheap at police auctions and later ditched because of engine problems. The cars are beautiful, but their insides are rotted out—just like Flynn's own promises to his children and long-suffering wife Claire. "Dad operated purely on instinct, which didn't always work in his favor," says his teenage son, Nicky, the narrator. Nicky balances the story of his father's decline with his own maturing awareness of life, especially a love of acting that hints at his future theater career. At times the story arc feels a little predictable and the scenes unnecessarily padded out, but Rorke's writing is always assured as he paints a charming portrait of 1970s family life right down to the Amana fridge in the kitchen and Filet-O-Fish Fridays for the Catholic school kids during Lent. Rorke avoids easy psychologizing to explain Pat's behavior; Nicky never tries to understand why his father seesaws between the roles of family man and "Himself," a nickname the family gives his drunken alter ego. The closest Nicky ever gets to an answer comes one night when he finds his father at the Dew Drop, a local bar, and heartbreakingly realizes it is packed with men just like Pat Flynn, "playing the away game from their families."

**What readers learn in Rorke's moving, bittersweet story is that hard realizations are often necessary on the road to discovering one's true self.**





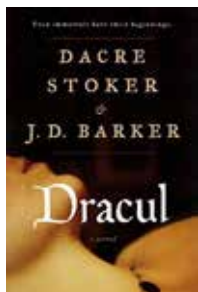
**WE WERE MOTHERS**

*Sise, Katie*  
 Little A (337 pp.)  
 \$24.95 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-5039-0362-3

A group of women are bound by dark secrets in Sise's (*The Academy*, 2018) adult debut.

Cora still misses her younger sister, Maggie, who died in a drunken driving accident six years ago: Maggie was the driver, and Cora's husband, Sam, and her best friend's husband, Jeremy, were both in the car. It happened on the night of Cora and Sam's engagement party, and it's left a patina of sadness on their marriage even though they have precious 2-year-old twins, George and Lucy, to dote over. At the twins' birthday party, someone leaves a notebook for Cora to find, and it seems to be the diary of their babysitter, 21-year-old Mira. Mira details a passionate kiss she shared with Sam one night, and Cora is not only devastated, but wonders if a kiss was the only thing that happened. Meanwhile, Mira's mother, Laurel, hasn't heard from her and is getting increasingly worried, and there are the positive pregnancy tests she discovers in Mira's room. Laurel is also dealing with an abusive relationship with her husband, Dash, and is considering leaving him. Jeremy's wife, Jade, is struggling with a choice between pregnancy and adoption, her husband's desire for a child of his own, and her painful history with Maggie. Mira's disappearance and Maggie's death are catalysts for each woman's secrets to come to the fore and, over the course of a weekend, pave the way for an explosive confrontation. Cora is especially intriguing: Her story will elicit sympathy from women struggling with the new role of motherhood. She is fiercely smart but must reconcile her intellectual self (she studied to be a mathematician) with days spent potty training and juggling juice boxes and the insecurity that comes with a changed body and an altered sex life. While the suspense is thin, Sise offers an astute glimpse into tragic loss, the innermost lives of women, and the highs and lows and societal expectations of motherhood.

**Though melodramatic, this compelling character study will resonate.**



**DRACUL**

*Stoker, Dacre & Barker, J.D.*  
 Putnam (512 pp.)  
 \$27.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-7352-1934-2

Very scary, boys and girls: the "pre-quel" to the classic 19th-century novel *Dracula*, with lots of gore thrown in to satisfy 21st-century tastes.

Stoker (*Dracula: The Undead*, 2009) has the name, Barker (*The Fifth to Die*, 2018, etc.) has the chops, and both work from an intriguing

notion: When Bram Stoker shaped his novel—originally billed as a work of nonfiction—for publication, the first 102 pages were taken out by the publisher. What if they contained crucial details concerning origins, setting up future conflicts while clearing up mysteries? This foundational novel makes Bram a central character in his own story, which "finds its roots in truth." What's more, Bram is haunted by memory: A sickly child, he was bedridden, tended to by a woman named Ellen Crone, who here joins the ranks of the undead but, for all that, has some redeeming qualities, even if people tend to die and go missing whenever she's around. In healthier adulthood, Bram and his siblings go off in search of Ellen, who's disappeared—only to be spotted, years later, not having aged a bit. (Incidentally, Ellen and her fellow vamps can walk in sunlight; it just enervates them.) Well, strange doings are afoot, and those strange doings involve a preternaturally sinister chappy of grim countenance and sharp fang. Stoker and Barker positively exult in Dracul's ability to control all manner of underground critters, including tower-climbing snakes and other creepy-crawlies, and their gross-out stuff can't be beat: "The shroud felt moist, as if it were covered with some kind of bile or slime; it was akin to reaching into the carcass of some dead thing and taking hold of the stomach." It's a lively if unlovely story, in which the once febrile Bram becomes a sort of Indiana Jones and other heroes emerge in the endless fight against the damned—some of whom, of course, remain undead for further adventures.

**A big book that will no doubt be a hit among monster-movie and horror lit fans—and for good reason.**



**SPLIT TOOTH**

*Tagaq, Tanya*  
 Viking (208 pp.)  
 \$29.95 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-0-670-07009-1

This debut from acclaimed Inuit throat singer Tagaq (her album "Animism" won the 2014 Polaris Music Prize) is a shamanic coming-of-age journey through a haunted and mystical Arctic landscape.

In 1975, a fierce and tomboyish 11-year-old Inuit girl growing up in the northern Canadian territory of Nunavut discovers her shamanic powers at the onset of puberty. Wielding words as sharp as shale rocks and ice, Tagaq narrates the story from the unnamed girl's perspective with poems woven in between prose vignettes. In "The First Time it Happened," the girl describes the experience of falling into a trance, being attacked by a supernatural being, and the sensation of her "spirit self" leaving her body. Despite the threat of possession, she says, "I am not afraid, only curious. I don't feel like prey. I too am a predator." This empowering initiatory experience is the catalyst for a series of bizarre and delicious excursions into the spirit world which occur throughout her teen years. Her astral flights are a reclaiming of her spiritual heritage and the "shaman's way" as well as a means of escape from the drunks at home, school

bullies, and the roving hands of her teacher. Her animistic view of the universe helps her cope with these everyday problems in terms of spiritual warfare. Sometimes the narrator's voice shifts to philosophical musings and words of wisdom that may seem far beyond the years of a teenager. When speaking of the rampant alcoholism in her family, she says, "There are evil beings in the room near the ceiling waiting to take over the drunken bodies, Grudges and Frustrations slobbering at the chance to return to human form, to violate, to kill, to fornicate." Finding solace in nature, she sings to the sky, and it is beneath the eerie green glow of the northern lights that she conceives with a mysterious celestial lover and is irrevocably transformed.

**A raw, powerful voice breathes fresh air into traditional Inuit folklore to create a modern tale of mythological proportions.**



### I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU

Thayer, S.M.  
Thomas & Mercer (348 pp.)  
\$24.95 | \$15.95 paper | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-1-5039-5167-9  
978-1-5039-0118-6 paper

After years of failed fertility treatments, a seemingly perfect marriage transforms into a manipulative battleground in this dark and twisty debut thriller.

When Trish discovers that her husband, James, has had an affair with a younger woman who's now pregnant, she understands his philandering as a reaction to her own failure to conceive during their 12 years of marriage. She actually accompanies James to the hospital after the baby's birth to visit her husband's new child, Anne Elise, and the mother, Laurel. The hospital visit is the first time the two women meet, but Trish claims to have been aware of Laurel's existence for months. She had hoped that the pregnancy would end in miscarriage or abortion, but now that Anne Elise has arrived, Trish becomes suddenly obsessed with the idea of keeping the baby for herself. When James tells her he wants a divorce, Trish is devastated to realize that the affair was about more than fathering a child. However, unless Trish is the one to initiate legal proceedings, the terms of their prenup decree that James forfeits all of Trish's significant wealth. With a cold detachment, Trish refuses to divorce him and instead begins exploring ways to get Laurel out of the picture so she may keep both her husband and his baby. Meanwhile, Trish's calculated comments coupled with James' long absences from the hospital lead Laurel to question whether James is the trustworthy and dedicated man she believed him to be. As the story unfolds and Laurel struggles to recover from post-delivery medical complications, she is stuck in bed as James and Trish each separately plot and machinate over the fate of her baby. The narrative voice alternates among the perspectives of Trish, Laurel, and James, each character revealing additional details about their personal stakes in the outcome of this love triangle and the lengths they are willing to go toward achieving their goals.

**A fast-paced story of toxic love and shocking deceptions that will have readers huffing and puffing until the final page.**



### A CLOUD IN THE SHAPE OF A GIRL

Thompson, Jean  
Simon & Schuster (336 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-5011-9436-8

Thompson (*She Poured out Her Heart*, 2016, etc.) constructs her latest novel around the parallel themes and variations in the unhappy lives of three generations of women in an unnamed Midwestern

college town.

Pillar-of-the-community Evelyn, her frazzled, overstretched daughter, Laura, and Laura's independent-minded daughter, Grace, appear to have little in common, but when scrutinized in separate sections, their lives follow an alarmingly similar pattern of deferring dreams for disappointing men. As a young woman, Evelyn has serious academic ambitions and is working toward a Ph.D. when World War II ends. Then she falls into a love affair with Rusty, a veteran who's attending college on the GI Bill but has no interest in academia. He's left town to return to farming before Evelyn realizes she's pregnant. In desperation she quickly manipulates straight-laced and clueless Andrew, a smitten law professor, into marrying her. Ironically, she miscarries. She considers leaving Andrew but doesn't, for reasons left unexplained. Instead, she commits to her marriage and eventual children but never quite overcomes her unrealized academic aspirations. Laura, who considers Evelyn "detached," lacks her mother's career ambitions and is perhaps too attached. She loves her computer-whiz husband, Gabe, but early in their marriage, his off-putting behavior alienates her friends. In her loneliness, she carries on a short, passionate affair with her brother's former high school friend Bob, a car mechanic. Grace is the result. As Laura trudges on in her marriage, she carries the weight of care for the dying Evelyn, increasingly alcoholic Gabe, and Grace's younger brother, Michael, a talented musician with addiction issues. By the time family crises turn tragic, Grace has not yet defined her career or romantic ambitions. She falls into an affair with an inappropriate man who, unlike Bob or Rusty, is genuinely creepy; fortunately, 25-year-old Grace avoids pregnancy. She also stumbles upon family secrets and begins to imagine a future with possibilities.

**Thompson, who wrote movingly about another Midwestern family in *The Year We Left Home* (2011), here creates a plot and characters that feel more diagrammed than lived.**

# Unger keeps the twists coming in this standout thriller.

UNDER MY SKIN



## UNDER MY SKIN

Unger, Lisa  
 Park Row Books (368 pp.)  
 \$26.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-7783-6978-3



A young woman struggling with the aftermath of her husband's murder finds herself in escalating danger in this novel of psychological suspense.

Unger (*The Red Hunter*, 2017, etc.) is adept at thrillers that turn on clever uses of point of view. Her 16th book is a worthy entry in the currently crowded field of unreliable-narrator mysteries. New Yorker Poppy Lang was devastated when her husband, Jack, was beaten to death during a run in Riverside Park. The couple ran a photography agency together, and the murder of likable Jack seems to be a random crime. A year later, the case is cold and Poppy is a hot mess. She has a new apartment, a solicitous therapist, supportive employees, and maybe a new romance. A determined police detective is still trying to solve Jack's murder. The posh Central Park West apartment where her nurturing best friend, Layla, lives with her hedge fund manager husband and their kids is Poppy's haven. But she's haunted by her inability to recall what happened during her several days' disappearance just after Jack's death, by vivid nightmares that might be memories, by a figure in a hoodie who seems to be following her, and even on occasion by the apparition of Jack. Maybe it's grief, or PTSD, or the alarming amount of prescription drugs and wine she downs seeking "chemical slumber," but as her search for truth uncovers other crimes, she comes to doubt her judgment of almost everyone around her—and her own survival.

**Unger brings the reader along as her narrator's grip on reality is tested and keeps the twists coming in this stand-out thriller.**



## THE SADNESS OF BEAUTIFUL THINGS

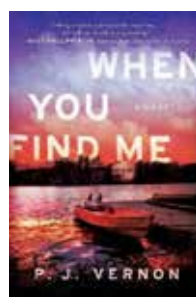
Van Booy, Simon  
 Penguin (208 pp.)  
 \$16.00 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-14-313304-9

Stories of brief bonds forged in unlikely places.

In his latest collection, Van Booy (*Father's Day*, 2016, etc.) examines the threads that tie people together. Such threads take different forms: a meaningful blanket, a fateful ride, an anonymous gift. In "The Pigeon," a man shares a meal with his would-be mugger. In "The Saddest Case of True Love," a postcard reminds a man of a chance encounter years earlier. Many stories in the book feel thin. "The Pigeon" is more scene than story. "The Hitchhiker" takes a similar structure and feels similarly underdeveloped. On the other end of the spectrum is "Not Dying," a standout. There, Lenny tries desperately to

protect his wife and daughter even as he loses his grip on the world around him. He contemplates the likelihood of a pending apocalypse and ends up arriving at some profound insights. Death, not love, is "the forever part," he thinks. "Love was just something tiny and bright with eternity on all sides." Van Booy points out twice that these stories are based on real people's lives: first in the preface and, later, with more specifics, in an author's note to "Not Dying." The purpose of these gestures is unclear; they don't add dimension to the flat characters, and the more dynamic characters, like Lenny, feel real enough as is. In any case, one of the book's eight stories could not have been based too closely on reality. "Playing with Dolls" is the sole foray into science fiction and future technologies. While it shares some similar themes with the other stories, it makes for an odd fit.

**A slim collection featuring tales of loneliness and longing based, largely, on real people.**



## WHEN YOU FIND ME

Vernon, P. J.  
 Crooked Lane (336 pp.)  
 \$26.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-68331-749-4

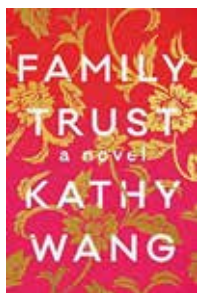
Immunologist Vernon's fiction debut is a Southern Gothic steeped in politics, adultery, family dysfunction, and murder.

Christmas Eve finds alcoholic heiress Gray Godfrey, who's returned for one of her infrequent pilgrimages to Piper Point, the South Carolina home of her imperious mother, in the arms of Jacob Wilcox, an old friend-with-benefits who smooches her up on the dance floor at Ruby's and finds his kiss returned with interest. Of all the scandalized spectators on hand to watch the show, Gray's husband, Paul, a clean-energy lobbyist with political aspirations, is the most shaken. Before he can do more than scream at his wife briefly, she blacks out, and when she awakens on Christmas morning, she's alone in bed, and Detective Nina Palmer, of the Elizabeth County Sheriff's Office, reports that Paul's car has been found abandoned along a highway. Gray, her recently divorced sister, and her lawyer cousin do their best to deflect gossip that finds in Paul Godfrey's disappearance an echo of real-life South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford's absence while he was reportedly hiking the Appalachian Trail in 2009. As Gray's experiments with sobriety return decidedly mixed results, she receives a voicemail message from someone calling herself Annie who wants a hush-hush meeting to talk about Paul. Instead of showing up, however, Annie follows up her first contact with a series of increasingly intrusive, disturbing, and frankly mocking messages that threaten Gray's hold on both her husband and her sanity.

**Although the Grand Guignol climax won't surprise genre veterans, Vernon creates a fleet, suffocating sense of velvet nightmare as he races through the list of all the taboos readers would love to believe every wealthy, politically connected Southern family has violated.**

# Members of a Chinese-American family based in Silicon Valley deal with the passing of their patriarch.

FAMILY TRUST



## FAMILY TRUST

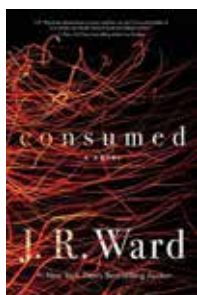
Wang, Kathy  
Morrow/HarperCollins (400 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Oct. 30, 2018  
978-0-06-285525-1

Members of a Chinese-American family based in Silicon Valley deal with the passing of their patriarch.

As news of Stanley Huang's bleak diagnosis settles in, his ex-wife and adult children all face other complications in

their lives. Linda Liang, 72, has been enjoying peace and quiet since her divorce from the ill-tempered Stanley. Always the brains of the outfit, she continues to ensure her comfort with smart investments and, now, a subscription to a high-end online dating service. Her fear is that whatever resources Stanley has managed to hang on to are being cornered by his young second wife, Mary Zhu, who caters to him with foot rubs and indulgent meals that she may well realize are doing nothing for his longevity. Meanwhile, offspring Fred and Kate, like debut novelist Wang, belong to a generation of Chinese-Americans grappling with the complicated effects of their high achievement and assimilation. Fred, groomed for success with a Harvard Business School degree, has gotten stuck at a middling firm where he's making a mere \$325,000 per year. The woman who's hoping to be his second wife is another gold digger, a Hungarian beauty with a job selling jewelry at Saks. Fred's vistas open up when he gets an email from a former classmate: "Jack Hu, the lone male scion of a billionaire family in Hong Kong. They shared a circle because they were both Asian men, a minority whose numbers at Harvard were carefully and deliberately contained each year by the administration." Invited for the first time to the Founders' Retreat, a luxurious networking opportunity for captains of industry, Fred is determined to do whatever it takes to cash in. Back home, his sister, Kate, is suffering from Superwoman syndrome: Her paycheck supports her family of four, but she also carries the heavier burden as both parent and child. And she's about to find out what her entrepreneur husband really does all day.

**Wang speaks with authority, insight, and irony about the ethnic and socio-economic realities at business school, in Silicon Valley, in mixed-race relationships and marriages. A strong debut.**



## CONSUMED

Ward, J.R.  
Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster  
(416 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-5011-9490-0

A Massachusetts firefighter injured on the job finds new purpose as an arson investigator and discovers that looking for the sources of fires can be just as dangerous as trying to put them out.

The daughter and sister of legendary New Brunswick firefighters, Anne Ashburn grew up struggling to prove she was tough enough to be one herself. After finally making it, it's the very thing she loves that ends her career: A routine fire goes rogue, trapping Anne and forcing her on-again, off-again crush, Danny Maguire, to amputate her hand in order to save her life. While Anne recovers—conveniently quickly for a narrative paced like a soapy TV drama—Danny, who's also injured in the blaze, tumbles down a wormhole of undiagnosed PTSD and heavy drinking. Anne takes her position as arson investigator seriously, linking several warehouse fires to a big-shot Boston developer with ties to the department and a violent streak. Meanwhile, Danny pines for Anne, renovates an old house, and puts his life on the line, like far too many characters before him who should have "I'm Damaged and Have Nothing To Lose" tattooed across their chests. Ward (*The Thief*, 2018, etc.), known best for her Black Dagger Brotherhood series, relies on double-entendre instead of realistic dialogue and stock characters in place of complicated people in a dangerous profession.

**For a story centered around flames, there is no spark between the characters.**



## OTHER PEOPLE

Winterhart, Joff  
Illus. by the author  
Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster  
(208 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-5011-9174-9

A collection of two of English artist Winterhart's graphic explorations of people dealing with people—and their own issues.

The first story follows the six summer weeks Daniel Bagnold spends at home with his mother, Sue, instead of going to Florida to see his distant father (who canceled the visit due to the birth of his daughter with his new, American wife). Sue's father also abandoned her for America, and Sue still quietly struggles with these and other past hurts, particularly a teenage episode with a troubled boy. Daniel is himself a taciturn teenager, mainly interested in heavy metal, video games, and resisting Sue's attempts to get him a nice pair of shoes. Tensions ebb and flow throughout the summer as Daniel wrestles with shyness and ambition and an extroverted best friend—and of course the indignity of having a mother. In the second story, Sam, a failed artist in his late 20s fresh off a nervous breakdown and back in his childhood home, has accepted that earning money from his passions doesn't work. So he takes a mindless job with an odd little man named Keith Nutt, which amounts to riding in Keith's car as the older man visits various office parks—and listening to Keith's stories. They are an odd couple, Sam's aloofness clashing with Keith's demands for conformity—though, through his close proximity and artist's eye, carefully studying the man's roughly textured body and elaborate mannerisms, Sam catches glimpses of hidden truths beneath Keith's bluster. Both stories are quiet affairs where inner struggles dovetail with the challenges of interpersonal dynamics, executed with deep sensitivity and sly

humor. The characters can appear stiff, like positioned figurines rather than people, yet the rich detail with which Winterhart renders their faces and fingers, combined with his superb ear for dialogue, breathes indelible life into them.

Keenly observed.



**GODSEND**

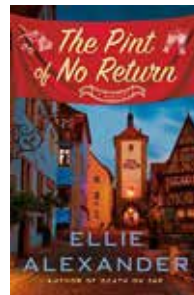
*Wray, John*  
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux (240 pp.)  
 \$26.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-374-16470-6

A young woman heads to the Middle East for spiritual guidance but instead encounters the violent side of jihadism.

Wray's fifth novel (*The Lost Time Accidents*, 2016, etc.) keeps its narrative lens firmly trained on Aden Grace Sawyer, a young woman who leaves her Northern California home with her boyfriend, Decker, to enter a men-only madrasa in Peshawar, Pakistan, trusting that her boyish frame and crew cut are a sufficient disguise. Her commitment to Islam is intense, though the source of her conversion is vague. Her father is a scholar of the religion, but he strenuously disapproves of her decision. "You have disappointments in store, I'm afraid," he intones. Dad is right, though her disillusionment happens slowly, naturally—and, to Wray's credit, without hackneyed caricatures of violent terrorists or trite gender-swap plot twists. There are linguistic and cultural barriers that are difficult to cross (her teachers don't quite get that her father is a scholar of Islam but not an adherent), Decker is increasingly absent, and she suspects he's increasingly involved in fighting on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. If so much deception is going on, Aden (and Wray) wonders, what room is there for spiritual seeking? In the novel's second half, Aden increasingly becomes witness to and participant in violence, though Wray's tone is so restrained and muted the effect of such events feels more like moral disappointments than emotional crises. (Letters home from Aden, written in a snappish tone, have a little more blood in them.) Indeed, it's a stylistic counterpoint to Wray's previous novel, the ungainly, loose-limbed *The Lost Time Accidents*. But as Aden's crisis comes to a head, some recklessness would be welcome.

Wray is paying appropriate respect to the matters of gender and religion he's taken on. But the narrative is also subsumed by its own gravitas.

**M Y S T E R Y**



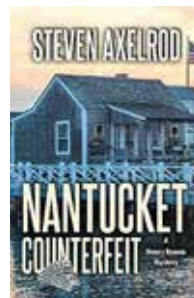
**THE PINT OF NO RETURN**

*Alexander, Ellie*  
 Minotaur (304 pp.)  
 \$304.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-250-10865-4

Oktoberfest returns to Leavenworth, Washington, bringing happy crowds and murder.

October is the busiest time of year for a town that's rebranded itself as a beer lover's paradise, complete with German-themed everything. One of the few holdouts is Nitro, the nanobrewery run by Garrett Strong with help from Sloan Krause, who has a nose for the business. When a film crew comes to town to make a documentary on beer, the pair get more grief from real estate agent April Ablin, the self-proclaimed clothing Nazi who wants everyone to dress like a German villager of past times. Sloan, who's divorcing her unfaithful husband, Mac, remains very attached to Mac's family, who've given her a share in their large brewery in the hope that she and Mac's brother, Hans, can hold his wild impulses in check. When the film crew stops in at Nitro for a taste of Cherry Weizen, Sloan and others are deeply disturbed both by the arrogant nonsense the project's spokesperson, former child star Mitchell Morgan, spouts and the way he treats his colleagues. So it's less than shocking when he ends up dead in the street. The president of his fan club, Kat Kelly, accuses vacation-home specialist Lisa Balmes of killing him. And it's true that Mitchell was trashing Lisa's reputation by complaining that the cottage he was renting from her was a dump. But although Sloan feels sorry for Kat, she learns that Kat hasn't always been entirely truthful. Since this isn't Sloan's first go-round with murder (*Death on Tap*, 2017), the police chief is glad of her extra pair of eyes, but she ignores her advice to be careful.

Beer mavens will enjoy the information on myriad brewing styles; mystery fans will enjoy winnowing down the short list of suspects. Prost!



**NANTUCKET COUNTERFEIT**

*Axelrod, Steven*  
 Poisoned Pen (288 pp.)  
 \$26.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4642-1039-6

It's a good thing the Nantucket Island police chief loves to solve puzzles, because he finds himself investigating another doozy.

Chief Henry Kennis, a poet and LAPD veteran, is slowly adjusting to Nantucket society, with its sharp contrasts between the

working class and the often vulgar rich who plant their mansions all over the island. He's folded his two children into a family unit with his girlfriend, author Jane Stiles, and her son, though the presence of both exes on the island provides constant opportunities for drama. Someone sets the cat among the pigeons by murdering Horst Refn, the Artistic Director of the Nantucket Theatre Lab, a man so widely hated that Kennis expects a hard time winnowing down the suspects. Even Jane comes under suspicion when a neighbor describes someone who looks like her running from the scene. Refn has been seducing and then blackmailing members of the upper crust, at least one of whom has been witnessed fighting with him. Although Kennis likes to use his keen sense of observation to solve crimes, he's not above using the skills of a computer-savvy officer who turns up some shocking news. Because Refn, or whoever he really is, is using the name of a dead man, the myriad suspects from his current life may well be joined by more from his mysterious past. Alibis abound, but closer scrutiny shows that many are bogus. The Theatre Lab's current production is a murder mystery whose plot uncomfortably echoes real life. Just when Kennis thinks he's discovered the killer, new information pops up that proves him wrong. Hacking his way through a tangle of conflicting stories is a tough job, but the introspective detective is up to the task.

**The fifth in Axelrod's clever series (*Nantucket Red Tickets*, 2017, etc.) casts a cynical eye on Nantucket's decidedly diverse denizens. Only the most careful readers, undistracted by his satire, will figure out whodunit.**



### THE ANTIQUITIES HUNTER

Bohnhoff, Maya Kaathryn

Pegasus (336 pp.)

\$25.95 | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-68177-857-0

Pairing with the National Park Service to catch dealers in stolen artifacts gets personal for a private investigator whose best friend has been taken down by a smuggling ring.

It's lucky for Rose Delgado that her best friend, Gina Miyoko, is a private eye, because some sort of stalker is following Rose. The two set up a trap, and without too much effort, Rose and Gina discover that the tail is archaeology Ph.D.-turned-journalist Cruz Veras, who just wants a chance to talk with Rose about her undercover work chasing pot-hunters with the National Park Service. A little disappointed by the lack of excitement in the case, Gina, aka Tinkerbelle or Tink (as no one appears to call her), digs into Cruz's background to discover that he seems to be...exactly who he says he is. It's another let-down for Gina, who wasn't hoping for danger exactly, but maybe for something a little edgier. But Cruz isn't the only one who's been following Rose, and the other person in pursuit may have a dangerous connection to one of Rose's recent cases, which focused on the thieves who resold antiquities from national parks and monuments. Rose and Gina track down Ted Bridges,

one of the middlemen dealers, with the blessing and funding of the NPS, and are preparing to go into full investigative mode when tragedy strikes, killing Ted and putting Rose out of commission, maybe indefinitely. As much as Gina wants to stay local and care for her ailing friend, she won't be satisfied until she has someone to blame. So she gamely takes Rose's place in the undercover op, supported by Cruz's cunning and archaeological know-how. Their quest to nab the big dogs of the operation lands them in over their heads because there's an insider connection even the most savvy dealers won't mess with.

**Best known as a collaborator on the Star Wars series (*Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, 2013, etc.), Bohnhoff combines well-paced adventure and double-crossing in her mystery debut, although some of the distinctive character traits she incorporates are hit-or-miss.**



### PENNED

Brady, Eileen

Poisoned Pen (280 pp.)

\$26.95 | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-4642-1109-6

A sleuthing veterinarian plays cat and mouse with a serial killer.

Introduced to elderly Gloria LaGuardia at the Oak Falls, New York, Halloween party, Dr. Kate Turner finds her both confused and afraid of someone evil she's just seen. So when police officer and law student Luke Gianetti, her friend, tells Kate that Gloria's been strangled in an apparent burglary, she's suspicious that there may be more to the story. Kate has some romantic feelings for Luke, but he's still entangled with his high school girlfriend, and she's dating her college boyfriend, Jeremy, though their long-distance relationship is challenging. At Gloria's funeral, Kate meets Tucker Weinstein, who's writing a book about a fugitive killer named Carl Wolf, who was living across the street from Gloria when he murdered his wife and children 21 years ago. Interviews Tucker gives to promote his book, in which he mentions Kate, make them both targets of the killer, who may now be living nearby. When Tucker is badly beaten near his Brooklyn home, the police think it's a hate crime because Tucker is gay. But Kate suspects the Big Bad Wolf. As she goes about her business treating everything from randy goats to an intelligent cockatoo, her connection to dogs involved in Schutzhund training gives her a new lead. Wolf had a Schutzhund-trained German shepherd that he loved enough to leave alive when he fled. A talk with the dog's retired veterinarian, who remembers Wolf and Brownie well and was surprised the FBI never interviewed him, gives her the idea to look into people in the area interested in that special training. She wonders if she's getting paranoid when she feels that she's being followed. Learning too much for her own good, Kate works to unmask the killer before he makes her his next target.

**Veterinarian Brady (*Chained*, 2017, etc.) imbues this page-turner with authentic details about a vet and the critters she treats.**

# An engaging tale of domestic intrigue in backwater France.

THE ACCIDENT ON THE A35



## THE ACCIDENT ON THE A35

Burnet, Graeme Macrae

Arcade (240 pp.)

\$24.99 | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-62872-983-2

The Man Booker Prize finalist (for *His Bloody Project*, 2015) spins another tale within a tale in this “Historical Thriller by Raymond Brunet, Translated and Introduced by Graeme Macrae Burnet.”

Saint-Louis advocate Bertrand Barthelme, on his way home from his weekly dinner with his law partner, Gustave Corbeil, and two other old friends, skids off the A35 and is thrown through his windshield. It’s clearly an accident, but since that’s not at all clear to Lucette Barthelme, the victim’s much younger widow, police chief Georges Gorski agrees to make inquiries. Not a single person he talks to accepts his right to ask nosy questions about a car crash, but apart from their resistance, the only evidence he unearths is the discovery that Barthelme’s

Tuesday evening dinners were fictitious; all three of his alleged companions maintain that they never met for dinner. In all probability the advocate was spending the time with a mistress, but after all, this is France. While Gorski, whose own wife has recently left him, presumably because he’s unambitious and a little boring, attempts to link Barthelme’s death to the strangling a few hours earlier of Veronique Marchal in Strasbourg, the next city along the A35, the dead man’s 17-year-old son, Raymond Barthelme, takes enough time out from reading Sartre to open his own investigation along quite different lines, beginning by asking why his father was interested enough in 13 Rue Saint-Fiacre, Mulhouse, to write the address on a scrap of paper Raymond has found at the bottom of a drawer. Both sleuths end up making important discoveries quite at odds with either their expectations or the leading conventions of the genre before an afterword written in Burnet’s editorial voice adds several metatextual hints more playful than compelling.

**With or without the metafictional frame, an engaging tale of domestic intrigue in backwater France with two appealing detective figures.**



## THE TRAVELER

TOM KUBIAK

Following the reunification of Germany, the KGB recruits an operative to retrieve stolen bearer bonds crucial to Russia’s Canadian presence in this debut novel.

“The author has put together a well-written, thought-provoking mystery with political and philosophical ramifications that bear on events in today’s headlines. A complex political thriller for adventurous readers—and well worth the effort.”

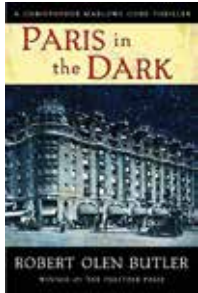
“A complex political thriller for adventurous readers—and well worth the effort.”

—Kirkus Reviews

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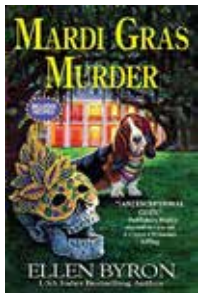
### PARIS IN THE DARK

Butler, Robert Olen  
Mysterious Press (240 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-8021-2837-9

November 1915 finds Butler's durable war correspondent/secret agent Christopher Marlowe Cobb expecting some time away from cloak and dagger. Fate, the Germans, and his boss have other plans.

Despite the pleas of the Foreign Office and the manifest inability of the British and French to win the Great War on their own, Woodrow Wilson is stubbornly keeping the U.S. on the sidelines. But of course there's nothing to prevent Kit (*The Empire of Night*, 2014, etc.) from sending the *Chicago Post-Express* inspiring tales of Americans like John Barrington Lacey, Cyrus Parsons, and Jefferson Jones, who've volunteered to serve as ambulance drivers. Kit's relatively sedate plans of riding along with these drivers and getting them to pour their hearts out are upended by a bombing at the Terminus Hôtel and the promise of more. James Polk Trask, the head of the American Secret Service, thinks Kit would be the perfect candidate to infiltrate the ranks of recent German immigrants who may secretly be saboteurs. It's hard to share his confidence, since the first person Kit suspects of heading the saboteurs is vindicated in a spectacularly abrupt way, and his second suspect disappears while Kit is supposed to be keeping an eye on him. Luckily for Kit, he's far more successful at romancing Louise Pickering, a New England-born nurse who's just as wary of strangers as he is and just as susceptible to high-flown sentiments. As for the rest, readers who don't know how World War I turned out will find no spoilers and precious little espionage. Paris isn't the only thing in the dark here.

**Sensitive but unimpressive.** The early paranoid previsions of all-too-contemporary fears about immigrants just aren't enough to lift Butler's latest above the crowd of stiff-upper-lip period tales of the War to End All Wars.



### MARDI GRAS MURDER

Byron, Ellen  
Crooked Lane (304 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-68331-705-0

Wish you were in Louisiana for Mardi Gras? Wish again.

Major flooding has dumped piles of trash and an unidentified body in St. Pierre Parish. Maggie Crozat's boyfriend, Bo Durand, is a detective for the Pelican

Police Department, but although Maggie's nose for murder (*Body on the Bayou*, 2016, etc.) makes her curious about the anonymous corpse, she's so busy that she pushes it to the back of her mind until Bo tells her the death was no accident. Replacing her Gran, who feels poorly, Maggie is roped into judging the Miss Pelican

Mardi Gras Gumbo Queen Pageant, a chore that quickly entangles her in another murder. The other judges are Constance Damboise and her husband, Gerard, the stuffy, snobbish president of the historical society; convenience store owner Robbie Metz; and star beauty products sales rep Maureen "Mo" Heedles, a vivacious woman with an outsize personality. Constance and Gerard are already squabbling over an exhibit featuring the orphan trains that carried children from the North in search of a better life in Louisiana. While the pageant mothers do their best to influence the judges, Gerard is certain that Belle Tremblay will win because she's an attractive girl from one of the area's finest families. Maggie is literally nudged into the case when Gerard runs into the back of her car and mutters, "Lies. Secrets," before he keels over dead. Then she's asked to restore a picture at the plantation where she works part time, and beneath the peeling painting she finds another one that references a possible treasure site. On top of everything else, Maggie must prepare for Mardi Gras, deal with her father's obsession with the perfect gumbo, and figure out why Bo's been so distant lately.

**Byron embeds her tricky mystery in an amusing and informative tale of Cajun life and the logistical travails of Mardi Gras.**



### BIRD, BATH, AND BEYOND

Copperman, E.J.  
Minotaur (304 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-250-08429-3

An animal talent agent's patience is sorely tried when the police eye one of her clients as a murder witness.

In her years representing furred, feathered, and finned television and movie actors, Kay Powell (*Dog Dish of*

*Doom*, 2017) has honed her ability to explain to showbiz folks the limits of the animals' skills. She tells the cast and crew of *Dead City*, a zombie crime drama set in New York, approximately a bazillion times that her latest client, a parrot named Barney, can't really have a conversation—he can only repeat back phrases he's been taught. But when Dray Mattone, who plays likable medical examiner Dr. Banacek, is shot while Barney is visiting his trailer, even NYPD detective Joe Bostwick seems to believe that the bird can give him information about who committed the crime. And to Kay's astonishment, Barney does spontaneously generate phrases like "Put down the gun!" that make her wonder if he really does have information to share with police. Of course, his outbursts aren't all that different from those of the mysterious woman who interrupts Dray's onstage memorial service to accuse showrunner Les Mannix of killing his leading man before disappearing from the set. For a while, it's a toss-up who'll end up in the slammer—the bird, the babe, or both—until quick-witted Kay unravels the mystery of who killed the star of a show about the undead.

**A second sharp outing for Copperman's pitch-perfect heroine.**



# Murder reaches deep into the hearts of a magician and a police officer.

THE VANISHING BOX



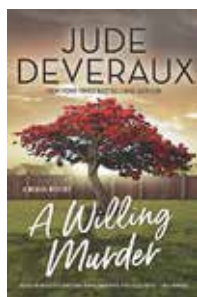
## THE QUESTION OF THE DEAD MISTRESS

Copperman, E.J. & Cohen, Jeff  
Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (312 pp.)  
\$15.99 paper | Oct. 8, 2018  
978-0-7387-5061-3

A client asks a researcher to find out whether her husband is cheating on her with his late college girlfriend, who might seem to be above suspicion but isn't after all.

As proprietor of Questions Answered, a service dedicated to answering queries from the mundane to the esoteric, Samuel Hoenig (*The Question of the Absentee Father*, 2017, etc.) makes it clear to potential clients that his business doesn't include getting the goods on cheating spouses. But Virginia Fontaine doesn't exactly want the goods on her husband, Brett. Since Melanie Mason, the putative object of Brett's affections, died three years ago, Ginny's query has a more metaphysical edge: Can a person cheat on a living spouse with a deceased mistress? And there's a further complication. Even though Samuel's firmly persuaded that ghosts don't exist, his assistant, Janet Washburn—a person he regards with esteem bordering on affection—wonders if maybe they do. Dealing with the vagaries of human relationships is hard enough for individuals like Samuel on the autism spectrum. Dealing with love and lust between humans and specters pushes his nascent understanding of the ways of the neurotypical to its limit.

Readers will delight in watching Copperman's literal-minded hero grapple not only with unpredictable and nuanced human thinking, but with logic from beyond the grave.



## A WILLING MURDER

Deveraux, Jude  
Harlequin MIRA (336 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-0-7783-6929-5

The mystery debut of bestselling romance author Deveraux (*As You Wish*, 2018, etc.) starts with an unhappily-ever-after—an unsolved murder. But its heroine, a romance novelist, has a better ending in mind.

After purchasing a house in her hometown of Lachlan, Florida, Sara Medlar makes a gruesome discovery in her yard. Buried beneath a poinciana tree with flaming red leaves are the skeletons of a mother and daughter. Sara's housemate, Jackson "Jack" Wyatt, knew the victims well. Cheryl Morris skipped town 20 years ago, just after her 16th birthday, presumably with her mother. Although Jack was younger, the two were friends, and he knew she aspired to be a television journalist, not a runaway. But Cheryl's mother was believed to be a prostitute, which was why only Jack questioned the family's disappearance. Jack is

now a construction worker and the grandson Sara wished she'd had with his late grandfather, who married someone else. He's haunted by the car accident that killed his half brother and left him on crutches. Meanwhile, Sara's niece, realtor Kate Medlar, has joined Sara in Lachlan to learn more about her late father. Kate and Jack fight like siblings, but there's room for romance in future books. For now, Sara, Kate, and Jack form a trio of unlikely sleuths, using Sara's fame as an author and the house's notoriety as a crime scene to pump the locals for more information. Although the story's tone is dark, Deveraux's signature humor often peeks through, especially when the sheriff points out all the ways the trio's meddling has jeopardized the case.

Fans of Deveraux and the cozy mystery genre will find common ground in this twisted tale of forgotten graves, small-town grudges, and new friends.



## THE VANISHING BOX

Griffiths, Elly  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (368 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-544-75029-6

Murder reaches deep into the hearts of a magician and a police officer.

DI Edgar Stephens and his team are called to the scene of a disturbingly odd murder in a Brighton boardinghouse. Lovely florist Lily Burtenshaw was strangled and carefully posed in her room, reducing the six tenants of her landlords, Edna and Norris, to five. Of those remaining, Brenda and Peggy work in a bank; Peter Entwhistle is a shaky retired bookkeeper in his 70s; and newcomers Betty and Janette perform in a risqué tableau at the Hippodrome, where Edgar's pal, famous magician Max Mephisto, co-stars with his daughter, Ruby, who's engaged to Edgar. Ever since Max and Edgar became friends while serving in a World War II special-ops group, Max has assisted Edgar with other cases (*The Blood Card*, 2017, etc.) and is more than willing to help out again. Edgar's clever DS, Emma Holmes, suddenly realizes why Lily's pose looks familiar: It mimics the death of Lady Jane Grey in a famous painting. The group of near-naked beauties that make up the tableau at the Hippodrome re-create similar historic moments. One of these showgirls, stunning Florence Jones, has a fling with Max even though she's the mistress of wealthy showman Vic Cutler, the next to die. Indeed, love must be in the air. Despite his long-standing arrangement with his landlady, Max grows close to Florence and pulls out all the stops to prove her innocence. Emma has long loved Edgar, who has doubts about his engagement to the ambitious Ruby. Even Edgar's sergeant falls for one of the showgirls. But all these budding romances must be pushed aside as the sleuths unearth clues and look to the past for help in finding a ruthless and unusual killer.

Griffiths combines plenty of theater lore, romance, and a clever mystery that's sure to please both newcomers and fans of the Magic Men detective team.



### A KNIFE IN THE FOG

Harper, Bradley  
Seventh Street/Prometheus (288 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-63388-486-1

Sherlock Holmes' creator and a crusading British journalist team up to hunt for Jack the Ripper.

In September 1888, no less a personage than Prime Minister William Gladstone writes to young doctor and author Arthur

Conan Doyle with a vague entreaty to save "many lives." Not surprisingly, Doyle's first-person narrative is reminiscent of Holmesian amanuensis Dr. Watson. When Doyle meets Gladstone's personal secretary, Jonathan Wilkins, he's surprised to learn that this is not a medical matter but a criminal one. Impressed by the astuteness of Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, Gladstone would like him to investigate the Whitechapel homicides, searching for the killer Scotland Yard calls "Leather Apron." Wilkins puts Doyle in touch with "one of the new breed of 'emancipated women,'" crusading journalist Margaret Harkness, who'll be his guide through the dangerous streets of Whitechapel. (Under the pen name John Law, Harkness was a real-life radical writer.) As in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, a leading feature is the vivid, thorough questioning of a colorful cross-section of Londoners, here including brash Cockney boy John Richardson, inept but loquacious Dr. Llewellyn, and beat policeman Sgt. Thicke, known on the street as "Johnny Upright." Oscar Wilde also makes a cameo appearance. At length Doyle does indeed stir the interest of the serial killer who calls himself Jack the Ripper, and he and Margaret get close enough to him to rescue an intended victim.

**Delightful chemistry, plummy prose, and believable period detail lift Harper's debut above the throng of forgettable Baker Street imitators.**



### THE SO BLUE MARBLE

Hughes, Dorothy B.  
Penzler Publishers (216 pp.)  
\$25.95 | \$15.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-61316-111-1  
978-1-61316-105-0 paper



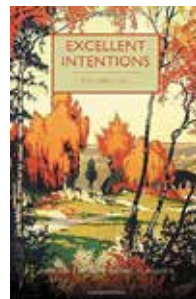
A movie star-turned-designer gets swept into a murderous hunt for a precious gem in this reissued 1940s thriller.

Griselda Satterlee (not, thank God, her screen name) has decided to give up

the screen for the comparatively quieter life of fashion design. During a trip to New York, which will reunite her with her two sisters and find her staying in her ex-husband's digs near Madison Avenue, Griselda returns home one night only to be accosted by the Montefierrow twins, denizens of the society page, back in town after a dozen years on the Continent, and as thoroughly, chillingly, cold-bloodedly homicidal a pair as has appeared in any thriller. The twins insist that Griselda's ex is in possession

of a rare and ancient gem, which they call the blue marble, and insist she knows where it is. Her own insistence that she has no idea spurs the twins to a series of vicious murders, made even more horrible by the alternately gleeful and bored participation of Griselda's conscienceless, psychopathic younger sister. Some of the murders are committed to extract information and some just to tidy up loose ends. But as with everything else in the rather intricate plot, the particulars drop away and the motive, far more than obtaining the marble, becomes the desire for mayhem and casual sadism, all of it executed as casually as ordering another round. Nearly 80 years after its initial publication, there is still nothing like Hughes' (*The Expendable Man*, 1963, etc.) debut novel. The 1940s New York setting, the characters who drink like fish and dress for dinner and take cabs to go a block—because, really, who *walks?*—give the book the sophisticated luster of romantic comedy. But it's as if a Lubitsch movie kept being periodically taken over by David Lynch. It remains funny only now we're being asked to laugh at murder and threats and oddball sociopaths. And so the book becomes genuinely nightmarish, at times close to suffocating.

**The debut by one of the great American suspense writers will suck you in even as it makes you keep asking, "Did I just read that?"**



### EXCELLENT INTENTIONS

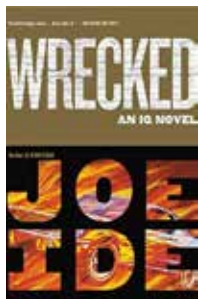
Hull, Richard  
Poisoned Pen (206 pp.)  
\$12.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4642-0975-8

Originally published in 1938, this British mystery ponders which of several people could have killed a rich man everyone agreed was better off dead.

Henry Cargate, the new owner of Scotney End Hall, went out of his way to

annoy and insult people. He made no friends in the village when he brought in from London every supply and most of the servants. So when he dies on a train, there is little sadness but some confusion. Was it his bad heart—or murder? The novel unfolds within the structure of a courtroom trial, with droll mental observations from the judge and the foreman of the jury as the case is presented. Interspersed are accounts of interviews conducted by the deceptively simple investigator from Scotland Yard. If it was murder, which of four suspects could it be—the secretary, the butler, the village vicar, or a dealer in rare stamps who had called on Cargate? The novel has several earmarks of a Golden Age mystery—the manor house setting, the stately pace (this is not a book to skim), and the distinctions of class. But while there are true moments of dry humor, the author (*The Martineau Murders*, 1953, etc.) indulges in rather too much repetition of who-could-have-when scenarios, and the ending will leave many readers unsatisfied if not downright puzzled.

**While one applauds the idea of reissuing classic crime novels, this isn't the choice to reawaken fans' interests or to charm new readers to the genre.**



**WRECKED**

*Ide, Joe*  
 Mulholland Books/Little, Brown  
 (352 pp.)  
 \$27.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-316-50951-0

The hip-hop generation's answer to Sherlock Holmes returns fast and furious in the third installment of Ide's (*Righteous*, 2017, etc.) celebrated series.

Over the course of the last two years, Isaiah Quintabe's stature as a quick-witted neighborhood private eye has grown beyond his East Long Beach, California, base. His bank account, however, hasn't kept pace with his legend. So IQ's friend and partner, Dodson, a lapsed street hustler, tells him it's time to stop accepting ugly sweaters, home repairs, and baked goods as payment and go full-tilt marketing, complete with a Facebook page and rate scale. This business plan quickly goes out the proverbial window when Isaiah accepts as payment paintings from a truculent, enigmatic young artist named Grace, with whom he'd become "intrigued" in the previous novel. Grace wants IQ to find her mother, but when he presses her for details, she becomes resentful and secretive. He deduces that she knows more than she's telling, and before long, it becomes apparent that Grace and her mother are both in over their heads against a sadistic cabal of Iraqi War veterans implicated in torture at Abu Ghraib more heinous than other, previously exposed incidents. Meanwhile, Dodson, just getting accustomed to new fatherhood, is being blackmailed into robbing a neighborhood dealer named Junior who has a penchant for misusing four-syllable words. Then there's Isaiah's Moriarty, Seb, the Oxford-educated African gangster lurking along the edges for any opportunity to ruin, or end, IQ's life. Ide's penchant for colorful characters, droll banter, and whackadoodle set pieces is aided by a growing command of narrative dynamics. And Isaiah Quintabe remains an engaging, fascinating protagonist, but there are signs here that he's becoming more an action hero than a puzzle solver. The world has plenty of action heroes—but nowhere near enough street-wise intellects to serve as role models.

**There's a harder, darker edge to the violence that gives this ripsnorting follow-up a rueful yet resonant aftertaste, perhaps in anticipation of more unsettling jolts in the hero's future.**



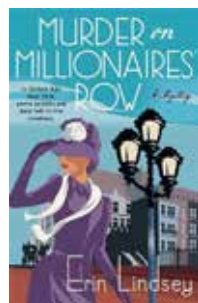
**FIELD OF BONES**

*Jance, J.A.*  
 Morrow/HarperCollins (368 pp.)  
 \$27.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-0-06-265757-2

Just because Sheriff Joanna Brady has a newborn baby in tow doesn't mean she can't do her best to take charge of a case of serial kidnapping, rape, and murder.

Sure, Eleanor Sage Dixon takes her mother away from election night when she makes her arrival just as the citizens of Cochise County, Arizona, are returning Joanna to office for the third time. And her birth paves the way for chief deputy Tom Hadlock to assume the post of acting sheriff. But teenage poacher Jack Carver's discovery of a skull in the desert, miles from any home, unleashes a case that's too big for Tom, especially when a return to the site reveals the remains of several dead girls. As Latisha Marcum, abducted from the streets of New Orleans by a man she knows only as the Boss, prays for the survival and deliverance that have eluded her fellow captives, Joanna (*Downfall*, 2016, etc.) tries her best to keep her distance from the investigation. Despite her best intentions, the reckless interference of her old antagonist, *Bisbee Bee* reporter Marliss Shackleford, pulls her back from the sidelines with the rueful confession: "I'm not very good at maternity leave," even though professional honors will go to rookie deputy Garth Raymond. Veteran Jance, who still thinks the best way to bring even her minor characters to life is to share every possible detail about their life stories, their formative years, and their ancestors, provides more backstory than a family reunion. Long before the end, her summaries, flashbacks, journal entries, and reminiscences have pulled off the impossible feat of draining the suspense from what might have seemed a foolproof story of women in extreme peril.

**On the plus side, Jance's heroine does get to hear the most suitable compliment imaginable from a hard-used victim: "I never knew cops could be so nice."**



**MURDER ON MILLIONAIRES' ROW**

*Lindsey, Erin*  
 Minotaur (400 pp.)  
 \$17.99 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-250-18065-0

An Irish maid's attempts to help her employer change her life dramatically in Gilded Age Manhattan.

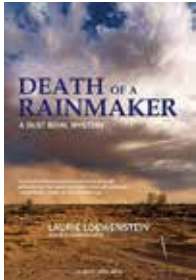
Nineteen-year-old Rose Gallagher, a maid in Thomas Wiltshire's Fifth Avenue home, has a crush on her boss. So when his friend Jonathan Burrows reports him missing, Rose, who's as brave as she is inquisitive, gathers her courage and calls on Burrows, where she finds Wiltshire's watch but no information. Luckily for Rose, the indisposition of Mrs. Sellers, the housekeeper, allows her time to follow Burrows from New York's slums to the Masonic Hall, where she overhears a cryptic conversation. Following the trail to Wang's General Store, she encounters a badly injured woman who seems to be a ghost. Wiltshire, it turns out, is a Pinkerton agent who was working for the Freemasons when he vanished. Visiting his office, Rose finds it ransacked and is brutally attacked herself. She finally tracks Wiltshire to a gasworks and helps rescue him. Although Wiltshire is loath to get Rose involved in his case, he slowly reveals fantastic secrets, such as the fact that many of the wealthiest families are well-off

# A cryptanalyst takes on a worldwide conspiracy targeting women.

MERCY'S CHASE

because they have special talents he calls luck. When Rose next encounters the ghost, she's touched by her and so exposed to mortal danger. The ghostly woman has knowledge of several murders and of a portal under the East River that's allowing spectral shades to escape. Since the world of the paranormal is Wiltshire's specialty, he knows that he must find a powerful witch to keep Rose from dying. As Mr. Wang treats her with special teas, Wiltshire tries to unlock a cipher that could solve all their problems.

**Lindsey (*The Bloodsworn*, 2016) kicks off her new series with a spooky paranormal mystery/thriller filled with historical tidbits, a touch of romance, and a talented and delightfully gritty sleuth.**



## DEATH OF A RAINMAKER

*Loewenstein, Laurie*

Akashic (320 pp.)

\$32.95 | \$16.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018

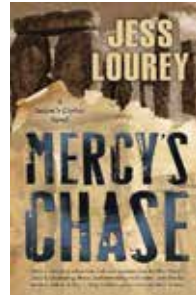
978-1-61775-679-5

978-1-61775-665-8 paper

A small-town sheriff in 1930s Oklahoma, already dealing with the effects of the Depression and a drought, must solve the murder of a rainmaker who failed to make it rain.

Sheriff Temple Jennings and his wife, Etha, have made Vermillion, Oklahoma, home for the last 15 years, having moved west to avoid memories of the place where their young son died. Everyone in town is struggling because of the Depression, but the farmers are especially hard-hit, trying to keep crops and animals alive without rain for 240 days. Certain town leaders, among them Jennings' rival for the upcoming sheriff's election, have paid to have a rainmaker come to town in hopes of making it rain. But the day after the man's TNT blasting failed to bring a drop, he's found dead outside the local movie theater. Suspicion falls on a local Civilian Conservation Corps young man who arouses the maternal instincts of Etha. She begins her own investigation, uncovering some dark town secrets along the way. In measured and only occasionally overwritten prose, Loewenstein (*Unmentionables*, 2014) movingly describes the events and the people, from farm eviction auctions and hobo villages to Dish Nights at the movies. She vividly brings to life a town filled with believable characters, from a young woman learning her own worth to the deputy sheriff figuring out where his loyalties lie.

**This warm and evocative novel captures a time and place, with well-researched details shown through the lives and circumstances of one American town.**



## MERCY'S CHASE

*Lourey, Jess*

Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (384 pp.)

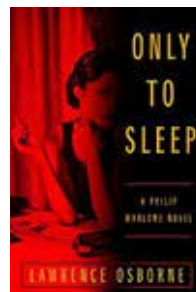
\$24.99 | Sep. 8, 2018

978-0-7387-5755-1

A cryptanalyst takes on a worldwide conspiracy targeting women.

This isn't the first time Salem Wiley has reluctantly fought the powerful group known as the Hermitage or the Order. In fact, she was raised by her family, especially her unloving mother—a leader in the Underground, an ancient group fighting for women's rights—to uncover secret, long-buried clues that could help the women's cause. Despite her agoraphobia, Salem has now joined the FBI's top-secret Black Chamber. Her first assignment takes her to England, where U.S. President Gina Hayes will attend a conference, and Ireland, where a woman has called in a tip that Hayes will be assassinated while in London. The Irishwoman reveals a replica of Stonehenge that's perfect but for an extra stone with the word "mercy" carved on it. Astonished by the revelation that Stonehenge has something to do with feminism, Salem keeps it to herself while she ponders whether mercy is a plea or something to do with Mercy Mayfair, a child she met when she and her best friend, Bel, thwarted an earlier attempt to kill Hayes. Salem's assigned to work with Charlie Thackeray, a member of British Intelligence, rather than Lucan Stone, the FBI agent she has a crush on, who turns out to be in London along with Salem's mother, Vida, and Mercy Mayfair. While Salem uses her experimental computer program to learn more about Stonehenge, world-class assassins hired by the Hermitage plot to kill the president and Salem once she solves the puzzles. They kidnap Mercy to force her compliance. Salem's search takes her from Stonehenge to the Orkneys and back to Ireland in a desperate and dangerous search for clues. Never knowing who she can trust and nearly crippled by her fears, she soldiers on, refusing to abandon Mercy.

**A complicated page-turner of a history-based thriller whose predecessor (*Salem's Cipher*, 2016) is virtually a prerequisite to understanding the tangled relationships and fascinating backstory.**



## ONLY TO SLEEP

*Osborne, Lawrence*

Hogarth/Crown (272 pp.)

\$26.00 | Jul. 24, 2018

978-1-5247-5961-2

Philip Marlowe returns, albeit in a rather superannuated hard-boiled form, in this novel commissioned by the Raymond Chandler estate.

Osborne sets his novel in the late 1980s, when Marlowe is 72 and living in retirement in Mexico. He has one last case to solve, however, one

that calls him “to a last effort, a final heroic statement.” Pacific Mutual has recently paid \$2 million on a policy for Donald Zinn, recently deceased, but the firm suspects it’s being scammed and that Zinn and his “widow” are planning to live the high life in Mexico. Marlowe arranges to meet Dolores Zinn, and as one might expect, she’s a generation younger than her husband and fatally attractive. Marlowe soon establishes that Zinn is indeed alive and has assumed the identity of one Paul Linder, who recently died under suspicious circumstances. Zinn is a vicious bully whose first impulse is to want to murder Marlowe to get him out of the way of his happy “retirement,” but his wife instead tries to persuade the detective to accept a generous payment and forget about their scheme, for, after all, everyone wins if Marlowe simply reports to Pacific Mutual that he was unable to locate Zinn. Osborne is generally successful at ventriloquizing Chandler. The book features intriguing and shady characters, a convoluted and murky plot, and Marlowe’s attempts to remain untainted in a world pervaded by violence and corruption. Adapting to the times, the detective now has “a small radio transmitter with bugging devices, a pair of opera glasses, and a subminiature Minox camera,” but perhaps most startling is that he’s traded in his .38 for a shikomizue, a razor-sharp sword hidden in his cane.

While there are obvious perils in what Osborne attempts to do here, for the most part he succeeds in re-creating both a beloved character and a decadent ambience.



**THE BIG BOOK OF FEMALE DETECTIVES**

*Penzler, Otto—Ed.*  
 Vintage Crime/Black Lizard (1,136 pp.)  
 \$25.00 paper | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-525-43474-0

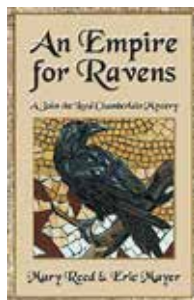
Most of the bulked-up anthologies veteran editor Penzler has produced for Black Lizard (*The Big Book of Rogues and Villains*, 2017, etc.) are remarkable mainly for their

comprehensiveness, even their exhaustiveness. Not this one.

Most of the 74 stories Penzler has chosen are beyond cavil. The first 10 entries, originally published between 1864 and 1911, may not set your pulse racing, but they’re historically indispensable, and the tales by L.T. Meade and Robert Eustace, Baroness Emmuska Orczy, and Richard Marsh will set many readers to searching for more stories featuring Florence Cusack, Lady Molly Robertson-Kirk, and Judith Lee. Nor is anyone likely to quarrel with the reprints from the first half of the 20th century, from Carolyn Wells, Anna Katharine Green, Mary Roberts Rinehart, F. Tennyson Jesse, and Mignon G. Eberhart to Phyllis Bentley, Gladys Mitchell, Frederick Nebel, and Richard Sale. H.H. Holmes supplies an adventure of Sister Ursula, Stuart Palmer presents the spinster schoolteacher Hildegard Withers, and James Yaffe showcases the anonymous mother of the police detective who narrates her armchair-and-coffee table investigations. Trouble arrives only later on, when the field becomes too rich to do more than sample. Following a gap of more than 20 years (1966-1989) that evidently produced no worthwhile

short stories featuring female sleuths, Penzler resumes with tales by Marcia Muller, Sue Grafton, Carolyn Hart, Faye Kellerman, Sara Paretsky, Nevada Barr, Linda Barnes, S.J. Rozan, Laura Lippman, Wendy Hornsby, and eight others. But fans will search in vain for anything by such equally eminent candidates as Sharyn McCrumb, Barbara D’Amato, Margaret Maron, Val McDermid, Kathy Reichs, Liza Cody, Denise Mina, Laurie R. King, Rhys Bowen, Karin Slaughter, Kerry Greenwood, or Alan Bradley. The only way for Penzler to have shoehorned them into his 1,100-plus pages would have been to cut the last section, “Bad Girls,” whose dozen selections (including two more by Meade and Eustace and one by Penzler’s adored Joyce Carol Oates) seem to have wandered in from a different collection, or to replace *The Secret Adversary*, the second-rate 1922 novel in which Agatha Christie introduced the forgettable Tommy and Tuppence, with a short story featuring Miss Marple, who together with Nancy Drew is the most notable no-show here.

On balance, then: lots of landmarks, even more incidental pleasures, and endless provocations for arguments about who really should have made the cut.



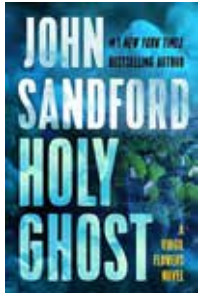
**AN EMPIRE FOR RAVENS**

*Reed, Mary & Mayer, Eric*  
 Poisoned Pen (266 pp.)  
 \$26.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4642-1110-2

An exiled Lord Chamberlain unravels layers of deception when he returns to the site of his banishment to rescue a friend.

In response to a brief, imploring letter from his old friend Felix, a general in the Byzantine army, John the Lord Chamberlain ventures from his new home in Greece to Rome, where he once served Emperor Justinian. The danger is palpable, and not just because the Goths are preparing an attack on Rome. Gen. Diogenes, who commands the Roman garrison, gives John an escort named Viteric to help locate the missing Felix even as he dispatches a courier to Constantinople to ask the emperor whether John was permitted to leave Greece or whether Diogenes should execute him. Aware of the danger, John manages to send Viteric away, freeing himself to seek Felix out of the sight of spying eyes. In his seemingly endless quest, John asks countless people whether they’ve seen the “big German with a bushy beard,” but with little positive response. The ebullient Clementia, housekeeper to a senator and Felix’s confidante, echoes his recent disquiet, though she confirms that Felix had not planned to leave the city. Felix isn’t the only citizen who’s disappeared, and virtually every new person John encounters speaks vaguely of the need for justice. When John finally finds Felix, he realizes how deeply his help is needed. With Diogenes in pursuit, can John possibly succeed?

The 12th franchise entry (*Murder in Megara*, 2015, etc.) places the reader in the middle of the turmoil of sixth-century Rome and into a tense historical mystery.



**HOLY GHOST**

*Sandford, John*  
Putnam (400 pp.)  
\$29.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-7352-1732-4

A drollly fraudulent plan to reverse the fortunes of a declining Minnesota town hits a snag in the form of a much more serious spate of felonies.

Wheatfield mayor Wardell Holland, who lost a foot in Afghanistan, sees no reason why he shouldn't take intellectually and sexually precocious teenager John Jacob Skinner's advice about having Janet Fischer, Skinner's frequent bedmate, masquerade as the Blessed Virgin at St. Mary's Catholic Church. The apparently miraculous sightings of the faithful will put Wheatfield back on the map, increase tourism, and juice the local economy, all without hurting a soul. But then a series of shootings outside the church indicate that although souls may be getting saved, bodies are having a tougher time. Iowa visitor Harvey Coates isn't seriously injured, but Betty Rice, a second visitor, is wounded seriously enough to warrant a call to Virgil Flowers, of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (*Deep Freeze*, 2017, etc.). Leaving his pregnant girlfriend, Frankie Nobles, back in Mankato, Virgil drives the hour to Wheatfield and finds—nothing: no obvious suspects, no motive, no forensic evidence, not even a good place to get lunch. Looking for clues about the likely weapon, he stumbles on the rotting corpse of Glen Andorra, a farmer whose shooting range drew many local marksmen, and the mystery darkens. Andorra was almost certainly killed by someone who wanted the use of his .223 rifle for some long-distance target practice, but who and why? When the shooter scores a fatal shot on retired health care aide Marge Osborne, Virgil, immediately assuming she's been the real target from the beginning, narrows his focus, still to no avail. Why would anyone kill such an inoffensive old lady? It must be all about money—but where's the money?

**It would be nice if the payoff were more closely linked to the amusing setup, but the detection, though often tediously routine, carries all the authenticity you'd expect from a pro like Sandford.**



**LOOSE TONGUES**

*Simms, Chris*  
Seyvern House (240 pp.)  
\$28.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-0-7278-8810-5

Simms (*A Price to Pay*, 2014, etc.) kicks off a new series about a Manchester detective who, after benefiting from early promotion, can't catch a break.

Ever been so annoyed by someone nattering away on a neighboring seat aboard public transit that you wanted to kill them? Well, an

electrician fired from his vocational teaching post for slapping a student has taken the idea one step further. He tracks women whose cellphone whining annoys him to their homes, poses as a deliveryman to gain access, smothers them, cuts out their tongues, and shoves their precious phones between their dead jaws. DC Sean Blake, who's just joined the Serious Crimes Unit of the Greater Manchester Police, wishes he could be part of the hunt for the killer of four women—a fifth corpse has yet to be discovered—but he's been sidelined after being unjustly accused of cowardly inaction in the unsuccessful attempt to bring in Ian Cahill, the unit's primary suspect. What makes Sean's enforced pencil-pushing even worse is his realization that his posting to Serious Crimes at 22 was due not to his brilliance or hard work but to a favor his mother, former police sergeant Janet Blake, called in from her old mate ACC Tony Shipton, who's owed her ever since her heroic pursuit of a runaway criminal condemned her to a wheelchair and her own paper-pushing job gathering information for transport surveys. Sean would like nothing better than to identify the killer on his own, but his most promising ideas all seem to come from his mother.

**A routine setup distinguished by Simms' decision to strip away all the extra bits, his skill at ratcheting up the tension, his insights into tracking criminals in a culture in which public surveillance is the norm, and his predictable but inspired choice of the killer's climactic target.**



**HUNTING THE SATURDAY NIGHT STRANGLER**

*Wendelboe, C.M.*  
Midnight Ink/Llewellyn (288 pp.)  
\$15.99 paper | Oct. 8, 2018  
978-0-7387-5362-1

A second case for Arn Anderson, who retired from Denver Homicide to move back to Cheyenne, finds him settled in more deeply and ready to look just as deeply into the relatively shallow locals' backgrounds when they start getting murdered.

Whoever killed secretary/receptionist Jillie Reilly was just minding his own business, alternately choking her and letting her catch her breath, until getting interrupted by the Midnight Shepherder, a serial rustler who'd chosen that night to target "Wooly" Hank Doss' place at the moment it was becoming the scene of a much more violent crime. Did the Shepherder get a good enough look at the killer for a police identification? DeAngelo Demos, the television station owner who gave Arn his first hometown case (*Hunting the Five Point Killer*, 2017), is convinced that Sgt. Mike Slade, preoccupied with his impending political challenge to Sheriff Grimes, is incapable of finding out and wants Arn and TV news reporter Ana Maria Villarreal to take this one on as well. The obvious suspect is Eddie Glass, Jillie's sometime lover, but his wife, Karen, can't be ruled out either. Nor can psychiatrist Dr. Maury Oakert, who admits that his practice over the years may have included more promising suspects but asserts that the confidentiality between doctor and patient prevents him from

# A Welsh nun with a passion for murder investigations sees every suspicious death as a case to solve.

THE HOUR OF DEATH

saying anything more. When he's not wondering just how much guiltier Eddie Glass could look, Arn spends most of his time tracking down the homeliest sorts of forensic evidence—the Midnight Shepherd's car, the tires that left distinctive tracks at the scene, signs of defensive wounds on any of the suspects—and eventually he gets lucky, though not in time to save several other victims.

**Strictly routine, with perfunctory characters, little mystery or suspense—despite many superfluous chapters from the killer's point of view—and a particularly underwhelming windup.**



## A SORROWFUL SANCTUARY

Whishaw, Iona

TouchWood Editions (384 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Sep. 25, 2018

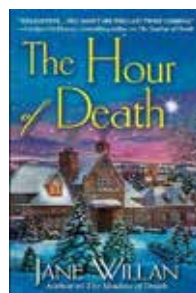
978-1-77151-289-3

The course of true love never runs smooth for a police inspector and an independent woman.

Inspector Darling has gotten off to a rough start with Lane Winslow, whose private income has allowed her to leave

England, where she was a spy during World War II, and live a peaceful, lazy life in British Columbia. Her astuteness has helped Darling solve several murders and rescued him when he's been a suspect himself (*It Begins in Betrayal*, 2018, etc.). While Darling takes a call from frantic Vanessa Castle, whose grown son is missing, Lane and her friends, fishing on a nearby lake, tow in a boat whose contents include a revolver and a man near death. They think the unknown man is Carl Castle until Vanessa says it's not her son. A little digging reveals that Carl, who'd just lost his job, may have been involved in a neo-Nazi group that's shockingly sprung up from a similar prewar organization. In addition, the area is plagued by a rash of burglaries. Lane and Darling's romance has progressed apace, but his desire to marry unsettles Lane, whose last affair ended badly. While Darling and Constable Ames pursue their investigation, the ever curious Lane tries to befriend Mrs. Castle and borrows a neighbor's boat so she and her friend Angela can explore the lake and determine where the gravely injured man came from. They find a tiny cabin where one K. Lasek has been living. His books indicate that he was a German speaker but no Nazi, and this discovery helps break open a case that may be related to Darling's other investigations without, at first, resolving the complications in their rocky romance.

**An excellent mystery complemented by an appealingly down-to-earth look at life in postwar Western Canada.**



## THE HOUR OF DEATH

Willan, Jane

Crooked Lane (320 pp.)

\$26.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

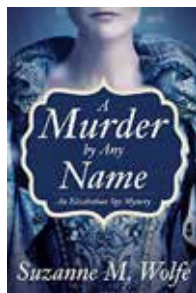
978-1-68331-759-3

A Welsh nun with a passion for murder investigations sees every suspicious death as a case to solve.

Sister Agatha of Gwenafwy Abbey reads detective fiction and watches *Midsomer Murders*, and she's also busy writing

a murder mystery of her own. Agatha already has a claim to fame since helping solve a murder at the abbey (*The Shadow of Death*, 2018). Now the villagers of Pryderi are in a bother over plans to build housing in a lovely meadow between the village and the abbey, but even that outrage is put aside when Tiffany Reese, the very model of annoying perfection, is found dead in the church hall with the painting she'd planned to enter in the annual art show—where she'd won first prize last year—gone missing. Constable Barnes, who thinks Tiffany had a heart attack, refuses to do an autopsy, but Sister Agatha, knowing how many enemies Tiffany had made with her high-handed ways, starts her own investigation with the help of Father Selwyn and some of the nuns at the abbey. Even the abbey's paying guest, young artist Lucy Pennoyer, gets dragged into the investigation when her dog is stolen and left in a crate in a frozen field. There are too many suspects for Agatha, who labors to find alibis and motives. Strange notes with *Wizard of Oz* references left for Lucy only raise the stakes as Agatha tries to keep up with the abbey's pre-Christmas cheese orders while hunting down a killer.

**The second entry in this charming series poses no great challenges for mystery buffs but is peopled with plenty of interesting characters and local color.**



## A MURDER BY ANY NAME

Wolfe, Suzanne M.

Crooked Lane (336 pp.)

\$26.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

978-1-68331-714-2

An Elizabethan spy must uncover a murderer close to the court.

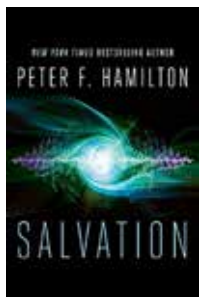
The Honorable Nicholas Holt has been forced to take up spying for the queen because of his family's suspicious ties to Catholicism. Someone murders

Lady Cecily, one of Elizabeth's ladies-in-waiting, and the furious queen orders Nick to find the killer. When he calls upon his friend Eli, a Jewish physician who escaped Spain with his twin sister, Rivkah, Eli confirms that the deed was done with a thin-bladed knife. The meager clues are a fragrant handkerchief, a note bidding Cecily to meet at midnight, and a small topaz. Nick gives his devoted Irish wolfhound, Hector, a good sniff of the parchment in hopes that he can track the killer. The handkerchief smells of a cold remedy containing expensive ingredients,

but any clues it might have carried vanished when it was picked up by an unidentified servant. The Jews are already being blamed for the death, but the shrewd queen suspects that the killer is one of her large retinue. Nick, who owns the Black Sheep Tavern, is in a casual relationship with Kat, a clever madam, but knows himself to be in love with Rivkah. Given the crowd of hangers-on always near the queen, Nick can't determine who passed the note to Cecily, an innocent girl who romanticized the billet-doux. Nick is still investigating when another lady-in-waiting is murdered in an entirely different way. Mary, a friend of Cecily's, was different from her even before they died: She had many lovers who must be considered suspects. The queen sends away all her remaining maids except for the elderly Countess of Berwick, who refuses to leave. Though he's learned that the killer was left-handed, Nick must discover a motive for the two murders before the queen's notorious temper gets the better of her.

An excellent series kickoff by Wolfe (*The Confessions of X*, 2016) that cleverly highlights both the mystery and the many ills of Elizabethan times.

## SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



### SALVATION

Hamilton, Peter F.  
Del Rey (576 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-399-17876-4

First of a projected alien-contact trilogy from one of the leading purveyors (*A Night Without Stars*, 2016, etc.) of door-stopper space operas—although this one squeezes in at a positively emaciated 576 pages.

Early in the 23rd century, when a wrecked alien ship turns up on a remote planet, the all-powerful Connexion Corp, which provides instantaneous travel via quantum-entangled, step-through portals, organizes a team to investigate: security chief Feriton Kayne; Connexion bigwig Yuri Alster; Callum Hepburn, who works for the Utopians, an independent human civilization; Alik Monday, an FBI operative from Corporate Earth; and various assistants. What's aboard the alien vessel proves both difficult to fathom and extremely unnerving. The actual investigation moves at glacial speed, though, interspersed as it is with backstories involving team members plus chapters in an independent thread set in the far future, where child soldiers train to meet a mysterious and all-conquering alien enemy. In the present, meanwhile, we hear about two sets of aliens. The nonhuman Olyix have stopped off at Earth to refuel on their

endless voyage across the universe, where, at the end of time, they expect to meet their god; they seem benevolent, but not everyone agrees. The Neána, whom readers know about but none of the characters may, arrived secretly some years ago, grew some human bodies, and sent them out to do—what? So, readers will contend with a choppy narrative, obvious delays and sidebars, and long stretches that read like an editor's advice to a first novelist on how *not* to introduce your characters or propel the storyline and veer dangerously close to dull. It's a yarn, however, that packs a teeth-rattling wallop when it finally gets there.

Not altogether satisfying, but Hamilton expertly keeps his audience coming back for more.



### TIMELESS

Salvatore, R.A.  
Harper Voyager (400 pp.)  
\$27.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-06-268859-0

The beginning of a new fantasy trilogy by Salvatore (*Child of a Mad God*, 2018, etc.), set in the Forgotten Realms and starring Drizzt Do'Urden, the renowned dark elf whose first name sounds like a comic-book electrical short circuit.

Created half a century ago as one of the settings for the Dungeons & Dragons fantasy role-playing game, the Realms owe much of their popularity to Salvatore, who, over three decades, has set many of his novels therein, most of them featuring the said Drizzt. This time, in the present, Drizzt's late father, Zaknafein, has been revived. By whom? And why? The contending female rulers (males are subordinate—even the wizards) of the aristocratic houses of the Underdark city Menzoberranzan suspect the machinations of Lolth, the ambitious Demon Queen of Spiders. At first Drizzt doubts that Zaknafein is really who he says, and clearly believes, he is. Another problem is that the Menzoberranzan families loathe and despise Drizzt for siding with inferior races—dwarves and elves—against them, prejudices that his unenlightened father shares. Meanwhile, nearly five centuries in the past, Matron Malice Do'Urden commissions roguish mercenary Jarlaxle to capture and deliver brilliant and handsome young weapons master Zaknafein to warm her bed and sire the child who will become Drizzt. Jarlaxle, of course, will become friends with both Zaknafein and Drizzt and features in both threads. Despite all those decades of experience, much remains indestructibly, maybe even endearingly, ham-fisted about Salvatore's work, from the clunky prose, clanking exposition, and abrupt switches in point of view to the barrage of names and facts that feels less like being informed and more like being clubbed over the head. Or perhaps the secret's in knowing that the audience is fanatically loyal, expectant, well-informed, and highly forgiving—and that he really does deliver the thrills and spills, the battles and swordplay, the jolly banter amid dreadful danger, and the hissing, clawing, chortling, tooth-grinding malice of the villains.

Salvatore fans will rejoice.





**THE FUTURE IS FEMALE!  
25 Classic Science Fiction  
Stories by Women, from Pulp  
Pioneers to Ursula K. Le Guin**

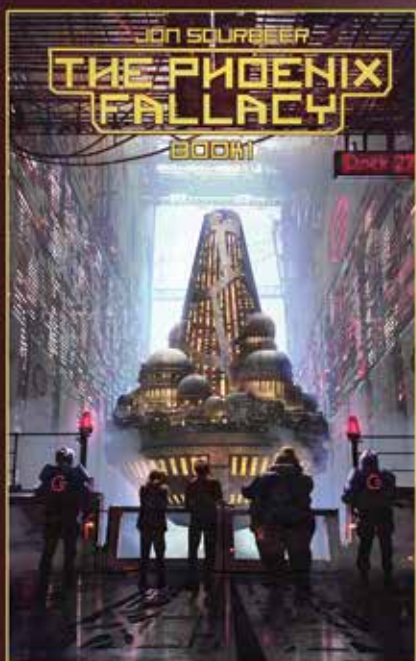
Yaszek, Lisa—Ed.  
Library of America (560 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-59853-580-8

A story collection, edited by Yaszek (Science Fiction/Georgia Inst. of Technology), billing itself as a set of science-fiction classics written by women.

With a title like this, readers may assume they'll get a sweeping look at all science fiction written by women from the early to mid-20th century. And that is the case—to a point. Upon closer examination, 24 of the stories are taken directly from pulp magazines, except for Ursula K. Le Guin's contribution, which, in this version, appeared in her 1975 collection, *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*. The selection of pulp stories is somewhat questionable. For instance, the introduction recounts how the editor of *Weird Tales* "closed his office for the day in celebration" upon reading C.L. Moore's

story "Shambleau." If that piques your interest, too bad: That story isn't here. Moore's "The Black God's Kiss" is—but it's sword-and-sorcery with a hint of eldritch horror, not science fiction. And why acknowledge that Marion Zimmer Bradley has been accused by her daughter of sexual abuse yet still include her in this anthology? These issues aside, make no mistake: The quality of the stories here is unassailable. "The Last Flight of Dr. Ain," written by James Tip-tree Jr. in 1969, still adeptly offers the chilling fear of a global pandemic. Alice Eleanor Jones' post-apocalyptic "Created He Them" is surely just as disturbing as it was in 1955. Zenna Henderson's "Ararat," with its *what if everyone on The Waltons were actually aliens?* vibe, is also a delight. This could have been a thoughtful collection, specifically highlighting the women of pulp magazines, but this theme is unconvincingly broadened, apparently to accommodate a perplexing title. Also, the editor shoehorns in recently deceased Le Guin, whose selection never appeared in a pulp magazine, and her inclusion on the cover feels like cynical marketing. These stories—and the women who wrote them—deserve far better.

*The Future is Female!*: because *Shameless Ploy to Cash in on a Feminist Slogan Plus One Random Story by Ursula K. Le Guin (RIP) wouldn't fit on the cover.*



**THE PHOENIX FALLACY  
BOOK I  
BY JON SOURBEER**

In this sci-fi debut, a young man escapes of the slums of his corporation by rigorously training as a mercenary under a tough-as-nails sergeant, who has her own battles to fight.

**"ACTION-PACKED"**

"An energetic dystopian saga that should surely spawn return readers."  
—Kirkus Reviews

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For publishing rights or agent representation, please contact [jonathan.sourbeer@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.sourbeer@gmail.com)

## ROMANCE



### THE ILLEGITIMATE DUKE

*Barnes, Sophie*

Avon/HarperCollins (384 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Aug. 28, 2018

978-0-06-284972-4

An heiress decides to use her fortune for good and winds up working closely with a celebrated doctor. The two share an attraction, but a dark secret keeps him from wooing her and ultimately places her in grave danger.

Bored by the season and feeling she wants to make a difference, heiress Lady Juliette Matthews decides to support a hospital that caters to the poor, then becomes more involved when there is a typhus outbreak. Serving on an advisory board for the hospital highlights her compassion, intelligence, and ingenuity, and Florian Lowell, the famed physician, takes notice. Recently named heir to his uncle's title and estate, Florian knows he should marry, and he'd like nothing more than to claim Juliette as his own. However, "he was not in the market for a wife and had no intention of ever gaining one." He's long harbored the shameful secret that he's illegitimate and that his biological father is a notorious criminal. Society believes the man is dead, but Florian knows he's alive and seems intent on harming people Florian loves. As Florian wards off an epidemic and fights his feelings for Juliette while trying to get to the bottom of his father's nefarious plans, Juliette is confused by his mixed messages. Soon, though, she's fighting for her own survival, and if she lives, she's determined to fight for the man she loves. Fascinating medical and historical tidbits enrich an engaging storyline, and Florian especially is an interesting character. But Florian's fickle treatment of Juliette, as well as their internal and external denials of feelings that are clearly there, becomes tiresome. Also, so much tension is built up toward the end that the quick resolutions to a number of conflicts feel anticlimactic.

**Generally smart and action-packed but slightly uneven.**



### BORN TO BE WILDE

*James, Eloisa*

Avon/HarperCollins (384 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Jul. 31, 2018

978-0-06-269247-4

The third installment in the Wilde historical romance series features an heiress who has fallen on hard times and her infuriatingly attractive nemesis, the richest bachelor in England.

Lavinia Gray is horrified to discover that her mother is an opium addict who has decimated her

daughter's dowry to support her habit. Once renowned for her beauty and riches, now Lavinia's "old life seemed to lie in shards around her feet." To save her mother and herself, Lavinia proposes to Parth Sterling, a wealthy businessman taken in as a child by the eccentric and loving Wilde family after his Englishman father and Indian mother died. Lavinia and Parth have been thrown together often enough in the company of the Wildes that they have formed ill opinions of one another: Lavinia thinks Parth is too stern and correct, while Parth thinks the fashion-obsessed Lavinia is shallow. Parth rejects the offer but agrees to help Lavinia find a suitor, perhaps a European prince, while himself courting an Italian contessa. Of course, underneath the antagonism there is a mutual attraction, and as they give in to it, they come to know more about one other. Parth's character arc is mainly to stop seeing Lavinia as "shallow as a puddle," which he does, very quickly. Lavinia develops her prodigious, and bankable talents as a modiste and stylist, learning to embrace her love of clothing as an art form. Readers are advised to read the first two books in the series to better understand immediate past events, which are frequently referenced, and the large cast of characters James has created. Even with that background, however, the characters' motivations are often opaque or nonsensical, very little actually happens beyond psychological gymnastics, and Parth's Indian heritage, which might have provided fertile ground for deepening this two-dimensional character, is almost completely sidelined.

**A dull hero and little plot make this book best for readers with knowledge of the first two books in the series who cannot bear to miss any Wilde action.**



### WHY NOT TONIGHT

*Mallery, Susan*

Harlequin HQN (384 pp.)

\$8.99 paper | Sep. 18, 2018

978-1-335-47460-5

Sent by the gallery where she works to check on a taciturn artist in his isolated hilltop home in the middle of a rainstorm, Natalie Kaleta winds up stranded.

Ronan Mitchell moved to Happily Inc., California, after learning he was his artist father's illegitimate son. Raised

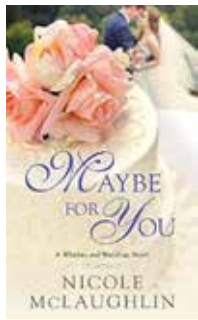
by his father and his wife alongside their four legitimate sons, Ronan feels betrayed and confused and has distanced himself from his family, including the two brothers who followed him to the town. All three are renowned artists and share studio space attached to a gallery that carries their work. It's not unusual for Ronan to be out of contact, but when he's unreachable for too many days, gallery assistant Natalie is sent to check on him in his mountain home during a violent storm, then finds herself stranded due to blocked roads. Forced to spend a few days together, Ronan and Natalie have a delightful time and clearly share an intense chemistry. The two begin an affair that spills into their lives in mostly positive ways. Ronan is moved by Natalie's determined optimism, especially after he discovers

# A sexy, entertaining read.

ALL THE WAY

her own heartbreaks and watches her own struggle as an artist. Natalie pulls Ronan out of his gloom, inching him back into a social life and his brothers' lives. A family reunion reopens wounds, though, and Ronan realizes he faces losing everyone he loves if he can't work through his hurt. Mallery's next Happily Inc. title rounds out the Mitchell family saga in satisfying fashion, and Natalie's bright, cheerful attitude is the perfect antidote to Ronan's self-absorbed moodiness, which occasionally weighs the book down. As usual in this series set in destination-wedding magnet Happily Inc., the central wedding of the book adds a fun touch, bringing texture and community to the story along with check-ins from favorite characters.

**A typical visit to the town of Happily Inc.—sexy, connected, emotional, and fun.**



## MAYBE FOR YOU

McLaughlin, Nicole  
St. Martin's (320 pp.)  
\$7.99 paper | Aug. 28, 2018  
978-1-250-14002-9

A woman fresh out of the Army falls in with a lady's-man brewery owner while accompanying him on a publicity tour.

Alex Parker has returned to Kansas City after her final deployment. Life is not what she expected, since her fiance died in a tragic accident a year ago, but she's happy to be back in the arms of her family. With a new civilian job lined up in Virginia, Alex has some time to spend doing nothing. But her time back isn't as helpful as she'd expected; being less busy than she was in the military is getting to her. Even after a year of friendly messaging with her brother's best friend and business partner following a brief but meaningful encounter just days after what should have been her wedding, Alex is starting to feel the weight of her grief. When an opportunity arises to accompany Jake on a two-week trip through the South to help promote the business, she jumps at something to keep her thoughts occupied. It doesn't hurt that she and Jake have gotten to know each other very well, and he's not bad to look at either. When the pair decide to act on their attraction, neither knows where it might lead them. In the third novel of her Whiskey and Weddings series, McLaughlin (*Only with You*, 2018, etc.) introduces us to a couple who could have used significantly more development, with and without each other. The friendship they develop during Alex's deployment happens completely off-page, so the reader is introduced to their dynamic at their reunion. Even with sprinkled reflections on conversations they'd had, the two people who interact in the moment seem to know each other much less than they should. This, combined with mediocre writing, leads to a less-than-stellar reading experience.

**Only for major fans of the series.**



## ALL THE WAY

Proby, Kristen  
Morrow/HarperCollins (288 pp.)  
\$15.99 paper | Aug. 21, 2018  
978-0-06-267491-3

An injured actress becomes romantically involved with an attorney, and as their relationship gets serious, they must navigate their strong personalities, geographic challenges, and her resentful brother.

After surviving a fire that killed her parents and left her with injuries that threaten her career, Tony Award-winning actress London Watson learns that she has inherited her parents' estate, cutting her brother out almost completely. Neither her parents' decision nor her brother's rage at the news surprises London, since Kyle has a history of drug addiction and deflected responsibility. Leaving New York to heal at her family's Martha's Vineyard property, she discovers that her neighbor is Finn Cavanaugh, the handsome attorney who handled the will. The two have an immediate connection and electric chemistry, so the relationship gets intense very quickly. Once they both move back to New York, their island bubble is pricked by some clashes, often when Finn oversteps the independent London's boundaries. More complications arise with exciting but risky new professional opportunities for London in California. Meanwhile Kyle remains a shadowy menace, which the reader recognizes, though Finn and London don't. Proby delivers a sexy love story between two wealthy, successful characters whose conflicts are very modern and First-World—I can buy my own Chanel bag, thank you very much. Their problems sometimes feel realistic and sometimes feel overblown, but they're almost always lacking in deep emotional tension since London and Finn start out rich, beautiful, smart, and eminently likable, then fall in fairy-tale love. It's a tricky choice that mostly works because we really do like the characters and want them to be happy. Warning: The sex scenes are frequent and *very* hot, and an abrupt, unsatisfying ending feels like a contrived introduction to Book 2.

**A sexy, entertaining read.**



## TEMPTED BY LOVE

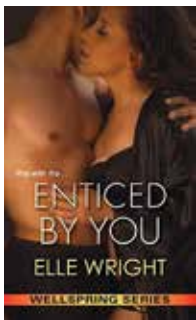
Ryan, Jennifer  
Avon/HarperCollins (400 pp.)  
\$7.99 paper | Aug. 21, 2018  
978-0-06-264529-6

A one-night stand and a mysterious attack complicate the "just friends" relationship between a Drug Enforcement Administration agent and the younger sister of his two best friends.

Jay Bennett and Alina Cooke can't resist their attraction while attending the double wedding of Alina's brothers. The aftermath of their

fling quickly leads to a dizzying back and forth of returning to formality and then jumping back into bed. While it's clear their chemistry is the motivation for their trysts, both are worried about anything more serious. They know the life of a DEA agent is dangerous. Jay doesn't want to leave Alina worrying about whether or not he'll come home safely. Alina doesn't want to live with that constant uncertainty either considering she's already spent time fretting over her brothers, who are fellow agents. Whatever fun the two are having, as they wind up in each other's beds, is dashed by a frightening incident when Alina's car is purposefully run off the road. Jay isn't sure if his work as an agent has engendered Alina or something else is at play. The suspense element is the most interesting part of the book; unfortunately, it doesn't mesh particularly well with Jay and Alina's romance. Often, the story feels like two different books were Frankenstein-ed together, with neither plot getting the depth it needs to be satisfying. Many characters are superfluous, with their introductions having little relevance to the main story. Jay's DEA assignments and career history provide some insight to his actions, but they still seem more like filler than anything else. Admittedly, Alina and Jay are adorable together, with Jay's protectiveness and worry making him a caring, thoughtful hero. Alina's constant waffling over her feelings for Jay isn't as endearing. With the added action and threat of danger, this should have been a fast-paced read, but it never truly reaches a level above tepid.

**Expect a lot of skimming to get to the good parts.**



### **ENTICED BY YOU**

*Wright, Elle*

Dafina/Kensington (304 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Aug. 28, 2018

978-1-4967-1602-6

A corporate lawyer returns to her hometown and falls in love with a man trying to redeem his family's reputation even though she's not sure she can trust him.

Kennedi Robinson has suffered her fair share of tragedies in the past few years: the sudden deaths of both her parents followed by a bad marriage and painful divorce. Needing a boost and some time to evaluate her life, she decides to visit her aunt in her hometown of Wellspring, Michigan. As soon as she gets back to town, Kennedi meets the town's golden boy, Parker Wells, in a minor fender bender. He's handsome and the attraction between them is palpable, but Kennedi is determined not to trust her heart again. The development of the internal and external conflicts is overly drawn out, but once the pieces fall into place, there's pleasing complexity and depth to both Kennedi and Parker. She's suffered too much hurt in the past and is completely closed off, while he is struggling to clean up his family's name and business. The conflict between them intensifies when Kennedi discovers that Parker's company wants to buy her aunt's land with an unfair contract that is full of loopholes.

The evolving relationship between the two is full of false starts, which is frustrating but authentic. Their fears and worries are too deep-seated to just disappear, but Wright (*Touched by You*, 2018, etc.) carefully develops a large, loving cast of family and friends who help Kennedi and Parker learn to take a chance on love. Some of the action is too quickly resolved to be satisfying, though, especially as it relates to Parker's business conflicts.

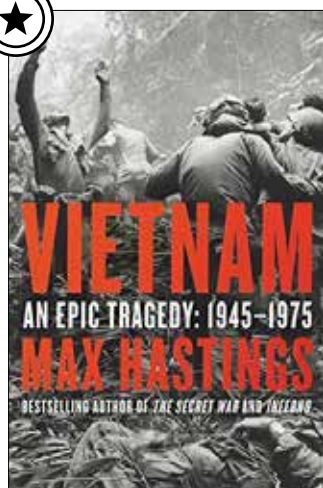
**A pleasant romance that focuses on the emotional development of the heroine as she learns to trust her heart in both business and romance.**

# NONFICTION

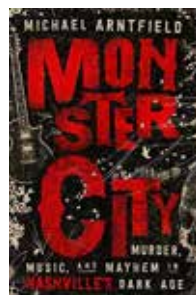


These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- FREDERICK DOUGLASS** by David W. Blight.....56
- SCHUMANN** by Judith Chernaik..... 60
- CHRONIQUES** by Kamel Daoud; trans. by Elisabeth Zerofsky.....62
- THE SHADOW PRESIDENT** by Michael D'Antonio & Peter Eisner ..... 63
- HOW TO BE LESS STUPID ABOUT RACE** by Crystal M. Fleming.....65
- VIETNAM** by Max Hastings.....70
- TIGERLAND** by Wil Haygood.....70
- LESSONS FROM A DARK TIME AND OTHER ESSAYS** by Adam Hochschild..... 71
- BELONGING** by Nora Krug..... 75
- BASKETBALL** by Jackie MacMullan & Rafe Bartholomew.....78
- THE LETTERS OF SYLVIA PLATH VOLUME 2** by Sylvia Plath; ed. by Peter K. & Karen V. Kukil Steinberg.....81
- CALL THEM BY THEIR TRUE NAMES** by Rebecca Solnit ..... 82



**VIETNAM**  
**An Epic Tragedy, 1945-1975**  
*Hastings, Max*  
 Harper/HarperCollins  
 (896 pp.)  
 \$37.50 | Oct. 16, 2018  
 978-0-06-240566-1



**MONSTER CITY**  
**Murder, Music, and Mayhem**  
**in Nashville's Dark Age**

*Arntfield, Michael*  
 Little A (352 pp.)  
 \$15.95 paper | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-5039-5435-9

Sprawling, pulpy account of the violent underbelly of Nashville, filtered through the career experiences of a veteran homicide detective.

A former police officer, Arntfield (Criminology/Western Univ., Canada; *Gothic Forensics: Criminal Investigative Procedure in Victorian Horror & Mystery*, 2016, etc.) argues that, following two foundational unsolved murders in the 1970s, the beloved “Music City” became a dark, violent locale haunted by merciless repeat offenders: “A sinkhole was about to open up beneath Music City to reveal a darkened recess—an abyss from which other odious and unfathomable things would soon come crawling.” The author focuses on the murders investigated by colorful central character Patrick Postiglione, a self-described “hoodlum” from New York whose service during Vietnam inspired him to pursue a law enforcement career: “He *had* to be a cop—a good cop.” Once in Nashville, Postiglione discovered that the city’s surface charm concealed surging street crime; “even iconic streets uptown were in complete disarray,” writes Arntfield. After several years of aggressive policing, Postiglione became a homicide detective, working complex, brutal cases of thrill killings in dive bars and serial rape-murders in cheap motels. The author argues that many of these typified “the hedonistic-thrill killer...a special breed of psychopath with an insatiable desire for stimulation.” Although Postiglione maintained an admirable clearance rate, by 2002, he’d organized a new unit to address the most violent and mysterious of these killings. “A full-time cold-case squad, even if unofficial, was a radical concept at the time,” writes the author. Postiglione relied on developments in profiling and DNA comparison, and he cleared the early unsolved rape-murder and child-abduction cases that haunted his colleagues since 1975. Arntfield writes capably about investigatory forensics and behavioral science theory in clarifying the motivations of these sadistic murderers, as well as the tactics developed over time by smart cops like Postiglione. Yet his prose tends to be melodramatic, with some repetition and lots of gratuitous description and asides.

**A fevered yet mostly engrossing narrative of urban predators and the hardworking detectives who try to stop them.**

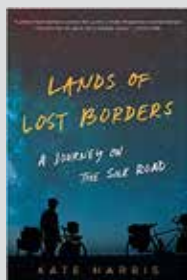
# GET OUTSIDE!



Photo courtesy Leah Overstreet

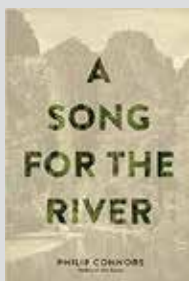
SURE, IT'S HOT in most parts of the country—certainly down here in Charleston—but as I tell myself constantly, in today's tumultuous (sometimes poisonous) political and cultural atmosphere, it's important to get offline, get outside, and find a way to stay connected to nature. If you need motivation, try one of these satisfying celebrations of the natural world.

***The Nature Instinct*** by Tristan Gooley (Aug. 21): "Naturalist Gooley writes affectingly of how to recapture our ability to live in the real world with senses 'almost forgotten and steamrollered by our modern lifestyle'.... Gooley's book...is a useful owner's manual for anyone who likes to get outdoors and be immersed in something beyond the asphalt."



***Lands of Lost Borders*** by Kate Harris (Aug. 21): "A debut travelogue chronicling a modern explorer's bicycle ride along the ancient Silk Road, a journey that beautifully reveals much about the history and nature of exploration itself....Exemplary travel writing: inspiring, moving, heartfelt, and often breathtaking."

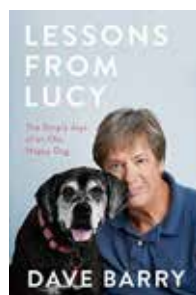
***A Song for the River*** by Philip Connors (Aug. 28): "A veteran fire lookout in the mountains of southern New Mexico ponders life and death in one of North America's oldest wilderness areas....A heartfelt, well-written volume of vignettes and reflections of a man who—much like his long lineage of fire lookout forebears—gladly chooses to escape civilization for the natural world."



***Travels with Foxfire*** by Phil Hudgins (Aug. 14): "A welcome rekindling of the Foxfire franchise of books on Southern folkways. Journalist Hudgins and [a] former Foxfire student continue the fine tradition of publishing collections of oral history around Southern Appalachian cultural mores begun by teacher Eliot Wigginton in the early 1970s."

***The Revolutionary Genius of Plants*** by Stefano Mancuso (Aug. 28): "Although lacking a brain and immobile, plants are smart, flexible, durable, and innovative, writes Mancuso in this lively, enthusiastic, expert, and convincing overview." —*E.L.*

*Eric Liebetrau is the nonfiction and managing editor.*



## LESSONS FROM LUCY *The Simple Joys of an Old, Happy Dog*

Barry, Dave  
Simon & Schuster (208 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Oct. 23, 2018  
978-1-5011-6115-5

An old dog learns new tricks from his dog, Lucy.

Pulitzer Prize winner Barry (*Best. State. Ever: A Florida Man Defends His Homeland*, 2017, etc.), well-known for his countless humorous columns and books, tackles a topic that most of us don't find funny: aging. Once the author hit 70, the same age in dog years as Lucy, he started thinking more about the brevity of life. "If our lives were movie credits, we'd be way down at the bottom, past the assistant gerbil wrangler. If our lives were Cheez-It bags," he writes, "we'd be at the stage where you hold the bag up and tilt it into your mouth to get the last crumbs. In other words: the End Is in Sight." Despite her age, Lucy was almost always happy. So Barry set out to learn from her, compiling seven basic "lessons" from his observations. The lessons are filled with the author's signature brand of quirky, sometimes-sarcastic humor as he wanders from topic to topic: a hurricane bearing down on the Florida coast; having his DNA analyzed; waiting interminably in line at an ice cream shop; hitting puberty and suddenly finding girls attractive; and accumulating stuff, particularly camera equipment. His integration of informative tidbits about his life helps readers see him as an average guy confronting his own mortality. Few topics are off-limits, and each ministory relates back to the lesson at hand, whether it's to have more fun, make new friends, or pay attention right now to the people you love (put down the cellphone). Even for those who are not as enamored by dogs as the author, his gentle wisdom seeps through the humor. He successfully pokes fun at the aging process without wallowing in overly long discussions of declining health and the wear and tear of body parts.

Astute advice about growing older rolled into a blanket of classic Barry humor.



## FAME *The Hijacking of Reality*

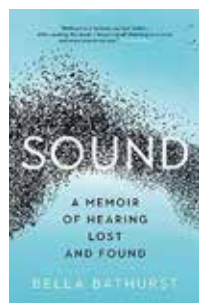
Bateman, Justine  
Akashic (220 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-61775-660-3

Now in her early 50s, the actress best known as a teenager on *Family Ties* lashes back at the distortions and toxicity of celebrity-obsessed culture.

Bateman insists from the outset that she has no interest in writing a memoir, though the narrative draws from her experiences and particularly from the emotions that those experiences elicited. Neither

is it the book she originally intended to write, one that would have had more distance between the author and her subject and relied more on theory and research concerning the topic. There is still some of that here, reflecting the college education she pursued in her mid-40s, but “instead of the academic version I had already half-completed, [this is] rather a cut-to-the-bone, emotional-river-of-Fame book.” Bateman has no filter, whether she’s describing how it felt to be introduced to male fans who had masturbated to her photos or fending off the fathers who asked for autographs for their daughters while simultaneously trying to hit on her. The author shows how things changed with reality TV (“the cancer of America”) and with the internet that made fame available to anyone and made the famous targets for armies of anonymous trolls. “You cut and gut and make them bleed,” she writes about those who slam her online. “Type, type, peck.” And then they type, and she bleeds all over these pages, as if the passage of time and the maturity of decades can’t heal the hurt that she experienced when she went from very famous to not-so-famous and from young and thin to older and heavier. In almost stream-of-consciousness fashion, she takes readers along for a ride that few are prepared to experience: “You’re 16, 17, 18, 19, 20; you don’t know shit. It’s all happening too fast, too fast to do anything about. You’re doing school, the show, then this Fame. Much too fast. Unmanageable. Can only lie down in the canoe and let the rapids pull you downstream.”

Instead of crashing and burning, Bateman has found a life outside the maelstrom, ably described in this sharp, take-no-prisoners book.



**SOUND**  
**A Memoir of Hearing Lost and Found**

Bathurst, Bella  
Greystone Books (224 pp.)  
\$16.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-77164-382-5

A memoir of hearing loss and what the author learned about the subject in general through her unexpected recovery from it.

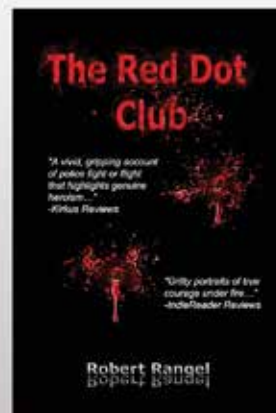
A good writer knows material when it presents itself, and Bathurst (*The Bicycle Book*, 2011, etc.) is a very good writer. In 2004, when she found herself “not completely deaf, just down to about 30 percent of normal hearing,” she recognized that she had a rich vein to mine—though perhaps not immediately, for she was pretty much in denial. Hearing loss was for the old and infirm, and she was neither. She resisted hearing aids, and she went about her journalistic work as if nothing were amiss. It was only later, when transcribing interviews, that she would recognize the gaps of incomprehension, realizing that she had failed to pick up on verbal cues her subjects had given her and that she had proceeded to ask questions that had nothing to do with the previous response. She experienced depression, and she learned how common it is to try to hide the condition. “If I had behaved like an island, then why the hell should it be a surprise when I

became one?” she asks, referring to the way she held others at arm’s length, accused of not really listening to them even when her hearing had been at full strength. “As it happened, it turned out to be a very overcrowded island. Though I didn’t realize it at the time deafness is a very common problem, as is not talking about deafness.” The author surveys the fields where hearing is most threatened, from music to the military, and why society as a whole often ignores it. Bathurst writes with a command of the way words sound: “And under it all the susurrations of the sea itself,” she writes of a sailing expedition imperiled by her limited hearing. “The shush it makes as it slides along the hull, fast or slow, urgent or gentle, its mesmerizing endlessness.”

An illuminating memoir of hearing lost and found.

**The Red Dot Club**

by Robert Rangel



In his nonfiction debut, Rangel, a Los Angeles-area police veteran, shines light on the many factors that go into a cop’s use of deadly force.

“...engaging...  
fascinating...”

ISBN: 978-0990317357

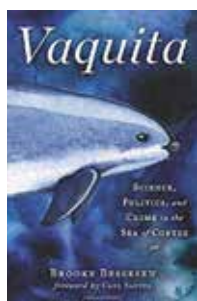
“A vivid, gripping account of police fight or flight that highlights genuine heroism...”  
—Kirkus Reviews

Medal of Valor Accounts, by real Medal of Valor Peace Officers

For information on publishing or film rights, contact [robertrangelbooks@gmail.com](mailto:robertrangelbooks@gmail.com)

# A masterful, comprehensive biography, particularly of Douglass' Civil War, Reconstruction, and Gilded Age years and occupations.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS



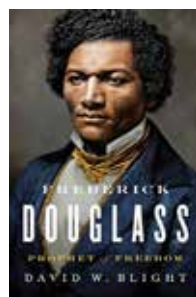
## VAQUITA Science, Politics, and Crime in the Sea of Cortez

Besesen, Brooke  
Island Press (264 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-1-61091-931-9

With strong feelings and a world of facts, a naturalist and wildlife researcher tells of the fight to save one critically endangered marine mammal.

The vaquita (“little cow” in Spanish), or *Phocoena sinus*, is the smallest of all the porpoises, and it is found only in a small region in the northern part of the Sea of Cortez, between Baja California and the Mexican state of Sonora. Once abundant, vaquitas are now rarely seen, leading some to claim that the species may already be extinct. Besesen (*Arizona Highways Wildlife Guide: 125 of Arizona's Native Species*, 2016, etc.) explores the factors behind the vanishing of vaquitas: One of the primary problems are the gill nets that fishermen use to catch totoaba, a fish whose swim bladder brings thousands of dollars in China for its supposed therapeutic properties. Vaquitas scooped up in the gill nets die. The author alleges that Mexico’s president, Enrique Peña Nieto, could have acted to make gill nets illegal but did only enough to appear preservation-minded. “With China hemorrhaging money and with the Mexican cartels in the driver’s seat,” she writes, “I just can’t imagine that there is a chance for sustainability. Like elephant tusks, the fewer that remain, the greater the value.” Nevertheless, a lot of people are trying. Besides the villains—cartels, poachers, and the distributors and consumers of totoaba swim bladders—Besesen’s account is filled with dozens of scientists, conservationists, concerned fishermen, and supporters fighting to save a disappearing species. Especially gripping are the author’s tales of capturing vaquitas and attempting to raise them in protective custody. Unfortunately, all attempts failed. One of the take-home messages here is that conservation is complicated, requiring an understanding of history, related species, and the intricacies of ecosystems. Another is that there are important lessons to be learned from the vaquita story, and we all must do better to protect the biodiversity of our planet.

A well-told and moving tale of environmentalism and conservation. (10 photos; 2 illustrations)



## FREDERICK DOUGLASS Prophet of Freedom

Blight, David W.  
Simon & Schuster (896 pp.)  
\$40.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4165-9031-6

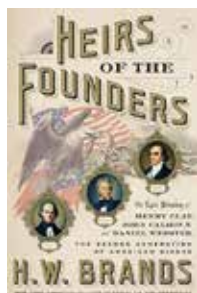


A lengthy but easily digestible biography of the famed ex-slave, abolitionist, and autobiographer.

In this superbly written book, Civil War and Frederick Douglass (c. 1818-1895) scholar Blight (American History/Yale Univ.; *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era*, 2011, etc.), a winner of the Bancroft, Abraham Lincoln, and Anisfield-Wolf prizes, ably captures his complex subject from all angles. While many readers may be familiar with Douglass’ escape from slavery, self-education, and early life (thanks to his autobiographies), most nonscholars are not as well-versed in the details of his later life—e.g., his role in the Civil War, political campaigning, fight for suffrage, complicated family relationships, and more. It’s in these later years that Blight’s work really shines; in fact, Douglass’ early slave life and escape only cover roughly the first 100 pages of the 760-page narrative (followed by 100 pages of notes). From there, Blight makes the case for Douglass as an American prophet in the mold of the Old Testament’s Jeremiah or Isaiah. Though he often scolded and admonished in his speeches and writings, often in King James-style vernacular, he also never gave up hope of a coming time of freedom for his black brethren. Douglass truly was the “prophet of freedom” all the way until his death in 1895, fighting for civil rights until the very end. While some readers may want more coverage of his early life, and perhaps more analysis of what Douglass means today, Blight viscerally captures the vitality, strength, and determination of his subject. For such a renowned figure, who was perhaps the most photographed and recognizable person of the 19th century, there is surprisingly little in the way of modern, full-scale, accessible biographies. Blight delivers what is sure to be considered the standard-bearer for years to come.

A masterful, comprehensive biography, particularly of Douglass’ Civil War, Reconstruction, and Gilded Age years and occupations. (50 b/w images)





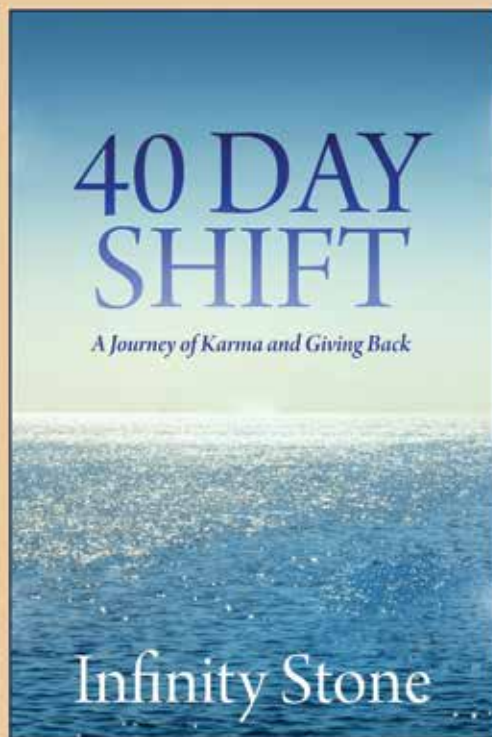
**HEIRS OF THE FOUNDERS**  
*The Epic Rivalry of Henry Clay, John Calhoun and Daniel Webster, the Second Generation of American Giants*

Brands, H.W.  
 Doubleday (432 pp.)  
 \$30.00 | Nov. 13, 2018  
 978-0-385-54253-1

Prolific historian Brands (Chair, History/Univ. of Texas; *The General vs. the President: MacArthur and Truman at the Brink of Nuclear War*, 2016, etc.) continues his project of retelling the American national story through its principal actors.

The author's return to the "great man" school of history is somewhat problematic, since those presumed great men of American history are mostly white and seldom women. Still, the approach has virtues in making for a neat, character-driven

history of the sort that nonspecialist readers like to read, in the manner of Douglas Brinkley, Steven Ambrose, and other popularizers. Brands goes a little farther afield to deal with three contemporaries who were rivals and occasional allies in the business of deciding what America was going to become at the time when the Founding Fathers were leaving the political field. Daniel Webster, by the author's account, was a mesmerizing orator and debater, a man who "had a way with words that seemed almost supernatural." John Calhoun of South Carolina was almost as gifted as his Massachusetts peer, with a fiery devotion to his home state, while plain-spun Henry Clay of Kentucky had his eyes on the opening West. None of the "great triumvirate," as they were known, lived long enough to reckon with the Civil War and its aftermath, but all were principal players in the great post-Jacksonian debate over slavery and states' rights. The greatest contribution of this book, full of historical set pieces and debates, is the author's parsing of the regional and sectional differences that would lead to conflict, with the South enjoying undue influence. "The South," writes Brands, "acting through the national government, had repeatedly secured the admission



ISBN # 978-1-7320641-0-2

**40 DAY SHIFT**

*A Journey of Karma and Giving Back*  
 by Infinity Stone

Stone's brief nonfiction debut chronicles her 40 days of seeking a more enlightened, more giving life, patterning the 40-day period on the Lent of her Catholic upbringing but broadening the ambit to include the widest possible spectrum of spiritual leanings.

"...seamlessly and enjoyably interwoven...thoughtful..."

"An informative, concise handbook to learning and giving."  
 —Kirkus Reviews

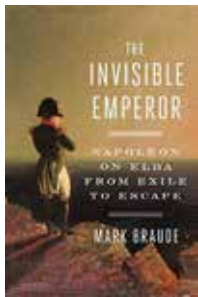
For publishing rights or agent representation, please contact [Infinitystone9@gmail.com](mailto:Infinitystone9@gmail.com)

You don't need to be black or a minority to grasp the need to stand up and fight in today's political world. The authors lay it out well in this solid primer on how to "dare to enter the halls of power."

FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED POLITICS

of new slave states: nine since the ratification of the Constitution, with Texas likely to spawn more." Given the sectional and ideological divides at work today, the book is oddly timely—and unlikely in the moments when the three politicians managed to forge compromises.

A lesser work from Brands but a solid introduction to a post-revolutionary generation whose members, great and small, are little remembered today.



**THE INVISIBLE EMPEROR**  
**Napoleon on Elba from Exile to Escape**

Braude, Mark  
Penguin Press (384 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-7352-2260-1

A history of Napoleon's short first exile, rendered in short, punchy chapters. The Treaty of Fontainebleau exiled the emperor to Elba and generously gave

him sovereignty over the small island, which was rich in mineral deposits, featuring iron mines and good wine but poor soil. It certainly had no structure anywhere near sufficient to house the emperor. Accompanying him was Neil Campbell, a representative of England's government who was directed to act as an impartial observer but not an enforcer. Campbell had no power or control over the emperor and spent a good deal of his time away with his mistress. Counting on his promised annual allowance, Napoleon was free to build houses and roads, develop commerce, maintain a navy and army, and even claim the nearby fertile land of Pianosa. He appointed a governor and treasurer and formed a council to establish the appearance of a constitutional monarchy. His mother and sister even joined him in exile. The terms of the treaty would prove to be its undoing, as Napoleon never intended to stay long, and nothing in the treaty proscribed his leaving the island. Louis XVIII, newly restored to the throne, had no intention of paying the annual allowance, and Campbell strongly warned the Allies that Napoleon was short of funds even though he tried to collect back taxes. Braude (*Making Monte Carlo: A History of Speculation and Spectacle*, 2016) wonders whether he would have stayed if he were sufficiently funded. Perhaps, but he was there only 10 months and left with a flotilla of armed vessels. It's great fun reading about the Allies' attempts to predict his destination, and those anecdotes reinforce our knowledge of the emperor's great talents. His only mistake was leaving while the Allies were still gathered at the Congress of Vienna and able to quickly respond to his escape. Though not earth-shattering in his insights, Braude's unique focus will allow this book to sit comfortably alongside the countless other Napoleon biographies.

A simply written, sturdy addition to the groaning Napoleon shelves.



**FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED POLITICS**

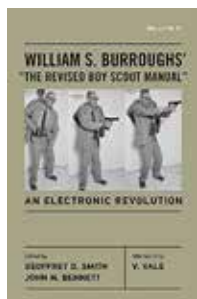
Brazile, Dorna & Caraway, Yolanda & Daughtry, Leah & Moore, Minyon with Chambers, Veronica

St. Martin's (368 pp.)  
\$28.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-250-13771-5

The fascinating story of four women who got into politics in the 1960s and '70s and are now the rare Washington insiders who understand people from all areas of the nation.

The authors—Brazile (*Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-ins and Breakdowns That Put Donald Trump in the White House*, 2017), a Democratic political strategist and TV commentator; Caraway, a public relations executive and Democratic strategist; Daughtry, a preacher, organizer, and CEO of the 2008 and 2016 Democratic National Conventions; and Moore, a former assistant to Bill Clinton—all came from different parts of the country but had in common strong family upbringings and a devotion to civil rights. The list of their mentors is an all-star cast: Ron Brown, Oprah Winfrey, Maria Shriver, Vernon Jordan, and the Rev. Willie Barrow. Each author remembers vividly the first time she met Jesse Jackson; Brazile worked on his first presidential campaign. Caraway has held key leadership roles in nearly every major presidential campaign of the past couple decades. Daughtry was CEO of the DNC, twice. Moore served in Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and became director of political affairs at the White House. They shared their lives as true friends, weathering setbacks, disagreements, and breaks but always trusting each other. Their individual strengths increase significantly when they're together, as they were during the 2004 election. Washington power brokers regularly host informal dinners for presidential hopefuls, and the authors decided to do the same. The rules were simple: The candidate would come alone, be responsible for the bill, and everything was off the record. The dinners would include the candidate, the four women, and some of their associates—though the meals with Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were jam-packed. The authors' description of the professionalism and political savvy exhibited and/or lacking at those meals is eye-opening.

You don't need to be black or a minority to grasp the need to stand up and fight in today's political world. The authors lay it out well in this solid primer on how to "dare to enter the halls of power." (First printing of 250,000)



**WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS' "THE REVISED BOY SCOUT MANUAL"**

**An Electronic Revolution**

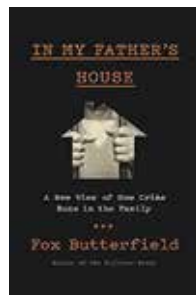
*Burroughs, William S. Smith, Geoffrey D. & Bennett, John M.—Eds.*

Ohio State Univ. Press (144 pp.)  
\$17.95 paper | Sep. 10, 2018  
978-0-8142-5489-9

A surrealistic action plan for would-be revolutionaries from the literary provocateur, prescribing a dash of viral marketing and a lot of political assassination.

Written and recorded in multiple forms in the early 1970s, this manifesto is an impassioned yet sometimes incoherent rebuke to ossified political ideologies, much as Burroughs' fiction assailed literary conventions and even the countercultural ideals of the Beats he associated with. As a guide to "bring down the economic system of the West," its recommendations are, effectively, terrorism: targeted and random assassinations, plane bombings, mobilized street gangs, and so on. Not all of the recommendations are violent, though, and some anticipate modern-day political meme strategies: "Construct fake news broadcasts on video camera," he writes. "Scramble your fabricated news in with actual news broadcasts." Some passages are marked by a righteously outraged humor, as when he imagines the masses rising up against the British monarchy and profanely chanting "bugger the queen." That tonal shifting—sometimes funny, sometimes angry, sometimes coolly how-to-ish, as the title suggests—makes it unclear how seriously Burroughs took his call to arms. (He calls his mass-assassination plan a "utopian fantasy," but he still contemplates it in detail.) Three academic essays introducing the book shed surprisingly little light on the matter, fussing over discrepancies between versions of the text, though a lively afterword by alternative publisher V. Vale argues that Burroughs was theorizing more than exhorting, chasing "outrageous scenarios and fresh language capable of inspiring readers decades into the future." But even if Burroughs was indeed recommending mass killings, few would find much inspiration in this book's slurry of ideologies, half-remembered history, and pseudoscience, as the author draws on crackpot Scientology doctrine and inexplicably suggests that we "produce a variety of humanoid sub-species."

As Burroughs-iana, marginal. As satire, flat. As agit-prop, clumsy and outdated.



**IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE**  
**A New View of How Crime Runs in the Family**

*Butterfield, Fox*

Knopf (288 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-4000-4102-2

A follow-up of sorts to *All God's Children*, the author's 1995 book about an African-American family mired in multiple generations of imprisonment. This time, the author chronicles a "a white family with a sizable number of inmates to illustrate this perverse legacy while removing race as a factor in the discussion."

Based on an extraordinary research effort that combined years of building trust with outlaws as well as searching law enforcement records, longtime *New York Times* reporter and bureau chief Butterfield, who won the National Book Award for *China: Alive in the Bitter Sea* (1982), located at least 60 members

**IN OVER MY HEAD**  
THE ADVENTURES OF A BROOKLYN BAD BOY WHO BECAME A MADISON AVENUE PRINCE  
BY HENRY HOLTZMAN

A debut rags-to-riches memoir follows a man's trek from inauspicious beginnings to success in advertising.

**"Holtzman writes lucidly and affectingly..."**

**"..impressively forthcoming..."**

**"A thoughtful account of the exhilaration – and potential disenchantment – that accompanies career achievements."**  
—Kirkus Reviews

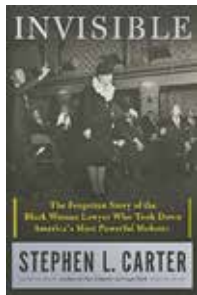
For information on publishing or film rights, contact [henry@henryholtzman.com](mailto:henry@henryholtzman.com)

# A vivid portrait of a remarkable woman.

INVISIBLE

of the extended Bogle family who have been arrested and sentenced beginning in the early 1920s. Although 60 may seem like an extraordinarily large number, “some oddity out of *Ripley’s Believe It or Not*,” the author notes that roughly five percent of families account for approximately half of all crime in the United States. While fascinated with the Bogles, Butterfield never loses sight of a significant question: Why is the intergenerational transmission of violence so powerful in countless specific families? Though the Bogles don’t necessarily present a simple answer to the author’s inquiry, he learned that numerous Bogle fathers and mothers encouraged their children to choose a life of crime, usually at the expense of education. Being sent to prison was viewed by Bogle family members as a rite of passage, even an honor. Certainly for some Bogle crime careerists, prison served as a school for honing skills to become more skilled robbers and burglars. (Butterfield found only one homicide during his research.) Near the end of the book, the author focuses on Ashley, the first Bogle to attend college. How Ashley broke free from a career of crime is such a remarkable saga that it reads like fiction. However, Butterfield provides persuasive documentation about his subjects and also delivers an epilogue that is at least as unexpected.

The occasional shoehorning of academic theories into the Bogle narrative barely mars an outstanding book of sociology and criminology. (8 pages of photos)



## INVISIBLE *The Forgotten Story of the Black Woman Lawyer Who Took Down America’s Most Powerful Mobster*

Carter, Stephen L.  
Henry Holt (384 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-250-12197-4

An accomplished and determined woman transcended racial barriers to rise to prominence.

Carter (Law/Yale Univ; *Back Channel*, 2014, etc.), former clerk for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, celebrates the life of his grandmother, Eunice Hunton Carter (1899-1970), who forged an astonishing legal career that included successfully prosecuting mobster Lucky Luciano. At the age of 8, Eunice told a young friend that she wanted to become a lawyer “to make sure the bad people went to jail.” Two decades later, she acted on that desire. After graduating with degrees from Smith College, a married mother of a 2-year-old son enmeshed in the social whirl of upper-society Harlem, she realized that she was thoroughly bored. She enrolled at Fordham Law School, one of the few that admitted women and blacks, and earned a law degree in 1932. Two years later, the GOP tapped her to run for New York state assembly against the Democratic incumbent: “Black and female, conservative and brilliant, charming and charismatic,” she seemed the perfect candidate. Although she lost that race, the campaign gave her visibility, and soon Mayor

Fiorello La Guardia appointed her to a special commission to investigate rioting and unrest that had erupted in Harlem. Her career took off in 1935, when Special Prosecutor Thomas Dewey hired her to join his team investigating mob activities in New York. It was, writes Carter, “the job every young lawyer wanted.” Eunice became Dewey’s staunch supporter, campaigning for him when he ran for Manhattan district attorney, New York governor, and president against Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Yet he always picked others to fill important appointments. Nevertheless, Eunice’s many social and political activities earned her widespread admiration. Carter places Eunice’s experiences in the context of American culture, politics, and her own family: her activist mother; her defiant brother, whose Communist Party membership, Eunice believed, threatened her career; and her son (the author’s father). Eunice could be imperious, “judgmental and often dismissive,” impatient and aloof. Quitting, the author writes, “was not in her nature.”

A vivid portrait of a remarkable woman. (b/w art throughout)



## SCHUMANN *The Faces and the Masks*

Chernaik, Judith  
Knopf (368 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-0-451-49446-7

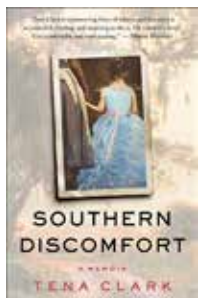
A guided tour through the life and work of Robert Schumann (1810-1956), a musical genius who viewed the sublime before a decline into a syphilitic madness.

Chernaik (*Mab’s Daughters*, 1991, etc.), who has taught at Columbia, Tufts, and elsewhere, has clearly devoted years of research to this lush life. Although she asserts in the introduction that she is aiming her work at “the general reader,” there are many places—especially in her analyses of individual works—where general readers will require some fairly sophisticated understandings of music. That caveat aside, Chernaik rewards those who do journey through these pages with insights and conclusions that make the reading experience both enjoyable and educative. She teaches us a lot about Schumann’s world and life, including details about his boyhood and his early love for Clara Wieck (the gifted pianist whom he would later marry), whose father’s angry opposition to their relationship courses throughout the early sections. (They had to go to court to obtain legal permission to marry.) Throughout, the author shows us a complicated composer. Fond of drink and of women, he had difficulty settling down; in later sections, we see his inability to conduct less-than-gifted musicians during a stint in Düsseldorf. Chernaik also chronicles his friendships with numerous other musical luminaries and legends, including Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Brahms also developed a crush on the older Clara Schumann, but nothing ensued. The author escorts us through Schumann’s most noteworthy works, and we see his frustration about not being able to compose a successful



opera. She lets us know which works are still performed, and in agonizing detail, she rehearses Schumann's descent into darkness in a chapter aptly titled, "The Mind Stripped Bare."

**A sturdy foundation of research and musical knowledge (and love) underlies this inspiring and wrenching account of a man who pursued, captured, and lost.** (16 pages of photos)



**SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT  
A Memoir**

Clark, Tena  
Touchstone/Simon & Schuster (304 pp.)  
\$27.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-5011-6794-2

The Mississippi blues take on new meaning in this tragic yet uplifting memoir. With its Southern setting and themes of racial conflict and civil rights, it's easy to see how this book has been compared to *The Help*. But Clark's debut is an entirely original—and true—story. In the Grammy Award-winning songwriter and producer's memoir, she reveals a Southern gothic tale of growing up in 1950s Waynesboro, Mississippi, a lesbian raised by a womanizing father, an alcoholic mother, and a household of African-American help whom she'd sooner call family. Long before the author went on to become a renowned music producer, she was a little girl trying to make sense of her confusing world on the cusp of integration. The youngest daughter of four, Clark was the only one in the house by the time her parents had reached the height of their fisticuffs. The daughter of the wealthiest man in town, Clark watched her father's adultery in action. "On any given day," she writes, "Daddy would cruise around town, admiring his own image in his Cadillac's rearview mirror, his left arm dangling out the window, a cigarette between his fingers. When he wasn't entertaining some woman in his car, he and I would tool around town, making his daily rounds." His womanizing drove Clark's mother not only to drink, but to shoot, and the author saw her mother, on more than one occasion, take aim at her father. But this isn't merely a story of parental dysfunction. The narrative is an investigation of what it meant to be a progressive during the Jim Crow era. Clark openly mocked Klan members, took her black nanny to lunch days after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and tested her own family's acceptance by marrying a woman. Yet throughout the book, the overarching theme is love.

**A highly satisfying look at a flawed family, a conflicted South, and a fraught future.**



**PROFESSOR AT LARGE  
The Cornell Years**

Cleese, John  
Cornell Univ. (232 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Oct. 15, 2018  
978-1-5017-1657-7

In this probing collection of essays and lectures given during his tenure as Cornell University's "professor at large," Cleese (*So, Anyway...*, 2014, etc.) reminds us that his intelligence and wit extend well beyond Monty Python and *Fawlty Towers*.

The beloved British comic actor, writer, and director began his academic association with Cornell in 1999, when he was invited to serve as a visiting professor, holding forth on everything from *The Life of Brian* and the nature of religion to creativity, screenwriting, group dynamics, and physiognomy. He has continued guiding these scholarly workshops and classes flecked with humor for almost 20 years. This book assembles

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"Miller oozes ideas but makes his points quickly, mostly through rapid-fire anecdotes. Short sentences—often questions—punctuate his discourse, engaging the reader as a stand-up comic might call out an audience member."  
— Kirkus Reviews

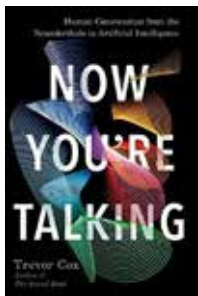
For publishing rights or agent representation, please contact kay@theadventure.com

# A stunning, defiant, and impassioned collection.

CHRONIQUES

the best of them in a thoughtful, engaging way—at least to liberal thinkers—though the author sometimes succumbs to broad generalizations. Apart from his look at frameworks that fire creative energies, of particular note is his discussion of the dichotomy between the authoritarian impulse of organized religion and the liberating mysticism expressed by Buddhism. Cleese also offers trenchant (if familiar) commentary on political and cultural matters while relating much practical knowledge about film and TV, including the eventual demise of the Pythons. Although aspects of it are somewhat dated, movie buffs will savor a long, detailed, often eye-opening interview Cleese conducted in 2000 with respected screenwriter William Goldman—during which Cleese also recalls his experiences writing and performing in *A Fish Called Wanda*. In “The Human Face,” the author talks to developmental psychologist Stephen J. Ceci, and the two brilliantly explore the parameters of perception and recognition, with an illustrative aside on the “golden mean.” Cleese, 78, reveals a sharp but humane sensibility as well as a wicked sense of humor when it comes to human frailty. What surprises is the depth of his understanding.

As provocative as it is amusing—an edifying journey through the mind of a major talent.



## NOW YOU'RE TALKING Human Conversation from the Neanderthals to Artificial Intelligence

Cox, Trevor

Counterpoint (320 pp.)

\$26.00 | Sep. 18, 2018

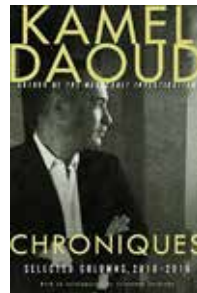
978-1-64009-079-8

A lucid look at the science behind human communication.

Consider a smartly constructed computer that read every book in the world. Even if it did, writes Cox (Acoustic Engineering/Univ. of Salford; *The Sound Book: The Science of the Sonic Wonders of the World*, 2014), “its knowledge would be incomplete,” for the computer would lack a world of cultural context. It would probably not be able to understand most allusions, would certainly not be able to fill in the blanks of the things that human storytellers leave out of their tales, might not parse plays on words, and so forth. That we human speakers and listeners are able to do all these things points to the phenomenal amount of brainpower that underlies communication. The author examines the evolution of the human vocal tract, noting that standing upright lengthened it to produce a great variety of sounds—and adding that there are distinct differences in the pronunciation of short and tall people in pronouncing words such as bit/bet because of vocal tract length, differences that we adjust for without knowing that we’re doing so: “the listener subconsciously estimates how long the vocal tract of the speaker is.” Just so, speech impediments such as hesitation or stuttering speak to a huge amount of neural processing and misprocessing as well as the implication of genetics, such as the mutation of “FOXP2 on chromosome 7,”

in making pronunciation difficult for one unfortunate British family. Neural processing, too, makes it possible for us to judge the “authenticity” of a speaker who is reporting some emotion—an authenticity that is too often faked, whether by a politician or a skilled actor. The greatest takeaway from the book is the welcome thought that our best moments as human communicators are in ordinary conversations, “quotidian activity that allows knowledge about how to survive and thrive to be passed between us.”

There’s lots to ponder in Cox’s geekily entertaining exploration of how we acquire our voices and understand those of others.



## CHRONIQUES

Daoud, Kamel

Trans. by Zerofsky, Elisabeth

Other Press (336 pp.)

\$28.95 | Oct. 16, 2018

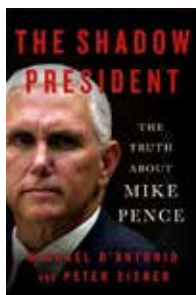
978-1-59051-956-1



Incisive essays depict a world beset by “a geography of hysteria.”

In a selection of commentary published between 2010 and 2016, journalist and novelist Daoud (*The Meursault Investigation*, 2015), columnist for the French-language Algerian newspaper *Le Quotidien d’Oran* as well as contributor to many international publications, offers unsparring critiques of political Islam, Arab dictatorships, Western complicity, and social and cultural repression. As translator Zerofsky notes in an informative introduction, Daoud’s writings have earned him respect as “a commentator who could both speak for and criticize” the Arab world: “a Muslim and an Algerian, a member of a postcolonial society but distanced from it by the privilege of his position and his intellect.” He also became reviled for his views on Islamists and was condemned as an Islamophobe. In 2014, an imam called for a fatwa against him for “apostasy.” Daoud sees Islamists as religious fanatics, “an armed force, belligerent for war,” spawned from dictatorships. Islamists emerge “when you infantilize a population for decades, when you deculture them, reduce them to ignorance and take them back to the Middle Ages.” Violence, intolerance, and oppression of women reflect Islamists’ unease with difference, desire, and even with life. “For him life is a waste of time, blocking his way to eternity,” and women, the source of life, are the enemy. “The Islamist wants to veil woman to forget her, to deny her, disembodiment her, escape her,” Daoud writes in one among many essays denouncing societies that force women “to live under the laws of live burial.” Some essays respond to particular events, such as terrorist attacks in Paris, Arab refugees’ aggression against women in Cologne, and the death of a 3-year-old Syrian Kurdish child, drowned at sea, whose photograph shocked the world. Who is guilty for that death? “The smugglers, ISIS, Assad and his father, the Russians, Bush, and the Iranian regime: it’s a chain reaction” that reflects pernicious complexities. “When Aylan drowns, it’s the world that’s in shipwreck.”

A stunning, defiant, and impassioned collection.



**THE SHADOW PRESIDENT**  
**The Truth About Mike Pence**

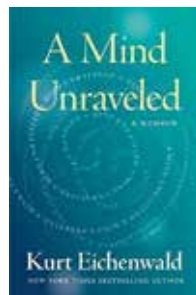
*D'Antonio, Michael & Eisner, Peter*  
 Dunne/St. Martin's (304 pp.)  
 \$28.99 | Aug. 28, 2018  
 978-1-250-30119-2



Award-winning, veteran journalists collaborate on a well-researched and moderately toned yet searing biography of Vice President Mike Pence (b. 1959).

D'Antonio (*A Consequential President: The Legacy of Barack Obama*, 2017, etc.) and Eisner (*MacArthur's Spies: The Soldier, the Singer, and the Spymaster Who Defied the Japanese in World War II*, 2017, etc.) begin with Pence's middle-class, Catholic, politically moderate Indiana upbringing before tracing how the ambitious, polite young man turned toward increasingly exclusionary politics during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. As for the religious component, Pence's mainstream Catholicism morphed into evangelical zealotry with a heavy emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible. Pence came to believe that God decided the path of every human; while still a student, he also adopted the notion that God would elevate him to the presidency. Of course, at such an early age, he did not foresee that serving as vice president to Donald Trump would constitute part of God's plan. When that became reality much later, Pence tolerated Trump's vitriol and scandals as preordained by God, simply a means to an end. The authors devote the final third of the book to the Trump-Pence partnership. In the middle sections, they document Pence's marriage; an unfocused, meandering work history during his 20s; and impatient attempts to join the House of Representatives by defeating an entrenched Democratic incumbent. Pence lost twice before starting a career as an Indiana radio personality, which, a decade later, provided the name recognition he needed to become a Congressman. The authors provide copious evidence of Pence's lackluster legislative accomplishments in Washington, D.C.; nonetheless, Pence won the governorship of Indiana in 2012. He demonstrated a low level of interest in actually governing, and he was often evasive or heartless when confronted with hot-button issues. Trump showed little interest in Pence's legislative record, focusing instead on Pence's patina of inoffensive behavior, pleasant physical appearance, and faith-based zealotry.

Producing a biography of a living, controversial politician is always difficult. D'Antonio and Eisner have succeeded in this well-documented, damning book. Cue the outrage from Sean Hannity et al.



**A MIND UNRAVELED**  
**A Memoir**

*Eichenwald, Kurt*  
 Ballantine (416 pp.)  
 \$28.00 | Oct. 16, 2018  
 978-0-399-59362-8

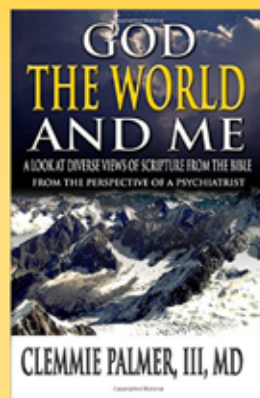
A journalist recounts his decadeslong struggle with epilepsy.

Veteran journalist Eichenwald (*500 Days: Secrets and Lies in the Terror Wars*, 2012, etc.), a two-time winner of the George Polk Award, engrossingly relates his experiences with frequent epileptic seizures and the impact this condition has had on his life: "I have lived most of my life knowing I could be seconds from falling to the ground, seizing, burning, freezing, or worse....For years, I believed that each day might be my last, that I would die from an accident or a seizure or by my own hand. I lived in a boundless minefield, never knowing if I was a step away from triggering an explosion." The author

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 —Dr. John Campbell, Clinical Psychologist, Montgomery, AL

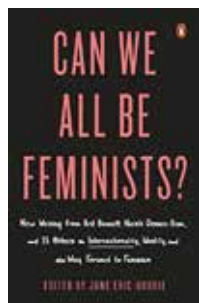
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# Eric-Udorie calls to mind a young Audre Lorde, and her anthology feels like a 21st-century version of *This Bridge Called My Back*.

CAN WE ALL BE FEMINISTS?

focuses mainly on his younger years, when he entered college up through his struggles to establish a foothold in his career. Central to his story are the grueling efforts he and his family faced trying to ensure his remittance to Swarthmore College. Through a combination of gross medical incompetence and disturbing administrative offenses within the college, Eichenwald was forced to leave during his first semester; he had to seek out extensive legal and medical intervention before he was able to continue his education. The author goes on to recount similar struggles in launching his early career. Throughout, Eichenwald brings his measured journalistic directness to the various dramas that unfold. His experiences pointedly reflect the challenges of trying to live a normal life while at the mercy of his condition, but more expansively, he relates the challenges that many disabled people face. He concludes each chapter with interview quotes, diary entries, and letters by various family members, close friends, and physicians. Though he mentions having kept these records as a means to organize his thoughts in response to increasing memory loss, their inclusion adds a somewhat cloying inspirational element that slightly undermines the strength and authority of the story he has to tell.

**An enlightening and often moving memoir of one man's struggle to live with a chronic and debilitating condition.**



## CAN WE ALL BE FEMINISTS? New Writing from Brit Bennett, Nicole Dennis-Benn, and 15 Others on Intersectionality, Identity, and the Way Forward for Feminism

Eric-Udorie, June—Ed.

Penguin (288 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Sep. 25, 2018

978-0-14-313237-0

A collection that aims to turn feminism's gaze away from an agenda largely set by privileged white women.

In an eloquent and searing introduction, debut editor Eric-Udorie—an undergraduate at Duke University who was named *Elle* UK's Female Activist of the Year in 2017—takes white feminists to task for ignoring the stories, suffering, goals, and power of “women of color, disabled women, queer women, trans women, poor women, and other marginalized groups.” The essays that follow examine everything from films about trans people to the death of Sandra Bland to body hair. Novelist Brit Bennett contributes an especially lyrical piece about the body-spirit dualism she learned as a young black girl in church. British journalist Aisha Gani offers a brilliant reading of the portrayal of Muslim women on TV (“a Muslim woman should not be newsworthy only if she is the first visibly Muslim woman in a particular field”). Several writers consider how political issues not always thought of as feminist problems—e.g., British immigration policy, cuts to Medicaid, the highly flawed American prison system—would look if seen through a feminist lens. One of the most incisive essays is by Frances Ryan, a columnist

for the *Guardian*. She criticizes the way that disability typically features in abortion-rights discourse about abortion, discourse in which the prospect of being forced to raise a disabled child is held up as a specter of ghastliness meant to convince the likes of Phyllis Schlafly that abortion should be legal in at least some cases. This line of reasoning, Ryan notes, bolsters a cultural script in which disability is “something to be avoided at all costs.” She also argues that a feminist approach to reproductive rights that took disability seriously would include a fight to protect the rights of disabled women to raise children.

**Eric-Udorie calls to mind a young Audre Lorde, and her anthology feels like a 21st-century version of *This Bridge Called My Back*.**



## AMERICAN LIKE ME

Ferrera, America with

Dumont, E. Cayce—Eds.

Gallery Books (336 pp.)

\$26.00 | Sep. 25, 2018

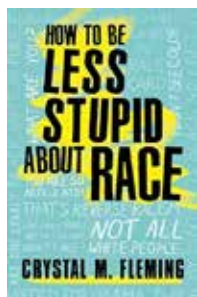
978-1-5011-8091-0

Writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds ring in on American identity.

Actor and activist Ferrera makes her book debut as editor of this collection of spunky, fresh, and often moving personal essays responding to the question: What do I call an American like me? Because she grew up believing she was “alone in feeling stuck between cultures,” Ferrera sees the book as a way to foster a sense of belonging as well as to celebrate difference. “We live as citizens of a country that does not always claim us or even see us,” she writes, “and yet, we continue to build, to create, and to compel it toward its own promise.” That promise beckoned many writers’ parents or grandparents to make an arduous journey to a new homeland. “For my family,” writes Olympic figure skater Michelle Kwan, “the American dream wasn’t just a fairy-tale notion or a meaningless phrase. It has always been real and extremely motivating.” Hoping for a bright future for themselves and their children, Kwan’s parents left China, arriving in the U.S. penniless and knowing no English but certain that “if you work hard and take big risks for what you believe in, you can accomplish anything.” They sacrificed time and money to support Kwan’s passion for ice skating. Other writers include comedians Al Madrigal and Kumail Nanjiani, cookbook author and TV host Padma Lakshmi, transgender advocate Geena Rocero, NBA player Jeremy Lin, actor and documentary filmmaker Ravi Patel, gymnast Laurie Hernandez, and composer and playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda. Some, bullied and mocked as children, wanted to blend into white America, begging for white-bread sandwiches rather than curry in their lunchboxes. Others flaunted their difference. Growing up in Houston, actress Liza Koshy liked “being racially ambiguous. Forever the ethnically mysterious little brown girl.” She saw her Asian and Latino friends not as a melting pot but a salad bowl, “tossed haphazardly together” to produce “something delicious,” each contributing a “special flavor or texture.”

**Heartfelt essays from vibrant American voices.**





**HOW TO BE LESS STUPID ABOUT RACE**  
**On Racism, White Supremacy, and the Racial Divide**

Fleming, Crystal M.

Beacon (256 pp.)

\$23.95 | Sep. 18, 2018

978-0-8070-5077-4

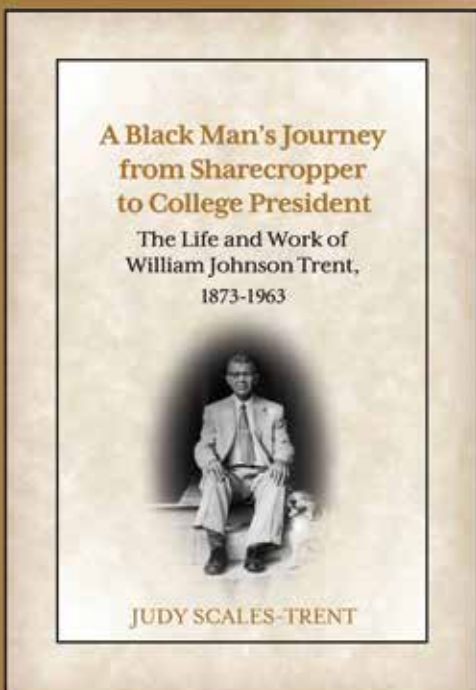


A scholar navigates between the academic and the vernacular in delivering some hard lessons on racism and white supremacy.

Fleming (*Resurrecting Slavery: Racial Legacies and White Supremacy in France*, 2017) promises to make her readers uncomfortable, particularly her white ones, and she succeeds. Yet the “stupid” in the title isn’t simply an insult. People are stupid about race, as she herself was, because they haven’t been properly educated. They know nothing of the interdisciplinary Critical Race Theory and think that “white supremacy” references should be limited to guys in hoods and other extremists. Fleming offers a crash course in what will be a radically new perspective for

most and a provocative challenge that should inspire those who disagree with her to at least consider their basic preconceptions. “There are a certain number of prerequisites for the course that you will find in these pages,” she writes. “These include critical thinking, reflexivity, compassion, and a willingness to experience discomfort.” She proceeds to distinguish between personal prejudice and the more insidious and pervasive “systemic racism (a system of power).” It is by no means limited to America, but it has flourished along with white supremacy as “capitalist inventions.” As the author examines the history of a country in which white settlers appropriated the land of Natives from a different race and then harvested it through the labor of imported slaves of a different race, she builds a strong case that the existence of systemic racism is undeniable and is perpetuated by a white power structure, a white education system, and a white-controlled media for the benefit of a white elite. Rather than finding any sort of post-racial hope in Barack Obama, for whom Fleming once served as a campaign spokesperson, she now dismisses him as “the king of neoliberal tokenism...it’s almost as if he’s competing for the title of the Most Sold-Out Sell-Out of all time or the Unclest of Uncle Toms.”

**A deft, angry analysis for angry times.**



**A Black Man's Journey from Sharecropper to College President**

The Life and Work of William Johnson Trent, 1873-1963

by Judy Scales-Trent

A biography of the remarkable African-American educator William Johnson Trent (1873-1963) that gives readers a close look at the tumultuous times of his long life.

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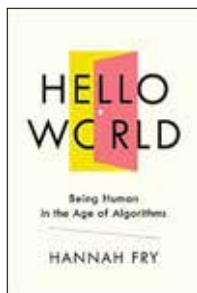
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A well-constructed tour of technology and its discontents—timely, too, given the increasing prominence of AI in our daily lives.

HELLO WORLD



**HELLO WORLD**  
**Being Human in the Age of Algorithms**

Fry, Hannah  
Norton (272 pp.)  
\$25.95 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-393-63499-0

London-based mathematician Fry (*The Mathematics of Love: Patterns, Proofs, and the Search for the Ultimate Equation*, 2015, etc.) ponders thinking machines,

the trust we put in them, and the implications for the future.

Forget about the singularity: The thinking machines are already upon us, and they make extraordinarily complex decisions, from how to battle cancer to whether to send someone to jail. The central question about artificial intelligence and the algorithms that drive it is whether we can trust them to do the right thing, especially if we are ceding decision-making power to mathematical constructs and probabilities. As Fry notes, algorithms alone can push us into some uncomfortable territory—e.g., the sentencing of criminal defendants, a process that, though perhaps driven by an altruistic wish for truly blind justice, puts members of ethnic minorities at a distinct disadvantage: The poorer and less educated a person, in many instances, the more a risk for nonappearance or flight he or she is judged to be. There may be reasons for that failure to show up in court; for one thing, as Fry asks, “do they have access to suitable transport to get there?” Programming the algorithm to account for “societal imbalances” may be one solution, and AI may be able to get around some of the discrimination that would bias a human judge. Still, programmers are people, too. In theory, technology is morally neutral—a drone can be used to take photographs or to kill people—so what really unfolds is what Fry describes at the outset: “Each [algorithm] is inextricably connected to the people who build and use it.” The author writes ably and accessibly of some of the thornier problems, not just in the administration of justice and health care but also in matters like the Bayesian inferences that go into operating driverless cars safely and using algorithms to revise film scripts to “make a movie more profitable at the box office.”

A well-constructed tour of technology and its discontents—timely, too, given the increasing prominence of AI in our daily lives.



**THE PHAROAH'S TREASURE**  
**The Origin of Paper and the Rise of Western Civilization**

Gaudet, John  
Pegasus (304 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-68177-853-2

A lively overview of a medium that was central to public and private life in the ancient world.

Ecologist Gaudet (*Papyrus: The Plant that Changed the World*, 2014, etc.) expands on the research that informed his first book by investigating the history of paper from the end of the Stone Age to 1000 C.E. During that period, paper was made from papyrus that grew in swamps around the Nile, the only place that the reedy plant could flourish in quantity. For 4,000 years, therefore, Egypt had “uninterrupted and exclusive control” over the production of papyrus paper, the longest monopoly in world history. The medium “was the property of the king, since paper manufacture was at that time a royal prerogative.” It was vitally important both economically and culturally. In agriculture, which economists deem “the real basis for Egypt’s greatness,” tracking production depended on “lightweight paper to process and manage data sets.” Unlike tablets made of lead, copper, wax, or clay or writing surfaces made of tree bark or leather, papyrus paper “weighed almost nothing” and yet was extremely durable. Besides record-keeping, papyrus made its way into pyramids and coffins as funerary scrolls containing texts known as the *Book of the Dead*. These writings, Gaudet explains, were “designed in consultation with priests to ensure that the deceased came alive after death.” Organizing the book into three sections, the author first establishes paper as “a key element in global advancement” and dissemination of information. He notes that after the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, Egyptomania raged across Europe and Britain, sending thousands of Victorian collectors to pillage tombs and temples in search of ancient artifacts. A middle section details how paper and ink are made and scrolls are assembled, and a last section looks at the environmental changes and technical innovations—such as vellum, Chinese paper, and rag paper—that relegated papyrus paper to what it is now: a souvenir for tourists.

An engaging journey to the distant past.



**FEMINASTY**  
**The Complicated Woman's Guide to Surviving the Patriarchy Without Drinking Herself to Death**

Gibson, Erin  
Grand Central Publishing (288 pp.)  
\$26.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-4555-7186-4

Channeling absurdity into activism: blunt, woman-centered comedic essays aimed at generating female resistance and mutual support.

*Throwing Shade* podcast co-host and *Funny or Die* writer Gibson felt all fired up after reading Susan Faludi, so she decided to write a book about the beleaguered state of women in this country. A self-proclaimed “feminasty” whose superpower is “repackaging lady sadness into digestible comedy,” the author leverages her outspoken Southern persona and her less conventionally feminine characteristics (including a predilection for swearing and gross-out humor) as weapons in the fight for gender parity. In a series of rambling, casual essays, Gibson rages against those she sees as having

committed or enabled crimes against women, with the most vituperation reserved for right-wing journalists and politicians, especially Mike Pence and Betsy DeVos. She unleashes a stand-up comedian's audacity and calculated obscenity on recent topics like the legislative rollbacks on rape and abortion, the #MeToo backlash, and breast cancer profiteering, punctuated by her own bitterly hilarious tales of woe. She thinks we should all, male and female, be talking more about labia and herpes and teenage sex. The rhetorical purposes of the work are clear: Gibson seeks to lift up women at every opportunity, especially by changing the gender balance in political power: "We wait out their term, helping women who are in the crosshairs of their villainous laws. Then, we flush them out with a sea of overqualified women who won't forget what they did to us." In keeping with her goal that women pursue a "closed female monetary system" wherever possible, she offers a series of surprisingly earnest reviews of specific cosmetics from women-owned companies. Like much topical satire, the book would likely benefit from a live or recorded reading. Gibson is still sussing out her transition

to the printed page, and this debut embodies her trademark awkwardness, but she speaks to a generation of women too angry to accept any cultural commentary that isn't somewhat raw and deadly sincere under its veneer of sarcasm.

**Flawed but funny diatribes from an emerging comedic voice.**



*Pamela Colman Smith*  
THE UNTOLD STORY

With over 400 color images, *Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story* is the most exhaustive collection of works by and about Pamela Colman Smith (1878-1951) published to date.

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—Kirkus Reviews

"A stimulating entryway into the imaginative world of a nearly forgotten illustrator."



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# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## BETH MACY

### THE BESTSELLING JOURNALIST MAKES HARROWING TRAVELS THROUGH THE LAND OF THE HYPERMEDICATED

By Megan Labrise



Photo courtesy Josh Melzer

FOR HER THIRD BOOK, *New York Times* bestselling author Beth Macy (*Factory Man*, *Truevine*) takes on her largest charge to date: a comprehensive analysis of the American opioid crisis, anchored by the heartbreaking, highly personal stories of affected families and first responders in three Virginia counties.

“If I could retrace the epidemic as it shape-shifted across the spine of the Appalachians,” Macy writes in *Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company that Addicted America*, “roughly paralleling Interstate 81 as it fanned out from the coalfields and crept north up the Shenandoah Valley, I could understand how prescription

pill and heroin abuse was allowed to fester, moving quietly and stealthily across this country, cloaked in stigma and shame.”

“There’s a lot of pain in this country,” Macy says by phone from Roanoke, the small Southwest Virginia city she’s lived in, and reported on, for the past three decades. It was on assignment for the *Roanoke Times* in 2012 that she began investigating a surprising uptick in addiction to painkillers—and ultimately, heroin—among affluent white suburban teens.

Former straight-A students and sports stars were turning to drug dealing and prostitution to stave off dopesickness, the body-wracking illness resulting from opioid withdrawal. They were overdosing and dying; their parents were panicking.

“I always like my reporting to bubble up from the ground,” says Macy, who sourced the story through friends, colleagues, former sources, and chance encounters. “It’s all just a matter of shoe-leather reporting, getting to know people, getting people to trust you,” and often keeping in touch with subjects long after deadlines are met.

“That was partly why people talked to me,” Macy says of her suburban drug-dependent subjects and their families, many of whom initially refused to speak on the record (five years later, as the book neared publication, almost all agreed to be identified). “These are educated people with resources, trying to break down what’s happening in the system. Who can they reach out to for help? Was this the right kind of health care they were supposed to be getting? And why didn’t anybody see this problem with a sense of urgency when they called the community service board to get into counseling? Everybody’s trying to figure it out on the fly, and it becomes the family unit that is ultimately responsible when government hasn’t

quite yet figured out how it's going to respond, and health care hasn't either, nor admitted it played a big role in it."

As the opioid problem became an apparent epidemic, and the story became a book, Macy followed up with some of those early subjects. Many offered unparalleled access to their lives through hundreds of text messages, social media posts, and countless hours of interviews.

"I haven't quite figured out how to talk about it, because I'm still processing it," Macy says of the intimate experience of reporting *Dopesick*. "I did a literary festival not too long ago and got really emotional. I lost some special people, people I spent time with, who had trusted me with their stories, some of whom died before I had time to type up my notes."

To figure out how the opioid epidemic ballooned—swiftly engulfing Virginians of all ages, races, and classes—Macy traces the epidemic back to 1996, with the introduction by Purdue Pharma of a time-released pain-killing "wonderdrug" called OxyContin. According to disingenuous marketing, for which the pharmaceutical giant was (eventually) successfully sued, only 1 percent of users would be susceptible to OxyContin addiction and abuse. Purdue deployed an army of aggressive sales reps to ram that message down prescribers' throats.

"If a doctor was already prescribing lots of Percocet and Vicodin, a rep was sent out to deliver a pitch about OxyContin's potency and longer-lasting action," Macy writes. "The higher the decile—a term reps use as a predictor of a doctor's potential for prescribing whatever drug they're hawking—the more visits that doctor received from a rep, who often brought along 'reminders' such as OxyContin-branded clocks for the exam-room walls."

Branded clocks, pens, trips to Florida—drug reps even sponsored one mercenary doctor's daughter's birthday party—inspired too many physicians to overprescribe a drug deemed "safe" for use by patients young and old.

"In this country, we're so enamored of a pill to solve every ill," says Macy, who was prescribed 15 oxycodone for abdominal surgery just last year (she took only two). "We don't know how to deal with pain anymore. Pain is just part of life. [We need to return to] the mindset of, 'I had surgery, I *should* feel some pain in my abdomen, right?' Because all the data shows, in the long run, [opioids] don't help" and actually promote hyperalgesia, an exaggerated sensitivity to pain.

Once addicted, most people will do anything to avoid dopesickness. So when the prescriptions run out, they steal or turn to drug dealers like Ronnie Jones, the man

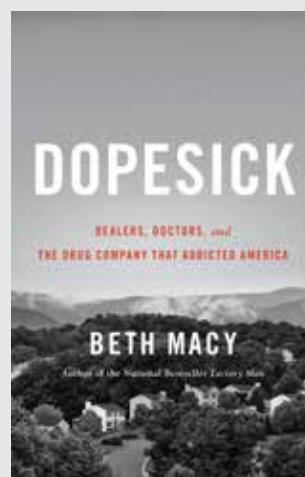
Macy credits, in part, with flooding the Shenandoah Valley with cut-rate heroin circa 2012. (Her six-hour interview with Jones, from Hazelton Federal Correctional Institution, where he's currently serving a 23-year sentence, further complicates the story.)

As the subtitle suggests, Jones and others—the *Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company that Addicted America*—get their excoriating due, but they're not the main focus of this "urgent, eye-opening look at a problem that promises to grow much worse in the face of inaction and indifference," as Kirkus calls *Dopesick* in a starred review.

"The only way I could stand to live in this story was to focus on the people fighting back," she says, heralding activists, law enforcement officials, EMTs, physicians who get waived to prescribe medication-assisted therapy (MAT) for opioid-dependent patients, founders of local syringe-exchange programs, and others working together, in Virginia and beyond, to combat the scourge and stigma of opioid addiction in their communities. "Those were my beacons.

"The statistics say now over half of Americans know somebody or have somebody in their family" who is opioid-dependent or has died an opioid-related death," Macy says. (That's 56 percent of Americans living in the aftermath of 300,000 deaths in the last 15 years, with 300,000 more predicted in the next five.) "When you're in that lucky other half and don't know anybody, I mean... chances are that, one day, you will. You're going to need to understand how we got here and what we can do. We all need to be vigilant about our health care, our families, and our children."

*Megan Labrise is a staff writer and co-host of the Fully Booked podcast. Dopesick received a starred review in the June 1, 2018, issue.*



# A definitive history, gripping from start to finish but relentlessly disturbing.

VIETNAM



## MUSSOLINI AND HITLER *The Forging of the Fascist Alliance*

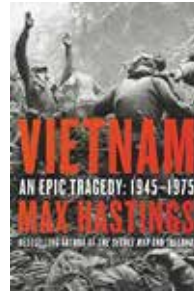
Goeschel, Christian  
Yale Univ. (400 pp.)  
\$30.00 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-300-17883-8

Goeschel (Modern European History/Univ. of Manchester; *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, 2009) examines the strained relationship—never a true friendship—

between the two dictators.

Both Hitler and Mussolini served as corporals in World War I, and both seized power through brutal violence and apparently legal political activity. Their “new order” was based on replacing the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles. Both were anti-Bolshevik and anti-Jewish. While anti-Semitism was central to Hitler’s ideology, Mussolini believed in a strategy of racial exclusion, not extermination. Mussolini was a strategic model for the rise of Nazism as the driving force behind the attempt to reshape postwar politics and diplomacy. In Italy, the monarchy and papacy were maintained, curtailing a complete dictatorship, a fact that Hitler often criticized. Curiously, Hitler was the instigator of the alliance, which wasn’t signed until well after World War II began. As the author demonstrates, the relationship was never ideological; it was politically constructed and contained little substance. Tensions were constant, not only between the dictators, but also their nations; few Germans could forget that Italy deserted their alliance and fought against them. The rivalry manifested itself at all of the meetings, which were really about image. Hitler quickly dropped his hero worship of Mussolini and, as an all-powerful dictator, monopolized their short conversations and made the decisions. Mussolini doggedly pursued his goal to become the “determining weight” in the Mediterranean and continued to foster Italy’s détente with England, hedging his bets with brinkmanship and opportunism. Hitler’s method of diplomacy was to completely skip the bureaucratic machinations, make backdoor deals, and put every nation’s fate in his own hands. The author methodically follows the meetings through the years, from great shows of power and exorbitant expenditures to the secretive meetings at Wolf’s Lair late in the war, which were no more than summons to Mussolini to receive Hitler’s instructions. Ultimately, Goeschel skillfully exposes the relationship as that of two men who merely tolerated each other to amass power.

**A necessary book for those who study dictators.**



## VIETNAM *An Epic Tragedy, 1945-1975*

Hastings, Max  
Harper/HarperCollins (896 pp.)  
\$37.50 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-0-06-240566-1

The prolific, prizewinning military historian turns his attention to the Vietnam War.

Having defeated the French after a bitter war, Vietnamese forces under Ho Chi Minh expected to govern Vietnam, but in 1954, the Geneva Conference awarded them only the northern half. Ironically, Ho’s frustration was engineered by the Soviet Union and China, whose priority was to avoid intervention from the United States. Of course, the U.S. eventually intervened. Hastings (*The Secret War: Spies, Ciphers, and Guerrillas, 1939-1945*, 2016, etc.) lets no one off the hook. “In the years that followed the Geneva Accords,” he writes, “it was the misfortune of both Vietnams to fall into the hands of cruel and incompetent governments.... The war that now gained momentum was one that neither side deserved to win.” The author brings his usual brilliant descriptive skills to the action, mixing individual anecdotes with big-picture considerations. Stupidity was rampant on both sides, and the North Vietnamese generalship was not immune; all combatants committed terrible atrocities. Hastings does not conceal his contempt for America’s anti-war movement. He makes a good case that fear of the draft stimulated many participants, and readers will squirm as he quotes many of its leaders’ praise of Ho and his freedom fighters. He also offers a virtuoso account of the 1968 Tet Offensive, which was a disaster for the North but convinced many hawks that the war was unwinnable. Richard Nixon’s election in 1968 showed that most Americans opposed a quick withdrawal, but his cynical goal (revealed by his own tapes) was to avoid blame for the inevitable communist victory, and he achieved it. No domino fell after 1975, as a united Vietnam faded into impoverished Stalinist isolation. The sole satisfying outcome of two recent American interventions in poor nations with incompetent governments is likely to be more superb histories by Hastings.

**A definitive history, gripping from start to finish but relentlessly disturbing.** (two 16-page b/w photo inserts)



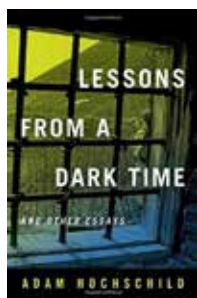
## TIGERLAND *1968-1969: A City Divided, a Nation Torn Apart, and a Magical Season of Healing*

Haygood, Wil  
Knopf (432 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-1-5247-3186-1

During the 1968-1969 school year, an all-black high school soared to win Ohio’s basketball and baseball championships.

Journalist Haygood (Media, Journalism, and Film/Miami Univ.; *The Haygoods of Columbus: A Love Story*, 2016, etc.), a Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, tells a story of perseverance, courage, and breathtaking talent as he recounts, in vibrant detail, the achievements of the Tigers, a basketball and baseball team at Columbus, Ohio's inner-city East High School. Drawing on interviews with the athletes and their families, coaches, and teachers as well as published and archival sources, the author creates moving portraits of the teenagers and their undaunted coaches and supporters. "Black boys in a white world," the students lived on the blighted side of town and had always attended underfunded schools; many had mothers who cleaned houses for wealthy whites. But they were uniquely, impressively talented athletes, and sports was a means of proving their worth. The Tigers could not have achieved their success without the help of two dedicated coaches: Bob Hart and Paul Pennell, both white, "big-hearted men who had a social conscience"; nor without the tireless and defiant efforts of Jack Gibbs, Columbus' first black high school principal, an astute networker who roused support from parents, business owners, and community leaders. Because the East Side had the city's highest crime rate, Gibbs made sure the students were kept too busy with school activities to get into mischief. East High "became part progressive laboratory, part military school, a place that had high expectations for student achievement." Haygood dramatically renders the heady excitement of each game, the tense moments of a close contest, and the exuberant—tear-jerking—wins. The inspiring story of East High's championship becomes even more astonishing in the context of endemic racism, which the author closely examines, and "the turmoil of a nation at war and in the midst of unrest," roiled by the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

**An engrossing tale of one shining moment in dark times.** (23 photos)



### LESSONS FROM A DARK TIME AND OTHER ESSAYS

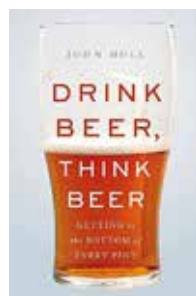
Hochschild, Adam  
 Univ. of California (288 pp.)  
 \$27.95 | Oct. 12, 2018  
 978-0-520-29724-1



An eminent public historian offers perspective on the Trump era. Hochschild (Journalism/Univ. of California; *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War*, 2016, etc.) has spent his career writing about imperialism, racism, war, tyranny, and the relationships among them. This collection of two dozen previously published essays was explicitly constructed as a response to the presidency of Donald Trump. As he writes in the introduction, "we have some tough years ahead of us....But when times are dark, we need moral ancestors, and I hope the pieces here will be reminders that others have fought and won battles against injustice in the past, including some against racism, anti-immigrant hysteria,

and more. The Trumps and Putins of those eras have gotten the ignominy they deserve." Some of those moral ancestors are famous. He describes a 1994 campaign trip with Nelson Mandela, conveying Mandela's moral authority but also noting another reason apartheid ended: "South Africa's largest corporations had had enough. The endless conflicts and the growing international boycotts and embargoes were bad for business." Of Mark Twain, one of several authors Hochschild spotlights, he writes, "Twain understood, more clearly than most white Americans, that the Civil War had changed too little, and that for former slaves, the United States could still be a place of lynchings and terror." Some of the inspiring individuals he writes about are not as well-known—e.g., Rebecca Masika Katsuma, who runs a program to aid some of the thousands of girls and women raped during civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (she herself was a victim of multiple rapes). In these essays about places around the globe, Hochschild's graceful, informative, straightforward writing always finds the telling detail as well as the people of courage in the most horrifying of situations.

**Focusing on some of the direst eras of recent history, these potent essays nevertheless find reason for hope in the idealism of individuals.**



### DRINK BEER, THINK BEER Getting to the Bottom of Every Pint

Holl, John  
 Basic (272 pp.)  
 \$26.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-0-465-09551-3

Informative overview of the economic and cultural transformations surrounding the world of beer.

*Craft Beer and Brewing* magazine senior editor Holl (*The American Craft Beer Cookbook*, 2013, etc.) is a passionate advocate for beer as both libation and lifestyle. He feels fortunate to have built a career as a beer judge and critic, and he argues that beer remains misunderstood despite its acknowledged popularity. The author shows how this popularity developed over the last few decades thanks to iconoclasts like New Albion Brewing's Jack McAuliffe, who resurrected knowledge lost during Prohibition. As he writes, "a brewing culture exists in America today that not only creates and supports local drinking communities but has launched a global phenomenon." Holl first captures this as narrative: During the 1980s and '90s, the "microbrew" and "craft" categories blossomed despite push back from corporate-controlled brewers like Budweiser and initially skeptical food-scene chroniclers. Such controversies have persisted. "It's easy," writes the author, "to criticize the 'big guys' and the 'traitors' that are no longer 'craft' or 'independent.'" Still, it's undeniable that the breadth and quality of American brewing today constitutes a renaissance. Holl writes enthusiastically about such facets of beer appreciation as the science behind the sensory experience of beer and

# A useful reading of history and politics in the light of mythmaking and media.

OUR AMERICAN ISRAEL

its core ingredients (yeast, water, malt, and hops) and the varied methodologies employed by brewers to resurrect neglected forms and try radical new taste combinations. He writes perceptively about current trends, noting that such marketplace competitiveness has an unsettling side: “Chemical flavoring is having a big impact in beer these days.” He also addresses the social aspects of enjoying beer, including the benefits of pub culture versus drinking at home, and some persistent issues regarding diversity and retrograde imagery in marketing; he notes his own editorial pleas for inclusiveness resulted in abuse from thin-skinned trolls online. The book is clearly written and only occasionally pedantic; this is leavened by good observations and nuggets of obscure brewing information.

**Will appeal to neophyte beer drinkers and foodies generally.**



## NIGHT MOVES

Hopper, Jessica  
Univ. of Texas (184 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-1-4773-1788-4

Down but not out in the hardscrabble Chicago of the 2000s.

*Pitchfork* writer Hopper (*The First Collection of Criticism by a Living Female Rock Critic*, 2015, etc.), who was also a music consultant for *This American Life*,

freestyles her way through the past in this spirited random-access journal of her Chicago days in the early 2000s, when she struggled to get by while taking in the sights. There’s the guy on the roof, peeing into a duct (“Does he know where that duct goes?...Is he a handyman who hates his job?...Is our duct next?”), and the disappointed evangelical who finally loses it. (“Whud-dup, bitch? Why didn’t you take a pamphlet? You can just ignore him like that? Huh? *Beeitch!*”) Hopper mostly got around by bike or foot, subsisted on crummy jobs, attended concerts, and fell in and out of relationships that left her buoyant or bummed out (“I think he thought I was just being vindictive for that time he ruined 1997-2002”). The author doesn’t just observe; she also asks the right questions: “You know how some nights you leave the house wanting to milk summer for all it’s worth, but all you get is a good glimpse at the rotten soul of the universe as it exists in and outside of yuppie jazz discos?” The weather was often unforgiving—“everyone is feeling the deep funk of winter’s bitch turn”—but the city was not: “It is profoundly comforting to live in a city that doesn’t give a shit and loves you how you are, because it is every bit as marred, bereft, and cocky as you are.”

The nonsequential entries make it difficult to chart Hopper’s growth, but that isn’t her game. In this lively and funny collection, she bears vivid witness to an industrial punk landscape that is both crumbling and evolving beneath her bare feet.



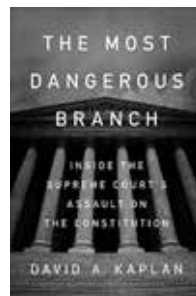
## OUR AMERICAN ISRAEL The Story of an Entangled Alliance

Kaplan, Amy  
Harvard Univ. (350 pp.)  
\$29.95 | Sep. 17, 2018  
978-0-674-73762-4

From Genesis to Revelation: a well-argued study of the place of Israel in American culture.

In the zombie apocalypse, as Brad Pitt so vividly learned in the film version of *World War Z*, always have an Israeli soldier at your side, and preferably “a buff Israeli woman soldier who is a symbol of Israeli feminism and modernity.” Even if feminism and modernity are in retreat in the United States, it was a good match: They staved off the end of civilization and saved our unworthy souls. Since the founding of the modern state of Israel 70 years ago, writes Kaplan (*English/Univ. of Pennsylvania; The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 2003, etc.), Americans, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, have seen in that nation a reflection and confirmation of their own, a system of affinities drawing on “powerful myths about their kinship and heritage, their suffering and salvation.” The author examines how those exceptionalist myths were made, often through the medium of popular literature and film. *World War Z* is but one case. Six decades earlier, the legendary journalist I.F. Stone traveled to Mandate Palestine onboard a ship carrying Jewish refugees from Europe and wrote a now largely forgotten book, *Underground to Palestine*, which “included the major tropes of the narrative that progressive Americans told about Zionism in the years following World War II.” Those tropes also play out in Leon Uris’ novel *Exodus*, which, in Kaplan’s view, recapitulates some of the opening-of-the-frontier stories Americans tell about themselves. The tropes change to fit the narrative at hand: Some of the author’s cases argue that it’s the battle for land that keeps Israelis and Arabs apart, some the battle of good and evil. Much of the book is confirmation rather than eye-opener, but Kaplan’s tour of literature and film shows how common understandings of Israel and the U.S. have been shaped—and distorted, as with the Trump administration’s relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem.

**A useful reading of history and politics in the light of mythmaking and media. (19 photos)**



## THE MOST DANGEROUS BRANCH Inside the Supreme Court's Assault on the Constitution

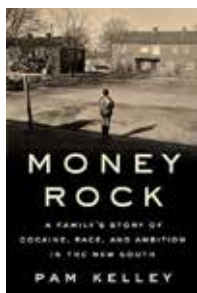
Kaplan, David A.  
Crown (464 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-5247-5990-2

An appeal for greater judicial restraint from the Supreme Court.



Former *Newsweek* legal affairs editor Kaplan (*Mine's Bigger: Tom Perkins and the Making of the Greatest Sailing Machine Ever Built*, 2007, etc.) devotes much of the first half of the book to chatty sketches of the biographies and jurisprudence of various Supreme Court justices. These contribute little beyond establishing the author's sympathies with the liberal members of the court and snarky disapproval of the conservatives. He reserves special contempt for Justice Anthony Kennedy, "the Court's metaphysicist-in-residence," whom he sees as embodying a judicial triumphalism that has "made the Supreme Court the most dangerous branch." Kaplan then settles into a tendentious review of several recent landmark cases, starting with *Roe v. Wade*; though approving the result, he lambasts the decision as not an example of constitutional law at all. This sets the table for a tour of standard liberal bugbears like *Bush v. Gore*, *Citizens United*, and *Shelby County v. Holder*; Kaplan trashes the majority opinions and approvingly quotes at length from the dissents. Still, the author is in pursuit of a serious point. He argues persuasively that, through these decisions, the court has seized control of debates and policies best left to the legislative process, thus damaging its own integrity and our system of democratic government. Worse, it has done so by resurrecting the legal doctrine of substantive due process, thought to have been discredited in the 1930s, which tends to position the court illegitimately as a superlegislature. These developments have unnecessarily politicized the court and poisoned the confirmation process for justices. Ironically, it is often the acerbic Justice Antonin Scalia who makes Kaplan's point best in his dissents in cases like *Obergefell v. Hodges* which, like *Roe*, the author disapproves of for consistency's sake.

**An informed discussion of a serious issue that may be too easily dismissed for its intrusive partisan bias. (8-page full-color insert)**



**MONEY ROCK  
A Family's Story of Cocaine,  
Race, and Ambition in the  
New South**

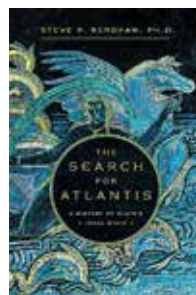
Kelley, Pam  
New Press (288 pp.)  
\$26.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-62097-327-1

The journalistic ordeal of a reformed felon and the legacy of the South.

Award-winning veteran journalist Kelley first encountered the saga of "Money Rock," a young, convicted North Carolina cocaine dealer named Belton Platt, in 1986 when she covered his trial as a *Charlotte Observer* courthouse reporter. She visited him in prison to discover how a turf war between African-American drug dealers ended up in a bloody shootout. In this in-depth report, Kelley retraces the original 1985 episode from its roots, beginning in Charlotte's Piedmont Courts public housing projects, where then-22-year-old Platt ruled supreme as a "skilled marketer" of cocaine, distributing free samples while maintaining a personal anti-drug stance.

Aiming to wipe out the threat of his main competitor, Big Lou, Platt engaged in a shootout. Kelley expands her coverage even further by drawing from Platt's familial history, including that of his mother, Carrie Graves, survivor of an abusive marriage and a political activist eager to "break the lock that white businessmen had on the city's power structure." The author also profiles the work of the prosecuting attorney in the Platt case. Kelley's diligent exposé updates readers on both the Old and the New South versions of Charlotte's history and explores issues of busing, racial segregation, and America's cocaine culture at the time and how it ruled the streets of Charlotte. But the core of the narrative is Platt's struggle to change his destiny after the second chance of a drastically shortened prison term, a relapse back into the drug trade, another crushing prison sentence, and, eventually, aided by belief and hope, a transformative epiphany: "Belton often cited his own transformation as proof that God could help anyone change." The author's debut encompasses many aspects of Platt's plight and creates a unique, engrossing reading experience.

**A fascinating and hard-hitting story about drugs, crime, faith, and retribution. (18 b/w images)**



**THE SEARCH FOR ATLANTIS  
A History of Plato's Ideal  
State**

Kershaw, Steve P.  
Pegasus (428 pp.)  
\$27.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-68177-859-4

Since the fourth century B.C.E., the fabulous island of Atlantis has invited avid curiosity and speculation.

Kershaw (*Classics/Oxford Univ.; A Brief History of the Roman Empire*, 2013, etc.) ranges widely and deeply to create a comprehensive overview of the origins, meaning, and legacy of Atlantis, described by Plato in two dialogues. Besides translating and analyzing Plato's texts, Kershaw draws on geophysical, archaeological, and historical sources to investigate the tale and respond to still-unresolved questions: Was Atlantis a real place? What did Plato mean to convey by his story of the rich and powerful island that disappeared into the Atlantic Ocean? Those questions have spawned responses from historians and archaeologists as well as from many who "have taken the discussion, quite literally, to another world." Theosophy founder Madame Helena Blavatsky, for example, claimed that Atlantis arose about 850,000 years ago and was the home of the "Fourth Root Race," one of seven human Root Races corresponding to seven eras in world history. According to Blavatsky and other occultists, Atlantis "had the type of extraordinarily advanced scientific knowledge that has become a standard feature of Atlanteological books." Mystic Edgar Cayce, who said that he connected with spirits of individuals who had once lived on Atlantis, similarly claimed that the island "had some astonishingly advanced technology, much of it driven by energy derived from the power of crystals." A 17th-century Swedish

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE WALLS OF WALL STREET COME CRASHING DOWN?

JUST AS GENETIC MALADIES can skip a generation, so the worst effects of political and economic diseases can skip an election cycle. By the time the presidential election of 2008 rolled around, notes historian Adam Tooze, it was clear that economic malaise was upon the world and that strange and hard times were going to be the result. “We knew that in Europe for many reasons, one the nomination of Sarah Palin to be John McCain’s running mate,” Tooze says. “We didn’t see it as a joke. We saw it as a scandal, and even though McCain was able to tamp down most of the worst of his base, it signaled a change.”



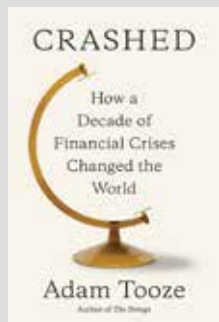
Adam Tooze

Photo courtesy/Viking Adult (H+O) 2018

Mitt Romney was able to do the same in 2012. But then—well, read Tooze’s new 700-page book *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (Aug. 7), and it’s clear that the election of Donald Trump can be seen at least in some measure as a holdover effect of the worldwide financial collapse of 2008, when it became clear to many that the old institutions of government were incapable of managing crises, not just in the United States, but also in places like Greece and Britain. *Crashed* follows his studies of the economy of the Third Reich, *The Wages of Destruction* (2007), and of the Depression era, *The Deluge* (2014), the last of which was a finalist for the 2015 Kirkus Prize in Nonfiction.

Tooze began working on *Crashed* in the midst of the 2008 crisis itself. It took a full decade both to gather the material and to write his long study—a decade in which great political changes swept across the globe in the wake of those economic ones, leaving the post-crisis world very different from the one that existed before 2008 and certainly more uncertain, more insular, and more frightened. —G.M.

Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor. *Crashed* received a starred review in the June 1, 2018, issue.



scholar argued that Atlantis—located in Sweden—was peopled by the descendants of one of Noah’s sons. In addition to presenting assorted bizarre theories, Kershaw explores Greek and Egyptian mythology, Homeric works, and mid-fifth-century Athenian culture to conclude that Atlantis was “an amalgamation of a variety of places and events that Plato would have been aware of from his own upbringing, reading and life experiences.” He believes Plato’s message is “a timeless one about the pernicious effects of wealth on the ruling class,” with lasting appeal because of the “brilliance of Plato’s story-telling.”

A treasure trove of information for readers seduced by the drowned land.



### INADVERTENT

*Knausgaard, Karl Ove*  
*Trans. by Burkey, Ingvild*  
 Yale Univ. (104 pp.)  
 \$18.00 | Sep. 5, 2018  
 978-0-300-22151-0

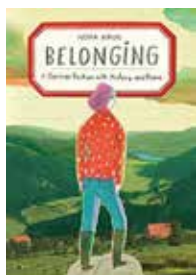
Brief thoughts on the purpose and meaning of writing from a writer not known for his brevity.

This book, first presented as the 2017 Windham-Campbell Lecture at Yale University, has a few trademark Knausgaard (*Summer*, 2018, etc.) moves. It’s digressive, shifting focus from the painter Edvard Munch to Ursula K. Le Guin to *Ulysses*, and it’s shot through with a low-boil anxiety, as the author wrings his hands over his writing and how it’s received by critics. Knausgaard engages in all of this meandering to explore a pair of straightforward, if somewhat contradictory, points: that literature is one of the most powerful tools we have to connect individuals to a collective humanity and that the true measure of a writer’s success is an ability to ignore the herd and soldier forth individually. The success of the *My Struggle* series as a work of art, he explains, came from his willingness to reject artifice and simply plow ahead: “I simply wouldn’t have time to think, to plan or to calculate.” That’s not to say he rejects artfulness, just that he privileges emotion in literature. He prefers the James Joyce of “The Dead” to the one who wrote *Finnegans Wake*, though emotion alone isn’t enough; the hollow provocations of *Game of Thrones* leave him cold. Navigating this unsteady line between the head and the heart doesn’t lend itself to simple answers to the lecturer’s prompt (“Why I Write”), but the book has a motivational quality all the same. For any writer seeking reassurance of the virtue of rewriting, his description of “eight hundred pages of beginnings” is a kind of balm. But he demands that writers never shy away from big questions: “What is the meaning of life? Where does this meaning come from? Who am I?”

A light-footed meditation on the literary life that will be best appreciated by his fans.

As multilayered as memory, the book intertwines text, photo, graphic art, and thematic complexity into a revelation almost as powerful for readers as it must have been for the author.

BELONGING



**BELONGING**  
**A German Reckons**  
**with History and Home**

Krug, Nora  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Scribner (288 pp.)  
 \$30.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4767-9662-8



A graphic artist of German descent tries to come to terms with her family's history before she was born.

Not only was Krug too young to have memories of the Nazi era, but her parents weren't born until 1946. Yet she feels drawn to what happened before, a legacy that amounts to a search for identity, a pilgrimage to the homeland that risks guilt and shame. Neither of her parents seems to know much about their familial Nazi ties or to be inquisitive about learning more. Her father's brother had died as a teenage Nazi soldier, and their sister and her father had since been estranged. Her maternal grandfather had also served with the Nazis, and the level of his support remained something of a mystery. Krug felt blood ties to her ancestors but had no idea how deeply (or not) they had been entangled. She also felt stigmatized by the common stereotype of her as a German and what this seemed to reflect about her emotions, personality, and overall identity. The narrative is a deeply personal—and deeply moving—dive into national legacy and family history, with more text than most graphic novels and a graphic presentation that mixes documentary photographs, illustrations, and memories that predate the author's birth. Her obsession takes her from her home in Brooklyn, where she lives with her Jewish husband, to the Germany where her parents were born and raised, in search of documents and testimony. As she gets closer to something that feels like truth, she writes, "I feel a sudden pain, shallow but sharp and all-consuming as a paper cut, because even inherited memory hurts." Krug's efforts reunite a family and return to her a lost legacy.

As multilayered as memory, the book intertwines text, photo, graphic art, and thematic complexity into a revelation almost as powerful for readers as it must have been for the author.



**A CERTAIN LONELINESS**  
**A Memoir**

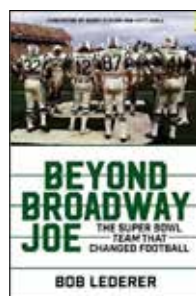
Lambert, Sandra Gail  
 Univ. of Nebraska (210 pp.)  
 \$19.95 paper | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-4962-0719-7

A woman stricken with polio-borne limitations shares her physical and emotional challenges.

By the time she was 4, Lambert (*The River's Memory*, 2014) required two surgeries and two body casts. In this memoir, she retraces the years when the struggle against loneliness and isolation at times

became more disabling than polio's assault on her spine and legs. With frank, lyrical prose, the author describes a painful, awkward youth in Norway as she became reliant on the bracing "contraption put on my legs at night that was supposed to untwist my bones." Once her military family relocated back to America, she sought solace alone on the forest floor beneath a canopy of foliage and refracted sunlight. Lambert chronicles her high school years trying to appear "normal," whatever that word means, and also delicately addresses the dual struggle of her physical disability coupled with her emerging sexuality and a reliance on alcohol to calm the residual anger, bitterness, and depression experienced after a relationship deteriorated. Lambert describes uncomfortable incidents in her 30s—e.g., navigating a public laundry facility where gawking, intrusive onlookers called her "so inspiring" or the ordeal of boarding a packed airplane. "There's a mute button in my head for these moments," writes the author. "I push it." More positive events include the author's camping trips in Florida and kayaking in the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia. Lambert makes beautifully palpable the exquisite liberation she finally experienced when exchanging her braces and crutches for a manual (and then automatic) wheelchair. Each of these recollections is unhurriedly told and expressed with true introspection; the author knows herself well and shares thoughts, feelings, and impressions with grace and acute self-awareness. Readers will come away with a clear-eyed portrait of the author through the stories of her joys, sorrows, and intimate impressions.

A powerful testimony to the determination and strength necessary to persevere despite assumptions, scrutiny, and societal stigmatization.



**BEYOND BROADWAY JOE**  
**The Super Bowl TEAM that**  
**Changed Football**

Lederer, Bob  
 Dey Street/HarperCollins (416 pp.)  
 \$27.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-0-06-279804-6

A longtime fan of the New York Jets debuts with a meticulous analysis of the Jets' personnel who, on Jan. 12, 1969, defeated the highly favored Baltimore

Colts in Super Bowl III.

Lederer doesn't ignore the actual game—he has an early chapter about it and a nine-page play-by-play account in the backmatter, and he and various Jets from the era rehearse key moments—but his focus remains on the team. With a true fan's passion (that day, according to the author bio, "was the most exciting sports day in his life"), he employs scores of interviews and other necessary research to tell the stories of those who brought about the victory. Not wishing to write yet another tribute to Jets' star quarterback Joe Namath, Lederer devotes several pages to each individual involved, dividing his chapters into traditional team divisions—coaches, offensive line, defensive line, etc. Although there are names that will resonate with

many general sports fans—e.g., Namath, Weeb Ewbank, Don Maynard, Matt Snell—there are many others whom the author rescues from the virtual anonymity that awaits a nonheadliner upon retirement. We learn how each player or coach got to the Jets (what head coach Ewbank thought of them (he kept notes), how they performed in the AFL championship game and the Super Bowl, and what happened to them afterward. More than a few are no longer living, and some died from brain deterioration now recognized as a dire side effect of a career spent in football. Lederer doesn't conceal the injury situation; neither does he condemn it at length. The text is a little too littered with clichés (“kept his eye on the prize,” “blowing his own horn”), and though he alludes about a dozen times to the “Heidi game,” he leaves its explanation to a writer of one of the forewords.

**A fan's notes, meticulous and proudly partisan, for Jets fans and devotees of the early NFL. (8-page photo insert)**



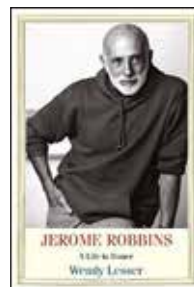
**BIG GAME**  
**The NFL in Dangerous Times**

Leibovich, Mark  
Penguin Press (400 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-399-18542-7

Ladies and gentlemen, the NFL, America's “beautiful shit-show of a league.” A football fan and chief national correspondent of the *New York Times Magazine*, Leibovich (*Citizens of the Green Room: Profiles in Courage and Self-Delusion*, 2014, etc.) spent four years immersed in the NFL's “cultural hunger games,” interviewing owners, coaches, and players to trace how football has morphed from “being one of the most unifying institutions in America to the country's most polarizing sports brand.” Still superpopular and profitable, the game's present “moral and cultural moment” includes ball-tampering, child and domestic abuse, brain-disease deaths, and knee-taking during the national anthem. While exploring all of these, the author's chief focus is on the owners and players, who, like the politicians he covers daily, are all part of “the same sitcom.” The 32 owners, typified by Jerry Jones of the Dallas Cowboys (“rich, audacious, distracted, shameless”), are variously described as “aging show poodles,” “superrich postmenopausal dudes,” and “tycoons of enlarged ego, delusion, and prostate.” Jets owner Woody Johnson is “an overgrown third-grader who collects toy trains and rotten quarterbacks.” Leibovich gives lengthy treatment to Patriots quarterback Tom Brady and his suspension for allegedly using underinflated footballs in the 2015 AFC championship game. Wealthy, with a supermodel wife, Brady touts sustained peak performance with his TBr2 business partner and bodywork guru Alex Guerrero and famously golfs with NFL owner-wannabe Donald Trump, whose anti-kneeling tweets have their own moments. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, much-harassed by fans, dodges the author's questions and holes out watching league games on three TV sets in a man cave. Leibovich covers Super Bowl parties, the NFL draft, training camps, Hall of Fame inductions,

and more. The “conservative, Republican, and nationalistic” NFL has mostly white fans (83 percent) and mostly black players (nearly 70 percent), he writes. However, the implications of that sociology—and the deep uncertainties facing the league—are lost amid the rollicking entertainment.

**Must-read gossip for NFL junkies.**



**JEROME ROBBINS**  
**A Life in Dance**

Lesser, Wendy  
Yale Univ. (216 pp.)  
\$25.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-300-19759-4

A compact and incisive portrait of the great dancer and choreographer.

In 2015, after Lesser (*You Say to Brick: The Life of Louis Kahn*, 2017, etc.) saw one of Robbins' (1918-1998) final works, *The Goldberg Variations*, she sat “in a state of stunned amazement.” She welcomed the offer to write a biography for the publisher's Jewish Lives series because she sees him as a “genius worth championing.” The author begins with Robbins as perhaps “the most hated man on Broadway.” Actors and dancers famously feared his “vicious outbursts” and “cruel perfectionism.” Others loved him deeply. He was always “high-strung and tormented,” according to one of his rehearsal pianists, and conflicted about his skills, homosexuality, and Jewish roots. Born Jerome Wilson Rabinowitz—he changed his name at the urging of a ballet teacher—to a “rarely affectionate” father and “forceful” mother, he possessed perfect pitch and an excellent sense of rhythm. He could “move naturally and expressively.” A stint at Camp Tamiment in the Catskills confirmed his first love, choreography. Throughout, Lesser focuses on Robbins as a “narrative artist,” perhaps one of the century's “most powerful exemplars.” George Balanchine cast him in a musical in 1938, and Robbins soon began working with Leonard Bernstein. In 1951, he joined up with Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II on *The King and I* and developed a new style of dance, a “fusion between Eastern and Western modes.” A low point in his career came in 1953, when he named names for the House Un-American Activities Committee, something he later deeply regretted. The hits kept coming: *Peter Pan*, an “amazing achievement,” *Gypsy*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and, with now close friend Bernstein, *West Side Story*, where he worked with a young Stephen Sondheim, who called Robbins the “only genius I've ever met.” As Lesser concludes, his “influence lives on even where his name may not.”

**A breezy and inviting biography from a self-described “zealot.”**

## A treat for the Man in Black's many fans.

JOHNNY CASH



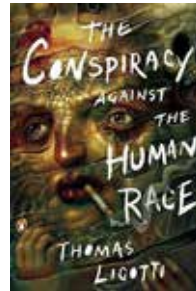
### JOHNNY CASH *The Life and Legacy of the Man in Black*

Light, Alan  
Smithsonian Books (224 pp.)  
\$40.00 | Oct. 23, 2018  
978-1-58834-639-1

A profusely illustrated volume documents a celebrated performer's struggles and hard-won triumphs.

Veteran music journalist Light (*What Happened Miss Simone?: A Biography*, 2016, etc.) offers an admiring yet clear-eyed biography of Johnny Cash (1932-2003), a composer, singer, and guitar player who crossed many genres. Though associated mainly with country, in 1992, when he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cash acknowledged a wide range of influences, including Alan Lomax's field recordings of hill country music, Hank Williams, and gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Cash's cultural contributions went beyond music; he was also an actor, writer (of two autobiographies and a novel), and social and political activist. "You could guide your ship by him," his friend Bob Dylan said. "Listen to him and he always brings you to your senses." Cash made his first major concert appearance in 1955, opening for Elvis Presley in Memphis; "Cash don't have to move a muscle, he just sings and stands there," Presley remarked. "The whole world will know Johnny Cash." His early recordings—"Folsom Prison" and "I Walk the Line"—were immediate hits, topping country and pop charts. But neither his career nor his personal life was smooth. Married with four children, he fell in love with singer June Carter and desperately wanted his Catholic wife to agree to a divorce. In the 1960s, he descended into alcoholism and drugs, "gobbling amphetamines at a ferocious pace." During a seven-year period, he found himself in jail seven times for drug-related offenses. Throughout the book, Light interrupts the chronology of Cash's life with "spotlights," concise essays on four themes: musical influences, social concerns, marriage to June (complex, tense, and often volatile), and religion (he was a good friend of Billy Graham). The author draws on Cash's autobiographies, music history and criticism, interviews, and writings by Cash's family to produce an intimate and engaging portrait. By far the greatest strength of the book, though, are the illustrations: memorabilia from family archives and abundant photographs that capture Cash's undeniable charisma.

A treat for the Man in Black's many fans. (165 photos)



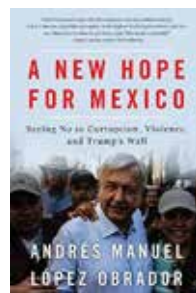
### THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE HUMAN RACE *A Conivance of Horror*

Ligotti, Thomas  
Penguin (272 pp.)  
\$17.00 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-14-313314-8

A writer of supernatural horror stories illuminates the darkest horror of all in this nonfiction affirmation of negativity.

An award-winning cult favorite, Ligotti (*The Spectral Link*, 2014, etc.) doesn't write horror simply to scare readers. On the basis of this unsettling tract—which draws from philosophy, metaphysics, neuroscience, literature, and literary criticism—his horror fiction proceeds from a deep belief that existence itself is a horror show and that procreation is at best an illusion and at worst a crime against humanity. The author's viewpoint is uncompromisingly bleak; he finds seemingly kindred spirits such as Nietzsche to be a little too sunny. "Existence," writes Ligotti, "is a condition with no redeeming qualities." He understands that most philosophers and readers will disagree with him and that his position that life has no meaning is impossible to prove, just as anyone claiming to have discovered the meaning of life is suspect. Yet he sticks to his guns throughout. Life is suffering, and "human suffering will remain insoluble as long as human beings exist." And the sooner human beings cease to exist, the better. But why does he write this, and what is the "conspiracy" of the title? It all stems from the self-knowledge that we do our best not to acknowledge: the fact that we alone of all living creatures know that we are going to die. As with Eve's apple or the snake in the Garden of Eden, "human existence [is] a tragedy that need not have been were it not for the intervention in our lives of a single, calamitous event: the evolution of consciousness—parent of all horrors." In other words, we act as if we lack "the knowledge of a race of beings that is only passing through this shoddy cosmos." Originally published in 2010, this reissue includes a new preface.

For Ligotti fans and fellow pessimists, here's affirmation that "their only respite is in the balm of bleakness."



### A NEW HOPE FOR MEXICO *Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump's Wall*

López Obrador, Andrés Manuel  
Trans. by Uhlmann, Natascha  
OR Books (224 pp.)  
\$16.95 paper | Aug. 21, 2018  
978-1-944869-85-4

"Confronted with Trump's orders to persecute migrants, we must join together to denounce his human rights violations": Mexico's president-elect delivers a few choice words for his counterpart north of the border.

In this collection of campaign-trail speeches and articles, leftist politician López Obrador offers a program for—well, making Mexico great again, inasmuch as a long reign of neoliberalism has left it “one of the poorest countries on the continent.” One of the effects is that Mexico’s rural poor have had to look to the north for jobs, which in turn has occasioned the rise of nativist politics in the U.S. When candidate Trump thundered that Mexico wasn’t “sending their best,” the author gained a convenient foil, accusing Trump of ignorance and demagoguery. “Mexico does not ‘send’ anyone to the United States,” he writes, adding that the Mexican and U.S. economies are so closely bound that protectionist policies will only harm American consumers, to say nothing of the elites who supported Trump. On a more purely domestic note, López Obrador holds that corruption is “Mexico’s central problem” and pledges to uproot it. Moreover, he adds by way of a promise that he must now fulfill, by 2024—the end of his six-year term—a less corrupt Mexico will have posted a 6 percent growth rate, while “we will have created a new way of thinking, a revolution in conscience that will prevent avarice, corruption, and greed from prevailing over truth, morality, and fraternity.” The high-flown rhetoric notwithstanding—and a cynic might observe that such fine words have been heard before from a governing class that the author calls “a gang of plunderers”—López Obrador gets down to cases with table-heavy pieces showing how former presidents soak the system with fat pensions and protections, how net migration flows have operated in the last 50 years, and the like.

**A book of promises and projections that, now that López Obrador has proved victorious, becomes a checklist for action.**

### BASKETBALL A Love Story

MacMullan, Jackie &  
Bartholomew, Rafe

Crown Archetype (448 pp.)

\$30.00 | Sep. 18, 2018

978-1-5247-6178-3



{NONFICTION}

An expansive oral history of basketball.

Veteran hoops chronicler MacMullan (co-author, with Shaquille O’Neal:

*Shaq Uncut*, 2011, etc.), who has covered basketball for more than three decades at ESPN and the *Boston Globe*, and sports-writer Bartholomew (*Two and Two: McSorley’s, My Dad, and Me*, 2017, etc.) have done a major service for basketball fans in a book inspired by an ESPN Film series. With unprecedented access to an unbelievably robust lineup of players, coaches, executives, journalists and others associated with the game, the authors bring readers into the action both on and off the court, rendering the entire history of the game in easy-to-read bites interspersed with helpful contextual stories and background information. Roughly chronological, the narrative arc flows smoothly from James Naismith all the way to the present: from Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell to Jerry West and on through Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Hakeem Olajuwon,

Patrick Ewing, David Robinson, LeBron James, Kevin Durant, and Stephen Curry—not to mention the women stars, including Rebecca Lobo, Kara Lawson, and Cheryl Miller. And don’t forget the boldfaced names in coaching and journalism: Phil Jackson, Mike Krzyzewski, Dick Vitale, Pat Riley, Bill Simmons, Bob Ryan, Ahmad Rashad, and Jim Boeheim. Some readers may find the text overly packed with information, but this is a book for true basketball fans, who will devour every page. In addition to the addictive anecdotes from nearly every great, still-living player and coach the NBA has ever seen, the authors provide chapters on non-NBA topics that are particularly insightful, including “Basketball’s Battle for Racial Equality,” “Breaking Barriers: Title IX and the Growth of the Women’s Game,” “Relief or Joy?: NCAA Championship Coaches on the Feeling of Winning a Title,” and “Coach K: From Bob Knight’s Protégé to the One-and-Done Era.”

**Non-basketball fans need not apply, but this is must-read catnip for hoop heads. Pair with Bill Simmons’ *The Book of Basketball* (2009) for a full-spectrum roundball education. (8-page full-color insert)**



### SAUDI AMERICA The Truth About Fracking and How It’s Changing the World

McLean, Bethany

Columbia Global Reports (144 pp.)

\$15.99 paper | Sep. 11, 2018

978-0-9997454-4-1

A biopicworthy corporate scandal paired with a recent financial history of the fracking industry.

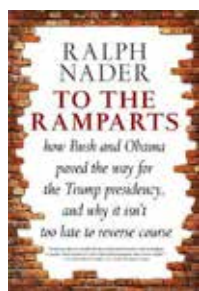
The incendiary title would seem to promise another op-ed on the controversial resource-extraction technique. But as in her previous works, *Vanity Fair* contributing editor McLean (*Shaky Ground: The Strange Saga of the U.S. Mortgage Giants*, 2015, etc.), an investigative journalist best-known for her coverage of the Enron scandal, focuses on the staggering corporate scandals that the industry has produced along with its billions of barrels of oil. In the first half of the book, she singles out the rise and fall of colorful, hubristic entrepreneur Aubrey McClendon, an early fracking promoter and “land man” who successfully raised and lost billions of dollars by leasing the drilling rights to properties atop the shales where extraction took place. The second half of the book uses McClendon’s story to inform an overview of the “fracking revolution,” the author’s term for the boom in domestic energy due to American oil production that could rival that of Saudi Arabia. Notably lacking is a clear, technical explanation of fracking—though maps of the shales are helpful—and McLean writes to an audience familiar with the jargon of industry and finance. All but overlooking the environmental impact of the extraction method, the author tracks the billions of dollars made, invested, and lost in corporate fracking transactions, most of them an order of magnitude or so above the common experience. For the most part, she leaves readers to interpret

An above-average example of the stream of similar books pouring off the presses. That there is a large audience for this genre is a cause for optimism—perhaps the only one.

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS

the significance of these figures and to assemble a throughline of meaning from the accumulation of factual records, which hardly improves the book's scant aesthetic dimensions. Occasional dramatic interest in this straightforward financial portrait comes from the sheer scale of the fiscal irresponsibility depicted and the anxiety of McClendon's outsized wins, losses, and incredible debt.

The business-minded should appreciate the focus and precision of this brisk overview, while readers in search of more informative conceptual arguments about the industry and its geopolitical implications should look elsewhere.



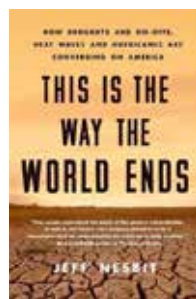
**TO THE RAMPARTS**  
**How Bush and Obama Paved the Way for the Trump Presidency, and Why It Isn't Too Late to Reverse Course**

Nader, Ralph  
Seven Stories (240 pp.)  
\$26.95 | Aug. 28, 2018  
978-1-60980-847-1

The consumer gadfly and former third-party candidate continues to offer answers to the nation's political problems.

Having published one book of letters he had written to presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama without receiving any response (*Return to Sender*, 2015), Nader returns with imaginary letters he would have written to those presidents during times of crisis, an imagined encounter between Obama and the ghost of Osama bin Laden, and various lists "to promote a people's agenda." The author recognizes that in the public eye, he has been branded with "the politically bigoted word 'spoiler'" since his Green Party candidacy might have tipped the 2000 election of Bush over Al Gore, but he insists that Bernie Sanders played the same role and faced the same charges: "The unfortunate truth Bernie discovered was that anybody who challenges the positions of the corporatist, militaristic, Wall Street-funded Democrats, led by Hillary Clinton...is, by their twisted definition, a 'spoiler.'" Not that there was all that much to spoil, in Nader's analysis, though he never says that the Democrats would be as bad as "the self-destructive, unstable, unorganized, fact- and truth-starved, egomaniacal, bigoted, cheating, plutocratic Donald Trump." However, he holds what he calls "the ObamaBush White House" responsible for the rise of Trump and chastises Obama for not targeting his predecessor as "a war criminal." Nader draws from old clippings and some of his own writing at the time to make familiar complaints about Obama governing more toward the center after campaigning as more of a progressive and about the claims of progressivism by the hawkish and corporate-funded Hillary. He insists that the Electoral College, responsible for Trump's victory, is "antiquated, atavistic," and way overdue for reform, if not removal. For the most part, though, he seems to want to have a direct voice in this discussion rather than shouting from far away on the sidelines.

Despite the occasional good point, Nader's current influence extends no farther than preaching to the choir.



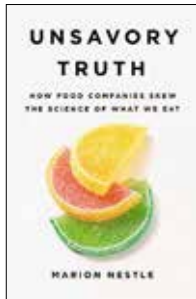
**THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS**  
**How Droughts and Die-Offs, Heat Waves and Hurricanes Are Converging on America**

Nesbit, Jeff  
Dunne/St. Martin's (320 pp.)  
\$29.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-250-16046-1

A passionate overview of human-induced global warming whose effect on climate, agriculture, ecosystems, and extinction is approaching a point of no return.

In 30 short yet detailed chapters, journalist Nesbit (*Poison Tea: How Big Oil and Big Tobacco Invented the Tea Party and Captured the GOP*, 2016)—a former White House communications official who is now the executive director of Climate Nexus—explains the science behind climate change, how it affects specific nations today, and the far more dismal afflictions that are just around the corner unless nations can get their acts together. The 10 hottest years in human history have occurred since the turn of the century. The major cause, atmospheric carbon dioxide, is not only rising faster than ever, but will continue to rise for decades after we stop adding to it—which we are doing at an alarming rate. Shrinking ice at the Earth's poles may be of less concern than the vanishing snowpack and glaciers at the so-called "Third Pole": the Himalayas, which serve as a source of water for over 1 billion people. Readers may find modest hope in the obligatory how-to-fix-it final chapters. Many world leaders worry about climate change, and some are trying to help. This is not the case in the United States, where, bizarrely, the subject has become politicized. Democrats accept its reality, and Nesbit praises former President Barack Obama for his warnings, neglecting to add that he took no action. Still, this is preferable to Congressional Republicans who consider it a liberal affectation. Thus, offended on discovering a CIA research project on the effect of global warming on national security, they cut off funding.

An above-average example of the stream of similar books pouring off the presses. That there is a large audience for this genre is a cause for optimism—perhaps the only one.



## UNSAVORY TRUTH *How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*

Nestle, Marion

Basic (320 pp.)

\$30.00 | Oct. 30, 2018

978-1-5416-9711-9

A leading nutritionist asks whether consumers can trust highly publicized research into whether food and beverages are healthy and safely produced.

Nestle (Emerita, Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health/ New York Univ.; *Big Soda Politics: Taking on Big Soda (and Winning)*, 2015, etc.), who has a doctorate in molecular biology and a master's degree in public health nutrition and has conducted decades of research into food producers, is perfectly positioned for this topic. She makes the convincing case that because so much of the research is paid for by industries that benefit from the results, buyers should interpret the results skeptically. Many of Nestle's previous books, articles, and academic studies focused on specific types of food. Here, the author turns her attention to large corporations, investigating why they pay for supposedly independent researchers, why the quality of the research might be compromised by conflicts of interests, how consumers can separate reliable science from compromised science, and why consumers should lobby legislators, government regulatory agencies, and universities for reforms regarding the disclosure of conflicts. Nestle emphasizes research paid for and disseminated by the sugar/candy industry, producers of dairy foods, marketers of meat, and—in its own chapter, “A Case Study in Itself”—the soda giant Coca-Cola. Since the author is a prolific nutrition researcher who has accepted funding that could involve conflicts of interest, she admirably scrutinizes her own policies of funding and how she discloses it. Ultimately, researchers must act as ethicists as well as scientists. When her own studies and those of fellow researchers become marketing tools for multinational conglomerates, the author admits that she feels queasy about how consumers might be misled by the marketing. On the other hand, she writes, some studies paid for by industry can be trusted scientifically—and be marketed and advertised responsibly.

Nestle proves yet again that she is a unique, valuable voice for engaged food consumers. (15 figures, 9 tables)



## INTERIOR STATES *Essays*

O'Gieblyn, Meghan

Anchor (240 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Oct. 9, 2018

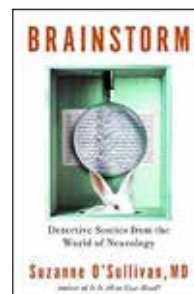
978-0-525-56270-2

Personal essays rooted in religion with a Midwestern ethos.

In the preface to her first book, a collection of 15 mostly previously published pieces, O'Gieblyn characterizes

the contents as primarily dealing with “questions about history and historical narratives” and her “abiding interest in loss.” The main loss is her own religion, evangelical Protestantism, which is the prism through which she smartly probes a variety of timely topics. “Although I no longer espouse this faith,” writes the author, “it’s hard to deny the mark it left on me.” In the longest and one of the best pieces, O’Gieblyn takes on the concept of hell. She recalls watching an instructional video in school about four kids killed in a car crash who end up in cages: “I was always too shell-shocked to find it redemptive.” She then recounts her time at the ultra-conservative Moody Bible Institute. Her stay there contributed mightily to her religious change of heart. However, she still finds herself “lurking” around the religion section of bookstores “like a porn addict sneaking a glance at a Victoria Secret’s catalog.” In a piece on John Updike, she confesses to having avoided his misogynistic-tinged fiction. The author was in a forgiving mood after reading his “great” novel *Couples*, which documents “one man’s fears about the limits of his own dominion—his dawning premonition that paradise is tenuous, and his to lose.” The sprightly “A Species of Origins” recounts a visit to Northern Kentucky’s Creation Museum, the “backwater fringe of creationism,” and its Ark Encounter, where visitors encounter “robotic beasts.” It posits a worldview, she writes, “that precludes the very possibility of inconvenient truths.” Other topics include Alcoholics Anonymous, the myth of motherhood, Henry Ford’s “vanity project,” Greenfield Village, and Mike Pence, a “curious kind of Christian politician.”

O’Gieblyn’s contemporary, hip voice is one people need to hear.



## BRAINSTORM *Detective Stories from the World of Neurology*

O'Sullivan, Suzanne

Other Press (336 pp.)

\$27.95 | Oct. 30, 2018

978-1-59051-866-3

A collection of probing and empathetic stories of difficult neurological cases.

Epilepsy is one of the oldest of human diseases. Suddenly, the brain’s neurons fire at once, producing the massive electric discharge of a general seizure—or if only a subset of neurons fires, it’s a focal seizure. British epilepsy consultant O’Sullivan (*Is It All in Your Head?: True Stories of Imaginary Illness*, 2017), a winner of the Wellcome Book Prize, writes compassionately and sensitively about mostly those who suffer from focal seizures. There’s Mike, a high-powered lawyer who developed epilepsy following a presumed mugging that injured his frontal lobes; Eleanor, a young woman whose most basic movements could trigger seizures, causing a complete loss of muscle tone (she grew afraid to leave her bed); and Donal, a school janitor facing job loss who developed seizures in which he saw cartoon figures of the seven dwarfs moving across the room. Most of O’Sullivan’s patients spent days in a telemetry



# An exemplary edition offering a textured portrait of an iconic poet.

THE LETTERS OF SYLVIA PLATH VOLUME 2

clinic with electrodes attached to their scalps and under surveillance in hopes of capturing when and where a seizure would occur. While these studies have been invaluable in aiding diagnosis, they also reveal how much of the brain and its interconnectedness remains unknown. "There are still gaping holes in our knowledge about the brain," writes the author. "Even the basic questions remain unanswered." O'Sullivan also writes about how much she has learned from her patients. Many are not much helped by drugs, and the locations of their seizures are often too risky for surgery. Yet they show resilience and a determination to get on with their lives in spite of epilepsy.

O'Sullivan is a skilled storyteller in the same league as Oliver Sacks. Furthermore, she includes asides on the history of neurology, which, perhaps more than other specialties, owes much to the patients who have endured injury, strokes, degenerative diseases, and epilepsy in order for researchers to better understand how the brain is organized.



## THE LETTERS OF SYLVIA PLATH VOLUME 2

1957-1963

Plath, Sylvia

Steinberg, Peter K. & Kukil, Karen V.—Eds.  
Harper/HarperCollins (1,088 pp.)

\$45.00 | Oct. 30, 2018

978-0-06-274058-8



Six years of hope and joy end with a spiraling descent to suicide.

Journals, soul-baring poems, autobiographical fiction, and several biographies and critical studies have made the trajectory and struggles of Sylvia Plath's (1932-1963) life familiar. Nevertheless, the second volume of her correspondence, edited, annotated, and introduced by Plath scholars Steinberg and Kukil, offers new revelations: unabridged letters to her mother and letters to the psychiatrist who treated Plath in the U.S. until 1959 and by letter after Plath settled in England. In an exceptionally sensitive foreword, Plath's daughter writes of her stunned reaction when these intimate letters came to light in 2016, her trepidation about reading them, and the insights they gave her about her parents' intense, almost claustrophobic love and the dramatic end of their marriage. It was her generous and well-considered decision to allow them into this volume. In hundreds of letters to her mother, Plath ebulliently and insistently conveys her happiness about writing, motherhood, and—until she discovers Hughes' affair—her marriage. She portrays Hughes as nothing less than an Adonis: "a kind, handsome, wonderful person"; virile and attractive; a genius who, without a doubt, will achieve greatness as a poet. He tenderly nurses her through colds, flu, and a miscarriage and happily plays with his daughter in the mornings so that Plath can write. Even when struggling financially, even when they both try to write in a cramped two-room apartment, Plath betrays no chink in the gleaming surface of their marriage. In 1959, though, when both are in residence at Yaddo,

she admits, "I am so happy we can work apart, for that is what we've really needed." Correspondents include Plath's brother; Hughes' parents (to whom she writes ingratiating encomiums about their son) and his overbearing sister; friends, fellow poets, and assorted relatives; and many editors who publish her work. Although worries and anxiety occasionally creep in, not until the end does she become overwhelmed with frustration, anger, and a desperate fear of madness.

An exemplary edition offering a textured portrait of an iconic poet.



## STRUCK A Husband's Memoir of Trauma and Triumph

Segal, Douglas

Prospect Park Books (320 pp.)

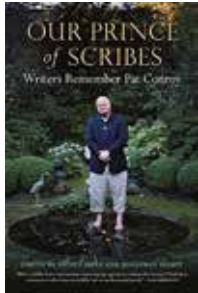
\$16.00 paper | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-945551-38-3

A tragic accident drastically alters the lives and responsibilities of a producer and film and TV writer and his family.

Segal's life came to a screeching halt when his beloved wife, Susan, an actress, was hit by a city bus head-on in 2012. Curious readers may skip to the end of this smoothly written memoir to discover that Segal's wife (and daughter Alyce) miraculously survived the accident. However, the true heart of this book is the long journey afterward, as the author diligently and eloquently documents his wife's painful recovery and his efforts to hold the family unit together. In flashbacks, Segal writes lovingly of his storybook romance with Susan, whom he met through a friend in New York City, and of their brisk marriage and relocation to Los Angeles, where they both thrived on the Hollywood film and TV circuit. Two decades later, while the marriage began to show some wear and tear, the near-fatal tragedy seemed to reinforce priorities and the idea that true love could indeed conquer all. With honesty and conviction, the author meticulously recalls his first feelings after Susan was bedridden for two months with critical injuries, including a massive brain bleed, a broken neck, broken arms and feet, and a crushed pelvis. Segal also remained dedicated to updating friends on Facebook with detailed, often heart-wrenching posts. Susan's journey toward wellness was arduous, replete with "ICU psychosis," hallucinations, and confusion, but it was all tempered by the love of her husband and children and the shared hope that she would fully recover. Segal also details the aftermath of her ICU stay, the long road through rehab, and how the family gelled back together; photographs of Susan's mangled car horrifyingly illustrate the deadly extent of the accident. Some sections meander and ramble a bit, but overall, Segal's story reflects the intensity and desperation of an "all consuming" familial trauma.

Hope and love trump tragedy in this heartfelt, vigorous memoir.



**OUR PRINCE OF SCRIBES  
Writers Remember  
Pat Conroy**

Seitz, Nicole & Haupt, Jonathan—Eds.  
Univ. of Georgia (320 pp.)  
\$29.95 | Sep. 15, 2018  
978-0-8203-5448-4

His wound may have been geography, but his legacy was generosity. That's the takeaway from this new collection of essays honoring the late Pat Conroy (1945-2016).

Novelist Seitz (*The Cage-Maker*, 2017, etc.) and Haupt, the executive director of the Pat Conroy Literary Center, pull together a who's-who of writers from the Lowcountry and beyond for an ode to the real Prince of Tides. Remarkably, what could have been a tedious eulogy turns out to be a compelling read that illuminates the man behind the myth, a writer's writer, a fantastic storyteller, a flawed genius, and an exceptionally loyal friend. Of course, some essays excel more than others. Sallie Ann Robinson, a student of Conroy's on Daufuskie Island, which he later made famous in *The Water Is Wide* (1972), writes a moving account of what it was like to be taught by the larger-than-life author: "Pat saw that our experiences had been limited, and he wanted us to have more." Other chapters are more nostalgic, but even still the collection feels genuine. How many writers get a 60-author-strong memorial published after their death? For fans of Conroy, the peek into his real life is especially entertaining. Apparently, he was notorious for leaving the same message on all of his friends' phones—"It's up to me to keep this dying friendship alive"—although it was next to impossible to call him back as his own voicemail was nearly always full. But even if you couldn't get him on the phone, Conroy always showed up when it was important, like when another author needed a book jacket endorsement. A self-declared "blurb slut," he was renowned for not just giving other writers recommendations, but also writing thoughtful praise that many credit for their success to this day. Among others, notable contributors include Jonathan Galassi, Ron Rash, Marjory Wentworth, Patti Callahan Henry, Rick Bragg, and Mary Alice Monroe.

**A fitting tribute to a unique, significant writer and man.**



**THE MAN WHO WROTE THE  
PERFECT NOVEL  
John Williams, Stoner, and  
the Writing Life**

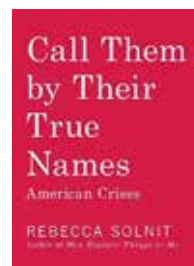
Shields, Charles J.  
Univ. of Texas (304 pp.)  
\$29.95 | Oct. 15, 2018  
978-1-4773-1736-5

A biography of a nearly forgotten mid-20th-century American writer.

A notable literary sensation of recent years is the belated success of the 1965 novel *Stoner*. This quietly

intense story of an English professor at a small Midwestern college was the third of only four published novels by author John Williams (1922-1994). Though the book was favorably reviewed, it sold poorly. But thanks to the efforts of devoted readers and fellow writers, the book has slowly gained a cult following, which led to a reprint in 2006. The larger success was established first through foreign editions before gaining recognition in the U.S. Literary biographer Shields (*Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee: From Scout to Go Set a Watchman*, 2016, etc.) provides a respectful and well-documented yet occasionally lackluster overview of Williams' life and career. Beginning with his subject's humble origins in northeast Texas, Shields tracks his experiences in the Army during World War II, early academic and writing pursuits, and then his 30-year tenure as a professor at the University of Denver, where he also served as the director of their creative writing program. Along the way, we see glimpses of Williams' personal life, but what ultimately emerges is a fairly predictable portrait of yet another heavy-drinking, chain-smoking postwar American white male writer. He sustained a focused eye on his craft but apparently had limited interest in his students or family, and his continual and often desperate ambition for fame somewhat diminished his reputation within his department. His disdain for modernist and experimental writing and his reluctance to reflect directly on his times also left him out of sync with reading interests of that period, including the more provocative work of contemporaries ranging from Norman Mailer to John Barth.

**Though *Stoner* has proven to be a novel whose compassionate themes have timeless appeal, this portrait of the irksome Williams, though brisk and readable, may do little to further advance the book's cause.**



**CALL THEM BY  
THEIR TRUE NAMES  
American Crises  
(and Essays)**

Solnit, Rebecca  
Haymarket (166 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-60846-946-8

For those heartsick at Trumpism, essayist and *Harper's* contributing editor Solnit (*The Mother of All Questions*, 2017, etc.) offers context and support. Optimism? You're on your own.

As the author argues in this fiery clutch of essays, optimism isn't a particularly helpful attitude anyway. Optimism—and its obverse, pessimism—are "false certainties" that "let us stay home and do nothing" in response to hard-line, bigoted conservatism. It is better, she argues, to cultivate hope, "an informed, astute open-mindedness." That's a thesis Solnit has explored often, particularly in her 2009 book on Hurricane Katrina and other tragedies, *A Paradise Built in Hell*, and she's persuasive at marshaling a case for the long view while being cleareyed about the degradations of the moment. The 1916 Irish rebellion against the British, for instance, paved the way

to independence two decades later, and years of steady pressure led to the removal of Confederate statues in New Orleans in 2017. So don't despair: "We don't know what will happen next and have to live on principles, hunches, and lessons from history." Which is why the author doesn't mind the criticism that liberal pundits like her are preaching to the choir by reasserting principles and history lessons: The choir represents the "deeply committed" who need encouragement. Stoking that support in part demands attacking doublespeak that enables bigotry and unethical behavior from governments. She explores this most effectively in "Death by Gentrification," an investigation of the shooting of a San Francisco man by police and the rhetorical pretzels police used to blame the victim. Telling the story wrong, with the wrong words and framing, threatens democracy, she exhorts journalism school graduates in one essay. Her own work is a model of doing it right.

**Solnit is careful with her words (she always is) but never so much that she mutes the infuriated spirit that drives these essays.**



**WE BEGIN IN GLADNESS  
How Poets Progress**

Teicher, Craig Morgan  
Graywolf (176 pp.)  
\$16.00 paper | Nov. 6, 2018  
978-1-55597-821-1

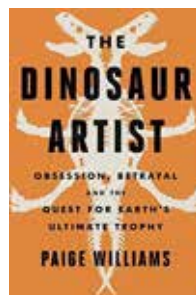
What prompts people to write poetry? What permits a poet to revise himself? Poet and critic Teicher (*The Trembling Answers*, 2017, etc.) offers new versions of previously published essays,

each of which considers aspects of poets' artistic development.

Refreshingly, the author discusses less well-established poets such as Monica McClure and francine j. harris, but he is at his most astute when assessing the oeuvres of poets whose careers are complete, or nearly so. He reads Sylvia Plath, for example, as a poet who experienced a dramatic breakthrough later in her career. Her early work demonstrated "a virtuosity of technique," but it wasn't until the last poems in *The Colossus* and the "extraordinary abandon" of *Ariel* that Plath found a subject worthy of her technical power (herself). Teicher's assessment of W.S. Merwin, by turns laudatory and sharply critical, manages in 13 pages to map a complex, persuasive chronology: Merwin's early affection for "Pre-Raphaelite ornamentation," his nearly perfect middle-period poetry, his descent into a kind of solipsistic self-parody, and his late work, in which he "can step out of his own way and let the poem come through unobstructed." Considering Louise Glück, Teicher makes the illuminating suggestion that her poetry is animated by a tension: Glück finds meaning in everything—in the merest leaf or sunbathing episode—but that habit of mind "grates against her belief that the world is mostly meaningless, mostly uncaring." Teicher's narrative is marred by occasional romantic self-seriousness—e.g., poets "are people who, for any number of reasons, cannot, or at one point could not, speak...the keepers of the unsayable"—and

he is on shakier ground when, instead of discussing poems, he attempts to divine the motives of the poet, as when he suggests that Glück uses a "mask" in *Faithful and Virtuous Night* because she needed to "fool herself into [the] vulnerability" required to write about the approach of death.

**Imperfect but the insights outweigh the pretension.**



**THE DINOSAUR ARTIST  
Obsession, Betrayal, and the  
Quest for Earth's Ultimate  
Trophy**

Williams, Paige  
Hachette (368 pp.)  
\$28.00 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-0-316-38253-3

An intriguing story of dinosaur smuggling.

*New Yorker* writer and National Magazine Award winner Williams debuts with an account of a 38-year-old American fossil hunter who, in 2012, sold the reassembled bones of a 24-foot-long *T. bataar* from Mongolia at auction in New York. The illicit \$1 million sale—the skeleton was returned to Mongolia—marked the downfall of Eric Prokopi, a fossil enthusiast who had peddled specimens to museums and collectors for years. In this densely detailed, wide-ranging narrative, the author uses the taciturn and constantly cash-short Prokopi's adventures in bone-hunting as a window on the world of fossil collecting. Dinosaurs roamed the Earth for 165 million years, but it was only recently, in 1994, that the first natural history auction occurred, creating heightened interest among wealthy buyers and providing cover for the sale of illegal fossils and forgeries. Williams delves into all aspects of the fossil business, from explorations in the Gobi Desert to Tucson's innumerable trade shows to natural history "field clubs" to the frequent conflicts between scientists and commercial dealers. She describes a colorful array of paleontologists, tradesmen, and hobbyists, including pipe insulator Frank Garcia, who unearthed the richest Pleistocene fossil bed in North America, and the celebrated Indiana Jones-like explorer-zoologist Roy Chapman Andrews, who became a 1920s hero after discovering dinosaur eggs. The flow of her story of science and crime is sometimes interrupted—rather than enhanced—by lengthy descriptions of people and events. Passages about Prokopi's dribbling wine down his shirt at an auction preview and his wife's penchant for house-flipping convey little beyond the need for editing. At other times, the author's deep reporting yields memorable passages on desert car caravans and the assembly of dinosaur skeletons. She brings to life an unlikely mix of museum officials and bone salesmen as well as the single-minded pursuit of "income and adventure" that drove her smuggler-protagonist to Mongolia in the service of paleontology and profit.

**Good fun for fossil freaks.**

# Wilson's insider take is hilarious, smartly written, and usually spot-on. Somebody had to do it.

EVERYTHING TRUMP TOUCHES DIES



## EVERYTHING TRUMP TOUCHES DIES *A Republican Strategist Gets Real About the Worst President Ever*

Wilson, Rick  
Free Press (336 pp.)  
\$27.00 | Aug. 7, 2018  
978-1-982103-12-5

Scalpel in hand, a conservative strategist dissects Trumpism, the Washington, D.C., swamp, and the new GOP. The autopsy report isn't pretty.

While many commentators are intimidated by forum trolls, hate mail, and death threats, veteran Republican political strategist and adman Wilson seems to thrive on them. Best known for his controversial 2008 political ad that smeared Barack Obama for his association with his pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the author now wields an axe dripping with his own party's blood. "The disease of Trumpism," he writes, "has consumed the Republican Party and put the entire conservative movement at risk. It has been hijacked by a bellowing, statist billionaire with poor impulse control and a profoundly superficial understanding of the world." From Trump's most vociferous foes to his most loyal lapdogs, everyone is responsible for "President Strangelove." Refreshingly, Wilson calls the players out, listing the specific complicities of each. From Reince Priebus to Mike Pence (with his "personality of a basket of wet laundry"), Tomi Lahren ("an utterly spoiled little trashfire of a human being, and thus a perfect exemplar of Trump's media enablers"), Steve Bannon, Paul Ryan, Ted Cruz, Chris Christie, evangelicals, and "Trumpbart," none escape the whip. From the help of hardcore cheerleaders to the acquiescence of reluctant enablers, and through a complicated knot of self-delusion, personal Faustian deals, and Russian aid, con man "Donald Trump, the avatar of our worst instincts and darkest desires as a nation, now sits in the Oval Office." While offering no apology for what some consider his traitorous activity against the party he loves, Wilson spells out the Never Trump movement's underlying higher purpose: "We reject an all-powerful state, whether it's in the hands of a leftist technocrat or a bright-orange alt-right-curious neofascist." Throughout, the author reiterates his allegiance and mission to restore limited government conservatism, which he believes is still the driving force and true spirit of the GOP.

Wilson's insider take is hilarious, smartly written, and usually spot-on. Somebody had to do it.



## NAPOLEON *A Life*

Zamoyski, Adam  
Basic (784 pp.)  
\$40.00 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-465-05593-7

A biography of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) that avoids the well-established military details and gives us the story of a singular man.

In a lengthy but highly readable narrative, Zamoyski (*Phantom Terror: The Threat of Revolution and the Repression of Liberty 1789-1848*, 2014, etc.) eschews a standard history of battles and instead describes a brilliant student and voracious reader. Well-trained at the École Militaire in Paris, he became an artillery officer but took leave from his regiment to help establish Corsica's independence; he showed his talents first at the Siege of Toulon at age 24. He was brave and indefatigable but tended to disregard superiors and bypass instructions, and he escaped discipline with judicious use of flattery. During the Revolution, his well-led troops successfully stopped the mob at the Tuileries, and he was put in charge of the Army of Italy. His soldiers' best qualities were their abilities to march quickly and live off the land. They succeeded with poor supply lines, operating in small, self-contained units with strong feelings of honor and love of glory. Throughout his life, Napoleon took propaganda to new levels, fabricating battles and enemy losses. As the author shows, he was a master tactician but no strategist. He never had a solid plan and took his daring to the limits of temerity. He was diminutive and projected an awkward manner and complete lack of grace. However, he possessed an extraordinary ability to inspire his armies. With his establishment as First Consul in 1799, he was determined to make France great, with the Napoleonic code, a stable economy, and a state so well-grounded that when his regime ended, the change occurred without chaos. Of course, his military glory and the vast empire he built from 1799 to 1815 went to his head, and the young Republican quickly transformed himself into an imperious emperor.

An illuminating, easy-to-read, warts-and-all biography of one of history's most significant figures. (32 maps; 3 galleries of images)

# CHILDREN'S



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**THE STUFF OF STARS**  
*Bauer, Marion Dane*  
*Illus. by Holmes, Ekuu*  
 Candlewick (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-0-7636-7883-8

# IT'S TIME FOR FAKE PIRATE DISABILITIES TO WALK THE PLANK

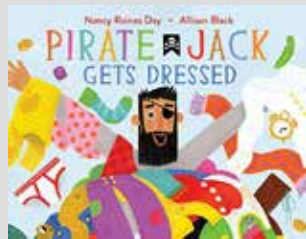


Photo courtesy Leah Overstreet

PEG LEGS, HOOKS, EYE PATCHES—all standard-issue elements of a pirate's gear. So assumed are they that young readers might have a hard time recognizing a pirate without these visual cues.

And that's a problem, as prostheses and eye patches are unremarkable, necessary parts of the lives of many real people, including many children.

In this issue we review a book called *Pirate Jack Gets Dressed*, by Nancy Raines Day and illustrated by Allison Black. It's as much a color-concept book as anything else, as Pirate Jack dons one by one the various articles of clothing and accessories, each of a different color. Readers first meet Pirate Jack as he wakes up in his gray long johns, both eyes wide open and seemingly functioning. He proceeds to put on first a black eye patch before moving on to (among actual articles of clothing) a silver hook, and a brown peg leg, meaning he's lost the pirate trifecta. (In a particularly insulting detail, he ruins his white shirt with his hook, a moment that's played for slapstick.)

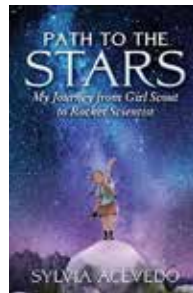


There's a solid factual underpinning for this clichéd collection of pirate disabilities: The maritime life is a notoriously dangerous one. But so are a host of other occupations, including construction, logging, groundskeeping, agriculture, and steel working—and don't forget the military. Lost eyes, digits, and limbs can be a consequence of many occupations as well as recreational accidents and illnesses.

And when such necessary equipment as prostheses and eye patches are seen almost exclusively as the province of fantasy pirates, it both trivializes and exoticizes them. Children who have family members who use prostheses and eye patches—or who use them themselves—don't find mirrors in these piratical disability tropes, particularly when they are clearly decorative. Black's illustrations are cagey as to the necessity of Jack's prostheses. How validating would it have been for a child who uses a prosthesis to see someone like them?

Nope. Just more pirates. —V.S.

*Vicky Smith is the children's editor.*



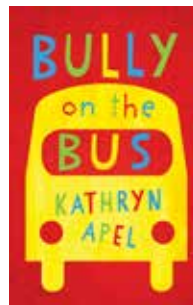
## PATH TO THE STARS *My Journey from Girl Scout to Rocket Scientist*

Acevedo, Sylvia  
Clarion (320 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-328-80956-8

Acevedo debuts with an inspirational autobiography detailing how she bucked expectations while growing up in 1960s New Mexico.

Though born in faraway South Dakota, where her father was completing his service in the U.S. Army, Sylvia grew up in the southern New Mexico town of Las Cruces. Growing up in a tightknit community of extended family, church family, and fellow Mexican-Americans, Sylvia soon discovered that her interests did not align with many of her peers'. While the cultural expectation for young women, especially Mexican-American women, was to marry and stay home to raise a family, Sylvia longed for adventures. She found a community and home away from home with the like-minded girls within her Girl Scout troop. The skills she acquired selling cookies and earning badges gave her confidence and self-efficacy as she moved through school taking honors courses, refusing home ec, playing drums in the band, and ultimately pursuing higher education in engineering. Acevedo's narration is frequently repetitive, and she breezes past the many instances of racism and sexism she experienced both within and outside of her home in a matter-of-fact tone. All's well that ends well, she seems to say. Though the redundancies cause hiccups in the narrative flow, and at times it feels like a long-form advertisement for Scouting, those seeking stories of female STEM trailblazers will find much to love here.

**Encouraging and uplifting.** (Memoir. 8-12)



## BULLY ON THE BUS

Apel, Kathryn  
Kane/Miller (144 pp.)  
\$5.99 paper | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-1-61067-770-7

A bully on the bus proves to be more than siblings Leroy and Ruby can handle alone.

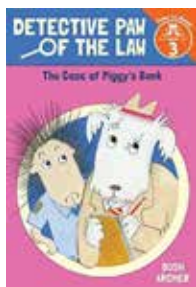
Even though grade schooler Leroy loves his teacher and his fellow Superkids in Mrs. Wilson's classroom, he dreads the trip to and from school for one particular reason—DJ. A high schooler who changes the color of her hair almost as frequently as her mood, DJ finds respite from her own frustrating life by tormenting Leroy. Insults, mockery, and poking are only the start, and there's little that older sister Ruby, who's only in grade five, can do to help. When the cupcake Leroy has made for his teacher disappears into DJ's mouth, he is crushed. His parents and teacher notice a change in his demeanor, but Leroy feels nervous confiding in them. When he does, they hatch a plan. Leroy

## More a celebration of the Galápagos wildlife and a call to action than a traditional story, the book will fascinate readers with Valentina's magical island life.

GALÁPAGOS GIRL / GALAPAGUEÑA

has a list of things he can do to combat DJ, including ignoring her, sitting in a seat close to the bus driver, and speaking confidently. But it's his secret weapon, a storybook that distracts him and interests DJ, that finally encourages peace on the bus. Leroy learns the important lesson of show and tell: "Show the bully you don't care. / Tell an adult." Simply written in verse, this is a story many children will find familiar. An optimistic ending might be just the encouragement most kids need, but it may be a little improbable for some readers. Set in Australia, the book assumes a white default.

**Simple, hopeful, and positive.** (*Verse fiction.* 7-10)



### THE CASE OF PIGGY'S BANK

*Archer, Dosh*  
*Illus. by Archer, Dosh*  
 Whitman (48 pp.)  
 \$12.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-0-8075-1557-0  
 Series: Detective Paw of the Law

Archer (of the Urgency Emergency! series) takes on the mystery genre in her new Detective Paw of the Law series.

Dream team Detective Paw (an old dog) and Patrol Officer Prickles (a young porcupine) sure love solving crime together—even when it's hard. Early one Monday morning at Big City Police Headquarters, a call interrupts Detective Paw's doughnut breakfast. Someone has robbed Piggy's Bank! With notebook, pencil, and magnifying glass in hand, Detective Paw speeds to the scene of the crime in his Vintage mobile. The first to greet Detective Paw is Patrol Officer Prickles, who uses his "electronic notepad" to present the existing evidence. Detective Paw individually interviews the bank employees and cross-checks their alibis. Since the safe isn't broken, only someone with the keys to unlock it could be the culprit. But who? Divided into four chapters, the step-by-step story logically follows the detective's thought process as readers crack the case alongside him. Though there can be up to 16 lines per page, ample leading helps give the text a spacious feel. Archer's mix of colorful full-page and spot illustrations aids in decoding more complex sentences. Her expressive, cartoony character design delightfully accentuates comedic moments. *The Case of The Stolen Drumsticks*, which is different in plot but identical in formula, publishes simultaneously.

**A serviceable introduction to sleuthing for more fluent readers who are almost ready for early chapter books.** (*Early reader/mystery.* 5-7) (*The Case of The Stolen Drumsticks.* 978-0-8075-1556-3)



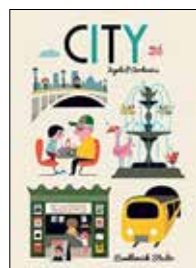
### GALÁPAGOS GIRL / GALAPAGUEÑA

*Arnold, Marsha Diane*  
*Illus. by Domínguez, Angela*  
*Trans. by Domínguez, Adriana*  
 Children's Book Press (40 pp.)  
 \$18.95 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-0-89239-413-5

Valentina is born a Galápagos girl, a galapagueña, and experiences the joy of growing up among the unique wildlife the Galápagos have to offer.

Arnold has penned a poetic love letter to the spectacular wildlife of the Galápagos, inspired by Valentina Cruz, a biologist and conservationist. From blue-footed boobies to tortoises and even penguins, the islands seem to have it all. Readers will enjoy this quiet story of a young girl who finds not only a love of nature, but a way to come home to it again after study overseas, to protect it, and to share it with the world. Angela Domínguez's precise and clean but lively and colorful illustrations really bring everything to life and pull the book together. Young readers wanting more will find extensive backmatter with information about the real Valentina as well as all of the animals they meet within the pages. The text is in English and repeated in Adriana Domínguez's Spanish translation, which results in sometimes-crowded pages. Readers may find themselves wishing for two separate editions. More a celebration of the Galápagos wildlife and a call to action than a traditional story, the book will fascinate readers with Valentina's magical island life, and they will wish for nothing more than to swim with manta rays themselves.

**A timely lesson of conservation that will get kids looking at the wildlife around them and saying, "We will not forget you. And we will keep you safe."** (author's note, Galápagos facts, bibliography) (*Picture book.* 4-8)



### CITY

*Arrhenius, Ingela P.*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Candlewick (40 pp.)  
 \$22.00 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-5362-0257-1

Another oversized picture book by Swedish artist Arrhenius (*Main Street Magic*, 2017; *Animals*, 2016) introduces very young children to the sights and colors of the city.

Flat, Lego-like figures of varying skin tones populate the European-inflected city scenes, which include a movie theater, bookstore, port, airport, art museum, construction site, bakery, zoo, pool, park, hospital, and school. Some figures reappear in different illustrations, prompting a seek-and-find game or even a rudimentary narrative. The only word on each page is the title of each scene or activity, which is engagingly integrated with the illustration, designed in a type to match the place or activity to which it refers. "MOVIE THEATER" appears on the marquee;

Vivid characters—tough, whip-smart Nan; lovable, childlike Charlie; their engaging companions; even the marvelously Dickensian villains—prevent the story from becoming either dry history lesson or political screed.

SWEEP

each letter of “soccer” appears on a different ball being kicked around; “dogs” is composed of the leashes that connect the pets and their owners; the word “museum” becomes a tumbled sculpture of letters. Retro, stylish, and elegant in design, with plenty of detail to engage young kids, this big, bright tome will be a great tool for use in a preschool classroom or library reading circle. Two spreads at the end of the book, in the form of one-sided poster pages, provide a picture dictionary of the words illustrated in the book, labeled in clear caps.

**Ideal for young listeners and beginning readers who are making their first word associations.** (*Picture book. 2-5*)



**SWEEP**  
**The Story of a Girl and Her Monster**

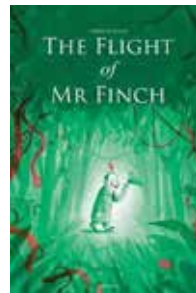
Auxier, Jonathan  
Amulet/Abrams (368 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-4197-3140-2



A young chimney sweep gathers an unusual family around her in this bitter-sweet historical fantasy of love and loss.

Eleven-year-old Nan Sparrow's only legacies from the Sweep, her beloved mentor, are his hat and a strange lump of charcoal. After her fiery near death lets her escape her abusive master's control, this “char” awakens into a protective golem she names Charlie. Alas, Victorian London, however magical, is not kind to “climbing boys” of any gender—nor to monsters, nor to any of the odd lot of outcasts that Nan befriends. Auxier (*The Night Gardener*, 2014, etc.) turns his imaginative whimsy and lyrical prose to a real historical horror; while never gratuitous, he does not shy away from the appalling conditions under which children labor, nor does he ignore the sacrifices and struggle to abolish the practice. The inclusion of two (possibly three) Jewish characters suggests the intertwining of anti-Semitism and class exploitation, while references to such authors as William Blake, Daniel Defoe, and Mary Shelley demonstrate how literature could fire imaginations and highlight oppression. But the vivid characters—tough, whip-smart Nan; lovable, childlike Charlie; their engaging companions; even the marvelously Dickensian villains—prevent the story from becoming either dry history lesson or political screed. As Nan painfully, tentatively, haltingly permits love to make her vulnerable, she also gains strength and purpose: “We are saved by saving others.”

**As heartbreaking as bleak midwinter—and as hopeful as early spring.** (author's note, historical note) (*Historical fantasy. 8-12*)



**THE FLIGHT OF MR. FINCH**

Baas, Thomas  
Illus. by the author  
Tate/Abrams (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-84976-590-9

A man loses his pet bird and finds a new friend when a magical plant temporarily transforms his urban neighborhood into a dense jungle.

Mr. Finch, pictured as a white, balding, mustachioed man dressed in a suit and tie, overcoat, and tall old-fashioned hat, lives in a small attic room. He enjoys the company of his bird, Pip, and worries when Pip ceases chirping. An improved view and larger cage don't make a difference so, enticed by a clever sales pitch, Mr. Finch purchases a “very special plant” in hopes of cheering up his pet and sets into motion an unlikely transformation of his environment—and the loss of Pip. His subsequent search for the bird broadens his horizons and sets the stage for a new friendship. Baas' relatively lengthy text has a slightly formal tone that complements the old-fashioned, cartoon-style illustrations, which are reminiscent of William Steig's. The limited palette, primarily in green, with red outlines and highlights and occasional details in black, further establishes the retro feel. A wordless gatefold follows an emotional description of Mr. Finch's distress, immersing readers in the fantastical setting. The appearance of a generic Indigenous man, with body and face paint and holding a spear, gives pause but matches the overall sensibility.

**Adult characters, a plot with limited child appeal, and use of stereotype may keep this import, originally published in French, from flying high in the U.S.** (*Picture book. 5-8*)



**PLAY ME SOME MUSIC**

Bannister, Emily  
Illus. by Woolf, Julia  
Kane/Miller (24 pp.)  
\$11.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-1-61067-771-4

Young readers are encouraged to “pick up an instrument and start to play,” as “music is magic.”

Speaking directly to a kid audience in engaging rhythmic verse, each double-page spread opens with the imperative to “play me some music,” focusing on different instruments in various venues. Sprightly, cheerful, active, inclusive watercolor illustrations printed on durable stock fill the pages with changing scenes of diverse groups of happy children and adults playing and enjoying music. A solo street musician juggles a banjo, drum, and harmonica for appreciative shoppers. A uniformed marching band struts across the page to a cheering crowd. A string quartet accompanies swirling ballet dancers, while a loud, jiving rock band stirs up jumping fans. A pianist and drummer entertain at a home birthday party. A harpist and flutist play at



an elegant ball, a child violinist renders a farewell song at a sad pet funeral, tambourines brighten a school show, and a clarinet tune lulls a child to sleep. The final double-page spread implores readers to play a tune on a spoon, shake a jar, clap hands, “crash” pan lids together, “twang” a rubber band, “puff” into a bottle, or “just open your mouth and sing me a song!” There is no apparent attempt at a unifying narrative—just lots of happy music makers.

**This rousing, upbeat, participatory invitation to make music should entice budding musicians. (Picture book. 3-7)**

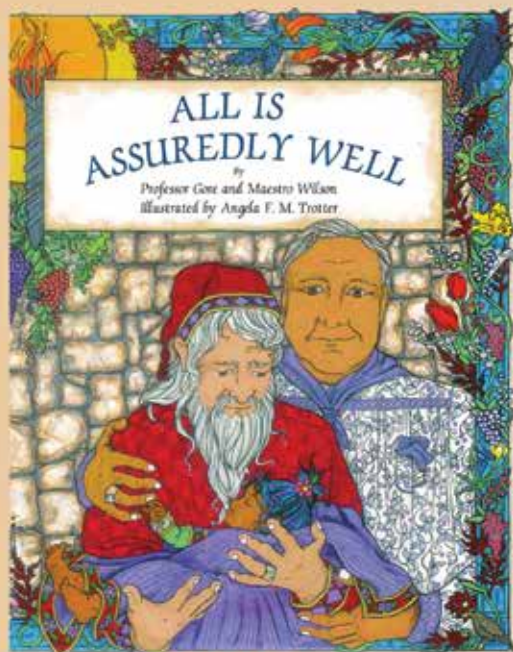


**BUILD ME A HOME**

*Bannister, Emily*  
*Illus. by Sanfelippo, Ana*  
 Kane/Miller (24 pp.)  
 \$11.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-61067-772-1

Where would you like to live? Just imagine....

Ten fanciful four-line poems each imagine a different kind of home, one per double-page spread. “Build me an ice palace” imagines a dancing bear, a polite penguin serving refreshments, and a tall staircase with a curving banister suitable for sliding down. The imagined “library” has “a roof made of glass” so that children can lie on the floor and read all day and at night “watch stars shooting past.” The castle has a big golden tower, and “We’ll have a pet dragon... / To scare off passersby.” Many different faces (human and animal) peer out of the square windows of the skyscraper, where “We’ll play hide-and-seek, / Behind all the doors.” A cat sits behind the controls



**ALL IS ASSUREDLY WELL**  
 by Professor Gore and Maestro Wilson  
 illustrated by Angela F. M. Trotter

ISBN #978-0-9998880-0-1

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

**ALL IS ASSUREDLY WELL**

BY PROFESSOR GORE & MAESTRO WILSON  
 ILLUSTRATED BY ANGELA F.M. TROTTER

**A monarch and his husband long for a baby girl of their own—sparking an arduous search—in this picture book.**

**“The Arthur Rackham–like images in lavender-blue tones by debut illustrator Trotter are a gorgeous, striking plus, beautifully detailed with flower, bird, vine, and fruit motifs.”**

**“Sweet characters, skillful storytelling, and knockout illustrations.”  
 —Kirkus Reviews (starred review)**



For publishing rights or agent representation, please contact [Camille.lancaster.books@gmail.com](mailto:Camille.lancaster.books@gmail.com)

of the big submarine (yellow, natch), “With gadgets galore.” The rocket features beds that can fly. Ultimately, the nicest home of all is a simple house, with room for everyone: “We’ll all live together— / That’s the best home of all.” A final long (two-page) verse suggests numerous ways to play at house-building with makeshift components such as chairs, an umbrella, cushions, or a blanket. Bannister’s repeated invocation, “Build me a...” sets a lovely dreaming tone. Sanfelippo’s illustrations are appropriately busy and colorful, cheerfully populated with diverse humans and animals, but some of the architectural features mentioned are not particularly well-realized.

**Engaging as well as a nice springboard for creative play.**  
(Picture book. 4-7)



### WHAT GOES UP

*Baragrey, Wen Jane*  
Random House (224 pp.)  
\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 30, 2018  
978-1-5247-6581-1  
978-1-5247-6584-2 PLB

When a rogue NASA satellite threatens to crash back to Earth, 12-year-old Robyn decides it’s time to find her father before it’s too late.

An albino with pale white skin, pale curly hair, and pale eyes with poor vision, Robyn Tinkerbelle Goodfellow has always looked “out of place.” Robyn knows nothing about her father except she resembles him, so maybe his recessive gene for albinism was “stronger” than her mom’s (who presents white). When she learns about a local family with albino kids, Robyn decides she’s related. Also totally convinced NASA’s XR-26 satellite will crash into her house with its infamous “magnet roof” (it seems to attract every falling object in Calliope), Robyn sets out to locate her father before it does, aided by her best friend, Nickel. Even though her mother operates a fairy-themed party venue, Robyn’s shocked when her English teacher assigns *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, with its famous fairy character named Robin Goodfellow. Why would her mother name her after this character? Why has her mother told her nothing about her father? Will she locate her father before the satellite hits? Robyn’s anxieties and determination resound through her humorous first-person narration. A cast of very zany local characters and a tension-filled plot driven by the approaching satellite enhance Robyn’s quest to uncover her real identity.

**A quirky, heartwarming story of family and friendship.**  
(Fiction. 8-12)



### THE STUFF OF STARS

*Bauer, Marion Dane*  
*Illus. by Holmes, Ekua*  
Candlewick (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-7636-7883-8



The stories of the births of the universe, the planet Earth, and a human child are told in this picture book.

Bauer begins with cosmic nothing: “In the dark / in the deep, deep dark / a speck floated / invisible as thought / weighty as God.” Her powerful words build the story of the creation of the universe, presenting the science in poetic free verse. First, the narrative tells of the creation of stars by the Big Bang, then the explosions of some of those stars, from which dust becomes the matter that coalesces into planets, then the creation of life on Earth: a “lucky planet...neither too far / nor too near...its yellow star...the Sun.” Holmes’ digitally assembled hand-marbled paper-collage illustrations perfectly pair with the text—in fact the words and illustrations become an inseparable whole, as together they both delineate and suggest—the former telling the story and the latter, with their swirling colors suggestive of vast cosmos, contributing the atmosphere. It’s a stunning achievement to present to readers the factual events that created the birth of the universe, the planet Earth, and life on Earth with such an expressive, powerful creativity of words paired with illustrations so evocative of the awe and magic of the cosmos. But then the story goes one brilliant step further and gives the birth of a child the same beginning, the same sense of magic, the same miracle.

**Wow.** (Picture book. 3-8)



### THE LYING KING

*Beard, Alex*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Greenleaf Book Group Press (56 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-62634-528-7



When other animals fail to take a stand, a lying warthog becomes their king with devastating results.

“A runt who wanted / to be a huge pig,” the warthog “started off small,” telling tall tales and lying “to feel big.” Claiming night is day and rain is dry, the warthog brags how high he can fly, how great and handsome he is. Many find his behavior shameful but do nothing to stop him. As “his fibbing got bolder,” the bullying warthog climbs “up on the backs of his lies” to become king, lying to fill his wallet, questioning “all that was right,” and turning subjects against one another. But when “all that was false was spoken as true,” his lies eventually ensnare him. Beard spins his relevant cautionary tale in droll verse that builds in intensity as the warthog’s dishonesty expands. Signature ink-and-watercolor illustrations feature the warthog and his exotic subjects, drawn in neat, black outlines

# There's not a cardigan in sight, but the spirit of Fred Rogers is all over this rhymed chorus of "likes."

I JUST LIKE YOU

and filled with pale washes. The plain white background calls attention to the hand-lettered text and drama of the narcissistic warthog, who wears an officious sneer and absurd crown, strutting, posing, leaping, denouncing, and accusing his way across pages as stunned animals collapse beneath his lies.

**This witty, contemporary fable brilliantly champions truth in an era of fake news, alternative facts, and rampant lies.** (Picture book. 4-8)

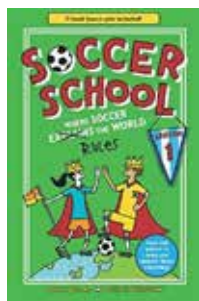


## EVEN SUPERHEROES MAKE MISTAKES

Becker, Shelly  
 Illus. by Kaban, Eda  
 Sterling (40 pp.)  
 \$16.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4549-2703-7

Caped crusaders take responsibility. Everybody makes mistakes, even superheroes. This picture book uses rhyming couplets and playful, cartoon artwork to illustrate a variety of scenarios in which masked avengers mess up. They trip and fall, they catch "the wrong guys," they even oversleep. Regardless of their missteps, heroes always get back up and try again, and they certainly do their best to set things right. The author's sermon on personal responsibility is a bit too long, but little readers will enjoy the variety of superheroics on display. The mix of superhero-specific misdeeds (muffing the alignment of a bridge they are building) with totally unrelated ones (singing off-key) feels totally arbitrary and a little unkind, but for children facing difficulties with their own behavior, this picture book that acknowledges that "perfection is rare" and an apology goes far certainly hits the spot. The illustrations are suitably dynamic and colorful, boasting a range of male and female superheroes of various sizes and colors. Two negatives to the art: A preponderance of identified "bandits" appear to be people of color, and all three female heroes are wasp-waisted, and two wear short shorts and midriff-baring tops while the guys are covered head to toe. These trends really, really need to go.

**A decent romp with a few drawbacks.** (Picture book. 3-5)



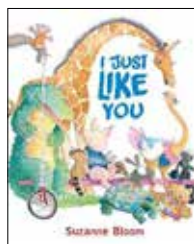
## SOCCER SCHOOL Where Soccer Explains (Rules) the World

Bellos, Alex & Lyttleton, Ben  
 Illus. by Gerrell, Spike  
 Walker Books (208 pp.)  
 \$15.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-5362-0435-3  
 Series: Soccer School, Season 1

Bellos and Lyttleton team up to create the ultimate school, one in which every subject from biology to zoology is focused through the world of soccer.

The premise is an interesting one, and the book begins successfully enough with biology, where readers learn about the importance of a soccer player's diet as well as gain a cursory understanding of the digestive system. Each chapter is similarly themed—with varying levels of success—and readers learn about different subjects while picking up facts and trivia about international teams. Each chapter begins with a cartoon rendering of the authors and a few puns and ends with an equally punny player's card for the star student in the class and a quiz. For instance, Tulip Feaver is star student of philosophy class, where readers learn about famous Dutch coaches Marinus Michels and Johan Cruyff and how their strategies changed international play. While the player's cards are amusing and offer a variety of genders and a bit of ethnic diversity, the quizzes are less successful. The questions asked frequently have nothing to do with the preceding chapter and vary between those that are specific to soccer and general knowledge. This may be the most frustrating aspect of the book; how do you become a star student if the instructors are quizzing you on things you've never been taught?

**Red card it.** (Nonfiction. 8-12)



## I JUST LIKE YOU

Bloom, Suzanne  
 Illus. by the author  
 Boyds Mills (32 pp.)  
 \$16.95 | Nov. 6, 2018  
 978-1-62979-878-3



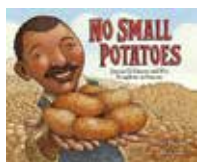
A sweet celebration of differences.

There's not a cardigan in sight, but the spirit of Fred Rogers is all over this rhymed chorus of "likes." "You don't look just like me. / You don't see the things I see. / You don't walk just like me," but still and all, "You just like me! You just like me!" Bloom suspends pairs and larger groups of anthropomorphic young animals on plain, unmarked white backgrounds for these amicable declarations, and she goes to town on highlighting her figures' diversity—dressing a gray elephant in a colorfully striped shirt, wrapping a loong scarf around a woolly llama's loong neck, outfitting an ostrich with pink ruffles and a parasol a-dangle with pom-poms, placing a wombat in a wheelchair and a little squirrel atop a tall unicycle. Nor are behavioral differences neglected, as a methodical porcupine ("I like to take my time") leans over a blank sheet of writing paper while the tiger cub in the next seat ("I'm speedy") is awash in notes and drawings. Scenes gradually fill up as the author gathers all and sundry together to dance (or shyly watch), to eat, and climactically to read (books printed and handwritten; in English, Danish, and Braille; a map; a sheet of music; a sewing pattern; a blueprint). The mood then calms for a concluding scene of two friends sharing an easy chair with a final: "I just like you! / Yes, I do."

**A manifesto to bridge the deepest chasms of otherness and to melt the stoniest of hearts.** (Picture book. 4-8)

The mixed-media illustrations, awash in blues, greens, and browns, successfully represent the expansiveness of the land and the momentous nature of Groves' accomplishments.

NO SMALL POTATOES



**NO SMALL POTATOES  
Junius G. Groves and  
His Kingdom in Kansas**



Bolden, Tonya

*Illus. by Tate, Don*

Knopf (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Oct. 16, 2018

978-0-385-75276-3

978-0-385-75277-0 PLB

Junius G. Groves, named “Potato King of the World” by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1902, was the richest black man “living between the Missouri River and the Rockies,” according to the Indianapolis *Recorder*.

This entertaining biography celebrates an African-American hero born into slavery in the late 1850s in Kentucky who realized his dreams for himself and eventually for his large family. Settling in the Great Kaw Valley, Kansas, Junius began working on a potato farm for 40 cents a day, “almost starvation wages,” but he was determined to own a farm one day. First renting their land, Junius and his wife, Matilda, worked hard and saved, buying 80 acres in 1884 and paying off the balance in a year with the help of their three sons. Eventually he bought over 500 acres on which he grew 72,150 bushels—roughly 12 million potatoes—in one year, 1902. With 12 children and lots of hired hands, Junius built Groves Park, the community of Groves Center, a church, a store, and even a golf course. Every few pages, a sidebar punctuates Bolden’s chatty, colloquial narrative with words from Groves himself. The mixed-media illustrations, awash in blues, greens, and browns, successfully represent the expansiveness of the land and the momentous nature of Groves’ accomplishments. A glossary, a timeline, and other helpful backmatter make this an excellent research resource for teachers and students alike.

**This a-peel-ing story will give readers a new appreciation for spuds. (Picture book/biography. 5-8)**



**ATTACK OF THE  
50-FOOT FLUFFY**

Boldt, Mike

*Illus. by the author*

McElderry (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 7, 2018

978-1-4814-4887-1

Unlike Molly Bang’s Sophie, when Claire gets angry, there are some significant consequences.

The day starts out like any other, with Claire and her stuffed white rabbit, Fluffy, looking forward to many things. But when a “tiny button” pops off Fluffy’s outfit (which matches Claire’s), then the box of Super Choco Puffs cereal is found to be empty, then all the neighborhood kids want to swing at the same time as Claire...readers can see Claire’s gaze turn a little more manic, her teeth and hands clench a little tighter with each new frustration. The last straw, though, is when it starts to pour just as

it’s finally Claire and Fluffy’s turn on the swing. Her anger rages so wildly that Fluffy grows to be 50 feet tall and goes on a rampage against all that has frustrated Claire: the tiny-button factory, the cereal delivery trucks, the beloved park swingset. But just as soon as this last is smooched to bits, Claire regains control and is remorseful. Her friends at the park are understanding and tell her “We’ve *all* been there before.” Claire, Fluffy in tow, puts all back to rights. Boldt’s digital illustrations keep the focus on Claire’s emotions, her expressiveness leaving no doubt in readers’ minds as to how she is feeling. The fact that Fluffy’s face never changes in the slightest adds welcome humor. Claire has straight, black hair, brown eyes, and pale skin; other kids at the park are diverse.

**Pair with a book that will teach children alternatives to unleashing their own inner Fluffys. (Picture book. 4-8)**



**POLAR BEAR ISLAND**

Bonilla, Lindsay

*Illus. by Villalobos, Cinta*

Sterling (32 pp.)

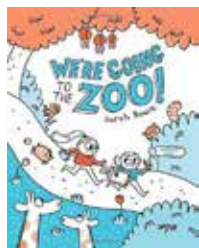
\$16.95 | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-4549-2870-6

Only polar bears are allowed on Polar Bear Island, until Kirby, a friendly, creative penguin, arrives on the scene.

On the verso of the first double-page spread, large white lettering proclaims against an azure sky: “Polar Bear Island was peaceful and predictable. Parker, the mayor, planned to keep it that way.” Below, Parker—paint can in left paw—can be seen facing his sign: “Welcome to Polar Bear Island. No Others Allowed.” On the recto, Kirby floats into view on an ice floe, with hat, scarf, and overstuffed suitcase. When Kirby arrives, Parker grudgingly allows her an overnight stay. However, she soon proves her worth to the other bears; she has invented Flipper Slippers, which keep extremities warm and reverse from skates to snowshoes. Now Kirby is allowed to stay and help the bears make their own Flipper Slippers. When her family shows up with more inventions, Parker feels compelled to give them a week. (Presumably, the penguins have made the 12,430-mile-trip from the South Pole to the North Pole, characterized merely as “a long journey.”) A minor crisis permanently changes Parker’s attitudes about exclusivity. The text is accessible and good fun to read aloud. The weakness of the ostensible theme of granting welcome to newcomers lies in the fact that all the newcomers are immediately, obviously useful to the bears. The cartoonlike, scratchboard-ish graphics are lighthearted and full of anthropomorphic touches.

**Good bedtime reading. (Picture book. 3-5)**



### WE'RE GOING TO THE ZOO!

*Bowie, Sarah*

*Illus. by the author*

O'Brien Press/Dufour Editions (32 pp.)

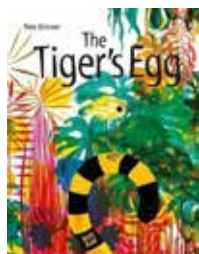
\$20.00 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-84717-949-4

Can Kitty get her big sister, Clara, to stop texting long enough to enjoy the world around her?

Young Kitty wants to have fun during the summer holidays, but overdramatic sister Clara just likes to declare how bored she is and do...nothing. When Dad suggests a trip to the Dublin Zoo, Kitty's excited, planning to draw all the animals that she sees. Clara agrees to go, albeit with arms crossed and a sour expression on her face. Kitty draws the fruit bats, throwing in some fruit-bat trivia in Q-and-A form. Clara calls her "weird." Visits to the elephants, giraffes, and red pandas follow. These last appeal to Clara, and she begins taking selfies with them. She's getting into the spirit a bit. Kitty and Clara next see the tapirs, the tigers, and the sea lions. Kitty draws them all and shares some more fun facts. Kitty studies an unusual monkey called a macaque, and Clara falls in love with the new baby rhino. Both sisters are fascinated by the meerkats, and Clara feels inspired to collaborate with Kitty on her meerkat drawing. At the day's end, the sisters have a stronger bond. Bowie's delightfully shaggy illustrations, which look like they were done by Kitty herself, add immense charm to this story of sisterly understanding and animal exploration. They depict Kitty and her family as white.

**Delightful and educational.** (*Picture book.* 3-6)



### THE TIGER'S EGG

*Brönner, Nele*

*Illus. by the author*

*Trans. by Wilson, David Henry*

NorthSouth (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-0-7358-4319-6

A morose tiger, frustrated by life in an enclosure, finds renewed purpose when a turquoise egg falls into his care.

Herman, the tiger, takes to paternity quickly, "very carefully...wrapp[ing] his soft, furry tail around the egg." Hunched and focused, he weaves a nest from straw and "the softest hairs from his chest." Children will giggle at the hulking tiger's loving, ludicrous posture as he stands on two feet, willing dexterity into his cumbersome paws and claws, bent in concentration. Matte watercolors (buttercup yellows, teal greens, and fuchsia reds) delight as well, making joyous striations as branches, bark, water, ground, leaves, fur. Vivid, multidirectional, and abundant, the cheerful clash of colors captures the teeming life and sound inside the animal enclosure. Creatures peer, gawk, and interject throughout, making readers aware of the inescapable closeness of captivity. In the background of one spread, a pale caretaker

cleans up a pile of animal bones using a broom and wheelbarrow—a small, grim reminder that sadness and death live here too. Young life and adoptive love, thankfully, cast a golden light across the pages of this endearing book from the moment the egg cracks. The hatchling emerges (a yellow-and-black pom-pom with enormous black eyes on two long stick legs), and Herman sees his "little tiger bird." Soon, the baby bird learns to roar.

**Exuberant pictures express parental love, which makes species, gender, size, biology, and even the bars of an enclosure irrelevant.** (*Picture book.* 4-8)



### 3X4

*Brunetti, Ivan*

*Illus. by the author*

TOON Books & Graphics (40 pp.)

\$12.95 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-943145-34-8

Annemarie from *Wordplay* (2017) and her class work on set theory.

Annemarie's homework assignment is for the students to draw a dozen items in sets: Three sets of four, four of three, and two of six are all valid. While Annemarie tries to decide what she wants to draw, she wonders what her classmates are working on, and the book cuts to various kids and their work. Initial examples (four sets of three, the most common set division selected by the students) are organized with the extra visual division of the four panels on each page, building to full-page images that encourage kids to count the items in the illustration to determine the sets. There's also a delightful sequence that shows four seeds, then four saplings, then four trees, which pieced together read as a comic strip. The book doesn't teach math so much as it encourages developing number sense through play. The art (digitally colored) has minimal shading and emphasizes basic shapes in both characters and their drawings, making it easy for child readers to imitate while playing along and drawing their own sets. Annemarie's a brown-skinned girl with black hair and glasses in a class filled with racial diversity and led by a teacher who has dark brown skin, black hair, glasses, and a jaunty bow tie.

**So exemplary an execution of a simple concept that it can be read multiple ways—as multiplication, counting, sorting—without sacrificing fun.** (*Early reader.* 5-8)





### GOOD MORNING, SNOWPLOW!

Bruss, Deborah  
Illus. by Fancher, Lou & Johnson, Steve  
Levine/Scholastic (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 30, 2018  
978-1-338-08949-3

In winter, as the farms and town go to sleep, the snowplow driver is just waking up.

Night is falling, and so is the snow. Readers say goodnight to the town but not the snowplow driver and his dog. The driver prepares the snowplow and checks all the parts; then he drops the plow blade and turns on his lights to begin his night of work. Following the route of a snowplow, readers see the ins and outs of driving in snow. As the sun begins to rise, the roads are clear, and it is time for the driver to sleep. In rhyming couplets, Bruss introduces readers to the vocabulary of snowplows and driving in the snow. The text is written in the second person, speaking to the driver and the snowplow and encouraging them on through the night. The illustrations are beautifully made with multiple media, creating different textures that both pop and add depth. Strong lines describe the town, vehicles, and people, but the snow is made to look soft and fluffy. Delicate and detailed snowflakes are stamped over the images to create the effect of snow falling. This book shines light on a lesser-known occupation and gives recognition to the hard work done to keep our roads clear and safe in the snow. The snowplow driver has brown skin and straight, black hair.

A great addition to any big-machines collection. (Picture book. 3-6)



### THE PERFECT SECRET

Buyea, Rob  
Delacorte (384 pp.)  
\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-5247-6459-3  
978-1-5247-6460-9 PLB

Are there secrets that shouldn't be revealed?

In this sequel to *The Perfect Score* (2017), Randi, Natalie, Gavin, Trevor, and Scott are assigned community service for cheating on a standardized test. It's not really a punishment, as these good-natured students enjoy working in the senior center where they've established relationships, and besides, they want to reconcile two of their teachers, a mother and daughter, before it's too late. As before, narration alternates among the five, and while their characters are well-developed, the various issues are examined lightly. In this case, many are related to secrecy, from budding romance to absentee fathers, familial estrangement, parental marital problems, financial struggle, Alzheimer's, brain injury, adult illiteracy, immigration, and racism. The last three revolve around Gavin,

whose Mexican-immigrant mother is undocumented and who becomes the target of the racist football coach. Aside from biracial Gavin and his mother, the book adheres to the white default. Though handled with kindness and compassion, the sheer abundance of topics results in oversimplification, and every story has a pat ending, which, cumulatively, seems unlikely. Still, the characters shine, the plots are engaging, and the issues are addressed in interesting ways that will provide readers with many perspectives and much to consider.

Strong characters grapple with a multitude of issues (a few too many) in this celebration of friendship and the rewards of volunteer work. (Fiction. 9-12)



### THE CASE OF THE MISSING CHALK DRAWINGS

Byrne, Richard  
Illus. by the author  
Godwin Books/Henry Holt (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Nov. 13, 2018  
978-1-250-18959-2

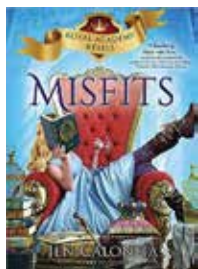
A playful mystery culminates in a gentle message of conflict resolution.

The bold palette, knockout type, and the chalk characters' big eyes contribute to the book's striking design, with childlike, colorful, anthropomorphic sticks of chalk against a dark, black-boardlike background, digital lines emulating strokes of chalk. The story begins when the protagonists leave their drawings of flowers behind when their teacher, Mrs. Red, calls them for lunch, and when they return, they're shocked that the drawings have disappeared. They redraw the flowers, and Mrs. Red adds a fence, but it fails to protect the new drawings when the chalks leave for storytime. "Sergeant Blue arrived to investigate..." reads the next spread, which depicts a blue, mustachioed chalk and his matching blue police car. Sgt. Blue notes "important evidence," highlighting the width of the areas of absent markings and the presence of dust. He then assembles a lineup of suspects, including, among others, scissors, a ruler, and a chalkboard eraser of just the right width. It also has, as a tiny chalk exclaims, "A DUSTY RED BOTTOM!" A chase ensues to capture the eraser, but the chalks eventually understand that it isn't a thief, it's just fulfilling its natural role when it erases drawings. The happily-ever-after ending shows chalks and eraser playing together in a collaborative culmination of the whodunit tale.

Storytime is solved with this addition to the bookcase. (Picture book. 3-6)

# Hernandez's semi-abstract illustrations are the stars of the show—bold visual statements founded on big shapes, dramatic silhouettes or contrasts, and deep-space fields.

ONCE UPON A STAR



## MISFITS

*Calonita, Jen*  
 Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (256 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4926-5128-4  
 Series: Royal Academy Rebels, 1

An unconventional princess-in-training questions the status quo—and throws the kingdom for a loop.

When 12-year-old Princess Devin's invitation to attend the Royal Academy arrives, she has reservations about her royal future, but Fairy Godmother Olivina assures her that her gifted way with animals, scorned by her mother, is not only acceptable, but will be nurtured. Still, there doesn't seem to be much flexibility. Princesses are to be beautiful, to dance well, and to seek a good match with a prince. Most of all, princesses are never to take the lead in dangerous situations; they must wait to be rescued. But when harpies attack the school's opening ball, the princes need help. Devin teams up with rakish Prince Heath to save the day. Nonconformity has its price, and Devin receives her first strike. After three, not only is she kicked out of school, but she's altogether banished from Enchantasia. Olivina further isolates Devin from her classmates by warning them against fraternization. Though it expands on the world introduced in the Fairy Tale Reform School series, the Royal Academy unfortunately comes across as little more than a watered-down Hogwarts. While discussion of gender roles is thoughtful, racial and cultural diversity are limited; Devin and Heath present white. Characters are flat, the plot is predictable, and the fairy godmother as villain is a tired twist.

**A disappointing spinoff to an inventive series.** (*Fantasy*. 10-13)



## MAGNIFICENT BIRDS

*Candlewick Press*  
*Illus. by Togo, Narisa*  
 Candlewick (32 pp.)  
 \$20.00 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-5362-0169-7

Fourteen bird species chosen for their dramatic or unusual characteristics are illustrated and described in this album.

Each spread presents a full-bleed linocut print of the bird in question in its habitat, with a paragraph or two of detailed text describing such features as flight pattern, typical courtship behavior, plumage, migration, and feeding habits. The text includes fascinating facts about the birds, such as how the flamingo's plumage varies with its diet, the way the bird of paradise shows off its plumage to its mate, the unusual vision of the common kingfisher, and how the toucan uses its enormous beak. Birds that travel vast distances are described, including the wandering albatross, which can cover more than 10,000 miles in a single journey, and the bar-tailed godwit, which flies more than 6,000 miles during migration. One of the most interesting

birds is the rare kakapo from New Zealand, which uses its thoracic sac to make a booming sound to attract females. Togo's linocut illustrations are beautifully composed, judiciously colored, and observant renderings of the birds and their habitats and help to give life to the factual text (produced in collaboration with the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). However, they seem mismatched to the fine-print, detailed text, looking too junior for the reading level.

**Lovely but out of sync.** (*Nonfiction*. 10-14)



## MOLLIE ON THE MARCH

*Carey, Anna*  
 O'Brien Press/Dufour Editions (352 pp.)  
 \$15.00 paper | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-78849-008-5

Mollie Carberry continues to fight for women's rights in 1912 Dublin.

When last readers saw her, (*The Making of Mollie*, 2017) 14-year-old Mollie and her best friend, Nora, had become suffragists. They maintain their dedication to the cause throughout the summer of 1912, despite interference from their frenemy, Grace, who's forced to live with Nora for several weeks; handsome Frank, visiting Mollie's brother, Harry; and Barnaby, the neighbor's annoying dog. Mr. Asquith, the British Prime Minister, is visiting Dublin in July, and Mollie and Nora are determined to express their opinions even if it means disguising themselves to make them look older—and even though the situation turns rather more dangerous than they expected. As its prequel did, the novel unfolds as a series of letters written to Mollie's friend Frances, now spending the summer in America. Though Mollie and the setting retain their charm, the sequel suffers from lack of narrative tension. Mollie's opinions remain consistent, and her actions aren't as interesting as in the previous book.

**This sequel does not work well as a stand-alone nor add much to Mollie's story; readers should stop after Book 1.** (*Historical fiction*. 10-14)



## ONCE UPON A STAR A Poetic Journey Through Space

*Carter, James*  
*Illus. by Hernández, Mar*  
 Doubleday (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Nov. 6, 2018  
 978-0-525-57933-5

The universe in a nutshell: "A mighty BOOM / a huge KER-RANG / that scientists call / THE BIG BANG!"

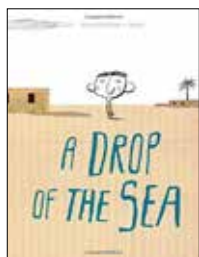
Hernández's semi-abstract illustrations are the stars of the show—bold visual statements founded on big shapes, dramatic silhouettes or contrasts, and deep-space fields through which swim clouds of stylized stars. In later scenes our local star seems

# Kids of all ages will readily identify with Ali's manifest affection for and devotion to his grandma.

A DROP OF THE SEA

almost lambent as it shines down on earthly flora and fauna. Carter's metrics are less stellar, but his cosmology serves well enough as he takes young readers out to view the stars, then explains the explosive origins of space, time, and our very own sun, how planets formed, and how at last on Earth "life swam, crawled, flew." Channeling Carl Sagan, he concludes "We're from that star / that seems so far. / We're made of stardust, / yes, we are. / So, what are you? / YOU'RE A STAR!" He rounds off his poetic flight by laying out the sun's past and probable future in a list of factual "Sciencey Stuff" arranged as an acrostic. Three children, one white, two with different shades of brown skin, appear in the final scenes.

**The right "stuff" for young readers who have wondered about the stars and about their place in space.** (*Informational picture book. 6-8*)



## A DROP OF THE SEA

Chabbert, Ingrid  
 Illus. by Guridi, Raúl Nieto  
 Kids Can (36 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-5253-0124-7

This is the story of Ali and his valiant journey to make his beloved great-grandmother's dream come true.

The two of them lead a simple yet happy life in an unidentified desert (naming conventions and attire suggest the Arabian Peninsula). Their favorite pastime: savoring fresh dates picked from a neighboring century-old palm tree while contemplating the vastness of the night's starry sky. Curious about his aging great-grandmother's dreams, Ali realizes that one of them—seeing the ocean—remains unfulfilled. Complicating matters, her age and frail condition are such that she is unlikely to ever be able to make it all the way to the sea on her own. "Great-grandmother," declares Ali, "I am going to seek the sea for you," and off he goes, with nothing but water and a few dates for sustenance and a bucket in his hand to collect ocean water, hoping to make it through the four-day round trip and come back with a taste of the sea. Kids of all ages will readily identify with Ali's manifest affection for and devotion to his grandma. Although adults might worry about the rather impulsive undertaking (reckless, some might say) involving inadequate preparation, frightening nights, and physical pain, children will thrill to Ali's agency. Chabbert's style of writing is on a par with Guridi's minimalist, mixed-media illustrations, remarkably straightforward with no distracting lyricism.

**Genuine.** (*Picture book. 4-7*)



## ELLA UNLEASHED

Cherry, Alison  
 Aladdin (224 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-1-5344-1212-5

Middle schooler Ella Cohen navigates life with divorced parents.

Two years ago, Ella's mother married Krishnan, who lets Ella show his champion dog, Elvis. Ella is close to her stepfather and is happy to share this hobby with him, but she feels pangs of guilt when she thinks of her own father, David, who cannot deign to be in the same room as his ex-wife's new husband. Ella wishes she could share this hobby—and her debut at the National Dog Show in Philadelphia—with her *entire* family. Conjecturing that if her father had a partner he would be happy and confident around Krishnan and, therefore, would attend the dog show, Ella and her friends set up a fake online-dating profile for her father, and all sorts of hijinks ensue. By the end of this delightful and satisfying novel, Ella gets her comeuppance—she is caught in a barrage of lies and must apologize to her mother, her father, Krishnan, and Beth (a woman whom her father inadvertently falls for). Ultimately, Ella learns she can't control all possible outcomes to create the best of all possible worlds. Cherry presents a realistic portrait of a multicultural, blended family—Ella, her mother, and her father are white and Jewish, and Krishnan is South Asian—and doesn't blunt the challenges of divorce.

**Realistic and sympathetic, with an appealing protagonist and an interesting hobby for texture.** (*Fiction. 8-12*)



## WICKED NIX

Coakley, Lena  
 Illus. by Zollars, Jaime  
 Amulet/Abrams (176 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-4197-2869-3

When a man-people moves into the old cottage in the woods, Wicked Nix isn't happy.

Having been given temporary responsibility for the forest, Wicked Nix is afraid that when the Good Queen returns from the Summer Country, she'll be angry to see a people living in the woods. That's not allowed, according to fairy rule. And if the Good Queen is angry at Wicked Nix, she might leave him behind again when all the other fairies go to the Summer Country at next Midsummer, like she did last year. So Wicked Nix sets to work trying to trick the man-people into leaving, using ideas inspired by his friends Mr. Green and Rose the Wise, a little girl-people with "strange and amazing powers." But as Wicked Nix learns more about the man-people, he begins to suspect all is not what it seems. Coakley offers up a secretive tale with an abundance of turns and surprises, illustrated with Zollars' black-and-white sketches



(in which Rose the Wise presents black and the man-people and Wicked Nix have pale skin). The worldbuilding in this short tale occasionally feels forced and at times inconsistent, but readers pulled in by the premise will enjoy puzzling through unreliable-narrator Wicked Nix's mysteries.

**This dark twist on the old legend of stolen children is a spooky, compelling read.** (*Fantasy*. 8-12)



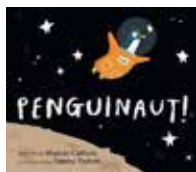
**TRY A LITTLE KINDNESS  
A Guide to Being Better**

*Cole, Henry*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Scholastic (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-338-25641-3

Kids are encouraged to engage in small but mighty acts of kindness throughout the day.

“A smile to greet the morning / A hug to greet each day / A ‘thank you’ and a ‘yes, please’ / Are things that you should say.” Vignettes depicting various scenarios and glossed with bold red statements of ways to be kind make up the majority of the work, but similar snatches of narratorial verse are also mixed in to hold the moments together. Standard advice applies: “Write thank-you notes!” or “Share your toy.” Other suggestions, such as “Hold the door for a friend,” or “Tell someone they are special,” seem perfectly polite on the surface, but Cole’s watercolor art conceals some devious possibilities within that both provoke thought and help to keep the book from feeling too syrupy. A cat holding the bird-cage door open, for instance, might not be as kind as one might think. But the art is full of unlikely groupings (a wolf helps three pigs build a brick house), and readers can only hope differences have been set aside for the sake of neighborliness (and enjoyment in spotting them). In a world where kindness and empathy are lacking, this string of actionable advice is enough to get the wheels turning.

**The story will hopefully create similar compassion in readers—or it might just make them giggle.** (*Picture book*. 3-6)



**PENGUINAUT!**

*Colleen, Marcie*  
*Illus. by Yarlett, Emma*  
 Orchard/Scholastic (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 30, 2018  
 978-0-545-84884-8

A little penguin tries to outshine his zoo friends, but there’s a surprise in store for him.

Penguin Orville lives in the zoo and has many big friends, such as an elephant, a giraffe, and a lion. These big friends go on big adventures, and Orville is sad because he misses out. He wants to feel big too, so he decides he is going to go to the moon. With some trial and error, he manages to build a spaceship. He defiantly proclaims, “I can do this myself,” when his friends

offer to help him or express doubt. His big adventure is successful, and he lands on the moon—but while he’s thrilled to have made it, soon he starts to miss his friends and wonders if this is what he really wanted to do. With some introspection and the support of his friends, Orville discovers his biggest adventure yet! This empowering story is conveyed beautifully with simple text that’s distinguished by gentle wordplay and remarkable mixed-media illustrations. Yarlett’s detailed depictions, including the cartoon-style portraits of stylized, friendly-looking zoo animals, bring the story alive. Small details delight, as when Orville sketches his diagrams on the elephant’s hide. The satisfying tale also leaves room for an interesting conversation about whether adventures would be more fun with or without friends.

**A funny and sharp story with nuance.** (*Picture book*. 3-7)



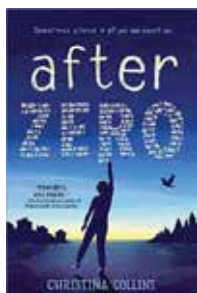
**TEAM STEVE**

*Collier, Kelly*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Kids Can (40 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-77138-932-7  
 Series: Steve the Horse

Steve the good-natured, self-absorbed horse and his animal friends are back in a story about teamwork and sportsmanship (*A Horse Named Steve*, 2017).

Steve historically wins the annual Race-a-Thon, but this year the forest creatures have decided on a relay race. To be fair, teams are created by drawing names. Imagine Steve’s surprise—nay, his consternation—when he’s told his teammates are a turtle, a snail, and a duck! How can they win? Steve has a brilliant idea—possibly prompted by his teammates asking: “Coach us?” “Coach us?” He’ll “share [his] running wisdom!” His goofy smile never leaves his face as he spouts nonsensical tips, blithely oblivious to the real needs of his students. Readers are in the know. Simple, sepia-toned, cartoon-style art makes body language and facial expressions easy to read. The action unfolds in a neatly paced variety of double-page spreads, vignettes, and panels. If Steve’s coaching is ineffective, it’s no matter. It turns out that the racecourse combined with weather conditions is optimal for each of his runners’ natural abilities. Turtle, snail, and duck each pull ahead of their competitors. Steve is so proud of them (and himself, of course) that he forgets to run his portion! Steve could beat himself up—or conclude that he helped two other teams win.

**In this comical tale, the lesson lies in how the race is run.** (*Picture book*. 4-8)



## AFTER ZERO

Collins, Christina

Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (256 pp.)

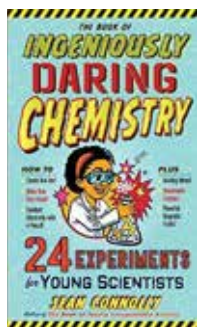
\$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-4926-5532-9

A series of social missteps convinces eighth-grader Elise that remaining silent is preferable to saying the wrong thing and looking foolish.

The transition from home schooling to public school proves more difficult than Elise imagined. Classroom politics, rival friendships, and social media are minefields. And whether it is Bernard Billows' greasy hair and milky smell or Elise's own Armenian unibrow, Elise decides that the best way to navigate Green Pasture Middle School is to disappear. Her plan backfires as she manages to alienate her old friend, Mel, and frustrate Conn, a possible ally, leaving her more isolated than ever. When Elise discovers her family's dark secret, which explains her mother's neglect and her isolated childhood, she turns inward, falling into hallucinations and fantasy. Elise's social isolation and pain are realistically portrayed, and her determination to stay silent even when she is accused of stealing and is threatened by Conn's older brother, Dónal, underscores her distress (even as it may also frustrate readers). Other elements are less-successful. The persistent appearance of a raven that alternately comforts and disturbs Elise hints at an underlying magic that is insufficiently explored. The portrayal of home-schoolers borders on cliché, and the resolution of Elise's mother's extreme negligence is far too easy. The book adheres to the white default.

**Ambitious but not wholly successful. (author's note)**  
(Fiction. 9-12)



## THE BOOK OF INGENIOUSLY DARING CHEMISTRY

24 Experiments for Young Scientists

Connolly, Sean

Illus. by Bean, Cara

Workman (256 pp.)

\$14.95 | Oct. 30, 2018

978-0-7611-8010-4

Series: Irresponsible Science

A highlights reel of the periodic table of elements, with 24 experiments and demonstrations.

Connolly (*The Book of Potentially Catastrophic Science*, 2010, etc.) focuses on 20 of the table's common "key players," providing for each accounts of its historic discovery, how it bonds or otherwise behaves with other substances, common uses, quick snapshots of neighboring elements, and one or two experiments. These last are the weakest link, as, for instance, the author simply instructs budding chemists to buy trick birthday candles rather than try to make them, pulls a bait and switch

with a project for neon that uses a fluorescent bulb ("Sure, it's filled with a different gas...but the experiment gets the same result"), and, thanks to garbled instructions, leaves the circuit unclosed in a supposed demonstration of graphite's electrical conductivity. In her very simple cartoon illustrations Bean doesn't always pick up the slack (placing the wire and nail in a potato "battery" close together rather than, as the instructions specify, as far apart as possible) but does at least portray a diverse cast of young makers along with decorative historical and fanciful images. Otherwise, the author further punches up a set of colorfully delivered tales of discovery with plenty of side notes on hazardous products and isotopes, capped by a closing rogues' gallery of particularly dangerous elements, and also offers lucid pictures of chemical processes and how the periodic table is organized.

**Fresh and informal but stronger on background than hands-on experiences. (glossary)** (Nonfiction. 10-13)



## EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT POOP

Copons, Jaume

Illus. by Galí, Mercè

Firefly (28 pp.)

\$12.95 | Sep. 1, 2018

978-0-2281-0083-6

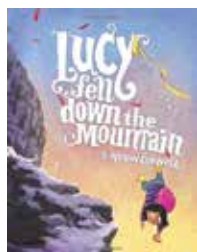
The scoop on poop.

Cartoon art and cheeky text mark this as a potty-training book that uses humor to make young readers comfortable with toileting. The downside to this is that some may be a bit *uncomfortable* with the humor's tone, which veers toward the gross and has little regard for privacy. On the former point, poop is likened to food: "Cows make huge poops like a pizza! And goats make little balls, like olives." (Eeew.) On the latter point, the narrator, a boy who seems well beyond potty-training age, has a series of four spreads toward the end devoted to answering "What about me? What about you? How do we poop?" He's first depicted running down a hallway clutching his backside, then sitting on the toilet while his sister brings a roll of toilet paper. Then, on a page with a closed bathroom door, text reads, "Sometimes a few little farts escape," before a page-turn shows the boy, red-faced and straining while his sister and their cat literally cheer him on, complete with pompoms. The rest of the family joins in on the cheering on the next page when ("PLOP!") he successfully poops. It's a logical conclusion but an oddly public one for a child who seems decidedly older than the implied toddler audience. The narrator and his family present white.

**Not a totally shitty book, but not the shit, either.** (Picture book. 2-4)

Perhaps the book's most valuable visual aspect is the way it features people of color in all elements of the theater, from Lisa and her mother, of course, to the orchestra pit, stage manager, and actors.

CORDUROY TAKES A BOW



**LUCY FELL DOWN THE MOUNTAIN**

Cornell, Kevin  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 30, 2018  
 978-0-374-30608-3

No one knows how it happened, but somehow, young Lucy finds herself falling straight down the mountain, and it is just as terrifying for her as you would imagine.

Readers first meet protagonist Lucy on the reverse of the title page as she begins to fall down the mountain, a tiny figure tumbling down next to the copyright statement. Opposite the gutter, in a closer view, she is seen to be wide-eyed and cold, and all manner of things are tumbling out of her backpack. As luck would have it, she meets a "mountain man" along the way who can throw her a rope...except he throws it away instead. Down and down she goes, meeting a kooky cast of characters (a "bungeeing duck"—who actually isn't bungeeing; a "great, shuffling pile of bears") along the way. Bright illustrations with vivid colors and a very expressive Lucy give this quirky, quick nonsense tale a whole lot of personality. Large type scattered across the pages along with Lucy and her belongings make it fun for new readers. Lucy's personality shines through as she ultimately is able to save herself from her predicament, hitting the snow with heads and legs tucked so she turns into a "tiny kid comet," even if she can't rescue herself from puking (although kids will find this hilarious). Lucy has brown skin and straight, dark hair, and the mountain man is brown-skinned as well.

All in all, this is a fun one. (*Picture book.* 3-6)



**THE LIGHTHOUSE BETWEEN THE WORLDS**

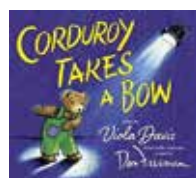
Crowder, Melanie  
 Atheneum (256 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-5344-0514-1

Griffin Fenn and his father, Philip, enjoy a quiet life looking after a lighthouse on the Oregon coast.

Suddenly, their calm, ordered world is shattered by the arrival of the mysterious Society of Lighthouse Keepers. The Keepers need Philip's help with the light's lens, which Griffin learns is a portal linking Earth to seven other worlds. After reluctantly agreeing, Philip disappears through the portal, leaving Griffin on his own with the Society and its dubious intentions. Griffin turns to his dad's journal, his late mother's bedtime stories about imaginary worlds, and his own knowledge of glass to find his way through the portal. The portal takes Griffin to Somni, an invading world where wicked priests control an entire populace with stolen magic. Then Griffin meets Fi, a member of a covert group of revolutionaries who have evaded the spell and are planning to

bring down the priests. If Griffin wants to rescue his dad, he'll have to join the resistance. The smooth third-person narration moves back and forth between Griffin and Fi. They are both resilient, self-reliant, and determined; readers will cheer them on until the end. Action is well-paced, making for a fast read that ends too soon. The book's diversity isn't among the people of Earth, who present white, but among the denizens of the different worlds.

The cliffhanger ending leaves the portal open for a sequel; with luck, readers won't have to wait long for Book 2. (*Fantasy.* 8-13)



**CORDUROY TAKES A BOW**

Davis, Viola & Hennessy, B.G.  
*Illus. by Wheeler, Jody*  
 Viking (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-0-425-29147-4

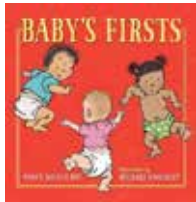
Don Freeman's beloved Corduroy experiences an unforgettable night at the theater in this debut picture book from Tony- and Academy Award-winning actress Davis with co-author Hennessy and illustrator Wheeler.

When Corduroy accompanies Lisa and her mother to the theater to see a dramatization of nursery rhymes, mischief and fun inevitably follow. After he's accidentally dropped before the curtain goes up, the ever curious bear ambles through the theater, eager to find the perfect vantage point from which to view the production. Corduroy's adventures take him from the orchestra pit to the costume room and finally onto the stage itself! The author's simple text conveys both her love of theater and the magical experience of a child who's brought to see a show for the first time. Lisa may be sitting in the plush red seats enjoying the show, but the real production is backstage, which readers experience through Corduroy's eyes. One of Wheeler's talents as an illustrator is facial expressions, and she captures Corduroy's elation, trepidation, and fearlessness as he free-wheels from adventure to adventure even as she successfully mimics Freeman's style. Perhaps the book's most valuable visual aspect is the way it features people of color in all elements of the theater, from Lisa and her mother, of course, to the orchestra pit, stage manager, and actors. Even Lisa's doll, shown at the end, is of color, providing much-needed representation.

A sweet story that will have children clamoring to see a show, perhaps with their own bears. (*Picture book* 3-5)

# Emberley's accompanying pencil-and-digital illustrations are gorgeously human in their depictions of parents caring for their babies.

BABY'S FIRSTS



## BABY'S FIRSTS

Day, Nancy Raines  
Illus. by Emberley, Michael  
Charlesbridge (32 pp.)  
\$14.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-58089-774-7

A joyful, poetic celebration of tiny moments in babies' lives.

This isn't the first picture book to revel in babyhood, but in many ways it's a refreshing addition to the nursery shelf. Its striking red cover with gold foil display type acts as a visual departure from the pastel pinks, blues, yellows, and greens that dominate all things baby, and its inclusive depiction of three families of different races makes it feel, if not like a first, then like it's keeping up with the times (though it would've been even nicer to see a two-mom or two-dad family included). From the first, Day's verse has the appeal and feel of an original nursery rhyme: "First cry. / First meal. / First burp. / Warm feel." Emberley's accompanying pencil-and-digital illustrations are gorgeously human in their depictions of parents caring for their babies. A few spreads (two of babies in sequences rolling, creeping, and crawling; then the closing birthday party scene) seem like direct references to Marla Frazee's illustrations in *Everywhere Babies*, by Susan Meyers (2001). Those familiar with Emberley's work in Robie Harris' books about bodies and sexuality will see here, too, his efforts to depict varied body types, along with a realistic, rather than idealized vision of early parenthood. Though the babies are endlessly appealing, their obviously adoring parents are also tired and exasperated sometimes.

An excellent first book for baby—and parents, too.  
(Picture book. 0-3)



## PIRATE JACK GETS DRESSED

Day, Nancy Raines  
Illus. by Black, Allison  
Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-4814-7664-5

A bold, black-bearded pirate gets dressed for the day, describing each item of his pirate garb by color in rollicking, rhyming text.

Jack the pirate awakens at 6 sharp wearing his gray long johns, which serve as both pajamas and the first layer of his costume. He adds a black eye patch (though he appears to have two intact eyeballs), gold earrings, a silver prosthetic hook on one hand, and clothes of many colors on following pages. His outfit includes a brown boot on one leg and a wooden peg on the other. Pirate Jack, who has golden-tan skin, meets his racially diverse "motley crew," which includes two women pirates. One of the women has a peg leg and the other has a prosthetic hook. As with most children's books with a pirate theme, these piratical tropes disregard concerns about disability awareness and sensitivity. The rhyming text is spunky and humorous, filled with familiar pirate lingo such as "matey," "aye, aye," and "me"

and "ye" for "my" and "you." Computer-generated illustrations use bright, saturated colors and an oversized landscape format with double-page spreads that provide lots of room for amusing details in Jack's well-furnished stateroom aboard ship. A tiny mouse character with a teeny-tiny eye patch is hidden somewhere within each spread.

Yer pirate-lovin' tender-aged readers will give *Pirate Jack* a thumbs-up, but they won't find many surprises, and disability advocates will find the same old, same old.  
(Picture book. 3-6)



## STAND TOGETHER AGAINST BULLYING Becoming a Hero and Overcoming Bullying Together

Day, Sophia & Pearson, Kayla  
Illus. by Zowada, Timmy  
Real MVP Kids (72 pp.)  
\$14.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-64255-232-4  
Series: Help Me Become

One of a line of character-building titles, this focuses on standing up to people who are bullying others.

Three short chapters show how the MVP Kids use STAND to stop the bullying: "Stand tall and be confident. Tell an adult if you run into trouble. Act bravely and walk away if you need to. Notice what is going on around you. Display kindness to others." On a hike, Lucas refuses to ostracize an unpopular boy, befriending him instead. Faith stops two kids from "intimidating" another student. And Leo leans on his friends (much as he leans on his walker) for help standing up to Charlie when he picks on another kid. With its short, simple tales, follow-up questions about each story and its application to real life, and notes for adults, this is clearly meant for use in an educational setting. The notes focus on various forms of bullying (verbal, mental, social) and showing kindness to everyone, bullies included; empathizing with bullies, the bullied, and bystanders as well as using role play to practice responses; and getting adults involved to prevent future bullying. The book's format and illustrations look like those found in early readers—short sentences and a sans serif font in different sizes and colors. The MVP Kids include two girls and six boys; three are brown, five are pale. Digital illustrations are as unvarnished as the text; this is a book that puts message above art.

Didactic it may be, but until our schools are bully-free, this provides kids an easy way to remember to STAND together and be kind. (Informational early reader. 4-10)



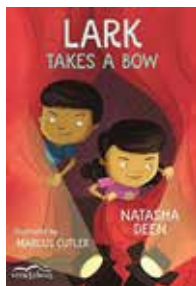
**SLEEPY, THE GOODNIGHT BUDDY**

*Daywalt, Drew*  
*Illus. by Campbell, Scott*  
 Disney-Hyperion (40 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-1-4847-8969-8

Will a goodnight buddy help restless Roderick fall asleep?

The opening text cuts to the chase and declares, “Roderick hated going to bed.” Campbell’s accompanying watercolor illustration shows a pajama-clad boy with his back to readers (and parents). He looks away from his toys and casts a defiant look over his shoulder at his parents, whose bodies are only partially visible on the page as they loom over him. Humorous text and art proceed to share his various stalling techniques, including his intentional provocation of a litany of “reasons why he couldn’t have a pony.” Roderick is resistant when his parents introduce him to Sleepy, “a goodnight buddy to help him sleep.” The stuffed animal looks like a cross between a bear and a moose with enormous eyes that stare at Roderick until he finally tosses him in his closet. He’s shocked and exclaims, “You’re alive!” when Sleepy protests. Sleepy then turns the tables on Roderick and wears him out with a series of demands and protestations against going to sleep. Lo and behold, an exhausted Roderick finally collapses in his bed, but not before Sleepy’s antics and Roderick’s responses to them can delight readers—though some may object to a cheap attempt for laughs when Roderick reads aloud a book entitled *The Witch’s Booty*, about “a witch with a very big butt,” and a rapid-fire barrage of variants on “freak” in the dialogue. Roderick is a pink-skinned, big-eyed boy with a mop of dark curls.

**Bedtime-bookshelf fodder.** (*Picture book.* 4-6)



**LARK TAKES A BOW**

*Deen, Natasha*  
*Illus. by Cutler, Marcus*  
 Orca (96 pp.)  
 \$6.95 paper | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-4598-1715-9  
 Series: Lark Ba Detective

Someone is playing pranks on the community theater’s rehearsals of *Alice in Wonderland*. The Ba twins spring into action to solve this mystery before the

play is shut down.

The third title in the Lark Ba Detective series begins at play rehearsals, where suspicious problems are showing up every day. The confusion and resultant delay are jeopardizing the entire play, causing everyone to be on edge. Both Lark and Connor have parts to rehearse, but they would rather find out who has removed the buttons from the costumes and taken the light bulbs from the makeup vanities. Their mixed-race family (Korean and Kenyan) is reintroduced but takes a back seat to

the investigation. Lark’s personality, however, is full of curiosity and determination, leading readers down the rabbit hole of clues. Like any good mystery, the book offers a list of suspects, red herrings, organized clues, and a moment of truth. The plot and pacing slowly build through the rehearsals just as the production nears showtime. This realistic story involves finding someone caught in a difficult situation and the hard decision to tell someone in charge. It wasn’t a high crime, like stealing diamonds. But it also wasn’t an accident, like losing a key. When friends and family are involved, solving mysteries can be complicated.

**As a multiethnic detective, Lark’s authentic success at sleuthing ensures her a place at the chapter-book table.** (*Mystery.* 6-9)



**LIGHTS, CAMERA, CARMEN!**

*Denise, Anika*  
*Illus. by Gómez, Lorena Alvarez*  
 Abrams (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-1-4197-3169-3

Dramatic triple threat-in-training Carmen returns in another story of sibling love and sharing the spotlight.

Since putting on her big home stage show in *Starring Carmen!* (2017), things appear to be going great for young actress/singer/director Carmen and her adoring little brother, Eduardo. When Carmen decides to turn her attention to the big time by submitting an entry to a contest for a Dino-Krispies cereal commercial, she names Eduardo cinematographer (“What’s a *cinnamon-tographer?*” he asks). She puts together a showstopping dance number, but it’s cute Eduardo in a dino costume who gets the ad agency’s attention. Carmen must, of course, overcome her emotions without displaying bitterness toward Eduardo, who offers to turn down the gig. For readers of the first book, it’ll come as no surprise that Carmen won’t let that happen, and she shows some growth since then in how quickly she becomes a cheerleader for her brother. Soon, Carmen is seeking career opportunities in talent management. What the Carmen books do well is treat the overeager enthusiasm of Carmen with compassion: Her dreams aren’t presented as unrealistic or irritating to her bilingual, interracial, Latinx family; her parents and brother enjoy her performances. The illustrations throughout capture great human moments in the characters’ expressions, the way they stand, dance, and move, and the ebullient mass of purple hair on Carmen’s (and her mother’s) head.

**Carmen’s moxie still charms, even when Eduardo is stealing the show.** (*Picture book.* 5-7)

# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## *IBTIHAJ MUHAMMAD*

### AN OLYMPIAN FENCER MAKES HISTORY BY LIVING OUTSIDE THE BOX

By Joshunda Sanders



Photo courtesy/Heidi Gutman-Guilaine

ONE OF THE MOST surprising things about the trailblazing Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad's memoir, *Proud: Living My American Dream*, is that she nearly gave up the sport she loved for a law career.

Three months after graduating from Duke University, the New Jersey native found that the post-9/11 world was not ready to accept her in hijab, the traditional head covering for Muslim women: Her applications for jobs and law schools she was qualified for led to one rejection after another. Muhammad became depressed. She started working at a Dollar Store near her home as a cashier, then a substitute teacher before she returned to fencing, the sport that brought her joy.

But she started to feel that fencing might not be the best use of her time and efforts. "I think it was important to include that part of my journey because it's similar for other athletes," Muhammad says. "Elite level competition can cost upward of \$25,000 a year, and coming from a working-class family, it wasn't possible for me to try to compete without working. Then there's the struggle of being a woman of color trying to break into corporate America—it's one of those things you don't know. Is it my skin color? Is it because I'm a woman? Is it the hijab?"

*Proud*, released simultaneously in two versions—one for young readers, another for adults—is thoughtful and candid. It's also a refreshingly diverse Cinderella story at a time when anti-black and anti-Muslim sentiments are high. The politics and racial animus that have added to Muhammad's adversities are detailed in the adult version in greater detail, but the young reader's edition focuses on reminding youth to stay the course regardless of external obstacles.

Muhammad is now a superstar Olympic fencer who made history as the first U.S. athlete to compete in hijab and the first Muslim-American woman to receive a medal when she won bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics. She's an entrepreneur who runs a business, Louella, selling modest women's clothing with her siblings. Later this month, Mattel will release a Barbie doll named in her honor—another first that is especially moving because of how meaningful and scarce black dolls are for young girls of color.

But Muhammad had to put aside the painful dismissiveness of a few hostile coaches and the nearly debilitating isolation she felt from her teammates, which led to depression, fatigue, and anxiety.

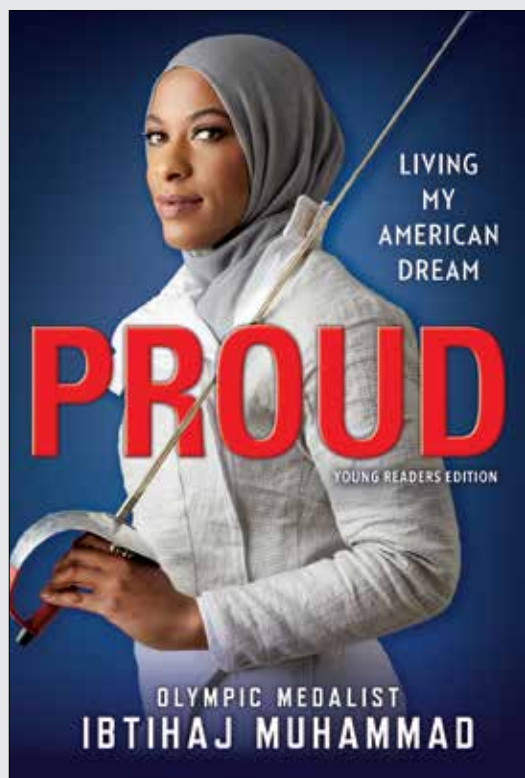
"I wrote about that struggle because a lot of people don't get over that hump," she says. "People think that there are limitations to what women and people of color can achieve. It's part of my life's work to break through that box people try to put you in."

The key to unlocking her strengths and potential came from making an internal shift. "For a really long

time, I tried to do everything to make my teammates feel more comfortable with me as a Muslim. As a black woman, you're constantly fighting what people place on you and at the same time dispel the stereotypes they have about you and others," she says. "At some point, I had the epiphany that no matter what hoops I jumped through, they'd never accept me. People are going to have their biases; you shouldn't let that dictate your happiness. When I arrived at that understanding, my results skyrocketed. I let it run off my back. I left it all on the fencing strip."

The rest is now history—a history she and others can take great pride in.

*Joshunda Sanders is an author and educator in New York City. Proud: Living My American Dream: Young Readers Edition received a starred review in the June 1, 2018, issue.*



**PROUD: LIVING MY AMERICAN DREAM: YOUNG READERS EDITION**  
*Mubammad, Ibtihaj*  
 Little, Brown (240 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | July 24, 2018  
 978-0-316-47700-0



**THE SNOW RABBIT**

*Deutsch, Georgiana*  
*Illus. by Edgson, Alison*  
 Tiger Tales (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-68010-101-0

Will a kind gesture from Rabbit change Bear's grumpy attitude?

"Bear was ALWAYS GRUMPY. He had a big, furry frown and a sulky scowl." The bold, serif typeface proclaims this on the verso, as Bear's large, open, toothless mouth lets out a "GRRROWL!" that crosses into the recto via speech bubble. His foreshortened muzzle makes his face look rather doglike here, but on later pages he appears obviously ursine. Sweet-faced Rabbit, sporting a striped sweater, vows to cheer up Bear, against the cautions of nervous squirrels. When Bear finds Rabbit's snow sculpture (embellished throughout with embossed sparkles), his outraged roar sends a pile of snow onto himself and the snow rabbit. Little ones will giggle nervously as each woodland animal denies to Bear any culpability in the creation of the snow rabbit. The text continues to use both narrative text and comments in speech bubbles, complemented by an array of brightly colored, anthropomorphic, cartoonlike animals—all with soft-appearing fur—against pale blue, wintry skies. A particularly funny bit shows an owl perched on a snowy tree branch, dramatically covering its face with feathered fingers, bracing itself for a Bear tirade. When Rabbit has been identified as the trespasser, Bear bellows and growls and ultimately demands that she help him clean up the mess. Despite Bear's bluster, little ones will sense that a happy ending is coming, and they will enjoy gazing at the final double-page spread.

A funny, fast read with a predictable but enjoyable plot and character development. (Picture book. 3-5)



**NIPPER AND THE LUNCHBOX**

*Dillamore, Lucy*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Child's Play (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-78628-180-7

In this British import, a small, brown-and-white dog named Nipper zips through town to take a forgotten lunchbox to his devoted owner at the man's shop.

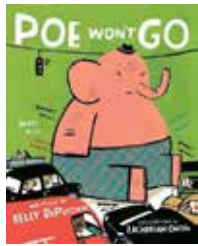
An inviting portrait of Nipper on the cover shows the cheerful canine holding the handle of the red lunchbox in his mouth, with the book title scrawled on the lunchbox's side. Nipper is devoted to his owner, Richard, who heads off to work each morning, leaving Nipper alone. When Richard leaves his lunchbox at home one day, Nipper grabs its handle and sets off on a journey through the countryside and into town, where Richard's toy shop is located. The dog falls asleep in the store window, creating a draw for customers, and in a satisfying

O'Hora's matte-finish acrylic-and-pencil illustrations are reminiscent of *Madeline's* but with a pink and gold palette; Marigold is an endearing heroine.

POE WON'T GO

conclusion, Richard decides Nipper can be his partner at the store. Busy, soft-focus illustrations in a muted palette are filled with a diverse cast of characters, including people with disabilities, same-sex couples, and women in hijab. (Richard presents white.) A double-page-spread scene of the town square with Nipper lost and alone at its center is particularly interesting, with a crowd of people of every sort, from dark-skinned twins in a stroller to an elderly white lady with a walker (and, in a crowd-pleasing but rather baffling detail, several pairs of underwear).

**Nipper might be just a little nipper, but he is smart and courageous, solving a problem in a resourceful way.** (Picture book. 4-8)



**POE WON'T GO**

*DiPucchio, Kelly*  
*Illus. by O'Hora, Zachariah*  
 Disney-Hyperion (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
 978-1-4847-9059-5

A pink elephant named Poe sits in the middle of a town's only road and won't budge—until someone bothers to

find out why he's there.

The people of Prickly Valley aren't happy that Poe is blocking their road. A traffic jam forms. People honk and yell at Poe. A traffic cop writes him a ticket. When that doesn't work, they try making all sorts of noises to shoo him away, from trombones to tap dancing, then turn to begging and bribing. They bring mice, cranes, and magicians. The mayor forms committees. Balloons, fire hoses, and the force of all the people in town can't get Poe to go. Finally, a brown-skinned girl named Marigold, who's wearing a hijab that reflects her name, asks the mayor (a pink-skinned woman with white hair and pearls) if anyone has thought to ask Poe why he won't go. Marigold, who is "fluent in both kitten and hedgehog," says that "anyone can speak elephant if they just listen hard enough." She climbs up and listens closely to Poe, who smiles for the first time, then she tells the crowd Poe is waiting for a friend. The mayor doesn't believe her, but a news reporter thinks he may have seen Poe's friend. O'Hora's matte-finish acrylic-and-pencil illustrations are reminiscent of *Madeline's* but with a pink and gold palette; Marigold is an endearing heroine. After the buildup and anticipation though, the story's conclusion (Poe was sitting on his friend, a monkey named Moe) is more puzzling than satisfying.

**A cute escapade for the silliest readers.** (Picture book. 3-7)



**THE LOTTERYS MORE OR LESS**

*Donoghue, Emma*  
*Illus. by Hadilaksono, Caroline*  
 Levine/Scholastic (304 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-338-20753-8

When a major storm forces Toronto's creative Lottery clan to revise their plans for the winter solstice and succeeding holidays, Sumac misses familiar family traditions.

The ice storm transforms the Lottery's neighborhood into a glittering, dangerous fairyland while, flight canceled, PapaDum and Sic, oldest of the family's four biological kids wait it out in India. Again, the third-person perspective is filtered through family record-keeper, traditionalist, and worrywart, Sumac, 9, oldest of the three adopted Lottery's. While caring for couch-surfing Brazilian visitor Luiz, sidelined after wiping out when sledding behind a car, the Lottery's assist neighbors afflicted by power outages and, losing power themselves, gratefully accept help. Everyone misses PapaDum, the family cook and handier of their two dads, though PopCorn tries to fill in. Stresses mount. Sumac's enraged when her impromptu entry in icy Lake Ontario's Polar Bear Plunge goes unrecorded. Amid setbacks and challenges, the Lottery's exercise their "muscles of surrender." Brian, 4, ventures farther into gender reinvention; MaxiMum meditates with steely resolve; CardaMom comforts; and the harsh weather turns multiethnic and immigrant neighbors into friends. The Lottery kids, a series' strength, are extra-engaging; their gay dads and lesbian moms, here softened by parental imperfections and quirks, continue to curate a tantalizingly wide-ranging home-school curriculum. In this celebration of Canada's vibrant cultural diversity, French Canada's culture and the country's second official language are conspicuous in their almost total absence.

**Funny, well-crafted, and mostly intersectionally inclusive.** (Fiction. 8-12)



**GOODNIGHT SANDMAN**

*Drescher, Daniela*  
*Illus. by the author*  
*Trans. by Lawson, Polly*  
 Floris (26 pp.)  
 \$16.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-78250-525-9

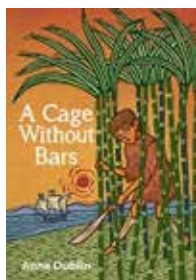
Jacob the Sandman befriends the Night Monster when he goes to gather dream sand.

Drescher's text, translated from German, is heavy on exposition as it tells readers about an evening when the elfin Sandman, Jacob, oversleeps and neglects his duty to sprinkle dream sand over the homes of sleeping children in order to give them good dreams. When he and his helper, Milo the mouse (just a head shorter than Jacob), belatedly arrive at the hilltop to gather the sand, they find the massive, reptilian Night Monster and are



afraid until they realize that he's a misunderstood, kindhearted soul. He says he's afraid of the dark, and he goes into children's bedrooms to seek a cozy place for himself, and he never means to scare anyone. Jacob and Milo then welcome the monster to accompany them on their dream-sand-sprinkling mission in their hot air balloon, and after that they welcome him back to Jacob's cozy home and rename him Albie. The story is every bit as haphazard and meandering as this summary makes it seem, and redundant art does little to elevate it, though the full-bleed, double-page-spread watercolors are better-executed and more appealing than the writing is.

Not exactly dreamy. (*Picture book*. 3-5)



**A CAGE WITHOUT BARS**

*Dublin, Anne*  
 Second Story Press (160 pp.)  
 \$10.95 paper | Sep. 10, 2018  
 978-1-77260-069-8

In 1492, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain sends 12-year-old Joseph and his young sister to slavery on a sugar plantation.

Any Jews who don't convert must leave their homes in Spain, but neighboring countries have no desire to take in these unwanted refugees. When Joseph and his family, after a grueling walk on which many of their thousands of fellow Jews die, reach the border with Portugal, they're told that they must pay everything they have or they'll become slaves to the king. Joseph's parents pay the tax, but to no avail. In a harrowing scene, these Jewish refugee children are ripped from their parents' arms and sent into slavery. Many of the children die on the brutal ocean journey to São Tomé, off the coast of central Africa. On São Tomé, the children—forcibly converted to Christianity—prepare the land for sugar farming along with white Portuguese convicts and, eventually, African slaves. Joseph, who can read and write and figure, has some privileges, though he still labors in the fields. When he befriends an Igbo slave known as Tomás, Tomás makes it clear that white-skinned, literate Joseph's slavery is qualitatively different from his own. While the scenario and constant peril should draw readers in, Joseph's first-person narration is sadly flat; a topic this vital deserves a more compelling story.

**An important educational (rather than enthralling) take on this little-known historical tragedy. (map, historical note, endnotes, author's note, glossary, further reading)**  
*(Historical fiction*. 9-11)



**THE BIGFOOT FILES**

*Eagar, Lindsay*  
 Candlewick (384 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-7636-9234-6

A skeptical middle schooler gets more than she bargained for in her own search for Bigfoot.

Asian-American Miranda Cho, 12, has big plans, with the lists to prove it. She is student-body president and aims to go to a prestigious leadership camp in Washington, D.C. The only problem is that she is on the verge of losing credits from too many absences. Her mom, Kat, who is also Asian-American, is a cryptozoologist—a serious one. This means last-minute trips to remote wilderness chasing the next big sighting of Bigfoot with little success. Her anxiety surfacing in a hair-pulling habit, Miranda tries to take her mom's comical eccentricities in stride until she discovers a drawer full of unpaid bills threatening eviction and any possibility of her dreams coming true. Desperate, she plans her own Bigfoot search with her mom with the goal of shaming her into reality and, at the very least, responsible parenting. Very quickly her plans fall through, leading her to question everything. Although Miranda is introduced as the perfect Asian student, Kat acts as a foil and provides conflict enough to allow a fully rounded personality to develop. Eagar has a beautiful way with words. Her complex internal dialogues and descriptors allow readers to visualize, in minute detail, every physical and mental aspect of each character and their current surroundings. However, these skillfully in-depth descriptors often usurp the pace and plot.

**Unlike the elusive Bigfoot, there is little left to the imagination in this quirky mother-daughter story for studious readers. (Fiction. 11-14)**



**WHAT CAN A CITIZEN DO?**

*Eggers, Dave*  
*Illus. by Harris, Shawn*  
 Chronicle (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-1-4521-7313-9

Following *Her Right Foot* (2017), Eggers and Harris team up for a second time to try to answer their timely titular

question.

“What in the world can a citizen do? / Who can a citizen be?” The book's answers are simple and idealistic. A citizen can “help a neighbor,” “join a cause,” “plant a tree,” “write a letter.” A citizen should “be engaged,” “care and care,” “build things, save things.” For those new to the concept of citizenship, some aspects of the text are misleading: How are they to understand “A citizen can be a bear. / Yes! A citizen can be a bear”? The statement that “A citizen's not what you are—a citizen is what you do” is both opaque and painfully insensitive to America's practiced

definition of citizenship both historically and contemporarily, which denies the humanity of those not legally deemed citizens. Harris' mixed-media collage illustrations feature a palette of muddy pinks, deep blues, and earthy browns and tans. The illustrations are generally overcrowded and frequently muddle, rather than illuminate, the potential message of Eggers' text. A diverse group of children is featured in the illustrations, including a beige child with a shaved head, baseball cap, and tulle skirt; a brown child wearing a hijab; and twins with brown skin and Afros.

**A disappointing effort that aims high but misses the mark.** (*Picture book. 5-8*)



### DRAGONS IN A BAG

Elliott, Zetta

Illus. by B, Geneva

Random House (160 pp.)

\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 23, 2018

978-1-5247-7045-7

978-1-5247-7046-4 PLB



Nine-year-old Brooklynite Jaxon meets a witch, becomes her apprentice, and protects baby dragons all in one eventful day.

As the story opens, Jaxon and his mom are being evicted. While Mama tries to secure a place to stay, she leaves him with Ma, the woman who raised her. Ma clearly doesn't want Jaxon around, but it becomes apparent that's at least partially due to a mysterious package she's received. Jax soon discovers that Ma's a witch, his mom used to be Ma's apprentice (a mantle he takes up), and that Ma's package contains...baby dragons! The dragons need to be taken to the magical realm, but a transport malfunction strands Ma while Jax is sent back to Brooklyn. Desperate to save Ma, Jax enlists the help of his friend Vikram, whose little sister, Kavita, tags along. Curious—or is it nosy?—Kavita discovers the dragons and does the worst: feeds them. This not only increases their size, but bonds them to her. Thankfully, Trub, Jax's maternal grandfather, is a magic user and helps Jax find Ma and get the dragons to the magical realm, where (discerning readers won't be surprised) they discover one dragon is missing....What a breath of fresh air: a chapter-book fantasy with an urban setting, an array of brown-skinned magic wielders, and a lovable black protagonist readers will root for and sympathize with. Geneva B's black-and-white illustrations depict a cast of color and appear every few pages.

**Good, solid fantasy fun.** (*Fantasy. 6-10*)



### DODGER BOY

Ellis, Sarah

Groundwood (176 pp.)

\$16.95 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-77306-072-9



Draft dodging and literary censorship come to a head in this Canadian bildungsroman set in the 1970s.

While the Vietnam War rages, 13-year-old Charlotte and her best friend, Dawn, are doing their best to grow up without becoming awful teenagers in the process. While attending a supremely muddy be-in in full hippie regalia, the two befriend clean-cut Tom Ed, a well-mannered Texan draft dodger in need of a place to crash. Charlotte's Quaker family takes him in, and Charlotte finds a true friend in the American guest. Meanwhile, the girls' favorite English teacher is facing a censorship battle over *Catcher in the Rye*, and Charlotte feels a calling to help. Scintillating prose, rich dialogue, and charming characterizations mark a novel that straddles the boundary between middle-grade and YA. Charlotte, despite her determination to be an Unteen, has an age-appropriate fascination with menstruation and the concept of sex, and Tom Ed occasionally forgets his boundaries to drop the occasional swearword ("fag-got," "asshole"), adding to the book's liminal feel. Charlotte, part of an all-white cast of characters, is a curious, confused, and delightful companion, wrestling with questions about her best friend's flakiness and her brother's emerging same-sex attraction. Ellis extends her insightful characterizations to the secondary cast, such as a censor's daughter who is "snobby and scary, like she was just getting ready to be mean."

**A whip-smart historical that highlights that transitionary period to which few would ever desire to return.** (*Historical fiction. 10-14*)



### CLEOPATRA BONES AND THE GOLDEN CHIMPANZEE

Emmett, Jonathan

Illus. by Eaves, Ed

Kane/Miller (32 pp.)

\$7.99 paper | Sep. 1, 2018

978-1-61067-802-5

Series: Fast and Furry Racers

This title about the Fast and Furry Racers sends anthropomorphic dog Cleopatra Bones and other animal characters racing off to find the fabled Golden Chimpanzee.

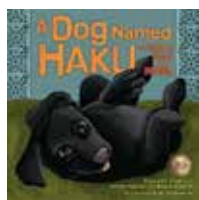
While busy, cartoon art and labored, rhyming text signal this to be a cute adventure story, readers may balk at various details. For starters, is the canine protagonist's name an intentional or unintentional play on the name of the 1973 blaxploitation film *Cleopatra Jones*, starring Tamara Dobson in the title role? Either scenario seems downright odd, at best. So named, Cleopatra finds a treasure map in a temple, and although nowhere does the text name what sort of temple it is, there are symbols that

## Using a dark palette, Jeyaveeran's authentic illustrations add another layer of cultural knowledge.

A DOG NAMED HAKU

seem to emulate Egyptian hieroglyphics. She shares the map with other animal characters in a scene at a museum, and they all go off in pursuit of the Golden Chimpanzee. Some may wonder about the underlying ethics of this treasure hunt. In an era of discussion and debate about appropriation, exploitation, and repatriation in the museum field, this lighthearted book runs roughshod over such concerns. The animals' race brings them to a large stone chimpanzee sculpture hidden in a jungle, which they destroy. "And from the broken body parts pours a waterfall of gold." The animals divide the gold among themselves; that's the dubious happily-ever-after conclusion.

**A treasure it's not.** (Picture book. 3-6)



### A DOG NAMED HAKU A Holiday Story from Nepal

Engle, Margarita & Karanjit, Amish & Karanjit, Nicole

Illus. by Jeyaveeran, Ruth

Millbrook/Lerner (32 pp.)

\$19.99 | Sep. 1, 2018

978-1-5124-3205-3

Brothers Alu and Bhalu are celebrating Kukur Tihar, a special day to honor dogs during festival time in Nepal.

The two young boys search the streets of Kathmandu for a stray dog to feed, remembering the brave search-and-rescue dogs that saved many lives after earthquakes devastated their country in 2015. Multiaward-winner Engle teams up with her daughter, Nicole Karanjit, and son-in-law, Amish Karanjit (who was born and raised in Nepal), to craft this tale based on a true story from another part of the world. The spare text is interwoven with authentic touches about Nepali family and culture, describing how "families chased away the darkness / by lighting lanterns on doorsteps, / rooftops, / and windowsills" and how the children strive "not to scatter / the rice flour / arranged in dazzling patterns / on the living room floor." Using a dark palette, Jeyaveeran's authentic illustrations add another layer of cultural knowledge, showing dark-haired, brown-skinned children and adults wearing traditional Nepali outfits and joyously celebrating the festival. While the resolution to Alu and Bhalu's search is successful and satisfying, the text may not fully convey to young readers the cultural depth of the brothers' actions, as they feed their new pet the festival feast meant for the family. The oversimplification of the climax diminishes the impact of this otherwise remarkable story set in another culture.

**A sweet sojourn in Nepal; though not perfect, it's nevertheless an important contribution.** (glossary, further reading, activities) (Picture book. 5-8)



### THE LITTLE GIRL WHO WANTED TO BE BIG

Engledow, Dave

Illus. by the author

Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)

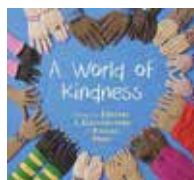
\$17.99 | Oct. 16, 2018

978-0-06-242539-3

Growing pains abound in this follow-up to internet star Engledow's *The Little Girl Who Didn't Want to Go to Bed* (2017).

As in his previous title and his online work, Engledow uses humorous, digitally manipulated, composite photographs of his daughter, a blonde white girl. In this story, she wants to grow up quickly in order to do "big things," and she tries various tactics to make herself grow. While one photo shows her arms lengthened to unnatural proportions after stretching with weights, it's not until she follows her parents' advice to "think big" that she awakens transformed into a larger-than-life child. Towering over her parents, she now rides atop the family station wagon instead of in her car seat, and she does "big things," too: from washing the roof of her house to "serving her country" by lifting the dome off the Capitol building to declare "You'll never accomplish big things if you keep acting like little children." This moment feels rather self-important and off-mark in terms of child appeal, but subsequent spreads are stronger as they show the giant girl sitting on a mountaintop and eventually snoozing on a distant planet as though it were an exercise ball. The imaginative conclusion finds her reunited with her parents, glad to be their little girl.

**Big on visual appeal if short on storytelling innovation.** (Picture book. 3-6)



### A WORLD OF KINDNESS

Featherstone, Anne—Ed.

Pajama Press (32 pp.)

\$17.95 | Oct. 5, 2018

978-1-77278-050-5

Inspiration for acts of kindness, with illustrations from several artists.

The text, uncredited to a single author, uses direct address to draw readers into its central message. The first four spreads read: "Are you kind? / Do you wait your turn? / Will you help someone younger... /...or older?" Each brief line is illustrated by a different artist, with credits for the art in a table of contents. Some art is original to this book, while other illustrations have been taken from other picture books from this publisher. The result is akin to an exhibit book rather than a cohesive, illustrated narrative, and some pairings of art and text are more successful than others. The opening question is juxtaposed to a painting of three smiling children who appear black, Asian, and white and look out at readers with their hands open. This physical enactment of kindness is rather opaque compared to the next spread, which shows a child going down a slide while others await a turn. While many spreads include diverse human subjects, others, such as one reading "Do you say please and

Brooker's illustrations are a marvel. Her collages seamlessly blend the most basic geometric shapes—circles for heads—with ultra-detailed photographs.

BITTER AND SWEET

thank you? It's easy, you know," are illustrated with anthropomorphic animals, which might help lighten the text's unabashed heavy-handedness. In a meta act of kindness, royalties from the proceeds from the book will support nonprofit group Think Kindness.

**A tool to spur kindness conversations rather than a satisfying read unto itself. (Picture book. 4-7)**



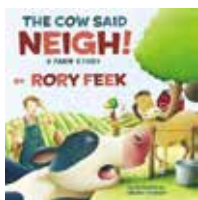
**BITTER AND SWEET**

Feder, Sandra V.  
 Illus. by Brooker, Kyrsten  
 Groundwood (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-55498-995-9

Little things matter.

Many classic children's books are shaped around very small, very important moments, and at first Feder's story might not seem to fit that pattern. This picture book is about a big life change: Hannah is leaving all her friends to move to a new neighborhood. Her grandmother promises her it will be "definitely some bitter but even more sweet." The story is told through tiny, poignant details. Hannah sees everything she owns packed onto a big truck; she watches her home "disappear from sight" through the window of a car. These moments don't always have the impact they should, and the final pages of the book feel almost anticlimactic: Hannah's new neighbor Maya offers her some hot chocolate. And, in fact, the chocolate turns out to be bitter. But Hannah discovers that, when she adds sugar to the powder, it's delicious. The last few lines of the book are poetic. Hannah tells her grandmother, "I thought it was only bitter here," and when her grandmother asks if she's found "the sweet," Hannah says, "You can't just find it. You have to add it yourself." Nothing else in the book quite reaches that level of beauty, though Brooker's illustrations are a marvel. Her collages seamlessly blend the most basic geometric shapes—circles for heads—with ultra-detailed photographs and are populated with mostly light-skinned characters. Hannah's family is Jewish.

**Some of the small, important moments feel smaller than necessary, but the last scene is a tiny, perfect gem. (Picture book. 3-8)**



**THE COW SAID NEIGH!  
 A Farm Story**

Feek, Rory  
 Illus. by Robert, Bruno  
 Thomas Nelson (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4003-1171-2

Envy on the farm has animals wishing they could each behave and speak like the other—with inane results.

The cow in the barn observes the horse in the field and thinks, "If I were a horse, I could run free all day." To emphasize

his desire, he lets out a "NEIGH!" (Yes, this cow is gendered male.) The horse, on the other hand, looks at the duck swimming in the pond and laments, "If I were a duck, bet they'd stay off my back." With that, a "QUACK" bolsters his view. In turn, the duck longs for a winter coat like the sheep, the sheep wants to dig in the mud like the pig, the pig wants to be tough like the guard dog, the dog wants to be inside like the cat, and the cat longs to be a man like the farmer. Each makes the iconic sound of the animal he wishes to be, creating a cacophony of mixed-up noises. After the cat says "Hello," the surprised farmer decides to join in the fun and produces "a big...MOOOOOO!" Bright paintings in an expressive animated style add to the humor of the rhyming narrative. Preschoolers will surely giggle at the erroneous sounds coming out of each animal and perhaps suppress an urge to correct. The farmer presents white.

**Though there's no real resolution, the concept of pure fun will surely resonate. (Picture book. 4-8)**



**THE REPTILE CLUB**

Fergus, Maureen  
 Illus. by Ellis, Elina  
 Kids Can (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-77138-655-5

New kid Rory hasn't found a school club he wants to join, so he starts his own, for kids who share one of his interests: the Reptile Club.

Lots of kids like animals—and he's certain lots of kids like reptiles—so he has high hopes, making posters and bringing in his plastic reptiles and lizard-shaped cookies. Here, what has so far seemed like a fairly run-of-the-mill school story takes a literally wild and fantastical turn when the first participants arrive: not fellow reptile lovers but a crocodile, a snake, and a lizard. The animals introduce themselves and offer some interesting facts. The crocodile tells Rory he sweats through his mouth, for example. When the other students see how much fun the inter-species group is having, "they couldn't wait to join," and Rory's goal is achieved. Rory is a red-haired white child; the classroom is a multicultural group in which boys and girls alike participate in the Prancing Unicorn Club as well as the Extra Math Homework Club. Ellis' digital artwork replicates a scratchy, penciled look, which suits the energetic, imaginative story. As winter approaches, the reptiles must leave, imparting one last animal fact: "Reptiles can't tolerate the cold." Delightfully, this does not spell the end of Rory's friendships.

**This testament to imagination, confidence, and entrepreneurship offers refreshing takes on learning about animals and how to make friends. (Picture book. 5-7)**



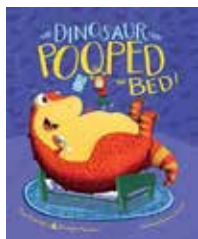
### THE CHRISTMASAURUS

*Fletcher, Tom*  
*Illus. by Devries, Shane*  
 Random House (384 pp.)  
 \$13.99 | \$16.99 PLB | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-5247-7330-4  
 978-1-5247-7331-1 PLB

A boy asks Santa for a dinosaur and gets a life-changing experience.

Cribbing freely from any number of classic Christmas stories and films, musician/vlogger Fletcher places his 10-year-old protagonist, William, who uses a wheelchair, at the head of an all-white human cast that features his widowed dad, a girl bully, and a maniacal hunter—plus a dinosaur newly hatched from an egg discovered in the North Pole’s ice by Santa’s elves. Having stowed away on Santa’s sleigh, Christmasaurus meets and bonds with William on Christmas Eve, then, fueled by the power of a child’s belief, flies the lad to the North Pole (“It’s somewhere between Imagination and Make-Believe”) for a meeting with the jolly toy-maker himself. Upon his return William gets to see the hunter (who turns out to be his uncle) gun down his dad (who survives), blast a plush dinosaur toy to bits, and then with a poster-sized “CRUNCH! GULP!” go down Christmasaurus’ hatch. In the meantime (emphasis on “mean”), after William spots his previously vicious tormenter, Brenda Payne, crying in the bushes, he forgives trespasses that in real life would have had her arrested and confined long ago. Seemingly just for laffs, the author tosses in doggerel-speaking elves (“‘If it’s a girl, can we call her Ginny?’ / ‘I think it’s a boy! Look, he’s got a thingy!’”) and closes with further lyrics and a list of 10 (secular) things to love about Christmas. Devries adds sugary illustrations or spot art to nearly every spread.

**Reads like a grown-up’s over-the-top effort to peddle a set of kid-friendly premises—a notion that worked for the author’s *The Dinosaur That Pooped a Planet* (2017), but not here.** (*Fantasy. 9-11*)



### THE DINOSAUR THAT POOPED THE BED!

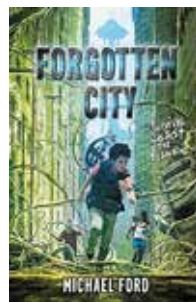
*Fletcher, Tom & Poynter, Dougie*  
*Illus. by Parsons, Garry*  
 Aladdin (32 pp.)  
 \$15.99 | Nov. 6, 2018  
 978-1-4814-9870-8

Danny’s one-trick dino again goes with the flow.

Forbidden to watch TV until he’s cleaned his room, rightly dubbed “Mount Dumpy,” Danny invites his outsized sidekick to Hoover up all the toys, dirty clothes, and bric-a-brac. A double crisis ensues, as not only does Dinosaur swell up to the point that the door is blocked (“Then Dan started crying. / His nose dripped with snot. / They were stuck in their room and the TV was not!”), but the inevitable diarrhetic deluge redeposits all the

junk amid “smelly poo lumps.” This eco-disaster seems pretty small scale, considering that in previous outings the dinosaur ...*Pooped a Planet* (2017) and ...*Pooped the Past* (2018), and the poo in Parsons’ antiseptic cartoons barely twitches the gross-o-meter. It just looks like pumpkin-pie filling and fails to stick even a little to Danny’s possessions, as they emerge unaffected by their passage through the dinosaur’s bowels. Moreover, once the poo’s out, rather than go for more alimentary gags, the authors just skip ahead to a disingenuous moral: “You can’t watch cartoons if your bedroom’s not clean!” Danny and his family present white.

**A thin-sauce, phoned-in sequel.** (*Picture book. 4-6*)



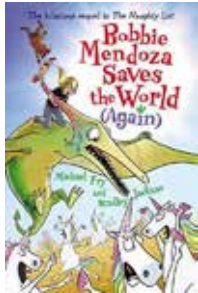
### FORGOTTEN CITY

*Ford, Michael*  
 Harper/HarperCollins (272 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-06-269696-0  
 Series: Forgotten City, 1

Teenager Kobi must fight for survival in this post-apocalyptic thriller.

Seattle is unrecognizable after the Waste outbreak. A “genetically engineered hormone” initially designed to end the worldwide food shortage has instead infected all life—plants, insects, and animals—and genetically mutated them into gigantic creatures with supernatural abilities, such as the predatory Chokerplants. Kobi and his father are the only known human survivors. They have strict rules in place: Don’t spend too much time in the Waste, seal all entrances. Kobi’s dad routinely leaves him in their shelter, an abandoned school, to work in his lab for a cure. When he does not return from one of these trips, Kobi must break with protocol and venture out to find out what happened to him. To the Asian-American teen’s surprise, he runs into three kids: a white boy named Fionn and two girls, olive-skinned Niki and Indian-American Asha, who are being chaperoned by Guardians, adults in hazmat suits. The action just accelerates from there. The only inhibitor in this tightly and effectively written thriller is the inconsistent science in the worldbuilding. Typically a “hormone” is not spread by “spores” or “cured” by “antibodies.” Still, readers will find the plot twists engrossing enough.

**Ending on a cliffhanger, this book is sure to infect readers’ curiosity for a sequel.** (*Science fiction. 10-14*)



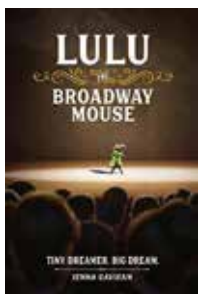
**BOBBIE MENDOZA SAVES THE WORLD (AGAIN)**

*Fry, Michael & Jackson, Bradley*  
*Illus. by Fry, Michael*  
Harper/HarperCollins (272 pp.)  
\$12.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-0-06-265193-8

Fry and Jackson team up again in this sequel to *The Naughty List* (2015).

Roberta “Bobbie” Mendoza would give anything just to be “normal.” Starting a new school is difficult enough without the need to conceal the secret of her past brush with Trans-Dimensional Beings. Having saved Christmas does not make her a hero; it just makes her “weird.” Cole Crusterman, another weirdo, is the only student to even speak with her on the first day of school. Yet she has few opportunities to make more friends, as the new semester begins with the return of elfin accomplices from a previous quest, a stampede of unicorns, and a trip through a locker-based portal. Fast-paced adventures ensue, full of ridiculous chases, fantastical creatures, and ample scatological humor. All the while Bobbie is plagued by a recurring nightmare and simmering anxieties. In the end she must learn to embrace her fears in order to conquer them and discover that “there’s nothing wrong with being weird.” Short chapters include stream-of-consciousness first-person narrative prose interspersed with cartoon illustrations that further reveal Bobbie’s internal thoughts as well as the plot. The quality of writing does not make this title a standout in the genre, but the brevity, pacing, and humor are likely to appeal to reluctant readers, especially where there is appreciation for both ridiculous plot twists and fart jokes. Bobbie is assumed to be Latina (though her identity is not explored beyond her surname), while Cole is white.

**Fun for fans of fantasy and flatulence.** (*Adventure. 8-12*)



**LULU THE BROADWAY MOUSE**

*Gavigan, Jenna*  
Running Press (256 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-7624-6461-6

Lulu’s dreams are big for a little mouse: starring on Broadway.

Lulu lives in the very best house, the Schubert Theatre, on West 44th Street. Her passion is to perform on stage. In a first-person narrative, the little mouse interacts with and assists the cast and crew backstage. Her ability to speak English and her full acceptance despite her rodent nature are givens. The drama of the story revolves around a self-centered child performer, who rarely misses a performance and whom Lulu does not like because she is full of “Sugarcoated meanness,” and the very friendly understudy who decides to chuck it all and go home to New Jersey. Can the new understudy overcome her stage fright? Spoiler alert: Dreams can come

true for performers of all sizes. Lulu writes with a very chatty, insider’s point of view (the author made her debut on Broadway in *Gypsy* with Bernadette Peters and author Tim Federle) and tosses out references to Broadway luminaries such as Stephen Sondheim and Elaine Stritch along with shows such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Oliver!*, and *Wicked*. Cast and crew default to white, with one Italian-American and one guy who “dates men” but flirts with women singled out. Gavigan concludes her tale with a list of recommendations about New York City, proper theater behavior, and how to live your own theatrical dream.

**Preteens who are star-struck for Broadway will enjoy the drama.** (*Fantasy. 9-12*)



**MAD, MAD BEAR!**

*Gee, Kimberly*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 23, 2018  
978-1-4814-4971-7

Why is Bear so mad?

Readers first encounter Bear in his bedroom, scowling. A flashback (unusual in picture books) explains that he’s mad because he “was the first one to have to leave the park for a nap.” The accompanying art shows Bear being led off the recto and looking back longingly at other cubs on a playground. The text then explains that he tripped and “got an owie on the way home. And then he had to take off his boots and leave his favorite stick outside.” This understated, sympathetic text is extended and enhanced by Gee’s expressive, downright cuddly art, which evokes something of Kevin Henkes’ later style, with a dash of Marla Frazee’s emotive prowess. A zoomed-in portrait of Bear’s pouting face against a dark background brings readers back to the time of the opening spread and reads “Bear thinks it is all no fair.” This may bring to mind really, really angry Sophie and her blazing close-up in Molly Bang’s famous title. Bear’s ensuing tantrum alone in his room might make some wonder where his mother is (it was she who led him off the playground), but she soon reappears to give him lunch and tuck him in for a much-needed nap. When Bear awakens, he’s ready to play outside, refreshed and, like angry Sophie before him, no longer mad.

**Good, good book!** (*Picture book. 2-5*)



**DELIVERY BEAR**

*Gehl, Laura*  
*Illus. by Sordo, Paco*  
Whitman (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-0-8075-1532-7

When Zogby, a big, brown bear, applies for a job as delivery bear—a job he has wanted since he was a “tiny cub”—the hiring manager, a small, purple rabbit, says, “You just don’t have the Fluffy Tail Cookies look.”

## At this point in the series fans know what they're getting, and Gibbs doesn't disappoint.

SPY SCHOOL GOES SOUTH

It is striking for a picture book to open with this sort of reference; the manager seems to be outright discriminating against Zogby. Still, Zogby pleads for a chance, and the manager gives him a one-day trial. His clients are terrified of Zogby once they see him: Mrs. Rabbit and Mr. Beaver each scream, "AAHH-HHH!!!" upon opening their doors. Zogby alters his appearance after these rejections, donning bunny ears and a fluffy tail. He finally reminds himself that he is "special" and makes up a song to go along with his newfound confidence: "I am big, and I am hairy! / But I promise, I'm not scary!" Mrs. Mole and Mr. Porcupine then accept his cookie deliveries with grace and hospitality. It's a peculiar resolution to an awkward book: The animals in this story are prejudiced against Zogby's appearance, but it is up to Zogby to ameliorate their fears. The burden, it seems, lies with the oppressed rather than the oppressor, making this a very unprogressive tale. Sordo's bright, cartoonish illustrations are zippy but can't mitigate its central flaw.

**Competent but profoundly uninspiring.** (Picture book. 3-7)



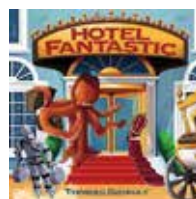
### BALANCE THE BIRDS

Ghabremani, Susie  
*Illus. by the author*  
 abramsappleseed (32 pp.)  
 \$14.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4197-2876-1

Following *Stack the Cats* (2017), here is another fun opportunity for young thinkers to use their observational skills.

The birds, mostly deep aqua and olive, alight (sometimes) on a tree with many branches, set against striking backgrounds of orange, yellow, aqua, and blue. "Here come the birds! // Half on the left side / and half on the right. // This is how / the birds balance!": four on each side. Soon a squirrel upsets things and triggers further permutations. Most young children will follow the process easily, until that pesky squirrel scares all but one bird away. When a big white owl shows up, "How will these birds balance?" Five small birds fly in to "balance" one big one. Without knowing the weights involved, the idea of balance becomes very abstract. Finally, many types of birds of all sizes and shapes (and the squirrel) appear on the tree. The tree looks balanced again. This last double-page spread asks the open-ended question: "How will you / balance the birds?" It is an impossible question to answer given the visual information available. For some readers, it will just prove frustrating. For others, it may open up the path to physical experimentation with simple toys or equipment, if there are cooperative adults around.

**As visually exciting as *Stack the Cats* but not as successful conceptually, this attractive book can still lead to fruitful discussions and scientific play.** (Picture book. 3-5)



### HOTEL FANTASTIC

Gibault, Thomas  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Kids Can (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-77138-992-1

All manners of monster and heroes are welcome at the Hotel Fantastic, but beware *Soror Horribilis!*

The Hotel Fantastic is a getaway like no other; there are rooms for every type of being: underwater rooms for mermaids, giant rooms for giants, anti-gravity rooms for ETs. There are even "sky rooms" for those who fly. The rooftop pool is a perfect place to play for pirates and giant squids. There is an all-night ballroom in the basement and an infirmary that offers such upgrades as "supersonic rocket-feet." The security force is second to none, but even they can't handle the fiery breath, the knobby knees, the deadly stare of a particularly nasty specimen of *Soror Horribilis!* Gibault's bright, digitally rendered cartoon illustrations are full of robots, aliens, superheroes, monsters, and humor. It's hard to distinguish the guests from the staff; but that makes perfect sense at the wide-angled visual punchline at the close, which shows a human girl shaking a superhero doll she has just grabbed from the "hotel." She's yelling (at her brother, the narrator), "I told you a million times not to put YOUR toys in MY dollhouse." Both kids are pale-skinned redheads.

**Foolish fantastic fun with enough goofy details to warrant repeated reads.** (Picture book. 2-7)



### SPY SCHOOL GOES SOUTH

Gibbs, Stuart  
 Simon & Schuster (352 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4814-7785-7  
 Series: Spy School, 6

The spy kids return for another Spy School adventure.

By now, the students at the CIA's Academy of Espionage have had multiple exciting encounters with the villainous organization that calls itself SPYDER. The CIA is keen to take advantage of an offer made to them by disgraced ex-spy Murray Hill, a captured SPYDER teen agent. Narrator and agent Ben Ripley, 13, and his partner, Erica Hale, 15, are the only agents Murray will lead to SPYDER's secret headquarters, so the duo reluctantly follows the traitor's lead while their fellow students Mike Brezinski and Zoe Zibbell stow away. Things go south quickly, and soon the group is stuck in a strange land with no backup. At this point in the series fans know what they're getting, and Gibbs doesn't disappoint. The dialogue crackles, the schemes are clever, and the plotting is tight and efficient. Gibbs doesn't divulge any of the character's ethnicities, leaving room for interpretation in a key moment that is gracefully organic to the narrative. The book's finale leaves

Sweeping, colorful illustrations by the artist who designed one of Santana's album covers convey mood well and recall Mexican murals.

CARLOS SANTANA

room for more adventures, and fans' interest in the series will be just as rabid after this fast-paced, good-humored entry.

Another solid adventure that doesn't reinvent the wheel but spins it quite well. (*Adventure*. 10-14)



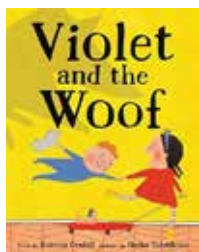
**CARLOS SANTANA**  
**Sound of the Heart, Song of the World**

*Golio, Gary*  
*Illus. by Gutierrez, Rudy*  
Christy Ottaviano/Henry Holt (40 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-62779-512-8

A vibrantly illustrated biography of the groundbreaking musician.

Carlos Santana is born in Jalisco, Mexico, in 1947. His young life is spent watching his musician father and playing alongside him but never being satisfied. His father is a mariachi player who travels often, but Carlos is more inspired by the blues music he's hearing from north of the border. When his father leaves to work in the United States, Carlos is free to set his violin down and pick up an electric guitar. As he grows as a musician, he develops a sound that marries traditional Mexican music with American jazz and blues. Sweeping, colorful illustrations by the artist who designed one of Santana's album covers convey mood well and recall Mexican murals. The pictures invite a wide age range of readers, but the text, written in present and future tense, is awkward and reads like an encyclopedia entry rather than a narrative. Points of interest, from struggling to make ends meet to tourists being cruel, are lost rather than elaborated upon.

A product ultimately unworthy of the celebrated subject it covers. (glossary, author's note, bibliography) (*Picture book/biography*. 6-10)



**VIOLET AND THE WOOF**

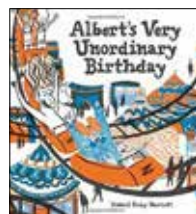
*Grabill, Rebecca*  
*Illus. by Tolstikova, Dasha*  
Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-06-244110-2

A modern-day Little Red Riding Hood travels through her apartment building.

Violet, a determined girl wearing a short red dress, and her toddler brother, Peter, are exploring their building. Both are white. While pulling Peter's wagon through the hallway, she starts telling him a familiar tale. In the elevator, they meet a woman with dark brown skin and white hair carrying a dog whose shadow appears to be quite ferocious. When Peter says: "WOOF!" (his only word), Violet assures him (and herself) that it's not a wolf. Violet informs the woman that they are bringing their sick neighbor Papa Jean-Louis "soup and cookies," and

she responds, "I'll be heading that way myself." After traversing deep woods with animals and a "damp, dingy, cave," they finally reach their destination, where they encounter someone all wrapped up on the couch. Is it Papa Jean-Louis? Or is it a creature with eyes "so big," "ears so...hairy," and teeth too sharp? Violet's storytelling skills and overactive imagination are augmented by the colorful illustrations, done in a naïve style and combining the everyday environment and the fairy-tale world. It's charming, but it missteps. Violet's reassuring interjections to Peter during her own narration interrupt the flow of the story, and positioning the two dark-skinned people as objects of fear is unfortunate despite the revelation that they are clearly benevolent.

Neighborliness, sibling friendship, and bits of a fractured fairy tale can't overcome the book's limitations. (*Picture book*. 4-6)



**ALBERT'S VERY UNORDINARY BIRTHDAY**

*Gray-Barnett, Daniel*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Kids Can (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-5253-0118-6

Poor Albert seems doomed to dullness until his fairy-godmother-like grandmother shows up to give him the "chocolate-cherry-ripple" birthday of his dreams.

Albert's stick-in-the-mud parents don't do noise or mess. But Albert longs for something more than "extremely ordinary," and with fellow explorer Grandma Z, adventures ensue, both mystical (bird-watching while soaring through the sky) and mundane (a wild roller-coaster ride) until Albert arrives home changed. The illustrations open on Albert's dreary, black-and-white, composed home. Grandma brings touches of blue and glaring orange into the tight gray pencil drawings, the pages becoming riotously colorful and the drawings looser and gauzier. Albert metamorphoses too, from somber boy in black-tie to a cheery, sketchily lined, Quentin Blake-esque child, all with help from some not-so-subtle butterfly imagery. Ultimately, though, the story feels flat. The magic is too subtle and doesn't always feel like wish fulfillment—readers glimpse the sleeping dragon under the "curiosity shop" but Albert settles for merely touching a tooth. Some jaunts, such as foraging for "Dead Man's Bells" or "teaching Icelandic horses how to can-can" are weirdly esoteric. Albert never leads but passively follows the enigmatic Grandma Z, making the constant reassurances that he "never felt ordinary again" feel strangely hollow. There's no hint that Albert will seize his destiny and lead his own exploits; he's left waiting for Grandma's next visit.

It's a likable-enough tale that never quite transforms into something magical. (*Picture book*. 4-8)





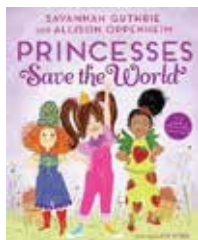
**THE MAGICAL WISHING FISH**

*The Brothers Grimm*  
 Illus. by *Koopmans, Loek*  
 Trans. by *Lawson, Polly*  
 Floris (24 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-78250-524-2

Bigger houses, more important titles: sounds like the wishes of many of today's professionals and entrepreneurs.

But wait! This is an old tale of envy. This version of "The Fisherman and His Wife" hews closely to the original, although some significant (and unattributed) changes have been made. Here Isabel, the wife, asks to be a queen (not a king), and her wish to be pope (perhaps to smooth out the original's overtly Christian content) is elided, the text jumping straight to her even more outrageous desire to be God. When the couple is reduced to living under an "old broken pot" once again (like a chamber pot, taken from the German "pissputt"), Isabel realizes that luxury and palaces never made her content, again deviating from the original. She moralizes: "God on Earth lived a simple life full of love and kindness, and I'm happy to live like that too." The story is smoothly told, with fisherman Thomas' dialogue to the fish introduced in rhyming verse. The sea roils in a wilder and wilder manner as the fish grows angrier and angrier with Isabel's demands. The delicate paintings often have an ethereal, abstract quality, as in the picture of Isabel on an emperor's golden throne, with a long flight of steps leading up to an indistinct, richly dressed seated figure. Poor Thomas sits at the bottom, turned away from her, holding his head, sad and scared, when she makes her last imperious request. Thomas and Isabel both present white.

Although an additional purchase for most purposes, this might have a place in a religious school or for a family of faith. (Picture book/fairy tale. 4-7)



**PRINCESSES SAVE THE WORLD**

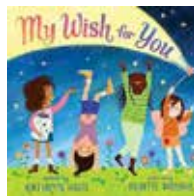
*Guthrie, Savannah & Oppenheim, Allison*  
 Illus. by *Byrne, Eva*  
 Abrams (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-4197-3171-6

Princesses reintroduce honeybees to a place that needs them.

While this sequel to *Princesses Wear Pants* (2017) is sure to generate buzz due to author Guthrie's celebrity, it's every bit as lackluster as its predecessor. Stilted, forced rhyme tells a convoluted tale of Princess Penelope Pineapple's efforts to bring honeybees to Princess Sabrina Strawberry's kingdom (the former girl is depicted as white, the latter as black). The text never explains how the Strawberry Kingdom lost its pollinators, and the story presents the crisis as limited to a gardening problem (how will they make smoothies?), while the solution to

the smoothie catastrophe is merely a matter of moving some of Penelope's bees there. A multiracial cast of princesses descends and concocts a perfume of sorts to lure the bees, whose numbers are oddly small in the digital illustrations. Once they successfully pollinate the flora, a year passes and the princesses have a tea party with fruit pies. Throughout, Byrne's uninspired digital illustrations vary little in their visual perspective, resulting in a dull presentation of the redundant visual narrative. To make this poor book even worse, the bland three-paragraph backmatter note about the current crisis in the honeybee population offers little substance and no resources beyond advice to "ask your teacher or a local librarian to direct you to some books or online resources about honeybees."

Save your dollars for other bee books, other princess books, other books. (Picture book. 3-6)



**MY WISH FOR YOU  
 Lessons from My  
 Six-Year-Old Daughter**

*Hahn, Kathryn*  
 Illus. by *Barrager, Brigitte*  
 Orchard/Scholastic (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-1-338-15040-7

An affirming wish list for girls.

Hahn's opening author's note sets an affirming tone for the ensuing text and its joyful, hopeful vision for girls—though in the book proper she never mentions the word "girl," nor does she use a gendered pronoun. Instead, second-person address is combined with illustrations that depict children who all appear feminine (though some wear gender-neutral clothing). It opens with: "My wishes for you are many. / But at the top of the wishes: / I want you to be you." Some spreads, such as this one, include several children; others depict only one. Throughout, Barrager's appealing digital illustrations include girls with a range of skin colors and hair textures participating in many activities. But even though text encourages readers to "Love your big beautiful belly," the girl on this page and those throughout the book all seem pretty thin, and not one is visibly disabled. The late, singular illustration of a girl of color wearing a hijab and standing with seven other girls in the closing spread represents a welcome moment of inclusivity that nevertheless may have readers wishing she were also in a prior illustration showing her engaged in some activity—riding a bike, reading, eating, or somehow interacting with others. Ultimately, this is an affirming, empowering text with accompanying illustrations that charm but don't rise to meet its promise.

Hopeful, playful girlhood guidance. (Picture book. 3-8)



### THE PRINCESS IN BLACK AND THE SCIENCE FAIR SCARE

Hale, Shannon  
Illus. by Pham, LeUyen  
Candlewick (96 pp.)  
\$14.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-7636-8827-1  
Series: Princess in Black, 6

Princess Magnolia’s attempt at a monster-free science fair goes as well as can be expected in the sixth book of the Princess in Black series.

With the Goat Avenger on monster watch, Princess Magnolia heads to the Interkingdom Science Fair. While initially excited about her project—a poster showing “how seeds grow into plants”—and seeing her fellow princess friends, Magnolia’s soon intimidated by how ambitious and fancy the other royals’ projects are. Why, Tommy Wigtower even has a talking volcano—when his baking-soda-and-vinegar volcano didn’t erupt properly, he added monster hair. The resulting goo monster wreaks havoc on the fair, leading to appearances by the Princess in Black and the Princess in Blankets to battle the beast. Evicted from the volcano, the monster tries to find a new home, prompting Princess Honeysuckle, Princess Orchid, and Princess Snapdragon (all sans aliases and costumes) to help deliver the monster to the monster hole for a new home. While it’s great to see the heroics from princesses in full regalia, the final page hints that they’ll soon join in the alter-ego fun. Perhaps the best gem is when the science-fair winner is announced and the graceful losers offer genuine congratulations while resolving to try harder next year. Aside from white Magnolia, the cast is multicultural and multiracial.

**Amusing and nicely on-brand.** (Fantasy. 5-8)



### THE SECOND STORY

Harris, Neil Patrick  
Illus. by Marlin, Lissy & Hilton, Kyle  
Little, Brown (336 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-316-39185-6  
Series: Magic Misfits, 2

The Magic Misfits are back for another outing.

The second installment in this middle-grade series returns readers to the magic shop in Mineral Wells, where Carter—the protagonist of the first novel—found a family, friends, and a new life. The story centers on Leila, the dark-skinned orphan girl adopted by the Vernons, the gay couple who own the magic shop. The quest for identity is at the center of the tale, as Leila yearns to know why her birthparents abandoned her. The plot thickens when Sandra Santos, a beautiful and mysterious stranger from her father Dante Vernon’s past, sweeps into town, and rumors of hauntings at the Grand Oak Resort seem to be linked to magical misdeeds from Dante’s younger days. Acceptance, love, and

understanding are at the heart of this novel, which features a diverse cast of child characters. Readers who love Harris’ (*The Magic Misfits*, 2017, etc.) screen/stage presence will feel as if he’s sitting next to them reading the words aloud, as the dialogue sounds authentic to his own voice. It is too cutesy at times, but the message that friendship helps children conquer adversity is a welcome one. The recap of the first novel is helpful, but interjected magic-trick instructions break the narrative flow.

**A heartfelt sequel that primes audiences for the next installment.** (Fiction. 8-12)



### OTHERWOOD

Hautman, Pete  
Candlewick (320 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-0-7636-9071-7



Stuey and his best friend, Elly Rose, both 9, share a birthday and love of the wild woods until a discovery rips them apart, landing each in a world from which the other has disappeared.

Before he died, Gramps, Stuey’s grandfather, showed him where the woods have overgrown the swanky, country-club golf course Stuey’s white great-grandfather, a former bootlegger, built. He disappeared there long ago, while embroiled in an argument with the Jewish district attorney investigating him, their mutual hatred fueled by anti-Semitism and class bias. Stuey lives in the old family home with his artist mother, who’s opposed to selling the woods to a developer. He meets Elly Rose when her family, new arrivals, invites them over. Like Stuey, she’s explored the woods, discovering a hollow clump of dead trees, the deadfall, where each has heard voices whispering. The two steal away to the woods, spin stories, and grow a unique friendship. They’re soul mates. But when Stuey shares an ugly secret that touches both families, Elly Rose vanishes and his world changes: Once allies, her bereaved parents now support leveling the woods. Without Stuey, Elly Rose’s world changes for the worse, too. Each longs to reconnect, but how? Shy Stuey and just-short-of-bossy Elly Rose are likable, their friendship believable and moving. Infused with the magic of the unknown, the eerie wilderness entices them, and readers, inside.

**An intensely atmospheric ghost story and elegy for a vanished world: spellbinding.** (author’s note) (Paranormal adventure. 8-12)

# The focus broadens beyond simple geographical maps. As Sam explores, other types of pictorial guides are also explained.

MAPPING SAM



## THE SNOW LION

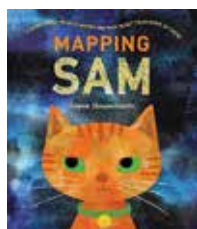
*Helmore, Jim*  
*Illus. by Jones, Richard*  
 Peachtree (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-68263-048-8



When young Caro moves to a new home with her mum, she derives comfort and strength from a mysterious, large, white lion.

The cover art and endpapers immediately draw readers into a world where a lion as enormous and gentle as the famous red dog Clifford will play a starring role. The story begins, however, with a dark, nighttime double-page spread showing a car heading up a hill toward Caro's new house. Next, Caro explores her new home's interior, as art verifies text: "The walls were white, the ceilings were white, and even the doors were white." When Caro wishes for a playmate, the Snow Lion appears, and for a full week the two play and play. More than once, the wise Snow Lion encourages Caro to play with other children, and she finally connects, at the playground, with a welcoming boy named Bobby. Eventually, Caro's mother engages Bobby and other young friends in a house-painting party. Will the colors eliminate the Snow Lion? The mixed-media artwork is a splendid complement, using just enough detail and geometric patterns against large planes of muted colors, both indoors and out. The human figures have solid, toddlerlike appearances, while the Snow Lion is appropriately well-camouflaged against the house's white walls. Caro has pale skin and curly, auburn hair; Bobby is a boy of color with brown skin and black hair.

A well-crafted tale about healthy adaptation to new environs merges with superb artwork. (Picture book. 3-7)



## MAPPING SAM

*Hesselberth, Joyce*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Greenwillow (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-06-274122-6



This nighttime adventure teaches children about different types of maps.

In the days of GPS software and smartphones that tell us where to go, essential learned skills such as reading maps may not be passed along to younger children. Hesselberth takes on this challenge of instruction through the story of Sam, an orange cat who exudes attitude. Each night after her human companions are safely in bed, Sam slips out of their house and begins an adventurous stroll around her community. Every few pages, Sam's journey is explained using a map and map-based terminology. Important terms, such as "compass rose" and "blueprints," are explained in pop-up boxes that accompany Sam's story, but the focus broadens beyond simple geographical maps. As Sam explores, other types of pictorial guides are also explained. Anatomical maps, cross-section diagrams, constellation charts, and many others are

described and pictured. The flow of the story is smooth, and the introduction of each new piece of cartography feels organic. Hesselberth's artwork, a combination of acrylic, gouache, and digital manipulation, is clear and will show well in large groups. The added backmatter further defines the cartographic styles used throughout the story. Educators will find this a useful tool for introducing new concepts of space and location.

A winning choice for just about anywhere that's on a map. (Informational picture book. 6-8)



## THE DIAMOND AND THE BOY The Creation of Diamonds & the Life of H. Tracy Hall

*Holt, Hannah*  
*Illus. by Fleck, Jay*  
 Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-06-265903-3

Engineer and author Holt's first picture book introduces "A ROCK / named graphite, / A BOY / named Tracy."

In two, parallel free-verse narratives, Holt tells the stories of both the creation of natural diamonds and the invention of synthetic diamonds. Versos detail how diamonds are naturally produced and harvested: "Mighty, unyielding, brilliant. / The rock would dazzle if it had / any light to reflect, / but it doesn't. / A crystal, even a priceless one, / is still only a lump / in the dirt / until it is found." The recto shares the life of H. Tracy Hall (Holt's grandfather) from his childhood through his invention of his diamond-producing machine: "Mighty, unyielding, brilliant. / His inventions dazzle classmates. / But Tracy is still penny poor, with so / many ideas floating just out of reach. / ... / Even a genius must eat and sleep / before his dreams can be found." The parallel narrative structure is a compelling one, although occasionally the technique slows the momentum of one or both of the narratives. Illustrator Fleck uses full-bleed spreads of bold colors and simple lines, rendered with pencil and digitally, to effectively emphasize the scope and significance of both creations, cannily varying the palette to emphasize the parallel structure.

A quiet gem. (scientific note, biographical note, timeline, bibliography) (Informational picture book. 4-8)



## UNDER THE BODHI TREE A Story of the Buddha

*Hopkinson, Deborah*  
*Illus. by Whitman, Kailey*  
 Sounds True (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-68364-153-7

The life of Prince Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha, is told in this picture book.

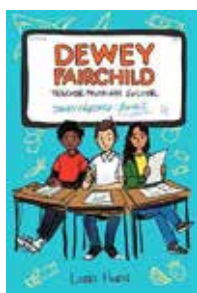
Using simple phrases in a pleasing, steady cadence that flows restfully, author Hopkinson tells the story of the Buddha for

# The text skillfully includes details about laws governing the lives of enslaved people while keeping readers hooked through every step of Bill’s plan.

HAMMERING FOR FREEDOM

young readers. Born Prince Siddhartha Gautama in ancient India, he spent his childhood in his father’s palace in protected luxury, since his father did not want him to experience anything painful or unhappy. But eventually Siddhartha wanted to see what was outside the palace walls, so, yielding to his son’s requests, his father let him visit the city, where he had ordered the mayor to hold a festival. Despite these precautions, Siddhartha wandered off and saw hardship and pain—an experience that left him determined to find a way to set people free from suffering. Hopkins inserts variations on the phrase “just like you” into the narrative at key moments, thereby connecting the ancient story to the feelings and longings readers may experience—an effective device that makes the story relevant and applicable to today. Illustrator Whitman’s gracious double-page spreads mirror the text, featuring plenty of white space and a soothing, light palette. She often uses white lines, rather than dark, to delineate the pictures, which has the effect of imbuing the illustrations overall with light—enhancing the enlightenment theme of the story.

**Light, graceful, and accessible in both words and pictures.** (*Informational picture book. 5-10*)



## DEWEY FAIRCHILD, TEACHER PROBLEM SOLVER

*Horn, Lorri*  
Amberjack Publishing (286 pp.)  
\$13.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-1-944995-85-0  
Series: Dewey Fairchild, 2

Sixth grade dumps a flurry of teacher and school-policy issues on a veteran problem-solver’s plate.

So it’s off to middle school and a whole new level of assignments for Dewey—including a teacher whose shark-based curriculum is terrorizing an entire class, the sudden appearance of single-sheet dispensers in all the toilet stalls, and the dismaying prospect of having the snack machines replaced by wholesome produce from a student garden. But, as fans of his exploits in *Dewey Fairchild, Parent Problem Solver* (2017) well know, no matter the scope or complexity of the case, Dewey has a plan or at least enough of one to get started. In classmates Colin and Seraphina, plus nonagenarian business associate, neighbor, and designated cookie baker Clara Cottonwood, he has an excellent posse, too. Extended brainstorming and research sessions, a poster campaign, and carefully crafted presentations for a climactic school assembly are all plainly offered as models for would-be activist readers, but the author stirs in a big dog, a little sister, classroom hijinks, family interplay, and so much banter and punning (“Your t-issue is a call to duty!”) that the agenda sits lightly on the roller-coaster plot. Dewey is white, but his supporting cast is more explicitly diversified than previously, both on the cover illustration (in which Colin and Seraphina are both shown to be kids of color) and in narrative references to immigrant parents, ethnicity, and like cues.

**Grass-roots politics at its best, likely to leave readers flushed with laughter.** (*Fiction. 10-13*)



## HAMMERING FOR FREEDOM

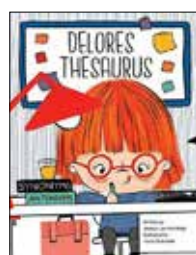
*Hubbard, Rita Lorraine*  
*Illus. by Holyfield, John*  
Lee & Low (32 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-60060-969-5



The true story of William “Bill” Lewis, a man born into slavery who wouldn’t rest until his whole family was free.

Bill and his family were enslaved in Tennessee, where they worked long days in Col. Lewis’ fields. Bill was a young boy when Col. Lewis decided to make him a blacksmith, and Bill became very good at it. Col. Lewis rented him out, a common practice, and started letting Bill keep some of the money. Bill saved his coins and decided to ask Col. Lewis to let him rent himself. Col. Lewis agreed, for a large yearly fee. Bill paid the fee and opened his own blacksmith shop, becoming the first African-American blacksmith in Chattanooga. He worked long days and saved his money, with a goal in mind. Over time, he bought his wife’s freedom, and then their son’s, and then, one by one, the rest of his family’s. The text skillfully includes details about laws governing the lives of enslaved people (Bill travels with a white escort; he buys his wife’s freedom first so that their future children will be born free) while keeping readers hooked through every step of Bill’s plan. Rich illustrations help readers imagine life in the 1800s and show the complexity of Bill’s situation. Readers will root for Bill to the utterly satisfying end.

**Powerful and uplifting; William Lewis should be a household name.** (*afterword, sources*) (*Picture book/biography. 5-9*)



## DELORES THESAURUS

*Hutchings, Jessica Lee*  
*Illus. by Quintanilla, Hazel*  
Flowerpot Press (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 12, 2018  
978-1-4867-1463-6

A girl collects words for the fun of it.

Inspired by her teacher, accompanied by her dog, and carrying a pink attaché case, Delores Thesaurus, who wears glasses and has braces on her teeth, searches for big words to add to her ever burgeoning stock. Tantalizing gems arise on signs and in overheard conversations, and these Delores eagerly writes down and stashes in her case. When a pelican flies off with the attaché case, Delores frantically pursues it, to no avail. Equally useless are Delores’ efforts to enlist help from various passers-by: Articulating some of her big words—incorrectly—to explain her plight, she fails to convey her desperation to seemingly uninterested bystanders. A kindly shopkeeper, a woman of color, finally steps in, gently helping the little white girl understand she had confused everyone with her inaccurate language and clarifying this point by defining the words. She hands Delores a dictionary, prompting the girl to adopt a new nickname. This overlong narrative,

expressed in very clunky verse that often scans poorly, may try kids' patience. The illustrations are colorful if static and incorporate some exciting words used in the text in addition to other interesting vocabulary; readers will enjoy poring over these in the drawings. The book also makes a subtle, welcome point by putting a woman of color in the position of linguistic expert.

**It means well, but there are better books about the power of words.** (Picture book. 6-8)



### QUEEN PANDA CAN'T SLEEP

Isern, Susanna  
 Illus. by Ruiz Johnson, Mariana  
 StarBerry Books (36 pp.)  
 \$18.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-63592-095-6



Queen Panda has been awake for days, and her exhausted subjects are desperate to find a way to make their

grouchy monarch fall asleep.

Since she is unable to fall asleep, Queen Panda insists that her servants stay awake as well: The tailors sew by moonlight, the cook prepares rice cakes 24/7, and the butler keeps cleaning all night long. Exhausted, the royal adviser pens a decree, promising “a bag of Chinese pearls” to whomever can lull the queen into slumber. Visitors arrive from around the world, and each of them tries a different trick: A Mongolian shepherd suggests that the queen count his sheep, a Bengali storyteller tells her “the world’s most boring story,” a Parisian diva sings her a lullaby...but nothing seems to work. Will the queen ever fall asleep? The tone of Isern’s narrative is reminiscent of a folktale, especially the value-based ending (after a day of honest work, the queen falls asleep easily). Ruiz Johnson’s rich illustrations are populated with anthropomorphic animals and display a Chinese influence, particularly in the clothes the characters wear, Queen Panda’s palace, and depictions of flowers and the bamboo in the background. Text and illustrations work together seamlessly, resulting in subtle humor and wordplay that do not escape readers—the Mongolian shepherd, for instance, is a wolf, and the Bengali storyteller is a tiger.

**A charming, sensible tale for audiences young and old.** (Picture book. 4-8)



### WE WERE MADE FOR EACH OTHER!

Jiu Er  
 Illus. by the author  
 Trans. by Zouaghi, Alexandre & Roulston, Hélène  
 The Secret Mountain (112 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-2-924774-22-9

An illustrated series of observations on life and living translated from the Chinese, with audio available online.

Each double-page spread by author/illustrator Jiu Er features a quiet observation by a small pig named Little Sun. Little Sun’s best friend is Little Mouse, and many of the observations (they may be diary entries; it’s not entirely clear) are addressed directly to her. They run the gamut from supportive (“We have to trust our friends / who can help us / overcome our fears!”) to odd (“An artist by the name of Jiu Er / came to see me. She was very sad”) and don’t organize themselves into an overall storyline but rather remain unconnected. The entries address accepting sadness, being grateful for what you have, looking out for others, and downplaying individual achievement (“Nothing to brag about— / I haven’t done / anything exceptional. / I simply borrowed / some beauty from / these lovely flowers”), which Western readers may find dampening if not confusing. Accompanying these observations are gentle illustrations in a soft palette that feature anthropomorphic Little Sun and Little Mouse, their anthropomorphic friends, and some Wild Things-esque monsters. The illustrations are competent, but the overall impression is one of soft blandness (although the Chinese characters on some of the details are intriguing). The audio (accessed online) features a female narrator and musical accompaniment.

**Soft, unsurprising illustrations accompany quiet (many with adult sensibilities) musings on life.** (Picture book. 5-8)



### TOMORROW

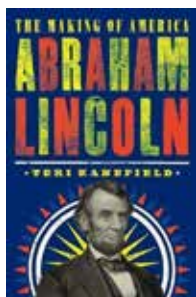
Kaadan, Nadine  
 Illus. by the author  
 Trans. by the author  
 Lantana (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-911373-43-8

A story about how a child and his family cope with war.

Yazan, a Syrian boy, has not been able to go to the park to play recently nor to go to school sometimes, which upsets him. He used to have fun watching his mother paint and painting with her, but recently she has been constantly watching TV with the volume so loud and the images spilling out of it full of darkness—literally: Shadows ooze out of it in the pencil-and-watercolor illustrations, one of many symbolic images used to portray war and destruction. One weekend, after all of Yazan’s attempts at self-entertainment and to engage with his parents

fail, he escapes. However, the world he sees outside is not what he expected: The street is empty, there are no other kids to play with, and scary sounds of explosions abound. Yazan's father eventually comes to the rescue, and his parents become more involved again, explaining to him why he cannot go outside. His mother brings her paints, and Yazan is excited. "When will the fighting be over?" he asks. "I don't know," says his mother, but "let's paint a park in your bedroom...and soon, you'll be able to go outside again and play."

**Kaadan crafts a happy ending within an active war context, no easy feat; readers seeking a less fantasy-dependent plot may enjoy Nicola Davies and Rebecca Cobb's *The Day War Came* (2018) or Hayan Charara and Sara Kahn's *The Three Lucys* (2016). (Picture book. 4-8)**



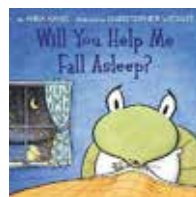
### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*Kanefield, Teri*  
Abrams (192 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-4197-3159-4  
Series: Making of America, 3

The presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the many constitutional issues it dealt with are explored in this book for young readers.

Abraham Lincoln, born 20 years after the U.S. Constitution was ratified, served one term in Congress but twice lost bids for the Senate. However, the political volatility of the times and the growing debate concerning slavery as the country expanded into new territories (displacing Native peoples) provided the opportunity for Lincoln to rise. Lincoln's election was seen as a direct threat to the slaveholding South, and a month after his inauguration, the Civil War began, plunging the country into "its greatest constitutional crisis." In this third volume of the Making of America series, Kanefield continues to examine constitutional issues through the lives of important political figures. Here she also looks at Lincoln's views on slavery, the rights of black Americans, and the various views of Lincoln scholars on these topics. The work makes clear that despite the constitutional end to slavery through the 13th Amendment, the country did not embrace full citizenship for African-Americans. This concise and balanced narrative encapsulates the life and legacy of one of the country's most important leaders. As in others in the series, Lincoln's own words are used liberally, giving a sense of the way he thought and expressed himself.

**A solid addition for understanding America's story. (source notes, timeline, selected writings, a bibliography, index) (Biography. 10-14)**



### WILL YOU HELP ME FALL ASLEEP?

*Kang, Anna*  
*Illus. by Weyant, Christopher*  
Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-0-06-239685-3

Will a sleepless little frog ever catch some zzz's?

Monty, an anthropomorphic frog, can't fall asleep and uses direct address to ask readers to help. The frog is worried that if they don't get enough sleep, Mom won't let them participate in the boat races at the pond the next day. The event is advertised on a poster in Monty's bedroom with the legend "THE FROGATTA BOAT RACES." Suggestions, ostensibly from readers, to count sheep and read books backfire humorously, with energetic, cartoon illustrations depicting imagined ovine chaos and then a terrifying encounter with a pop-up book about sharks. Finally, recalling advice from their teacher, Miss Chon, helps Monty go to their internal "happy place," do some deep breathing, and calm down until they finally drift off to sleep. The last line thanks readers for keeping Monty company, and a closing, wordless spread depicting the whole family at the boat races could be interpreted as a happy dreamscape or as Monty's joyful participation in the Frogatta the next day.

**A hoppily-ever-after ending for this froggy bedtime book. (Picture book. 3-6)**



### POTATO PANTS!

*Keller, Laurie*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Christy Ottaviano/Henry Holt (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-250-10723-7

Nightshades clash more than just their personalities in this high-energy picture book.

A potato is very excited about getting a pair of potato pants. He rushes to Lance Vance's Fancy Pants store, along with a horde of other tubers, googly eyes, smiles, and teeth drawn haphazardly onto collaged-in photographs and drawings. But one giant eggplant is also in the pants store, trying on a loud yellow garment patterned with pineapples. At first the potato argues that "Eggplants don't even wear pants!" (perhaps that would be too ridiculous). It turns out that "Yesterday was Eggplant Pants Day," but the potato is still suspicious; "Yesterday," he says, "I was walking along, minding my own potato-y business...when he ran by and PUSHED ME right into a trash can!" Not wanting to patronize the same establishment, the potato lurks outside the store, even calling a grocery store in the hopes they might sell tater togs (or even a pair of "cucumber cords"), to no avail. Finally he bursts into the store, sending the eggplant flying, only to find that another root has snatched up the last pair of pants. Two apologies and one pair of display pants later, the conflict is all patched up, and the two friends

# The clever pairing of opposites adds humor, making the gradual emergence of friendship between steadfast Mr. Popli and flamboyant Archie all the sweeter.

GARBAGE ISLAND

dance the Robot. Zany and meandering, this story will make kids laugh despite the uneven pacing and maybe even model the art of apology.

**A high-energy read with plenty of kid appeal.** (*Picture book.* 3-6)



## WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR HOUSE IS A ZOO?

*Kelly, John*  
*Illus. by Laberis, Stephanie*  
 Tiger Tales (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-84869-949-6

A school-age boy wants to get a pet but can't decide what kind.

When Oscar finally gets permission from his parents to get a pet, he doesn't know which one to get. He put out an advertisement and receives an avalanche of letters from a vast range of animals ranging from Goldie the goldfish to Walter the whale. The animals even start coming to Oscar's house, but most of them are not interested in playing with Oscar. With Oscar's house so full, the family must sleep in their backyard. A final prank by Space Monkey Boo-Boo causes Oscar's mom to lose her temper and send all the animals away. When the family moves back into their house, Oscar discovers one missed letter from Rufus, a dog who promises to always love Oscar and be his best friend. Told in first person by Oscar, the story is simple but quite funny. It may be a tad on the complicated side for very young readers, and readers looking for an overt moral are unlikely to find one. Veteran Laberis' digitally created illustrations are neat, displaying the expressions of the family and the animals exquisitely. Oscar is a brown-skinned, biracial boy, with a white dad and brown-skinned, black-haired mom.

**A funny, lighthearted story sure to appease everyone, animal lovers or not.** (*Picture book.* 4-8)



## WE TRAVEL SO FAR

*Knowles, Laura*  
*Illus. by Madden, Chris*  
 Firefly (64 pp.)  
 \$19.95 | Aug. 15, 2018  
 978-1-77085-985-2

While taking readers around the world, this book discusses various species' migrations.

Twenty-six diverse species are discussed in this anthology of movement. Each animal is given a two-page spread that discusses the potential motivations for migration, and many hint at the challenges encountered along the way: The sockeye salmon must swim "past the hungry bears," a snowy owl stoops menacingly over a pack of traveling Norway lemmings. The text is relatively sparse, offering five to six sentences about each species and its travels. Oddly, certain

parts of the text are featured in an enlarged font, which may prompt emphasis if reading the book aloud, but its use is haphazard. The illustrations appear to be digitally created and span both pages, making good use of color and composition. If read to a class or group, the illustrations would project well to the back of the room. The final animals discussed are humans, and the range of ages, skin tones, and cultures is noteworthy. Sadly, though it's in keeping with the very basic amount of information presented about animals, the information about human migration is superficial and will leave readers wanting more. The backmatter includes a map of the world, but migration patterns are not marked on it. Two pages of bare-bones data complete the book (with measurements in both English and metric systems); it, too, is scanty.

**Let this one pass you by.** (*Nonfiction.* 8-12)



## GARBAGE ISLAND

*Koehler, Fred*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Boyds Mills (288 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-62979-675-8  
 Series: Nearly Always Perilous Adventures of Archibald Shrew, 1

In this series opener, a mouse and a shrew find themselves unlikely allies as they unite to save Garbage Island.

Part of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, the floating debris of Garbage Island hosts a community of assorted small animals. Under the leadership of Mr. Popli, a pragmatic mouse, Garbage Island's citizens co-exist peacefully—except for risk-taking inventor Archie Shrew, who routinely puts his life and those of others in danger. After a disastrous episode with his latest invention, Archie's barred from inventing for three months or faces banishment. Unable to control himself, Archie invents a telescope through which he spies archenemy Colubra, a massive snake, with an egg—which he secretly rescues from her lair. When Mr. Popli's houseboat is severed from Garbage Island, he and Archie are set adrift with the mysterious egg and together face harrowing challenges including a fierce storm, an attacking swordfish, an island of voracious spiders, a marauding shark, and the unexpected hatching of that egg. Returning at last to Garbage Island, they confront their greatest challenge. The clever pairing of opposites adds humor, making the gradual emergence of friendship between steadfast Mr. Popli and flamboyant Archie all the sweeter. Dramatic black-and-white illustrations highlight key action.

**Exciting, fast-paced adventure and unexpected friendship in a "trashy" venue.** (*Animal fantasy.* 8-12)

Kulling employs accessible language and follows a logical sequence of events to provide readers with an understanding of Baker's strength of character.

DR. JO



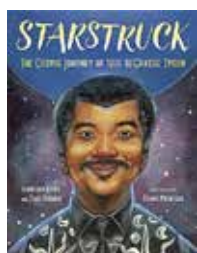
**A PROMISE STITCHED IN TIME**

*Kosinski, Colleen*  
Schiffer (128 pp.)  
\$12.99 | Sep. 28, 2018  
978-0-7643-5554-7

A 13-year-old New Jersey girl struggling with her painting finds inspiration in magical visions of a Holocaust victim.

Maggie McConnell, a redheaded, white Irish-American girl, buys a coat at the Salvation Army Thrift Store and promptly starts hallucinating. She remembers starvation, burning chimneys, savage dogs, and whippings. She wakes in the night having painted in her sleep. She sees visions of herself wearing her thrift-store coat with a yellow star sewn on the lapel in the spot where, in the real world, she'd removed some loose threads. Though Maggie misses her beloved father, dead for two and a half years, and she mourns her now-shattered friendship with her popularity-obsessed older sister, the visions are what dominate her waking and sleeping lives. At least she has the reliable friendship of Taj, a brown-skinned Moroccan-American boy with a quirky fashion sense. New to school, Taj is happy to hold séances and investigate Maggie's apparent haunting. Maggie's connection to an Auschwitz prisoner is more than a simple ghost, though, and as her paranormal experiences continue—she can read and write gibberish Yiddish and (appallingly) a tattoo burns itself into her arm—her paintings become more emotionally powerful. Unlike Sid Fleischman's stellar *The Entertainer and the Dybbuk* (2007), with its similar conceit, this lightweight paranormal uses the Nazi atrocities as a mere plot device for a magical adventure.

*Avoid.* (Paranormal adventure. 10-12)



**STARSTRUCK  
The Cosmic Journey of Neil  
Degrasse Tyson**

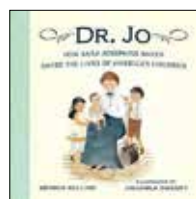
*Krull, Kathleen & Brewer, Paul*  
*Illus. by Morrison, Frank*  
Crown (48 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-399-55024-9

An introduction to the brilliant African-American astrophysicist who, from an early age, found his passion in the skies.

This biography tells of Tyson's childhood in the Bronx, where he walked dogs to earn money for his first big telescope, through which he viewed the stars from the rooftop of his apartment building, the aptly named Skyview. Mistaking the telescope for a rifle, neighbors often called the police, but Tyson would win the cops over by showing them the stars or his favorite planet, Saturn. The nearby Hayden Planetarium became an important educational space for Tyson, opening up opportunities such as an ocean-liner trip to the northwest African coast with 2,000 scientists to observe a solar eclipse when he was just

14. Attending the Bronx High School of Science, Tyson excelled in science but also in dance and wrestling. After attending Harvard, he returned home to work at Hayden Planetarium, the place where he first glimpsed the stars. Along with other astrophysicists, Tyson remapped the solar system, reclassifying Pluto as a dwarf planet. While the authors' informative, enthusiastic telling keeps readers interested in Tyson's nerdy and passionate pursuit of deeper knowledge about all things celestial, the illustrations border on caricature at times and, perhaps as a result, create many inconsistencies in Tyson's appearance. The recurring starry backgrounds, however, successfully emphasize the importance of stars in Tyson's life.

**An informative and entertaining title for aspiring young scientists.** (Picture book/biography. 5-8)



**DR. JO  
How Sara Josephine Baker  
Saved the Lives of America's  
Children**

*Kulling, Monica*  
*Illus. by Swaney, Julianna*  
Tundra (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-101-91789-3

Jo wanted to become a doctor, quite uncommon for a girl in late-19th-century America.

Jo had her opportunity when doctors Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell opened a medical school for women. When she graduated, she opened a practice in New York City with a woman colleague, Florence, but few patients came. Jo became a health inspector for the city and was assigned to Hell's Kitchen, a poor, crowded immigrant neighborhood where there was a high death rate among babies and young children. Dr. Jo found practical solutions to many problems, using her official capacity to implement them. She established a requirement that midwives be trained and licensed and assigned visiting nurses to new mothers. She organized milk stations, designed safe containers for silver nitrate eyedrops for newborns, and designed safe infant clothing that allowed movement and airflow. Kulling employs accessible language and follows a logical sequence of events to provide readers with an understanding of Baker's strength of character. Swaney's watercolor, gouache, and colored-pencil illustrations carefully complement the events and settings of the text. Baker and Florence are white, and the people of Hell's Kitchen are depicted in a variety of skin tones, but otherwise all the faces are the same with little indication of emotion, just dots for eyes and little swoops for smiles.

**An interesting, informative introduction to an unknown woman trailblazer.** (afterword, sources, web-sites) (Picture book/biography. 7-9)





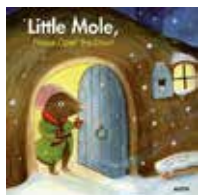
**COUNTING TO PERFECT**

*LaFleur, Suzanne*  
 Wendy Lamb/Random (208 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-5247-7179-9  
 978-1-5247-7180-5 PLB

A road trip with her older sister and her sister's baby help a seventh-grader understand her place in her complicated, well-meaning family.

When Cassie's sister, Julia, became pregnant at only 17, her parents rallied to support her and enable her to graduate high school. Now that goal has been achieved, but the girls' parents are still in full support-Julia mode while seemingly unconscious of the toll their dictates have taken on Cassie. She has had to miss important swim meets to attend family prenatal classes, and some of her friends are no longer allowed at her house. Cassie loves her niece but is rattled by the changes in her relationship with her sister. Meanwhile Julia's friends and boyfriend are heading to college, while she'll be commuting part time. Fed up, Julia grabs the baby and hits the road—and at the last minute Cassie comes along. As they hop from place to place, always finding somewhere for Cassie to swim, they gradually begin to communicate better. Julia gains confidence as a mother, and Cassie sees in Julia's love for Addie a reflection of the love Julia and her parents have always held for Cassie. Told from Cassie's first-person point of view, it's a nice reflection on the messiness of even strong relationships. All of the characters seem to be white.

A quiet story that will resonate with quiet readers. (Fiction. 8-14)



**LITTLE MOLE, PLEASE OPEN THE DOOR!**

*Lallemand, Orianne*  
*Illus. by Frossard, Claire*  
*Trans. by Bradley, MaryChris*  
 Auzou Publishing (32 pp.)  
 \$14.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-2-7338-6146-2

Unexpected visitors interrupt Little Mole one cold winter night.

"Snuggling into her warm bed," Little Mole hears knocking and discovers Frog, freezing on her doorstep. Just as Little Mole ensconces Frog on her sofa, she hears more knocking. One after another, her woodland friends arrive, seeking shelter from the snow. Wearing comfy nightcap, bathrobe, and slippers, unflappable Little Mole welcomes Squirrel, "shivering in the snow," Badger, "soaked to the skin," and cold Mama Chickadee and her babies. Then there's more banging on the door, and Wolf unexpectedly bursts in, threatening to eat everyone. Fortunately, Badger orders all to attack Wolf, who's quickly restrained and tethered. Unfazed, Little Mole brews her special soup just in time for more winter visitors. The repetitive device

of Little Mole's woodland friends arriving seriatim does not prepare readers for Wolf's dramatic entrance unless they have observed his dark shadow ominously lurking outside, arousing suspicion. Watercolor illustrations use line and color to relay the cozy details of Little Mole's warm, well-stocked burrow, in marked contrast to the dark, snowy, frigid outdoors. In the face of Wolf's sinister snout and fangs, the friendly, familiar, readily identifiable shapes of Little Mole and friends prove reassuring.

A deceptively simple tale guaranteed to tickle wee readers. (Picture book. 3-7)



**THE WOLF WHO LEARNED SELF-CONTROL**

*Lallemand, Orianne*  
*Illus. by Thuillier, Eleonore*  
*Trans. by Bradley, MaryChris*  
 Auzou Publishing (32 pp.)  
 \$14.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-2-7338-6147-9  
 Series: Wolf Who . . .

Wolf—the star of several picture books originally published in France—has many forest friends, but his inability to regulate his emotions interferes with his relationships.

Wolf's friends decide to instruct him in various self-management techniques, hoping he'll learn self-control. His first lesson is yoga, which he finds to be quite funny. Next he tries both exercise and baking. When his female love interest (the unfortunately named Wolfette) makes a good-natured joke at his expense, he explodes in anger and calls his friends hurtful names. Later, when building a house, Wolf makes a mistake and is on the verge of a meltdown. He remembers his initial yoga class and uses the techniques he learned to calm down. After this one instance of successful self-management, Wolf's friends celebrate and praise his transformation. The emotions Wolf experiences on his journey, such as fear, pride, jealousy, and shame, are noted in boldface text. The emphasis on naming feelings and the acknowledgment that different self-management techniques can be effective for different personalities are highlights. Unfortunately, the overall story is clunky. While this title would serve as a good tool for an explicit social-emotional-learning lesson, as a general read, the overall effect is lackluster at best.

The heavy-handed lesson and underdeveloped characters hinder this picture book's attempt to convey a positive message. (Picture book. 4-8)



**LOVE, AGNES**  
**Postcards from an Octopus**

Latham, Irene  
Illus. by Baker, Thea  
Millbrook/Lerner (32 pp.)  
\$19.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-1-5124-3993-9

Toward the end of her short life, an octopus exchanges a series of postcards with others around her, including a boy on a pier and her newly hatched eggs.

Spread by spread, a simple narrative accompanied by postcard messages provides clever introduction to the life of a giant Pacific octopus. Though Latham's story is thoroughly fantastic, both author and illustrator have been respectful to this amazing creature, describing realistic behaviors and depicting her relatively accurately, right down to the rectangular pupils of her eyes and her senescent color change. Agnes the octopus squeezes herself into a jar and later into a crevice in the rocks. As "Crabby Crab" requests, she stops eating crabs, but only because she's ready to lay her eggs. She evades a predator by ejecting a cloud of ink. She quietly tends her eggs until they hatch, and then she bids the world goodbye. She has final advice for her pen pal Andrew, too: "You can't be mad or sad when you're swimming. Try it." Backmatter offers further information about octopuses (including the correct plural) as well as solid suggestions for further reading. Baker's appealing collage, acrylic paint, and digital illustrations are full of deep-sea color and abound with interesting patterns and textures. They include other thoroughly recognizable sea dwellers.

**Certainly the most engaging of the recent wave of octopus stories, for reading aloud or reading alone. (Informational picture book. 4-7)**



**PLAY WITH PUPPY**

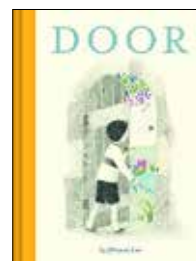
Layne, Steven  
Illus. by Hoyt, Ard  
Pelican (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-1-4556-2374-7

Somebunny has bitten off more than they can chew when it comes to pet ownership.

This tale of life in an anthropomorphic bunny family examines the difference between the dream of owning a pet and its realities and responsibilities. Throughout, watercolor-and-ink illustrations are redundant of the lackluster text, which delivers a straightforward lesson within its story. Initially, the first-person narrator campaigns hard to get a puppy as a birthday present, declaring "I wanted a puppy to play with all day long." When that dream comes true, however, puppy ownership ends up being not all it was cracked up to be. Sometimes the protagonist wants to do other things, but their parents and others are always telling them to "play with Puppy" to keep their new pet out of mischief. Exasperated, the bunny yells at the poor puppy, and it scampers

away and gets lost. While it's gone, the protagonist reflects on their impatience and grows worried about the puppy, too. Happily, the dog returns, "muddy and smelly and cruddy on his belly" but otherwise unscathed. Having learned an important lesson, the bunny goes out to play with the puppy, but there is no exploration of strategies the bunny and their family might explore to establish a healthy puppy-owner relationship.

**Neither a terribly playful read nor an especially useful one. (Picture book. 4-8)**



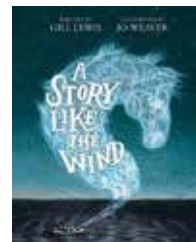
**DOOR**

Lee, JiHyeon  
Illus. by the author  
Chronicle (56 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4521-7142-5

A child finds a key to a mysterious door leading to a colorful, fantastical world full of friendly creatures.

Author/illustrator Lee follows up her debut, *Pool* (2015), with another wordless tale of a child exploring an unfamiliar land. Pencil drawings begin in drab black and white, but once the light-skinned child with little round eyes walks through the door, they collide with a bright red creature in a colorful landscape. The frightened and hungry child then finds a new friend who invites them to join their family for a picnic, activities, and a wedding. Readers will note the child gaining color as the book progresses and other creatures of all different types and sizes enter through numerous magical doors to attend the celebration. The creatures speak in a language that is written in squiggles, and the charming illustrations include details that illuminate the variety of their shapes, colors, and sizes as well as their cultures. Though neither readers nor protagonist can understand the language of these new friends, their welcoming warmth is clearly conveyed, and the child, in full color and smiling broadly, returns home through the magic door—leaving the padlock open.

**This simple tale of being a stranger in a strange land is not new, but readers will be drawn to its quiet charm and welcoming message of inclusion. (Picture book. 4-8)**



**A STORY LIKE THE WIND**

Lewis, Gill  
Illus. by Weaver, Jo  
Eerdmans (80 pp.)  
\$16.00 | Oct. 30, 2018  
978-0-8028-5514-5

On a boat drifting in the cold waters of the Mediterranean, dozens of Middle-Eastern refugees, young and old, cling to one another, waiting for the uncertainty that haunts their future to be put to rest.

In the bitter night, young Rami takes out his fiddle and begins to play, narrating an accompanying story that drifts



# Offermann's stirring pen-and-ink-and-watercolor illustrations create a deeply textured world, moving seamlessly from breathtaking vistas to intimate close-ups.

THE YIN-YANG SISTERS AND THE DRAGON FRIGHTFUL

through the boat, wrapping frigid bodies with the comfort of hope, faith, and freedom. Rami's fiddle tells of a young Mongolian shepherd who nurses back to health an abandoned foal. The foal becomes a white stallion rare in its beauty, might, and free soul. But as with all free and beautiful things, the white stallion soon captures the attention of the Dark Lord who rules the land, who forbids any freedom that he cannot control. As Rami plays, his fellow passengers reminisce. Nor and Mustafa remember when they met and the miracle birth of Bashar, their 6-year-old son, who is with them on the boat. Mohammad thinks of his wife, who is no longer with him; Youssef and Hassan remember their carefree childhoods, before the soldiers came. Rami's story stands as a reminder to the passengers that freedom cannot be taken from them because it exists all around them in the wind. Measured, lyrical prose is matched by Weaver's evocative, blue-toned illustrations, which depict sadness and fear, beauty and strength.

**Lewis' novella brings to life the unified power of hope and faith and freedom that keeps strong all those fleeing war, massacre, and hardship. (Fiction. 7-12)**



## THE YIN-YANG SISTERS AND THE DRAGON FRIGHTFUL

Ling, Nancy Tupper  
 Illus. by Offermann, Andrea  
 Putnam (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-0-399-17115-4

Can two sisters conquer the dragon who terrorizes their village?

The villagers of Woo are supremely inconvenienced by an ornery dragon who takes up residence across a bridge that connects their homes to the market. That same day, the Lee twins are born, one as fierce as the other is mild. Their auntie predicts that, like yin and yang, the two will be stronger together and defeat the dragon. The prose riffs satisfyingly on folklore conventions; readers and listeners will especially appreciate the repeated refrain: "Still, they were sisters. They stuck together." Offermann's stirring pen-and-ink-and-watercolor illustrations create a deeply textured world, moving seamlessly from breathtaking vistas to intimate close-ups. A double-page-spread image of the two girls as infants, snuggled together in a round basket, so aptly captures the concept of yin and yang, with a smart reference to the icon. Precise harmony eludes the narrative though, which devotes much more time to the thoughtful, "oozy"-feeling Mei, who arguably could have handled the dragon alone, than to fierce Wei. And for a story so clearly informed by imperial China, missed opportunities (additional resources about yin and yang, use of Chinese characters rather than scribbles in the illustrations) and misdirection (fabricated names and spelling conventions that approximate actual places or things) leave it treading near appropriation.

**Not quite a perfect balance here—but visually delightful nonetheless. (Picture book. 4-8)**



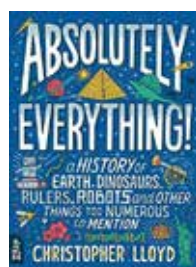
## LIZA JANE & THE DRAGON

Lippman, Laura  
 Illus. by Samworth, Kate  
 Black Sheep Press (32 pp.)  
 \$16.95 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-61775-661-0

A young girl thinks that a dragon will be a better caregiver than her mom and dad.

Liza Jane's parents tell her that she's very lucky. She has all the trappings of a happy-enough childhood: a canopy bed, a goldfish, and pizza on Fridays. "Yet: people didn't listen to her. People interrupted her. People didn't care about her feelings. And by 'people'—we mean her parents." The mixed-race child decides to fire her parental unit, and after putting up signs around the neighborhood ("Wanted: A MOM + A DAD"), she hires a dragon who claims "I can do both jobs." But the dragon can't cook, can't brush Liza Jane's hair, and "if anything made Liza Jane mad or frustrated, the dragon set it on fire." The illustrations are subdued watercolors; Liza Jane and the dragon are always rendered in bold colors, set against a retro sepia backdrop, with other splashes of color indicating the focal point of each spread. The text is awkward and clunky, using an overwhelmingly didactic tone for a story lacking any clear or compelling takeaways. "After two weeks, or maybe it was six months, or maybe it was four years," Liza Jane sends the dragon away and rehires her parents. "She tells them every day how lucky they are."

**Those seeking feminist-tinged picture books should look elsewhere. (Picture book. 5-9)**



## ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING! A History of Earth, Dinosaurs, Rulers, Robots and Other Things Too Numerous to Mention

Lloyd, Christopher  
 Illus. by Forshaw, Andy  
 What on Earth Books (352 pp.)  
 \$21.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
 978-1-999-8028-3-7

A view of human history from the Big Bang to experimental lab-grown meat.

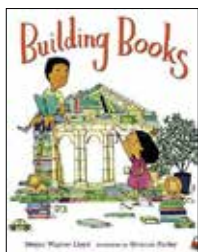
With this volume, Lloyd seemingly revises and updates *What on Earth Happened?...in Brief* (2009) into a rushed survey vaguely positioned as "a gateway to all the knowledge in the world." It's a narrow gateway, for all its substantial heft. The author is more or less through with the cosmos, geology, and biology by Page 75 and on to modern humans—beginning with the invention of cooking, a "gigantic breakthrough" in human development. He goes on to a tally of civilizations that's less Eurocentric than many, although he pays at best scant attention to the Indian subcontinent or to Indigenous North America, not to mention anyone's art, music, or literature. Moreover, his narrative is so telescoped that World War I is finished off

With repetitive, patterned, well-paced text, Lloyd weaves an enjoyable story while showcasing the benefits of trying something different and gently testing the boundaries of gender convention.

BUILDING BOOKS

in three paragraphs, and he gets from the space race to SpaceX in two. Still, he does carry his story up to Black Lives Matter, concludes by pointing to absolutism and income inequality as issues to watch, and finishes with an optimistic note that we humans are “superadapters” in a world whose true paradigm is adaptation to change. Reinforcing the panoramic feel, many of the colorful photos, images, and, from Forshaw, diversely hued and clad figures from various eras that brighten nearly every page seem to be marching into or out of view along the edges.

**Comprehensively mistitled but worth considering for its unusual angles, or at least as a replacement for the previous edition. (glossary and index not seen) (Nonfiction. 11-13)**



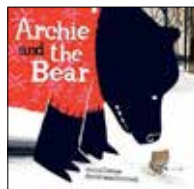
**BUILDING BOOKS**

Lloyd, Megan Wagner  
 Illus. by Farley, Brianne  
 Knopf (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-5247-7367-0  
 978-1-5247-7368-7 PLB

Owen loves reading but hates building. Katie loves building but hates reading. However, one day, each is forced to look beyond their interests.

Owen and Katie are siblings. Katie loves building with blocks, and Owen loves books. One day, they are caught by their school librarian arguing about the benefits of building versus reading. To push their boundaries, the librarian gives a pile of books to Katie to read and a pile of books to Owen to shelve. Both of them frown and ignore the librarian’s command. However, when Katie’s book castle falls and reveals a book titled *Castle Engineering*, her curiosity is piqued, and she begins to read. Similarly, when Owen takes a break from reading, he discovers he can build a cool tower with books! In no time, the siblings are sharing their joys of both building *and* reading. With repetitive, patterned, well-paced text, Lloyd weaves an enjoyable story while showcasing the benefits of trying something different and gently testing the boundaries of gender convention. Farley’s detailed and realistic illustrations are intriguing and playful, effectively using white space and vignettes to delineate the kids’ characters and activities. In addition to providing an added level of depth and beauty to the story, they depict Katie and Owen both with brown skin and black hair, and the librarian is a pants-wearing woman of color.

**Engaging read combined with a solid lesson. (Picture book. 4-8)**



**ARCHIE AND THE BEAR**

Louise, Zanni  
 Illus. by Mackintosh, David  
 Clarion (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-328-97341-2

A story about a little boy with a bear-sized imagination—or perhaps a fantastic friendship with a bear.

Readers may debate how much of the story’s action is real and how much imagined, but as it opens it’s clear that Archie is fed up with everyone telling him he’s not a bear. Small and angry, he stomps off the recto while wearing what appears to be a bear hat, brown jacket, and gloves. “It’s NOT a suit,” he objects to looming adults who are visible only from the knees down. “I AM a bear!” The next spread zooms out to a distant perspective, rendering Archie a minute speck on the verso as he approaches a forest. There, he meets a large black bear wearing a red shirt, and when “Archie realized the bear was friendly, he said, ‘I like your boy suit.’” The bear, incensed, insists “It’s NOT a suit....I AM a boy!” Archie goes along with this, and a friendship is born. They cavort about the woods, teaching each other bear things (Archie teaches these) and boy things (the bear teaches those), ultimately ending up at Archie’s house. Throughout, illustrations maximize the characters’ extreme size difference, and gestural watercolors combined with blocky collage and textured pencil offer a multimedia feast for the eyes.

**A striking, imaginative, beary good book. (Picture book. 3-7)**



**SABOTAGE STAGE LEFT**

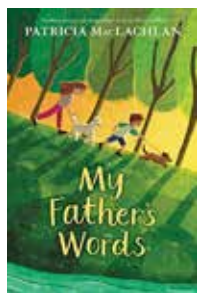
Lyall, Casey  
 Sterling (256 pp.)  
 \$14.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-4549-2968-0  
 Series: Howard Wallace, P.I., 3

Wallace and Mason Investigations is on the case again!

Howard and Ivy are still solving cases for kids at Grantleyville Middle School even though Howard has been told he will be suspended if he’s caught investigating on school grounds again. There is a graffiti tagger in town, and someone is sabotaging the middle school musical. Thankfully, Howard and Ivy now have a crew to help them with investigations, though Howard has trouble trusting his new associates. Still, the graffiti case bears fruit early (thanks to Howard’s personal attentions). The sabotage case is harder to crack—the list of suspects is long. When they narrow it down, Howard finds himself stung by a smart perpetrator, and he must rely on his associates. Can they trap the saboteur? Or will Wallace and Mason Investigations disband? Lyall continues to expand and improve her characterizations in this funny, entertaining, and suspenseful series of realistic(-ish) mysteries. Howard realizes he just can’t investigate on his own, especially when he is both trapped *and*

suspended. Fans will be happy for the new case, and new readers should not miss out on the first two. Most characters present white, with naming conventions implying diversity.

**The series just keeps getting better; fans will hope for more.** (*Mystery. 8-12*)



**MY FATHER'S WORDS**

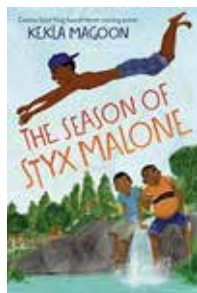
*MacLachlan, Patricia*  
Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins  
(144 pp.)  
\$15.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-06-268769-2



When a freak accident kills their father, Declan, the O'Brien family must discover how to heal.

When Declan makes eggs, they are typically runny, but when Fiona complains, he tells her, "It's the eternal fitness of things," without any further explanation. Other phrases he loved were "Dona nobis pacem" and "often the truth is just behind the door." These and many other lovable idiosyncrasies will never be fully explained to Fiona and younger brother Finn, because as Declan drives to help one of his psychiatric patients, a child races after a ball that has rolled into the street. Declan swerves but is struck by a truck and killed instantly, off the page and in the first chapter. As the O'Brien family struggles with grief and anger, help comes in two unusual ways. First, Thomas, one of Declan's patients, calls Fiona each Monday for two minutes only and shares insights about her father. Secondly, neighbor and classmate Luke invites Fiona and Finn to go with him to a local animal rescue shelter to read to abandoned dogs. With her customary precise, spare language, infused with emotional intelligence, MacLachlan takes readers from shocked grief to a way to live again, fundamental truths dropped carefully and delicately for young readers to comprehend in their own time.

**Simple words make a flawless story about resilience, hope, healing, and the eternal fitness of things.** (*Fiction. 8-12*)



**THE SEASON OF STYX MALONE**

*Magoon, Kekla*  
Wendy Lamb/Random (304 pp.)  
\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-1-5247-1595-3  
978-1-5247-1596-0 PLB



Cooler-than-cool newcomer Styx Malone takes the more-sheltered brothers Caleb and Bobby Gene on a mischievous, path-altering, summer adventure

of a lifetime as they embrace the extraordinary possibilities beyond the everyday in rural Indiana.

Readers may think an adventure such as they'll find here wouldn't be possible in the present day; this story takes place

*outside*, where nature, know-how, creativity, and curiosity rule. Creeks, dirt roads, buried treasures, and more make up the landscape in Sutton, Indiana. Younger brother Caleb narrates, letting readers know from the outset that he's tired of his dad's racially tinged determination that they be safely ordinary: "I don't want to be ordinary. I want to be...the other thing." With Styx Malone around, Caleb and Bobby Gene will sure figure out what that "other thing" can become. The three black adolescents are enchanted with the miracle of the Great Escalator Trade, the mythic one-thing-leads-to-another bartering scheme that just might get them farther from Sutton than they've ever dreamed. As they get deeper and deeper into cahoots with Styx, they begin to notice that Styx harbors some secret ambitions of his own, further twisting this grand summer journey. "How do you move through the world knowing that you're special, when no one else can see it?" begs the soul of this novel.

**Heartening and hopeful, a love letter to black male youth grasping the desires within them, absorbing the worlds around them, striving to be more otherwise than ordinary.** Please share. (*Fiction. 8-12*)



**TIGHT**

*Maldonado, Torrey*  
Nancy Paulsen Books (192 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-5247-4055-9

A loner navigates a dangerous relationship.

Bryan is a quiet, Afro-Puerto Rican sixth-grader living in Brooklyn. He enjoys comic books, video games, and keeping to himself. Pa, recently released from prison, and Bryan's sister, Ava, encourage him to be tough. Ava mocks him for being a "momma's boy," and Pa tells him it's better to be feared than liked. Ma, however, encourages Bryan to use his brains instead of his fists. Ma introduces Bryan to Mike, a slightly older black boy who uses the services at the community center where Ma works; she says he "seems nice" and "gets good grades," and Bryan needs a friend. Soon Mike and Bryan become so close that they say they're brothers—but Mike isn't as good as Ma and others think. Bryan gets swept up in Mike's influence and begins to behave badly in small ways, throwing rocks at cars from rooftops and practicing his mother's handwriting so he can forge excuses from school. After Pa violates his parole and is arrested again, Bryan's behavior escalates, including cutting class and hopping onto moving trains. Through Bryan's believable, emotionally honest first-person narration, Maldonado skillfully shows a boy trying to navigate parental desires and the societal expectations of his Brooklyn neighborhood while trying to figure himself out.

**Readers will be rooting for Bryan to make the right choices even as they understand the wrong ones.** (*Fiction. 8-12*)



**WINNIE'S GREAT WAR**

*Mattick, Lindsay & Greenhut, Josh*  
*Illus. by Blackall, Sophie*  
Little, Brown (256 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-0-316-44712-6

The biography of the world's most beloved bear finds a whole new audience in this winsome new work about Winnie.

As readers of *Finding Winnie* know, before she was Winnie-the-Pooh, the inspiration for the famous literary character was a cub living with her mother in the forests of Canada. Billed as a version of Winnie's origin story for a more mature reader, Mattick and Greenhut's thoughtful narrative tackles difficult subjects such as the death of a parent and the fear of being different with grace and humor. Besides its length, what most distinguishes this work from the Caldecott Award-winning picture book dealing with the same subject matter is tone. Winnie's journey demonstrates that new and unexpected life paths emerge from tragedy. In the authors' capable hands, Winnie becomes a strong and sympathetic character in her own right well before her fateful meeting with Lt. Harry Colebourn, the soldier who takes her to war with him. Narration that shifts between Winnie's life in the past and contemporary times, when Mattick tells the tale to her son, Cole, is an excellent framing device providing context for the larger historical events that shape Winnie's future. Blackall's spread-spanning illustrations, which serve as section breaks, are sublime as always and will make readers wish that there were more of them.

**A charming addition to Pooh lore that will send readers happily back to the Hundred-Acre Wood.** (*Historical fiction. 8-12*)



**SO MANY SOUNDS**

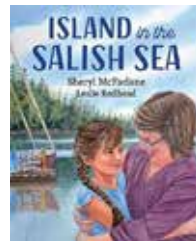
*McCanna, Tim*  
*Illus. by Miller, Andy J.*  
AbramsAppleseed (24 pp.)  
\$12.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-4197-3156-3

A look at sounds throughout the day.

The book opens with the child who is depicted on the cover, a child of color with brown skin and black hair, asleep in bed while a white-appearing man knocks on the bedroom door and a yellow bird sings outside. Accompanying, rhyming text reads, "LISTEN! DO YOU HEAR A SOUND? / NOISES COME FROM ALL AROUND." Subsequent pages show the child getting up and starting the day while sounds of the man, who seems to be his father, cooking breakfast, washing dishes, etc. surround him. Then the child walks to school with a woman of color who appears to be mom, and they encounter new noises outside. The school day, which includes a field trip to a concert, is filled with sounds too, and the students are a diverse group with differing skin and hair colors. Throughout, Miller's cartoon art concentrates on making sound visible. The vibrant,

multicolored palette alone looks loud, and musical notes on the page, along with colors and lines emanating from instruments, pounding hammers, and so on, graphically represent various sounds described by the text. Pages are visually noisy, compositions crowded and exuberant. The child returns home at book's end to settle down as the closing text reads, "NO MORE NOISES. NOT A PEEP. EVERYONE IS SOUND ASLEEP" (here, perhaps, readers will wish the otherwise appropriately all-caps text were not shouting quite so loud).

**Make some noise at storytime with this book.** (*Picture book. 1-4*)



**ISLAND IN THE SALISH SEA**

*McFarlane, Sheryl*  
*Illus. by Redbeard, Leslie*  
Orca (32 pp.)  
\$19.95 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-1-4598-1345-8

In this Canadian import, a girl spends the summer with her grandmother on an island in the Pacific Northwest.

The evocative story is told from the first-person point of view of the unnamed girl, who appears to be 10 or 11. She spends each summer with Gran at her cozy log cabin on an island in the Salish Sea, which is the collective name of the waterways of coastal British Columbia and Washington state. Lovely, atmospheric watercolor illustrations show the girl and her grandmother spending idyllic weeks together exploring the beach, gardening, fishing, and cooking. The child visits their neighbor, Joe, who is carving an eagle on a cedar totem pole. He tells the girl stories and speaks about eagles, explaining that you must earn an eagle feather in order to keep one. In both the U.S. and Canada, ownership of eagle feathers is legal only for Indigenous people, opening the door for readers to see Joe and possibly the girl and her grandmother as Canadian First Nations people. The girl and her grandmother have golden-tan skin and brown hair; Joe has reddish-tan skin and graying black hair. The story unfolds with a calm, peaceful tone, indicating the secure relationship between granddaughter and grandmother and the reassuring certainty of annual traditions in a protected environment. Several terms in the text are not well defined, such as jiggling for fish, "midden," and "petroglyph." A glossary and map and a clear indication of whether or not the characters are Indigenous people would have improved the accessibility of the story.

**An informative and entertaining tale of an intriguing location and a warm family relationship.** (*Picture book. 4-8*)

# While books on sibling rivalry abound, this volume brings freshness to the topic with McGhee's gentle humor and poignant scenarios.

DEAR SISTER



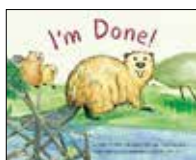
## DEAR SISTER

McGhee, Alison  
 Illus. by Bluhm, Joe  
 Caitlyn Dlouhy/Atheneum (192 pp.)  
 \$13.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4814-5142-0

Over the years, a boy's letters to his younger sister reveal his changing impressions of her and their relationship in this epistolary graphic novel.

For the unnamed 8-year-old boy, life was less complicated before his baby sister was born. Now his parents (aka "the wardens") ask him to write cards and letters, sometimes with accompanying drawings, to his new sibling. Beginning each note with "Dear Sister," the boy recounts his life with honesty, expressing his frustration with her incessant crying, having to read her the same book for "the 763rd time," and his lack of privacy. Mixed in are several apology letters that reveal that the wardens fail to understand his perspective. Only his friend Joe offers diversion. Signing his initial letters "From, Brother," he informs his sister that he's holding out on the love part until he's made up his mind. During a 10-year-period, however, his letters gradually reflect his growing affection for her. When Joe moves away, it's the sister, who's always adored her big brother, who understands his pain. And as their friendship and affection grow, perhaps the brother enjoys connecting with—and yes, reading to—his sister after all. While books on sibling rivalry abound, this volume brings freshness to the topic with McGhee's gentle humor and poignant scenarios (though adults may respond more strongly than kids). Bluhm heightens both with childlike sketches for the brother's drawings and emotive illustrations for the storyline.

**Dear indeed for preteens facing big changes and adults with fond memories.** (Graphic fiction. 10-13)



## I'M DONE!

McLellan, Gretchen Brandenburg  
 Illus. by Odell, Catherine Lazar  
 Holiday House (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-0-8234-3705-4

Again and again, Little Beaver, eager to play with his friends, claims his dam is finished—but is it?

Art and text combine to provide a plot familiar to a great many children. Each time Little Beaver adds a twig or two to the dam he is supposed to be building, a different friend comes along to lure him away: first Fish (a trout), then Bird (a great blue heron), then Otter. Each time, one of Little Beaver's parents slaps a tail to call back the errant kit, then reminds him that he needs to do some more work before he may play. There is a good deal of onomatopoeia and gentle rhyming to provide enjoyment to both a read-aloud audience and beginning readers; these sounds are set apart in a larger display type. Examples: "Nibble Nibble Snap" and "Scoop Scoop Pat" as Little Beaver

works on the dam; Fish's "Flish Flish Swish"; and, of course, the "Slap Slap Slap" of Papa's and Mama's tails. Children will also learn the rudiments of dam-building as they empathize with Little Beaver's impatience. The mixed-media art combines a northern woodlands palette of blue and green watercolors for backgrounds; in the foreground are animals that are a pleasant combination of anthropomorphic facial expressions and elegantly rendered, realistic bodies. There is gentle humor throughout.

**A bit of natural science combines with a sweet tale of perseverance and camaraderie.** (Picture book. 3-5)



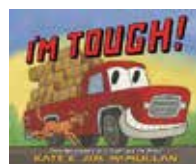
## HOW DO YOU TAKE A BATH?

McMullan, Kate  
 Illus. by Hanson, Sydney  
 Knopf (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | \$20.99 paper | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-5247-6517-0  
 978-1-5247-6518-7 paper

Everybody needs a bath sometimes, even hippos! But how do they manage it?

McMullan offers a rhyming bedtime book that looks at all the different ways our animal friends keep themselves clean. From kittens licking themselves to monkey mamas combing through fur, all animals approach their cleaning routines differently. But what about those lovable little humans in our lives? They can't let fish nibble on them as turtles do or wallow in mud with the piggies! Kids will enjoy seeing pictures of animal favorites getting clean, but they will really laugh as they see children trying to bathe themselves in the same ways as their animal counterparts. Three different children are portrayed, of different gender and race presentations, giving many kids the opportunity to see themselves in the pages. The illustrations are bright, with a cartoonish feel to them, showing not only different animals, but their habitats as well. Both the animals and children are delightfully expressive, which brings everything to life. The rhymes sometimes feel a little clunky, but that's a small quibble in an otherwise charming book.

**A bedtime read-aloud that young kids and caregivers will have a ball with.** (Picture book. 3-6)



## I'M TOUGH!

McMullan, Kate  
 Illus. by McMullan, Jim  
 Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-06-244925-2

The series of vehicles spouting declarative sentences about themselves returns once more with yet another self-confident machine: the not-so-humble pickup truck.

This pickup is the first to say, "I'm not the BIGGEST TRUCK in the parking lot," but what it lacks in size it more than makes up for in gumption. "Here I go, ridin' low. Who's got

The focus stays on Eliza rather than her famous spouse, presenting a determined, resilient, and individualistic white woman of her time, witness to many years of early American history.

ELIZA

truck squat? Me. I'm HUFFIN' and PUFFIN', but hey, that's nothin'..." After listing its physical attributes (the cab, cargo bed, tailgate, and engine are all highlighted), the truck attempts three very different loads. As with many other books in this series, humans make no appearances on the pages, focusing the attention entirely on the truck when, for example, it receives an extra-long load of lumber. Gravel comes next, and though it's extremely heavy, a shift into four-wheel drive and an ample use of the clutch save the day. Carrying bales of hay on twisty roads can hardly compare in difficulty. Watercolor-and-gouache illustrations keep the art peppy, and the judicious use of bold and colorful typography will aid in making this yet another staple read-aloud.

The McMullans' series is now 10 books strong; thanks to its energy and charisma, this one may well end up being one of their most requested. (Picture book. 4-8)



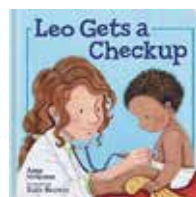
**ELIZA**  
**The Story of Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton**

McNamara, Margaret  
Illus. by Shapiro, Esmé  
Schwartz & Wade/Random (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-5247-6588-0  
978-1-5247-6589-7 PLB

"My story began on a hot August day in 1757."

An imagined letter tells the story of Eliza Hamilton so that her unborn great-granddaughter will know about her life, accomplishments, and beliefs as a patriot, socialite, philanthropist, child advocate, de facto archivist, dedicated wife, and loving matriarch. Paintings reminiscent of 18th-century American art show Eliza's journey from her privileged childhood with slaveholding parents in upstate New York to her rebellious marriage to Founding Father Alexander Hamilton and their life together and on to her work founding and fundraising for New York's first orphanage and her impressions of the many presidents she knew. The realities of slavery are addressed briefly, and Eliza's role in introducing Hamilton to benefactors and politicians is mentioned. While some of the history presented seems unnecessarily fragmentary given that this is not an original letter—no background for the Hamilton/Burr duel is presented within the text, for example—the endnotes are particularly detailed, and overall, the focus stays on Eliza rather than her famous spouse, presenting a determined, resilient, and individualistic white woman of her time, witness to many years of early American history. An afterword by Phillipa Soo, who played Eliza in *Hamilton: An American Musical*, is appended.

Well-researched and intricately illustrated, this portrait provides an accessible jumping-off point for those interested in the Broadway musical and captures an extensive historical period from a specific and interesting perspective. (Picture book/biography. 6-10)



**LEO GETS A CHECKUP**

McQuinn, Anna  
Illus. by Hearson, Ruth  
Charlesbridge (24 pp.)  
\$9.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-1-58089-891-1

In this episode in the life of toddler Leo, younger brother to Lola (*Lola Reads to Leo*, 2012, etc.), his parents take him to the doctor's office for a checkup.

Leo, a brown boy with tightly curled hair, dressed in a one-sie and holding onto a table, "is a big boy now." His mother and father, who are exactly the same shade of brown, are in the background as Leo feeds himself, plays ball, sings, and dances. When it is time to go, he "puts his toys away" and gets "his blankie and Mister Seahorse." Daddy packs a bag and brings him to the clinic, where Leo sits on the floor playing with Mister Seahorse while they wait for their turn. (This doctor evidently has a separate well-child waiting room, as every soul in the diverse gathering is smiling happily—there's not a runny nose in sight.) When it is Leo's turn, he shows his doctor, a white woman, "what he can do now." He gets a sticker and a book and gets checked all over. He even continues smiling while he gets his shot, which "will keep him healthy." The rounded features and shining, rosy cheeks of the invariably smiling characters make for a pleasant trip with Leo through his safe and welcoming world.

A helpful way to prepare toddlers for a visit to the doctor with a character who's easy to love. (Picture book. 1-3)



**BEAR CHILD**

Mead, Geoff  
Illus. by Duff, Samme  
Floris (32 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-78250-476-4

A conversation about bear folk—creatures half-human and half-bear—takes place between a little girl and her father.

Ursula, wearing a nightgown and cuddling a teddy bear, sits with her father in an oversized chair. When she asks Daddy to tell her about the bear folk, he begins with the myth of how today's bears descended from "Numitorum, the Great Bear of the Northern Sky." The faded wallpaper behind the pair blurs into the next page's star-studded sky, with gentle-looking polar bears moving along a path "woven from sunrays and moonbeams." An apparently nightly ritual has begun. Every page turn brings text with a deft balance of exciting, often funny ideas and lulling rhythms, as readers learn that bear folk are still in the world today; they continue to live "extraordinary lives" until the Great Bear calls them back. The art, done in a muted, full-color palette, with graceful lines and gentle watercolors, is well-matched in tone. The pages are full of sweet-faced children, adults, and bears—implying that bear folk morph easily between their identities. Though Ursula and Daddy present white, other contemporary bear folk appear to be of many races. Friendships,



a life well-lived, ecology, mortality—all are touched upon lightly as the child (whose name means “little bear,” of course) drifts into sleep. Disappointingly, the text—unlike the author’s own website—gives no source for the tale the father tells: an elaboration of a core story from the Khanty people of Siberia; nor does the artwork hint of it, instead dressing early bear people in attire reminiscent of Native American stereotypes.

**A sweet bedtime book with some significant gaps.** (*Picture book. 3-7*)



**LESSONS FROM UNDERGROUND**

*Methods, Bryan*  
 Carolrhoda (276 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Nov. 1, 2018  
 978-1-5124-0581-1

Series: Master Dipsexito and Mr. Scant, 3

The theft of a massive diamond leads fledgling secret agent Oliver Dipsexito to South Africa, where eye-opening revelations await.

The series loses juice, headway, and even coherence in this third episode, as Aurelian Binns, vengeful scion of the former head of the nefarious Woodhouselee Society, leads supposedly clever Oliver around by the nose. Binns tricks Oliver into actually helping to steal the gem, then into a chase through the *Titanic* (just before it sets out on its fateful voyage, which is an opportunity for drama lost if ever there was one) while the diamond heads for southern Africa. Oliver finally journeys to the diamond mines of Kimberley, where he gets filled in on the area’s growing racial oppression and turmoil and, in the course of an inconclusive dust-up, saves freedom fighter Bartholomew Hunter, an American whose parents had been enslaved, from a bullet and also from being tricked into selling the diamond to vicious white mine owners. Aside from narration (and playing Binns’ dupe), the white teenager is more observer than driver of events, so passive that he just shrugs off discoveries that both Hunter and the Woodhouselee Society figure significantly in the hidden past of his saturnine butler/mentor, Mr. Scant. In the end *Methods* himself apparently loses interest in his tale, not even bothering to mention whether the diamond is recovered or not.

**A shrug is likely to be readers’ responses, too.** (*Adventure. 10-12*)



**THE BACKSTAGERS AND THE GHOST LIGHT**

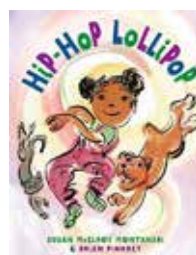
*Mientus, Andy*  
*Illus. by Sygh, Rian*  
 Amulet/Abrams (208 pp.)  
 \$14.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-1-4197-3120-4  
 Series: Backstagers, 1

*The Backstagers* gets the *Lumberjanes* treatment in this novelization of the

comic-book series.

Backstage drama kids Aziz, Hunter, Beckett, Jory, and Sasha have a few more performances left at St. Genesius Preparatory High School before the end of the school year. At the latest cast party, a bunch of actors, or Onstagers, pull out a spirit board for a few laughs and end up accidentally busting the Ghost Light—the stage light said to keep ghosts away. When a ghost lurking backstage tries to get out, the lore turns out to be truth. Now it’s up to the crew to go back into the unknown to save the theater. But can they do it without the stage managers? Sygh’s two-color spot art and the overall whimsical narrative tone keep the comic-book series’ spirit intact. Unfortunately, the sometimes-lofty third-person omniscient narrator is a bit of a mismatch. The sweet, blush-filled romances read a bit more chaste here than in the comics, but this may attract younger audiences. The already-diverse array of male characters broadens to include Reo, who is biracial (Japanese/Irish) and a witch. Fans of the series will appreciate Mientus’ exploration of characters’ backstories—and all will have a chance to learn more in future prose installments.

**An adequate dessert for existing fans that just may tempt a few new ones as well.** (*Fantasy. 10-14*)



**HIP-HOP LOLLIPOP**

*Montanari, Susan McElroy*  
*Illus. by Pinkney, Brian*  
 Schwartz & Wade/Random (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-101-93482-1  
 978-1-101-93483-8 PLB

With dance moves and beats that soothe, splashed with swirling lines and colors displayed in array—this picture-book tale is a fun-filled hip-hop hooray!

Montanari blends energetic rhythm with toe-tapping rhymes in her happy narrative of little Lollipop’s love of hip-hop and dance. “Mama says, ‘Time for bed. / Bed.’ / Lollie’s arms overhead. / Dancing down the long hall. / Bouncing off the tall wall.” But getting a bouncy ball of raw stamina down for bedtime is harder than you think. Pinkney’s swooping lines and whooshes of color enliven the story. Depicting dancing pets that arc and sway in time to the cadence of the rhymes, Pinkney amply demonstrates his mastery of visual narrative. He adds an almost abstract quality with his use of line, using pastel colors to

suggest outlines of furniture and then transforming them seamlessly into sheer motion in a smart, refreshing way, playing with perspective while showing totally realistic joy on the characters' charmingly rich, brown faces. Montanari has penned a read-aloud treat that is sure to enhance the nighttime ritual. However, caregivers shouldn't be surprised if their little ones decide this bedtime story deserves backup dancers.

**Though it's far from lulling, it's well worth the risk of a prolonged bedtime. The glee it provokes will surely be worth it.** (Picture book. 3-7)



**SOMETHING ROTTEN**  
**A Fresh Look**  
**at Roadkill**

Montgomery, Heather L.  
Illus. by O'Malley, Kevin  
Bloomsbury (176 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-1-68119-900-9



The discoveries that arise from our flattened fauna will amaze you!

Montgomery's story—part memoir, part scientific overview—begins with a squashed snake and follows her as she learns more and more about the animals she finds run over on the side of the road. Animals explored range from snakes to coyotes and deer, and although some international animals are discussed, the primary focus remains on those squished Stateside. For all the literal blood and guts, the tone of the book is light and slightly irreverent, but it never mocks either the animals or the scientists and volunteers who work with roadkill. Footnotes abound to help explain the occasional tangent or help readers understand more complex issues that are alluded to in the text. O'Malley's black-and-white illustrations are peppered throughout the text, sometimes illustrating a moment from the text, sometimes providing a visual description of an animal, tool, or related object. The icing on the cake is the wealth of backmatter, which is divided into three sections: "Simple Acts Save Lives," which provides practical tips for readers on how they can make an ecological impact; an annotated bibliography that's divided by chapter, allowing browsers to find out more info on their specific interests; and an index.

**There's nothing rotten about this book—it's a keeper.** (Nonfiction. 10-14)



**THE EXTREMELY**  
**INCONVENIENT ADVENTURES**  
**OF BRONTE METTLESTONE**

Moriarty, Jaclyn  
Levine/Scholastic (384 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-338-25584-3

The stipulations of her parents' will send Bronte Mettlestone on a quest throughout Kingdoms and Empires.

When Bronte is just 10, her aunt Isabelle, with whom she lives, receives word that her parents—off gallivanting since Bronte's birth—have been killed by pirates. Their will, bound with magic Faery cross-stitch, compels Bronte to deliver, in person, a gift to each of her other 10 aunts, spending at least three days with each one. She begins with Aunt Sue, who takes her to the elves' Festival of Matchstick, where Bronte saves a baby from drowning and wins the Elvish Medal of Bravery. Next, Bronte frees Aunt Emma from wrongful imprisonment regarding the theft of a water sprite's pepper grinder and saves the water sprite from death by drying. As her adventures go on, and on, Bronte learns more about the Whisperers, who spread Dark Magic from their kingdom, and the Spellbinders, who stopped it—and that she may have a closer relationship to all this magic than she knew. This is Moriarty's first foray into middle-grade fiction, and it turns out to be about five aunt adventures too many—the never-ending whimsy becomes cloying, and the story stalls. Readers struggle to keep so many characters straight, let alone care about any of them, and without emotional connection there's not enough incentive to keep reading. Most of the characters are described as light-skinned.

**Imaginative but not fully realized.** (Fantasy. 8-12)



**THE GIRL WITH A**  
**MIND FOR MATH**  
**The Story of Raye**  
**Montague**

Mosca, Julia Finley  
Illus. by Rieley, Daniel  
The Innovation Press (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-943147-42-7  
Series: Amazing Scientists



The true story of an African-American woman who broke barriers by reaching her potential as an engineer.

When Raye Montague saw a submarine at age 7 and learned that an engineer had built it, she found her calling. Her mother told her to stay strong and not let those who looked down on her because of her race and her gender hold her back. She attended segregated schools, and in college she was told that engineering was not taught to black students, so she majored in business. She became a typist in a place where they built submarines, and although her boss underestimated her, Raye paid

# Readers meet musicians, educators, gay rights activists, and entrepreneurs who paved the way for other Black Canadian visionaries.

BLACK WOMEN WHO DARED

attention at work and took classes at night. When the flu had most of the staff out sick, Raye did the engineers' work "from MEMORY." She got promoted and went on to design the first ship by computer. It was not all smooth sailing, though; only white men were invited to the unveiling of the ship she had designed, and she was still treated with disrespect. The use of perspective and artful composition in the simple illustrations conveys Montague's isolation and her determination. The text, in light rhyming verse, condemns the unfair treatment she received ("No invite?! / ABHORRIBLE!")—a great model for building awareness of racism and solid inspiration for achieving against the odds. The author interviewed Montague for her research, and further information culled from the conversation appears in the backmatter.

**A fun read and an uplifting story. (timeline, biographical note, bibliography)** *(Picture book/biography. 4-8)*



## BLACK WOMEN WHO DARED

Moyer, Naomi M.  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Second Story Press (24 pp.)  
 \$18.95 | Sep. 10, 2018  
 978-1-77260-071-1

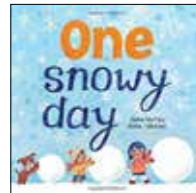


Filling an important void, this picture book delivers stories from a history about which most U.S. children remain

woefully ignorant: that of Black Canadian women.

Most American kids know stories of Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Sojourner Truth. But who were their equivalents in Canada? This strikingly illustrated collective biography captures some of the incredible life stories of unsung Canadian heroes who broke racial, social, political, and other boundaries to make life better for other Black Canadians. The Colored Women's Club, for instance, founded in 1902, "focused on supporting Black communities in Montreal" through services like soup kitchens and clothing giveaways. The organization now provides scholarships for black youth, having remained active since its establishment. Readers meet musicians, educators, gay rights activists, and entrepreneurs who paved the way for other Black Canadian visionaries. Moyer's unusual, eye-catching illustrations feature brightly colored backgrounds with focal characters whose figures appear in black and white. But while their faces are depicted using black-and-white photographs, paintings, or sketches, they all feature stylized dots and striations on them that resemble tribal markings. These distinctive characteristics invite readers to slow down and carefully consider the faces of these powerful women who dared.

**A crucial re-education in a likely unfamiliar history and an immersion in noteworthy art all at once.** *(Collective biography. 10-14)*



## ONE SNOWY DAY

Murray, Diana  
*Illus. by Toledano, Diana*  
 Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-4926-4586-3

The delights of snow-day snow-play in a small town are enumerated in this early concept book for tots.

Snow falls overnight. In early morning, one puppy barks and two small children wake up. All three smile as they look out the window onto the snow-covered grass. Rhyming text sets a gentle pace as they venture outside: The humans pull on four boots, then the trio pulls their sled past five pine trees. In this child-centric tale (no adults in sight), they are soon joined by a diverse cast of six friends eager to sled, make snow angels, and build snowmen. (The two protagonist children have light-brown skin and straight, blue hair.) The spelled-out numbers appear in large colorful type, but numerals are not included—a lapse. Blue and white dominate the wintry palette, and the white landscape gives readers' eyes plenty of space to focus on the items named and counted. A cozy feel is created by a series of soft, rounded shapes: puppy's bed, children's heads, snowballs, and pond. As the activities wind down, readers begin to count backward until the three are home again. The siblings enjoy two cups of cocoa and one puppy starts to doze.

**Although far from unique, this gambol allows parents and children room to talk about seasonal weather and activities.** *(Picture book. 3-6)*



## POWER TO THE PRINCESS

Murrow, Vita Weinstein  
*Illus. by Bereciartu, Julia*  
 Frances Lincoln (96 pp.)  
 \$19.99 | Sep. 6, 2018  
 978-1-78603-203-4

Well-known fairy tales get modern makeovers in this socially conscious compilation.

When Murrow heard these misunderstood princesses' stories firsthand, she explains in a playful introductory note, she discovered that "a princess is a person who seeks to help others" and "is open to learning new things." Belle the Brave is a fearless girl who goes after her father because she is good at climbing trees and jumping off ledges. She becomes a police officer with a specialty in restorative justice and is called Beauty because she can see the beauty in others. The Little Mermaid is determined to visit the land of the humans to find a way to keep the oceans clean. She meets a young woman with a similar vision, and after some time working together toward their common cause, the two marry. Rapunzel is a brilliant builder, and she doesn't let the Prince up the tower without first finding out who he is and what he wants (which is to learn

# Nobuo's story of reconciliation, not only for him, but for Japan and the U.S., is powerful and poignant.

THIRTY MINUTES OVER OREGON

more about her inventive designs). She becomes an architect and helps make the kingdom more accessible to people who are visually impaired, like the Prince. About half of the princesses appear to be of color, with varying skin tones and eye shapes. Combining real-life, meaningful work with the trappings of kingdoms and fairy tales, this volume is a treasure for readers who are tired of traditional helpless princesses who fall in love instantly and “live happily ever after.”

**Brilliant.** (*Fantasy*. 6-13)



## NO PEACOCKS! A Feathered Tale of Three Mischievous Foodies

Newman, Robin

*Illus. by Ewald, Chris*

Sky Pony Press (32 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-5107-1480-9

Three peacocks who live at New York's Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine try to expand their diets.

Tired of sunflower seeds (oddly, depicted as bullet-shaped heaps of golden granules), Phil, Jim, and Harry venture into the neighborhood for some variety only to be turned away everywhere with the titular exclamation. Tempted by “a whiff of something yummy,” they follow their noses to a nearby school, where children are enjoying “ooey, gooey, creamy and delicious mac 'n cheese.” Fascinated to the point of obsession, Phil, Jim, and Harry try daily to sneak into the school. Finally, a kid with “a connection” supplies them with the coveted foodstuff—and, anticlimactically, they don't like it. Based on three actual peacocks at the cathedral who roam the neighborhood and eat anything, the plot stretches out its build past the breaking point, so the final punchline lands only glancingly. Ewald's slick, animation-inspired digital illustrations have a glossy, off-putting look that fails to supply the visual verve the story needs. They depict a multicultural neighborhood and school population. The peacocks themselves (two blue, one white) look a lot more like Foghorn Leghorn with paddle-shaped tails than the striking ornamental fowl, which is underscored by the photographs that accompany an author's note.

**Fun for kids who know the cathedral (and for patrons of its gift shop); skippable for everybody else.** (*Picture book*. 4-7)



## A WITCH ALONE

Nicol, James

Chicken House/Scholastic (320 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 25, 2018

978-1-338-18851-6

Series: Apprentice Witch, 2

A newly qualified young witch struggles to succeed at her job, save the world, keep her friends, and impress her elders.

Arianwyn has been enjoying her vacation since the events of *The Apprentice Witch* (2017), but her relaxing time has come to an end. The Council of Elders, imposing witches all, have asked for help from *her*, little Arianwyn Gribble! A funguslike hex is spreading through the kingdom, and spirits of malign magic are causing trouble. Why, some winged grippets even bust up a parade in Kingsport—and in jumping to the aid of the parade-goers, Arianwyn accidentally coats the king himself in magical slime. Back in her hometown, Arianwyn is run ragged with constant magical errands for the demanding and overexcitable locals, all while preparing for her important secret quest. Magical creatures abound in this default-white, British-flavored fantasy kingdom; some are friendly, some are dangerous, and several are pests. It's Arianwyn's job to keep the town safe from the pests while seeking help from benevolent feylings in order to defeat the deadly hex. Instead of a tidy resolution, Arianwyn's accomplishments bring her further into some dire plots, easily setting her up for further adventures.

**The exuberant chaos is charming, easily carrying the lightweight magical quest.** (*Fantasy*. 9-12)



## THIRTY MINUTES OVER OREGON A Japanese Pilot's World War II Story

Nobleman, Marc Tyler

*Illus. by Iwai, Melissa*

Clarion (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

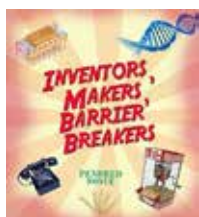
978-0-544-43076-1

The true story of the Japanese pilot who bombed the continental United States during World War II.

In 1941, the United States was drawn into World War II after the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor. The U.S. retaliated with a bombing raid on Tokyo. Wanting to prove that the continental U.S. could be bombed, Japan sent Nobuo Fujita in a small plane to bomb the woods of Oregon and start a raging fire. Flying over the small town of Brookings, Oregon, Nobuo dropped the bombs into the forest, but the bombs did not create the devastation and panic that Japan had hoped for. After Japan surrendered to the U.S. and its allies, Nobuo resumed civilian life with his family but lived with guilt and shame over his wartime actions. Years later the town of Brookings invited the Japanese bomber to their Memorial Day festival. Readers can follow his

emotional journey toward forgiveness and peace. Nobuo's story of reconciliation, not only for him, but for Japan and the U.S., is powerful and poignant. Using watercolors and finely inked lines, Iwai illustrates the moving moments and events in Nobuo's life with grace and humanity. The story captures a side of World War II readers may not have seen before.

**A must-read story of a lesser-known World War II event and its aftermath.** (*Informational picture book. 6-9*)



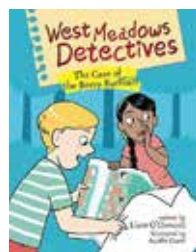
**INVENTORS, MAKERS, BARRIER BREAKERS**

Noyce, Pendred  
 Tumblehome Learning (300 pp.)  
 \$22.95 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-943431-42-7

This collection profiles both famous and lesser-known American inventors, entrepreneurs, and scientists from the 18th century to the present day, covering the social and historical contexts of their work.

Among the well-known individuals included are Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Graham Bell, and George Washington Carver. Women given chapters of their own are: Annie Turnbo Malone and Madam C.J. Walker, who made millions thanks to their African-American hair care products and business initiatives; Gertrude Elion, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist and daughter of Jewish immigrants; Grace Hopper, who broke barriers both in the Navy and the world of computer programming; and Lydia Villa-Komaroff, a scientist of Indigenous and Latinx descent who has done groundbreaking work in the treatment of diabetes. Some chapters offer an overview of particular topics, such as the inventions of enslaved and free blacks, food products, and popular games and toys. The most recent inventor covered is Elon Musk. A final section entitled "What About You?" encourages readers to be innovators, explicitly calling attention to the tremendous diversity (across many dimensions) of the individuals profiled. Unfortunately, the text, though accessible and informative, is neither insightful nor engagingly written. While some profiles run to 16 pages, others—in the topical chapters—are simply a paragraph. Another oversight is the lack of recommended readings of in-depth works on the subjects for those interested in learning more.

**A serviceable introduction.** (color photos, glossary, bibliography, index) (*Nonfiction. 10-14*)



**THE CASE OF THE BERRY BURGLARS**

O'Donnell, Liam  
 Illus. by Grand, Aurélie  
 Owlkids Books (160 pp.)  
 \$15.95 | Oct. 15, 2018  
 978-1-77147-306-4  
 Series: West Meadows Detectives, 3

Autistic detective Myron and his third-grade friends are back to solve their third mystery.

Someone is stealing strawberry plants from the neighborhood that surrounds Warbler Woods. The first victim is Simone, an older student and also autistic, who was growing strawberries in the school garden. Many others also lose plants in the coming days. Once again, very active Hajrah, who is a classmate in Myron's special needs class, is his partner in the investigation. The pair considers a variety of suspects, but Myron's methodical thinking helps him eliminate most. The young detectives' good-natured persistence keeps them on the trail of the thieves. Grand's simple illustrations depict a multiracial group and also break up the pages of text. (Myron and Simone present white, while Hajrah has brown skin and long, black hair.) Myron and Simone are matter-of-fact about their autism. Although they interact well with their classmates, Myron readily acknowledges his differences, and Simone comments, "People will always stare, Myron. And they will always laugh. Even when you try to be what they want you to be." But she goes on to cheerfully comment on how much the other kids miss out on and cheerfully continues with her relaxing activity that's causing the stares—burying her hands in the soil. Even those behind the pilfered plants, eventually revealed, have a sympathetic, pathos-infused motive.

**An engaging mystery that cleverly celebrates the quirkiness of not being neurotypical.** (*Mystery. 6-9*)



**CONSTRUCTION CAT**

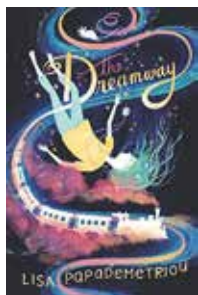
Odanaka, Barbara  
 Illus. by Hanson, Sydney  
 McElderry (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-4814-9094-8

Construction Cat and her kitty-cat crew are on the job!

"Construction Cat wakes up at dawn, // Grabs her boots and tugs them on, / Buckles tool belt, nice and snug, / Gives her family one more hug." She kisses her husband, who's making breakfast for their three kittens, and heads out in her blue pickup. At the job site, she reviews the plans, works a digger and a crane, and pours cement. "Lugging lumber, pounding nails, / Flicking sawdust from their tails," the construction team uses an array of tools, always taking care for safety. Then it's lunchtime, and there's a sweet note from home in Construction Cat's lunchbox. More work in the afternoon...and the project's done! It's a great play structure with a golden bell. A surprise visit from the family

with a picnic dinner makes for “A purrrrfect day.” Odanaka’s rhyme is jaunty and pleasing, and the construction-equipment theme is a proven crowd-pleaser. The gender switch of the hard-hatted protagonist makes Construction Cat’s tale an even more important addition to all collections. Hanson’s digitally rendered cartoon cats in human clothes (but no hair beyond their fur and, blessedly, no extra eyelashes on Construction Cat) are the direct furry descendants of Margaret Wise Brown and Alice Provensen’s *Color Kittens*.

**Solidly built for enjoyment by construction kids and feline friends alike.** (Picture book. 2-7)



### THE DREAMWAY

Papademetriou, Lisa  
Harper/HarperCollins (304 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 30, 2018  
978-0-06-237111-9

When pragmatic Stella’s imaginative twin brother, Cole, loses his spirit in the dream world, she must rescue him before he is consumed by shadow creatures who thrive on the creative brightness of human beings.

It begins when Cole investigates something he sees moving in the subway and becomes so spooked he leaves his treasured notebook of stories behind. Cole’s behavior swiftly changes, and Stella begins to have dreams that land her in the Dreamway, the place where all human beings go when they dream. There she encounters Anyway, a Door Mouse who just happens to possess a torn piece of Cole’s notebook. Anyway informs Sheila that her brother’s spirit has been taken by a Chimera, and to rescue him, they must get to the Nightmare Line. Stella struggles to navigate her waking hours, during which Cole is becoming angrier and more violent, and her time in the Dreamway, where she and Anyway, with the help of a few Dreamway employees, work to find Cole before his light is completely drained. Though the worldbuilding can be arbitrary and is largely delivered in expository dumps from Anyway, this tale has a beguiling, appropriately *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*-steampunk feel. The book subscribes to the white default. Stella has a childhood stroke-induced physical disability by day; although it seems to disappear by night as she bravely traverses the unpredictable landscape of the dream world, Anyway tells her she is not healed, adding a layer of healthy realism.

**An unsettling, engaging dream-world adventure.** (Fantasy. 10-12)



### MIRACULOUS MIRANDA

Parkinson, Siobhán  
Hodder Children’s Books/  
Hachette (160 pp.)  
\$14.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-1-4449-2907-2



When Miranda’s teacher tells her that all she needs is an imagination to make miracles happen, she begins trying to make the ordinary extraordinary.

After Miranda writes about the dangers of smoking, her grandmother gives up cigarettes. An essay discussing the joy of having chickens as pets precedes the arrival of three fluffy chicks. Miranda begins to suspect that she is actually creating miracles with her writing. When her sister is once again hospitalized for an unnamed but deadly illness, Miranda wonders if her writing might offer a cure. She writes a story, set in the magical country of Magnanimous, with its scones-and-jam trees and giraffe police, featuring a brave girl willing to risk her life to retrieve a cup of life-giving water for a sick fairy princess. But when Miranda catches her grandmother smoking in the garage and suspects that the chicks were really just a gift to distract her from her sister’s illness, her confidence begins to wane. Miranda is bright, hopeful, and appropriately naïve. However, her dry sense of humor when dealing with her odd grandmother, her overzealous friend, and her sister’s long-term illness are what make the pages fly by. Set in Ireland, the book assumes a white default, characters differentiated mostly just by hair color.

**Warm, smart, and completely lovable: Miranda.** (Fiction. 9-12)



### MAX EINSTEIN The Genius Experiment

Patterson, James & Grabenstein, Chris  
Illus. by Johnson, Beverly  
Jimmy Patterson/Little, Brown (320 pp.)  
\$14.99 | Oct. 8, 2018  
978-0-316-52396-7  
Series: Max Einstein, 1

A homeless genius orphan is recruited by one organization and hunted by another.

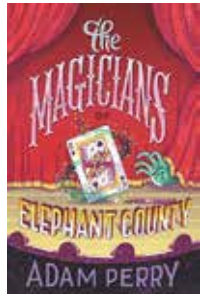
Twelve-year-old orphan Max Einstein never knew her parents, is obsessed with Albert Einstein, lives in a squat above some Central Park stables alongside other good-natured down-on-their-luck types, and attends NYU using fabricated records. Her cozy existence is shattered when the powerful Dr. Zimm and the mysterious Corp target her. Luckily, she’s swept off to Israel, where she meets a group of highly diverse, multicultural fellow child prodigies, the other “contestants” at the Change Makers Institute. (Max is white.) The CMI’s testing them to find a visionary genius prodigy to lead world-improving projects, but Max has more interest in their aims than their tests.

## Evocative watercolor illustrations show the appealing whales swimming and communicating, with the text integrating the whales' signature sounds into the story.

WILD ORCA

(While the book celebrates curiosity and learning, it also repeatedly rebukes standardized tests in favor of creativity and daydreams.) Max takes advantage of a chance to make friends her own age, while the Corp—with an alluded connection to Max's past—closes in on her. Once a winner's selected and a team formed, it's off to the Congo on a mission to bring solar power to a village in hopes of encouraging African investors in industries other than mining (which uses child laborers). Max's morality, love for humanity, and free spirit make a refreshing counter to the familiar computerlike, elitist genius archetype; evasion scenes bring thrills; problem-solving provides delightful role-modeling. The ending promises a sequel.

**A fun, positive book with plenty of heart.** (*Thriller*. 8-12)

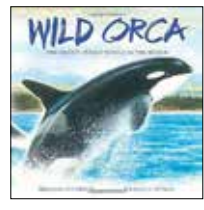


**THE MAGICIANS OF ELEPHANT COUNTY**  
*Perry, Adam*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Harper/HarperCollins (384 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-06-279535-9

A classic good-vs.-evil romp finds kid magicians wielding the real stuff.

Duncan Reyes and Emma Gilbert are middle schoolers in Elephant County, named for a distinctive rock at the center of their town. Duncan is a magician, and as Emma will remind everyone, she is his "co-magician," not his assistant. The two kids accidentally get entangled with real magic when they break into the neighborhood witch's house to retrieve Duncan's lost backpack and end up with a piece of her magic wand. When a spell at the school talent show goes awry, Duncan must use real magic to rescue himself, and then the world's elite magicians and journalists descend upon the town—which means that an evil magician bent on getting the wand arrives to town as well. With chapters alternating between Emma and Duncan and black-and-white illustrations that are part of a case file on the entire incident, the novel moves along at a steady pace and culminates in a great battle in which kids really do save the day. The conscious consideration given to the class differential between Duncan, whose Puerto Rican family struggles financially, and Emma, who is well-to-do and white, is just one of the novel's many grace notes.

**Behind the fun there are thoughtful and subtle meditations on socio-economic class, bullying, and family relationships to boot.** (*Fantasy*. 8-12)

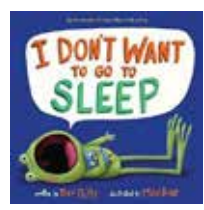


**WILD ORCA**  
**The Oldest, Wisest Whale in the World**  
*Peterson, Brenda*  
*Illus. by Minor, Wendell*  
 Henry Holt (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-250-11069-5

A young girl named Mia is the main character of this story about orcas living in the San Juan Islands of Washington state.

Mia's father is a scientist who studies the whales, and she has grown up learning about orcas from him. She explains in an engaging way how the whales live in pods and how they communicate with their own distinct sounds. Much of the factual information focuses on Granny, a senior leader of three whale pods, who lived to be over 100 years old. Evocative watercolor illustrations show the appealing whales swimming and communicating, with the text integrating the whales' signature sounds into the story. Dangers to the whales are briefly discussed, with a hopeful conclusion showing all three whale pods swimming playfully together. One arresting spread requires turning the book from landscape to portrait orientation so that Granny's huge size can be spotlighted as she seems ready to leap out from the page. Mia and her mother have golden-tan skin and straight, black hair; her father has light skin. Background characters—people who've come to the island to await the whales and sing for them—have a variety of skin tones. An author's note offers more information about orcas, and the endpapers provide an arresting map showing the Pacific Northwest superimposed over a huge orca.

**An informative and entertaining introduction to this intriguing endangered species.** (*Informational picture book*. 5-9)



**I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SLEEP**  
*Petty, Dev*  
*Illus. by Boldt, Mike*  
 Doubleday (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 16, 2018  
 978-1-5247-6896-6  
 978-1-5247-6897-3 PLB

Always displaying a penchant for the dramatic, Petty and Boldt's young amphibian is back for a fourth installment of childhood angst—bedtime.

The tiny frog is so excited for winter he can't contain himself. He is going to have a blast throwing snowballs, drinking hot cocoa, and cozying up in warm clothing. But his friend, a wise owl, breaks some bad news: "Frogs hibernate." The young frog's flippant response? "I don't know what that means, but I don't like it." Owl explains, but the frog doesn't want to hear it. He has to burrow in the mud all winter, while his friends have endless fun? The embodiment of pure despair, the young tot opens his mouth and eyes wide with terror, his horrified expression taking up an entire spread. Luckily, a compromise is reached—one

## Along with laffs aplenty, a fair quantity of “maturishness and deepality” for biguns and littluns alike.

LORD OF THE FLEAS

that doesn't bode well for his nonhibernating friends. Silliness abounds, with a nod toward the nature of coldbloodedness, as Boldt variously shows a crispy, smoldering frog near the winter fire and an ice-block frog, frozen in place.

Young readers may not quite make the leap from a desolate frog missing winter to a cranky child not wanting to sleep, but it's a fun read-aloud that will at least make bedtime more enjoyable. (Picture book. 3-6)



### LORD OF THE FLEAS

Pilkey, Dav

Illus. by the author

Graphix/Scholastic (256 pp.)

\$16.99 | Aug. 28, 2018

978-1-338-29091-2

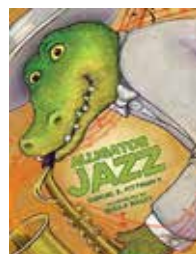
Series: Dog Man, 5



Confession proves good for the soul of Petey, “world’s most vilest cat,” when past misdeeds rear up to threaten him and his saintly clone, Lil Petey.

Adding in a free-wheeling mix of literary references, moral disquisitions, and stupid knock-knock jokes, Pilkey once again has superheroes and kaiju mix it up in squared-off panels of simply drawn, action-oriented cartoons. Here, the arrival of a giant robot brontosaurus driven by the vengeful Fuzzy Little Evil Animal Squad—“We’re not crooks! We’re *megalomaniacs!*”—pitches Petey and his annoyingly peace-loving mini-me into a rolling fight/flight. Naturally, “Supa Buddies” Dog Man (as “The Bark Knight”), robotic sidekick 80-HD, and, to diversify the otherwise all-animal cast, some previously introduced human regulars, dive into the fracas, and Flip-O-Rama sequences ensue. The FLEAS receive proper comeuppance (comedown-ance?) thanks to a handy shrink ray, and then it’s time for a dose of wisdom in the form of a dialogue between Petey and Li'l Petey: “If you’re good, nobody cares!!!” “Ya gotta be good anyway, Papa!” “If you’re kind, people just think you’re weak!” “Ya gotta be kind anyway, Papa!” Following a promise of more such “maturishness and deepality” to come, the author closes with his customary drawing lessons, plus plugs for the benefits of reading aloud to pets.

Actually, along with laffs aplenty, a fair quantity of “maturishness and deepality” for biguns and littluns alike. (source notes) (Graphic science fiction. 7-10)



### ALLIGATOR JAZZ

Pittman, Samuel

Illus. by Bailey, Sheila

Pelican (32 pp.)

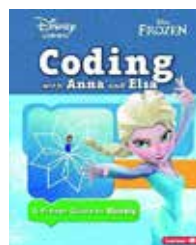
\$16.99 | Oct. 15, 2018

978-1-4556-2422-5

Alligator Slim decides to swap the blues for jazz, trading the swamp for the city.

He finds a hotel and auditions at a club called The Zoo. The crowd loves Alligator's sound, but while the musicians relax after their gig, jealous Weasel steals the gator's sax. After a fruitless search for his instrument, his money low, Alligator decides to head back to the swamp and the blues. Swinging by The Zoo for one last listen, he spots Weasel on stage. “He screeched and he blared and the audience moaned. / ‘He’s hurting our ears with that bad saxophone!’ / ‘That sax is all right!’ said Alligator Slim. / He walked up to Weasel and snatched the sax from him.” Alligator plays, reigniting the crowd, and gracefully accepts Weasel's apology. Alligator Slim's success reaches the swamp critters, who arrive cityside to hear him play. Pittman's upbeat verses occasionally settle for an awkward rhyme or some bumpy scansion. “Alligator Slim was in a terrible bind! / The days went by, but his sax he did not find.” Bailey's digital compositions pair Alligator's glowing green with the deep purple-browns of club crowds and dark, cobbled streets lit with lamps. Her pictures teem with busy, anthropomorphic animals preoccupied in amusing ways. Pittman provides a pithy note on jazz; Bailey's spot illustration shows Alligator's quartet heading out on the road.

Tuneful. (Picture book. 4-8)



### CODING WITH ANNA AND ELSA A Frozen Guide to Blockly

Prottsman, Kiki

Illus. by Disney Storybook Artists

Lerner (52 pp.)

\$31.99 PLB | Aug. 1, 2018

978-1-5415-3266-3

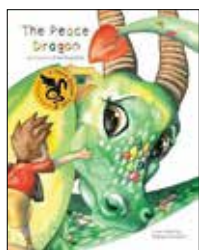
A *Frozen*-branded introduction to coding in Blockly.

This workbook directs readers to a Code.org project page featuring sprites of princesses Anna and Elsa as well as digital ice on which the *Frozen* heroines can skate, making designs using the block-based coding language Blockly (developed by Google and with visual interface similarities to MIT's Scratch language). In order to draw various designs, readers are introduced to directional commands, angles, and repeat loops. These build, coaxing readers to group together the written codes in functions and nested functions as well as loops to create more complex designs. Various code quizzes and puzzles, such as multiple-choice activities in which readers match code to output, are scattered throughout (with answers included in backmatter, alongside a glossary). Aside from those quizzes, the book is



mostly prescriptive, laying out codes exactly as they should be entered. While the book does introduce coding concepts used in all sorts of programming, it limits itself strictly to covering how to code drawings. While the branding might be enough to lure in *Frozen*-obsessed kids, all but the newest to coding are likely to be disappointed by how little the book teaches them to do. Anna, Elsa, and Olaf the snowman are the depicted guides, making this an all-white offering.

**Considering how many much more versatile coding-for-kids books are out there, it's best to just let this one go.** (*Nonfiction*. 8-12)



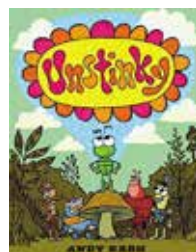
### THE PEACE DRAGON

*Ragsdale, Linda*  
*Illus. by Furlotti, Marco*  
 Flowerpot Press (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 12, 2018  
 978-1-4867-1466-7  
 Series: Peace Dragon

A cautionary tale about the dangers of prejudging others.

Sherwyn, a little boy with a pair of binoculars strung around his neck, is an explorer. One day, while on an expedition, he finds a curious sparkly item. He gives it a tug and realizes it is a tail attached to a dragon! Understandably, Sherwyn gives a horrified shout. But the dragon is smiling. This makes Sherwyn pause and begin a conversation. When Sherwyn points out the dragon's scary, pointy scales, the dragon expounds on the importance of seeing the whole picture; she sheds a scale, and Sherwyn sees that it is actually a heart. The dragon is a peace dragon. To further illustrate the point, when Sherwyn brings the dragon back to his village, the townsfolk immediately think the dragon is dangerous and threaten to attack. The shadow from the angry mob forms the shape of a dragon on the ground. Seeing this, they realize they are the only scary dragon around. The fairly lengthy text is set in a thin, small sans-serif type and expressed in a chatty, conversational tone, with authorial asides ("In some stories, getting close to a dragon can be a very bad decision. This isn't that kind of story"). It makes no effort to conceal its teaching purpose, but there's no question the advice it offers is sound.

**This doe-eyed dragon may help children look to others who are different with compassion instead of fear, whether it be on the playground or in the world.** (*Picture book*. 4-7)



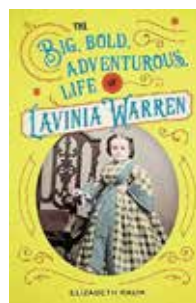
### UNSTINKY

*Rash, Andy*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Levine/Scholastic (40 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-0-439-36880-3

What's a stinkbug to do if it can't make a stink?

At every stinking contest, stinkbug Bud pales in comparison to his more-pungent kin. While the others emit scents of smokestack, dead fish, or dog doo, Bud stands out with his scent of flowers. Or pine tree. Or new car. Even his name lacks a certain *je ne sais quoi* when compared to the likes of P.U. Bottoms, Lord Stinkington, and The Fumigator. Time and time again, Bud's not-so-stinky fragrances land him in last place—and make him feel like an outsider. When a bee named April follows her nose to flowers but instead sees Bud dancing (and smelling) up a storm, she invites him to her hive for a dance party. The other bees initially turn up their noses at the stinkbug. But when they see Bud's dance moves and smell his most fragrant scent of all, everything eventually starts coming up roses. Rash's bold art mixes gouache, ink, and digital techniques to create a rich, colorful world. Between double-page spreads and a few large comics-style panels (all with textured backgrounds), there's minimal white space. For a story about an outsider, this one stands out in that Bud's struggle with what a stinkbug should be is mostly internal. The only real bully in this story is Bud himself.

**Get a good whiff of this olfactorily original celebration of individuality.** (*Picture book*. 3-7)



### THE BIG, BOLD, ADVENTUROUS LIFE OF LAVINIA WARREN

*Raum, Elizabeth*  
 Chicago Review (176 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-0-912777-50-4

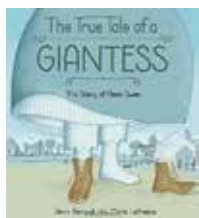
Born in 1841 to white parents of relatively tall stature, Mercy Lavinia Bump—later known as Lavinia Warren—was, at the age of 10, just 2 feet tall and weighed

only 20 pounds.

Although Lavinia initially taught school when she reached the age of 16, a river showboat operator persuaded her to join his troupe as a "living curiosity." The onset of the Civil War soon put an end to that kind of entertainment. Later, P.T. Barnum convinced her to join his New York City museum, where she attracted large admiring audiences. While working for Barnum, she met another little person, Charley Stratton, who toured as "Tom Thumb." Charley and Lavinia married just months later and toured through most of the rest of their lives, enjoying the unique experiences that their travels offered. Numerous period illustrations accompany the interesting story. Although the

interleaved inclusion of some historical (occasionally oversimplified) information helps keep Lavinia's life grounded in the context of the period, a text box introducing Massachusetts governor John Albion Andrew and his commissioning of the black 54th Massachusetts Regiment seems to have no connection to the story, serving as an instructive but unnecessary interruption. Excellent backmatter rounds out this engaging tale of an unusual and spirited woman.

**Although Lavinia became famous as a “human oddity,” Raum keeps the tale focused on her lively attitude and determination to use her exceptional size to achieve a stimulating life.** (*Biography*, 10-14)



**THE TRUE TALL TALE OF A GIANTESS  
The Story of Anna Swan**

*Renaud, Anne*  
*Illus. by LaFrance, Marie*  
Kids Can (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-77138-376-9

A small, illustrated biography of a giant woman.

Anna Swan was born in Nova Scotia in 1846, and an author's note explains she likely had “a rare medical condition called pituitary gigantism” that caused her to grow to nearly 8 feet. The story is written in the first person, a dubious choice for biography, but the point of view infuses the narrative with a sense of intimacy. From her birth, Anna is a spectacle in her rural community, where her family is credited with accepting and protecting her. “All the more to love,” her parents are quoted as saying of her, though there's no direct citation for this dialogue, nor for any other quotations in the book, which could exacerbate concerns about the book's nonfiction credibility. The strong foundation Anna receives from them helps her confidently set out into the world with a man she calls Mr. Barnum, who includes her in his Gallery of Wonders with other people with unusual physiques. An unfortunate, insensitive simile likens two men with gigantism to “totem poles,” and a later introduction of Anna's husband, Martin Van Buren Bates, calls him the “Kentucky Mountain Giant” but fails to mention he was a Confederate soldier. Despite these missteps, there's much to admire in this tribute to Swan, not the least of which are detailed mixed-media illustrations; done with a delicate folk-art sensibility, they depict Anna and her world as an all-white one.

**A spare telling of a big life.** (*Picture book/biography*, 5-8)



**BIRDS FROM HEAD TO TAIL**

*Roderick, Stacey*  
*Illus. by Moriya, Kwanchai*  
Kids Can (36 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-77138-925-9  
Series: Head to Tail

Identify birds by their particularly distinguishable body parts.

A question-and-answer game asks young readers and listeners to recognize familiar birds, introducing a variety of species from around the world. From head (the tufted “ears” of a great horned owl) to tail (a peacock), this inviting title presents a pleasing variety of species. Bird by bird the author asks “What bird has a head [beak, eyes, body, wings, legs, feet, and tail] like this?” on one double-page spread, with a close-up of the feature under examination. After the page turn, a second spread names the bird and adds a paragraph about the utility of the specific feature in the bird's life. Sometimes a specific species is named (the horned owl, bald eagle, arctic tern, blue-footed booby); some are given only general names: hummingbird (it's ruby-throated), kiwi, flamingo, peacock. Moriya's colorful illustrations, digitally created but reminiscent of Steve Jenkins' cut-and-torn-paper images, show first the recognizable body part, set on white space, and then the whole bird in its natural environment. Most of these birds will appear again and again in children's books, which makes this a helpful introduction. Two pages of aftermatter introduce eight other familiar and identifiable birds and describe a specific feature—again with a head-to-tail organization. Fourth in the creators' Head to Tail series (after dinosaurs, ocean animals, and bugs), this is equally appealing.

**Engaging, attractive, and informative, a good choice for group storytime as well as one-on-one sharing.** (*Informational picture book*, 3-7)



**HUNGRY BUNNY**

*Rueda, Claudia*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Chronicle (64 pp.)  
\$15.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-1-4521-6255-3

Bunny's back (*Bunny Slopes*, 2016), and this time they're hungry.

A rumbling tummy sends narrator Bunny to an apple tree. But—uh-oh, they can't reach! Luckily, Bunny isn't alone in their quest—they have readers! Bunny politely asks these readers to “shake the book” to make the apples fall. When leaves fall instead, Bunny next prompts readers to “blow” the leaves away. Unfortunately, Bunny's scarf gets caught in the helpful gust. Trapped in the tree in the illustration, the scarf also extends physically out of the book as a ribbon artfully inserted at exactly the right page. Readers must grab the scarf/ribbon and move it to the next page so that Bunny can use it as a rope to reach

## Readers will find the true whimsy in this book in the clever illustrations.

A PAGE IN THE WIND

the apples. Once their wagon is full of red deliciousness, Bunny wanders home. Along the way, readers must “tilt,” “rock,” and “turn” the book to keep Bunny moving. Rueda’s digitally-rendered charcoal illustrations are black and white with yellow tones. The sparse text highlights commands to readers in large-point, often playfully set red display type that, along with the red of various objects, creates a lovely accent. Though Rueda employed similar metafictional elements in the book’s predecessor, they’re used much more effectively and originally in this sequel. The ribbon will inevitably get misplaced during read-alouds, so it’s up to caregivers to remember to return it to its logical spot in the story.

**As sweet as apple pie—though one slice might just be enough.** (Picture book. 3-5)



### **AVALANCHE DOG HEROES Piper and Friends Learn to Search the Snow**

*Rusch, Elizabeth*  
Little Bigfoot/Sasquatch (48 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-1-63217-173-3

An exploration of the work of avalanche-rescue dogs through a focus on one dog and her trainer.

Piper is a 3-year-old border collie who is training with her owner, Sara, to become an avalanche-rescue dog in Washington. Rusch outlines Piper’s daily training at a ski resort, introduces readers to her canine classmates, and concludes with Piper’s big test to become a rescue dog. Present-tense narration paired with dynamic color photographs puts readers in the moment with Piper: “Suddenly, she stops and her head snaps back. Did she smell something? She sniffs a bit but continues across the slope toward a cluster of trees.” Casual, colloquial language makes the narrative friendly and information accessible: “When Piper, Darwin, and other team members get pooped, they head into a hut to warm up and relax.” Bold display type and clear headers and borders create distinctive sections and provide space for eyes to rest. Inset information fills in relevant details about avalanches, dog biology, and dog training. Backmatter includes instructions for making a tug toy and training a dog to tug, and Rusch includes both a list of further reading and a list of internet resources—including how to find more information specifically about Piper and her co-workers.

**A peppy introduction to a lesser-known type of worker dog.** (Nonfiction. 7-9)



### **A PAGE IN THE WIND**

*Sanabria, José & Díaz Domínguez, María Laura*  
*Illus. by Sanabria, José*  
*Trans. by Hall, Audrey*  
NorthSouth (48 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-7358-4324-0



This is the life story of a newspaper—as told by the newspaper itself, naturally.

The story is told in a straightforward manner right from the beginning: “I came into the world early one morning, in a large, cold place. / There were other newborns like me, and we all kept one another warm.” Only by looking at the illustrations is the story completed. Readers then see this is not the story of a human or other mammal but of a newspaper. And so it continues, with the illustrations expanding and extending the text. One by one, each newspaper finds a home until only the protagonist is left. When the wind picks up, it “comes apart,” and a “long journey” begins. Each page travels to a different place, where it is put to a different use by its finder. Readers will find the true whimsy in this book in the clever illustrations. When the sheet of paper arrives at the home of a hardworking woman it says: “With my arrival, her face grew bright again.” Readers then see her using the newspaper to polish the mirror. The mixed-media illustrations portray white characters and appropriately include newspaper collages with Spanish words—the original language the book was written in (*Una hoja en el viento*). This is one to be looked at several times to fully appreciate its quiet message.

**A thoughtful contemplation on how our lives are affected by our interactions.** (Picture book. 4-8)



### **JANE AUSTEN Her Heart Did Whisper**

*Santoni, Manuela*  
*Illus. by the author*  
*Trans. by Benassi, Matteo*  
Graphic Universe (96 pp.)  
\$30.65 PLB | Aug. 1, 2018  
978-1-5415-2366-1

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a young woman in possession of a keen mind must be in want of a husband...

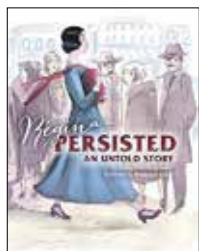
This graphic work of historical fiction, translated from the Italian, examines the life of beloved author Jane Austen. The story begins with spreads from the end of Jane’s life as she writes to her sister, Cassandra, remembering their time together as children, progressing into womanhood, and recounting how she cultivated, with the support of her father, her love of reading and writing. Thanks to her successful readings among the local gentry, she crosses paths with Thomas Lefroy, here presented as an abiding love interest, at a neighbor’s home, where they have a gruff first meeting that anyone familiar with Austen’s novels

## Sasso, a rabbi herself, tells Regina's story with great admiration and compassion.

REGINA PERSISTED

will recognize. Young readers new to Austen will enjoy speculating on their romance and will admire Jane's strength in an era that gave women very few options. A loose black-and-white illustration style gives a nice fluidity to the story and fits Jane's personality, although the addition of color would have made it feel more complete. Detailed backmatter fills in some of the holes in the story and helps readers sort fact from fiction. The author shows faith in younger readers by including some challenging vocabulary that may have them reaching for dictionaries. However, the illustrations and context clues make the work accessible.

**A lovely, quick read. (biographical notes, timeline)**  
(Graphic novel. 8-12)



### REGINA PERSISTED

Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg  
Illus. by Lucas, Margeaux  
Apples & Honey Press (32 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-1-68115-540-1



Regina Jonas was determined to become a rabbi, but she faced nearly insurmountable opposition.

While other girls played house, she played rabbi, pretending to read Torah to her toy animals. She took every opportunity to learn, studying first with her father and then with the rabbi of her synagogue. She kept on studying, but at the last moment she was prevented from taking the examination that would allow her to achieve her goal. At every step she was cautioned to concentrate on domestic skills or told to stop causing trouble. As a schoolteacher, she taught Jewish girls about Miriam, Esther, and Deborah, strong Jewish women in the Bible, and never gave up on her dream, although she continued to be denied the opportunity to take the needed tests. But her impact on the Jewish community was recognized, and in 1935 she finally succeeded in becoming a rabbi, the first woman rabbi in the world. All of this took place in Berlin, where life for Jews was becoming more and more restricted and then impossible. Sasso, a rabbi herself, tells Regina's story with great admiration and compassion. In an afterword readers are told of Regina's deportation to Theresienstadt and then her death at Auschwitz. Lucas' sepia and soft earth tones beautifully capture Regina's strength in her facial expressions and body language as well as the time period and setting.

**Evocative, inspiring, and uplifting. (author's note, note to readers, photograph)** (Picture book/biography. 7-12)



### THE TRUTH ABOUT MARTIANS

Savage, Melissa  
Crown (336 pp.)  
\$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-5247-0016-4  
978-1-5247-0017-1 PLB

Can the truth about the Martian invasion of Roswell heal Mylo's broken heart?

One year, one month, and three days ago, 11-year-old Mylo's brave older brother, Obie, died. Mylo still feels his loss and his absence keenly, to the point where he won't let his best friend, Dibs, use Obie's bed when he sleeps over, insisting that they share his twin. One hot July night in 1947, something lights up the sky. Dibs is certain it's Martians come to suck out their brains. Mylo's not convinced until a voice whispers "Help" inside his head. The two friends venture into the desert and find wreckage...but it's not until they return with friends that they find a saucer and someone who needs help. Mylo vows to help even if the government gets in the way. Following her debut, *Lemons* (2017), Savage again explores loss and its effect on individuals and families. This mostly realistic tale teeters on the precipice of maudlin and drags a bit—and no military base was ever so easy to break into (nor any American military so deferential to its former members and their children)—but patient readers, especially those who have experienced loss themselves, will identify with strong, good, self-doubting Mylo, who narrates his sometimes-funny story and often addresses his departed brother. The story takes place in Corona, New Mexico, where people of Latinx heritage, including biracial Mylo (his mother is Latinx and his father is white), predominate.

**Sci-fi seekers lured by the title might be bored, but lovers of historical fiction will be at home.** (Historical science fiction. 9-12)



### UTOMIA The Legend Beyond

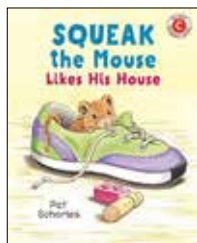
Scholl, Caitlin & Mullins, Neil  
Adaptive Books (304 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-1-945293-69-6

Laoch, a 14-year-old Iguana, is training to be a Master Grower, but the rebellious Lizard would rather be an inventor and leave his village of Talamh for the city of Utomia.

When one of Laoch's experiments goes awry, the Utomian Military Forces and the nefarious Other Army converge on quiet, agrarian Talamh. Just before the latter arrests Laoch's parents, his father gives Laoch a mysterious gilded disc, instructing him to take it to Utomia, where he'll discover its purpose. Is it connected to the purple smoke from his big fail? Why is the city, surrounded by the magical, domed Water Shield, so

heavily guarded? As Laoch and his twin brother, Leeland, and their friends Nudge (a Meerkat) and Sty (a Bat) make the dangerous journey to the legendary city, their personal transformations surprise themselves and one another. Worldbuilding includes a detail-heavy background of politics, warfare, tradition, and technology as well as a superabundance of capitalized words. Laoch, Leeland, and most of the Lizards in their village are “hybrids”; the twins also have Gecko and Chameleon blood. Marginalized Beings such as Bats are literally given “Other Status.” There’s a pronunciation guide to help with the numerous Irish spellings, but readers will also be forgiven for feeling that a who’s-who chart wouldn’t go amiss. Too many shifting third-person perspectives muddy the story. These include the four main characters and at least five major secondary characters whose roles are unclear. Here’s hoping they get more airtime in Book 2.

**A cluttered and confusing start to a new animal-fantasy series.** (*Fantasy*. 8-14)



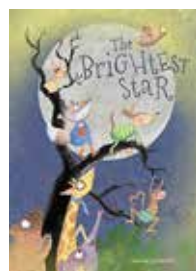
**SQUEAK THE MOUSE LIKES HIS HOUSE**

*Schories, Pat*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Holiday House (32 pp.)  
 \$15.99 | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-0-8234-3943-0  
 Series: I Like to Read

This simple early reader explores all the things Squeak likes in his house, the kitchen of a (mostly) unsuspecting human family.

Schories’ visual humor makes this slight story of just 18 words into a satisfying and complete adventure. New readers will gain confidence as Squeak navigates his house and words are repeated using the same sentence pattern introduced in the title. The only change is in the article-adjective-noun phrases that provide details of how the mouse uses familiar objects— toys, shoes, the dog’s water bowl, and snacks—provided by the unsuspecting humans who share his house. Bibliophiles will especially appreciate that “Squeak the Mouse likes the good books at his house.” The proximity of the mouse to two young children and a dog, all oblivious to the mouse’s activities, lends an air of daring and suspense to the mouse’s explorations of their shared home. Interjection of the mouse’s “Squeak” as he scurries about the kitchen and the chaos produced when one of the children (both present white) trips and spills her snack of nuts and raisins add both humor and excitement. Picture-book readers will delight in finding the mouse on each spread. Schories’ gentle humor and quick, clever mouse reminiscent of Arnold Lobel’s classic *Mouse Tales* (1972) should prove equally enduring and effective as both story and reading lesson.

**Here’s hoping this is not Squeak’s only adventure.** (*Early reader/picture book*. 3-8)



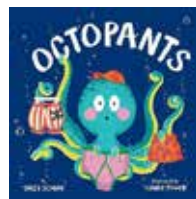
**THE BRIGHTEST STAR**

*Schothorst, Daniëlle*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Clavis (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-60537-419-2

Compliments can help make the world glow a little brighter.

Anthropomorphic Fox and Dog sit together outside enjoying the night together. Fox wonders why some stars seem bigger than others, and Dog posits, “Maybe stars are growing....Just like you and I.” He goes on to speculate that saying nice things to stars could help them grow. “When I give you a compliment, your heart grows. It is the same with stars,” he explains. Fox and Dog decide to think nice thoughts about a star, and lo and behold, it grows bigger and brighter in the night sky, attracting other creatures to look at it. Although it’s not visible in some spreads, the growing star’s light illuminates scenes of the upward-gazing animals. Then: “Suddenly the star shoots through the night” and falls, making Fox and Dog worry that they weighed it down with all their compliments. But the warm glow is now within the woods, leading Dog to assert that their “nice thoughts fell to earth with the star.” Ultimately, the story can’t seem to decide whether or not it wants to function as a metaphor, which ends up undermining its message about the power of affirmations. The illustrations get bogged down with busy patterns in the background, and soft-focus settings feel mismatched with the cheerfully smiling cartoon characters.

**Sadly, this one’s difficult to compliment.** (*Picture book*. 3-6)



**OCTOPANTS**

*Senior, Suzy*  
*Illus. by Powell, Claire*  
 Tiger Tales (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-68010-097-6

Embarrassed by his lack of underpants, an octopus discovers why he doesn’t need them.

Written as a ballad, this jaunty tale is giggle-producing. Having six legs too many for the standard briefs, he finds no one who can supply him with the appropriate clothing. “I’ve even tried to shop online. / I tried to surf the net.” But then he discovers the Under-Sea Emporium, which has clothing for every kind of sea creature from barnacles to rainbow trout—and with snazzy designs as well. Even better, the sea horse storekeeper solves the protagonist’s problem. The choice of meter supports the cheerful tone, and Senior’s rhyme and rhythm work beautifully. Powell fills the pages with lively, surprising sea creatures; on one spread they all wear underpants of some kind, and on another several sport hats. Her training in graphic design and background in animation are reflected in careful pacing of the storyboard, which will show reasonably well to groups, but

lap-sitters will find humorous details on these pages, drawn by hand and colored digitally. Questions of accuracy are irrelevant in this kind of light verse, but for the sake of the rhyme the writer has used a nonstandard plural, “octopi,” though biologists prefer “octopuses.” And, as is customary in cartoons, the illustrator has placed the octopus’s eyes and mouth on its mantle instead of on the head in the middle. It would be helpful to balance a storytime presentation with something more realistic.

**Gentle humor and bubbly fun.** (*Picture book. 3-6*)



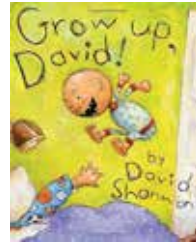
**HOW DO BRIDGES NOT FALL DOWN?**

*Shand, Jennifer*  
*Illus. by Bassani, Srimalie*  
 Flowerpot Press (32 pp.)  
 \$9.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4867-1485-8  
 Series: How Do

Various architectural innovations are featured in this science picture book for children.

Bridges are presented on one spread, with two paragraphs of text opposite a diagram that labels parts but does not show how the forces (“tension” and “compression”) are acting on those parts. The sentences are long, and basic technical terms (such as “pressure”) are not defined, so younger children who are not precocious will need older readers to explain the meaning of the text. Other engineering designs presented in the book are lock chambers for moving boats up and down, column-and-beam structures, and arches, with the Colosseum as an example. The illustrations throughout are drawn on graph paper; filling out the compositions are diverse figures who demonstrate and observe, models of the architecture, and pencils, rulers, protractors, and books. The companion volume, *How Do Seesaws Go Up and Down?*, presents such simple machines as a wheel and axle, a fixed pulley, an inclined plane, a screw, and a wedge. Again, terms are not defined, and diagrams are of limited use, so the explanations may confuse younger readers. These books can be a decent starting point for deeper investigations, but they do not meet the promise of the titles.

**Insufficient as a stand-alone volume; pair with hands-on demonstrations to avoid frustration. (glossary)** (*Nonfiction. 9-11*) (*How Do Seesaws Go Up and Down?*: 978-1-4867-1486-5)



**GROW UP, DAVID!**

*Shannon, David*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Blue Sky/Scholastic (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Aug. 28, 2018  
 978-1-338-25097-8

As if he couldn’t get into trouble enough on his own, David has a big brother to “help.”

Returning to his hapless alter (?) ego after eight years (*It’s Christmas, David!*, 2010), Shannon brings his older sibling—or at least, to judge from the pictures, said sibling’s lower portions—into play for a series of moments captioned by phrases that will be ultrafamiliar to all but only children: “No, David!” “You’re too little.” “Stop following me!” “That’s mine!” Drawn as before in a loose style with visible corrections and mottled, garishly colored backgrounds, the illustrations capture both the emotional intensity of David’s roller-coaster world and, in hilarious close-up tableaux, a series of brotherly tussles, pranks, domestic disasters, and goofy bids for attention. Many of Caldecott honoree *No, David!*’s iconic illustrations are mirrored here, including some mild (if catastrophic for the plumbing) potty humor, a close-up of David’s wide-open, bawling mouth, and both brothers in timeout. Just to show that big bro’s not entirely a brat, after David wangles his way into a big kids’ football game and gets clobbered, he gets a noogie and a “Nice catch!” that give the end a note of rough affection. Both brothers present white.

**Nice to see you again, David!** (*Picture book. 4-6*)



**FOUL PLAY AT ELM TREE PARK**

*Shaskan, Trisha Speed*  
*Illus. by Shaskan, Stephen*  
 Graphic Universe (48 pp.)  
 \$7.99 paper | \$26.95 PLB | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-5415-2644-0  
 978-1-5124-1149-2 PLB  
 Series: Q & Ray, 3

A hedgehog and rat solve a gentle whodunit.

Quillan, a tawny-hued hedgehog who goes by Q, and Ray, a chocolate-colored rat, return for their third graphic-novel mystery. Inspired by famous women ballplayers, Q has joined the Loons baseball team and is anticipating a fun season practicing catching. Ray, however, is more interested in indoor pursuits, sharing his recent reading about forgery and fakes. This information comes in handy as the pair soon discovers that a valuable signed baseball has been stolen and a forgery left in its place. Stephen Shaskan’s panels are large and bright, focusing on the prominently displayed characters alongside uniformly stylized and easy-to-read speech bubbles. As they are constructed with blocky outlines and solid colors lacking detail, readers may find it difficult to discern exactly which mammals they are intended to depict. Although a stand-alone mystery, this new case does not rehash necessary details explained in earlier installments,

# Raw depictions of slavery and its aftermath provide important context as the Eatonville community's resilience is tested in the face of injustice.

ZORA & ME: THE CURSED GROUND

which may be perplexing to series newcomers. Those familiar with the series, on the other hand, may notice that this volume follows an almost identical investigational path as its predecessor, reinforcing mystery conventions for young readers but perhaps causing more-seasoned ones to feel it is stale. This affable mystery is probably best for younger readers looking for more of a challenge than leveled readers provide.

**Not perfect but a pleasant-enough caper that bridges a gap between leveled readers and chapter books.** (*Graphic mystery.* 5-7)



## THE WEB

Simler, Isabelle

Illus. by the author

Peter Pauper Press (40 pp.)

\$16.99 paper | Oct. 1, 2018

978-1-4413-2843-4

Simler (*Plume*, 2017) presents a seemingly guileless visual inventory of nature's minutiae, but a spider's surreptitious, side-by-side activity conveys a more mysterious subtext in this French import.

"In nature there is much to see, if you look closely." A stylized oceanside scene—trees and flowers in the foreground, boats sailing, gulls flying, a shark swimming—seems idyllic enough. "You may find... / ...leaves, / catkins and seeds," and so much more. Simler invites readers to pore over exquisitely rendered natural elements, including multiple spreads of insects. Each creature, flower, or thorny stem appears against white space on the left, labeled with its common name. Each right-hand page features a close-up of the spider—often glimpsed only in part—interacting with one or more of these objects or critters. She's making off with a fern frond, an emerald-hued shield bug, an acorn cap, even some pebbles—but why? The puzzle's solved as Simler reveals "a web, / and a skillful, watchful artist... / ...weaving a delicate masterpiece." Readers see each captured element suspended in the web, carefully arrayed to replicate the seascape introduced at the outset. A thorn's the shark's fin; nutshells stuck with feathers are sailboats. The allegorical denouement (the spider's an "artist" rather than a predatory arachnid) feels manipulative, counteracting the relative verisimilitude with which Simler approaches her natural catalog.

**Visually stunning, and meta, sorta, but ultimately discordant.** (*Picture book.* 4-8)



## ZORA & ME The Cursed Ground

Simon, T.R.

Candlewick (272 pp.)

\$16.99 | Sep. 11, 2018

978-0-7636-4301-0

Series: Zora & Me, 2



A curse, the legacy of slavery, and a fight for justice collide in this fictionalized account of author Zora Neale Hurston's childhood adventures, sequel to

Simon's *Zora and Me*, co-written with Victoria Bond (2010).

Twelve-year-old Zora Neale Hurston is as brave and adventurous as her best friend, Carrie Brown, is cautious. The year is 1903, and the girls live in Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated all-black town in the U.S. Late one night, during an escape, the girls discover their friend Mr. Polk injured outside his cabin. Mr. Polk is known to be mute, but to the girls' surprise, he speaks—though not in English—to Old Lady Bronson, the town conjure woman, when she arrives to tend to his wounds. By night's end, Zora has made a pact with the conjure woman, and she and Carrie find themselves embroiled in a half-century-old mystery involving an enslaved girl named Lucia. Through alternating chapters, narrated by Carrie in 1903 and Lucia in 1855, Lucia's story and its connection to Zora and Carrie's world come to light. Raw depictions of slavery and its aftermath provide important context as the Eatonville community's resilience is tested in the face of injustice. The voices of Zora, Carrie, Lucia, and their families and friends make for powerful, unflinching storytelling, worthy to bear the name of a writer Alice Walker called a "genius" of African-American literature.

**An extraordinary, richly imagined coming-of-age story about a young Zora Neale Hurston, the long, cruel reach of slavery, and the power of community.** (biographical note, timeline) (*Historical fiction.* 10-14)



## THE GOODNIGHT TRAIN ROLLS ON!

Sobel, June

Illus. by Huliska-Beith, Laura

HMH Books (32 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018

978-1-328-50019-9

It is one thing to put a child to sleep. It is another thing entirely to keep them there.

In this unnecessary sequel to Sobel and Huliska-Beith's *The Goodnight Train* (2006), the stalwart locomotive of dreams attempts the near-impossible task of keeping its passengers recumbent. The rhythmic clacking text is back, with its soothing "Chugga! Chugga! Shhhhhhh! Shhhhhhh!" Unfortunately, a smooth journey this is not. There are naughty sheep to negotiate (counting them helps), a moon that's just too darn bright, and an unexpected detour over Wild Dream Hill, all of which threaten to waken the sleepers. Undaunted, the train goes on, lulling as it does, until the morning

Pictures full of stars and snowflakes swirl. The rhythmic quality of their undulating forms is quite striking, and it mirrors the sonorous text.

YOU'RE SNUG WITH ME

light appears. All curves and purple skies in its languid art, the book makes some bold choices, as when it demands a 90-degree turn to open vertically, suggesting the height of a steep hill. That said, this book fails to reach the soporific heights of its predecessor, making it less a book for urging young eyelids to close and more a storytime adventure. There are plenty of fun details to find hidden in the mix, though it is unlikely that this is a book that will be requested for multiple readings.

Perfectly charming, but with little to distinguish it from other bedtime trains in the field, perhaps it is time to put this series to bed. (Picture book. 4-7)



**PLEASE, MR MAGIC FISH**

Souhami, Jessica  
 Illus. by the author  
 Otter-Barry (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 13, 2018  
 978-1-91095-918-3

Souhami gives “The Fisherman and His Wife” a hopeful twist.

Souhami’s backmatter author’s note explains that she wanted to retell this old tale with sympathy for the characters, whom she resists depicting as they appear in other versions: “a horrible, greedy and nagging old woman” and “a weak, hen-pecked milksop.” Instead, she presents a couple worn down by poverty who are grateful when the magic fish grants their wish for “a small dry cottage...a blue teapot...[a]nd some bread and cheese in the larder.” They’re satisfied for a month before greed brings them back to the sea with grander wishes for status and material wealth. The duration of the couple’s contentment diminishes with every new wish granted, until the fish finally returns them to their initial state of poverty. But Souhami doesn’t leave them in dire straits. Instead, a closing picture shows them happily trying to net fish above text that reads, “But I hope that they caught lots of ordinary fish to sell at the market. And that they gradually became happy. What do you think?” Along with this use of direct address, expressive collage art that evokes something of Margot Zemach’s style will engage readers with depictions of the increasingly exasperated magic fish and how the couple and their home are transformed from scene to scene with their increasing wealth.

A pleasingly solid retelling. (Picture book. 3-7)



**FARMER FALGU GOES TO THE KUMBH MELA**

Soundar, Chitra  
 Illus. by Nair, Kanika  
 Karadi Tales (28 pp.)  
 \$12.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-81-8190-355-6  
 Series: Farmer Falgu

Farmer Falgu is off to the Kumbh Mela festival in the third title in Soundar’s series about the titular protagonist.

Falgu, an adult, brown-skinned Indian farmer, is excited to travel to Allahabad to catch the key highlights of the Kumbh Mela, such as the sadhu procession and the elephant parade, and to take a dip in the holy river, but he keeps getting called on to help other people. He puts others needs before his, and so, unfortunately he misses what he goes for. Luckily for him, through a number of happy coincidences, he manages to complete his Kumbh Mela bucket list. While sharing a positive message of kindness, the story seem too good to be true. Even young children are likely to see through the perfect plot. A train delay and sheer serendipity enable Falgu to catch the Kumbh Mela highlights. He even randomly meets his best friend in the train—who happens to have extra lassi and jalebis for Falgu. Like other books in the series, the concise onomatopoeic sounds are set in large, color-coded type, which provides additional emphasis. Nair’s bold, thick-outlined illustrations are engaging but do not tie in to the story adequately at times. A note at the end about the Kumbh Mela provides additional context.

Anodyne at best. (Picture book. 3-6)



**YOU'RE SNUG WITH ME**

Soundar, Chitra  
 Illus. by Mistry, Poonam  
 Lantana (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-911373-47-6

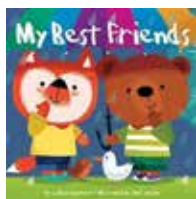


Starting with their birth in a den below the snowdrifts, Mama Bear nurtures her cubs and describes the world they will encounter in the spring.

The mother polar bear tells them that they will walk “where the land will let us walk” and “As long as the ice stays frozen, we will never go hungry.” The sea creatures pictured in this spread are recognizable but also almost phantasmagorical in the intricate designs, full of lines and dots inspired by traditional Indian art and looking beautiful here in this very different setting. Pictures full of stars and snowflakes swirl. “Terns and geese fly through the skies.” The rhythmic quality of their undulating forms is quite striking, and it mirrors the sonorous text. Mama gives her young ones lessons, good for human children (and adults) as well as polar bears: “We should only ever take what we need.” In telling them about the ocean and the land, the darkness of winter and the light of summer, the animals all around them, and their need to become independent after she has taught them all she knows, she reassuringly repeats the refrain: “But hush now, you’re snug with me.” In a note to readers, the author provides some additional facts about polar bears and urges everyone to be good stewards of the Earth.

Parental love, sound ecological advice, and breathtaking illustrations all in one. (Picture book. 4-7)





### MY BEST FRIENDS

Sparrow, Leilani  
 Illus. by Taylor, Dan  
 Boxer Books (32 pp.)  
 \$16.95 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-910716-75-5

A little bear reflects on friendship.

An anthropomorphic brown bear cub acts as protagonist and narrator of this simple celebration of friendship. From one spread to the next the cub interacts with different characters, designated as different kinds of friends based on those interactions. An “old friend” is a toy found at home; “a new friend” is a bird encountered outside in a tree; “party friends” (an anthropomorphic fox and bunny) come to celebrate a birthday; “a sad friend” is that same bunny after the cub spills water on its painting; “class friends” are those found at school. The digital illustrations of these varied friends depict them with oversized, round heads that give them a toy-like appearance, and the palette is bright and cheery. The simplicity of the forms Taylor uses to construct his compositions lend many pages a distinctly retro look. These pictures, rather than the rather bland text that concludes with an affirmation that “all” of the cub’s friends “are best friends,” will hold the book’s appeal for readers.

**Not the best—but just fine.** (Picture book. 2-4)



### BAKE LIKE MOMMY

Stickey, Lisa  
 Illus. by the author  
 Boxer Books (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Nov. 6, 2018  
 978-1-910716-64-9

A child “helps” Mommy in the kitchen.

The first-person text is narrated by a child whose feminine clothing and hairstyle suggest she is a girl and recounts her delighted efforts to bake with her mother. These efforts, however, seem more likely to cause consternation than pleasure, but the mother’s reactions to her daughter’s spilling sprinkles on the floor, pouring milk into many more cups than needed for pancakes, and blowing a tower of paper muffin cups across the table, among other things, never appear on the page. Instead, each spread over the course of a week features the girl’s antics in the kitchen, resulting in a list of sorts: brownies on Tuesday, meringues on Thursday, a Swiss roll on Friday, etc. Playful, descriptive language and the naïve, faux printmaking style of the digital art create an engaging tone: “When [the Swiss roll] was cooked, we slathered it with cream and Mommy rolled it up. Then all the cream OOOOzed out of the end. It looked like a roly-poly sausage.” Still, the book has just about as much substance as one of the pair’s meringues, and readers may find themselves wishing for more of a story to sink their teeth into. Both mother and daughter appear white.

**Half-baked—but sweet nonetheless.** (Picture book. 3-5)



### THE THRIFTY GUIDE TO ANCIENT GREECE A Handbook for Time Travelers

Stokes, Jonathan W.  
 Illus. by Bonet, Xavier  
 Viking (144 pp.)  
 \$13.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-0-451-48027-9  
 Series: Thrifty Guides, 3

The details of life in ancient Greece are presented as a travel guide for visitors from the future.

After prefaces, introductions, charts, and warnings, readers are welcomed to Athens and told that “ancient Greece is the birthplace of *everything*,” a nakedly Eurocentric claim that sets the book’s tone and is repeated throughout. Next, a visit to Sparta is presented as a risky experience for time travelers, with the gruesome details of how Spartans were groomed to become “the best soldiers in the world.” In the Battle of Thermopylae, time travelers are invited to “have the honor of fighting for a glorious cause,” to defend Greek civilization against the Persians, who are pictured as dark-skinned and sinister Middle Easterners. In the Battle of Salamis, “Xerxes is Beaten Like a Persian Carpet,” as the subheading blares. Art, philosophy, and architecture characterize the golden age of Greece. In two chapters on Alexander the Great and his “Greek Conquest” (a chapter heading), the text’s irreverence reaches a new low: The daughter of King Darius of Persia “isn’t too pleased to marry her father’s killer, but then, it’s so hard to find a good husband these days.” Apparently, the world owes nearly every positive advancement to ancient Greece; slavery, conquest, and oppression of women are just part of the package.

**This book is stuffed with fascinating information, but its presentation reinforces an us-versus-them mentality, with Europe on top.** (bibliography) (Nonfiction. 8-13)



### THE ATLAS OBSCURA EXPLORER'S GUIDE FOR THE WORLD'S MOST ADVENTUROUS KID

Thuras, Dylan & Mosco, Rosemary  
 Illus. by Ang, Joy  
 Workman (112 pp.)  
 \$19.95 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-5235-0354-4

A worldwide collection of superior oddities.

For each of the 47 countries featured here, Thuras and Mosco highlight two strange features, be they weather or natural resources, human artifact or moment in history. Accompanied by Ang’s full-color illustrations and a small globe situating the country under examination, Thuras and Mosco have linked each country to the next in line by some common curiosity. Peru’s Nazca Lines lead to Australia’s Marree Man, for instance,

and then Australia's second marvel—Lord Howe Island, where dwells the phasmid, a lobsterlike, hand-long insect—leads to Brazil's Snake Island, which hosts swarms of golden lance-heads (“They sit in trees and ambush migratory birds, injecting flesh-dissolving venom into them”) but very few visitors. It is debatable whether a kid has to be adventurous to enjoy many of these unusual features, such as the Antikythera mechanism, which is akin to a 2,000-year-old computer, found in Greece, or England's difference engine No. 2, a 200-year-old mathematical calculator, but curiosity is both a must and a given. The tone is consistently upbeat but not melodramatic, giving the oddments a sense of reality rather than fantasy—that you could go and witness these phenomena yourself.

**One delectable sampler of wonders, there for the asking.** (*Nonfiction. 9-13*)



**THUNDERCLUCK!**

*Tillery, Paul*  
*Illus. by the author & Wittwer, Meg*  
 Roaring Brook (240 pp.)  
 \$14.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-250-15528-3

A semidivine chicken and his Valkyrie friend save Asgard from a nefarious culinary professional in this illustrated middle-grade novel.

The story opens as a disgruntled chef of Asgard accidentally helps Thor imbue his beloved chicken, Hennnda, with the power of the gods. The ancient Norse goddess of prophecy foresees (in flawless rhyme) that Thundercluck, the offspring of Hennnda and a thunderbolt, will later be the one to save them all from the cook after his descent to the underworld. After a few years spent magicless and safe with two old farmers, Thundercluck reunites with both his powers and his chickhood friend, the doughty Valkyrie Brunhilde, and together the two travel across the Realms to vanquish the evil Under-Cook once and for all. It's a ridiculous plot, delivered with an impeccably serious tone, where every joke, from evil apple pie to a recipe for Chicken Soup for the Wretched Soul, is delivered deadpan and contrasts with suspensefully high stakes. Carefully worded sentences often integrate both rhythm and clarity, making this an ideal adventure for more reluctant readers. The valiant chicken thinks coherently to himself, but his entire dialogue consists of artfully timed “Ba-bwak?”s and “Ba-GURRRK”s, adding another layer of hilarity to an already comical story. Spot illustrations throughout add to the characterization, imbuing Thundercluck especially with a singular personality and depicting most humans and humanoids with paper-white skin.

**An absurd story executed with admirable gravity and skill.** (*Fantasy. 7-12*)



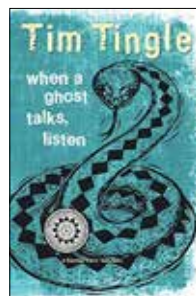
**SHE CHANGED THE WORLD**  
**First Achievements by**  
**Women, Told in Their Own**  
**Words**

*Eds. of TIME for Kids*  
 Time Inc. Books (128 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 30, 2018  
 978-1-54780-006-3

Thirty-two living women with “firsts” to their credit offer reflections and attitude.

The qualifier “American” is absent from the title, but everyone here except Madeleine Albright was born in the United States, and all are still residents. Distilled for young audiences from an online project and its earlier print spinoff, *Firsts: Women Who Are Changing the World* (2017), the birthdate-ordered gallery begins with Barbara Walters (“First woman to co-anchor a network evening news program”) and Rita Moreno (“First Latina to win an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar and a Tony”) and ends with Mo’ne Davis (“First girl to pitch a shutout and win a game in a Little League World Series”). In between it offers both third-person biographical thumbnails and original one- or two-page statements from women in a range of professions. As role models, the usual suspects (Oprah Winfrey, Hillary Clinton, Maya Lin) are interspersed with some venturesome choices (Kellyanne Conway, Rachel Maddow, transgender TV actor Candis Cayne), but common themes emerge in their experiences—being “the only woman in the room,” for instance, and the struggle to overcome “the curse of perfectionism.” If some remarks read like aspirational boilerplate, there is enough individual voice in most to convey strength of character and steadiness of purpose. Each entry features a recent, formal color portrait; most also include additional, sometimes early photos.

**Reasonably inclusive if parochial in geographic scope and with a message that Aretha Franklin puts most pithily: “We’re coming.”** (*index*) (*Collective biography. 10-13*)



**WHEN A GHOST**  
**TALKS, LISTEN**

*Tingle, Tim*  
 The RoadRunner Press (188 pp.)  
 \$18.95 | Aug. 7, 2018  
 978-1-937054-51-9  
 Series: How I Became a Ghost, 2

Narrated by Isaac, a Choctaw boy who was killed while walking the Trail of Tears in 1830, this quick-paced novel sheds light on forgotten histories.

A follow-up to the award-winning novel *How I Became a Ghost* (2013), Tingle’s imaginative tale of shape-shifting humans and time-traveling ghosts is the perfect adventure for young readers who wish to consider American history from the Indigenous perspective. Even as it recounts the story of the Choctaw people who were removed from their Mississippi homelands in the era of Andrew Jackson, the novel also bears witness to

## The earthy-hued, ink-on-paper illustrations in Gond art are absolutely striking in their depictions of the tiger and Indian rural life.

WHERE HAS THE TIGER GONE?

a complicated Choctaw hero by the name of Pushmataha, a United States Army general who fought against the British in the Battle of New Orleans. Though ultimately betrayed by the U.S. president he considered a friend, Pushmataha inspires his young Choctaw friends to literally bury the hatchet and seek peace with their American counterparts—episodes witnessed by Isaac and his dog friend, Jumper. While the novel addresses injustices head on, it does not delve into Pushmataha’s regrets regarding intertribal politics, making it a good introduction for young readers. The novel is filled with friendship, laughter, and Choctaw jokes, a stylistic flourish that lends levity to its difficult topics.

**A great introduction to Native American history that’s not too heavy for its young audience and is a solid read in its own right. (map, bibliography) (Historical fiction. 10-14)**



### BANANA SUNDAY

Tobin, Paul  
 Illus. by Coover, Colleen with Sygh, Rian  
 Oni Press (112 pp.)  
 \$12.99 paper | Oct. 23, 2018  
 978-1-62010-541-2

Kirby is about to start a new school with three talking primates in tow.

Unlike other students, Kirby Steinberg begins her time at Forest Edge school with a speech to the entire student

body introducing her unusual entourage that’s composed of three talking simians: eggheaded orangutan Chuck; Go-Go the gorilla, who is hungry and tired in equal measure; and spider monkey Knobby, who has a fondness for romance. Although Kirby claims the simians were secret experiments of her scientist father, school reporter Nickels smells something deeper to this story and decides to investigate. Meanwhile, Kirby’s new school is filled with human drama, including mean girl Skye’s relentless bullying and gentle romantic tension with lovably goofy Martin. Will Kirby be able to navigate all these pitfalls and look after her rascally primate posse? Originally published in 2006, this reissue both brings the story back to print and adds lively color from Sygh to its tidy and bright panels. While the new hues add a layer of diversity, the characters (including most of those in the periphery) are all uniformly thin with aspirationally long legs complementing their svelte physiques. However, with its adorably mischievous monkeys, this stand-alone offering should appeal to those who can appreciate reality with a healthy dash of simian silliness. Kirby, love interest Martin, and mean girl Skye are all white; best friend Nickels is a Japanese immigrant.

**A lot of monkey business. (Graphic fantasy. 7-12)**



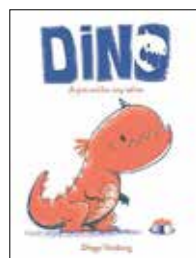
### WHERE HAS THE TIGER GONE?

Uikey, Dhavat Singh  
 Illus. by the author  
 Tara Publishing (32 pp.)  
 \$19.95 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-93-83145-99-7

Tiger stories from the Gond people, one of the largest Indigenous groups in South Asia.

In this wordy Indian import, author/illustrator Uikey laments the loss of the interdependent relationship that tigers once enjoyed with the Gond tribe. They shared their forest home, he recounts, “and the tiger was like an elder, a worthy ancestor.” Along with his own childhood memories of tigers, he also shares six short stories about the tiger. These tales are set in rural India and are part of the folklore of the Gond. In a preface, Uikey mentions that he has penned these stories in the hope that they will be remembered by future generations. At the end, he brings the book back full circle by sharing how his small son, Chalit, experiences the tiger now and how city-dweller Chalit’s experiences are so different from Uikey’s as a child. It’s a heartfelt effort, but the writing style doesn’t seem geared toward children. Young readers will need a significant amount of explanation and context to completely understand Uikey’s perspective. The book also has much more text than is common in the United States for a picture book, gearing it toward older readers. Compensating for this, the book has strong visual appeal, with intricate die cuts on the front and back covers. The earthy-hued, ink-on-paper illustrations in Gond art are absolutely striking in their depictions of the tiger and Indian rural life.

**A rare and distinctive perspective on the relationship between people and tigers, though with specialized appeal. (Picture book. 10-adult)**



### DINO

Vaisberg, Diego  
 Illus. by the author  
 Templar/Candlewick (40 pp.)  
 \$15.99 | Nov. 6, 2018  
 978-1-5362-0280-9

Some of the challenges of having a big—really big—pet.

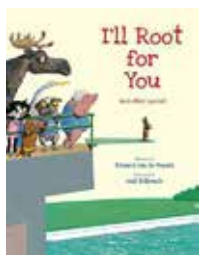
“Having an enormous dinosaur in the house can be a bit tricky,” observes the unseen narrator with considerable understatement. Hatching from a gigantic egg in the backyard, little Dino, “so cute and friendly,” soon becomes big enough to scare off both the mail carrier and possible new friends in the park, not to mention to knock things over and to chew on the furniture. Even if his favorite game is fetch, he doesn’t always bring back the ball. Nor (with a deft transition into metaphor) does Dino always put his toys away at day’s end...but bathtime makes him sleepy, and at day’s end, off to bed he goes. Young readers with big dogs or

Children will love Erlbruch's zany depictions of dogs and pigs in swimsuits, but what makes this collaboration shine is van de Vendel's intense focus on the psychological effort central to playing sports.

I'LL ROOT FOR YOU

younger sibs will easily relate, though in contrast to the moodier, bright red dino in Bob Shea's *Dinosaur vs.* series, this one is a good-natured sort, invariably smiling toothily as he romps and stomps through Vaisberg's minimally detailed, two-toned indoor and outdoor settings, created digitally but with a look that blends watercolor and printmaking. And if one dinosaur in the house is a handful, what's to do when *three more eggs* appear in the backyard? The perfect solution: "So we got a **bigger house!**"

A bright, buoyant addition to both the "giant pet" and "new sibling" genres. (Picture book. 4-7)



### I'LL ROOT FOR YOU

van de Vendel, Edward  
*Illus. by Erlbruch, Wolf*  
*Trans. by Colmer, David*  
 Eerdmans (44 pp.)  
 \$17.00 | Aug. 7, 2018  
 978-0-8028-5501-5



Lighthearted poems extol sport and human achievement—and the importance of losing.

Originally published in the Netherlands in 2013, van de Vendel's 17 offbeat inspirational poems are handily translated into rhymed English verse by Australian children's writer Colmer and accompanied by German illustrator Erlbruch's expressively detailed digital renderings of familiar animals engaged in various human sports. Children will love Erlbruch's zany depictions of dogs and pigs in swimsuits or a goose and a cat in racing and tennis togs, but what makes this collaboration shine is van de Vendel's intense focus on the psychological effort central to playing sports and developing the resolve to accomplish goals in general. The delightful title poem talks about rooting for "you when you suddenly shine" as well as the "time you're beaten"—not only "because this is my place, and I'm here to stay, / behind every finish and on every day," but "because you must wait if you want to get great." In "Here's the Idea," the speaker announces, "Today we'll root for the losers. / Today we'll cheer the other way round. / Today we'll love everybody / whose somersault / never got off the ground," promoting a similar message of steadfast support alongside a reality check.

Motivational and kind, these light poems and illustrations will embolden readers to take risks and "walk your own tightrope." (Picture book/poetry. 5-11)



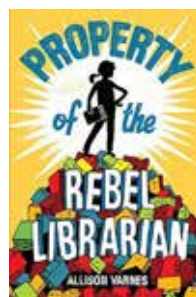
### THE PRINCE PROBLEM

Vande Velde, Vivian  
 Scholastic (192 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Nov. 27, 2018  
 978-1-338-12151-3

A spellbound prince and an abducted princess must work together to defeat their enemies.

When a confused witch thinks 13-year-old Prince Telmund is bullying his little brother, she casts a transmutation spell on him. Every time he falls asleep, he alternates between his human form and an animal form. Meanwhile, 15-year-old Princess Amelia has her own problems. Her parents have decided that it is time for her to be betrothed, solidifying the safety of their kingdom. When Amelia is kidnapped by a neighboring prince and carried away to his kingdom, Telmund comes to her aid, using his rat teeth to gnaw through her bonds. Unfortunately, Amelia is unable to see beyond the surface and dismisses her rescuer with a solid kick. However, whether as a rooster, a goat, or even a dragon, Telmund keeps trying. Amelia refuses to be a victim, relying on her intellect to undermine her captor. The usual model that finds a helpless princess saved by the gallant hero is flipped in this lighthearted exploration of birth order, familial obligations, and friendship. Telmund's bumbling and Amelia's annoying superiority make the duo's escape exciting and realistic. Other than a fairy with silver hair, the only descriptive details point to the white default.

A royal adventure with archetype-shattering characters. (Fantasy. 8-12)



### PROPERTY OF THE REBEL LIBRARIAN

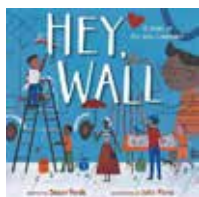
Varnes, Allison  
 Random House (288 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-5247-7147-8  
 978-1-5247-7148-5 PLB

Seventh-grader June Harper sets up a secret lending library when her school decides to ban books.

When June's overprotective father finds a school library copy of a book called *The Makings of a Witch*, her parents put pressure on the school to place Ms. Bradshaw, the school librarian, on administrative leave and, in addition to emptying June's home library, to strip the school library of anything deemed inappropriate. "Students in possession of unapproved texts will face disciplinary action," reads the board resolution, and teachers will be fired. As a rule-follower, June is conflicted, but she can't help feeling that this is wrong. Compounding her confusion are her reciprocated crush on eighth-grader Graham, who asks her to lie low and choose between him and books, and her best friend, Emma, who sympathizes with Graham. When June finds a Little Free Library in her

neighborhood, she is inspired to create a contraband lending library in an abandoned locker. This quickly grows into a movement, if only users can keep it a secret. Varnes' debut is a straightforward advocacy book for children's right to make their own reading choices. Most characters default white except for brown-skinned implied Latina Abby Rodriguez. June's narration is sometimes clumsy, and some characters, such as June's parents, are thinly developed and come across as extreme. The ending, however, is realistically open-ended.

**An accessible introduction to the importance of the freedom to read.** (*Fiction. 8-12*)



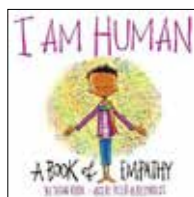
**HEY, WALL  
A Story of Art and Community**

*Verde, Susan*  
*Illus. by Parra, John*  
Paula Wiseman/Simon & Schuster  
(40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-4814-5313-4

Each day, a school-age child passes the neglected outer wall of what appears to be an abandoned movie theater in a diverse New York City neighborhood.

The streets bustle with kids, families, and traffic. Inside the child's home the family hosts potlucks, and, on the roof, there is dancing and singing. These lively communal gatherings are in direct contrast to the blank, mute wall that everyone ignores—until the brown-skinned child takes charge. Together with neighbors and friends, armed with paint and sketches, they give life to their memories and imaginations. In no time at all, the wall *is* the neighborhood. Verde's simple, expository, second-person narrative fluctuates between youthful exuberance and adult commentary as readers follow the tired wall through the seasons. "Soon we have filled you with colors, / creations, energy. / You are stone but you don't have to be *hard*." Parra's familiar, flat matte illustrations chronicle the wall's evolution until it reflects the neighborhood's vibrancy back to the people who enliven its revitalized surface. Mural projects have often traditionally served as unifying forces within blighted, fragmented communities, but not in this case. The residents interact, are friendly, and are organically connected before the mural is planned. Since the unnamed child is the catalyst of this activity, it's a pity the voice is not more consistently childlike.

**A classroom-friendly call for social activism somewhat marred by a too-adult voice.** (*Picture book. 5-8*)



**I AM HUMAN  
A Book of Empathy**

*Verde, Susan*  
*Illus. by Reynolds, Peter H.*  
Abrams (32 pp.)  
\$14.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4197-3165-5

Verde and Reynolds (*I am Yoga*, 2015; *I Am Peace*, 2017) team up again, this time to explore what it means to be human.

A child in red-striped shirt and blue jeans explores the range of possibilities open to them as a human being. Starting with "I was born. A miracle! One of billions but unique!" the narrator lists activities ("I am always learning"; "I have BIG dreams") and feelings ("I am amazed by nature"). After rejoicing in the positive, the child finds that they sometimes make mistakes, hurt others, and are hurt. They explore the difficult sides of being human: fear and sadness. Here, the colors of the illustrations dull to a greyish blue. But they have a solution. They can "make choices" and "move forward" with "thoughtfulness" (giving flowers to that friend they hurt). When the child chooses kindness, compassion, listening, and saying sorry, they find that they are connected to everyone, and they resolve to keep trying, because "I am full of hope. I am human." Reynolds' simple line drawings with bursts of color have become iconic, and they serve the simple, affirming text with their own vision of the emotions and possibilities we humans have in this wide world. He depicts the protagonist with brown skin and black, curly hair amid a multiracial gathering of other children and adults. An author's note guides readers through a loving-kindness meditation as an example of how one can choose to improve one's relationships with others.

**Grown-ups will enjoy reading this regularly with the children in their lives: The reminders benefit us all.** (*Picture book. 3-9*)



**LITTLE RED RODENT HOOD**

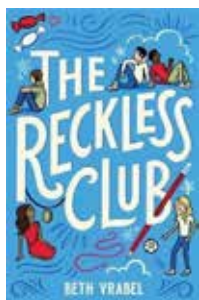
*Vernon, Ursula*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Dial (224 pp.)  
\$13.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-399-18658-5  
Series: Hamster Princess, 6

The Hamster Princess takes on Little Red Riding Hood.

A small, sycophantic, adorable-voiced hamster girl wearing a bright red hood seeks out Princess Harriet for help, saying her grandmother is being terrorized by weasel-wolves. Although she is deeply repelled by the little hamster's extreme cuteness, Harriet and her trusty companion, Wilbur, follow Red into the woods, where they find the weasel-wolves. They are acting suspiciously docile—but Red says to ignore them; it's "the big one" who's the problem. Their first encounter with the big one involves a badly spelled note and a drawing of Harriet with "little stink-lines," but the second moonlit meeting

is even stranger, as the big one is looking a lot more hamsterous and actually speaks (his name's Grey). Grey explains that he was "born a weasel-wolf" but was "bitten by a hamster under the full moon," making him a were-hamster. Probing reveals a shocking shared backstory between Grey and Harriet, and Wilbur's hilariously ill at ease while Grey and Harriet bond. Grey's looking for packs of weasel-wolves that have gone missing; it seems they vanish when Red and her grandmother enter an area. The jokes, both visual and textual, share space with the plot's central conflict: Harriet must decide whom to trust—a hamster subject who annoys her or a hamster-eating monster she likes.

**Vintage Vernon humor and a cast so lovable it hurts.** (*Graphic/fantasy hybrid. 7-12*)



### THE RECKLESS CLUB

Vrabel, Beth  
Running Press (256 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-7624-9040-0

Vrabel's latest middle-grade novel explicitly remixes John Hughes' iconic 1985 movie, *The Breakfast Club*, for the Instagram generation.

Five eighth-graders report for all-day detention for pranks they committed on the last day of middle school. Each comes from a different clique: Jason, an artistic white "Nobody"; Lilith, a talented Indian-American "Drama Queen"; Rex, an emo white "Rebel"; Wes, a charismatic African-American "Flirt"; and Ally, a high-achieving white "Athlete." They gather at an assisted-living home, where their strict principal introduces them to his sister, who runs the facility. The students are then each paired with a resident at the home, and they are also assigned an essay, to be completed by the end of the day. As in the film, these five teenagers who believe they have nothing in common bond over the course of the day as they open up and reveal their struggles: divorce, poverty, racism, bullying. And, similar to the film, the novel ends with a jointly written essay ("But after today, we just see each other. And we're going to change things, make them better, starting now") signed "The Reckless Club." The third-person narration mostly alternates among Jason, Lilith, and Wes, with Ally's and Rex's perspectives much later. The novel is tender, and it goes where Hughes' film never could have with its multicultural cast, but it's slow to start and cannot escape a preachy feel as the kids open up.

**Mostly accomplishes its feel-good goals.** (*Fiction. 10-14*)



### PROFESSOR ASTRO CAT'S SPACE ROCKETS

Walliman, Dominic  
Illus. by Newman, Ben  
Flying Eye Books (32 pp.)  
\$13.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-911171-55-3  
Series: Professor Astro Cat

The bubble-helmeted feline explains what rockets do and the role they have played in sending people (and animals) into space.

Addressing a somewhat younger audience than in previous outings (*Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space*, 2013, etc.), Astro Cat dispenses with all but a light shower of "factoroids" to describe how rockets work. A highly selective "History of Space Travel" follows—beginning with a crew of fruit flies sent aloft in 1947, later the dog Laika (her dismal fate left unmentioned), and the human Yuri Gagarin. Then it's on to *Apollo 11* in 1969; the space shuttles *Discovery*, *Columbia*, and *Challenger* (the fates of the latter two likewise elided); the promise of NASA's next-gen *Orion* and the Space Launch System; and finally vague closing references to other rockets in the works for local tourism and, eventually, interstellar travel. In the illustrations the space-suited professor, joined by a mouse and cat in similar dress, do little except float in space and point at things. Still, the art has a stylish retro look, and portraits of Sally Ride and Guion Bluford diversify an otherwise all-white, all-male astronaut corps posing heroically or riding blocky, geometric spacecraft across starry reaches.

**Energetic enough to carry younger rocketeers off the launch pad if not into a very high orbit. (glossary)** (*Informational picture book. 6-8*)



### BEST FRIENDS IN THE UNIVERSE

Watson, Stephanie  
Illus. by Pham, LeUyen  
Orchard/Scholastic (40 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
978-0-545-65988-8

Hector and Louie are such great friends that they're writing a book about being best friends. This is that book.

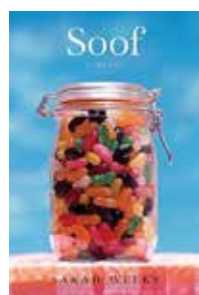
Watson offers a unique take on metafiction with this story of Louie, a black boy, and Hector, a boy who appears to be Asian, who are full of irrepressible energy and humor. Pham uses refined, clean-lined drawings to depict the real boys, while messy crayon illustrations indicate the pictures that the boys have drawn of themselves. In their book, the two friends list the reasons they are so compatible, including their mutual love of pythons, knock-knock jokes, and dancing. However, when it comes to keeping secrets, neither of them is very adept, and soon a few accidental slips devolve into a war of name-calling and insults. Illustrations show their real hands drawing kissy

Aurora is complex, simultaneously eliciting sympathy and exasperation. She's blunt, bordering on rude, but her heartache at losing her dog, her only friend, is palpable.

SOOF

hearts and bawling babies in mockery, while mustaches and devil horns adorn each other's likenesses. Soon, their friendship ends, as does their co-authorship, and each begins writing his own book. The inevitable and unsurprising happy ending resolves rather quickly, but this book is not about plot. It's about the visual delight of seeing both the real and crayon versions of the characters use their joyful (or angry) energy to celebrate creativity and friendship. The raucous endpapers alone are worth the price of admission.

A tried-and-true friendship story executed with creativity and verve. (Picture book. 4-8)



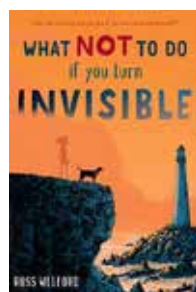
**SOOF**

*Weeks, Sarah*  
 Scholastic (208 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-545-84665-3

Fans of Weeks' *So B. It* (2004) will recognize this companion book's title as Heidi. It's intellectually disabled mother's word for love.

Twelve-year-old narrator-protagonist Aurora Franklin, the biological daughter of the couple who fostered Heidi before Aurora was born, has grown up hearing about Heidi and her good luck. Her parents—Mom especially—credit this good luck with giving them Aurora. Sadly, Mom's love for Heidi has instilled feelings of inadequacy in Aurora, who believes her mother wishes she were more like Heidi. Aurora has always been different. She speaks a made-up language called Beepish, prefers the company of adults to that of children, and wears her T-shirts inside out because of the bothersome tags. Mom was 48 when Aurora was born, resulting in anxiety for her daughter's well-being. She sought desperately for a diagnosis, but doctors ruled out autism spectrum disorder, concluding that "quirky" Aurora simply marches to her own beat. A now-grown and pregnant Heidi's impending visit triggers tension between Aurora and her mother, and Aurora is determined not to be nice to Heidi. Will she learn there's "soof" enough for them both? Aurora is complex, simultaneously eliciting sympathy and exasperation. She's blunt, bordering on rude, but her heartache at losing her dog, her only friend, is palpable. Knowledge of the previous book isn't a prerequisite. The book adheres to the white default.

A sweet story that shows all you need is soof. (Fiction. 8-13)



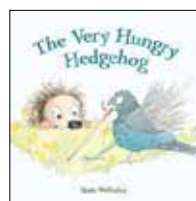
**WHAT NOT TO DO IF YOU TURN INVISIBLE**

*Welford, Ross*  
 Schwartz & Wade/Random (432 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | \$19.99 PLB | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-0-399-55152-9  
 978-0-399-55153-6 PLB

Ethel Leatherhead inadvertently turns herself invisible but discovers astonishing family secrets.

At 12, narrator Ethel has a whopping case of acne. Attempting to self-treat, Ethel combines an internet-purchased herbal tea and an accidental tanning-bed overdose of UV rays. She finds that she becomes entirely invisible—at first for a few hours, and by a third time seemingly permanently. The tea, Dr. Chang His Skin So Clear, causes foul-smelling burping but eventually actually seems to have helped Ethel's skin. Ethel has lived with her grandmother since her mother's death, when Ethel was 3. A classmate recently transplanted from London to Ethel's northeast English town of Whitley Bay is, like Ethel, an outcast and becomes an ally. Heavysset and outgoing, Elliott (dubbed Smelliot by classmates) is bright and loyal to Ethel. It is he who thinks to ask the proprietor of the mostly white community's Chinese restaurant to translate the Dr. Chang label, a moment that does not mitigate the story's Orientalism. The plot requires not only Ethel's (unseen) nakedness, but Ethel's accidental—and horrified—sightings of other characters' bare bottoms. The result is very funny and age-appropriate. The recent appearance of a stranger reveals surprising facts about Ethel's mother. Welford's narrative includes nicely timed, empathic humor and an honest, clear voice for Ethel along with intriguing speculation about what chemical and biological changes invisibility might demand.

Mostly funny and mostly convincing. (Fiction. 10-13)



**THE VERY HUNGRY HEDGEHOG**

*Welleley, Rosie*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Pavilion/Trafalgar (32 pp.)  
 \$9.99 paper | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-84365-353-0

Poor Isaac the hedgehog is famished after his long winter sleep.

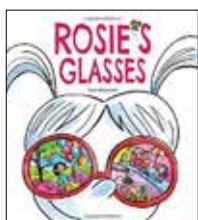
Noisy Starling awakens Isaac at the start of spring, and he's immediately tempted by her breakfast of a worm. But Starling laughs at him because she thinks he's having a "bad hair day." The hedgehog's feelings are hurt, and things only worsen when he ventures forth to find food, since Starling was too busy mocking him to share. Readers will note that he's oblivious to a fox, unmentioned in the text but depicted stalking Isaac across a spread and then lurking about as Isaac encounters Toad and Heron, who both thwart his efforts to get a meal. The seemingly watercolor-and-ink illustrations provide visual interest as

## Willis' brisk rhyming text has a nice phonic snap and should be accessible to early readers as well as listeners.

NOT JUST A BOOK

they add humor and extend the verbal narrative, which unfortunately lacks cohesion. Just when Isaac's fortunes seem to be changing with the sighting of an earwig ("Best breakfast of all!"), the lurking fox pounces and tries to make a meal of him. But that bad hair day ends up saving Isaac's skin since it wasn't caused by bed head but spiky quills that the fox isn't keen on ingesting. Somehow emboldened by this brush with death, Isaac tells the fox that there's plenty of food for all. Huh? Starling also returns with an offering and an apology, adding another layer to a rushed conclusion.

**Unsatisfying.** (Picture book. 3-5)



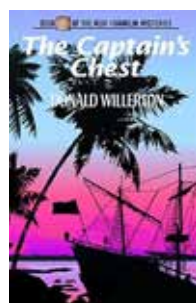
### ROSIE'S GLASSES

Whamond, Dave  
 Illus. by the author  
 Kids Can (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-77138-991-4

In this wordless book, a dark cloud hovers literally—and figuratively—over young Rosie's head until she finds a special pair of eyeglasses.

Grade schooler Rosie, a snub-nosed girl with a grim, crooked line for her mouth, is sitting in her bed, a puffy, sketchy gray cloud just above her. The world is black, white, and gray. Rain spatters against her bedroom's windowpane, and the animals in the posters cluttering her walls look equally glum. Readers soon see her mother, father, and little brother—all of whom appear to be having a rough morning. More monochrome images, some with dizzying perspective and all with a great deal of activity, continue the theme of universal unhappiness for Rosie and almost everyone she encounters. When Rosie finds a pair of glasses and puts them on, the busy-ness of the art persists, but now it is in full, loud colors, previously gloomy people and animals are suddenly happy and engaged when viewed through the specs. What does this mean? When the glasses inevitably disappear, there is age-appropriate angst, followed by an ending inviting more speculation from readers. The idea is interesting, but the artwork's jarring, jagged lines and perspectives have a fun house-like feel, which has the perhaps-unintentional effect of speeding readers through the book. Rosie's family is an interracial one, with a white mom and Asian dad, while Rosie's schoolteacher and some classmates are also diverse.

**Jarring art may keep readers from appreciating the book's message.** (Picture book. 3-6)



### THE CAPTAIN'S CHEST

Willerton, Donald  
 Terra Nova (148 pp.)  
 \$14.95 paper | Sep. 1, 2018  
 978-1-948749-04-6  
 Series: Mogi Franklin Mysteries, 8

In this eighth series outing, Mogi Franklin and his older sister, Jennifer, are spending their summer in the Caribbean—on St. John, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, to be exact.

The Caribbean is a much different place than their hometown of Bluff, Utah. The take-it-easy pace, musical accents, and incessant humidity require a bit of an adjustment. Jennifer is working at a resort, and Mogi is tagging along. Initially, Mogi hopes to discover a long-lost treasure chest, but then he learns of Oscar Padilla, a billionaire set on bringing an amusement park to St. John, much to the chagrin of the locals. Padilla's land has been sitting largely undeveloped for two years. The lack of activity seems suspicious, and Mogi soon abandons his quest for treasure to investigate. As the Franklins seek to uncover the truth, Padilla notices their activities. How far will Padilla go to protect his secrets, and how fast can Mogi discover them before returning to Utah? As the story unfolds, Willerton provides generous details about the environment, history, and industry of the Virgin Islands, whereas the characters can occasionally read flat, especially Jennifer. The use of "mon" and "de" to indicate Caribbean dialect comes off as stale and veers into caricature, and Willerton avoids mentioning race, with the result that his Virgin Islands are default white, like the Franklins.

**A quick read with a solid plot, but it's certainly more educational than literary.** (Adventure. 10-14)



### NOT JUST A BOOK

Willis, Jeanne  
 Illus. by Ross, Tony  
 Andersen Press USA (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-5415-3569-5

Books are more than just words and ink.

A child and their demonstrative cat (who seems to prefer watching television to reading) find more than a dozen unexpected uses for a book. Every new idea is shown in a full-page picture; sometimes even a two-page spread. "You can use it as a hat... / ...or a tent for your cat. Put it under a table leg to keep it steady. (Librarians and book lovers will suck their teeth at this one, but not as much as they will when they see it used as a funnel when the child milks a cow a few pages later.) If you put a flower inside and shut your book and then stand on it for a week, you'll have a beautiful pressed flower. It can also be used as a fly swatter (ick), a tunnel for your toy train set, or a fairy trap. Even more important, "Books can make you really clever... / ...and they stay with you forever." Willis' brisk



rhyiming text has a nice phonic snap and should be accessible to early readers as well as listeners. Ross' playful illustrations have a simplicity that nicely suits the rhymes, and, in a metafictional fillip, they show the shaggy-haired white protagonist using this very book. However, the message about the value of reading feels overshadowed by the numerous pages devoted to the use of a book as a prop.

**Fun but forgettable.** (*Picture book.* 3-6)



**THE SINKING OF CAPTAIN OTTER**

*Wilson, Troy*  
*Illus. by Chiodi, Maira*  
 Owlkids Books (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Oct. 15, 2018  
 978-1-77147-311-8

An otter and a butterfly—both passionate sea captains—become fast friends as they battle it out on the high seas.

Kelpy, an otter in the flesh but a sea captain in his heart, builds himself a boat and sets sail despite the pervasive mockery. Other otters laugh, human pirates laugh, sharks laugh, and even the waves laugh, but Kelpy sails onward, pursuing his dream (though shedding a few tears). Then, on the horizon he spies another pirate. But this time it is a diminutive butterfly (with a hilarious loop-over-the-nonexistent-ears beard) in a tiny boat who exclaims: “I be Blistering Blastering Butterbeard. Prepare to be sunk!” Kelpy laughs at the butterfly’s ineffectual barrage, and Butterbeard begins to cry. Contrite and recognizing that Butterbeard is a kindred spirit following his own dream, Kelpy realizes the only thing to be done is to destroy his own boat to make it look as though Butterbeard sank him. Butterbeard exults, Kelpy rebuilds. The two fierce denizens of the high seas commence to battle each other over and over, having a grand time and becoming fast friends in the process. Author Wilson’s tightly constructed narrative has a strong repetition-of-three base that supplies both a solid foundation and humor, and it plays well against illustrator Chiodi’s exuberant and colorful mixed-media illustrations with their loose, plenty-of-space feel.

**Fun—and with a supportive message for readers who march to different drums.** (*Picture book.* 3-6)

**HALLOWEEN & THANKSGIVING PICTURE BOOKS**



**SIR SIMON Super Scarer**

*Atkinson, Cale*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Tundra (48 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-1-101-91909-5



A “Super Scarer / Ghostest with the mostest” (according to his business card) learns a bit about being a ghost...and about being a human.

Sir Simon has haunted all sorts of things, from a bus stop to a potato, but he’s just gotten his first haunted house assignment, which means he’ll have “Ghost chores” to do: stair creaking, toilet flushing, attic stomping, etc. But when the expected elderly couple (“PRO: Sleep all the time / CON: None!”) turn out to be a grandmother and her grandson (“KIDS / PRO: None! / CON: Too curious”), can Simon survive the kid’s inquisitiveness? If it means getting out of chores, sure. But it turns out that Chester (hysterically!) isn’t so good at ghostly chores. And when Simon feels a bit of empathy for Chester, whose parents are separated, and he voluntarily helps Chester with the boy’s chores, Simon is just as bad (and funny) at “human chores.” But both are very good at being each other’s friend. Simon is one very expressive ghost, managing with just the basic facial features and two tiny arms to convey everything from frustration to deviousness. Speech bubbles and illustrations that range from double-page spreads all the way down to vignettes—with some very funny cross-sections—help break up the somewhat lengthy tale, though there’s enough detail in the pictures (made with “Ghost toots and Photoshop”) to keep readers riveted. Chester and his grandmother both have brown skin.

**Friendship makes the chores (and everything else) more fun.** (*Picture book.* 4-8)



**TEN HUNGRY TURKEYS**

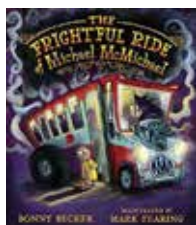
*Balsley, Tilda*  
*Illus. by Richard, Ilene*  
 Pelican (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Oct. 1, 2018  
 978-1-4556-2235-1

Ten turkeys invited to a Thursday luncheon decide, one by one, that attending might not be such a great idea.

The anthropomorphic turkeys are initially thrilled at Mr. and Mrs. Byrd’s invitation and accept enthusiastically. But reservations arise early on: “TEN hungry turkeys were on their way to lunch / when one turkey said, ‘Uh oh, I have a hunch. / I know

we thought this would be fun, / but something just feels wrong. / Please don't be mad, / 'cause I feel bad. / I just can't come along.” When they bump into two families—three stereotypical American Indians bearing a platter of corn and three stereotypical Pilgrims bearing a roast fowl—another turkey drops out. And so it goes, Balsley’s rhyme never faltering (though it may need some rehearsal at first), as turkey after turkey expresses ever more explicit qualms about the Byrds’ menu and decides not to attend. Finally just one turkey’s left to happily accept yams from Mrs. Byrd, who is revealed to be yet another anthropomorphic turkey. Richard dresses her turkeys in outfits that range from a biker vest to a pink cardigan; although they are nominally individuated, it’s hard to tell from the compositions which turkey is speaking until the page is turned and readers must figure out which one is missing.

**A side dish at best.** (*Picture book.* 4-7)



### THE FRIGHTFUL RIDE OF MICHAEL MCMICHAEL

Becker, *Bonny*  
*Illus. by Fearing, Mark*  
 Candlewick (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Jul. 10, 2018  
 978-0-7636-8150-0

A young boy takes a terrifying bus ride on his way to his grandmother’s house in Becker and Fearing’s gleefully baleful picture book.

“’Twas the thirteenth of November, a stormy night, / when the Thirteen bus hove into sight. / Something about it didn’t seem right... // but Michael McMichael boarded.” And off young Michael McMichael goes on his way to deliver a beloved pet to his grandmother. A busful of creepy passengers doesn’t faze the young boy of color, but when he suddenly finds himself alone, he begins to notice the bus’s jawlike doors, its tonguelike floor, and the driver’s sinister leer. Becker’s rollicking rhyme scheme not only captures the rapid, lurching motion of Michael McMichael’s journey, but as the unnerving quickly escalates to the life-threatening, it also steadily envelops readers in the rising tension. Fearing’s dark but dynamic illustrations keep pace with the building intensity and intertwine with the text as seamlessly as humor intertwines with horror in a narrative that sits somewhere between “The Raven” and *Courage the Cowardly Dog* animated cartoons. And rather than pull back and return readers to the dullness of safety, Michael McMichael’s creative and disconcerting solution to free himself from the bus will leave readers with a whole new set of frissons.

**Dark and delightful—for readers who enjoy chills with their giggles.** (*Picture book.* 3-8)



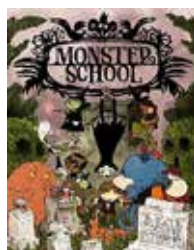
### BONE SOUP A Spooky, Tasty Tale

Capucilli, *Alyssa Satin*  
*Illus. by Knight, Tom*  
 Paula Wiseman/Simon & Schuster  
 (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-1-4814-8608-8

“Stone Soup” gets a Halloween remake.

Three hungry witches, finding only a dry bone in the cupboard, take their cauldron door to door collecting ingredients for their bone soup. Both the neighbors, who are initially suspicious of the witches, and their additions to the pot will be unfamiliar to children used to grandma’s chicken soup: A ghost contributes a giant’s eye; a ghoul brings a lizard’s tail; a werewolf adds old toenails. The beguiling smell attracts more and more creatures, and as their hunger increases, their patience grows thin: They will not put up with any tricks from the witches. (Capucilli’s wordplay here is a delight: “‘Let’s wrap this up now,’ mumbled the mummy. / ‘Don’t rattle me further,’ clattered the skeleton.”) Just as it looks as if the witches will be part of the soup, a monster child saves the day, and bone soup is shared and enjoyed by all. Knight’s illustrations, made with charcoal and pencils and colored digitally, have just the right mix of creepy and humorous, treading the line between scary and fun. His palette is suitably Halloween-y.

**Just right for sharing with neighbors this October—either the tale or the (real) recipe that follows, or maybe both.** (*author’s note*) (*Picture book/folk tale.* 4-8)



### MONSTER SCHOOL

Coombs, *Kate*  
*Illus. by Gatlin, Lee*  
 Chronicle (40 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Aug. 28, 2018  
 978-1-4521-2938-9

While the subjects and daily schedule may look familiar, the students at Monster School are a bit different.

Take Stevie, for example. He’s a zombie, and he’s always losing things. Sharp-eyed readers may be able to spy his homework—still at the end of his arm in the corner—or maybe his missing eye. And “multicultural” has a rather different connotation when trolls, elves, witches, and boggarts make up your family tree. But many of the topics Coombs writes about seem more like middle school probs than those of picture-book readers: a girl other students moon over, an introvert, a queen-bee mummy who secretly wishes to be a commoner so she could play, a nerdy “Computer Wizard,” hair care (the individual strands are snakes), and a poor “Ghost Girl’s Lament” (she cries in the coat closet from loneliness and failure to haunt anyone). Other poems are typical of school collections: a gross-out one about cafeteria food; one about baseball (albeit with a few extra obstacles—avoid the ghouls and don’t trip on tombstones); and

Marvelous, wordless creations will delight young readers: A black spread is followed by one with an orange-rimmed white triangle on the verso, then one with similar triangles on both pages.

STUMPKIN

the requisite poem about homework—when one is dead, there's not much incentive for doing it. Gatlin's illustrations play up the gross and macabre in the small details—monkey in the middle with a head for a ball—and he certainly can't be said to fail at portraying diversity.

**Middle graders will shiver over this angst-y collection of school verses.** (*Picture book/poetry. 8-12*)



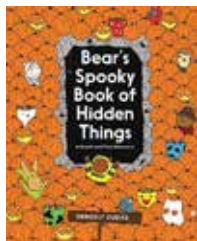
**STUMPKIN**

*Cummins, Lucy Ruth*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Atheneum (56 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-1-5344-1362-7

A stemless pumpkin who isn't chosen gets the best Halloween of all.

On the shelves outside a shop in a busy city, a shopkeeper makes a display of orange pumpkins and a single yellow gourd. They are all sizes and shapes and have lovely stems, save for one. Poor Stumpkin worries that, despite his good qualities, his stemlessness will prevent him from becoming a jack-o'-lantern like all the other pumpkins that go home with customers to decorate the windows across the street. On Halloween night, he alone is left (even the gourd went home with someone!). So the shopkeeper scoops him up. The spreads that follow are marvelous, wordless creations that will delight young readers: A black spread is followed by one with an orange-rimmed white triangle on the verso, then one with similar triangles on both pages. "Stumpkin wouldn't be getting a window. And he wouldn't be getting a new home. // He already *had* a home." The final page shows Stumpkin as a jack-o'-lantern back on the shelves with the shopkeeper's friendly black cat. Though undoubtedly feel-good, the book may leave readers wondering exactly what it's saying about Stumpkin's physical irregularity—is it some kind of disability metaphor? The city sights, people, and animals other than the cat are all black silhouettes, keeping the focus on Stumpkin.

**Kids may choose differently at the pumpkin patch after reading this tale, though any deeper message may be lost on them.** (*Picture book. 4-7*)



**BEAR'S SPOOKY BOOK OF HIDDEN THINGS**  
*Halloween Seek-and-Find*

*Dudás, Gergely*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Harper/HarperCollins (32 pp.)  
 \$8.99 paper | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-0-06-257079-6

Readers follow Bear on Halloween, searching for treats in this seek-and-find title.

Bear and his forest-animal friends are surrounded by autumnal sights and colors in Dudás' boldly colored cartoon spreads,

from piles of hay, corn, leaves, and bones to a field of tractors at the pumpkin patch and a cemetery packed with gravestones. Brief text continues the thin story of Bear and his pals and gives them (and readers) something to search for in each picture: a spider-ring party favor, a masquerade mask, a pocket watch. Flat colors and no shadows facilitate seeking, but it's still not supereasy: There's no answer key, though all the items can be found in Bear's room at the end, and readers may need to see the gourd there in order to spot it in a crowded pumpkin patch. Children will search in vain, however, for the honeycomb that the opening statement (mis)leads readers to believe will be at every shindig. Though adorable, the animals are expressionless (and mouthless), and all animals of each species share the same costume: The raccoons are "mad scientists," the owls are scarecrows, the deer are witches, etc.; Bear is the only bee. The animals labelled skunks, however, are pictured as badgers. In the end, Bear does get his honeycomb: His friends have found some and delivered it to the final party—at his house. Readers will wonder where it came from.

**Patient seekers will enjoy this Halloween party; others should steer clear.** (*Novelty picture book. 4-8*)



**ONE LITTLE MONSTER**

*Gonyea, Mark*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Aladdin (40 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-1-5344-0674-2

What starts as one little monster on a child's windowsill quickly gets out of hand.

To give credit where it's due, the child handles the situation with remarkable self-possession. "I'm cozy in bed, and what do I see? // 1 little monster staring at me. / I say to myself, / What harm could it do? / I only blinked once... // But now I see 2!" Page turn by page turn, the monsters continue to add up, gross-out humor arriving with No. 3, a green, mucous-y one sneezed out of monster No. 2, and with No. 5: "One cuts the cheese." But when the count reaches 10, the monsters have a new look in their eyes and postures: fear. This 10th creature is different from the others, lacking the clean, sharp lines of the rest. In fact, it looks distinctly like a sock puppet with drawn-on, staring eyes and scowling mouth. The clever child gets to enjoy that cozy bed at last...at least until monsters populate dreamland. The bold, simple shapes and bright colors of Gonyea's digital illustrations are clear when the monsters are few and obviously, uh, monster-shaped. But as the pages fill with oddly shaped blobs, some of which lack even facial features, it becomes increasingly difficult to parse the illustrations, especially when they are close-ups.

**Would that all children could greet their own monsters with this much aplomb.** (*Picture book. 4-8*)

Garrigue's appropriately spidery illustrations employ a palette that's heavy on purple and black, and there are lots of creepy details for observant readers to spy.

MOTHER GHOST



**MOTHER GHOST  
Nursery Rhymes for Little  
Monsters**

*Kolar, Rachel*  
*Illus. by Garrigue, Roland*  
Sleeping Bear Press (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Jul. 15, 2018  
978-1-58536-392-6

This collection of shivery Mother Goose rhymes is sure to put kids in the Halloween spirit.

Opening with a spin on "Boys and Girls, Come out to Play," Kolar sets kids up for the 12 to come: "Come with a whoop and come with a call; / Come with brave hearts or not at all." All the favorites are here: "Mary Had a Little Ghost," "Zombie Miss Muffet" (which doesn't end well for the spider), "Sing a Song of Witches," "Mary, Mary, Tall and Scary," "Little Boy Drac." Kolar's scansion is spot-on with the originals, making them delicious to read aloud: "Frankenstein had a marvelous mind, / And a marvelous mind had he; / He called for some arms and he called for some eyes / And he called for his thunderbolts three." Not all are creepy, though: "Twinkle, twinkle, lantern Jack, / Grinning orange against the black, / Crouched beneath the window light / Like a watchman in the night." "Wee Willie Werewolf" rounds out the collection: "Growling at the window, howling to the skies, / Are the monsters all in bed? The sun's about to rise!" Garrigue's appropriately spidery illustrations employ a palette that's heavy on purple and black, and there are lots of creepy details for observant readers to spy. Of the humans/humanoids who are alive, three have brown skin, and the rest are pale; almost none have discernible chins.

**A treat for those who like their tricks on the scary side.**  
*(Picture book/poetry. 4-8)*



**FRIGHT SCHOOL**

*Lawler, Janet*  
*Illus. by Galletti, Chiara*  
Whitman (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-0-8075-2553-1

Where else but Fright School will goblins, ghosts, and ghouls learn to scare trick-or-treaters?

Human schools might not expect their students to learn how to "moan," "leer," or "swoop" (or hold graduation in October), but other parts of Fright School will seem quite familiar, if with an eerie twist. There are picky eaters in the lunchroom ("Our apples don't taste rotten!") as well as students who will eat seemingly anything, and at recess, the jungle gym is popular with the spiders. On the way in, "The janitor tells birds of prey / to wipe their dirty claws. / The nurse yells from her office, / 'Hey, I'm running out of gauze!'" (Both nurse and patients are mummies.) But although the students have learned all kinds of things, courage is not among them: When there's a knock at the door, the students run away at the sight of three costumed trick-or-treaters: cowboy and princess who present white and

a pirate (with eye patch) who presents black. Lawler's rhythm and rhyme are mostly spot-on. Galletti's seemingly digital illustrations display a delightful array of student stereotypes, including a nerdy cat with a ruler, a bat with braces, an ultra-girly witch bedecked in pink, and a skeleton who skateboards into class.

**Readers may pick up a few frightening pointers of their own for Halloween night, but will they make the grade?**  
*(Picture book. 4-7)*



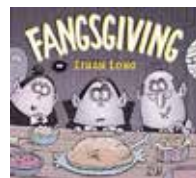
**DUCK AND HIPPO  
GIVE THANKS**

*London, Jonathan*  
*Illus. by Joyner, Andrew*  
Two Lions (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Aug. 21, 2018  
978-1-5039-0080-6  
Series: Duck and Hippo, 3

Hippo dreams of "a good, old-fashioned Thanksgiving."

It's not all smooth sailing. Hippo is raking and dreaming of Thanksgiving goodies when Duck plunges into Hippo's leaf pile and musses it up. When a falling apple bonks Hippo on the head and he then gives it to Duck, Duck thanks him, triggering an invitation to celebrate the day together. The two friends go off to shop and find themselves in mishap after mild mishap, meeting friends and inviting them one by one to Thanksgiving dinner tomorrow. Duck engages in mild tomfoolery, but Hippo maintains his genial calm. That evening, Duck goes back to their friends and suggests that they plan a surprise for Hippo. The next day, Hippo prepares a delicious assortment of traditional (all vegetarian) dishes and then waits for his friends—who show up late with their surprise: more food (eggrolls, sushi, pizza, and peanut-butter-and-jelly tacos), which temporarily puts Hippo out because it "is NOT a good, old-fashioned Thanksgiving feast!" Hippo rapidly gets over himself, and the friends all have a good time. While the message of enjoying fellowship and valuing each individual's contributions is a worthy one, this meandering tale offers little to chew on in terms of character development or plot. Joyner's anthropomorphic cartoon animals are cheery, but his illustrations do nothing to give London's story any depth.

**Empty calories.** *(Picture book. 5-8)*



**FANGSGIVING**

*Long, Ethan*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Bloomsbury (32 pp.)  
\$16.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-68119-825-5

Long and his bevy of monsters tackle yet another holiday in this look at the family angst that is a natural part of Thanksgiving.

All is going swimmingly for the friends—cranberry sauce, stuffing, sweet-potato casserole, turkey; each made by a different monster—until Vladimir’s extended vampire family unexpectedly drops in. Uncle Gus, Aunt Bessy, and Joey and Schmoey are welcomed with arms open wide to the friends’ feast, but then the meddling begins. Aunt Bessy shrinks from the garlic in the mashed potatoes, Uncle Gus has his own way of cooking the turkey, and the Siamese twins “help” Fran with the pumpkin pie, adding maggot meatballs. The pic of everyone gathered around the table says it all: Vladimir’s family looks pleased; his friends look uncertain and a bit dismayed. As in many households, the inevitable explosion of tempers is triggered, but this one is quickly resolved in a flurry of re-dos and cooperation before a satisfying (and slightly more palatable) Friday feast. Long’s graphite pencil and digitally colored illustrations are packed with gross-out details that will have kids in stitches, and the body language and facial expressions are clearly 100 percent human even if the characters aren’t. Gus’ electrifying turkey-cooking machine, which recalls the electric chair, may be a bit over-the-top even for this series, though.

**A (mostly) typical Thanksgiving: family, lumpy mashed potatoes, arguments, and all.** (Picture book. 3-7)



### SKELLY'S HALLOWEEN

*Martin, David*  
*Illus. by Richmond, Lori*  
 Henry Holt (32 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Aug. 7, 2018  
 978-1-250-12706-8

“Head and shoulders, knees and toes. / Trick-or-treating, here we goes!”

Skelly Bones Skeleton is excited for Halloween; after all, skeletons sleep the whole rest of the year, so he likes to really live it up on Halloween. But what should his costume be this year? Not a witch—he couldn’t stay on the broomstick. Not a monster—too scary. A ghost! In no time, he’s ready to go. Only he hadn’t planned on the wind, which catches his sheet and lofts him up and then drops him...in separate pieces. And in a twist that will remind readers of “Humpty Dumpty,” the other trick-or-treaters can’t put Skelly back together correctly—they make him look like them: a snake, an ant, and a chicken. Finally some human kids come by. They’re at first scared by the pile of bones (more so when it talks!), but Skelly convinces them he’s friendly and needs a hand, and once he’s back together, they all set off trick-or-treating together. Richmond’s illustrations, done with pen and ink, foam stamp, and Photoshop, use a palette heavy on purple, orange, and green. Skelly’s personality shines, his eyebrows and mouth doing much of the emoting. The skeleton is an unconnected group of bones, most long and skinny save for the pelvis, which resembles tighty whities, and the skull. The three children include a brown-skinned girl skeleton, a pale-skinned pirate with glasses, and a beige-skinned chef.

**A Halloween anatomy lesson sure to tickle funny bones.** (Picture book. 4-7)



### SAMMY'S SPOOKTACULAR HALLOWEEN

*Petrik, Mike*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Two Lions (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Jul. 17, 2018  
 978-1-5039-0179-7

Sammy’s Halloween tricks are no treat for his family when they last the whole year.

The Loomis family really goes all out on Halloween, their haunted house putting all others to shame. But no one loves the holiday more than Sammy, the youngest child. In fact, the day after Halloween, he’s already planning improvements for next year’s celebration, and he practices them on his hapless family. But the Thanksgiving turkey carved like a jack-o’-lantern doesn’t impress, the zombie Christmas is a dud, and the Frankenstein Fourth of July is the last straw: No more Halloween until the rest of the family is ready. But at this point, Sammy’s older siblings recognize his good ideas and offer to help him refine the ones that are not so awesome, and this year’s haunted house is the best ever. Sibling cooperation, parental recognition of hard work, and Sammy’s stick-to-itiveness give this book a little something extra beyond just a funny Halloween tale. Petrik’s digital illustrations have a Saturday morning–cartoon aesthetic. The Loomises all present white, and the sister and mother wear glasses.

**Perseverance has its rewards.** (Picture book. 4-8)



### SAMURAI SCARECROW A Very Ninja Halloween

*Pingk, Rubin*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Simon & Schuster (48 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-1-4814-3059-3  
 Series: Samurai Holiday

One Halloween, Yukio gets tired of his sister following him around and says some things he doesn’t mean.

After trying to chase away Santa (*Samurai Santa*, 2015), Yukio the ninja returns excited for Halloween night. His little sister, Kashi, wants to be just like her big brother. As they prepare for a night of trick-or-treating, Kashi follows her brother around everywhere, asking questions incessantly—and even dressing in the same costume. Yukio has had enough and yells at his sister. Chided by his friends (“Ouch. Too far, dude”), Yukio tries to apologize, but she doesn’t want to go trick-or-treating with him anymore. While he and his friends are out, the Samurai Scarecrow—the well-known spooky urban legend—chases them, demanding his candy, which forces him into a decision that teaches him what it is to be a ninja and a brother. Taking inspiration from Japanese urban legends, Pingk creates the eerie Samurai Scarecrow. He uses a palette of black, white, orange, and mauve to convey a Halloween feel. Gray clouds, curvy trees, and

ghostly tendrils create spooky landscapes and frames. His focus on small details, such as scatterings of orange feathers, adds to the movement and emotion in each scene. Playful changes in typeface add voice and emphasis.

**With spooky scarecrows, sneaky ninjas, and sibling tricks, this book has a little something for everyone.** (*Picture book. 4-8*)



### GO TO SLEEP, LITTLE CREEP

Quinn, David  
Illus. by Spires, Ashley  
Crown (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Jul. 24, 2018  
978-1-101-93944-4

A bedtime book for all the nocturnal ghouls, ghosts, and goblins.

Structured identically to the many twee books about bedtime for human children, this is designed to do the same job: get little ones to sleep. Just as human children want one more cuddle, snack, and book, so too do these monsters' offspring. Godzilla's diapered child wants to keep stomping block cities, and it's a struggle to get the bigfoot child's toes scrubbed, face brushed, and pajamas on. Then there are those pesky fears that parents need to banish (imagined terrors include a unicorn and a cute kitten). The beauty of Quinn's text, though (the vampire dad's request for one more bite and a couple of bobbed rhymes excepted), is that this will work on human children as well. Indeed, some of the typical twee has made it to these pages, demonstrating that monster caregivers are just as sentimental as human ones: "A little wonder, yes, that's true. / A miracle, uniquely you." Spires' illustrations mix the tender with the slightly macabre (the zombie child's stuffed animal is missing its lower half), and the palette is dark and subdued to match the time before the dawn.

**Two messages come through loud and clear: caregivers' love for their children and, in the words of the ghost parent: "I'll always love you, to the grave. / But frankly, dear, it's sleep I crave." Truer words were never spoken.** (*Picture book. 3-7*)



### HOW TO SCARE A GHOST

Reagan, Jean  
Illus. by Wildish, Lee  
Knopf (32 pp.)  
\$17.99 | \$20.99 PLB | Aug. 21, 2018  
978-1-5247-0190-1  
978-1-5247-0191-8 PLB  
Series: How to...

Reagan and Wildish continue their How to... series with this Halloween-themed title.

If you've ever had a hankering to scare a ghost, this handbook is what you need. In it, a pair of siblings shows readers "how to attract a ghost" (they like creepily carved pumpkins

and glitter), identify a ghost (real ghosts "never, ever open doors"), and scare a ghost (making faces, telling scary stories). Also included is a warning not to go too far—a vacuum is over-the-top on the scary chart for ghosts. Once you've calmed your ghost again, it's time to play (just not hide-and-peek or on a trampoline) and then decide on costumes for trick-or-treating. Your ghost will also need to learn Halloween etiquette (knocking instead of floating through doors). The title seems a little misleading considering only two spreads are dedicated to trying to scare a ghost, but the package as a whole is entertaining. Wildish's digital cartoon illustrations are as bright as ever, and the brother and sister duo have especially expressive faces. Both are white-presenting, as are all the other characters except for some kids in the very last spread.

**The tips garnered here could be used to scare just about anyone, and for those scared of ghosts, at least your carpets will be clean from all the vacuuming.** (*Picture book. 4-8*)



### ARE YOU SCARED, DARTH VADER?

Rex, Adam  
Illus. by the author  
Disney Lucasfilm (48 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Jul. 3, 2018  
978-1-4847-0497-4

An unseen narrator attempts to discover what might scare Darth Vader.

Lord Vader scoffs at the typical Halloween beasties. Neither a wolf nor a man scares him, so a wolfman won't do it; his armor will protect him from a vampire's bite; and as long as the ghost isn't Obi-Wan Kenobi's or Yoda's, he's fine. Though he's not afraid of a witch, learning that she might curse him makes him morose: "I am already cursed." Unflappable until now, the Dark Lord finally grows agitated and then increasingly annoyed (but still not scared) when the costumed kids who have been trying to scare him remove their masks and use him as a jungle gym. But even when they leave, there's still one left: the one who's holding this book and who's about to close it. That does it! À la Grover in *There's a Monster at the End of This Book*, the finally fearful Darth Vader tries everything to get the reader to stop turning pages, and the narrator just rubs it in, comparing being closed in the book to being trapped in carbonite. Clever design places the narrator's text in yellow, Vader's sarcastic responses in white on black speech bubbles. The image of the staid Lord Vader fighting off hordes of children will keep kids in stitches.

**Never underestimate the power of a child, even against the Dark Side.** (*Picture book. 4-8*)

Illustrations are darkly colorful, with the many animals represented fairly realistically, while the witches, with brown skin and white hair, sport long, pointy noses and sparse teeth.

A TANGLE OF BRUNGLES



**DOES FRANKENSTEIN GET HUNGRY?**

*Solimine, John*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Putnam (32 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Aug. 14, 2018  
 978-0-399-54641-9

Instead of worrying about the many monsters and ghouls that are typical Halloween haunts, a young girl, who narrates in the first person as she lies in bed, uses her imagination to put her fears to rest.

After an opening verse and an image of the girl with her blankets pulled up to her chin, Solimine's first spread-spanning illustration shows the girl in bed in her room, the blue monochrome illustration showing all sorts of spooky things. But this little girl isn't one to panic. Instead, she lets her curiosity take charge, the illustrations depicting each silly scenario: "Are MUMMIES fond of long bike rides / just like normal folks? / Or do their crusty bandages / get tangled in the spokes?" Do ghosts teach their pets to play dead? Does Dracula floss? Does the Boogeyman wipe his boogers on his sleeve? The final spread returns readers to the bedroom, only now the spooky things are gone, replaced by the objects that inspired them: the tentacle beneath the bed? Only a scarf. "All these questions make the ghoulish appear foolish / and the ghostly mostly meek. / Being scared is so silly now that / monsters seem so weak!" Though the text's scansion is sometimes off, Solimine's pencil, pen, and Photoshop illustrations are sure to tickle readers' funny bones (and disgust them as well). The palette is heavy on orange, green, and purple; the girl has brown skin and brown braids.

**Imagination is a powerful tool; perhaps this will show readers how to harness its powers to tame their fears instead of feeding them.** (Picture book. 4-8)



**LOTS OF CATS**

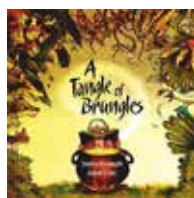
*Taylor, E. Dee*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Harper/HarperCollins (40 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-0-06-267569-9

An independent witch who wishes for a playmate gets a little more than she bargained for.

Margaret has lots of interests that keep her busy, but sometimes it might be nice to have a friend to share them with. So she adds some extra ingredients to a spell to summon a playmate...but it backfires, producing 12 cats on her doorstep. Taylor's detailed, textured colored-pencil illustrations show all the fun Margaret has with her new pals. But they also show all the trouble they cause: the mess they make, the food they eat, the hair they shed, and oh, the poop! So Margaret takes drastic measures to make them disappear (cat owners will not be surprised at what drives them away) and enjoys some brief alone time before realizing she misses their company. Spells to bring them back fail, and searches are in vain. But then, anticlimactically,

she dreams of a spell to retrieve them and finds the cats in her bed when she wakes. Margaret is a childlike witch with light skin, short blondish hair, a purple dress, and a pointed witch's hat. The pages that highlight the cats' antics are the best (imagine the game of Twister!)—readers will long for their return along with Margaret. Still, those leaning toward introversion may cringe that there's no compromise between all or nothing.

**Even independent witches need some companions, but how many is too many?** (Picture book. 4-7)



**A TANGLE OF BRUNGLES**

*Viswanath, Shobha*  
*Illus. by Fox, Culpeo S.*  
 Karadi Tales (34 pp.)  
 \$15.95 | Aug. 28, 2018  
 978-8-181903-60-0

A coven of witches stirs up the Great Brungle Stew with a variety of collective nouns to summon Mr. Brungle, the "wickedly vile" heartthrob of "the witch with a wart," in this offering from India.

"A QUIVER OF COBRAS, / Shoot them in straight. / From A LOUNGE OF LIZARDS / Add exactly eight! // Make sure to toss in / AMISCHIEF OF MICE. / Or just one big rat / Is sure to suffice." Interesting and unusual collective nouns for different animals are written in uppercase type, while the rest of the text is set in standard fashion. The rhymes of the quatrains as well as the meter are occasionally inconsistent. Illustrations are darkly colorful, with the many animals represented fairly realistically, while the witches, with brown skin and white hair, sport long, pointy noses and sparse teeth. Their charm delights (though it may need some practice before reading aloud): "Tremple Gemple Fever Sticks / Pimple Poxile Psittacosis / Frungle Brungle, Where Are You? / Appear Now! Shimshamshoo!" When the spell does not work, one of the witch sisters adds the last essential ingredient at midnight, and what appears? The titular tangle of brungles! The collective nouns range far and wide, as the witches toss in a kaleidoscope of butterflies, a clew of worms, a paddle of ducks, and many more.

**An offbeat blend of education and mayhem, themed just right for Halloween.** (Picture book. 5-8)



**IT'S HALLOWEEN!**

*Wielockx, Ruth*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Clavis (32 pp.)  
 \$17.95 | Aug. 1, 2018  
 978-1-60537-411-6  
 Series: Luke and Lottie

Twins enjoy some Halloween fun.

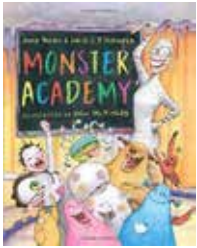
Luke and Lottie are excited for trick-or-treating; they've already decided on costumes: Lottie will be a witch, and Luke, a ghost. But the duo are still young enough to be a bit fearful of Halloween's scarier side: A spider decoration made of yarn

The illustrations, especially those of melancholy Tomás and his colorful costume, are warm without being cloying, particularly the first time readers see him smile.

A TIGER CALLED TOMÁS

fools them both. After their mother reassures them, she invites them to help her assemble some edible treats, and then they make jack-o'-lanterns with their dad. By then, it's time to head out. Their dad (dressed as a vampire) accompanies them for an evening of trick-or-treating. The night ends when they arrive back at home to tell their mother all about it. Wielockx's characters all have adorable round heads and snub noses, and none of the costumes or sights are scary. The family all has pale skin and brown hair. Amid the costumed trick-or-treaters, two other people appear to have brown skin; the rest are pale.

**This gentle, simple tale features only treats, making it just right for very little trick-or-treaters. (Picture book. 3-6)**



### MONSTER ACADEMY

*Yolen, Jane & Stemple, Heidi E.Y.*

*Illus. by McKinley, John*

Blue Sky/Scholastic (32 pp.)

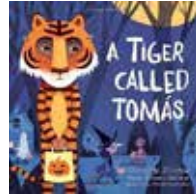
\$16.99 | Aug. 28, 2018

978-1-338-09881-5

A new student at Monster Academy turns out to be more than she seems.

The students at this school are definitely different from the norm, although the things they do will seem familiar. For instance, Miss Mummy makes a chart of the number of teeth each student has lost. (She speaks only in rhyme due to a curse, making the read-aloud switch between her dialogue and the rest of the text, which is in prose, a bit of a challenge.) Poor Vic, a vampire, is distraught to have lost no teeth, and he spends the day working at his wiggly fang. New student Tornado Jo, meanwhile, isn't fitting in. The other monsters want her to behave. In the end, it's revealed that she's a human! And her behavior does start to change, but for no real discernible reason. Troubling messages hide within this rather slight tale: Vic is anxious to lose a tooth so he won't be "a ZERO anymore," and Jo is said to be "scary" and a "monster, too," seemingly because of her behavior. But her obstinacy, peremptory ways, and dizzying energy can seem like the actions of children with oppositional defiant disorder or ADHD—in other words, not monstrous. McKinley's illustrations play up the goofiness of the various monster students and their school, which is rather monsterlike in its own right.

**Skip; there is little good that kids will learn at Monster Academy. (Picture book. 4-8)**



### A TIGER CALLED TOMÁS

*Zolotow, Charlotte*

*Illus. by Miguéns, Marta Álvarez*

Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (40 pp.)

\$17.99 | Aug. 7, 2018

978-1-4926-0171-5

The story of a shy child and a Halloween costume that helps him connect with new neighbors is reinterpreted again, 55 years after its original publication as *A Tiger Called Thomas* with illustrations by Kurt Werth.

Tomás stays on the stoop of his new home every day as potential friends pass by, convinced "that the new people might not like him." The gnawing feeling that he won't be embraced by the neighborhood worsens until Halloween, when he puts on a tiger costume and disguises himself to meet them all. Of course, the costume doesn't do much to hide his identity; everyone knows it's Tomás, to his surprise. But the interactions help him connect in ways he wouldn't otherwise. The boy and his mother, who are bilingual and presumed Latinx, speak mostly in English with a little Spanish sprinkled in, a hint that a language or cultural barrier may be adding to his shyness. But the Spanish is light at best, mostly parroting English words; it's not a convincing reason for Tomás' isolation. Nevertheless, his story rings true, as it has in previous versions of the late author's story. The illustrations, especially those of melancholy Tomás and his colorful costume, are warm without being cloying, particularly the first time readers see him smile (which happens to be on the last page).

**A must-read for introverted kids, it's a worthy update to the 1963 original. (afterword) (Picture book. 4-8)**



# YOUNG ADULT



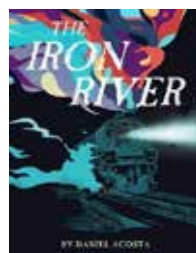
These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- IRON RIVER** by Daniel Acosta..... 161
- AN ASSASSIN'S GUIDE TO LOVE & TREASON**  
by Virginia Boecker..... 162
- THE UNWANTED** by Don Brown ..... 163
- UNLADYLIKE** by Cristen Conger & Caroline Ervin;  
illus. by Tyler Feder..... 164
- FLAWED** by Andrea Dorfman..... 165
- THE CHAOS OF NOW** by Erin Jade Lange..... 170
- BLACK WINGS BEATING** by Alex London..... 172
- WILDCARD** by Marie Lu..... 172
- UNBROKEN** ed. by Marieke Nijkamp..... 175
- THE ECHO ROOM** by Parker Peevyhouse..... 175
- DRY** by Neal Shusterman & Jarrod Shusterman..... 176
- LOST SOUL, BE AT PEACE** by Maggie Thrash..... 178



## IRON RIVER

Acosta, Daniel  
Cinco Puntos (225 pp.)  
\$17.95 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-1-941026-93-9



Haunted by nightmares and the dangers of life in a Los Angeles barrio, Manuel Maldonado Jr.'s courageous testimony forever changes his community.

Born with a port-wine stain that earns him the nickname "Man-On-Fire," 12-year-old Manny plays with a group of three friends in the shadow of the Pacific Railroad in the late 1950s. He and his buddies engage in dangerous games along the tracks, throwing oranges at hobos who ride on the cars. When they find a dead body and run into trouble with a crooked policeman, they seem destined for juvenile detention. With the return of an uncle from prison, a drug-ridden hometown, and a racist cop on the loose, Manny's small circle of friends and family is his only safety net. In the wake of another death, a secret comes to light, leading the way to forgiveness in his family. A story about a sensitive Mexican boy in a multicultural community that also includes Japanese-Americans and African-Americans, the novel treats difficult themes with hope. "I'm telling you this now because I don't know when I'm going to die," our young narrator says at the beginning of the novel. By the end of the story, readers will understand the obstacles thrown in the paths of youths from disadvantaged communities.

**A dense story with rich associative leaps, the novel will prompt discussions about race, class, sexuality, and gender. (Historical fiction. 12-18)**

## THE RED RIBBON

Adlington, Lucy  
Candlewick (288 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-1-5362-0104-8



Historical fiction about the high-fashion tailoring studio where Nazis enslaved prisoners on the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Ella is a yellow star-wearing prisoner at the camp she calls Birchwood, where she's managed to get a labor assignment in the tailoring studio. Though the "prominent" (a fellow prisoner empowered to boss around other inmates) can be cruel, it's a safer task than many



**BLACK WINGS BEATING**  
London, Alex  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux  
(432 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-374-30682-3  
Series: Skybound Saga, 1

# INCLUSIVE HISTORIES



LATELY, MORE SPECIALIZED young adult historical works, both fiction and nonfiction, focus on groups that are traditionally overlooked, but I've hoped to also see more general works that take a truly inclusive approach. I loved being a history major at a women's college thanks to the inclusion of women's contributions in every course. Refusing to teach "standard" (i.e., male) history with some "special"

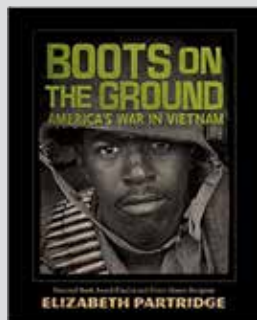
women's classes on the side was quietly revolutionary.

Unfortunately, nonfiction history and historical fiction still tend to either focus entirely on diversity (the Civil Rights movement, Japanese-American internment camps) or on mainstream topics with no inclusion of historically accurate diversity, further reinforcing misconceptions about the past. How many books about the *Titanic* show readers that there were over 100 Syrian passengers; eight Chinese men; a black Haitian man, his white wife, and biracial daughters; and a biracial Englishman of Italian and Egyptian descent? Similar points could be made about other events.

So it was with tremendous pleasure that I received *Boots on the Ground: America's War in Vietnam* by Elizabeth Partridge (April 10), which integrates broad historical background with intimate profiles of diverse individuals. A biracial (Chinese/Italian) American nurse found her ethnicity made it easier for her to gain the trust of the Vietnamese orphans she volunteered with. A white Marine who grew up bullied and in foster care describes the horrors of being a POW and how his military experience fueled his desire to attend college. The Mexican-American son of migrant workers who was hit at school for speaking Spanish hoped to gain respect by fighting for the country where his family was denigrated. Together their voices provide a more engaging and informative glimpse into a complex time than a less inclusive work would.

This is the first book of its type to cross my path this year; I hope it won't be the last. —L.S.

*Laura Simeon is the young adult editor.*



of the jobs available at the death camp. Ella's lied about her age to get the position, but she hasn't had to lie about her talent; she is genuinely a smashing seamstress. Ella's sometimes-unbelievable naiveté about the camp (she asks when she can write to her grandmother at home) enables her to willfully ignore how much her dressmaking enthusiasm smacks of collaboration. Not so her friend Rose, a political prisoner and fellow dressmaker. Unlike Ella, Rose understands that their supplies are stolen from the Nazi's victims. Though Ella's eyes eventually open to horror, especially as Rose's health falters and Birchwood descends into chaos in the waning days of the war, her unreliability as a narrator makes the camps appear less horrific than the reality. The avoidance of specific references to Jews or Germany in a story about atrocities that targeted very specific groups of people strips this Holocaust narrative of both believability and historical accuracy.

**Pass on this one. (afterword)** (*Historical fiction. 12-14*)



## AN ASSASSIN'S GUIDE TO LOVE & TREASON

Boecker, Virginia

Little, Brown (384 pp.)

\$17.99 | Oct. 23, 2018

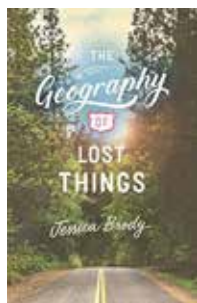
978-0-316-32734-3



A spy for the queen and a vengeful Catholic intent on regicide bend genders and battle their lovesick hearts in Elizabethan England.

When Katherine's father (a Catholic and therefore heretic) is killed by order of Queen Elizabeth I, Katherine escapes and, assuming the male identity of Kit Alban, stage actor, vows to avenge his death. Toby is a royal spy, intercepting coded letters, unraveling secrets, and unveiling traitors (it was his skill that unearthed Katherine's father's plot to kill the queen). Besotted with power and Toby's dreamy blue eyes, HRH enlists him to ensnare her would-be-assassin. His solution? Bait the zealot with a role in *Twelfth Night*, to be performed mere feet from the monarch. Kit and a team of co-conspiring Catholics bite, arming Kit with a dagger and little hope for escape. Enter stage right: unexpected attraction between Toby and Kit. The first-person, present-tense dual narration of Kit/Katherine and Toby shows their tandem turmoil of pretense: hiding true missions, veiling sexual identity and orientation (Toby is bisexual), simultaneously hoping to actualize and be unfettered from their mutual affection. Though the author's note declares liberties in storytelling, the meticulous design and execution make it read as a scrumptious slice of history. The conflicts of religion, sexuality, class, and gender identity are apropos to contemporary times.

**Victor, Victoria and Shakespeare in Love: Meet your thrilling new sister. Or brother. (author's note, maps, bibliography)** (*Historical fiction. 12-adult*)



**THE GEOGRAPHY OF LOST THINGS**

*Brody, Jessica*  
 Simon Pulse/Simon & Schuster (464 pp.)  
 \$18.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-4814-9921-7

Eighteen-year-old Ali Collins must reckon with her complicated history with her rolling stone father on an eventful road trip with her ex-boyfriend.

With their house about to be repossessed, curly-haired brunette Ali and her mother have all but given up on being able to stay in their home. While packing up to move, Ali learns that her father has passed away and left his beloved 1968 Firebird convertible as her inheritance. The value of the car shocks her and immediately appears to be the answer to all her problems...that is until she realizes that she must trek hundreds of miles north along the Pacific coast to deliver the car to an eager buyer. The last thing Ali wants to do is to complete the drive with her strikingly handsome, lying ex-boyfriend Nico—but he's the only person she knows who can drive a stick shift. Ali's internal and external journeys lead her to come to terms with both her late father and her old flame. This is a solid, highly-consumable coming-of-age story, easily devoured in one sitting and bringing with it all the comforts of a cozy, predictable romance. Brody (*The Chaos of Standing Still*, 2017, etc.) places the reader in picturesque settings with a cast of familiar characters in this road-trip narrative. Ali and Nico are white.

Fans of Sarah Dessen and Gayle Forman will enjoy this tender story. (*Fiction*. 12-18)



**BORN SCARED**

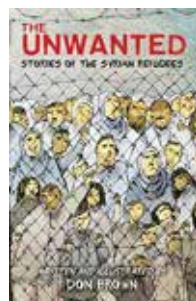
*Brooks, Kevin*  
 Candlewick (256 pp.)  
 \$16.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-0-7636-9565-1

Elliot, who suffers from severe anxiety, must face his fear of the outside world when his mother goes missing in a Christmas Eve snowstorm in Yorkshire.

Suspensefully told from multiple perspectives, and jumping back and forth in the narrative timeline, the text gradually reveals the seemingly innocent circumstances that lead to the day's disturbing events. A mix-up with Elliot's medication requires his mother to leave him home alone after Elliot's aunt, who'd agreed to bring the correct pills from the pharmacy, is conspicuously late and unreachable by phone. His harrowing journey into the snowstorm toward his aunt's house—the last place his mother was headed—is interwoven with a bank robbery by two men in Santa costumes. Elliot's specific condition is never explicitly named, but his naïve narration, which includes descriptions of prior doctor's appointments and imagined conversations with his twin sister, who died an hour after being born, provides

readers with additional context. However, this open-ended approach to portraying mental illness risks pathologizing Elliot further as he struggles to navigate encounters with other people en route to his aunt's house. Elliot and his mother are white.

At times frustratingly elliptical, the narrative inexorably draws characters toward one another—and into a surprising, explosive climax. (*Psychological thriller*. 12-18)



**THE UNWANTED**  
*Stories of the Syrian Refugees*

*Brown, Don*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 HMH Books (112 pp.)  
 \$18.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-328-81015-1



The collective tale of Syrian refugees' attempt to escape the horrors of their country's civil war in search of a better tomorrow.

When war broke out in 2011 between the armed forces loyal to the country's potentate and a growing number of insurgents fighting his tyrannical rule, millions of Syrians fled the war zone, overflowing neighboring countries and creating a refugee crisis in Europe, as their wished-for ultimate destination. Rather than focusing on individual stories, Brown (*Up & Down*, 2018, etc.) zeroes in on particular situations, providing compassionate snapshots of the harsh realities facing the displaced populations: cunning smugglers, unwelcoming neighbors, hostile legislation, the refugees' own disenchantment with their difficult conditions....Brown's poignant testament is fittingly titled *The Unwanted*, as the book damnably chronicles the slowly building resentment among host communities and the mounting legal restrictions on the asylum-seeking populations. Most importantly, by alternating sheer tragic moments (rockets falling, the capsizing of a boat, drownings, rejection) and glimpses of joy (a child's successful resettlement, a compassionate neighbor, family reunions), he succeeds in offering a window into the humanity of displaced groups—their resilience and tenacity but also their inspiring, hopeful nature. The pen-and-ink digitally colored art has a loose, informal style that vividly expresses the intense emotions contained in the book.

A moving chronicle of a real humanitarian tragedy. (maps, author's note, source notes, bibliography) (*Graphic nonfiction*. 14-adult)



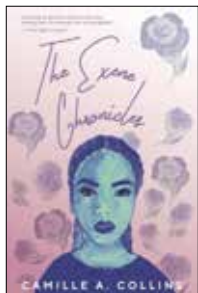
### ART BOSS

*Cagan, Kayla*  
Chronicle (384 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4521-6037-5

A young artist moves to the big city.

In the follow-up to *Piper Perish* (2017), Cagan’s plucky first-person narrator has escaped the confines of her distressing home life in Houston to follow her dreams of attending art school and supporting herself as an artist. Moving to New York City with the money she saved waiting tables, talented 18-year-old Piper now finds herself in the rare position of being hired by a celebrated artist to serve as his assistant as she awaits news on the financial aid package she desperately needs to attend art school. Piper is ready to remake herself and start a new life, even as she gets a reality check from native New Yorker Silas, a would-be beau and seeming “real live Edward Gorey character,” who warns her that New York is “a city with no respect for the past. Nostalgia just gets swept up with the trash here.” Trash eventually becomes an important artistic element for Piper as she tries to establish her own autonomy and negotiate budding romantic and artistic relationships in the shadow of the domineering artist who’s hired her to execute his vision. This enjoyable read contains many New York City details that ring true and offers a glimpse into the contemporary world of young struggling artists. Piper and Silas are white.

**A fast-paced bildungsroman offering an engaging portrait of the artist as a young woman.** (*Fiction. 14-18*)



### THE EXENE CHRONICLES

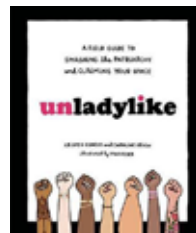
*Collins, Camille A.*  
Brain Mill Press (262 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-948559-05-8

When her best friend, Ryan, goes missing, 14-year-old Lia struggles to figure out who she is without her other half.

In a tiny California town, Lia and Ryan are outcasts: Ryan was one of the first girls in their class to go through puberty, and Lia is one of a handful of black kids. In middle school, the two bonded over their mutual love of Exene, a powerful female punk rocker. For years, they have been inseparable—until Ryan falls in love with 19-year-old Neil and disappears, leaving Lia in a sexist, racist town that she’s not sure she can survive alone. Despite the promising premise, the treatment of oppression lacks subtlety, focusing on shocking incidents and ignoring the myriad ways racism, sexism, and classism affect everyday lives. Debut novelist Collins frequently reduces complex motivations to single, unconvincing incidents: Ryan’s brother, for example, becomes a white supremacist after a black boy humiliates him in a fistfight rather than because

of his family’s declining class status, which would have been a fascinating (and highly relevant) motivation to explore. This is particularly disappointing since the text does have glimmers of poetry and real insight—as, for example, when Lia’s father hopes that the person responsible for his daughter’s friend’s disappearance is not black. In addition, the prose is clunky and verbose, making the pace feel slower than it is.

**A potentially fascinating coming-of-age story that sadly misses its mark.** (*Fiction. 14-18*)



### UNLADYLIKE A Field Guide to Smashing the Patriarchy and Claiming Your Space

*Conger, Cristen & Ervin, Caroline*  
Illus. by Feder, Tyler  
Ten Speed Press (288 pp.)  
\$24.00 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-0-399-58045-1



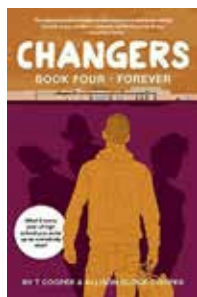
A feminist history and primer for today’s women.

*Unladylike* podcast hosts Conger and Ervin present an encyclopedic overview of gender roles in history, aiming not only to enlighten teen readers about centuries of women’s experiences, but to motivate them to stand up for themselves and grow into complete, conscientious adults. Warning readers “it’s time to get comfy with being *uncomfy*,” this comprehensive action guide addresses many aspects of contemporary living, including body image, the beauty industry, sexuality, the workplace, biased language, and activism. Some of the volume’s pithiest and timeliest segments illuminate the fraught history of women’s reproductive rights. The book offers numerous practical tips for “detoxing from the sexist myths, mind-sets, and stereotypes culture constantly force-feeds us,” and compels readers with its sassy, take-no-prisoners colloquial style to adopt the authors’ Guerrilla Girls—esque mantra: “stay curious. build empathy. raise hell.” Along the way, the authors call out numerous feminist trailblazers—Anita Hill, Fanny Kemble, Qiu Jin, Florynce “Flo” Kennedy—in an effort to demonstrate that ordinary people can step up to disrupt the status quo and introduce change. Full-color infographics and illustrations make historical examples of women’s subjugation and hair-raising statistics on various types of gender and racial inequity more accessible. Intersectionality and gender identity are also addressed and referred to throughout.

**Gritty, wildly informative, and informed: a must-have feminist survival guide for the Trump era.** (notes, index)  
(*Nonfiction. 14-adult*)

## Bold, funny, and brimming with emotional intelligence.

FLAWED



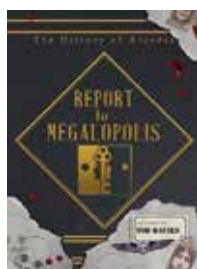
### CHANGERS Forever

Cooper, T. & Glock-Cooper, Allison  
Black Sheep Press (280 pp.)  
\$12.95 paper | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-1-61775-528-6  
Series: Changers, 4

A Changer never returns to their childhood name and body; for adulthood, they choose one of the identities they've experienced serially during high school.

This first-person protagonist has been a thin white girl, a thin black boy, and a fat Filipina-looking (as described in the previous book) girl. As this series-ender opens, she's still Kim Cruz, with one more incarnation looming. Changers' raison d'être is to mend the world because humans who've lived as more than one race or gender would never discriminate. This premise posits race and gender as exterior traits; deep connection to various identities is missing, and changes bring no new cultural knowledge. The protagonist cannot learn with any fullness what it's like to *be* a fat Asian girl unless we reduce "being" to issues of discrimination and privilege, ignoring the many layers and facets to any identity apart from how others treat you. Additionally, being "postgay and postgender" is considered evolved, which almost dismisses distinct identities more than honoring them. In other ways, however, the text is admirably anti-racist, anti-sexist, and pro-queer, the latter including a refreshingly mellow attitude about bisexuality. Social justice murkiness aside, the suspense is high, the plot is irresistible, and contemporary cultural references overflow—from edibles to hashtags. This series is knowingly cool but still cool (though quoting Audre Lorde without attribution isn't—and is a missed opportunity to educate readers unfamiliar with her work).

**Fast-paced and wonderfully, forcefully loud about privilege—but, premise aside, this explores discrimination more than identity.** (glossary) (*Fantasy*. 12-16)



### REPORT TO MEGALOPOLIS The Post-Modern Prometheus

Davies, Tod  
Exterminating Angel (240 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | Aug. 25, 2018  
978-1-935259-31-2  
Series: History of Arcadia, 4

A philosophical fable, fourth in the series but able to stand alone, pits an ambitious scientist against his own

unnatural creation.

Aspern Grayling was born in bucolic, pacifist Arcadia, but after over 100 years, all his loyalties lie with the technocratic militaristic empire of Megalopolis. This report, ostensibly a plan of conquest, metamorphoses from a dry encyclopedic assessment to a more personal memoir (or, perhaps, confession) following his triumph: the genetically-engineered Nietzschean

übermensch Pavo Vale. Incorporating allusions to the contemporary political climate, the story delivers a polemic framed in binaries: technology/nature, individualism/communalism, rational/spiritual, toxic masculinity/eternal feminine, etc. The former are personified in the monstrous Pavo, who would be cartoonishly villainous if it weren't for his graphically brutal rapes, murders, incestuous obsession, and wanton destruction; the latter, in the immensely (and interchangeably) beautiful, wise, compassionate, multiethnic heroines of Arcadia. Only Aspern bridges the divide: He is arrogant, condescending, viciously misogynistic, transparently (and unconvincingly) justifying of Pavo's appalling crimes, yet sympathetic in his honest admiration of any intellectual achievement, his craving for respect and admiration, and his deep, unwilling love for the Arcadian professor Devindra Vale. Black-and-white illustrations of tarotlike cards in a pre-Raphaelite style hint that the apparent triumph of Megalopolis and its values may be only temporary.

**Despite the subtitle, as much Faust as Frankenstein; for teens looking for social commentary in their fiction.** (dramatis personae, family tree, table of transformations, appendices) (*Fantasy*. 15-adult)



### FLAWED

Dorfman, Andrea  
Illus. by the author  
Firefly (88 pp.)  
\$19.95 | Sep. 15, 2018  
978-0-228-10071-3

Illustrated lessons in self-acceptance.

Originally brought to life as a time-lapse film, Canadian animator Dorfman's (*How to Be Alone*, 2013) memoir excels at tugging at the heartstrings as she shares key aspects of her being. The striking cover art, featuring a vivid, digitally rendered cartoonlike self-portrait of the author in profile—her nose prominently depicted with ruler lines—leaves little mystery as to the source of the Toronto native's inner turmoil. Dorfman reveals that when she first met future love interest and plastic surgeon Dave, when housesitting one summer in Halifax, she had already decided she wouldn't like him because it bothered her "that his job was to operate on perfectly healthy people in an attempt to make them 'beautiful.'" But after finding herself irresistibly drawn back to their summer romance, the author suggested the two cultivate a long-distance relationship by sending each other handmade postcards. Expecting Dave to shy away from her artistic challenge, Dorfman's prejudices against plastic surgery were shattered when he happily sent her an illustration of his day spent working on patients with skin cancer. Dave's courage in expressing himself artistically (not to mention loving the author, nose 'n' all) inspires Dorfman not only to rethink her judgment of his vocation, but eventually to re-evaluate her own sense of being flawed.

**Bold, funny, and brimming with emotional intelligence: a charming debut.** (*Graphic memoir*. 12-adult)



# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## KATIE HENRY

### FREETHINKING TEENAGERS AT AN UPTIGHT CATHOLIC SCHOOL: WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

By Michael Valinsky



Photo courtesy/Chris Macke

IN HER DEBUT NOVEL, *Heretics Anonymous* (Aug. 7), Katie Henry gives us a group of children whose main goal is to subvert the systems of authority through devious takeovers of general assemblies, meticulous digging into their professors' lives, and the subtle disruption of their peers' convictions. In that, her novel is a delicate painting of the complicated social, moral, and administrative structures that have come to define the lives of many children and teenagers today.

Michael, Lucy, Avi, Max, and Eden find each other at St. Clare's, the strict private Catholic school their varyingly believing parents enrolled them in. Each character comes with his or her own set of beliefs: Lucy, the feminist Catholic; Avi, who's a gay,

semi-observant Jew; Eden, who's pagan; Max, who's happy to break the school's dress code; and Michael, the atheist whose eyes are the mirror through which the story is told. The five of them form Heretics Anonymous, a supposedly "delinquent" group that meets as regularly as needed to discuss the problems at St. Clare's, from unfair policies to the inaccurate relaying of facts around sex ed to gendered uniforms to the hypocrisy of church officials. As they become increasingly frustrated by the school's administrators, Heretics Anonymous starts to take action, effectively creating waves of change both throughout the school and within themselves.

With a background in writing plays for children, Henry is a master at creating characters who treat the pages they occupy as an expansive stage onto which they can project their identities onto their audience. "I was kind of feeling burned out on writing plays and was wondering if I had any artistic range outside of that," Henry says. "I already knew that I really loved writing for and about teenagers. That was the space that I was the most comfortable with."

But it's her curiosity for crossing from plays to novels that enabled Henry to tackle the complicated issue of religion in her characters' lives. Henry grew up in liberal Berkeley, California. "I had priests who talked openly about being gay, I had priests who used feminine pronouns to refer to God. It was very social justice focused," she recalls. But when she went to college, she immediately encountered a very different kind of religion, one that wasn't as

liberal or as tolerant. One that didn't include the feminist and gender-fluid deity of her childhood. "It shocked me," she says. "I had this conception of what the religion I had grown up in was like, and it turned out that for most people, it wasn't like that at all."

In *Heretics Anonymous*, the tension provided by both the students and the teachers cracks open the treasure trove of historical facts that characters try to both expose and protect. "Catholicism really rose to power in the Dark Ages. There's just so much weird stuff that I feel like people don't know about and they really should. I tried to shoehorn that into the book as much as possible," explains Henry. And these facts breathe humanity into the text, ultimately providing a space for religion to be understood as a dynamic and moving concept that can take many shapes and advocate for many sets of belief.

*Michael Valinsky's work has been published in Paper Magazine, them, Hyperallergic, Los Angeles Review of Books, OUT Magazine, and BOMB Magazine, among others. Heretics Anonymous received a starred review in the May 15, 2018, issue.*



## THE IRON FLOWER

Forest, Laurie  
 Harlequin Teen (608 pp.)  
 \$19.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
 978-1-335-91739-3  
 Series: Black Witch Chronicles, 2

Thoroughly committed to the anti-Gardnerian Resistance, aspiring apothecary Elloren Gardner also struggles with the question of committing to a man—and if so, which one?

As Gardneria tightens its fist around nominally independent Verpacia, Elloren's cell weighs its options. Refuge in the Noi lands to the east beckons, but there is still work to be done in Verpax City—including mining Gardnerian Cmdr. Lukas Grey's obvious attraction to Elloren for information. She's attracted too, but that's nothing compared to what she feels for Kelt and fellow Resistance member Yvan. Much happens over the course of this sequel: horrific Gardnerian mob violence; a trip to impoverished Keltania; a delegation to the all-female Amaz; and more. Despite this, the narrative arc feels flat, as Elloren accomplished much of her character growth previously. Forest piles trope on trope, encouraging readers to make associations with real-world history (Gardneria evokes Nazi Germany), but the associations are not firm (the Gardneria/Keltania relationship can be read as a cognate to modern Israel and Palestine), causing readers to constantly reassess them. Readers who loved the first book will find Forest's consciousness of the dynamics of allyship further raised. Elloren rescued a Selkie named Marina from sexual slavery in the first book, *The Black Witch* (2017); here, after she facilitates a deal with the Amaz to free all similarly enslaved Selkies, Marina and the Amaz accomplish the deed with ruthless efficiency while Elloren waits. Once Marina is reunited with her skin, she is dangerously bad-ass. Those who hated the first book will find more to dislike: Repellently, the reason Selkies in sexual bondage do not fall pregnant—because love is not involved—is reminiscent of former U.S. Rep. Todd Akin's (R-Missouri) obtuse theory about rape rarely resulting in pregnancy: "If it's legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down."

Though imperfect, the novel warns, "Power changes everything"; those intrigued by Elloren's desire to halt "the normal cycle of history" may wonder how this might change in Volume 3. (map) (*Fantasy, 14-adult*)



### THAT NIGHT

Giles, Amy  
HarperTeen (320 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 23, 2018  
978-0-06-249577-8

Two teens who survived a mass shooting find love as they try to pick up the pieces of their lives in the wake of loss and tragedy.

It has been a year since a shooting at a movie theater left 18 people dead. Lucas survived but lost his brother, a star football player. Jess survived, but her brother didn't, and her mother has been debilitated by grief. Lucas tries to make sense of his survival by keeping a daily record of his random acts of kindness. Therapy helps, and boxing releases a lot of the negative energy, but he still suffers from panic attacks and avoids talking about his feelings with his parents. Jess finds a job to help with the overdue bills that keep piling up since her mom stopped working, but she can't convince her mother to spend a full day out of bed, and she occasionally depends on weed to get her through her toughest moments. When Jess and Lucas meet at work they are wary of each other, but over time they become close, helping each other through feelings of shame, guilt, and ambivalence about living normal lives after their losses. This sensitive portrayal of the complications of journeying through grief is convincing and moving. Little physical description of the main characters, combined with the awkwardness with which the diversity of very minor characters is made known, accentuates the white default.

**Thoughtful and thought-provoking.** (*Fiction. 14-18*)



### SEX PLUS *Learning, Loving, and Enjoying Your Body*

Green, Laci  
Harper/HarperCollins (528 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-0-06-256097-1

Internet personality and debut author Green gives readers a jam-packed guide to human sexuality.

Initial information about anatomy and a brief stopover in identity-based questions soon transition to the nitty-gritty of sex, relationships, and related topics, including consent culture (possibly the most interesting section) and kink. This tome contains a lot of information to take in at once. "Since you may encounter topics in this book in a different order IRL than they're presented here, you're invited to skip around. However," says Green optimistically, "reading it cover to cover will provide -maximum impact-." It also skips around in tone, going from eye-glazing scientific descriptions to a chatty, faux-sisterly style heavily peppered with up-to-the-moment meme-speak that will quickly render it dated (the white author includes liberal dashes of AAVE).

Despite the emphasis on remaining nonjudgmental, hints of authorial finger-wagging subtly creep through, like a description of some sex as "a liiiittle too rough" or instructions to "be proactive" after an abortion "and find a reliable birth control method that works for you to prevent another unplanned pregnancy." Attempts to use gender-neutral language are only somewhat consistent, and an introductory note—"Should any of the language in this book not resonate with your experience, please know this is not meant to confuse or invalidate anyone"—does little to lessen the possible impact of confusing or invalidating language.

**A useful enough guide to some aspects of sexuality and related topics.** (*Nonfiction. 16-adult*)



### JUST WRECK IT ALL

Griffin, N.  
Caitlyn Dlouhy/Atheneum (336 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Oct. 23, 2018  
978-1-4814-6518-2

High school junior Bett was an athlete and a daredevil.

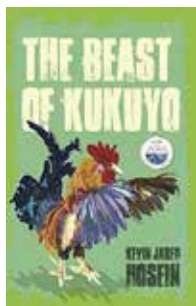
That was until two years ago, when a dare gone devastatingly wrong destroyed the life of someone she loved. Guilt-ridden and heartbroken, Bett engages in self-punishment by denying herself anything she considers a treat, including the purest pleasure of all: movement. Merely thinking about running and how good it made her feel is something she'll have to counteract with a junk-food binge. Now heavier than she's ever been before, Bett attempts to mortify herself daily with short-shorts as part of her punishment. When odd circumstances (notably, *not* an attempt to lose weight) force her to start running again, Bett finds herself stuck in a Catch-22 and can no longer deny her true self. Bett is unique among fat characters in fiction: She can scale walls and outrun the thin kids on the cross-country team. The third-person narration is limited to Bett's perspective, and run-on sentences when she's anxious place readers in the midst of her out-of-control thoughts. Throughout, the fatness-as-punishment message simmers just under the surface; however, the resolution somewhat negates that message. Whiteness is assumed for most characters.

**A much-needed story about a fat girl that does not equate weight loss with salvation.** (*Fiction. 12-17*)



## A quick and captivating story full of observations about human life.

*THE BEAST OF KUKUYO*



### THE BEAST OF KUKUYO

*Hosein, Kevin Jared*  
Blouse & Skirt Books (240 pp.)  
\$12.99 paper | Sep. 15, 2018  
978-976-8267-15-3

Ever since her mother's death, 15-year-old Arundhati "Rune" Mathura has lived with her brother and grandfather in her rural Trinidad village of Kukuyo.

A dark-skinned, mixed-race (black and Asian Indian) girl, Rune is inquisitive, with a love for *Murder, She Wrote*. When her classmate is found murdered with no known culprit, Rune's curious nature takes over and she decides to try and solve the case. This investigation takes her on a journey that unravels the sinister underbelly of something that has been plaguing her small village for a long time. Her best friend, Tiki, has misgivings about her snooping, but he always has her back, just as she has his. Still, Rune gets them caught up in some serious and terrifying trouble when she goes prying—and the repercussions lead to unimaginable events. Rune soon finds out that real-life detective work is not like what she sees on television, and she's forced to face the harshness of this truth and see just how far she's willing to go to get justice. With a strange, complicated, and diverse cast of players, this is a quick and captivating story full of observations about human life and attitudes toward life and death. It depicts the different ways people deal with trauma and how they struggle or fight to cope and keep moving forward.

**A heartbreaking, realistic tale filled with just the right amount of suspense.** (*Mystery. 14-adult*)



### THE 48

*Hosie, Donna*  
Holiday House (360 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-8234-3856-3

Those who don't learn history are doomed to repeat it, but what about those who learn history for the sake of changing it?

The court of Henry VIII is a dangerous place to be. Between the king's outbursts, the queen's nervousness, and Cromwell's conniving, it's a hard place to relax. But redhead Charlie and his identical twin brother, Alex, who is gay, aren't there to relax. They are there to prevent Henry VIII from marrying Lady Jane Seymour, thus preventing the swell of Catholicism that follows her subsequent death. The twins are actually from the future, where they work for The 48 as Assets, people who are sent to different periods in history to alter timelines according to the wishes of the Termination Order Directorate. The assignment is risky, but Alex and Charlie feel up to the task—until they realize that deception and disloyalty have followed them from their own time period. Hosié (*The Devil's Banshee*, 2016, etc.) paints a picture of Tudor

England with a carefully detailed brush, bringing the sights and sounds to the forefront while juggling a complex plot and several subplots filled with twists, turns, and torture. The characters, who all present as white and are of varying social classes, fully embody the language and spirit of their times.

**A fast-paced, well-researched, clever tale of loyalty, torture, and the power of persistence.** (*author's note*) (*Science fiction. 14-18*)



### LOST BOY

*Hrdlitschka, Shelley*  
Orca (224 pp.)  
\$14.95 paper | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-4598-1637-4

After being caught kissing a girl, 17-year-old Jon leaves Unity, the faith-based polygamous community in which they were both born and raised.

Though Jon's departure is abrupt, it's not unexpected: According to the Prophet, a man must have at least three wives to get into heaven, and there simply aren't enough women to go around. Jon is not the first boy to leave Unity: There are several lost boys living in a nearby city who have found shelter with Abigail, a former Unity resident dedicated to helping these runaways build new lives. With Abigail's support, Jon gets a construction job and a tutor. First-person present-tense narration conveys Jon's initial bewilderment with mainstream social norms, encouraging readers' reflection and compassion as he struggles to navigate the outside world. The pacing is uneven, skipping chunks of time as Jon's life unravels while he grows frustrated by his slow progress in school and drops out. While the story is educational, Jon's narration in the second half of the book as he encounters many aspects of modern life for the first time—from salt-and-vinegar potato chips to the wonders of the internet—often feels self-conscious and overtly didactic in a way that may not engage readers. Major characters present as white.

**This companion novel to *Sister Wife* (2008) ends on a hopeful note for the young people of Unity struggling to make sense of the world beyond.** (*Fiction. 13-18*)



### SHADOW OF THE FOX

*Kagawa, Julie*  
Harlequin Teen (400 pp.)  
\$19.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-335-14516-1

As the time of prophecy draws near, rivals seek the relic that will allow them to call upon the dragon god.

An ancient scroll holds the prayer that summons the dragon who will grant one wish every thousand years. After one such wish brought destruction and chaos to the land of Iwagoto,

## KRISTA AND BECCA RITCHIE KICK OFF A POTENTLY ADDICTIVE FANTASY SERIES

WHAT WOULD LIFE BE LIKE if we all knew the exact day we would die?

In *The Raging Ones* (Aug. 14), Krista and Becca Ritchie imagine a world in which your deathday dictates your fate: Those who will live at least 30 years are Influentials, who are educated and work in skilled careers like medicine and engineering; those with 13 to 29 years to live are Fast-Trackers, who live wildly and work hard at unskilled and dangerous jobs; and finally those with fewer than 12 years of life are Babes, who live only to be loved by their families.

Influential society is similar to ours, but Fast-Trackers are much less concerned with social niceties—for better and worse. “If you really have only a certain amount of time to live, what would be almost a frivolous part of your life?” Becca says. “Caring about certain things like nudity and these bras and all of that seems...frivolous when you just want to get to the basic passion of life.”

When 17-year-old Franny Bluecastle survives the day she was scheduled to die, she finds herself psychically linked to two other teens who dodged their deathdays. The three must work together to make it onto the planet’s one spacecraft, where they’ll be able to escape the dire fate that awaits them if anyone finds out they’ve lived past their deathdays.



Though their previous published novels are all contemporary romance, YA fantasy and science fiction was their first passion. “Science fiction has always been really interesting,” Krista says, “because it takes one element from our world and changes it and then extrapolates on how everything would be different.” —*A.H.*

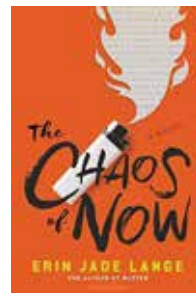
*Alex Heimbach is a writer and editor in California. The Raging Ones received a starred review in the June 15, 2018, issue.*



*Krista & Becca Ritchie*

the scroll was divided into three pieces and hidden away. Now both the emperor’s concubine, Lady Satomi, and the Shadow Clan race to obtain the scroll. Tatsumi, demon slayer of the Shadow Clan, journeys with Yumeko of the Silent Winds temple to head off Lady Satomi’s demonic attack on the Steel Feather temple, which houses one piece of the scroll. Tatsumi is bound to the sword of Kamigoroshi, the godslayer, and must remain devoid of emotion in order to keep the demon Hakaimono imprisoned within it. But as he travels with Yumeko he finds himself feeling more than he should. Yumeko, being half-human and half-fox spirit and secretly carrying another part of the scroll, is also wary of Tatsumi. Kagawa (*Inferno*, 2018, etc.) uses elements of Japanese mythology and folklore to spin an epic yarn. Readers who know these tales will recognize familiar elements and tropes. Despite some formulaic writing, readers will be drawn into the world of Kagawa’s first Japan-based fantasy; with its engaging action scenes and the cliffhanger ending, they will look forward to the next volume.

**Action-packed adventure. (maps) (Fantasy. 14-18)**



### THE CHAOS OF NOW

*Lange, Erin Jade*  
Bloomsbury (352 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
978-1-61963-502-9



A teen hacker is recruited for an anti-bully, pro-free speech vigilante project.

During freshman year, Jordan Bishop committed suicide by self-immolation in the cafeteria. With online bullying blamed, the fallout for everyone else includes strict monitoring of internet activities. Eli ends up on the radar of Mouse and Seth, two other coders at his school who were friends of Jordan’s, and they bring him on as the third member of their team in an annual hacking contest with big prizes. They must find flaws in the student cybermonitoring system—but instead of hacking the monitors, they plan to bring the monitors to them with a site that offers secure anonymity to teens, enabling them to air secrets about bullies like those who targeted Jordan with classist, homophobic, and other taunts. Eli’s reluctant—his previous just-to-see-if-he-could hacks caused major damage, and this could land him in huge trouble if he’s discovered—but he is tempted by the challenge. Those targeted by the site face public humiliation and consequences for their misdeeds, but the line between justice and vengeance thins, especially when a mean-girl bully targets Eli’s Mexican-American (in a primarily white community) crush with racist nastiness. The morally complex story avoids simple answers and is taut with tension as readers wonder if Eli will go too far or get caught—only for a third-act twist to complicate things further.

**Provocative, timely, and intense. (Fiction. 13-adult)**



**SAWKILL GIRLS**

*Legrand, Claire*  
 Katherine Tegen/HarperCollins  
 (464 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-06-269660-1

For generations girls have gone missing on Sawkill Island, their bodies never found....

Sawkill is right out of a dream: beautiful, rich people on a beautiful island, full of beautiful horses. It's seemingly perfect...Children tell stories of the Collector. Nothing more than a boogie man to scare each other around campfires, but to three young women, Marion, Zoey, and Val, he is very much real as they begin to understand their terrifying roles in what is really happening on their island. Val is the beautiful blonde, popular but with a dark secret. Marion is the new girl in town—dark-haired and plain, the white girl is recovering from the death of her father. Zoey, African-American and asexual, is the daughter of the police chief, with black curls highlighted with orange. She too is mourning a loss: Her best friend was the most recent girl to go missing, and Zoey has a theory about what happened. While the relationships (romantic and platonic) seem to develop a bit too quickly, readers will enjoy the fast-paced narrative and creepy feel of this book, part spine-chilling horror story and part coming-of-age lesbian romance. There is a feminist message in the way the girls refuse to be manipulated by those with ulterior motives, banding together to fight the monster.

**If you are looking for something to scare you awake at night, this is the book for you. (Horror. 14-adult)**



**ANYTHING BUT OKAY**

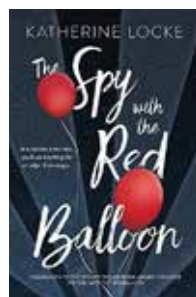
*Littman, Sarah Dager*  
 Scholastic (352 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-338-17748-0

Stella Walker's brother, Rob, is home from Afghanistan.

But Rob, a U.S. Marine, has changed—he's moody, angry, and anything can set him off. His parents are worried and focus all their attention on him. Stella isn't talking to anyone about what's going on at home—not even her best friend, Farida. Their local mayor is running for governor of Virginia, blaming immigrants and refugees for the state's economic problems. Some of Stella's classmates agree with the mayor—and when his son, Chris, decides to run for class president, Farida encourages Stella to run too. Although Farida, a Muslim Iraqi-American, wanted to run herself, her parents worried about her safety in the current political climate. When Rob becomes angry and assaults a boy who is bullying a Sikh teen, not only does he face charges, but the Walker family is targeted by hateful elements in the community who believe they support

“terrorists.” Farida and her family are also drawn into the controversy. Which “truth” will the community believe? Littman (*Fairest of Them All*, 2017, etc.) skillfully reveals Rob's thoughts and feelings as a veteran desperately waiting for help from the VA, while also intertwining Stella's perspective as a white girl who is growing in her understanding of her own identity.

**With well-developed characters, Littman explores growth and personal relationships alongside pain, mental illness, and social issues—showing how people can come together to heal. (Fiction. 12-18)**



**THE SPY WITH THE RED BALLOON**

*Locke, Katherine*  
 Whitman (368 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-0-8075-2934-8  
 Series: Balloonmakers, 2

Sixteen-year-old Ilse Klein and her older brother, Wolf, have a secret: They can do magic by writing scientific equations with their blood.

When Ilse accidentally sets fire to a kite using her magic and it is witnessed by a government agent, the siblings are blackmailed into helping America win the Second World War. Wolf is recruited as a spy and is sent to Germany, while Ilse is sent to a top-secret engineering facility in Tennessee to help develop magic to transport an atomic bomb that will end Hitler's reign. Complexities arise when some important documents go missing and Ilse is blamed for treason. The accusations against Ilse affect Wolf, whose Jewish identity makes him even more vulnerable in the face of the enemy. Despite the diversity present in the book—both Wolf and Ilse are Jewish and gay, and Ilse's friend Stella, a chemistry major also working on the bomb, is African-American—many of the characters feel underdeveloped. The implausibility of a group of teenagers being chosen to lead a nation's war effort, with particular regard to the development of science and technology, unfortunately is not portrayed convincingly enough to allow readers to suspend disbelief.

**Although Locke's (*The Girl with the Red Balloon*, 2017, etc.) novel has potential, it does not do justice to the complexities of war, the Holocaust, and racial segregation. (Magic realism. 14-18)**

# Political intrigue, epic battle sequences, jolts of romance, and strong female and queer characters.

BLACK WINGS BEATING



## BLACK WINGS BEATING

London, Alex

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

(432 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018

978-0-374-30682-3

Series: Skybound Saga, 1



Falcons are the new dragons in this engrossing fantasy series opener.

In the Six Villages, the Uztari use birds of prey for hunting, fighting, and companionship. But “war is on the wing” as they say: The Kartami, nomadic religious extremists, are set on purging the Six Villages of their sins. Twins Kylee and Brysen, who have “the same elk-brown skin as their mother, the same ice-blue eyes as their father,” soon find themselves at the conflict’s center. Kylee has a “once-in-a-generation gift” for falconry, yet all she wants is to be free of it forever. All Brysen wants is to be with his boyfriend and trainer, Dymian. By selling birds at market, the twins almost earn enough to pay off their late, abusive father’s gambling debts and fulfill both their hearts’ desires. But lovelorn Brysen gets swept up in Dymian’s debts and agrees to capture the dangerous, elusive ghost eagle in order to save Dymian’s life. Kylee secretly follows. The story, told through multiple third-person perspectives, soon reveals that more than just Dymian’s life rests on the twins’ shoulders. With political intrigue, epic battle sequences, jolts of romance, and strong female and queer characters, there’s a lot to pique readers’ interests here. But it’s the unique worldbuilding and beautifully complex sibling relationship that make this a must-read.

**Readers will be swept away in this book’s talons.** (*Fantasy. 13-adult*)



## WILDCARD

Lu, Marie

Putnam (352 pp.)

\$18.99 | Sep. 18, 2018

978-0-399-54799-7

Series: Warcross, 2



The fate of free will hangs in the balance as Emika must choose a side in this sequel to *Warcross* (2017).

In the days after Japanese Hideo triggered the algorithm in the Neuro-Link enabling him to control 98 percent of its users (all except those using the beta lenses), people are turning themselves in for crimes en masse, and some child molesters and murderers are even killing themselves. Those still using beta lenses—like Emika Chen, who is implied Asian-American, and her multicultural teammates—have a little more than a week until the beta lenses will download a patch and convert to the algorithm. The tight timeline has Emika dwelling on the team-up offer from Zero—which her friends are against as he’s a terrorist—until her hand is forced by assassination attempts and Zero

brings her into the secretive Blackcoat organization and into the know about his identity. Emika struggles with the Blackcoats’ extreme ends-justify-the-means stance but goes along with their plan while teasing out the truth of what happened to Hideo’s brother, Sasuke, all those years ago. The plotting is exquisite, with tiny details connecting back to the first book, big twists that never feel forced, and emotional power drawn from character growth. The flawlessly rendered characters anchor the sophisticated themes and world-altering stakes right up to the end game.

**A fast, intense, phenomenal read.** (*Science fiction. 13-adult*)



## DAGGER AND COIN

MacMillan, Kathy

HarperTeen (400 pp.)

\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

978-0-06-232464-1

Series: Sword and Verse, 2

“Revolutionaries...didn’t consider the paperwork involved when they were plotting their reforms; they just left it to people like me to sort out the details.”

In this riveting fantasy sequel, Soraya Gamo is only 19, but, as the ex-betrothed of the ex-king, she serves on the Ruling Council, struggling to keep Qilara’s two peoples—the original inhabitants, who have dark hair and olive skin, and their fairer newly-emancipated slaves—free, fed, and away from each other’s throats. But the fledgling government, dependent on her family’s rapidly diminishing wealth, is riven by jealousy and mistrust. Assassination attempts leave Soraya alone with the colleague who most despises her to cope with political disasters, financial crises, and an incipient counter-coup...that attempts to make her queen. While overstuffed with backstory, Soraya’s compelling narration makes the minutiae of management as thrilling as the betrayals, murders, and desperate gambits propelling the plot. Arrogant, calculating, and suspicious, Soraya isn’t easy to like; but her ferocious intelligence, ruthless discipline, and wry humor command respect, and her clumsy kindness and longing for affection evoke sympathy. Without ever diminishing the horrors of slavery, her emotional scars reveal how entrenched sexism and classism are also corrosive. Even as she sacrifices everything she once valued, Soraya’s hard-won independence feels triumphant; similarly, readers will cheer Qilara’s stumbling progress and hope for future updates.

**A fine balance of political intrigue, relationship drama, and thoughtful characterization.** (*Fantasy. 12-18*)



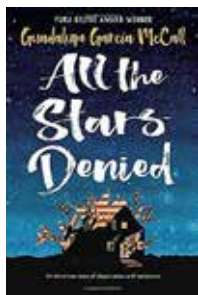
**THE DEVIL'S THIEF**

*Maxwell, Lisa*  
 Simon Pulse/Simon & Schuster (704 pp.)  
 \$18.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-4814-9445-8  
 Series: Last Magician, 2

The second book in The Last Magician series picks up right after the cliff-hanger conclusion of the first volume.

Time-traveling Esta and presumed-dead Harte, both Mageus, are on the run beyond the Brink in search of powerful magical artifacts in the primary storyline, which time-skips from 1902 to 1904. Back in New York, still in 1902, Viola and Jianyu, along with Cela, have their own secondary adventures; the three characters, respectively a white lesbian, a Chinese immigrant, and an African-American, also serve to illustrate some of Maxwell's (*The Last Magician*, 2017, etc.) thoughtful push back on racism, sexism, and xenophobia, even if they are somewhat centrally cast (especially Jianyu). Both narratives contain action and plenty of baddie Jack Grew (J.P. Morgan's fictional nephew, representative of toxic white male power), and magic continues to serve as an allegory; Esta and Harte's adventures in St. Louis at the (carefully researched) Exposition bring them into contact with magic activists-cum-terrorists, which furthers the ways Maxwell examines power and morality. Sadly, multiple perspectives and frequent jumps between two timelines, sometimes with single-page chapters, rob the narrative of flow and tension, making this doorstopper drag.

**In the end, this classic midseries entry seems mostly designed to set up the next volume, but fans probably won't mind. (map, author's note, further reading) (Historical fantasy. 12-adult)**



**ALL THE STARS DENIED**

*McCall, Guadalupe Garcia*  
 Tu Books (400 pp.)  
 \$19.95 | Sep. 15, 2018  
 978-1-62014-281-3

Estrella loves poetry and the natural world, but her days of lying in the fields and writing come to a halt when she is repatriated to Mexico.

Estrella's family owns Rancho las Moras—a rarity in Texas, where they are increasingly surrounded by Anglo incomers, and a safe haven, not just from the Great Depression, but from the Rangers, who are rounding up mexicanos and repatriating them to Mexico, without regard to the fact that many are actually U.S. citizens. Walking in the footsteps of her activist parents, Estrella helps to organize a protest against the treatment of the tejanos in her town of Montesecco, with devastating results. Her family quickly becomes a target for the Rangers, and Estrella finds herself in Mexico, separated from her family. Here, she begins

a journey for her survival as she attempts to reunite with her family and make it home to her country of birth, the United States of America. Beautifully and poetically written, the book includes Spanish words and Mexican-American cultural elements to make it a vividly authentic mirror for some readers and a universally appealing and engaging window for others. Enhanced by excerpts from Estrella's journal, teens will get lost in the pages of this story and truly feel for the injustice the community faced during this often forgotten chapter of American history.

**An incredibly relevant story, now more than ever. (author's note, further reading, glossary) (Historical fiction. 12-16)**



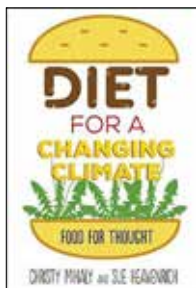
**A BLADE SO BLACK**

*McKinney, L.L.*  
 Imprint (384 pp.)  
 \$18.99 | Sep. 25, 2018  
 978-1-250-15390-6  
 Series: Blade So Black, 1

McKinney's debut novel introduces a no-nonsense, cosplaying, dark-skinned Alice with coily hair charged with defending two worlds while still making it home for curfew.

The same night 17-year-old Atlanta resident Alice Kingston's father dies, she's attacked by a Nightmare, "a manifestation of humanity's fears," and saved by "punk rock Prince Charming" Addison Hatta, guardian of a gateway in the Looking Glass pub between our world and Wonderland, a dreamscape of Earth. Hatta recruits Alice to fight alongside him, and from that first meeting the story races readers through her metamorphosis from lost, grieving teen to a still-grieving, world-saving, dagger-wielding "black Buffy." McKinney beautifully exposes the immensity of the pressure Alice feels to balance her duties as daughter, friend, and Dreamwalker, emphasizing the precariousness of Alice's position as a black girl alternately worried about the threat of police violence in her community and the mysterious menaces in Wonderland. The nuanced representations of relationships, platonic and not (there is a dreamy, romantic lesbian love story), between the inclusive cast of characters are highlights of the text. Uneven pacing leads to sometimes feeling one step beyond the action and without sufficient worldbuilding. While representations of race on Earth are clearly established, in Wonderland they are conflated and lacking in nuance (Addison is white, and other Wonderland residents are described as appearing Latinx and East Asian).

**A thrilling, timely novel that ensures readers will be curiouser for a sequel. (Fantasy. 14-18)**



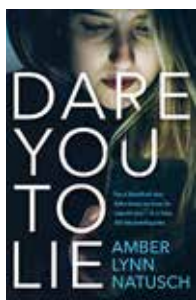
## DIET FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE *Food for Thought*

Mibaly, Christy & Heavenrich, Sue  
Twenty-First Century/Lerner (132 pp.)  
\$37.32 PLB | Aug. 1, 2018  
978-1-5124-8121-1 PLB

Providing sobering facts about our challenged planet, this book encourages young readers to rethink their food sources.

Warming temperatures, rising seas, vanishing species crowded out by invasive ones—these are just some of the challenges of climate change. With earnest enthusiasm this book invites young readers to educate themselves and believe they can make a difference—through a “focus on food.” Reviewing the link between human food production and climate change, the authors note that eating invasive plants and animals (like dandelions, kudzu, and iguanas) might help us limit use of damaging chemicals and fertilizers and rebalance the ecosystem. Similarly, consuming protein-rich, low carbon-impact bugs such as crickets and grubs reduces the harmful effects of raising livestock—and may soon be “cool” (after all, eating lobsters 200 years ago provoked the “ew” that sampling crickets gets today). In 10 chapters with plentiful color photographs and illustrations, the authors educate and encourage, offering observations, often posed as chapter title directives: “Exotic Pests Can Be Delicious” or “Expand Your Aquatic Menu.” Persuasive explanations and concrete actions readers can take are accompanied by recipes, apps for plant identification, instructions for growing your own edible mealworms, and a list of restaurants around the world that serve bugs.

An optimistic introduction for those who want to “take a bite out of climate change.” (source notes, glossary, bibliography, further information, index) (Nonfiction. 12-18)



## DARE YOU TO LIE

Natusch, Amber Lynn  
Tor Teen (352 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
978-0-7653-9767-6

A teen girl aims to prove her father’s innocence and resolve a very personal scandal in Natusch’s (*Dead Zone*, 2018, etc.) YA debut.

Kylene “Ky” Danners’ FBI detective father was convicted of murder, and Ky has moved in with her grandfather in the small town of Jasperville, Ohio, where two and a half years prior, topless photos of her passed out were plastered all over social media—but no one was held responsible. Despite the stares and whispers, Ky picks up where she left off with childhood friend Garrett and makes a new one in delightfully awkward Canadian immigrant Tabby. Ky wants to make the boys responsible for her humiliation

(including her then-boyfriend) pay. However, Donovan, a menacing football star and possible prescription drug addict, proves a genuine danger to Ky, and the local police don’t seem to care. As Ky snoops, with the reluctant help of an FBI agent who thinks her father is guilty, she discovers something big is going down in Jasperville—and it might get her killed. Natusch tackles #Me Too topics such as sexual assault and domestic violence, never talking down to her readers or offering easy answers. The terrifying finale is a doozy, and Ky is a capable (can you say muay thai?), whip-smart, snarky joy. Readers will follow her anywhere, no matter how dangerous. All main characters are white, and there are two Mexican-American siblings.

Dark and thrilling. (Thriller. 14-adult)



## GRAND THEFT HORSE

Neri, G.  
Illus. by Wilkin, Corban  
Tu Books (240 pp.)  
\$19.95 | Sep. 25, 2018  
978-1-62014-855-6

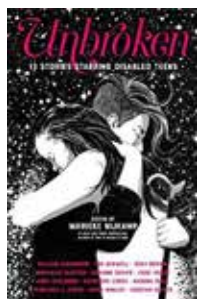
Gail Ruffu, a woman of Creole descent, grew up with a love of horses and later took a stand against their abuse.

This biography focuses on Gail, an Air Force brat raised in various parts of the U.S. and, later, Europe, where she received a formal education in horse riding and training. She eventually returned to America and became a respected trainer in the world of thoroughbred racing. Known for her unconventional methods, Gail became part owner and trainer of the racehorse Urgent Envoy. After it became clear that Urgent Envoy was injured and would become another casualty of a profit-driven industry that often turned a blind eye to cruel practices, Gail took matters into her own hands. Spiriting Urgent Envoy away to a secret location one Christmas Eve, she began living as an outlaw and eventually suffered legal consequences for her humanitarian choice. The pen-and-ink illustrations vividly capture the drama of this riveting tale that will provoke readers to ponder the ethics of our treatment of animals who suffer for human entertainment as well as the actions of a woman who broke the law to stand up for her principles and the horse she loved.

Amid the strife and sadness there are moments of joy and passion, and the message of standing up for your convictions makes this a necessary tale. (Nonfiction graphic novel. 12-18)

# An ever twisting spiral of intrigue, suspense, and moral discovery.

THE ECHO ROOM



## UNBROKEN 13 Stories Starring Disabled Teens

Nijikamp, Marieke—Ed.  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux (320 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 18, 2018  
978-0-374-30650-2



Thirteen realistic, fantasy, and science-fiction stories starring disabled teenagers.

These tales feature teens with different mental illnesses and physical, sensory, and intellectual disabilities, but all share common threads: no overcoming disability, magical healing, or disability-as-metaphor; just kids shaped by their bodies and minds, their experiences, and the worlds they inhabit. The #ownvoices tales (all by disabled authors) feature a few standouts. Schneider Award winner Francisco X. Stork's (*Disappeared*, 2017, etc.) protagonist is a cognitively disabled Mexican immigrant who hears voices and who makes a friend. Dhonielle Clayton's (*The Belles*, 2018, etc.) heroine, a black girl with gastrointestinal disease, pens an advice column. William Alexander (*A Festival of Ghosts*, 2018, etc.) offers a cane-using Latinx boy with chronic pain who accidentally animates the spirit of Richard III. Disability drives the plots at different levels: Corinne Duyvis' (*On the Edge of Gone*, 2016, etc.) cursed wish-granter, a 17-year-old girl who likes girls, may not even be noticeably autistic to some neurotypical readers, while the anxiety of Katherine Locke's (*The Spy with the Red Balloon*, 2018, etc.) programming heroine might prevent her from saving her city during an extraplanetary attack. Heidi Heilig's (*For a Muse of Fire*, 2018, etc.) heroine has mania and depression in ancient China, where her condition is seen as bad fate.

**For intersectional representations of disabled kids leading complex lives—sometimes painful, sometimes funny, never sentimentally inspirational—a vital collection.** (*Anthology*. 13-17)



## CROWN OF THUNDER

Onyebuchi, Tochi  
Razorbill/Penguin (320 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-0-448-49393-0  
Series: *Beasts Made of Night*, 2

After having escaped Kos and the clutches of Karima, Taj is on the run.

With the help of other aki (sin-eaters) and some Mages, including Aliya, Taj finds himself having to come to terms with the fallout of leaving his city. Karima will do anything, including destroying innocent lives, to find Taj. With each step away from Kos, he learns just how far she is willing to go—including turning his former best friend, Bo, against him. Grappling with feelings of remorse, survivor's guilt, and conflict over how to use his powers, Taj finds himself at a pivotal

crossroads—choose self or choose to fight for one's people. With the help of Arzu, Taj and Aliya make it to a village that has other aki, the tastahlik. Unlike Taj and his ilk in Kos, they are revered for their powers and have honed them to use for selfless and selfish reasons alike. Taj discovers that he can learn how to control and develop his talents, but he must decide what purpose he wants them to serve. Aliya also comes to terms with her own powers, though her path to knowledge and mastery takes a severe toll. Following the lauded *Beasts Made of Night* (2017), Onyebuchi's tale carries us on a journey of forgiveness, growth, and sacrifice. The action is fast-paced and captivating, but transitions at times feel a bit rushed as a result.

**A satisfying sequel.** (*Fantasy*. 14-adult)



## THE ECHO ROOM

Peevyhouse, Parker  
Tor Teen (320 pp.)  
\$17.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
978-0-7653-9939-7

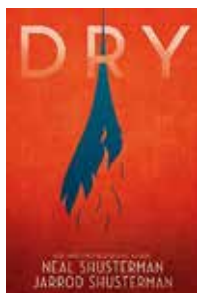
Rett wakes up with a scar on his head, not knowing where he is or why he's there.

It turns out that he's trapped in a series of rooms, and he's not alone. In another room, he finds a girl he recognizes—Bryn from Walling Home, where they both once lived as wards of the state. But how did they get from there to here? And why them? What are they supposed to accomplish? As they explore more and piece together the series of clues left to them by previous tenants of the complex, they learn more about both the whys and the hows and come to realize that their actions have an impact far beyond just the two of them. A thrilling ride on a back-and-forth journey of second guesses and near revelations, this sophomore offering from Peevyhouse (*Where Futures End*, 2016) is the kind of book that keeps readers up at night, makes them miss their stops, and embodies every characteristic of superlative suspense literature. It offers an ever twisting spiral of intrigue, suspense, and moral discovery set against the backdrop of a dystopia that will be recognizable to anyone who has pondered the connection between world governments and the global economy. All characters present as white.

**Make sure you don't have to be up early the morning after you start this book.** (*Science fiction*. 13-17)

## A world of dark thirst and fiery desperation which feels alarmingly near.

DRY



### DRY

Shusterman, Neal & Shusterman, Jarrod

Simon & Schuster (400 pp.)

\$18.99 | Oct. 2, 2018

978-1-4814-8196-0



When a calamitous drought overtakes southern California, a group of teens must struggle to keep their lives and their humanity in this father-son collaboration.

When the Tap-Out hits and the state's entire water supply runs dry, 16-year-old Alyssa Morrow and her little brother, Garrett, ration their Gatorade and try to be optimistic. That is, until their parents disappear, leaving them completely alone. Their neighbor Kelton McCracken was born into a survivalist family, but what use is that when it's his family he has to survive? Kelton is determined to help Alyssa and Garrett, but with desperation comes danger, and he must lead them and two volatile new acquaintances on a perilous trek to safety and water. Occasionally interrupted by "snapshots" of perspectives outside the main plot, the narrative's intensity steadily rises as self-interest turns deadly and friends turn on each other. No one does doom like Neal Shusterman (*Thunderhead*, 2018, etc.)—the breathtakingly jagged brink of apocalypse is only overshadowed by the sense that his dystopias lie just below the surface of readers' fragile reality, a few thoughtless actions away. He and his debut novelist son have crafted a world of dark thirst and fiery desperation, which, despite the tendrils of hope that thread through the conclusion, feels alarmingly near to our future. There is an absence of racial markers, leaving characters' identities open.

**Mouths have never run so dry at the idea of thirst.** (*Thriller*. 13-17)



### HEARTS UNBROKEN

Smith, Cynthia Leitich

Candlewick (304 pp.)

\$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018

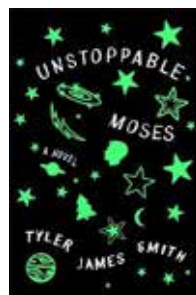
978-0-7636-8114-2

"Suburban," Muscogee (Creek) girl Louise "Lou" Wolfe confronts the politics of being Native in an overwhelmingly white high school while finding first love.

Smith's (Muscogee) (*Feral Pride*, 2015, etc.) novel begins "in the residual haze of [Louise's] junior prom." Heedless of Lou's identity, "WASPy boyfriend" Cam insults Native people and then further invalidates the hurt Lou feels. A three-chapter interlude of summer months establishes characters and relationships. The remainder of the story occurs during the autumn of Lou's senior year. Working for the *Hive*, the school newspaper, she teams up with possible love interest Joey Kairouz to uncover who's behind Parents Against Revisionist Theater and its attempt to pull the curtain on the

school's ethnically inclusive fall production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Anonymous threats, vandalism, and power abuse by parents, school officials, and community members give Smith's story potential to become an Indigenous version of *The Chocolate War*. Unfortunately, a chapter devoted to explaining the difference between "color-blind" and "color-conscious," overly didactic attempts to teach readers about verbal and visual microaggressions and Native stereotypes, and parenthetical asides that read more like authorial intrusions as opposed to the inner thoughts readers would assume from the story's first-person narration hold it back.

**Endearing enough for Smith's fans, too many subissues hinder an organic unfolding to convert new readers.** (author's note, glossary) (*Fiction*. 14-18)



### UNSTOPPABLE MOSES

Smith, Tyler James

Flatiron Books (352 pp.)

\$17.99 | Sep. 25, 2018

978-1-250-13854-5

Two boys' prank goes badly wrong, with life-changing consequences.

At 8 years old, Moses was shot by his cousin and best friend, Charlie, and died for three minutes. Since that day he has been considered a miracle boy by his family and has had an almost reckless sense of indestructibility. Now high school juniors, Moses and Charlie "were trying to be funny, and maybe even do something good. Stupidly." But when their prank—which involves destruction of models representing major world religions—goes off the rails, they are labeled arsonists and criminals. The townspeople insist that what they did was a hate crime. Charlie is shot by the police, but since Moses is a minor and the judge determines he isn't dangerous, he is given a chance to redeem himself and is ordered to serve as a camp counselor for a week, working with elementary school-aged kids. Can Moses, who has high aspirations for college and his future, find his way through the darkness and tragedy? A Midwestern teen struggles with loss, guilt, and finding his place in the world without his best friend in this character-driven novel that at times veers into the excessively wordy. Major characters are assumed white.

**Smith weaves between past and present, exploring growth and personal relationships in this emotional debut novel.** (*Fiction*. 12-18)





### THE OPPOSITE OF INNOCENT

Sones, *Sonya*  
 HarperTeen (272 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Sep. 4, 2018  
 978-0-06-237031-0

A young woman is sexually abused by a close family friend in this latest novel in verse from veteran poet Sones (*Saving Red*, 2016, etc.).

Fourteen-year-old Lily has long harbored a crush on her father's friend Luke and is thrilled to learn that he is going to stay with her family upon his return from a research trip to Kenya. She fervently hopes that he'll see she is no longer a little kid, "Now / I feel more like a butterfly— / a butterfly who can't decide / which wings to wear." Initially, Lily is thrilled when he seems to be returning her interest, but this gives way to palpable dread and shame as he pushes her into progressively more threatening situations. Factors that often play into sexual abuse emerge within this harrowing story, including Luke's grooming of Lily from a young age and his use of threats to keep her from telling anyone. She becomes isolated from her best friends, Rose and Taylor, and she is already accustomed to her father's hurtful emotional absence from her life. While realistic, these details sometimes feel a bit rote. All of the main characters seem to be white by default; Luke is English, Taylor is gay, and a caring teacher of Lily's is described as having brown skin.

**A quick moving and emotionally charged but ultimately underdeveloped novel that explores an important subject.** (*Verse novel. 14-18*)



### BENEATH THE CITADEL

Soria, *Destiny*  
 Amulet/Abrams (480 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
 978-1-4197-3146-4

Some authors take in medias res very seriously.

When this fantasy novel begins, the main characters have already been arrested for capital crimes, some of them have already dated and broken up, and

key members of their rebel group have already betrayed each other or died. It makes for a dramatic opening (the first sentence is "Four people were supposed to die at sunrise"), but Soria (*Iron Cast*, 2016) has to spend the rest of the book filling in the background. Some facts are repeated several times, and one chapter is nothing but plot exposition, which makes it so dense it's nearly unreadable. The story begins to feel like it ought to be the second book in a series, the sequel to a novel that was never written, but it's the rare sequel that's genuinely satisfying. The action is fast-paced, when it isn't being interrupted with flashbacks and exposition. Many of the surprise plot twists are actually surprising. The premise, based around "infallible

prophecies," raises interesting questions about free will. (Aging Taylor Dayne fans may find themselves humming "You Can't Fight Fate" after they start reading.) The characters are complex. (They are, however, mostly white, though a few have skin that's ambiguously described as "bronze" or "light tawny brown," and some are bisexual or asexual.)

**This is a thrilling adventure story. It would be twice as thrilling if it were split in two.** (*Fantasy. 13-18*)



### FREEDOM TRIALS

Tate, *Meredith*  
 Page Street (400 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-62414-599-5

Tate's (*Missing Pieces*, 2015) sophomore outing introduces a near-future dystopia where juvenile offenders are locked up underground and their memories are wiped of all their criminal deeds in hopes of being granted release through successful completion of the Freedom Trials.

Evelyn Summers is pretty sure she is 16, though she cannot be certain. Like all other hacks in the Center she had her memory wiped, obfuscating the reasons for her incarceration. Despite the difficulty in feeling remorse for a crime you cannot be sure you really committed, Evelyn has been a model prisoner, and the directors have every reason to hope she will successfully complete her Freedom Trials. In her prerequisite task, however, she encounters the violent and uniquely powerful Alex Martinez, who proclaims that he once knew her—triggering a quest for the real reasons behind her conviction and the truths hidden in her wiped memories. The first several chapters of first-person narrative are followed by peeks into Evelyn's journals detailing her first months in the Center lockup along with hints at her missing memories, such as the unexplained absence of the letter "D." Graphic, though rarely gratuitous, violence permeates the latter half of the book. The hopeful ending leaves the door open for a sequel. Evelyn presents as white, though the members of the supporting cast have varied racial backgrounds.

**For readers who can never have enough dystopian fiction; all others should refer to the classics.** (*Dystopian. 14-18*)



## LOST SOUL, BE AT PEACE

*Thrash, Maggie*  
*Illus. by the author*  
Candlewick (192 pp.)  
\$18.99 | Oct. 9, 2018  
978-0-7636-9419-7

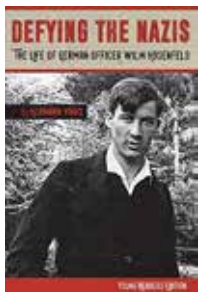


Thrash (*Strange Lies*, 2017, etc.) returns with a graphic memoir blended

with fiction.

A year and a half after *Honor Girl* (2015) ends, Thrash is a high school junior who has come out as lesbian; she is also depressed and flunking out of her exclusive prep school. She lives a life of ease and plenty with her overbearing, henpecking mother and federal judge father in their sprawling Atlanta home. Her only real sense of responsibility is to her beloved gray cat, Tommi, recently lost. While searching her cavernous house for Tommi, she befriends a ghost—also named Tommy—who lives in stark economic contrast to her. With a bit of insightful investigation, Thrash soon learns more about Tommy’s past, her father, and herself. Through an acute lens, Thrash has masterfully captured the tedium and melancholy of being a teenager: the self-doubt and preoccupation, the crushing ennui, and the sense of futility. In one scene, she recalls coming out, expecting this to be the topic of conversation at school, only to be ignored by her peers. Mixing recollections with a supernatural *Hamlet*-inspired theme, her watercolor-tinged illustrations add a wonderfully ethereal layer to an already nuanced offering. Defying genre boundaries, Thrash has proven herself a capable memoirist able to pinpoint her own pivotal life moments, turn them into art, and take risks with conventions. Nearly all characters present as white.

**A thoughtful and compelling exploration of adolescence.** (*Graphic memoir/fiction. 13-adult*)



## DEFYING THE NAZIS *The Life of German Officer Wilm Hosenfeld, Young Readers Edition*

*Vinke, Hermann*  
*Trans. by Babiar, H.B.*  
Star Bright (304 pp.)  
\$19.99 | Sep. 1, 2018  
978-1-59572-759-6

The first biography in English of a conflicted, quietly heroic German officer stationed in Warsaw during World War II who saved dozens of people from the Nazis.

Wilm Hosenfeld kept a journal and wrote copious letters home both during the war years and, later, as a Soviet prisoner of war. These became the foundation for this young readers’ edition, translated from the German, of a work for adults. Through excerpts of his writing, readers gain an appreciation of Hosenfeld’s opinions of German conduct in Warsaw. Avoiding

any whitewashing, Hosenfeld is shown in all his nationalist fervor but also as a decent man who had a basic respect for all his fellow beings and one increasingly appalled by Nazi policies; the occupation “has degenerated into excessive, inhuman, mass slaughter contrary to the ideals of a cultured nation...the inhuman treatment can never be justified,” he wrote. What he couldn’t put in his journal was the aid he rendered to dozens of Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Nazi tyranny, most famously Władysław Szpilman, subject of the movie “The Pianist.” In 2009, Hosenfeld was named one of the Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. Solid writing and photographs throughout bring the story of this complex individual to life.

**Hosenfeld wrote, “I always see the person in front of me and a boundless compassion overcomes me”; this work is a fitting tribute.** (*map, glossary, character list, timeline, resources, index*) (*Biography. 12-18*)



## QUIVER

*Watts, Julia*  
Three Rooms Press (324 pp.)  
\$15.95 paper | Oct. 16, 2018  
978-1-941110-66-9

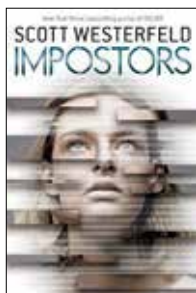
When genderfluid Zo moves in next door to Libby and her evangelical Christian family in rural Tennessee, their unlikely friendship changes Libby’s life.

Libby, who has five younger siblings, has little exposure to life outside her family’s isolated home, where her father’s word is law. She’s prepared to fulfill her duty of marrying young and bearing children, even if she’s beginning to realize that’s not what she wants. Things change when Zo’s family moves into the neighborhood and the two teens strike up a friendship. Zo’s family, liberal and fully supportive of Zo’s genderfluidity, are the antithesis of Libby’s family. When Libby’s parents cease contact with their neighbors, Libby must decide whether to obey her parents or maintain her friendship. Crucially, neither teen attacks the other’s beliefs or way of life; instead, Zo gently challenges Libby’s teachings about a woman’s subservience. Although the somewhat stiff narration alternates between Libby’s and Zo’s perspectives, the story belongs to Libby as she questions what she’s been taught (“The only way I’ve ever been is the way I’ve been told to be”). Disappointingly, readers don’t gain much insight into Zo’s genderfluidity and are never introduced to Zo’s personal pronouns (Libby presumes she/her/hers). The primary cast assumes a white default except for Zo’s friend Claire, a Thai-American transgender girl.

**Despite some issues, the novel opens important conversations about faith, family, independence, and identity.** (*Fiction. 13-16*)

## A charming, funny love story.

*THE SEVEN TORMENTS OF AMY AND CRAIG (A LOVE STORY)*



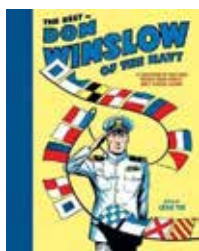
### IMPOSTORS

*Westerfeld, Scott*  
 Scholastic (416 pp.)  
 \$18.99 | Sep. 11, 2018  
 978-1-338-15151-0  
 Series: Impostor-Westerfeld, 1

A twin raised as a body double for her famous sister is sent on her first solo mission.

Sisters Rafi and Frey live under the shadow of their powerful father, leader of the city of Shreve. Rafi was raised in the public eye as a diplomat, attending parties and currying favor. Frey is a secret, enduring brutal training to ward off would-be assassins and taking her sister's place when a setting is deemed too dangerous. But when their father strikes a business deal with the first family of a neighboring city, there's a twist: The Palafoxes want Rafi as collateral to ensure there's no funny business. Sent there instead, Frey's world is turned upside down as she gets her first taste of freedom in a new city and quickly befriends Col, the Palafox heir—but her own duplicity turns out to be no match for those around her. In a setting that seems like a parallel Europe, the Palafoxes speak Spanish, and race is not explicitly defined. One character uses "they/them" pronouns. Intricately choreographed action sequences abound; Frey's unplanned adventure moves like a swift game of chess, but the fireworks take precedence over Frey and Col's relationship, and they read more as pawns in war games than fully realized people. Although set in the world of *Uglies* (2005), this work is accessible as an entry point.

**Impressive, immaculately plotted sci fi chock full of twists but lacking heart.** (*Science fiction. 12-18*)



### THE BEST OF DON WINSLOW OF THE NAVY A Collection of High-Seas Stories from Comics' Most Daring Sailor

*Yoe, Craig—Ed.*  
 Dead Reckoning/Naval Institute Press  
 (272 pp.)  
 \$29.95 | Sep. 15, 2018  
 978-1-68247-323-8

This collection brings selected adventures of white comic-book hero and U.S. naval officer Don Winslow to a new generation.

From the 1930s to the 1950s Winslow appeared variously in comics, radio, and film before sinking into oblivion. Winslow's creator, Frank V. Martinek, hoped to inspire young men to enlist in the Navy. In his 1943 comic-book debut—included here—Winslow fights nefarious plots hatched by Axis powers. He finds new antagonists in peacetime: human—the Scorpion, the Snake, Singapore Sal—and nature itself. Winslow kills a polar bear with his bare hands; makes the first successful

Everest ascent to rescue faithful pal and sidekick Red; and tames cannibalistic Amazons—young white women in cocktail dresses—with mirrors (they're captivated by their reflections). Occasionally amusing, the repetitive plots and poorly reproduced art in this expensive collection rarely rise above mediocrity. The decision to market this for teens raises questions: Some stories feature racist epithets and caricatures, presented without historical or cultural context (including year of original publication) or any explanation as to the selection and curation process. The Nepalese guide who leads Winslow partway up Everest is a peculiar amalgam of degrading foreigner memes. Editor Yoe (*Frankenstein: The Mad Science of Dick Briefer*, 2015, etc.) acknowledges, then shrugs off, biased depictions and sexist stereotypes in language that reads as culturally tone-deaf.

**Best for cultural historians and collectors with a passion for vintage comics.** (*Comic book compilation. 12-18*)



### THE SEVEN TORMENTS OF AMY AND CRAIG (A LOVE STORY)

*Zolidis, Don*  
 Disney-Hyperion (352 pp.)  
 \$17.99 | Oct. 2, 2018  
 978-1-368-00961-4

Two high school seniors weather a stormy year.

The last person Craig thought he'd be going out with is Amy Carlson, the youth in government president whose bright future seems to be a given. Craig hasn't thought much of his future, aside from a desire to be as far away and completely different from his parents and twin sister as possible. Regardless, circumstances intervene, and Amy and Craig begin to date...then break up...then date again...and then break up again. Over the course of a turbulent school year the lovebirds flit in and out of each other's lives. Zolidis (*White Buffalo: A Play in Two Acts*, 2014, etc.), a playwright making his novel debut, splinters and shuffles the narrative, hopping around in time so we see a couple of breakups before we ever see Craig and Amy get together. This technique takes a few pages to get used to, but Craig's blistering humor and reluctant optimism are so endearing that readers will settle into the groove of things. Told through Craig's perspective, Amy's character isn't fully fleshed out till later in the text. Laudably, these developments spring organically from the narrative. There's nothing startlingly fresh here, but there's something to be said for a good example of the genre, and this title certainly fills the bill. Amy and Craig are white; there is some diversity in secondary characters.

**A charming, funny love story.** (*Romance. 13-17*)

# SHELF SPACE

## Q&A with Aja Martin, General Manager of Indigo Bridge Books & Café

By Karen Schechner



LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, needed a community space, so Kim Coleman, a local pediatric radiologist, opened Indigo Bridge Books & Café. The 10-year-old general bookstore incorporated as a low-profit limited liability company and funds, among other programs, literacy outreach in Lincoln public schools. “An important part of the store from the outset was its bilingual story-

time,” says general manager Aja Martin, who has been with Indigo Bridge since it opened. Here, she elaborates on the bookstore’s mission to be a safe space for all.

### How would you describe Indigo Bridge to the uninitiated?

Warm, welcoming, waiting for you to come on in and find a favorite spot to spend some time. Our café serves ethical coffee and hearty meals. The piano is flipped open, ready to be played by anyone who wanders by.

### If Indigo Bridge were a religion, what would be its icons and tenets?

An Indigo Bridge is kind of an obvious answer BUT! We are a bridge between the things that would divide us. We promise a safe space to come together, regardless of identifiers, so long as you are respectful of others and keep an open mind. We also already rock the peace sign very heavily. We have Peace Camps for elementary kids to talk about reconciliation, forgiveness, justice, and anti-bullying.

### Which was your favorite event and/or most memorable disaster?

David Sedaris, my favorite author, sent us an event request a few years back. I did not keep my cool. I texted every person I knew that might be even a little bit interested. (And he came back again this summer! I didn’t keep my cool, once again, because I messaged total strangers about it.)

### How does the bookstore reflect the interests of your community?

Lincoln is large and diverse. We’re a college town and also a refugee resettlement site. Our inception included a bilingual storytime, and we continue to search out quality books in different languages. The events we select have to tie back in to our mission. Are we building a partnership with a local program? Does this author do community work (here or in their hometown)? What issues affect our city or state, and how can we make the community better informed on what options they have to participate?

### What trends are you noticing among young readers?

The Timmy Failure series by Stephan Pastis has been flying off our shelves. It’s not as negative as it seems by the title: It’s an absolutely hilarious series about a boy detective. Think Diary of a Wimpy Kid but in a zany parallel universe. Kids like to laugh!



Aja Martin

We’ve been letting kids write shelf-talkers to describe what they like about their favorite books. It’s fun for all of us, and it speaks more to young readers that are picking out books for themselves. “This is what my peer thinks” versus “this is what an old lady thinks I’d like.” Maybe that speaks to a larger trend of kids’ using their allowances to buy books for themselves rather than adults choosing things for them.

### What are some of the bookstore’s top current handsets?

Our city has a One Book, One Lincoln choice every year. Last year it was *A Gentleman in Moscow*, and it continues to sell well this year. Doesn’t hurt that it won a bunch of awards and is an incredible book. *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, volumes 1 and 2, are staff and community favorites. Ted Wheeler, one of our local authors and an Omaha native, has been doing really well, not just for us, with *Kings of Broken Things*.

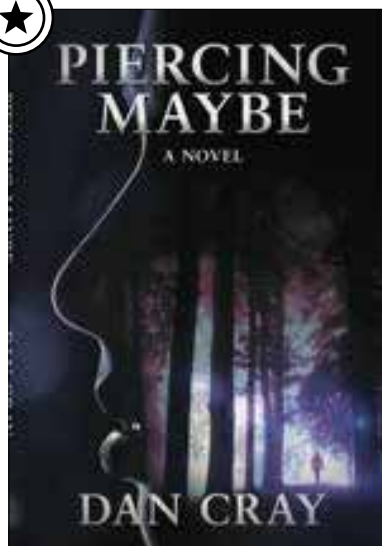
*Karen Schechner is the vice president of Kirkus Indie.*

# INDIE



These titles earned the Kirkus Star:

- LEGACIES** by Janis Bultman .....185
- PIERCING MAYBE** by Dan Cray .....186
- THE CONFLICTED SUPERPOWER** by Andrew B. Kennedy.....192
- WHEN HOPE IS YOUR ONLY OPTION** by Jim Stavis.....198



**PIERCING MAYBE**  
*Cray, Dan*  
 Third Quandary Books (338 pp.)  
 \$16.00 paper | Jul. 24, 2018  
 978-1-940317-07-6



**TIME FLASH  
 Another Me**  
*Ayers, Lana*  
 Night Rain Books (462 pp.)  
 \$17.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book  
 Jul. 1, 2018  
 978-0-9970834-5-3

In this sci-fi novel, an accountant aims to balance the books when a nefarious corporation's secret experiments leave her with an unusual side effect:

time travel.

Reaching for her breakfast cereal, Sara García, 37, finds herself transported back to 1975 and age 12. Before long, she returns to the year 2000, wondering whether she's going crazy. Things are strained at her Long Island home; she and her husband, Jon, both accountants, haven't been close since her late-term miscarriage. Another time flash proves that her past can be changed, frightening Sara into seeing her doctor, who explains that she's been injected with an illegal serum as part of a mind-control experiment. She must go on the run with a special agent—who turns out to be Steve Ranger, Sara's college boyfriend. He explains how the injections induce time travel; that Domestic Global—her husband's workplace—is responsible; and that Jon is actually the company's secret operative. Something seems fishy about Steve, and Sara still doesn't know whom to trust after he drugs her and Jon arrives to either kidnap or rescue her. Dramatic events and time flashes keep changing the ground under her feet as Sara pieces the truth together. With the threat of time travel-induced irreversible aging, Sara has a dwindling opportunity to flash back and stop Domestic Global once and for all. The opening pages suggest that Sara's a standard chick-lit heroine obsessed with dieting, but Ayers (*The Dead Boy Sings in Heaven*, 2018, etc.) is up to something much more original and engaging. Besides the intertwined thriller and sci-fi elements (fairly plausible), Sara learns a great deal about herself and her relationships in trying to change reality, revelations she couldn't have had without time travel. Her love of books and music adds to her character's complexity, and unexpected depths are revealed in several well-drawn side characters, even Sara's cold, critical mother. The pace could be tighter, bogging down about two-thirds through, but it does pick up toward the end, with a satisfaction-filled conclusion. And there's a touch of magic in Gallo, Sara's marvelous cat.

**An entertaining, well-written tale offering intriguing speculations and a heroine of courage and determination.**

# SECOND ACTS

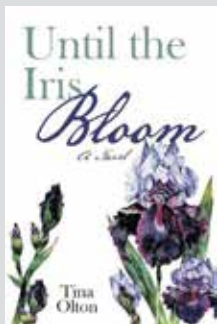


JUST AS SCORES of movies present young, attractive women in meaty roles, many books portray beautiful, smart heroines in their 20s and 30s searching for meaning or love (or both) in a chaotic world. But three novels reviewed recently by Kirkus Indie star older female protagonists dealing with messy lives.

In Lynn Arbor's *A Bird in the House*, Dee Ellison Chope takes care of her ailing mother, Bessie, and clashes with her conniving brother, Georgie. A 64-year-old widow, Dee finally decides to pursue a romance while trying to derail Georgie's nefarious plan to acquire Bessie's house. Meanwhile, Dee frets about the dead creature she found in the fireplace ("A bird in the house is bad luck. Someone's gonna die"). "A beautifully written story about loss and second chances," our reviewer writes.



Tidy Bourbon, 92, lives in her own house in California—relying on her Russian boarder, Ivan, for assistance—in Tina Olton's *Until the Iris Bloom*. But Ivan unfortunately lands in jail, and Tidy must round up new helpers, including a social worker, a bank teller, and her husband, and some neighborhood street denizens. Our critic calls the book "an intricate and moving examination of the challenges of aging anchored by a memorable heroine of indomitable pride and courage."



Joyce Hicks' *One More Foxtrot* focuses on Betty Miles, an octogenarian widow who moves in with an adventurous female friend in Chicago. While relishing the joys of urban life, Betty worries about her daughter, Sharon D'Angelo, who has opened a bakery in Indiana. Then a mysterious pink-haired woman tells Sharon a startling secret—

one that Betty already knows. According to our reviewer, the family drama explores "weighty themes" in a tale "that's as pleasant as watching an episode of *Gilmore Girls* or knitting in bed." —M.F.

*Myra Forsberg is an Indie editor.*



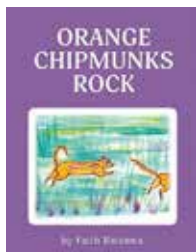
## THE LURKIN

*Baker, Corey*  
BalboaPressAU (148 pp.)  
\$12.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book  
Jan. 24, 2018  
978-1-5043-1208-0

In Baker's debut fantasy novel, two realms are poised for war before finding out that decades of fear and suspicion have been based on myth and misperceptions.

In a world hidden from humans, Fallons are able to sprout wings and fly, Garnios are fast and froglike, gnomish Nipoos are brave and stubborn, troll-like Trehwells are gentle homebodies, and humanoid wise men are (puzzlingly) called "Etruscans." Among these beings, the residents of the realm of Scaysborough fear those in the distant land of Tremlite, where a mysterious being called the Lurkin is said to possess the power to stir up "anger and hatred" among the locals. When a freshwater lake suddenly turns salty, killing the fish, Scaysborough elders blame the Lurkin and the Tremlites, so they send a band of seven—three Fallons, an Etruscan, a Trehwell, the Queen of the Nipoos, and a small Garnio—on a quest to learn what else their supposed enemies are plotting. Various mishaps and misunderstandings lead to the travelers separating, resulting in direct encounters with Tremlites. But although the latter are equally suspicious of the Scaysborough inhabitants, they still offer them help and friendship. In fact, some conflicts are over before they start; at one point, a character is reassured of strangers' intentions simply by looking into their eyes. Still, Baker clearly and appealingly defines the fantasy elements of her alternative world. The adventures are mild (aside from a few wing injuries), but the characters all have distinct and relatable personalities. Although some of the author's character-building lessons lack subtlety, they do encourage empathy for others, openness to differences, the benefits of mindfulness, and, startlingly, the price of substance abuse; an injured Fallon wallows in a pain-numbing, drunken haze with a boy's neglectful, "stumbling drunk" parents. That character's temporary "Fall from Grace" is presaged with this chapter-opening advisory: "Do not let go of your wise mind, as your body without guidance is like a flower without a stem—left to the mercy of the wind of desires."

**A fantasy that weaves in messages of empathy leavened by quirky characters and imaginative worldbuilding.**



**ORANGE CHIPMUNKS ROCK**

*Balsama, Faith*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 BookBaby (40 pp.)  
 \$12.99 paper | Nov. 1, 2017  
 978-1-5439-0781-0

Told in zappai (similar to haiku), this picture book celebrates an impish trick played by two orange chipmunks on a

purple cat.

Less formal and technical than haiku, zappai also has 17 syllables in lines of five, seven, and five syllables but is appropriate for amusing verse. Orange chipmunk companions Sako and Suki live in Chipmunk Run, where they scamper about searching for food—but uh-oh. “Beware of the cat / Big Purple Fuji Mama— / She’s out for a meal!” The friends chip-chip a danger alert and run for their lives as the formidable feline pounces. They make it to their den, hugging each other, resting, and making a plan. With Fuji Mama now sleeping (and dreaming of chipmunks), Sako and Suki sprint past dangers and temptations to the field where catnip grows. Gathering some, they drop stinky leaves by the sleeping cat, who wakes “Mewing and purring / Drooling all over the place / Totally clueless.” The friends laugh at her (from a safe distance, of course)—until next time. *Balsama (I Wish You Angels, 2009, etc.)* packs a lot of entertainment and real emotion into these short but effective verses, which make good use of the zappai structure. The story is backed with her evocative, painterly illustrations in shimmeringly vivid, varying brush strokes. She skillfully captures the personalities of her animals: the chipmunks’ fear and tenderness for each other, a bullfrog’s mighty leap, and Fuji Mama’s silliness when high on catnip.

A funny, delightful, beautiful, and triumphant tale of animal friendship.



**FREE RADIO & PODCAST MARKETING IN 30 MINUTES**  
**Fire Your Publicist and Leverage Free Radio and Podcasting to Market Your Business, Brand, or Idea**

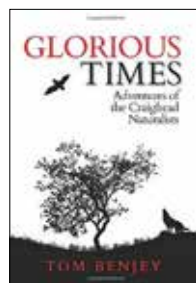
*Beach, Jim & Lewyn, Rachel*  
 i30 Media (104 pp.)  
 \$19.99 | \$14.99 paper | \$7.99 e-book  
 Jun. 19, 2018  
 978-1-64188-022-0  
 978-1-64188-020-6 paper

Entrepreneur and radio broadcaster Beach (*School for Startups, 2011*) teams up with radio producer Lewyn to make a compelling case for gaining free exposure via the airwaves.

The book begins with a useful overview of the reach of traditional radio and the growth of podcasting. They share what may be a little-known secret: “Hosts [of radio shows] are absolutely *desperate* for guests....Finding guests is the hardest part of radio and podcast programming, bar none.” This reality,

write the authors, opens up huge possibilities for anyone with expertise in a specific area to be interviewed on air. The second part of the book concentrates on finding interview opportunities, including a valuable list of sources for identifying and contacting show producers. Next up are sections on tactics for getting the interview and how to create a sales pitch—with a very helpful list of “The 10 commandments of a great pitch (and hook).” The last portion of the book covers preparing for the radio interview, tips for giving a successful interview (including such pointers as “animate your voice and improve intonation”), and post-interview strategies. This is a book that is meant to be consumed in 30 minutes, according to the publisher, so the content is delivered in a fast-paced, streamlined style. Chapters are short, with frequent subheads and bullets. The writing is informal and easy to read without a lot of fluff. There are no long explanations here, just suggestions and recommendations laid out in simple, straightforward language. Still, the brevity doesn’t detract from the value of the information: Beach and Lewyn deliver a legitimate soup-to-nuts plan for breaking into the radio/podcast market without spending a cent. As a result, the book provides a blueprint that’s particularly apropos for small-business owners or professionals willing to invest time instead of money to generate publicity. Those who heed the advice doled out by the authors should be in a position to reap the benefits.

A breezy, informative guide to getting radio and podcast interviews.



**GLORIOUS TIMES**  
**Adventures of the Craighead Naturalists**

*Benjey, Tom*  
 The University of Montana Press  
 (264 pp.)  
 \$18.95 paper | Dec. 20, 2016  
 978-0-9909748-9-5

An encyclopedic, multigenerational chronicle examines a family’s extraordinary contributions to wildlife biology, conservation, and nature literature.

What the Kennedys are to politics, the less-famous Craigheads are to nature—a prolific and accomplished clan. Benjey (*Doctors, Lawyers, Indian Chiefs, 2011, etc.*) traces their ancestry to Scottish-Irish immigrants who settled in central Pennsylvania in 1733. In 1868, a railroad bisected the family farm. A great-grandson built a depot, Craighead Station, and started grain, lumber, and coal businesses. A mansion, still standing by Yellow Breeches Creek, connected generations of Craighead children with flora and fauna. Five siblings, born between 1890 and 1903, graduated from college. Frank Craighead Sr. became a U.S. Department of Agriculture entomologist. His brother, Eugene, became a state entomologist for Pennsylvania. Frank’s twins, Frank Jr. and John, gained fame as self-taught teenage falconers. They later studied grizzlies, devised the first radio-tracking collars for large animals, and battled National Park

# Berla skillfully blends a fresh retelling of “Beauty and the Beast” with insights from the #MeToo movement.

BEAU & BETT

Service bureaucrats over bear management. They wrote the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, authored *National Geographic* articles, and produced lectures, photographs, books, films, and television programs. Their sister, Jean Craighead George, wrote more than 100 children’s books about animals and nature. Best known are *Julie of the Wolves*, a Newbery Medal winner, and *My Side of the Mountain*, a Newbery Honor work made into a movie. Five Craighheads achieved name recognition, but Benjey approaches the family as an ecosystem, deftly covering three dozen members over three centuries. He includes a family tree (indispensable) and a useful index and endnotes. Largely chronological, the book alternates between sections following entire generations through decades and chapters highlighting key individuals or topics. Benjey displays prodigious research skills and enthusiastic storytelling. With extensive family cooperation, he weaves interviews, letters, school yearbooks, family photos, and public records into such detailed scenes that he seems to have been present. He often sounds like a Craighhead. Granular details about extended family members occasionally tread close to tedium, but overall, this comprehensive, impressive synthesis of the historical, familial, social, economic, and natural forces that created the famous Craighheads is well-told.

**The author skillfully fills a scholarly, historical niche, producing an environmental and biographical work with broad popular appeal.**



## BEAU & BETT

Berla, Kathryn  
Dog Ear (217 pp.)

In this subtle reworking of a fairy tale, a teenage boy from a poor family works off a debt to a rich girl nicknamed the Beast.

High schooler Beau LeFrancois lives in California with his large family; his father, a Cajun transplant, picked oranges until a recent fall left him with several

broken bones. His mother works as a maid to a rich family, and Beau helps out by ferrying their son, Khalil, home from school. But Beau’s sister is getting married, and money is tight. So when Beau’s mother has an uninsured fender bender involving teenager Bettina “Bett” Diaz of wealthy Diaz Ranch, it’s a problem. Bettina’s father makes a deal: Beau can repay the \$1,000 deductible with a month of weekend chores at the ranch. The prospect isn’t made brighter when Khalil, who knows Bettina from his school, explains that everyone calls her “Bett the Beast.... Take my advice and stay away from her.” Beau is no stranger to hard work and wants to be a builder after high school, so he can handle the arduous weekend tasks. But Bett keeps him off balance with her lack of filter and fierce gaze. Surprisingly, she shows up to work alongside him; as Beau learns more about Bett, he’s sure she’s no beast. Though their developing relationship is threatened by the consequences of a lie, dramatic events bring healing truths to light. In her YA novel, Berla (*The Kitty Committee*, 2018, etc.) skillfully blends a fresh retelling of “Beauty

and the Beast” with insights from the #MeToo movement in a way that’s engaging, not didactic. When the tide of public opinion shifts in Bett’s favor, it’s genuinely moving. Beau also nicely models good comradeship when, for example, he challenges Khalil’s catcalling: “Okay, well just keep in mind that what’s fun for you I can one hundred percent guarantee wasn’t fun for those girls.” Beau has things to learn as well, like trusting his rich friends not to be embarrassed by his small, crowded house. Humor and drama effectively bounce off each other in Beau’s believable narration.

**An entertaining YA romance with multilayered characters—a winner.**



## ARYELA’S HIPPIY HOPPITY LUNCH

Bloomberg, Ron  
Illus. by De Francis, Mark  
CreateSpace (88 pp.)  
\$17.53 paper | Dec. 17, 2017  
978-1-976425-46-2

An unusual customer interrupts a youngster’s lunch with her grandfather in a humorous debut children’s book that addresses the issue of empathy.

Aryela, a little white girl with blonde hair, is having fun with her “Gramps” when a sporty kangaroo named Kip, wearing an “Aussie” T-shirt, baseball cap, and sunglasses, bounces into the shopping mall food court where they’re eating lunch. Everyone stares as Kip “hippity hops” to the salad counter to place an order. Aryela, pictured wearing an eye patch (to correct a vision problem), is empathetic: “I know what it’s like to be stared at,” she says to herself. When the salad maker refuses to serve Kip (“We only serve people here...and you’re not people”), Aryela notes the kangaroo’s hurt feelings and thinks of how she’s felt like an outsider. She asks Gramps to invite Kip to their table, and the senior goes to the counter to make sure that the kangaroo gets a salad. Aryela and Kip soon find that they have much in common: They know what it’s like to be picked on, for example, and they both love jokes. De Francis offers expressive, zippy, cartoon-style debut illustrations as Bloomberg delivers several messages about diversity, bullying, prejudice, and kindness. He does so with gentle humor and a light but sure touch, reinforcing the book’s messages with the arrival of Kip’s mother. Confronted by a security guard, she humorously but firmly educates him about her right to remain there with her son. (Mom’s pouch-as-shopping-bag also comes into play, and De Francis’ depiction of the guard’s expression is a hoot.) Bloomberg’s slapstick method for discouraging bullies is the book’s only misstep; although it’s comical when Kip sticks up for Aryela by dumping salad over the heads of the three “Meanie Brothers,” it’s likely that retaliatory escalation would be a bully’s real-life response.

**A lively picture book that offers a child-friendly perspective on difference and acceptance.**





**RUSSIANS ON TRUMP**  
*Press Coverage and Commentary*  
 Bogoslaw, Laurence—Ed.  
 East View Press (402 pp.)  
 \$24.95 paper | \$19.95 e-book  
 May 7, 2018  
 978-1-879944-89-3

A collection of articles and editorials from the Russian press focuses on President Donald Trump.

Given the flood of coverage in America concerning Trump's connections to Russia, that country's effect on the 2016 election, and U.S.–Russian relations under the new administration, debut editor Bogoslaw does a great service in providing a compilation of Russian pieces concerning the leader and his presidency. The well-structured book goes far toward addressing the often myopic view of U.S. readers by challenging the American public to see Trump from an international perspective. The editor begins with selections regarding Trump as a businessman and entertainment figure from the days before his foray into politics. The work then moves on to coverage of the Trump campaign. These pieces, though differing in opinions, point to the wide support that he had in Russia as he campaigned against Hillary Clinton. "It is sad," notes one article, but a recent "Gallup poll clearly shows that Trump and his American admirers have now become a mirror image of today's Russian mass consciousness." The book moves on to coverage of Trump's election victory, asking "How did this happen?" and "What next?" Moving forward, the volume presents pieces regarding the administration's "Russia ties" and his first months in office from the perspective of foreign policy. Bogoslaw points out a number of captivating aspects of Russian coverage as the work moves along, such as this insight: "Even when Russian commentators are most confused, disappointed and even outraged by Trump's decisions, they do not impugn his character, honesty or intelligence—unlike their counterparts in the West, particularly in the US." Editorial comments also clarify a number of finer points for American readers, such as an explanation of "yarky," an adjective Vladimir Putin once use to describe Trump. While the U.S. press largely translated the term as "brilliant," it is explained that the word more properly means "colorful." Opinions of the writers quoted range from excitedly pro-Trump to vehemently anti-Trump and almost every shade in between.

Well-organized and edited, this intriguing volume should serve as an excellent resource to those thoroughly interested in Trump's position on the world stage.

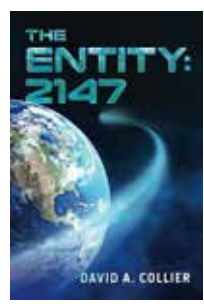


**LEGACIES**  
*Interviews with Masters of Photography from Darkroom Photography Magazine*  
 Bultman, Janis  
 Quercus Agrifolia Press (230 pp.)  
 \$12.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book  
 Apr. 5, 2018  
 978-0-692-83443-5

A reprinting of long-lost interviews with photography icons.

As the lead interviewer for the now-defunct *Darkroom Photography* magazine, debut author Bultman didn't shy away from approaching high-profile personalities, asking uncomfortable questions, and distilling complex photographic theories into digestible, compelling prose. The author spoke with some now-legendary photographers, such as Gordon Parks, Robert Maplethorpe, Mary Ellen Mark, Ernst Haas, Barbara Crane, and Lee D. Witkin, and allowed each to speak freely about their practice, without any limitations. "Gordon Parks flirted. Lee Witkin was so likeable, I wanted him to be my new best friend. Robert Maplethorpe was weak and barely articulate," Bultman writes. "He hadn't yet announced he had AIDS...but he was clearly ill. I left his studio, and I cried." In this book, readers experience intimate discussions that had been lost to those without access to *Darkroom Photography*—all featuring Bultman's intelligent questions, engaging repartee, and genuine curiosity. Many interviews published here were conducted in the 1980s, pre-9/11 and pre-digital age. As a result, a lot of their wonder and critical thinking may seem somewhat foreign to modern readers. In her interview with Parks, the photographer identifies "the camera as a weapon against intolerance, injustice, and poverty"; later, Mark says "there's no such thing as being objective on a personal project. If you care about it, then you have to be subjective. But it's very easy to make pictures lie, so you have to be fair in that sense." Although these ideas aren't novel, reading them here, as they were expressed by masters, may give readers goosebumps—and perhaps even entice some younger readers to consider photography in the same ways. Ultimately, this is a beautiful historical document of a long-gone era.

A magnetic and vital historical restoration.



**THE ENTITY: 2147**  
 Collier, David A.  
 Service Management Institute (261 pp.)  
 \$17.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book | Mar. 5, 2018  
 978-0-9996857-0-9

In Collier's debut sci-fi novel, set in the mid-22nd century, a Kentucky farm family is changed forever when a strange object lands on their property, promising a solution to the urgent problem of climate change.

## In this visionary work, Cray marries heady concepts to kaleidoscopic tableaux.

PIERCING MAYBE

In 2147, advanced computers and robots do all the labor in the developed world, where many people receive an automatic wage stipend and the average human life span is 92.4 years. But the planet is also beset by disastrous climate change, which has caused oceans to engulf Florida as well as other low-lying territories and nations. Meanwhile, impoverished countries, such as India and Bangladesh, confront famine, flood, and refugees. One day, a softball-sized, glowing orb settles on the family farmstead of the Hickory family in Bourbon County, Kentucky. First police, then scientists and the military arrive to behold the miraculous visitor. After 8-year-old Jillian Hickory touches the orb, she's not only cured of her cerebral palsy—she also becomes the orb's voice. Through her, the entity states that humankind is doomed to a slow death due to the rising temperatures but that technology to limit and reverse the damage of high carbon-dioxide levels is available—if we can handle it. Meanwhile, media representatives and messianic-cult pilgrims invade the Hickory homestead; the latter are mostly Greco-Roman pagan Earth-spirit worshipers. Collier embeds a great deal of future forecasting in this straightforward, rather no-frills tale of benign first contact. The author's narrative voice is instructive but never hectoring or alarmist about climate change, and it remains sure-footed throughout. That said, he often interrupts the flow for short sidebars on future technology, such as human-implanted cellphone devices. In the end, however, he ably achieves a blend of popular science, science fiction, and human-scale characterization, which the late Carl Sagan attempted with mixed results in 1985's *Contact*.

**A low-key tale of the future that's somewhat didactic but generous in spirit.**



### READINESS

Cox, Mark

Press 53 (80 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Mar. 28, 2018

978-1-941209-78-3

A poet meditates on the things that everyday life does and doesn't prepare us for.

Cox (*Sorrow Bread*, 2017, etc.), a Pushcart Prize and Whiting Award winner, takes the title of this elegant new volume of prose poems from *Hamlet*,

whose titular character says, near that play's climax, "There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all." *Hamlet* is presumably talking about timeliness, but many of Cox's pieces are, ironically, about untimeliness—about the events for which we *aren't* ready. The book is dedicated to the author's friend and fellow poet Jack Myers, who died in 2009. He memorializes his friend in "Wrought," which opens, "Jack, our old age together lasted twenty minutes. The distillation of all we'd learned about economy...we sat rocking on the rented beach house porch—something we had joked about for years, the inevitable old poets' home—and listened to gulls scavenge

along the water." The scene-setting here is gorgeous, but the poem is, at its core, a riff on its one-word title; "wrought" is both a craftsman's word—and what is poetry if not a craft?—and the base of "overwrought": agitated, troubled, disturbed. The author mines both meanings, thinking back on his friend's work while still clearly troubled by his early death. With such careful wordplay, Cox gives lie to the common notion that prose poetry is too formless to count as real verse. (Poet Charles Simic once said of prose poetry that it's "regarded with suspicion not only by the usual haters of poetry, but also by many poets themselves.") This collection proves that this suspicion has no basis in reality, as Cox is as careful with diction, rhythm, and even rhyme as one might be if they were writing strict alexandrines—and yet, his poems are as fluid and readable as Jack Kerouac's novels.

**Thrilling prose poems from a cherished writer.**



### PIERCING MAYBE

Cray, Dan

Third Quandy Books (338 pp.)

\$16.00 paper | Jul. 24, 2018

978-1-940317-07-6



Cray's sci-fi thriller stars a heroine who battles a hidden race determined to curtail humanity's growth.

Andra Barger is a diminisher. Utilizing arcane abilities, she stalks pregnant women and surreptitiously places a special gel on their palms. The gel chemically alters the unborn children, "diminishing" them by preventing special powers from developing. Andra performs this chilling work at the behest of the Cinüe, a hidden branch of humanity, who have managed their evolution. The Cinüe have sequestered themselves in a place called Edenshire, but every 50 years, the Sugar Dandruff Council—nine individuals who assign Andra's targets—vote on whether to maintain or repeal the Jeremiah Maybe Diminishing Act, which according to Cinüe leader Asantha Cooray VIII, is about "keeping everyone equal...and keeping the peace." While on assignment in Hawaii, Andra runs into Wade, an old flame who acts as a "mailman" for the Cinüe. He delivers a message from Asantha herself: "Sugar Dandruff Council convening in three days for renewal vote. You'll be my proxy." Andra's first instinct is to vote against renewing the Diminishing Act. When she eventually meets Asantha, however, so begins the unraveling of the world's deepest secrets. In this visionary work, Cray (*Friends from 4 A.M.*, 2012, etc.) marries heady concepts to kaleidoscopic tableaux while keeping both in service to his characters' humanity. The work continually surprises, as in the line about Wade's "necrospondence," a special candle that's like "peeking inside a Faberge egg, only the 'egg' could spy upon another place." Cray also delights in the most gorgeous settings, from the opening on a Hawaiian beach to Australia's red sandstone monolith Uluru, which "sparkled whenever the fading twilight hit the coarse quartz and feldspar." The narrative's whiplash pacing is perfect with a species at stake, and

Cray parlays every plot element—including Jackson, Andra’s terminally ill brother—into a satisfying twist. Ultimately, this adventure is a linguistic feast and a moral challenge that readers should be eager to pass along.

**Sumptuous sci-fi with originality to spare.**



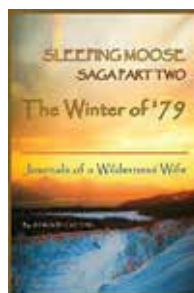
**RETURN OF THE JAGUAR**

*Cuddy, Norm*  
 Chester House Press (288 pp.)  
 \$17.00 paper | \$9.99 e-book  
 May 15, 2018  
 978-0-9958689-0-8

A Canadian lawyer gets drawn into Mexico’s contemporary revolutionary struggle in this thriller.

In 2001, Ted Sorenson’s life is one that’s full of “bad decisions,” including a “bad marriage.” He reluctantly visits a spa in the Mexican countryside, looking for a new lease on life. En route, he meets and falls for an American woman who identifies herself as Barbara Jones, a brokerage firm’s bookkeeper. But at the border, she tells customs officials that her name is Bailey. When readers next see her, she’s purchasing a Smith & Wesson .30-caliber pistol and hollow-point bullets in Tecate. It turns out that she has some unfinished business involving Capitán Hernandez, a sadistic Mexican army general who led the 1997 slaughter of 45 villagers in Acteal, where Bailey was working at the time. She survived the attack but not before enduring unspeakable abuses, harrowingly revealed as the book progresses. Soon after Ted agrees to help her, he’s arrested; after Bailey breaks him out of jail, she discovers that there’s an international warrant out for his capture. The action escalates, and later Bailey kills a gunman and saves the life of Subcomandante Marcos, leader of the revolutionary Zapatistas, “a legend in his own time.” She then tries to get Marcos, who was also at Acteal, to kill Hernandez. Cuddy’s posthumously published debut novel is based on the actual Acteal massacre, and other figures, such as Marcos and the Zapatistas, are also drawn from real life. However, it also has a propulsive, noirish quality, as it tells the story of a good man and a woman with a tortured past who draws him into extraordinary events that test his mettle. Cuddy’s descriptions of the landscape, village culture, and the Zapatistas’ militant crusade all feel authentic. By comparison, Hernandez’s posturing villainy seems a bit overly broad, but Cuddy does devise credible, hard-earned fates for each of his vivid characters.

**A gripping yarn for armchair adventurers.**



**THE WINTER OF '79**  
*Journals of a Wilderness Wife*

*Cutting, Atwood*  
 Echo Hill Arts Press (294 pp.)  
 \$14.99 paper | Apr. 6, 2018  
 978-0-9995061-9-6

A writer recounts a particularly difficult year for her parents homesteading in the Alaskan wilderness in this memoir.

For Cutting’s (*Where the Moose Slept*, 2017, etc.) free-spirited parents, Tim and Kate Peters, their rugged life on Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula was worth it for the beauty that surrounded them. Sure, they might have to travel hours for every amenity and labor for every comfort, but it allowed them to raise their infant daughter (the author) on a mountain with panoramic views, amid fields of wildflowers and alder forests where moose slept. This second volume of Cutting’s ongoing account of her family’s time in Alaska depicts one year when the remoteness of their home put particular pressures on the Peters household. The summer of 1979 was tricky enough. The author relates the time her mother was surprised to come home to find a man standing in their kitchen wielding a large hunting knife and describes a brush fire that nearly engulfed the property. While this was all going on, Cutting’s parents were racing to insulate and furnish their newly built house for the approaching cold. With their only neighbors away for the winter, the couple was forced to deal with mounting snow, impassable roads, cabin fever, and unexpected illness—trials that put their love of Alaska to the ultimate test. Cutting writes in a simple, understated prose that communicates the dire straits of her family while also downplaying its fears: “Kate watched as the raking whiteness howled past. She and her infant companion huddled together, listening apathetically to the perverse winds.” The author, who was a baby at the time, has fashioned the narrative from her parents’ recollections and her mother’s letters, many of which are included in the text. The sequel, which features family photographs, does not attempt to play up the drama, nor does it really investigate either Tim or Kate as complex characters. Rather, its goal is to present the day-to-day demands of living in a harsh climate far from the niceties of civilization. For those interested in feats of hard work and ingenuity at the edge of the world, the book delivers nicely.

**An intriguing, sometimes-thrilling account of remote Alaskan life in 1979.**

# INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

## CHRISTOPHER STOLLAR

### A WRITER ON A MISSION USES SELF-PUBLISHING TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE

By Rhett Morgan



WHILE WORKING AS A JOURNALIST in Central Oregon, Christopher Stollar stumbled on rumors of a sex trafficking ring at a local truck stop. Although his investigation led to nothing concrete, he remained haunted by the grim reality of modern-day slavery in America. He delved into the subject and, three years later, turned his research into the dark thriller *The Black Lens*. This self-published debut earned grand prize in the 2016 *Writer's Digest* Self-Published Book Awards and beat out more than 1,900 other books in the Book Pipeline competition. That exposure and Stollar's dedication (he has pledged to donate 10 percent of all earnings to organizations combating sex trafficking) have led to an option for an indie film from Stollar's adaptation of the novel. He spoke with us about crafting such a story, trying to use it for good, and using self-publishing to get it in front of readers.

#### What drew you to write *The Black Lens*?

I wrote this book because I wanted to tell a compelling story that also sheds light on the dark underworld of human trafficking. The more I learned about modern slavery, the more I wanted to fight it. And as a writer, I knew that words were my best weapon. They would help me give a voice to the victims I interviewed.

#### Could you tell me a little about your research process?

I conducted over a dozen interviews with survivors, social workers, and police officers, asking them about 50 questions. I also did an eight-hour ride-along with an officer during the day and several ride-alongs at night with social workers who delivered gift bags to victims on the street. I did that because I wanted to ground this book in reality.

#### What made you decide that a thriller was the best approach to this story?

The crime-thriller genre made the most sense to me because at its core, sex trafficking is a crime that impacts millions of people. I also thought this genre would be a powerful way of introducing the concept to readers as a story on an emotional level rather than writing a nonfiction book that regurgitates hard facts about this crime.

#### What makes *The Black Lens* stand out from other thrillers?

I realized that many nonfiction books about trafficking already existed. But good novels were lacking, especially in the thriller genre. The few works of fiction that did address the topic took place mostly overseas or in major U.S. cities like New York—not rural America. So I realized that my book would meet a unique need in the marketplace while also telling a thrilling story that keeps readers turning the pages.

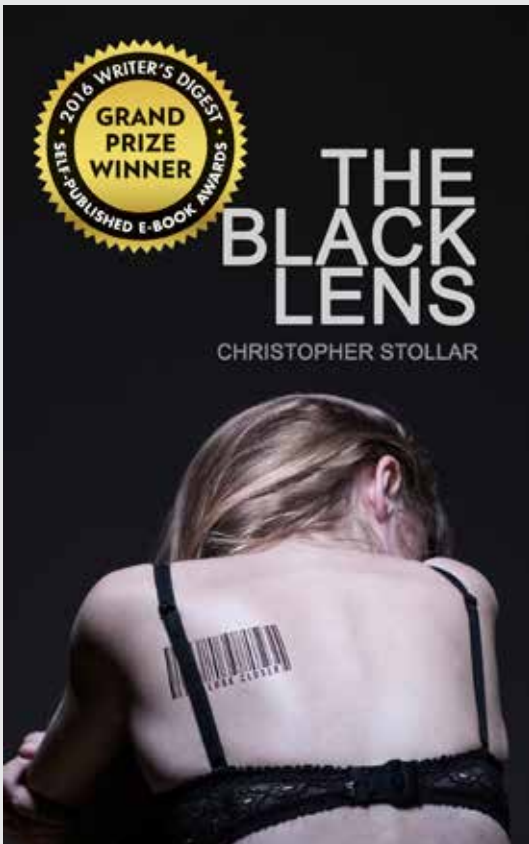
**What made self-publishing a good fit for *The Black Lens*?**

I liked the entrepreneurial challenge of both telling a great story and creating a high-quality product that would meet a unique need in the marketplace. I decided to launch a Kickstarter campaign to fund the cost of self-publishing the book through Boyle & Dalton. That proved to me there was a strong desire for my story and product, regardless of the form of publishing. And it gave me the confidence I needed to go through the rigorous developmental editing of Columbus Publishing Lab prior to publishing by Boyle & Dalton.

**What are your plans for your next project?**

I just finished a draft of my second novel, *The Girl from Level 10*. Those who read *The Black Lens* will recognize similar themes woven throughout, but this is a very different story. Like *Westworld* and *Ready Player One*, my dystopian science-fiction thriller explores the dark side of technology in the near future (in Columbus, Ohio, to be exact).

*Rbett Morgan is a writer and translator living in Paris.*



**FAWN**

*Dougherty, L.M.*  
 FriesenPress (204 pp.)  
 \$31.30 | \$16.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book  
 Apr. 25, 2018  
 978-1-5255-2111-9  
 978-1-5255-2112-6 paper

This middle-grade debut stars a girl whose new home borders on woods full of remarkable, dreadful secrets.

Eleven-year-old Freya Ward and her parents have just moved to acreage in the country. She already misses her friends Amanda and Chelsea, who will have to visit on weekends. When the Wards reach their new residence, “a steal for the price,” Freya dashes into the woods behind the old house. After battling through some tough undergrowth, she finds a clearing. She then hears a “hauntingly eerie, yet beautiful” sound. Near a rocky basin of water, she sees something that at first appears to be another mossy boulder. This is Fawn, who looks like a giant lemur who’s hatched from the woods itself. Fawn has entrancing eyes, rows of sharp teeth, and a lovely voice. Freya befriends the strange creature, but when she tries to leave, Fawn threatens to eat her—and the girl barely escapes. Two weeks later, the family has settled in a bit. Freya wonders if she imagined the encounter. She and her father decide to build a treehouse in the woods. It’s then that she meets a ghostly boy with sunken eyes who says, “Look behind the door in the basement.” In this chilling novel, Dougherty tests young horror fans with a Brothers Grimm–style descent into a magical realm called the hollow. Her prose conveys the primordial wonder of the forest, as in the line “Shafts of sunlight that made it through the trees illuminated specks of dust that were floating in the air.” Psychological aspects of the story are just as detailed, as when Freya tries to explain Fawn to Amanda and Chelsea, but “they really did not understand the scope of what was happening...and she envied them a great deal for that.” The author unspools deeper weirdness with the hollow, a labyrinthine inner wood where beings like Twitch, Meathead, and the enigmatic Root await discovery. A satisfying ending should have fans begging to learn what happens next.

**With all the trappings of straightforward horror, this tale kicks down genre doors to become a glowing adventure.**



**THIS LIFE AS TOLD BY AN OLD NDN**

*Hansen, Daniel*  
 CreateSpace (278 pp.)  
 \$12.99 paper | \$2.99 e-book  
 Apr. 1, 2018  
 978-1-979748-35-3

With a beautifully written frame story in the vein of *One Thousand and One Nights*, *The Decameron*, and *Canterbury Tales*, Hansen (*Raven’s Spear*, 2017, etc.) proves short fiction is a genre in which he shines.

Uncle is a chain-smoking, coffee-swilling, cussing old coot who can weave stories out of smoke rising from an unconscious man. This venerable Native American fashions a series of such tales for a group of children, stitching together the life of Tomtom, the man who lies before him. The Uncle sections are simultaneously humorous, instructive, and world-weary, while the Tomtom stories dance in time, referencing, foreshadowing, and illuminating one another as they construct a biographical and psychological portrait of a mixed-race (Native American and white) young man. The stories range from the *Twilight Zone*-like “Goat Man,” which mixes teenage ennui with a supernatural hitchhiker, to the laugh-out-loud “The Day I Heard the Bell Ring,” which involves a wild ride on a cooler of beer while slyly alluding to Hansen’s own *Tricksters’ War Trilogy*. Both the frame (“His words were flecks of gold and smoke that leapt out at the fire before weaving back towards the children’s ears”) and the tales (“they cut away those parts of themselves they do not want. But those parts never go away, hanging from them like dead limbs never to be fully amputated”) are elegantly written and image-filled. Whether Tomtom is wrecking his father’s car and running off to live in a tent or forever swallowing unsaid words of love, each tale abounds with running themes, symbols, and allusions. The ability to see outward from darkness versus the inability to see into darkness, along with the idea of being loved but not wanted, permeates, while the appearances of wasps and butterflies continually portend and color events. The stories Uncle draws out of Tomtom highlight the life of a man in turmoil and just might bring him peace.

**Smart, funny, heady, thoughtful, literary; this collection can be enjoyed on many levels by many different kinds of people.**



### **I RODE FOR THE WIGGLIN’ W A Flynn McGuin Tall Tale Memoir**

*Harder, L.A.*

SeedInSoil Creative (232 pp.)

\$10.00 paper | \$0.99 e-book

Aug. 7, 2017

978-1-5391-0226-7

In this debut novel, Harder brings a sharp, folkloric sensibility and plenty of humor to the not-so-wild West of

1970s Wyoming.

In 1977, Flynn McGuin is thrilled to be hopping a westward bus from Mudrock, Missouri, to travel to his new gig as a ranch hand. At the Wigglin’ W Ranch in Annelida, Wyoming, he’ll be able to rope and ride—and it’ll get him away from his depressing job in charge of a parking lot that no one uses. But instead of finding hard, honest work and the ideal of cowboy brotherhood, he finds a bizarre, ongoing feud, a reputedly violent foreman, and fellow workers who don’t seem to be aware of what century it is, let alone how to run a ranch. He’s ready to leave soon after he arrives, but then he stumbles into a saloon and finds love at first sight with a woman named Jolene. Flynn decides to tough

it out, even if it goes against his better judgment. However, he soon makes enemies; meanwhile, his co-workers’ eccentricities get more pronounced, and the object of his affection puts new meaning to the phrase “hard to get.” It’s clear that his cowboy dream is rapidly becoming a comedy of errors. Whether he can make it through the summer is uncertain, but there’ll certainly be laughs along the way. Harder’s prose throughout is solid, and he creates a great first-person narrative voice for Flynn. He portrays him as a fish out of water, but one with plenty of wit behind his observations. As much as the situations provide moments of humor, Flynn’s perspective is a vital element that makes the depiction of cow-hating ranch owners and other players really pop. Many other humorists might have exhausted the wild and crazy characters after only a few short jabs about their particular eccentricities, but Harder’s steady pacing keeps things fresh and engaging throughout. All-in-all, the novel is fast, fun, and a little disorienting—a bull ride that readers aren’t likely to forget.

**A unique and delightful modern Western that’s more *City Slickers* than *True Grit*.**



### **HARLEM ANGEL Book One of the Circle**

*Hardwick, Brenda*

CreateSpace (334 pp.)

\$23.99 | \$13.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Jan. 13, 2018

978-1-5462-2428-0

978-1-5462-2429-7 paper

In this paranormal thriller, a woman’s cryptic dream unlocks a remarkable secret and puts her in the crosshairs of a mysterious enemy.

One evening, two men murder Zacharias, a kindly Chicago shopkeeper. As the attack unfolds, Zacharias catches a glimpse of a young woman watching through his shop window. At that moment, in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, that woman, Soraya Rawlings, awakens; she thinks that the murder scene she saw was just the latest in a series of nightmares. Her mother, Constance Rawlings, believes these dreams to be significant, and she tells Soraya to see Iona Mabut, a local shop owner. Iona reveals that she’s part of a circle of soothsayers that included Zacharias and still includes others around the country—and that Soraya’s “dream” was real. She says that Soraya is a “seer” and that she’s willing to take her on as her apprentice. Meanwhile, Shawn Kites, the president of DN Agen Biolabs, pursues a sinister agenda. His company develops drugs that promise miracle cures—but one of them could be used for lethal purposes. He also knows about the Circle and plans to counteract their influence. As Soraya’s powers grow stronger, Shawn makes a surprising discovery of his own, putting the future of the Circle in jeopardy. Hardwick’s (*Laughing Your Life Healthy*, 2017) thriller offers a chilling premise and memorable protagonists. The novel starts off on a strong note with a tense action sequence that effectively establishes a sense of danger and highlights Soraya’s special abilities. Hardwick ably maintains a quick pace as the story shifts from Soraya to Shawn

Heyer's soft watercolors in shades of brown, blue, and green, emphasized with inked outlines, convey an appropriately autumnal feeling.

*DUCK, DUCK, MOOSE*

as his plan unfolds. The major players are well-drawn: Soraya is a likable heroine who tries to balance the responsibilities of her newly discovered abilities with caring for her mother, and the racist Shawn is a deeply unsympathetic but complex villain whose narrative arc takes some surprising turns. That said, some of the supporting characters could have been developed more fully, particularly other members of the Circle scattered around the country, such as Fanny Mae in Miami and Willamae in Washington, D.C.

**An often engaging tale that deftly mixes action with the supernatural.**



**TWO FOR YOU, ONE FOR ME**

*Hernandez, Anthony*  
 2 for You, 1 for Me Publishing (324 pp.)  
 \$23.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book  
 Jun. 26, 2018  
 978-1-73210-950-6

A posthumous debut autobiography supplemented with photographs and commentary by the author's son.

Richard E. Hernandez, who died in 2012, was born in 1922 in Nogales, Arizona, one of several towns near the Mexican border that would define the early years of his life. By 1927, his father, Edmundo, had deserted his mother, Guadalupe, and she became an alcoholic. She and her son wandered through border towns, mainly in the Mexican state of Sonora. Although she had family members willing to help in Nogales, Mexico, and in Arizona, she was unwilling to stay put: "my mother did not want them meddling in her life, so she stayed as far away from them as she could." Frequently, the author was left to his own devices, sometimes for days or weeks. His life changed dramatically in 1934, when he was 12 and homeless. He met a man named Miguel Mendoza, at the Agua Prieta border crossing, who brought him back to Douglas, Arizona, and had him declared a ward of the state; he and his wife raised Hernandez until 1936, when the state reassigned custody to his grandparents in Tucson. His initial experiences with instability motivated him to build a productive life as an adult. Extensive descriptions of his time in the Civilian Conservation Corps, his five years in the U.S. Army, his civilian work, marriage, and family life present unique glimpses into prewar and postwar America. The author's youngest child, Anthony, encouraged him to write down the secrets of his early life, which he'd carried with him in silence for decades. The resulting articulate and emotional prose is generally optimistic but often heartbreaking: "My mother and I must have been quite a sight. Here was a woman, obviously drunk, pulling a sobbing kid, maybe hungry or sick, surely scared, and in my heart embarrassed for the both of us." Although composed primarily for family members, the story offers a detailed geographical and cultural portrait of the border towns during the Great Depression. The relative ease with which one could cross back and forth between the two countries stands in poignant contrast to today's reality.

**A raw, honest, and sad memoir.**



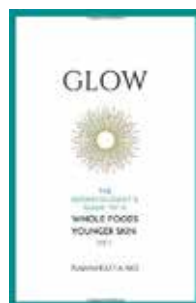
**DUCK, DUCK, MOOSE**

*Heyer, Joy*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Pink Umbrella Books (29 pp.)  
 \$24.99 | \$13.99 paper | Mar. 20, 2018  
 978-0-9985162-4-0  
 978-0-9985162-5-7 paper

With his goose friend away for the winter, a duck tries to find a partner for his favorite game in this debut picture book.

It's late autumn, judging by the bare trees with their few brown leaves left to drop, and a duck wanders around a small farm moping now that his playmate the goose has flown south for the winter. The animals he meets are sympathetic, beginning with a piglet: "To cheer the duck the pig said, 'Hi!' and danced a silly jig, / then asked him, 'Want to play a game of Duck, Duck, Pig?'" But something always goes wrong; the pig's mud puddle unfortunately makes their game "Ooey, Gooey, Icky, Sticky," for example. This and every try concludes with "Quack, Quack, Quack— / I can't wait till goose gets back." After a fish, a group of snakes, a porcupine, and a moose all fail to cheer him up, the duck sits down for a little cry but then comes up with a creative solution. He gathers his friends and suggests that they can all play a new game—hide-and-seek. Heyer matches pictures with text beautifully here. Her soft watercolors in shades of brown, blue, and green, emphasized with inked outlines, convey an appropriately autumnal feeling. The animals are naturalistic but have expressive faces that show their friendliness. The duck's cohorts are supportive and open to a new game even after he rejects their first attempts to play.

**Charming illustrations and an animal story that nicely models emotional intelligence without being preachy.**



**GLOW**  
**The Dermatologist's Guide to a Whole Foods Younger Skin Diet**

*Katta, Rajani*  
 MdzB (254 pp.)  
 \$19.95 paper | Apr. 5, 2018  
 978-1-937978-09-9

A dermatologist explains how the right diet can fight wrinkles, fine lines, dark spots, and other signs of aging.

Contrary to what popular magazines might have you believe, the path to younger-looking skin isn't found in a miracle cream or serum but in your refrigerator and pantry. According to Katta (co-author: *The Successful Match*, 2016, etc.), a dermatologist who is on the volunteer clinical faculty at Baylor College of Medicine, "skin saving foods" can stop the damage done by free radicals, repair damaged DNA, strengthen skin's natural barrier, and promote the growth of healthy microbes that keep skin healthy. To get those benefits, she recommends a balanced diet that includes healthy antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables, "power carbs" like whole grains and lentils, good-for-you

fats, as well as herbs and spices and probiotic foods. The focus is on permanently adopting a rich and varied menu that eschews processed food and “emphasizes whole foods as opposed to specific nutrients or supplements.” In other words, there’s no magic food or pill that will take years off your face, but you can prevent the signs of aging (and probably see other benefits) by eating nourishing foods. Katta, whose style is approachable and unpretentious, walks readers through the science of skin and the factors that contribute to common signs of aging (like crow’s feet and sagging), clearly explains how different foods benefit the skin in different ways and also delves into the connection between diet and skin conditions like eczema, psoriasis, and acne. Also included are more than three dozen simple recipes for nutritious and appealing entrees, sides, and desserts, like honey ginger roasted carrots and peach almond custard tart. The author cites plenty of research to back up her claims and shares a lengthy reference list but is also able to translate all scientific information clearly. Bullet points, callouts, and charts break up what could be impenetrable blocks of text.

Accessible, evidence-based advice for those who want radiant skin.



**NOT QUITE RIGHT**  
**Mostly True Tales of a Weird**  
**News Reporter**

Kazek, Kelly  
 Solomon & George Publishers (254 pp.)  
 \$15.00 paper | Apr. 16, 2018  
 978-0-9986362-3-8

The self-proclaimed Southern queen of “weird news” reporting offers a collection of dispatches.

Huntsville, Alabama-based journalist and humor columnist Kazek (co-author: *Alabama Scoundrels*, 2014, etc.) shares amusing anecdotes detailing her life and career as a newswoman and popular blogger. The book’s lively introduction is hilarious, setting a casual, affable tone much akin to having a fun coffee date with a chatty best friend. The author divulges that as a child she didn’t envision herself as the “person who gets emails about UFO sightings and invitations to Bigfoot hunts,” and now she produces reports on oddities around her home state of Alabama and beyond. She describes her childhood as an “innocent time” in the 1970s with Mercurochrome for leg scrapes, a big brother whom she idolized, cheerleading, rhinestone tiaras, and adolescent adventures. As a journalist, she covered “nekkid” news stories, newsroom foibles, celebrities, UFO sighting groups, and a clever array of priceless truisms on parenting. Though delivered with cleverness and effervescent charm, the work also provides depth and true affection. Kazek’s mother died when the author was in her mid-20s, and she poignantly admits to still not being able to write about her, though a short, sweet anecdote involving chains and a tree is pure heart. Memories combined with pet names for her husband (“Sweetums”), daughter (“Baby Girl”), and brother (“Doofus”) elevate the homespun charisma even

further. Boosting the allure of the delightful book is the addition of “How to Visit” sections of bizarre “ODDyssey” tourism that feature photographs, locations, and ways to visit a wide selection of area curiosities like the Stonehenge replicas in Alabama and Kentucky, the mysterious Georgia Guidestones, and the gastronomic Athens (Alabama) Grease Festival. Representing herself as a Southern writer brimming with wit, Kazek presents stories that aren’t tall tales that stretch the limits of plausibility but are instead reflections of the eccentric nature of her Southern life—and life in general—when it’s enjoyed with a positive attitude and a healthy sense of humor.

Fans of Fannie Flagg should be overjoyed to discover the rustic, lighthearted musings of this Southern writer, who enchants with keen, droll observations and needle-point wisdom.



**THE CONFLICTED**  
**SUPERPOWER**  
**America’s**  
**Collaboration with**  
**China and India in**  
**Global Innovation**

Kennedy, Andrew B.  
 Columbia University Press (280 pp.)  
 \$35.00 | \$19.24 e-book | May 22, 2018  
 978-0-231-18554-7

A foreign policy scholar analyzes two decades of American policymaking to better understand the country’s uneasy posture toward globalized innovation, research, and development.

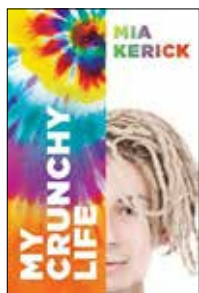
Kennedy (Public Policy/Australia National Univ.; *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 2011, etc.) has long studied China and India. This book specifically examines the globalization of innovation, focusing on how the United States interacts with these two countries in the high-tech arena. Innovation, he says, increasingly involves collaboration. Modern transportation, information, and communications technologies facilitate cross-border exchanges of ideas, people, and investments—but politics, he points out, can constrain these activities. Kennedy considers policies that regulate admission of skilled immigrants, allocation of foreign student visas, and offshoring of research-and-development services. In the first of five concise, well-organized chapters, he quantifies transnational flows of brainpower and R&D investment, tracking the rise of foreign-born students in higher education, international co-authorship of scientific papers, and overseas laboratories opened by multinational corporations. Next, he characterizes the U.S. high-tech community, “HTC,” as an interest group with business and academic wings and proposes explanations for America’s varying levels of openness. The last three chapters test his hypotheses through case studies of immigration, student visas, and offshoring. Kennedy details how the H-1B visa program for skilled workers expanded before 2004 but declined as citizen groups intensified opposition. He finds more consistent policy in soaring F-1 visas for foreign students; a slight decline followed the 9/11 attacks, but the



HTC's academic wing faced little opposition in re-establishing an open-door policy. The HTC's business wing, he says, has also been partially successful in defeating anti-offshoring proposals; again, citizen opposition groups proved more decisive than labor. Kennedy concludes that inconsistent American policies toward global innovation reflect domestic political battles rather than coherent strategy.

Drawing on research from 2017, the author also thoughtfully writes about whether anti-immigration fervor will recede after President Donald Trump leaves office, allowing more openness to collaboration with China and India. His last sentence: "Whether the United States will pursue such collaboration in a more intelligent way, one that addresses the shortcomings of its current approach, remains to be seen." Throughout this work, Kennedy effectively demonstrates his thesis that innovation is indeed globalizing. His portrait of an ad-hoc legislative patchwork, driven more by intensity than by majority opinion, raises clear concerns about America's future competitiveness. The text is replete with data and examples and supported with numerous graphs and tables, but the narrative flow never stumbles or feels overburdened. Overall, Kennedy writes with a clarity and command of his subject, and this provides an easy path for readers to follow. Extensive endnotes and a 34-page bibliography substantiate his prodigious research, which includes interviews with 72 sources from government, business, labor and citizen groups in all three nations at hand. As President Trump pursues trade battles abroad and an anti-immigration agenda at home, this cogent work from a seasoned observer of Asia and the United States could not be more timely—or, indeed, more necessary.

**A must-read for policymakers but one that's not too wonkish for lay readers.**



**MY CRUNCHY LIFE**

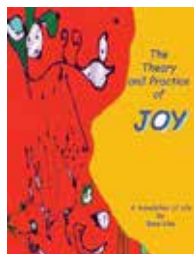
*Kerick, Mia*  
 Harmony Ink Press (180 pp.)  
 \$14.99 paper | \$6.99 e-book  
 Jun. 26, 2018  
 978-1-64080-393-0

In Kerick's (*The Weekend Bucket List*, 2018, etc.) YA novel, two teens navigate gender and other identities.

Julian Mendez—or Julia as she hopes one day to be known at school and everywhere else—recently tried to kill herself with a bottle of Extra Strength Tylenol. Everyone at school assumes it was a cry for help (including Julia), so now she's seeing a therapist who specializes in trans teens. Julia is placed on puberty blockers, and her therapist recommends that she join a club and try to make some friends in order to "expand [her] social base" before the treatment takes its effect on her body. At a meeting of the Rights for Every Human Organization, Julia meets Kale Oswald, another youngster going through a transformation—from nonhippie to hippie. Julia isn't much impressed by Kale's recently acquired dreadlocks and tie-dye, but Kale finds that

he is feeling an unexpected attraction to Julia, whom he perceives as a male. Could Kale be gay, he wonders? As fate further entangles the pair, they discover that they are more similar than they originally thought...but can the relationship survive the revelation that Julian is really Julia? Kerick's narration toggles between Julian's and Kale's perspectives. Both brim with angst and snark: "Since I left my makeup bag on my bed in the frenzied morning rush," Julia tells her unwanted therapist, "I had no powder to do touch-ups, so my face is as greasy as Colonel Sanders's crispiest chicken breast. Don't you like the way the suckage of my day came full circle, right back to my late start?" Despite its serious topic, Kerick eschews the melodrama common in today's YA lit, opting instead for a lighter, jocular tone that mostly focuses on perennial teen issues: student rivalries, bullying, families, and crushes. Julian's and Kale's situations and feelings of discombobulation are strikingly relatable. The book ends up about where the reader expects it will, but the well-drawn and emotionally engaging characters make this novel a fine place for a teen to pass the time.

**A funny, heartwarming YA novel.**



**THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF JOY**

**A Translation of Life**

*Link, Rory*  
*Illus. by the author*  
 Coyote Eye Press (64 pp.)  
 \$23.95 paper | Jun. 1, 2015  
 978-0-9909255-0-7

A debut New Age meditation guide that combines captivating illustrations with suggestions for attaining inner peace.

The academic-sounding title of this work doesn't adequately convey the idealistic and magical nature of its contents. In an introductory paragraph titled "Sand Dune Poetry," Link describes his drawings and paintings as "glyphalalia," a word he derives from "glossolalia"—speaking in tongues. His illustrations seem to radiate a lively spirituality with their abstract figures and invented runic alphabets. The images' dynamic colors and shapes pair well with Link's pithy meditations, which often come in the form of instructions: "Surrender. Give up. Accept the fact that you're not going to solve all the world's problems." The illustration for "Transforming the Blessings" is apparently drawn on a paper napkin, with lines and figures leaping off its crinkled edges, as the text instructs, "Thank Mother Earth for giving you a home. / Feel your connection to her gravity." As the book's title suggests, the overarching theme is joy, and most meditations do offer a path toward delight. Some are mystical, such as "Sands of Joy," which bids readers to "Become a Pillar of Light," while others are distinctly pragmatic: "Keep your agreements. Broken agreements often create guilt and anger." Even some cynical readers might be tempted by Link's playful challenge to brighten up a grim roomful of people by silently chanting the word "enjoy." Occasionally, the text offers tired truisms, such as "Kindness is its own reward," but more often,

# Matthews seamlessly blends some grim history with light and frothy fiction.

THE MATRIMONIAL ADVERTISEMENT

it showcases unexpected lines: “Cherish the cavewoman who is your ancestress” or “Sometimes, watching television can create a feeling of joy.” The author’s distinctive vision, coupled with the transcendent illustrations, may make this book a well-thumbed favorite.

**A provocative manual for achieving happiness that’s punctuated with original, intriguing images.**

## ONE OF MANY

*Matador, Phillip*

Guilford Park Publishing (74 pp.)

\$12.99 paper | \$7.99 e-book

Apr. 18, 2018

978-0-692-96880-2

Matador offers a debut collection of coming-of-age tales in prose and verse.

This book invites readers into the mind of a millennial man from Columbia, Maryland. It opens on an airplane, where the speaker contemplates his generation,

with its unique characteristics and challenges. The story then goes back in time to his parents’ meeting and his birth in 1988. Two childhood anecdotes follow; in one, the speaker’s grandmother saves him from choking on candy, and in the other, he and his father narrowly escape a mugging. In “Race Prose,” the narrator confronts discrimination and notices how the makers of movies and TV shows portray African-Americans as drug dealers or killers; the only successful black people that he sees are athletes or entertainers. These images are at odds with what he experiences in his racially and socio-economically diverse neighborhood. Carefree reveries arrive in a bicycling ode titled “The Cyclor’s Romance” and in “Night Out at a Restaurant,” which pokes fun at common restaurant-industry terms, such as “booked,” “reservation,” “waiter,” and “on the side.” Subsequent poems contemplate ambition, insecurities, religion, and death. The book ends on a hopeful note, comparing potential to the sunrise, effort to a mountain climb, and the journey of life to an airplane ride. The author’s love for language and wordplay is evident throughout these pieces: “All remains the same until a noun commits a verb,” he writes early on. Matador also turns racial and ethnic biases on their heads in poems such as “Stereo-Types,” which depicts cultural misconceptions as boomboxes: A clerk tells a buyer that white ones have no “bounce,” Mexican ones “work all day and night,” and black ones “self-destruct.” His inventive similes are a particular delight: “Father knew the paths like the back of his hand, like a beach knows its sand, like the lead singer knows his band.” That said, the narrative, which begins as a personal account of growing up black in America, often takes detours into less insightful topics, such as playing cards or the internet. Still, Matador’s language often bounds off the page.

**A fresh, tender, and clever work from a dynamic young voice.**



## THE MATRIMONIAL ADVERTISEMENT A Victorian Romance

Matthews, Mimi

Perfectly Proper Press (317 pp.)

Sep. 18, 2018

A man seeking a wife gets more than he bargained for in this Victorian romance.

Justin Thornhill has been physically and emotionally scarred by his past. Looking toward the future, he needs a wife to help run his newly acquired household, and he has little interest in an emotional investment. His staff places an advertisement to locate a companion for the gruff British ex-soldier, preferably a sturdy widow or similar candidate. Instead, the leading applicant is Helena Reynolds, a young woman of good breeding and great beauty who is in desperate need of a husband. Justin is an excellent hero, with just the right amount of brooding intensity. Helena is a woman of intelligence and kindness who is predictably unaware of her own allure. Readers would hate her if they didn’t like her so much. The couple marry quickly, and while Helena dreams of a peaceful and hidden existence at Justin’s cold and drafty English estate on a remote coast in Devon, fate has other plans. Justin’s protective instincts shift into overdrive as it becomes apparent that Helena is being hunted by her fortune-seeking uncle and his dastardly henchmen. The newlyweds must return to London and fight against her uncle’s accusations of insanity and his threats of an annulment. It’s not surprising when the couple begin to realize that their practical agreement may be a marriage of true love. Matthews’ (*The Pug Who Bit Napoleon*, 2018, etc.) series opener is a guilty pleasure, brimming with beautiful people, damsels in distress, and an abundance of testosterone. Despite its numerous clichés, it’s a well-written and engaging story that’s more than just a romance. The author chooses to draw on dark moments in British history to create Justin’s and Helena’s complicated pasts: the rampant abuse in the operation of private asylums in the Victorian era and the Indian Rebellion of 1857. It’s an unexpected narrative addition that works well, as Matthews seamlessly blends some grim history with light and frothy fiction.

**An enjoyable love story that dares to dip a toe into bleak social and political history.**



**DRIP**  
**A Gothic Bromance**

Montlack, Andrew  
CreateSpace (318 pp.)  
\$12.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book  
Apr. 18, 2017  
978-1-5411-0212-5

A dynamic debut novel about friendship, coffee, and a mysterious corporation's dark secret.

The two men at the center of Montlack's eclectic work, J.D. Pence and George Unger, have been best friends since childhood despite—or perhaps because of—their very different personalities. J.D. has always been a wisecracking, mischievous risk-taker while his roommate, the scrawny, reserved, nerdy, bespectacled George, seems grateful to be involved in whatever trouble his friend gets into. The snappy story catches up with the uncommon duo just after college; George laments getting a degree in English while J.D., who majored in engineering, frets over their rent and his mammoth student loan obligations. They live in Middlestop, a “dying steel town,” and their job search finds them both applying to BrewCorp, a coffee and retail sales conglomerate that’s hiring recent graduates as interns. Soon after they’re hired, J.D. hatches a plan to fast-track himself up the BrewCorp corporate ladder through the development of a revolutionary fiber-optic network that could move not just data, but also coffee from one place to another—which would, in turn, boost company sales and heighten marketplace visibility. In Montlack’s well-executed, darkly humorous comedy of errors, things between the two men disintegrate when J.D. sacrifices their friendship for his ambitions, which include making a move on Cerri Morgan, whom George had just begun to date. Then underdog George turns the tables and gets a promotion in an unexpected way. Montlack distorts the story’s reality with a truly zany divergence—J.D. discovers a coffin in George’s room, and things get even crazier when BrewCorp’s true machinations are revealed. (It’s not for nothing that J.D. calls his employers “a bunch of bloodsuckers.”) Although the book’s horror element is initially jarring, it’s also a hilarious plot zinger that hijacks the tone of the novel and adds fun texture to a tale that could’ve easily become mired in hipster jealousy and betrayal.

A weirdly addictive genre amalgam sure to enthrall readers of oddball fiction.



**SLEEPERS**

Pattison, Darcy  
Mims House (250 pp.)  
\$24.99 | \$9.99 paper | \$0.99 e-book  
Jul. 11, 2017  
978-1-62944-071-2  
978-1-62944-076-7 paper

In Pattison’s (*Pilgrims*, 2017, etc.) YA novel, a half-alien boy finds love but also racial tension at a high school on Earth.

Fifteen-year-old Jake Rose is half Risonian. His mother is the Risonian ambassador, come to Earth to plead the case of her people, who will soon have no home. (Attempts to temper Rison’s volcanoes have backfired and brought the planet to the brink of destruction.) The Risonians—an amphibious race—seek leave to take refuge in the cold depths of Earth’s oceans. As an allegory for immigration and refugees in general, they find themselves distrusted. Their detractors refer to them as sharks and fear they will turn aggressive if allowed to settle. Jake is in hiding, sent to his (human) father’s old high school but forced to conceal his identity: in particular his legs, which “Velcro” together in water to form a tail. Whatever happens, he must keep a low profile. But how can he when anti-Risonian activists are planning an ecological attack that will destroy diplomatic relations between the two species? How can he when Em—the girl in his biology class—might just be his first love? Pattison writes Jake as a teenager first and an alien second. This is an astute piece of characterization: His cultural disorientation mirrors the uncertainties of adolescence, his confusion about Em (and Earth customs) making him easy to relate to. Jake makes questionable decisions. He is both a young adult and an outsider. By conflating these two perspectives, Pattison humanizes the alien experience and—without pushing the point—paints xenophobia itself as faintly ridiculous. Grounded in the real-life locale of Puget Sound, Washington, Jake’s story bounces haphazardly (though not unpleasingly) between Risonian and romantic plotlines, one usually derailing the other. Ultimately, it’s his relationship with Em that emerges more clearly. Compared to the burgeoning romance, the anti-Risonian plan is lightly sketched. This, however, is not inconsistent with a teenager’s muddled priorities. Junior high readers should approve.

A solid beginning to a trilogy that addresses all sorts of teenage alienation.

# A clever and highly readable novel that examines the impact of gentrification on civic, familial, and personal levels.

SPARROW BEACH



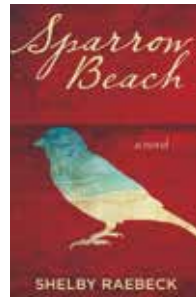
## FROM THE REALM OF TIME A Novel of the Fourth Century Roman Empire

Prill, Scott Douglas  
CreateSpace (532 pp.)  
\$17.00 paper | \$4.50 e-book  
Mar. 29, 2018  
978-0-9908604-1-9

Political turmoil and religious strife complicate a Roman general's plans for retirement in this sequel.

In the fourth century, Gen. Marcus Augustus Valerius is a legend, a savvy military strategist who demands nothing less from his men than loyalty to him and the Roman Empire. His defeat of the Huns at the Battle of Three Tongues cemented his reputation. He is also a loving husband to Claire, a former queen of Britannia, and stepfather to her daughters, Anne and Elizabeth. At age 55, he moves with his family to an estate near Milan; but he dreads growing older and worries he may become a burden to Claire. Hoping to lift her husband's spirits, she arranges a reunion with his trusted friend Bukarma. They open a training facility at the villa, but their attention soon turns toward religious and political discord. Valerius' friend Joseph, a Christian bishop, is targeted by a priest intent on purging his village of anyone he believes is guilty of heresy. Then a new crisis emerges when Valerius learns the Saxons plan to invade Britannia. He fights to save the kingdom only to face an enemy more dangerous than he ever imagined. Prill's (*Into the Realm of Time*, 2015) novel seamlessly continues Valerius' journey, strengthening his relationships with his family and friends while introducing dynamic new characters. Valerius is a man reckoning with his mortality and place in history, and this struggle is an undercurrent running throughout the narrative. A pivotal supporting character in *Into the Realm of Time*, Claire emerges here as a central figure as her desire to reunite with her son, Douglas, is complicated by a treacherous scheme by a usurper queen to consolidate her power over Britannia. Prill's lucid and compelling prose style weaves together storylines involving the various players in this ambitious tale. Newcomers to the series may want to start with the first book; but new readers and fans should find references to Valerius' backstory and the full cast helpful.

**A rousing and captivating epic that should satisfy fans of historical fiction.**



## SPARROW BEACH

Raebeck, Shelby  
Gatekeeper Press (326 pp.)  
\$14.95 paper | May 22, 2018  
978-1-64237-144-4

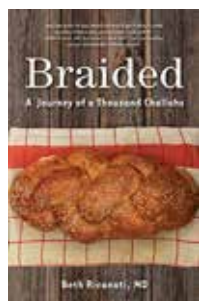
A construction manager living on Long Island struggles to come to terms with change in his personal life and community in this novel.

Michael Dorian's fortunes appear to be on the rise. Dorian Brothers Construction, the business that he manages with his sibling Willie, is landing ever larger contracts as wave after wave of gentrification buffets Long Island's East End. Willie is a go-getter who studied business at college, drives a sports car, and seeks to forge a lucrative relationship with a wealthy New York developer. Michael, meanwhile, is an English literature graduate who returned home to help his brother build his business. Willie's hunger frustrates him, and he much prefers to avoid fussy New York clients in favor of spending time with the workers. Michael's home life is no less complicated. The novel opens with him sleeping separately from his wife, Vivvy, who has anxiety issues and is intent on building a new life for herself. Her plan for transformation involves her becoming gradually less involved with Michael and their teenage daughter, Tommy, an obsessive compulsive whose routine, troublemaking decisions often mean that she does not go to school. When Vivvy finally leaves Michael, he must take care of Tommy and also keep tabs on Willie, who proves to be far from a transparent business partner. Sparrow Beach is where Michael goes to surf and reflect, but this too is changing.

This is a tale about two oppositional mindsets, those who are content with what they have and those who strive for more. Rich New York clients are depicted as "mini-empire builders, spreading their dominion from the city to the end of the island." This situation poses a direct threat to the way of life of current East End residents, who brace themselves for the influx of wealthy newcomers and the price hikes that will follow. Michael's position is a precarious one, because his construction company is involved in facilitating an alteration that will ultimately cause the East End to no longer feel like home. Raebeck (*Louse Point*, 2017) is skilled in communicating the characters' complex connections to Long Island (Michael and his wife "both loved the land and seascapes of the East End, and Vivvy added something beyond that, something beautiful and complicated that countered the provincial, second fiddle feel of the place"). It is intriguing to see how this link evolves throughout the story, with certain players clinging nostalgically to their former lives while others aggressively seek out the new. Raebeck's prose captures how individuals and communities react to change. This cannot be described as urgent writing, but its ambling pace should not be mistaken as bland. The author takes time to develop detailed psychological portraits of his characters to the point that the inner sources of their reactions become understandable, if not always

admirable. The result is a clever and highly readable novel that examines the impact of gentrification on civic, familial, and personal levels.

**Intuitive, thoughtful writing in a shrewd revitalization tale.**



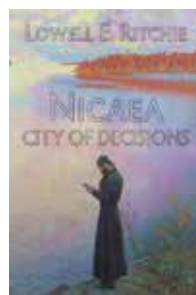
**BRAIDED**  
**A Journey of a**  
**Thousand Challahs**

*Ricanati, Beth*  
She Writes Press (184 pp.)  
\$16.95 paper | \$9.95 e-book  
Sep.18, 2018  
978-1-63152-441-7

An atypical memoir about how one woman learned spiritual lessons through baking bread.

Nearly every Friday for the past decade, debut author Ricanati, a Los Angeles-area doctor specializing in women's health, has baked challah bread. When she started, she was stressed and overworked, and she discovered that this baking process both rooted her in her Jewish faith and encouraged her to slow down and focus on the depth of her experience: "I could reconnect with myself and with other women," she writes. "I could find some happiness in this mixed-up, fast-paced world. I could, in other words, be present." In a sort of whistle-stop tour through her past, she convincingly argues that, for her, "Food is medicine." Whether she was writing a cookbook for the blind, creating a guide to eating disorders for a local hospital, or taking a cooking class during a lonely summer in Paris, she says that she was always acting on her belief that healthy comfort food is a way to care for herself and others. What's more, challah "is the ultimate *soul* food for me," she writes, as it forms an essential part of the Sabbath ritual. The 11 steps of making challah, as she lays them out here, effectively function as a metaphorical course in professional and spiritual discipline. Ricanati draws intriguing symbolic connections between the bread-baking process, her faith in God, and her busy life as a physician. In both baking and medicine, she notes, "*mise en place*" (putting everything in its place) is essential, as being organized defuses anxiety. The magical moment when the yeast comes to life, she says, brings to mind the first birth she observed. Waiting for the dough to rise, she writes, teaches her that God is in control; judging how much flour to add encourages flexibility; knowing when the bread is done requires patience. The book is impressively thorough, giving advice on every baking element from oil (canola) to flour (King Arthur brand, all-purpose), and she offers informative sidebars on sugar and the gluten-free craze.

**"I knead for my needs," the author insists—and readers are likely to join her.**



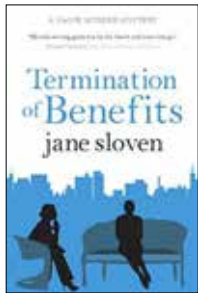
**NICAEA**  
**City of Decisions**

*Ritchie, Lowell E.*  
Black Rose Writing (268 pp.)  
\$17.95 paper | \$4.99 e-book  
Oct. 27, 2017  
978-1-61296-949-7

A resourceful skeptic accompanies an ailing bishop to the Nicene Council, their conversations and adventures on the road mirroring the Christian beliefs and doctrines they will address before Roman Emperor Constantine I.

In this debut historical novel, an odd pair sets out for Nicaea in C.E. 325. The skeptic Timotheus has been elected by his neighbors to escort the elder Bishop Iohannes to a council being held by the Christian Emperor Constantine. The emperor seeks to use the assembly to ease divisions between different Christian teachings, particularly concerning the notions of "God as the Father" and "God as the Son." The exchanges will eventually produce the Apostles Creed, an early steppingstone to Christianity's becoming a world religion. Timotheus, who hardly considers himself a Christian, sees the trip as another way to avoid dealing with his father's death and estate, while the kind Iohannes needs the younger man's aid on the journey due to his own failing health. But their travels quickly become far more enlightening as Timotheus and the bishop encounter an array of characters, from friendly Gnostics to philosophical shepherds, devious bandits, and a lovely, devout young caregiver whom Timotheus will take as his wife. Each of these interactions turns into a discussion about aspects of Christianity, ranging from the significance of the cross, the effects of Roman persecutions of believers, and the importance of charity and forgiveness to pagan beliefs that are shaping the religion. Ritchie's tale is a charming piece of historical fiction, using approachable, modern language to share details of the time, from the turmoil facing the Christian faith to the era's technologies, like road and cart building. There are quotations from hymns, religious history, Scripture, and even country singers throughout. And, though not overwhelmed by them, the text provides useful footnotes where necessary. Timotheus, an educated man from a landowning family, remains a fun first-person narrator, helping readers to engage intelligently with the story. His bawdy sense of humor contrasts with the bishop's dry wit, ensuring that even the most serious ecumenical debates will still have a bit of bounce to them.

**Highly accessible religious historical fiction, as funny as it is informative.**



## TERMINATION OF BENEFITS

*Sloven, Jane*  
Maine Authors Publishing (265 pp.)  
\$19.95 paper | \$2.99 e-book  
978-1-63381-130-0

In Sloven's impressive first installment of a planned series, someone is killing psychotherapists in Portland, Maine, and the primary suspect is another psychotherapist.

Sarah Green was a Boston lawyer with the public defender's office until her best friend from college, Miriam Moss, was murdered by a criminal defense client. She moved to Portland, got a degree in clinical social work, and went into private practice as a trauma therapist. She also has some psychic skills. She experiences premonitions and can speak with dead people. It runs in the family. Sarah is preparing to accompany Louise Gold, another close friend and fellow therapist, to a court proceeding. Louise is testifying on behalf of Brooke Hart Tate, one of her patients, in a custody dispute. Brooke's estranged husband, George Tate, happens to be the CEO of Constant Caring Managed Care Company, a health

insurance corporation that pays (or, more often, denies payment to) most of the therapists we meet in this narrative. Testifying for George is Dr. Harold Henderson, an arrogant misogynist who treated Brooke and George in couple's therapy. When Henderson turns up dead in his office, suspicion falls on Louise, who was overheard bad-mouthing him in the court's restroom. Unfortunately, Louise is involved in a personal crisis (her husband, Mark, may or may not have fallen off the AA wagon) that is causing her to be more secretive and appear guilty. Sloven (co-author: *Compassionate Journey*, 2018) makes fine use of her own experience as lawyer-turned-psychotherapist to lay out an intricate, twisty plot that maintains a steady pace. Sarah is a complex character, still working her way through PTSD from Miriam's death, conflicted about her paranormal visitations from Miriam, and simultaneously navigating two romantic relationships, one of which is with her wealthy former husband. There is a satisfying skewering of managed care health insurance, enough bad guys to provide tension and keep readers guessing, a few psychopathic patients to add to the danger, and a group of analysts still working out their own issues.

**A well-plotted thriller with a likable, female protagonist strong enough to be featured in her own series.**

### This Issue's Contributors



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## WHEN HOPE IS YOUR ONLY OPTION

**One Man's Brave Journey Through Life's Adversity: Triple Organ Transplant**

*Stavis, Jim*  
Dog Ear (151 pp.)  
\$34.95 | \$14.95 paper | \$9.99 e-book  
Apr. 18, 2018  
978-1-4575-6349-2  
978-1-4575-6192-4 paper



In this uplifting debut memoir, a Los Angeles businessman recalls his life before and after a triple organ transplant.

Stavis was no stranger to health problems, having been diagnosed with juvenile diabetes, but after suffering a heart attack at 42 in the San Bernadino Mountains, his life transformed. After receiving CPR for 20-plus minutes and being whisked off to a nearby mountaintop clinic, Jim learned that one of his coronary arteries was 95 percent blocked. He also discovered that he had developed further complications due to his ongoing battle with diabetes. His reaction: "How lucky was I?" This remarkably upbeat attitude percolates through the entire memoir, which details a medical odyssey that included congestive heart failure, end-stage renal failure, dialysis, a heart and kidney transplant followed by a pancreas transplant, and the amputation of part of his foot. The author also battled a painkiller dependency and the loss of friend and business partner Doug Carpenter. Stavis was sanguine through all of it, but the hope he gives to others is even more remarkable. The memoir is, in part, a manifesto on how to face adversity. Stavis' writing crackles with positivity: "Enduring requires perseverance, strength, courage, and

## Trop's prose is strong, with clean, natural dialogue and a particular flair for the kinetic details of action scenes.

THE DEADLIEST FEVER

determination to pass through this stage. Enduring also takes time. You never know how long you will have to tolerate your situation, so it's wise to stop fixating on questions like, "When will this be over?!!?" Instead, focus on moving *through*." There are some unconventional moments, like when the author unexpectedly offers his email address at the end of Chapter 3. Like his role model, "Dirty" Harry Callahan, Jim rarely plays by the rules, and this strategy, along with the support of a devoted family and dedicated team of medical professionals, has made him a survivor.

**Honest, moving, and an invaluable source of hope for those facing all manner of adversities.**



### WILLOW'S WAY

Struth, Sharon  
Kensington Publishing (226 pp.)  
\$15.00 paper | \$3.99 e-book  
Apr. 17, 2018  
978-1-5161-0359-1

At the center of Struth's (*Sweet Life*, 2017, etc.) second Sweet Life novel is Willow Armstrong, a woman at a crossroad.

Willow is the founder of the Pound Busters weight-loss franchise (think of a more militant Weight Watchers). Her husband has ditched her, and her longtime business adviser has embezzled her personal and company funds, and she falls off the dietary wagon. The "queen of weight loss" gets caught on camera shoving a slice of pizza into her mouth, and her place at the company she founded is in jeopardy. Salvation beckons when Willow goes through an envelope of her late mother's things and discovers she has inherited a house in England's Cotswold region. She travels there to escape her scandal, fix up and sell her ancestral home, and get back on her financial feet. Struth cleverly underscores the point that life is what happens while you're busy making plans. Willow is soon adopted by Owen Hughes, the caretaker of her new property; his young daughter, Jilly; and their dog, Henry, who live in a cottage on the grounds. Naturally she falls for Owen, and soon the people and places of the Cotswolds have Willow questioning all that she formerly found important. Struth has created a likably human protagonist. She was the chubby girl denigrated by her ex-model mom and stepfather who found her own well-received method to reach the societal standard of beauty. But Struth shows how, despite fame and fortune, the old insecurities lingered: "Deep inside of her, though, lurked the same person. The one who let dark demons in the pantry lure her to comfort." Through her leisurely narrative pace, Struth allows the people and places of rural England to work their magic on the uptight Willow.

**Another impressive entry in this series featuring strong women in transition.**



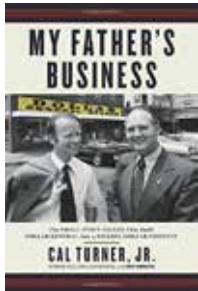
### THE DEADLIEST FEVER A Miriam bat Isaac Mystery in Ancient Alexandria

Trop, June  
Black Opal Books (248 pp.)  
\$12.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book  
Apr. 28, 2018  
978-1-62694-875-4

Trop (*The Deadliest Sport*, 2017, etc.) lends depth and familiarity to an ancient world and adds modern thriller sensibilities in this latest historical mystery novel, the fourth in the series.

Miriam bat Isaac, an aspiring alchemist in first-century C.E. Alexandria, has had a complex life. Having dealt with the dangers of alchemical techniques themselves and people competing with or acting against the Jewish alchemists working on such research, she finds herself in the rare position of both being an expert in alchemical science and in unraveling the conspiracies and threats that beset her and those around her. So it's all the more surprising when she's faced with her most puzzling challenge yet—an attack on Alexandria's Great Synagogue that leaves its Torah mantle damaged. That alone would be a mystery worth tackling, but when her alchemist colleague (and the longtime object of her affections) Judah repairs the mantle, he finds that none of the gems embedded in the sacred object were stolen, leaving the culprit's motives all the more uncertain. When a missive warning of a veiled need for additional guards at the synagogue appears, Miriam's concerns only deepen. As she investigates, she finds more and more doubt and confusion about this particularly twisted piece of intrigue, and it's dark and dangerous enough that it could very well be her last. As in previous books, Trop's prose is strong, with clean, natural dialogue and a particular flair for the kinetic details of action scenes and the dramatics of disguise and investigation. The complex cultural dynamics of Jewish people in this society are well-researched, a welcome facet of the series. What's more, even new readers will find themselves caught up in the setting via effective description and a liberal application of culture- and setting-specific terms. Fans of the series may be interested to note that, while this book brings with it the tension and quick pacing of previous entries, it does feature fewer scenes of violence and action-fueled drama. Certainly this is unsurprising, because the previous book focused on Miriam's brother, Benjamin, and his fellow gladiators, but it's worth noting this installment's shift to a greater focus on investigation, questions, and uncertainty.

**A historic page-turner that promises to bring fans new and old to the table.**



**MY FATHER'S BUSINESS**  
***The Small-Town Values that***  
***Built Dollar General into a***  
***Billion-Dollar Company***

Turner Jr., Cal & Simbeck, Rob

Center Street (272 pp.)

\$28.00 | \$13.99 e-book | May 22, 2018

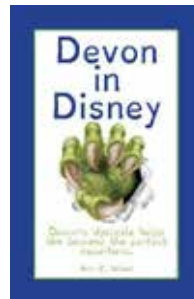
978-1-4789-9298-1

In this debut book, a retired executive examines the genesis and evolution of his family's business, Dollar General.

Turner was born three months after his grandfather and father established a wholesale business in 1939, the entrepreneurial seed that would eventually blossom into the iconic Dollar General. During the lean Depression years, retailers everywhere were going under. The Turners made a business of buying leftover inventories and selling them to healthier merchandisers or moving them through their own general store in Scottsville, Kentucky, at bargain prices. But the author's father had an incurable penchant for overbuying and was chronically saddled with too much stock, so he began to sell that inventory in his own stores at a single price—one dollar—inspired by single-day sales popular at the time. The first Dollar General opened in Springfield, Kentucky, in 1955; went public in 1962; and by the time the author retired after serving a quarter century as its president, the company boasted \$6 billion in annual sales, with nearly 6,000 locations and 60,000 employees. Turner's impressively candid chronicle—written lucidly and sometimes affectingly with Simbeck—covers not only the company's triumphs, but its dark days as well, including its brutal disputes with the Teamsters, a risky overexpansion in the '80s, and an embarrassing accounting scandal in the early 2000s. The fulcrum of the intriguing tale is the dual joy and anguish of a family-run business—as CEO of the company,

Turner fired his younger brother, Steve, and oversaw the forced expulsion of his father from the board of directors. The author also thoughtfully reflects on his own life and the lessons he learned from his father's and grandfather's examples, not only about business, but responsibility, family, and spirituality as well. Turner once considered becoming a preacher, but ultimately the family business issued a clarion call: "It turned out I *was* called into true ministry—ministry that matters in the real world, the world of hurt and pain and error and sin, which to my mind was an even higher calling than the institutional ministry."

**An edifying account of entrepreneurial success.**



**DEVON IN DISNEY**  
***Devon's Dyslexia Helps***  
***Him Become the***  
***Perfect Superhero***

Wixon, Ann V.

DeLiTa Press (172 pp.)

\$10.99 paper | \$6.99 e-book

Sep. 20, 2017

978-0-9986530-1-3

In Wixon's debut YA novel, a dyslexic teenager's trip to Disney World becomes a more serious adventure in which he must stop invading aliens from spreading evil.

Devon would rather listen to music than sit in a classroom at school, where his fellow students often mock him for his dyslexia. So he's excited when his grandmother suggests a Disney World vacation with his mom, Lindsey, and little sister, Taylor. It's not the family's first time to the amusement park, but this year's different: Grandma says that she needs Devon's help with something, and she begins by revealing the park's genuine purpose. The world, it turns out, is secured against evil by the "joyzone layer," which was, back in the 1930s, dangerously thin in both Florida and California. Walt Disney built his theme parks there to spread joy and help protect the world. It's also revealed that Devon has special powers—including the ability to know what someone will say after hearing the first word of a sentence—making him a prime candidate to be a protector, like Grandma. And now that the joyzone layer has a hole, his assistance is urgently needed, especially after a repulsive alien breaches the layer and injures his grandmother. It's up to Devon, armed with a laser gun, to prevent the alien from escaping the park and devastating the planet. Wixon's story effectively spotlights and champions its dyslexic hero. Devon's disorder is never portrayed as a detriment and, in fact, may be the reason for his powerful abilities. But other characters are just as intriguing: Taylor unhesitatingly chases after her brother despite her fear of slimy aliens, and a flying-gnome sidekick named Sniffen is always ready to bop Devon on the head for using vulgar language. The briskly paced tale finds Grandma in dire peril, but it also offers sympathy for the aliens, as not all of them are necessarily evil. Most memorable, however, are the expressive scenes depicting Devon's personal

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# Wright successfully combines the anarchic nihilism of Hunter S. Thompson with the deeper, exploratory writings of William Faulkner.

*NOBODY KNOWS HOW IT GOT THIS GOOD*

struggle: “the letters wouldn’t cooperate and they’d rearranged themselves right in front of his eyes.”

**An educational, witty, and enjoyable tale that showcases its unique protagonist.**



## **NOBODY KNOWS HOW IT GOT THIS GOOD**

*Wright, Amos Jasper*

Livingston Press (305 pp.)

Jun. 30, 2018

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978-1-60489-208-6 paper

Wright offers stark stories from the contemporary Deep South in this debut collection.

A cynical used car salesman in Birmingham—“an academic of the catchpenny auto-industrial complex,” as he calls himself—gets the opportunity to move up to new Jaguars, though a mural across the street from the dealership begins to haunt his thoughts. A black anti-corruption county commissioner attempts to raise his albino autistic son in Alabama’s richest (and all-white) suburb, where he feels they are not welcome. A white boy moves with his family to an all-black town and watches his father descend into an unsettling obsession with the civil rights era. A disgraced safety engineer at a steam plant walks uninvited into a woman’s house, sits on her couch, and when she asks him what he’s doing, says, “I’m Columbus. I live here now.” In these 16 stories, Wright pokes at the still-unhealed wounds of Alabama to discover the hatred and trauma flowing beneath the surface. The census takers, bankers, bodyguards, and prison cooks that populate these pages must contend with the tortured history that has preceded them, from the legacy of slavery to the Deepwater Horizon spill’s poisoning the waters offshore. In Wright’s vision, modern Alabama hasn’t gotten any less crazy; the old madness is simply manifesting itself in new ways: “The Dirty South is a disenchanted land of guilt and black milk and terror, white bed sheets and burning crosses in the front yard, the charred wood—cut from the same ugly pines used to frame your house and church—never quite cool to the touch,” writes the narrator of one story. “I’ve taken communion, and been a cannibal.”

Wright’s prose is stylishly verbose and honest, offering descriptions that seem to have ambulated onto the page of their own accord: “When DOT took a slice out of Red Mountain for the expressway...most of downtown Birmingham self-actualized to antique ruins, reverting to a giant used-car lot, a smooth asphalted prairie where trash and news blew before the winds.” He successfully combines the anarchic nihilism of Hunter S. Thompson with the deeper, exploratory writings of William Faulkner, identifying the cancers of his chosen corner of the American South and providing not solutions so much as requiems. The author shapes observations that feel simultaneously folksy and startling; one woman observes of her neighbors: “They’re such goddamn Good Samaritans they’d show

you how to load a gun if you were trying to blow your head off.” At nearly 300 pages, the book is perhaps overlong for a story collection, and a few of the weaker pieces could have been left on the editing room floor. That said, the thematic consistency is so strong that the reader leaves the book with the wondrous sense of having spent a lifetime among the crooks and malcontents of central Alabama and having come away much wiser for the experience.

**A finely crafted collection that perfectly evokes a place and culture.**

# FIELD NOTES

By Megan Labrise

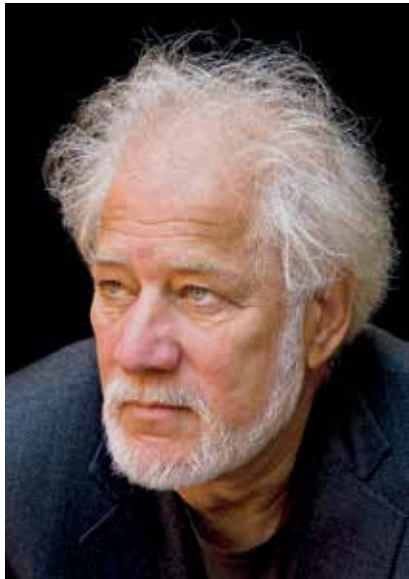


Photo courtesy Daniel Mordzinski

“Not for a second do I believe this is the best book on the list, especially when it is placed beside a work by V.S. Naipaul, one of the masters of our time, or a major work like *Wolf Hall*....I suspect and know more than anyone that perhaps *The English Patient* is still cloudy, with errors in pacing.”

—Michael Ondaatje, whose novel, *The English Patient*, won the “Golden Booker” — or “best winner,” out of 52 Booker-winning titles in the prize’s 50-year history—responding to the honor in the *Guardian*



Photo courtesy Anne Marie Fox/HBO

“No one used to care [when I turned the next one in]. They were always like, ‘You’re writing another book? Okaaay...’ ‘I guess we’ll pay you, if you do it.’ I didn’t really have a contract for the next book until *Gone Girl*.”

—Gillian Flynn, executive producer of *Sharp Objects*, a limited-run miniseries based on her lesser-known debut novel, starring Amy Adams. Flynn is at work on a new novel due this fall, slated for 2019 publication, she tells the *Hollywood Reporter*.



Photo courtesy Krystal Griffiths

“There should be a code among authors to never publicly pooh-poo another writer’s work. (If they’re dead, the code changes, I think.) It’s also very tricky to speak about a book I have dismissed because it’s likely that I’ll pick it up again and find out I was dumb to put it down in the first place.”

—Ottessa Moshfegh, author of *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, in the *New York Times*’ “By the Book” column

Submissions for Field Notes?  
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“Being a writer is being a rewriter. When you don’t know that about the industry, you have the idea that ‘[this person] wrote this book, and that’s how it came out,’ [because] when you watch movies about writers, that’s what you see: It’s like, somebody sits down, at a typewriter, and they type it all up the night before. Then their editor comes and, like, sheds a tear, and they’re like, ‘Oh my god...this is genius!’ And then it goes to press. And that’s garbage, that’s absolute freaking nonsense. You would be horribly humiliated if anybody actually took that stuff and published it.”

—Bethany C. Morrow, author of *Mem*, at Otherppl with Brad Listi

# Appreciations: *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* Turns 50

BY GREGORY MCNAMEE



Photo courtesy Mark Seliger

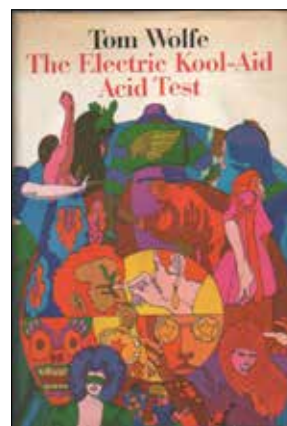
ON A SUMMER EVENING IN 1999, waiting for a storm-delayed flight out of Chicago, I wandered into a bookstore tucked away in a corner of the concourse. There was plenty to choose from, but I selected a new edition of a book I'd read many times since it first appeared: Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. The clerk smiled mysteriously when I presented the book at the cash register, so mysteriously that I asked her what was up. She said, "My boss didn't really want me to stock this book, but I told him someone would buy it."

The boss had reason to doubt. The Summer of Love had taken place three decades and more earlier, LSD was impossible to come by, Wolfe was on the outs with critics, and in the dawning Dubya era, hippie wisdom was definitely a thing for the walking wounded. Still, the book had power—and who could resist Ken Kesey's conjurings and Neal Cassady's conniptions? "They've opened up doors in

their minds they never knew existed, and a very beautiful thing," quoth Ken Babbs, the helicopter pilot who returned from Vietnam to fill a school bus with weirdo longhairs and send it sailing off to places like Phoenix, Beatles blasting on a massively overpowered stereo system, to freak out the natives. And what else could happen save freakout, given a cast of characters that included Jerry Garcia, a Hells Angel named Freewheelin' Frank, and a bunch of other assorted stoners, some of whom would soon be launching the computer revolution in Silicon Valley, all of them amped up lysergically via that favorite drink of '60s-era children?

*EKAT*, as the hiply literate took to calling the book, was what a first reviewer for the *New York Times* called "a raz-daz." It introduced the language of comic books, of surfing, of bam and pow and whoosh to the lingo, pushed the Heinleinian term "grok" and the Keseyan notion that all of us earthlings are in charge of making our own movies. If we don't call the police "the fuzz" anymore and if the Beats are a thing from out of the distant past, the book is still a wonderful memento of a time in so many ways superior to our own. It's timely, too, for as Michael Pollan has recently chronicled in *How to Change Your Mind*, LSD is making a comeback, working a world of good in some troubled minds.

Tom Wolfe died in May at the age of 88, having written a few other zeitgeist-surfing books, among them *The Right Stuff* and *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. By my lights, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* is the best thing he wrote, the book that no one else on the planet could have written—just as no one else but the Merry Pranksters, who really and truly were pulling a big prank, could have provided the subject matter. We live in a grim time, but a few such pranks today could go a long way. Revisiting *EKAT* is a good start.



*Gregory McNamee is a contributing editor.*

# STAFF PICKS

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## Pat Barker **The Silence of the Girls: A Novel**

Riveting historical fiction for readers who loved Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles* and *Circe*. In *The Silence of the Girls*, the Booker Prize-winning author turns her attention to the timeless legend of *The Iliad*, as experienced by the captured women living in the Greek camp in the final weeks of the Trojan War.

Jen's  
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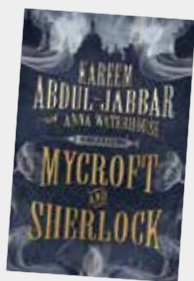
## Casey Gerald **There Will Be No Miracles Here: A Memoir**

A twist on the classic American Dream narrative, *There Will Be No Miracles Here* questions our deepest assumptions about what it means to succeed, with an urgency that will resonate deeply in these broken times. Intense, incantatory, shot through with sly humor and quiet fury, *There Will Be No Miracles Here* inspires us to question—even shatter—and reimagine our most cherished myths. For readers of Ta-Nehisi Coates, James McBride, and Wes Moore, Gerald is already a highly sought speaker. His 2016 TED Talk, "The Gospel of Doubt," has close to 1.5 million views!

Erica's  
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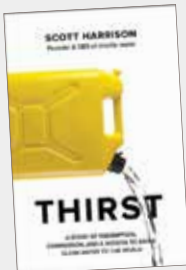
## Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse **Mycroft and Sherlock**

The new novel by NBA All-Star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, starring brothers Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes. It is 1872, and a series of gruesome murders is the talk of London. Mycroft Holmes—now twenty-six and a force to be reckoned with at the War Office—has no interest in the killings; however his brother Sherlock has developed a distasteful fascination for the macabre to the detriment of his studies, much to Mycroft's frustration.

Kelly's  
Staff Pick



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\$25.99/\$34.99C | 30,000  
Titan Books | HC | October  
eBook: 978-1-78565-927-0



## Scott Harrison **Thirst: A Story of Redemption, Compassion, and a Mission to Bring Clean Water to the World**

From the founder of the world-renowned nonprofit "charity: water," and one of *Fast Company's* "most creative people in business," a narrative about redemption, second chances, and the transformative power in all of us. A riveting account of how to build a better charity, a better business, a better everything, for readers of Nicholas Kristof, Tim Ferriss, and Katie Davis.

Miriam's  
Staff Pick



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eBook: 978-1-524-76285-8  
AD: 978-1-984-82735-7



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The bestselling author of *The Story of Arthur Truluv* returns to the town of Mason, MO with a delightful new novel about surprising friendships, community, and the way small acts of kindness can change a life. This heartwarming read celebrates the power of love and features sinfully delectable treats—so it's the perfect book to spark both discussion and menu inspiration for any book club!

Elizabeth's  
Staff Pick



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