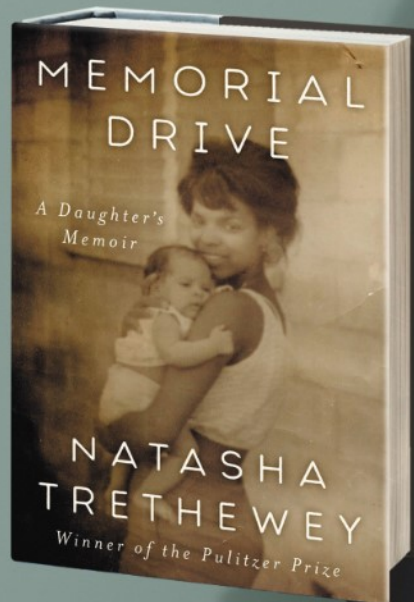


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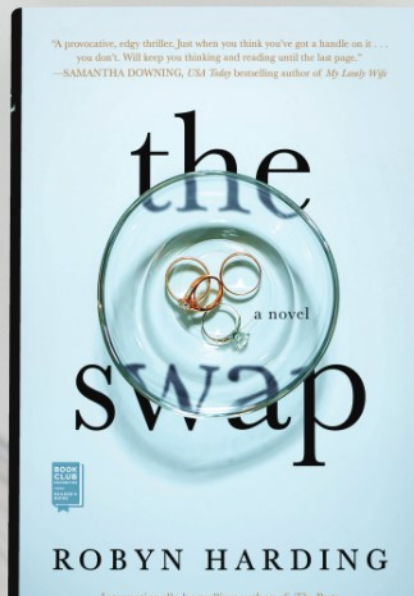
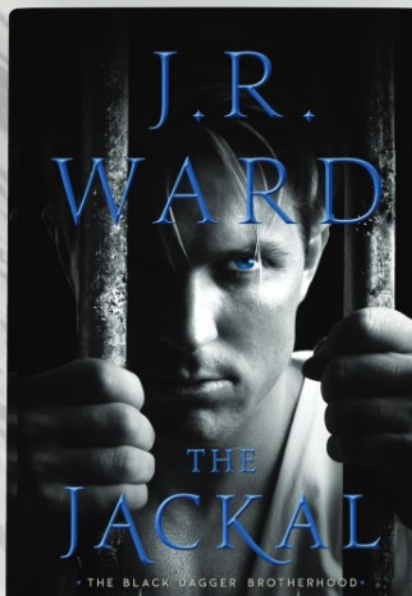
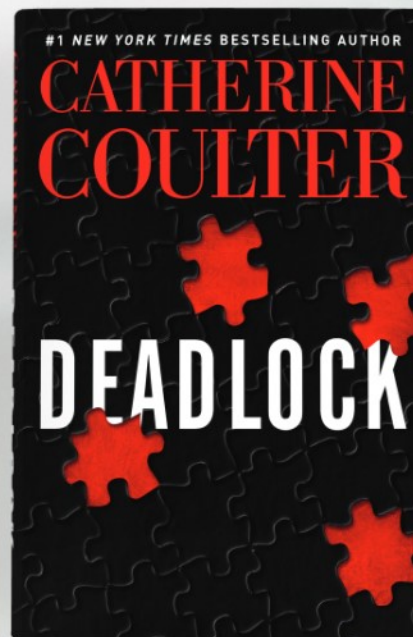
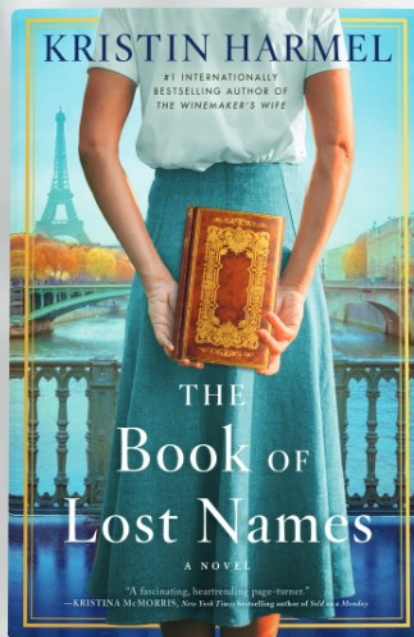
The great American poet transforms her life's defining tragedy into a luminous, moving new memoir



NEW VOICES IN FICTION

Charlotte McConaghy
Cherie Dimaline
Sanaë Lemoine
Rónán Hession
Alex Landragin
Lysley Tenorio
Raven Leilani
Odie Lindsey

BOOKS TO ENJOY THIS SUMMER— AND BEYOND!



features

- cover story | natasha trethewey 10
Natasha Trethewey reveals a new level of greatness in a memoir about her life's defining tragedy
- feature | educational memoirs..... 12
Humor and heart, without the extra homework
- interview | kathleen rooney 13
A bird's-eye view of World War I
- behind the book | jill mccorkle 14
The beloved novelist ruminates on memory
- feature | short stories 15
Three new collections from masters of the form
- feature | first fiction 16
Eight major debuts of the summer
- feature | rural noir..... 21
Two thrillers leave noir's traditional urban haunts
- behind the book | kimberly brubaker bradley 28
The book she was put on Earth to write
- feature | back to school 29
Four picture books to encourage young students
- meet | lulu delacre 31
Meet the author-illustrator of **Luci Soars**

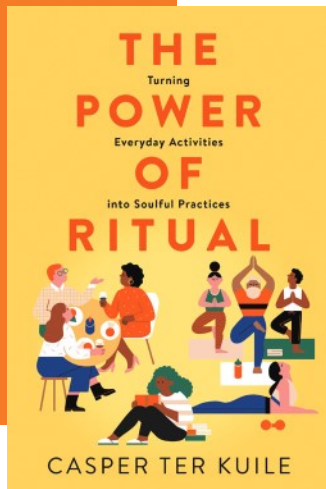
reviews

- reviews | fiction..... 18
- reviews | nonfiction..... 22
- reviews | young adult 27
- reviews | children's..... 30

columns

- lifestyles..... 4
- sci-fi & fantasy 4
- book clubs 5
- well read 6
- audio..... 6
- the hold list 7
- whodunit 8
- romance 9

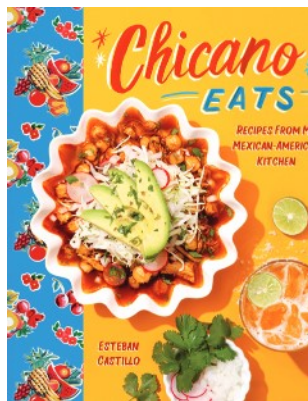
Cover image © Kevin Penczak Photography



★ The Power of Ritual

The “sacred” may seem conceptually distant from our increasingly secular lives, but it shouldn’t, says Casper Ter Kuile in **The Power of Ritual** (HarperOne, \$26.99, 9780062881816). He argues that any habit or practice can become sacred through ritual, allowing us to develop our own modern versions of spiritual life. Here he explores how reframing habits as rituals can help us build connection on four interweaving levels: with ourselves, other people, the natural world and the transcendent. “What I propose is this: by composting old rituals to

meet our real-world needs, we can regrow deeper relationships and speak to our hunger for meaning and depth,” he writes. In a world that can frequently feel upside-down and precarious, this well-researched book may provide vital ballast.



Chicano Eats

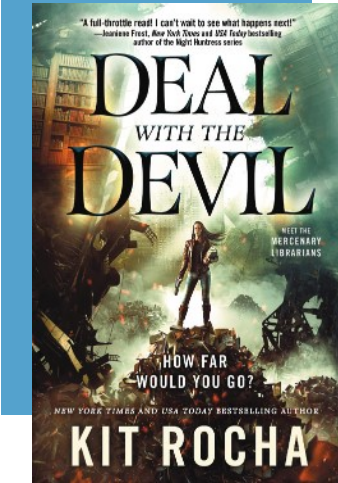
Esteban Castillo grew up near Los Angeles, making frequent trips to his parents’ homeland of Colima, Mexico. When he later moved to Northern California, he found Humboldt County seriously lacking in the cuisine of his family, so he started a blog to celebrate that food culture. **Chicano Eats** (Harper Design, \$35, 9780062917379) brings his work to print in festive color, highlighting the ingredients, kitchen tools and playful hybridity of Chicano cooking—Mexican cuisine shaped by immigrants to America over generations, reflecting a

community “who’s neither from there or here.” The perfect pot of beans, arroz rojo and salsa molcajete will get you started, and then it’s off to botanas (snacks) such as carnitas poutine, lots of tacos, several versions of pozole (a stew made with hominy and pork) and much more.



Lawns Into Meadows

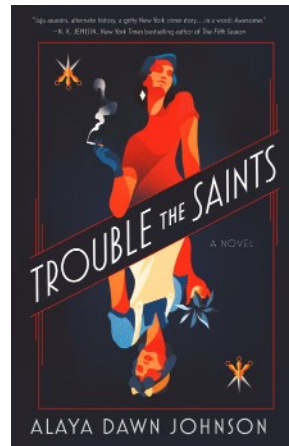
Americans love lush, green lawns. But the truth is, all those manicured yards are hard on the environment. They guzzle water, chemicals and fossil fuels and do nothing to encourage a biodiverse ecosystem of pollinators, wildlife and microbe-rich soil. In



★ Deal With the Devil

Kit Rocha’s thrilling, sexy **Deal With the Devil** (Tor, \$30.99, 9781250256294) is a rollicking good time complete with warrior women, cybernetically enhanced super soldiers and a treasure hunt in a post-democracy United States. Nina leads a group of mercenary librarians who protect content from destruction. Knox leads the Silver Devils, a covert ops team that has defected rather than follow orders to kill. When the two groups join up to recover the digital record of the Library of Congress, more than just sparks will fly. Each of the hypercapable team

members gets ample opportunity to brandish firearms, throw fists and blow stuff up. The dialogue is confident, funny and modern, like something out of an Avengers flick. There’s a good amount of steam here, too, as Rocha’s background in romance is on full display. **Deal With the Devil** is a solid sci-fi debut with unforgettable characters.



Trouble the Saints

Alaya Dawn Johnson’s **Trouble the Saints** (Tor, \$26.99, 9781250175342) is a historical fantasy set in the criminal underworld of New York City during World War II. Phyllis Green, a hired killer for silver-toothed Russian mobster Victor, is feared for her skills with throwing knives. When Victor gives her a new target, Phyllis senses a change in her abilities, putting her in mortal danger. What follows is a wild ride as she and her closest friends try to right her past wrongs. Beautiful prose and an omnipresent sense of regret build an intense, dark mood throughout the whole book. Johnson

explores the intersection of race, violence and personal identity in this powerful, passionate story.



Savage Legion

Imagine being thrown in jail after a night of carousing, only to discover you’re now a recruit in something called the **Savage Legion** (Saga, \$27.99, 9781534439207). In Crache, the lowest of the low can be forced to serve as a human battering ram against



True stories of insight and hope

In *Small Fry* (Grove, \$17, 9780802147219), Lisa Brennan-Jobs, daughter of artist Chrisann Brennan and Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, looks back at her turbulent California upbringing. When the author was a child, Jobs wouldn't acknowledge her as his daughter, and she and her mother struggled to make ends meet. Over time, she grew closer to her father, but his remote and thorny personality brought consistent friction to their relationship. This electrifying narrative provides an up-close look at Jobs while exploring timeless questions about family, loyalty and love.

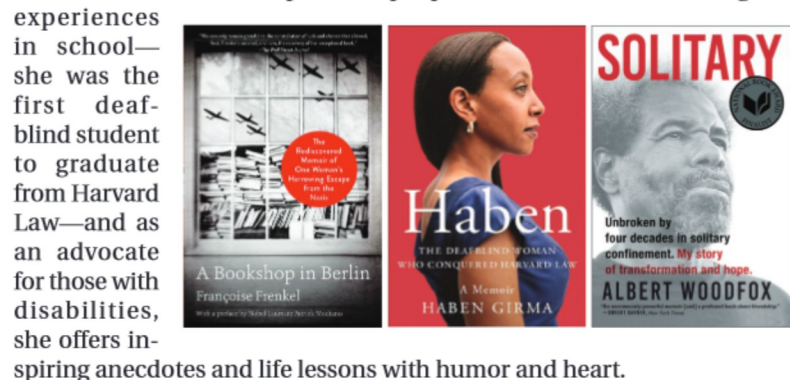
In 1921, Françoise Frenkel established a French-language bookstore in Berlin. The Nazis ascended to power, and in the late 1930s she managed to flee to France and eventually to Switzerland. In 1945, she published *A Bookshop in Berlin* (Atria, \$17, 9781501199851), a chronicle of her terrifying journey to escape persecution due to her Jewish heritage. The work was rediscovered more than six decades later and first published in the United States in 2019. This spellbinding and suspenseful memoir will prompt discussions on history, morality and human rights.

In *Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law* (Twelve, \$16.99, 9781538728734), Haben Girma tells her remarkable story. From a young age, Haben, the daughter of Eritrean refugees, was determined to make the world a better place for people like herself. In describing her experiences in school—she was the first deaf-blind student to graduate from Harvard Law—and as an advocate for those with disabilities, she offers inspiring anecdotes and life lessons with humor and heart.

An outstanding memoir can rev up any reading group. These four authors share their incredible stories in expertly crafted narratives.

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BOOK CLUB READS FOR SUMMER



THE GUEST LIST

by Lucy Foley

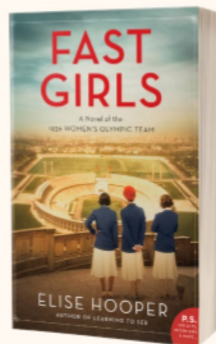
"I loved this book. It gave me the same waves of happiness I get from curling up with a classic Christie."

—ALEX MICHAELIDES,
New York Times bestselling author of *The Silent Patient*

HER LAST FLIGHT

by Beatriz Williams

The beloved author returns with a remarkable novel of both raw suspense and lyric beauty—the story of a lost pilot and a wartime photographer that will leave its mark on your soul.



FAST GIRLS

by Elise Hooper

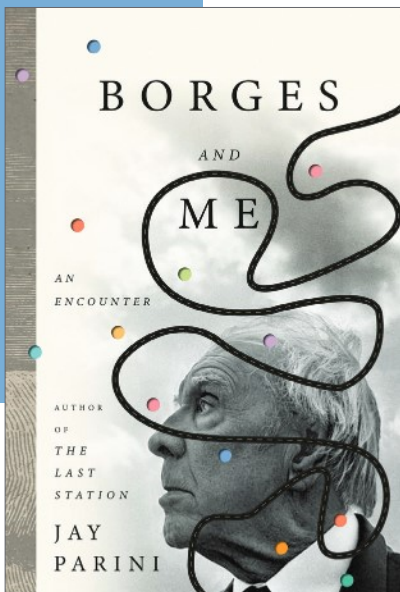
"Fast Girls is a compelling, thrilling look at what it takes to be a female Olympian in pre-war America."

—TARA CONKLIN,
New York Times bestselling author of *The Last Romantics*

MISS GRAHAM'S COLD WAR COOKBOOK

by Celia Rees





Borges and Me

Jay Parini, an esteemed literary biographer and accomplished novelist, calls his entertaining new book, **Borges and Me** (Doubleday, \$27.95, 9780385545822), “a kind of novelistic memoir”—an apt description of a narrative that recounts decades-old memories with their “contours enhanced and distorted in the usual way by time and retelling.”

At the center of the memoir is a series of comic episodes from a once-in-a-lifetime experience. In 1971, when he was a graduate student in Scotland, 23-year-old Parini was con-

scripted to look after the great Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, then in his 70s and blind. What transpired was a misbegotten road trip to the Highlands, with young Parini guiding the aging genius as they drove to Inverness on a dubious mission.

The journey was rife with mishaps. During a restless night spent in a widow’s dowdy bed-and-breakfast, Parini had to guide the incontinent Borges on numerous trips through the old woman’s bedroom to use her shared toilet; a capsized boat cast the pair into Loch Ness; a scary tumble landed Borges in the hospital. As Parini chronicles their misadventures with the hilarity of hindsight, he palpably re-creates his youthful anxiety and Borges’ own sometimes infuriating sanguinity.

Parini had only a vague notion of who Borges was and virtually no familiarity with his fantastical writings when he was coerced into taking care of the septuagenarian. The young American had come to St. Andrews primarily to escape the draft during the Vietnam War; during his stay, ominous letters from the draft board, forwarded from home, piled up unopened in his desk drawer, ignored but making their presence felt like Edgar Allan Poe’s tell-tale heart.

Indeed, **Borges and Me**, for all its charming anecdotes of the week spent with the iconic writer, is at its core Parini’s own coming-of-age memoir, as well as an acute reminiscence of a confusing time in America. The younger version of Parini wears his insecurities on his sleeve, awkwardly navigating the world of women (with persistent hopes of losing his virginity) while

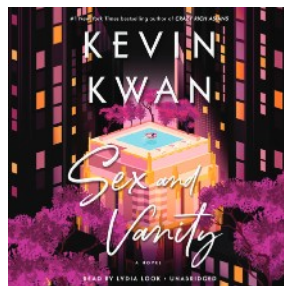
A hapless road trip with eccentric, iconic Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges anchors Jay Parini’s novelistic coming-of-age memoir.



★ The New One

Comedian Mike Birbiglia describes his reluctant journey to fatherhood in his funny and brazenly honest **The New One** (Hachette Audio, 5 hours), a truly special audiobook interspersed with short poems by his wife (and co-narrator), J. Hope Stein. Birbiglia shares his doubts, fears

and joys experienced while transitioning from a happily child-free existence to the mysteries of caring for a baby, and Stein’s sweet interludes capture the experience of new motherhood with playfulness and vulnerability. Birbiglia has written and starred in multiple comedy specials and movies, and his narration has the feel of an extended comedy set. You’ve probably never heard a more creative reading of a book’s acknowledgments, as Birbiglia and Stein tag-team their thank-you’s.

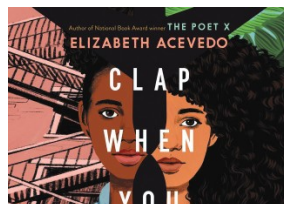


Sex and Vanity

Paying homage to *A Room With a View*, **Sex and Vanity** (Random House Audio, 9.5 hours) uses a captivating story of young love to deliver a hilarious and astute commentary on the upper classes. Nobody name-drops and describes designer fashion quite like Kevin Kwan, whose latest novel opens at a lavish destination wedding on the idyllic island of Capri and explores themes of Asian

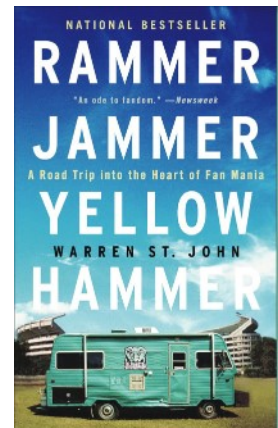
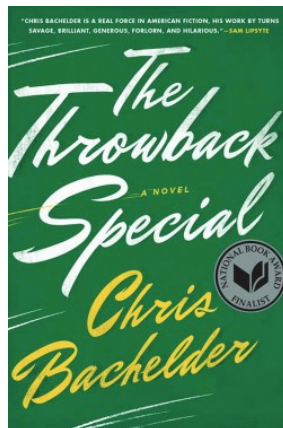
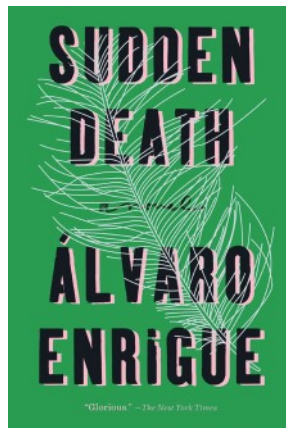
American identity and the pressure to live up to familial expectations. Narrator Lydia Look has her work cut out for her with this jet-setting cast, and she brings dimension and heart to every voice, from American heiresses with British lilt to well-traveled Chinese characters with Australian-tinted accents.

Sign up for our audio newsletter at BookPage.com/enews.



Clap When You Land

Novel-in-verse **Clap When You Land** (Quill Tree, 5.5 hours), written and narrated by Elizabeth Acevedo and co-narrated by Melania-Luisa Marte, is about two teenage half sisters who’ve never met. Camina lives



For anyone who's ever brought a book to a ballgame

Since most live sports are on hold this year, it's book lovers' time to shine. Whether you need something to fill the gaping hole left by cheering stadiums or just a fun read to go with your Sunday afternoon buffalo dip, these books are all winners.

We Ride Upon Sticks

Campy and surreal, Quan Barry's second novel follows a high school field hockey team that's desperate for a winning season—desperate enough to make a deal with the devil. All 11 Lady Falcons solemnly pledge their oath to the forces of darkness, signing a notebook emblazoned with an image of Emilio Estevez (did I mention this book takes place in 1989?). Of course, it's not the first time such a deal has been struck in Danvers, Massachusetts, which is just a stone's throw away from Salem, of witch trial fame. But as the devil's demands increase along with the powers of the team, things begin to get complicated. Barry uses the first-person

The Bromance Book Club

If you'd prefer your books to be light on the sports and heavy on the romance, then Lyssa Kay Adams' hilarious debut, **The Bromance Book Club**, is the book for you. When Major League Baseball player Gavin Scott's marriage to Thea seems on the verge of collapse, his friends introduce him to their secret book club—which reads romance novels and only romance novels. What follows is an absolute joy of a romantic comedy as the club's members try to convert Gavin to their love of the genre, pointing out all the ways in which reading romance can not only help him save his

Sudden Death

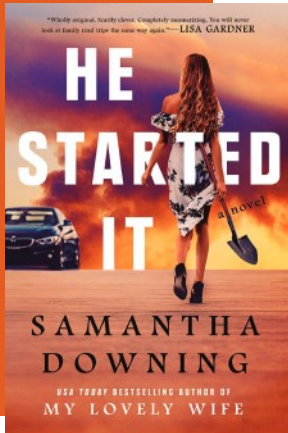
I'm not sure if a more bizarre sports novel exists, but I've always wanted a reason to recommend Álvaro Enrígue's bawdy tennis novel, so here we go. What begins as a 16th-century tennis match between Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo and Italian painter Caravaggio fractures into a far-flung historical stream of consciousness, bouncing from scenes with Hernán Cortés or Galileo to emails with the book's editor and then back to the court, where Quevedo and Caravaggio, both hungover, are volleying a ball made of Anne Boleyn's hair. In between points, Enrígue's metafictional tale (brilliantly translated by

The Throwback Special

Chris Bachelder's **The Throwback Special** is the only football novel I could ever love. Though it's technically about a group of men who convene once a year to reenact the November 1985 "Monday Night Football" game in which Joe Theismann's leg was brutally snapped in two, it's not really about that at all. (Believe me—if it were, I wouldn't read it.) Bachelder takes readers into the minds of 22 adult men and dissects their fears, failures, grievances and qualms with exacting humor. Fatherhood, marriage, middle age and masculinity—things with which I have no firsthand

Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer

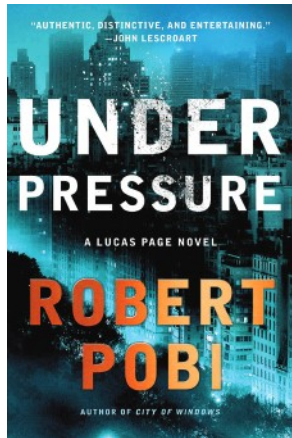
I'm going to make what feels like a bold claim: Warren St. John's **Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer** is a book you'll love whether you relish screaming at your television for three hours each weekend or you can't explain the difference between a third down and a third inning. Football knowledge isn't a prerequisite to enjoying this story of how St. John embedded himself in an RV-driving stampede of Alabama Crimson Tide fans for a season, because he didn't write a book about football. What he wrote is a love story about a group of people, brought together



He Started It

One of the funniest memories of my childhood was a fight with my younger brother that was brought to a halt summarily by our mother, who asked angrily, “What’s the problem here?” My brother’s classic response: “It all started when Bruce hit me back . . .” So naturally, Samantha Downing’s **He Started It** (Berkley, \$26, 9780451491756) was a shoo-in. Narrated in the first person by middle child Beth Morgan, the tale opens with a family trip to carry Grandpa’s ashes to their final resting place. But this is no ordinary family in an SUV on a nameless Alabama highway. This family bears most of the dis- and dys- prefixes you might care to apply: disturbed, disjointed and most decidedly dysfunctional. Their deceased grandpa, for his part, has added to the chaos by leaving a vast estate to be divvied up among the siblings after they have recreated a road trip they took with him when they were kids. Dutifully, and each with an eye on the prize, they make their way westward

through the South. Then, as they are wont to do in suspense novels, things go remarkably sideways remarkably quickly, and at least one family member appears to be a killer. And who the heck is that guy in the black pickup truck that keeps turning up at the most inopportune moments?

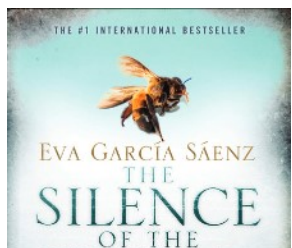


Under Pressure

I reviewed Robert Pobi’s first Lucas Page novel, *City of Windows*, exactly one year ago. In that book, the double amputee ex-FBI agent found himself drafted back into service to unravel a series of sniper killings. He was the perfect choice for the assignment, given his exceptional talent for processing information and considering bits and bytes of intelligence that lesser detectives might overlook. In his latest adventure, **Under Pressure** (Minotaur, \$26.99, 9781250293961), Lucas is called upon to investigate an unusual bombing at New York City’s Guggenheim Museum, in which 702 of the city’s wealthiest and most powerful people are killed, but there’s somehow remarkably little property damage. Lucas is a reluctant draftee, having settled rather comfortably into academia after suffering grievous bodily harm during the tragic events that ended his FBI career. But if Lucas has a character flaw at all, it’s that he cannot resist a challenging puzzle. The bombing is confounding on several fronts, both

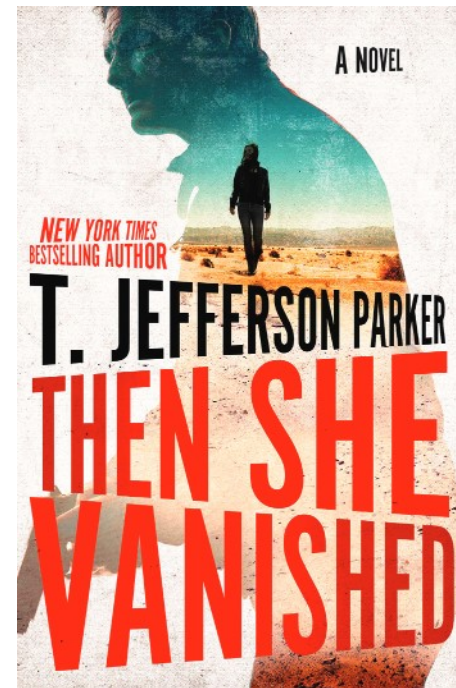
in terms of methodology and intended target(s). Was the attack aimed at one of the attendees in particular? What type of bomb can even do such a thing? There’s no sophomore slump here. Pobi has seriously upped his game.

Sign up for our mystery newsletter at BookPage.com/enews.



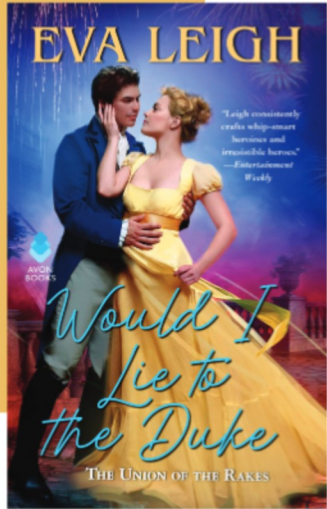
The Silence of the White City

Eva García Sáenz’s White City Trilogy, of which the first novel, **The Silence of the White City** (Black Lizard, \$16.95, 9781984898593), has just been translated into English, is already a bestseller in Spain (as well as the basis for a popular Netflix series). It’s set in the atmospheric Basque Country of northern Spain, in the city of Vitoria. As the story opens, Inspector Unai “Kraken” López de Ayala is summoned to the scene of a homicide remi-



★ Then She Vanished

There is a certain symmetry on display when an Iraq veteran working as a private investigator takes on a missing persons case for a brother-in-arms—semper fi and all that. **Then She Vanished** (Putnam, \$27, 9780525537670), T. Jefferson Parker’s fourth Roland Ford mystery, lodges the detective firmly in the crosshairs once again, as he discovers that his Republican war hero-turned-politician client, Dalton Strait, is not nearly as squeaky clean as he is portrayed in his bio and that the disappearance of his wife, Natalie, is suspicious to say the least. And let’s throw in a brewing war between California’s recently established legal marijuana dispensaries and a south-of-the-border drug cartel affected by this new order. Oh, and for good measure, add a bomber intent on sowing chaos and insurrection, who previews his next target on the nightly TV news and may be connected to Ford’s case. As told in the first person from Ford’s perspective, there



★ Would I Lie to the Duke

An ambitious woman with a family business to save falls for an aristocrat in the Regency historical romance *Would I Lie to the Duke* (Avon, \$7.99, 9780062932426) by Eva Leigh. Hoping to secure an investor, Jessica McGale, posing as “Lady Whitfield,” finagles her way into an elite group that includes Noel, the Duke of Rotherby. They’re immediately attracted, and Jess impresses him with her intelligence, common sense and ability to treat him as a man rather than a title. Their romance is charming, their conversations witty and sly, and their love scenes are positively scorching. But all good masquerades must come to an end, and Noel feels betrayed by Jess’ deceit, despite its good cause. There are well-rounded characters, drama and some impish fun—one man pitches what sounds very much like an impractical version of Twitter—but the satisfying sense of female empowerment makes this a standout.

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Say No More

A horrific past shadows the heroine of Karen Rose’s *Say No More* (Berkley, \$26, 9781984805300). Sexual abuse survivor Mercy Callahan returns to Northern California to reunite with her brother and uncover details of the dangerous cult that raised them. Police detective Rafe Sokolov can’t help but admire Mercy’s grit as they team up to stop recent killings that may be connected to the cult. Mercy is no isolated damsel in distress, and Rafe is no driven lone wolf. Loyal family and friends step in to help the protagonists, and it’s a richer story for their presence. There’s lethal,

heart-tripping danger, but the tender love story and powerful friendships provide a positive emotional core to this exciting thriller.



Wild Cowboy Country

Park ranger Lacey Montgomery suffers a concussion while protecting a wolf den from harassment by teenagers at the beginning of Erin Marsh’s *Wild Cowboy Country* (Sourcebooks Casablanca, \$7.99, 9781492670919). But she

A **timely**, **POWERFUL**, ultimately **exultant** tale of **RESILIENCE** and *hope* amidst the **1918 influenza pandemic** that went on to **INFECT** one-third of the world, killing **MORE AMERICANS THAN WWI...**



More Novels by Wiseman that **Cast a Hopeful Light** on History’s Darkest Hours.



My phone interview with the 19th poet laureate of the United States happens just days after a series of national tragedies: the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Tony McDade at the hands of police officers, crimes that have plunged the world—and Black communities in particular—into grief and rage. These circumstances momentarily shift the direction of our interview, and it is Natasha Trethewey who asks the first pointed question: “How are you holding up?” Her voice is rich with an accent that reminds me of home (we both grew up in states along the Gulf Coast), but it’s also tinged with something else: the bone-deep knowledge of what it means to survive violent, life-shattering loss.

Trethewey has spent much of her career studying tragedies of both national and personal scale, and her seventh book, **Memorial Drive: A Daughter’s Memoir**, is no different. It chronicles the life and death of her mother, Gwendolyn Ann Turnbough, who was murdered by her second ex-husband, Joel Grimmette Jr., in 1985. Though several of Trethewey’s poetry collections deal with the subject of her mother’s murder (in particular *Native Guard*, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 2007), **Memorial Drive** is the poet’s first memoir.

The prologue begins with a description of Turnbough’s last professionally taken photograph, in which her black dress is so indistinguishable from the background that her face appears to emerge from darkness “as from the depths of memory.” What follows is a haunting exploration of memory—unpredictable, incomplete and at times obfuscating—through the metaphor of negative space, the area around a subject. Interwoven with the book’s chapters are breathtakingly short vignettes in which Trethewey recalls dreamscapes where her mother is still alive, sometimes older than she was at the time of her death. In the vignette that precedes the first chapter, a piercing light shines from a bullet wound in the center of her mother’s forehead, ringing her face in utter darkness as she asks Trethewey, “Do you know what it means to have a wound that never heals?”

The chapters vary drastically in length, from single pages to much longer ones like “Evidence,” which includes transcripts of Turnbough’s final conversations with the man who would kill her only a few days later. During our call, Trethewey explains that she included these because, even when she’s recalling her own painful past, she is, at heart, a historian. “I’m someone who likes documentary evidence,” she says from her home outside Chicago. “I can tell you how remarkable my mother was, and resilient,



In memory of a living mother

Natasha Trethewey was already one of America’s greatest contemporary poets. Now she reveals a new level of artistry in a memoir about her life’s defining tragedy.

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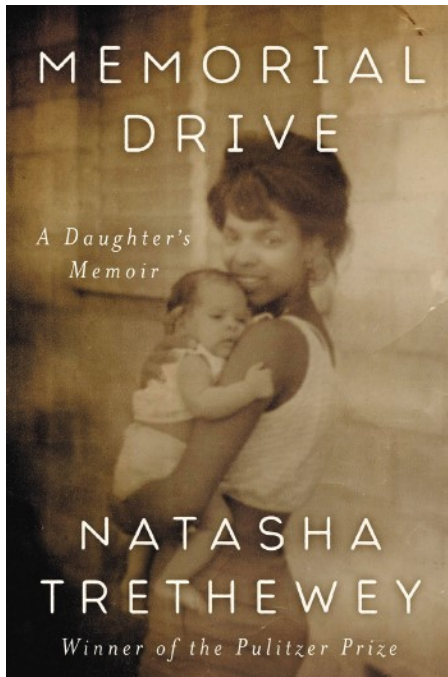
ened young Trethewey until her mother transformed it into a playroom planetarium, complete with a desk, books and a velvet cloth sky with stars made from cardboard and aluminum foil. Years later, when Trethewey shared with the family her dreams of being a writer and her stepfather told her it would never happen, Turnbough openly defied him with the full knowledge of the abuse she might later suffer. “*She. Will do. WHAT-EVER. She wants,*” she told him in front of their two children. In every instance, Turnbough worked to make use of the spaces available to her

mother purchased in an attempt to offer her a private place to process her thoughts, Trethewey laughs. “I don’t know how I knew, but I just knew that if I did this, that it would be between us, and it would be this way that I could push back. It wasn’t until much later, once I became a writer, that I began to think about it as a defining moment in terms of me having an audience, or imagining that I was writing for someone to read it. I think that it had everything to do with the writer I became.” This destruction of privacy transformed Trethewey’s personal space into a public one, and the poet began speaking truth to power.

Trethewey’s loss of her mother shortly after turning 19, however, is the point at which she believes the second half of her life began; Turnbough’s death split her daughter’s life into two parts, much like the book itself. “I became a whole other person,” Trethewey tells me. “That’s why I structured things as ‘before’ and ‘after.’ The hardest thing to acknowledge sometimes is I don’t know who I’d be without her death. If you were to say to me, ‘She could come back right now, we could undo that,’ it would mean I’d be the one gone. I don’t know who would be here.” Again, what is missing highlights what is left.

This admission reminds Trethewey of a moment that took place shortly after Turnbough escaped her abusive marriage. During a Friday night football game, Grimmette appeared in the stands as Trethewey stood with the other cheerleaders on the field. When she saw him, she waved, and only later discovered that he’d planned to shoot her that night as punishment for her mother leaving. Near the end of this section in **Memorial Drive**, Trethewey writes that, theoretically, her mother’s murder would have been impossible had Grimmette killed her first, a sentiment she echoes during our call. “For a long time, it felt to me like I had traded my life for hers,” she explains.

However, loss and self-preservation are never mutually exclusive, and **Memorial Drive** makes clear that the dead are more than their absence, the blank space where there was once a body, a life. The book ends with the singular image of Turnbough’s still-beating heart, a choice that was influenced by a trip Trethewey took to South Korea. Over



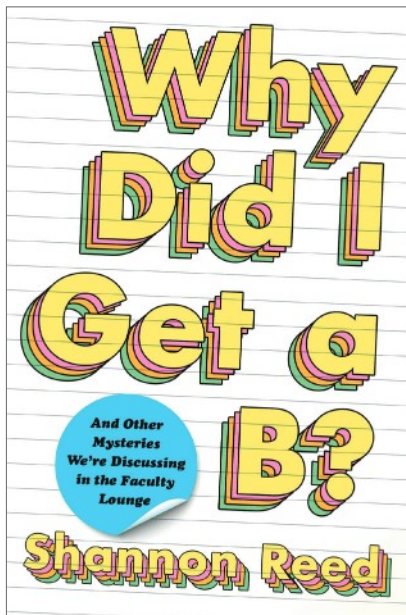
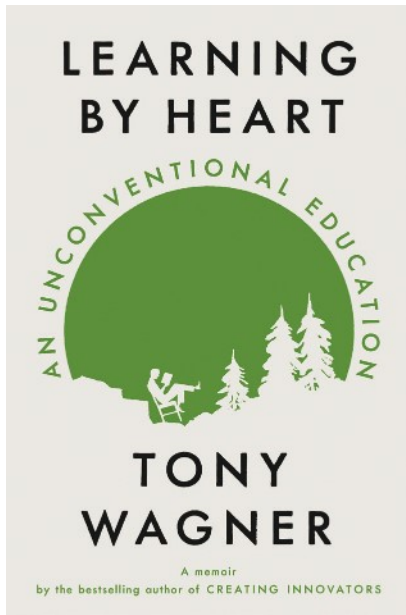
Memorial Drive
Ecco, \$27.99, 9780062248572

Memoir

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Literature with a lesson

These three memoirs by educators have all the humor, heart and hurrah we would expect from our favorite teachers, without the extra homework.

As students and teachers prepare for fall, these timely books explore the ways in which education both fails and finds us. As each memoir here shows, we can shape the future of our world simply by rethinking the way we learn.

Tony Wagner, senior research fellow at the Learning Policy Institute and a longtime education specialist, examines the ways in which the structures of American education fail to respect the individuality of each student in his memoir, **Learning by Heart: An Unconventional Education** (Viking, \$28, 9780525561873). After being kicked out of several boarding schools and failing out of college twice, Wagner began to pursue learning not for the sake of earning an “education” but rather for the love of knowledge. This passion sent him on a journey to discover how he could provide that same opportunity to students educated in more classical environments. Traveling far from his New England home to study in Mexico, Wagner eventually returned to America’s most hallowed and traditional halls at Harvard University to challenge widely accepted paradigms of learning.

Readers who are frustrated by conventional schooling will recognize Wagner’s fascinating narrative as their own. However, it’s worth noting that Wagner’s journey ends positively thanks in part to his proximity to certain societal privileges. Though he tries to acknowledge this privilege at points throughout the memoir, it’s not difficult for the reader to imagine how this story might differ if it were told from the perspective of someone with access to fewer resources and opportunities.

In contrast, **Why Did I Get a B? And Other Mysteries We’re Discussing in the Faculty Lounge** (Atria, \$26, 9781982136093) addresses issues of disparity in education and chronicles author Shannon Reed’s growth from a traditionally successful middle-class student to an actively passionate teacher with an

reers. Educators will appreciate the particular brand of nerdy sarcasm that pervades Reed’s book—and they may even recognize it as one of the quirks teachers must develop to survive in the world of education. However, anyone not in that world will enjoy the book, too, as an honest look into how teachers’ brains work to solve problems and do what’s best for their kids, while also just trying to stay alive.

This sentiment also undergirds **Kid Quixotes: A Group of Students, Their Teacher, and the One-Room School Where Everything Is Possible** (HarperOne, \$27.99, 9780062934062), which details author Stephen Haff’s personal experience with bipolar depression alongside his efforts to construct a creative and individualized learning environment for kids in

Brooklyn’s Bushwick neighborhood. **Kid Quixotes** weaves together the narrative of Haff’s teaching career and the stories of his students, who are largely members of the Latinx immigrant community. These kids, who seek solace in Haff’s Still Waters in a Storm after-school program, translate Miguel de

Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* from its original Spanish into English and then into their own interpretative play over the course of five years. This process of reading, writing and translating allows Haff to uncover the complexities of each child’s life story, and he encourages them to bring those personal experiences to life through the play.

Each of Haff’s students speaks out from the pages of this book and implores readers to hear their voice. In particular, Haff spotlights the voice of a young girl named Sarah, the “Kid Quixote” of Still Waters, who speaks prophetically both to the other children and to the reader. After she tells her first story at Still Waters, Haff remarks that the other children were “stunned, as if they had just met God.” The reader also feels this moment’s transcendence, which continues throughout the book.

One of the final sequences in **Kid Quixotes** de-

These books represent the best of what education could offer, if we would only believe in the power of each person’s individual story.

Message of hope

An intrepid pigeon and a patient war hero are at the heart of this sweet and creative new novel set during World War I.

Kathleen Rooney knew that writing half of her new book, **Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey**, from the point of view of a pigeon was a risk. But to the self-described animal lover, assuming a bird's POV made perfect sense.

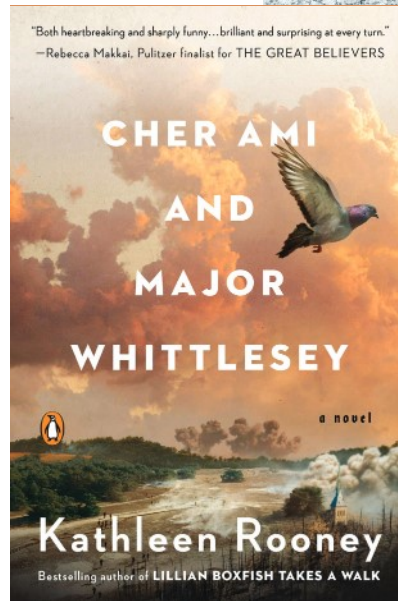
"A lot of people dislike and malign pigeons, but I never have," Rooney says from her Chicago home, where she lives with her spouse, author Martin Seay. She rejects the idea of pigeons as rats with wings. "If you watch them, they're such good fliers. . . . They're really clean and smart. And rats aren't that bad, either. They're doing the best they can!"

Rooney, perhaps best known for her 2017 bestseller, *Lillian Boxfish Takes a Walk*, says her interest in a feathered narrator was sparked by one of her students at DePaul University, where she is an English professor. "A student named Brian referenced Cher Ami in a poem and said to me, 'Look it up!' Of course, I did—and it blew my mind that this pigeon was so heroic and is stuffed and on display in the Smithsonian."

Her researcher instincts activated, Rooney learned that Cher Ami, a British homing pigeon, helped save a group of American troops known as the "Lost Battalion" during a horrific, multiday World War I battle. The story of this amazing pigeon, the terrible conflict and the extraordinary man who commanded the beleaguered battalion—Major Charles Whittlesey, the other narrator of the novel—is strange, true and, in Rooney's hands, altogether haunting and compelling.

"Once I learned about Charles, I was fascinated with him—how good he was at some things, yet how ill-suited he was to be a war hero," Rooney says. In her reading about the era, she was intrigued by the cultural fixation on masculinity, a complicated issue that we continue to contemplate a hundred years later. "It was the early 20th century, people were moving from rural to urban, and there was a real fear of men getting soft," Rooney explains. "Going to war was something you had to do if you wanted to be a man."

In **Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey**, Charles reflects on his happier prewar days in New York City, where he ran a law firm with a college classmate. Many an evening, he visited parts of the city where he could spend time with other closeted gay men and truly feel like himself. When it came time for battle, though, he focused on strategy and survival as he and his men, positioned in trenches in a section of the French Argonne Forest known as "the pocket," found themselves cut off from supply lines, surrounded



Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey
Penguin, \$17, 9780143135425

Historical Fiction

untold animals were lost. The fact that she was so important that they saved her, when normally pigeons with those injuries would have just been discarded, shows what she did and how important it was."

There's an interesting lesson to be learned from Charles' decisions in battle, too. "He was famous for something we'd describe as passive," Rooney says. "Once they were in the pocket, he waited as hard as he could. I'm an impatient, active person. . . . His act was stillness, waiting, keeping everybody's spirits up. The way he did that was amazing."

Although Charles was able to save 194 members of his 500-man division, he couldn't save everyone, and the experience took a heavy toll. He and his compatriots were given medals, held up as heroes and reminded of their wartime experiences daily, in a time when PTSD was only just beginning to be acknowledged.

"The only cure [for PTSD] is prevention," Rooney says. "War has been around forever, but I think it can end. It breaks people, and the way to not break people is to not make them [go to war] in the first place."

She adds that, with **Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey**, "I hope to make people think about why we still do this. To what extent, as a civilization,



behind the book | jill mccorkle

warning light, World War II soldiers heading home for Christmas. There were presents strewn, a bridal veil in the limbs of a tree, hospitals filled to capacity.

I was an adolescent myself when I first heard the story. My dad was grilling steaks, our dog waiting for a bone, and the telling of his memory became one of my own. I imagined the crash and my dad as a boy, and I committed to memory the night I sat and listened, the glowing coals and the sadness in his voice as he described the scene and the many people waiting for news that would proclaim a loved one alive or dead: a clothing tag, a scar, a particular brand and size of shoe, words and numbers and objects with the power to represent a whole life. The dry-cleaning tag becomes an intimate object, as does the watch, the lucky coin, the button someone might have fastened in place before getting on the train.

During the years I lived in the Boston area, I often heard references to the Cocoanut Grove fire of 1942, another catastrophic event that shocked and devastated a whole community. It was cold, it was dark, and people were left waiting and searching for personal items—a ring or necklace, a monogram or tag—anything that could bring news.

In the novel, two of my characters—Lil and Frank—are dealing with having parents who died in these tragic events. His father was on the train going home; her mother went to the Cocoanut Grove club without telling Lil or Lil's father where she was going. These losses led them

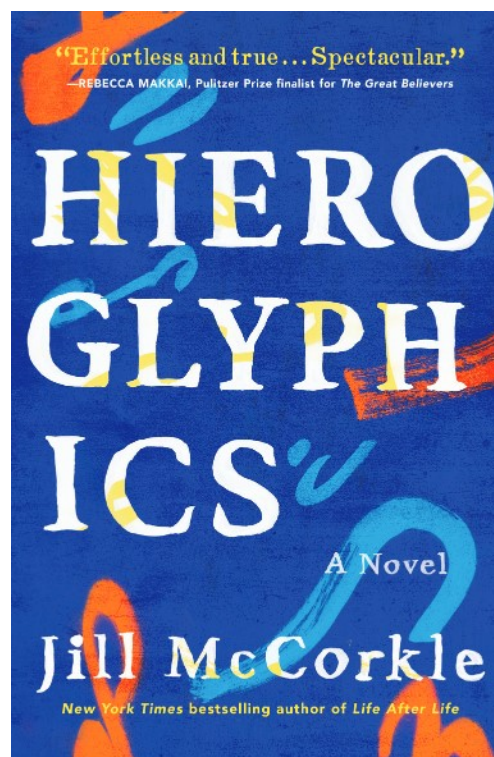
now, Frank has avoided looking, unlike Lil, who flings hers wide open, determined to know all that she can. Shelley has locked and barred her door multiple times, but the wind keeps rattling all the things she cannot escape, while her son, Harvey, is just beginning to find his way, doing what all children do: imagining his future and, along the way, finding and collecting and hiding little things like matchbook covers and flattened pennies.

In the early days of writing this novel, I read that when sites of orphanages or schools are excavated, there are often little caches of toys tucked away and hidden, evidence of children wanting to claim and protect what belongs to them. There are also the many versions of “Kilroy was here”—graffiti, handprints, notes in bottles—the desire to be remembered and, thus, immortal. In shaping these characters, I was thinking of the many marks we leave on our worlds, from the most visible knowledge

An endless excavation

Beloved novelist Jill McCorkle ruminates on keepsakes of memory and her latest novel, *Hieroglyphics*.

When I was growing up, there was a train that passed daily not far from our house. I loved the sound of it, and the whole neighborhood loved playing on the tracks. Even though we were told not to go there—admonished and threatened with the terrible things that could happen—we returned to put pennies on the tracks and watch them get flattened. There was always someone saying how destroying a penny was against the law and we could get arrested, but that fear usually dissipated with the flat copper treasure in our pockets and the view of the many miles we could travel, crosstie



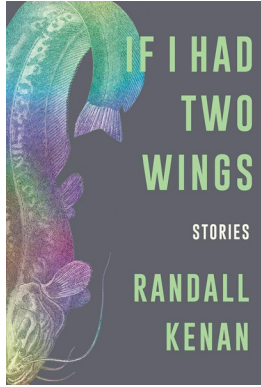
to the tiniest keepsake or

Hieroglyphics

Only the essentials

Short fiction can be as emotionally complex as songs and as precise as poetry.
The writers who do it well leave us in awe.

Three new short story collections from masters of the form offer all the power and surprise of great novels.



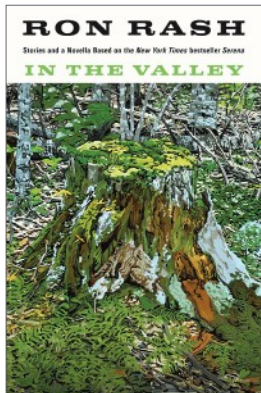
If I Had Two Wings

In his new collection, **If I Had Two Wings** (Norton, \$25.95, 9781324005469), Randall Kenan proves once again that he belongs to an elite group of short fiction writers who can master plot and character to create perfectly balanced little miracles of focus and style. Returning to his fictional locale of Tims Creek, North Carolina, Kenan takes us on 10 captivating journeys of change, loss, redemption, salvation and even a little magic. And while the stories share a geographic connection in some way or another, each feels like it exists in

its own rich, fully realized space.

What reaches out and grabs the reader right away, though, is not the place but the power of voice infused into every story, from that of a young girl who encounters a magical man in a creek, to a man reconnecting with an old flame after the death of his lover from AIDS, to an old woman who's put in front of TV cameras as a miracle worker. The characters' voices will leave you wanting to reach out to them again, to read on even after their stories have ended. Kenan's collection is a treasure.

—Matthew Jackson



In the Valley

Ron Rash is a poet, novelist and author of award-winning short stories whose work is steeped in the history and culture of Appalachia. His latest collection, **In the Valley** (Doubleday, \$26.95, 9780385544290), features nine haunting stories set in rural North Carolina from the Civil War to the present, followed by a novella continuing the saga of Serena Pemberton, the maniacal wife of logger George Pemberton from Rash's 2008 novel, *Serena*.

Each of the stories encapsulates a scene from the backwoods of Appalachia, often portraying a character struggling to do the right thing when given the opportunity to stand up to evil. Most memorably, "Ransom" paints an indelible portrait of a young woman kidnapped and forced into opioid addiction, all to satisfy



Animal Spirit

When a short story is operating at its peak, it's able to convey a novel's worth of emotional depth and allure. Francesca Marciano possesses this gift, a special magic that allows her to say so much in just a few thousand words, as demonstrated by her new collection, **Animal Spirit** (Pantheon, \$25.95, 9781524748159).

The six stories all feature a character at some kind of crossroads, often having arrived suddenly and with loads of emotional baggage. And in each story, animals arrive to shift the balance, from a small white dog on a road at

night to a flock of troublesome seagulls that represent much more than a nuisance on a Roman terrace.

Marciano displays a spellbinding sense of control over her characters, and she does so with surprising brevity and well-composed pacing. **Animal Spirit** is a passionate, compelling exercise in the fine art of short fiction. It's proof that the most intimate narratives are often the most powerful.

—Matthew Jackson



8 major debuts of the summer

Cherie Dimaline author of *Empire of Wild*

William Morrow, \$27.99, 9780062975942

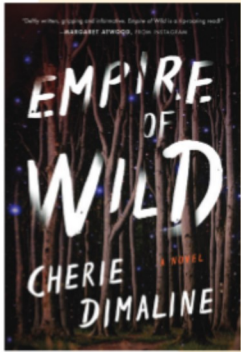


The author: Writer and activist Cherie Dimaline is a member of the Georgian Bay Métis Community in Ontario. She has published five books in Canada and makes her U.S. adult debut with *Empire of Wild*.

The book: Drawing inspiration from legends of the werewolf-like rougarou, Dimaline's powerful and inventive novel follows a woman who is searching for the truth behind her husband's mysterious disappearance and even more suspicious return.

For fans of: Literary thrillers that draw from the author's cultural heritage, such as *LaRose* by Louise Erdrich.

Read it for: Indigenous empowerment and a flawless mixture of supernatural events and realistic characters.



Raven Leilani author of *Luster*

FSG, \$26, 9780374194321



The author: A former student of Zadie Smith (who hyped *Luster* earlier this year in *Harper's Bazaar*), Raven Leilani has won multiple prizes for her fiction and poetry and is the Axinn Foundation Writer-in-Residence at NYU.

The book: This gritty novel explores many appetites—for sex, companionship, attention and money—and what happens when those lusts are sated.

For fans of: Spike Lee's 2017 reboot of *She's Gotta Have It* and heavy-hitting millennial writers like Ling Ma and Catherine Lacey.

Read it for: Leilani's cerebral, raw writing and keen social observations—especially about the truths that some people don't want to see.



Rónán Hession

author of *Leonard and Hungry Paul*

Melville House, \$25.99, 9781612198484

The author: Dublin-based author Rónán Hession is a social worker and songwriter who has released three lyrical acoustic albums as Mumblin' Deaf Ro.

The book: Hession explores the ordinary lives of two everyday guys in their 30s. Leonard's mom has just died, and he's working through his grief and loneliness. Hungry Paul lives at home with his parents and is occasionally accosted with motivational speeches by his older sister. These two lifelong friends go to work (or not, as the case may be), meet new people, try new things—the stuff of everyday life.

For fans of: Stories of lives well lived from Maeve Binchy and Mark Haddon.

Read it for: The reminder that we're all just



Alex Landragin author of *Crossings*

St. Martin's, \$27.99, 9781250259042



The author: French Armenian Australian writer Alex Landragin is a former author of Lonely Planet travel guides.

The book: *Crossings* is composed of three imaginative tales: a ghost story written by Charles Baudelaire, a German Jewish exile's dark love story on the precipice of the Nazi invasion of Paris and a memoir by a woman who lives through seven generations. The reader can read each story individually or follow the



Summer 2020 has been a season of big shifts, including in the world of fiction. We're delighted to give a warm welcome to these new voices and their debut novels.

Charlotte McConaghy

author of *Migrations*

Flatiron, \$26.99, 9781250204028

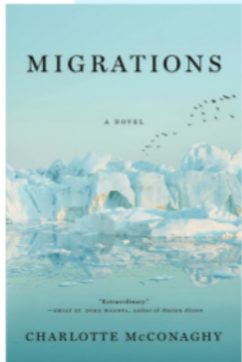


The author: Charlotte McConaghy has published eight books in her native Australia and has worked in script development for film and TV for several years.

The book: Set in a near-future world that's facing the mass extinction of animals, McConaghy's U.S. debut follows a young woman named Franny who, grappling with a lifelong inability to define the nature of home, joins a fishing crew to follow the last migration of Arctic terns.

For fans of: Emotionally resonant tales like *Disappearing Earth* by Julia Phillips and *H Is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald.

Read it for: A message of hope when all feels hopeless.



Sanaë Lemoine

author of *The Margot Affair*

Hogarth, \$27, 9781984854438



The author: Born in Paris to a Japanese mother and French father, Sanaë Lemoine was raised in France and Australia. She now lives in New York, where she has worked as a recipe writer and cookbook editor.

The book: Margot Louve is the product of a long affair between a married public figure and a well-

Lysley Tenorio

author of *The Son of Good Fortune*

Ecco, \$27.99, 9780062059574



The author: Lysley Tenorio is a Filipino American professor at Saint Mary's College of California whose stories have been adapted for the stage in New York City and San Francisco.

The book: Excel, a young Filipino immigrant living in California, lives paycheck to paycheck with his mother, a former low-budget movie star who now scams men online. When Excel meets a girl named Sab, the two run away and find themselves at the whimsical desert community of Hello City.

For fans of: Unique perspectives of the immigrant experience, such as *The Leavers* by Lisa Ko.

Read it for: A powerful examination of the bond between mother, son and motherland.



Odie Lindsey

author of *Some Go Home*

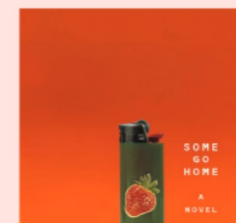
Norton, \$26.95, 9780393249521



The author: Combat veteran Odie Lindsey is the Writer-in-Residence at Vanderbilt University's Center for Medicine, Health, and Society.

The book: Inspired by the author's work as an editor of the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, *Some Go Home* is set in the fictional town of Pitchlynn, Mississippi, where white residents are forced to face buried truths during a retrial for the violent, decades-old murder of a Black man.

For fans of: *The Bitter Southerner* and Southern novels that wrestle with the region's complicated, brutal history.



★ Hamnet

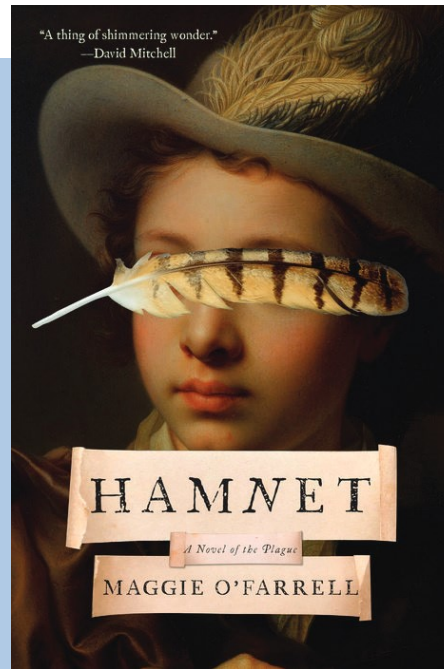
By Maggie O'Farrell

Literary Fiction

Maggie O'Farrell's **Hamnet** (Knopf, \$26.95, 9780525657606) is both a brilliant re-creation of the lives of William Shakespeare and his family in late 16th-century Stratford-upon-Avon and an emotionally intense account of the death of the dramatist's young son and its painful aftermath.

Told mostly through the eyes of Shakespeare's wife, herbalist and clairvoyant Agnes (known to history as Anne Hathaway), **Hamnet** shifts between the early 1580s, when she and William meet as he's tutoring her stepsiblings on their farm outside Stratford, and 1596, when the couple resides in a small apartment next to her in-laws' house. William struggles to escape his overbearing father and the family's glove-making business to pursue his writing career.

In a flawlessly executed chapter that's especially chilling in this time of global pandemic, O'Farrell traces the path of the bubonic plague from a glass-blowing factory near Venice to the Shakespeare home, where it afflicts Judith, the twin sister of 11-year-old Hamnet. Through a supernatural chain of events initiated by Hamnet, the disease passes from the girl to her sibling, and Agnes' joy at Judith's miraculous recovery is eclipsed by the horror of the boy's unexpected death. What follows is a vivid and heartbreaking portrait of grief, as Agnes tries to adjust to life without Hamnet, while



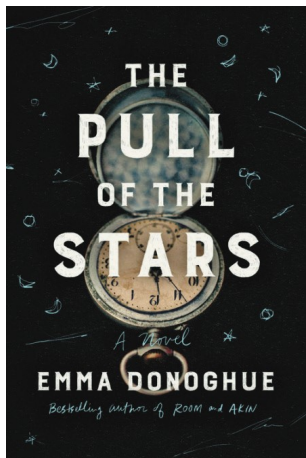
William travels to London and moves forward as a celebrated playwright.

An award-winning writer who has published seven previous novels, O'Farrell excels at evoking the essence of the Shakespeares' daily lives in Stratford, from the claustrophobia of the family's dwelling to the beauty of Agnes' beloved forest, where she gathers plants to fashion her potions. But in addition to getting all the details right, O'Farrell succeeds in creating psychologically acute portraits of characters living at a distance of more than 400 years. Graceful and moving, **Hamnet** is a triumph of literary and historical fiction.

—Harvey Freedenberg

The Pull of the Stars

By Emma Donoghue



Historical Fiction

As everyone now knows, the challenges of being a health care worker are exponentially greater during a global pandemic. As Emma Donoghue explains in the author's note to **The Pull of the**

Stars (Little, Brown, \$28, 9780316499019), her thinly plotted but moving new novel, the cen-

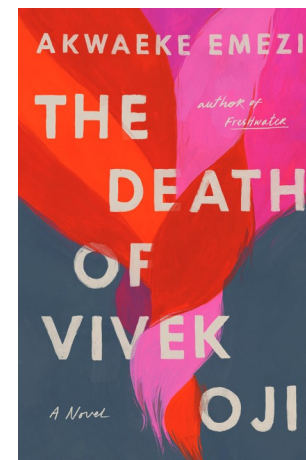
she has worked since age 21, she learns that the head of the maternity/fever ward has taken ill. Julia is to serve as acting ward sister in her stead.

In spare prose, Donoghue documents Julia's harrowing three days. Her patients are pregnant women of various economic backgrounds. Some characters are more fully fleshed out than others, but all suffer from the flu and other complications, much of which Donoghue renders in graphic detail. Among the people assisting Julia is the book's one real-life figure: Kathleen Lynn, the physician and Sinn Féin activist who was instrumental in the Easter Rebellion of 1916.

The book's most touching sequences dramatize the budding friendship between Julia and Bridie Sweeney, a volunteer who was raised in a convent and gives her age as "about twenty-two." The stories of Bridie's upbringing are among the book's most

★ The Death of Vivek Oji

By Akwaeke Emezi



Family Drama

In Akwaeke Emezi's brief, remarkable second novel for adults, the reader knows from the start that the central character, Vivek Oji, is dead. After riots in the marketplace of their Nigerian town, Vivek's mother discovers his naked body placed "like a parcel, like a gift" at the family's

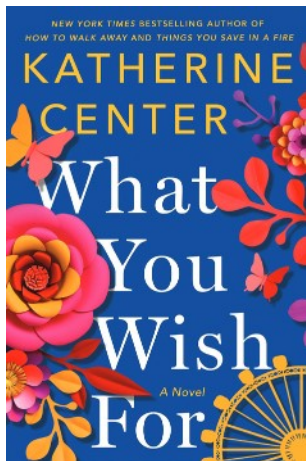
turns violently angry and girlishly shy. He is often beset by fugue states during which his body is present and his consciousness vanishes. Vivek's family is loving but unable to comprehend him. His extended family is populated by "Nigerwomen," women from India, the Philippines or Sweden who are married to Nigerian men. Outdated sexual traditions and identities—multiple wives for Nigerian men and a sanctified horror of gay people, for example—still prevail in these families. After being forced to leave university, Vivek spends more and more time with the daughters of his extended family. These daughters are of a new generation and seem to understand and protect him.

Yes, it takes a village to raise a child. But, Emezi implies, it takes a culture and its mythologies to erase a child. **The Death of Vivek Oji** (Riverhead, \$27, 9780525541608) is a profound exploration of the boundaries of personal, sexual and cultural transition.

—Alden Mudge

What You Wish For

By Katherine Center



Popular Fiction

Katherine Center, reigning queen of comfort reads, returns with an exuberant new novel that will have readers rejoicing. **What You Wish For** (St. Martin's, \$27.99, 9781250219367) is a bona fide

explosion of happiness packaged in book form.

Ensnared in the free-spirited island town of Galveston, Texas, Samantha Casey is living the life of her dreams. Working as a school librarian, Sam is like a second daughter to the Kempner School's founders, Max and Babette, and she feels like she's finally found the family

Sam decides to fight for her school and her students, launching a "joy offensive" on Duncan to help him remember who he used to be. If she happens to lose her heart to him all over again in the process—well, that's a risk she'll have to take.

A compassionate story of grief and resilience, **What You Wish For** is also a vital reminder that joy is not just something that happens to us but also something we have the power to choose. As Max always told Sam, we must "never miss a chance to celebrate," even when things get tough. Ultimately, that is what Center has created for her readers: a quirky confection that celebrates life in all its imperfect glory and delivers a much-needed dose of optimism.

—Stephenie Harrison

Must I Go

By Yiyun Li



Literary Fiction

At 81, Lilia Liska is a crabby presence at her assisted living center, offering tart replies to her neighbors' small kindnesses. But Lilia, the main character in Yiyun Li's new novel, **Must I Go** (Random House,

\$28, 9780399589126), has a secret obsession: rereading the self-published diaries of Roland Bouley, the man she had a brief affair with 65 years ago. Roland never knew that he was the father of Lilia's first child, Lucy, nor that Lucy killed herself at age 26.

Lilia bears some resemblance to Elizabeth Strout's indelible character Olive Kitteridge. As with Olive's story, suicide is a theme; Lilia returns repeatedly to Lucy's death, understanding as little now as she did then. Like Olive, Lilia walled off her heart long ago and is now

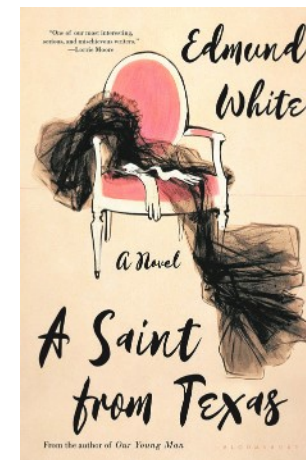
left unsaid, about Roland's practical wife, Hetty, and his longtime lover, Sidelle. Her notes are often funny, taking the self-important Roland down a peg: "Let's forgive Roland his bluffing. Let's enjoy it. . . . He wore his lies like tailored suits." This is a novel to sink into, knowing that you may not remember all the extended family members Lilia mentions, nor all the names Roland notes in his diary entries from the 1940s.

The author of three other novels, two story collections and a memoir, Li was born and raised in pre-capitalist Beijing, came to the U.S. for graduate school in immunology and later earned an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. She's a wide-ranging writer who can bringhen dark themes with humor and hope.

—Sarah McCraw Crow

A Saint From Texas

By Edmund White



Coming of Age

Exploring the complexities of sin, passion and love—both human and divine—Edmund White spins a tale of two Texas sisters whose destinies could not be more dissimilar. From the social milieu

of Paris to the sanctity of a Colombian convent, **A Saint From Texas** (Bloomsbury, \$26, 9781635572551) is alive with desire and rich with history, and White's love for his characters is infectious.

Yvonne and Yvette (pronounced "Why-vonne" and "Why-vette," y'all) are identical twins from a wealthy family. After their mother dies and their stepmother uproots the family to Dallas, the twins begin to grow into entirely different women. Whereas Yvonne becomes a proper Dallas socialite, with long blond hair

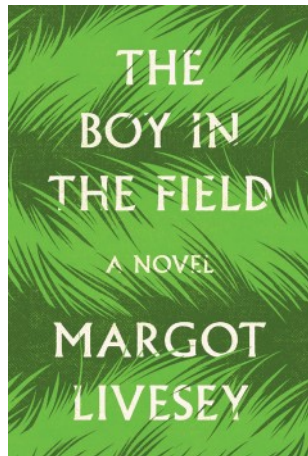
marriage, with brief yet powerful epistolary transmissions from Yvette. Both sides of the story are moving, emotionally tortuous and prurient, highlighted by White's subtle and tender prose.

White's nearly 50-year career has inspired the minds and lifted the hearts of many, and the 80-year-old author's storytelling power only continues to rise. **A Saint From Texas** explores the deep trenches of each woman's struggle, and we are forced to consider the differences between worldly and heavenly desire, though one may realize that perhaps there aren't that many. In this book, love is shapeless and nameless, though its effects can be staggering.

—Eric Ponce

The Boy in the Field

By Margot Livesey



Family Drama

The discovery of a random crime leads to an empathic exploration of family, connection and creativity in Margot Livesey's ninth novel, **The Boy in the Field** (Harper, \$26.99, 9780062946393).

Walking home from school outside of Oxford, England, siblings Matthew, Zoe and Duncan Lang find Karel Lustig lying in a field, stabbed and left for dead. Their intervention saves his life, but it also sends each of them on a voyage of self-discovery. The oldest, Matthew, avidly follows the police investigation but also seeks out Karel's family and is discomfited by their complicated dynamic, especially when Karel's hostile older brother demands that Matthew assist him in finding his brother's assailant. At 16, Zoe is discovering the potency of her own sexuality and is bored by boys her own age, so she pursues

her own discovery of family in Australia, after she believed she had no living relatives on her mother's side, is reflected in Duncan's search for the woman he calls his "first mother."

It's not the solving of the crime that moves the plot along—the discovery of Karel's attacker is anticlimactic at best—but rather the quiet way Livesey explores the enduring and, in this case, elastic bonds of family love, even in the most stressful situations. Filled with detailed observation and a precisely delineated plot, **The Boy in the Field** will please readers who enjoy coming-of-age stories written with psychological precision and empathy.

—Lauren Bufferd

Musical Chairs

By Amy Poeppel



Comic Fiction

Reading Amy Poeppel's **Musical Chairs** (Emily Bestler, \$27, 9781501176418) is as fun as watching a Marx Brothers comedy, especially that scene in *A Night at the Opera* when every-

one is squashed

into the stateroom. Warmhearted, maternal, beautiful and rich, Bridget Stratton has long been the cellist in the Forsyth Trio. The problem is that they're actually a duo, as she and the pianist, her platonic pal Will, have no luck in keeping a violinist. The most recent was Gavin, whom both Will and Bridget sort of disliked. (He was brilliant and never let them forget it.) When the novel opens, Bridget has come to Connecticut to spend the summer in her ramshackle old country house down the road from her famous dad's sprawling estate, and she is getting a little desperate for a fiddler.

Then Bridget's hypochondriac daughter,

them by playing one of Edward's compositions at the wedding? Reenter Gavin, demonic toddler and persnickety wife in tow. At least they don't have a dog.

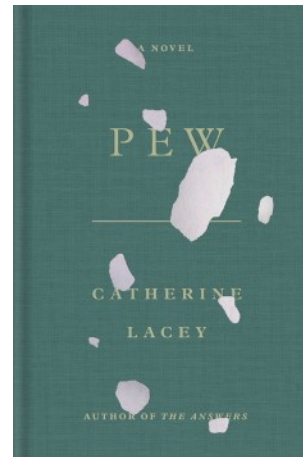
Among many other characters are Jackie, Edward's young assistant, who's both hapless and efficient; Edward's housekeeper, Marge, a mashup of Hazel and Alice from "The Brady Bunch"; and Bridget's sister, Gwen, dropper of famous names.

Poeppel's people are a mess, but her writing is crisp and breezy. Where does everyone end up when the music stops? Read and find out.

—Arlene McKanic

Pew

By Catherine Lacey



Literary Fiction

An ambitious fable that speaks to our need to classify and control, **Pew** (FSG, \$26, 9780374230920) tells the story of a person of indeterminate race and gender whose arrival

throws a community into an existential crisis at the same time that they are readying themselves for the ominously named Day of Forgiveness.

Arriving at church one morning, residents of a small Southern town find a young person asleep in a pew. The person, who refuses to identify themselves or even speak, appears to be gender nonconforming as well as racially nonspecific. A well-intentioned family volunteers to take the stranger home, naming them Pew after the church bench where they were found.

Pew's silence creates a kind of blank slate that draws in members of the community; confessing fears, dreams and past transgressions is easier to a wordless stranger. But

level of care seems to ebb and flow with this information or lack of it. With creepy allusions to Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and a timely exploration of gender's mutability, *Pew* is provocative and suspenseful, a modern-day parable about how our fear of otherness stands in the way of our compassion.

—Lauren Bufferd

The Weekend

By Charlotte Wood



Popular Fiction

Charlotte Wood's honest and humorous *The Weekend* (Riverhead, \$27, 9780593086438) follows three women in their 70s as they meet to clear out their friend's house after her passing.

Months after

Sylvie's death, her three close friends continue to grieve. Bossy former restaurateur Jude, practical intellectual Wendy and actor Adele, who's holding on to faded dreams, all struggle to restore what is left of their friendships now that Sylvie is gone. In their short gathering at the beach house, insecurities, bitterness and secrets are revealed, shaking the very foundation of their friendships. Antagonism, which for so long has gone unexpressed, brews just beneath the surface, as the three women question what has held them together for so long.

Adele isn't the only one struggling to adjust to her current life. Despite the sturdy image she portrays on the outside, Jude is having a hard time coping with old age. Her love life is an unspoken issue between the friends, yet all three are aware of her clandestine relationship. Wendy's dog, Finn, is nearing death, but despite his pain, Wendy is reluctant to let him go, convinced that her commitment to him represents her unwillingness to give up on life.

Economic and racial divides prove to be powerful motivators in these two gritty thrillers from masters of the genre.

In Edgar Award-winning author Joe R. Lansdale's *More Better Deals* (Mulholland, \$27, 9780316479912), the irresistible allure of easy money coupled with a conniving woman in distress drive main character Ed Edwards to take some unorthodox steps to secure his financial future.

When we first meet him in 1960s East Texas, Ed is a simple used-car salesman, barely eking out a living on commissions. He's quick to jump at a chance to make a few extra bucks when his boss asks him to repossess a Cadillac from a client, Frank Craig, who has failed to uphold his end of a sales contract.

Enter Frank's wife, Nancy, who is clearly distressed by her husband's physically abusive behavior towards her. Before long, Ed and Nancy are entangled in a steamy affair and embarking on a plot to permanently separate Nancy and Frank—by offing Frank and, in the process, collecting on his life insurance policy.

In typical Lansdale

into oddball situations with less than favorable outcomes. Rather than learning from their mistakes and uninhibited ambitions, the characters always think they can do better the next time out—and inevitably fall even harder.

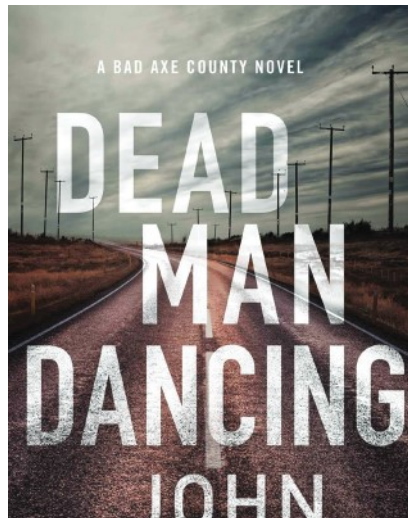
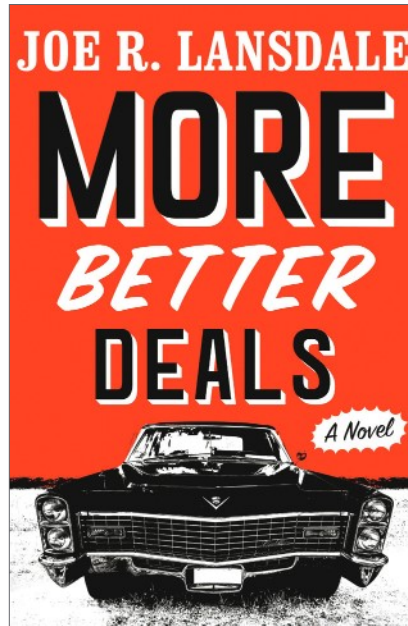
While Lansdale offers a dose of humor to temper harsh realities, author John Galligan goes into full-on dark mode in his new novel, *Dead Man Dancing* (Atria, \$27, 9781982110734). Right off the bat, Galligan gives readers a taste of racial injustice as he depicts a man driving around with a Confederate flag on the back of his truck at the Syttende Mai Festival (Norway's Constitution Day) in Farmstead, Wisconsin. The affront is especially egregious as the town is known for having harbored people who escaped slavery, smuggled in via the Underground Railroad during the Civil War.

Sheriff Heidi Kick, who made her debut in Galligan's previous thriller, *Bad Axe County*, struggles to keep the peace, but finds the situation compounded by the murder of local author and retired history teacher Augustus Pfaff and the discovery of a young Hispanic man who has been beaten nearly to death in an underground fight club. Some of Pfaff's last words are ultimately prophetic: "Anyone who wants to kill my story has to kill me too."

Heidi's investigation into

American nightmares

Noir leaves its traditional urban haunts in favor of wide-open spaces in two compelling books.



★ Inferno

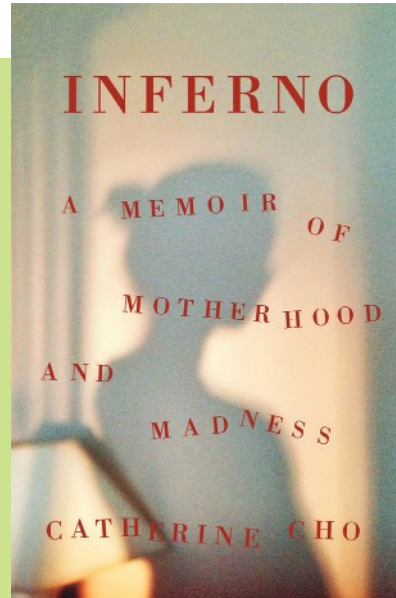
By Catherine Cho

Memoir

Inferno (Holt, \$26.99, 9781250623713) is a memoir of Catherine Cho's harrowing journey through postpartum psychosis. Postpartum depression and psychosis exist in some of the most taboo corners of the haunted space assigned to mental health, conjuring headlines of drowned children and marring the virtuous, sunny, false picture of new motherhood. Cho's story begins with a loving husband, a smooth pregnancy and only moderately overbearing new grandparents. But one morning, time and self began to unspool amid paranoid fantasies, and soon Cho's husband is visiting her in the hospital, pleading with her to eat, trying to connect in any small way and finding that he cannot.

In Cho's hands, the story of her psychosis is also one of her growing up and knitting together her sense of self, even as that self is coming ferociously undone. The Korean fairy tales of

her grandparents intermingle with the classical mythology loved by her father. Together, these stories suggest meanings to her that she can't quite discern. The identities of her ancestors, herself and her son become mutable and bleed into one another. She feels overcome with love for her husband, convinced they have entered hell and she must save him. Cho seems to experience time as a divine being might, skidding back and forth and in between, realities crisscrossing and intertwining. There is a sublime quality to this



temporal movement. Her illness looms large and mythic, even in its terror.

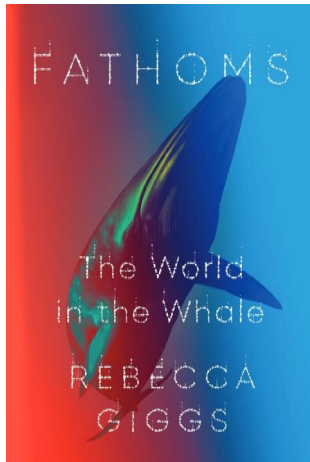
Those grandiose episodes flatten into periods of lucidity when Cho returns to herself in the ward and moves through her days without information, without contact with her family, carefully negotiating her relationships with the other patients. Even in these moments of clarity, postpartum psychosis treads around her edges like an animal, pressing a soft muzzle with hidden sharp teeth into her mind.

Though Cho dwells apprehensively on the intertwining of love and pain in the Korean culture of her upbringing, it's the resilient thread of devotion in her life—to her husband, her family, the curious memory of her son—that laces through the pain and draws her back into the world. Cho's expression of her experience of madness is poetic, and like much good poetry, it points its finger to the lies in our so-called reality: that our health system is healthy; that our expectations of motherhood are sane.

—Anna Spydell

★ Fathoms

By Rebecca Giggs



Nature

Australian writer Rebecca Giggs opens her book, **Fathoms: The World in the Whale** (Simon & Schuster, \$27, 9781982120696), with a disturbing scene: A crowd has gathered to observe the death of a beached whale,

a process that can take days as the whale's

eye for unforgettable and disturbing details that probe at the ancient and ongoing relationship between humans and whales.

Whale eyes, whale tongues, whale noises, whale skin: Giggs explores the contours of humans' obsession with whales over time in terrific specificity. Her investigation is historical, cultural, biological and personal. She has pursued whales herself, visiting decomposing whales, going whale watching and, as a child, reaching out a small hand to touch a whale skeleton in a museum (a skeleton whose provenance she later traces, wondering how so many dead whales came to hang in museums). She travels to Japan to eat whale and discusses them with others—at dinner parties with friends and in small university offices with academics. All of this is engaging. Yet it is Giggs' poetic and insightful analysis that elevates this book into something unforgettable.

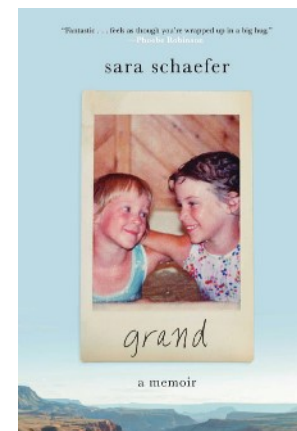
In the whale, Giggs truly does find the world.

remarkable views of nature, humanity and how we might find a way forward together.

—Kelly Blewett

Grand

By Sara Schaefer



Memoir

“My social media would tell you I was a working comedian with hobbies, love, a close family, and important opinions on trending topics,” author Sara Schaefer confides in

For most of her early years, Schaefer and her three siblings lived a privileged life as the children of a lawyer and a stay-at-home mom. Her parents both drove Porsches. Her mom's closet was "a jungle of textures: beads, suede, fur, silk." Their Christmases featured mountains of presents. But after Schaefer and her siblings learned that their dad had misappropriated his clients' funds, their family's opulent lifestyle was replaced by low-paying jobs as they rebuilt their lives and repaid their debts.

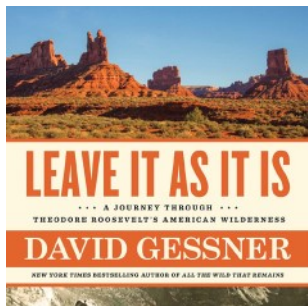
The rafting trip is a way for Schaefer to face her fears, both literally (she is afraid of water) and spiritually (she hasn't fully grieved the death of her mom a decade earlier). Schaefer and her sister travel through Class VIII rapids and learn how to check their campsite for scorpions before bedtime. All the while, Schaefer's writing is radiant, whether she's describing the wonder of the Grand Canyon or her early years as a stand-up comedian in New York City. She tells her story with a generosity that never lapses into sentimentality.

"The sound of the rushing river canceled out all the other sounds," she writes of her first night sleeping in the canyon. "I thanked the universe for this moment, made peace with my demons, and finally became one with nature. I fell into a deep, soul-restoring sleep. Just kidding—I tossed and turned and cussed for six hours straight." The melding of humor and pain makes **Grand** a fresh and engaging read. It is a wise, funny acknowledgment that we are not always in control—and that growth is most likely to happen when we let go.

—Amy Scribner

Leave It as It Is

By David Gessner



Nature

Lovers of our national parks and monuments may be familiar with President Theodore Roosevelt's speech at the Grand

Teddy Roosevelt and his passions, **Leave It as It Is: A Journey Through Theodore Roosevelt's American Wilderness** (Simon & Schuster, \$28, 9781982105044) digs deep into a cultural and political history as complex as Roosevelt himself. Insightful, observant and wry, writing with his heart on his well-traveled sleeve and a laser focus on the stunning beauty of the parks, Gessner shares an epic road trip through these storied lands.

With his newly college-graduated nephew riding shotgun, Gessner begins where Roosevelt's love affair with the West first took hold, in the South Dakota Badlands. Riven with grief after his wife and mother died on the same day late in the 19th century, the future president left behind his young daughter and searched for solace as a rancher amid the wildlife and wilderness. And while these 21st-century campers find that much has changed—Gessner bemoans the "Disneyfication" of such areas—they celebrate the fact that bison surround (and thoroughly blemish) their car as the animals wander by their campsite. It was Roosevelt, after all, who saved this iconic beast from extinction.

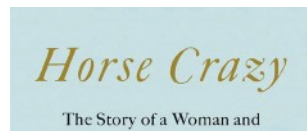
Weaving an often candidly critical biography of the 26th president through this account of the parks he created, Gessner eventually arrives at Bears Ears in southeastern Utah. After conferring with the Native American tribes for whom these lands are ancestral and sacred, President Barack Obama proclaimed it a national monument as he left office in 2016. In 2017, President Donald Trump promptly shrank the area by 85%, essentially inviting commercial interests to encroach.

Today, "leave it as it is" may no longer be possible for the parks. Can they still be saved from corrupting human interests? Roosevelt, Gessner insists, would know what to do.

—Priscilla Kipp

★ Horse Crazy

By Sarah Maslin Nir



Nature

Horses have always been

plishments with horses were not currency of value to my high-pressure, high-power mother and father; horses weren't Harvard degrees or newspaper bylines."

With horses as her anchor, Nir eventually earned more than stellar bylines. As a *New York Times* reporter, she became a Pulitzer finalist for her yearlong investigation into New York City's nail salon industry. Now, in **Horse Crazy: The Story of a Woman and a World in Love With an Animal** (Simon & Schuster, \$28, 9781501196232), she turns the investigative lens on herself, exploring why she and so many others share this equine obsession. Not surprisingly, her writing is energetic, exquisite and enthralling enough to appeal to both horse fanatics and more casual readers alike.

Reminiscent of Susan Orlean's *The Library Book* in its fascinating examination of a singular topic, *Horse Crazy* is an expertly crafted, wrenchingly honest memoir.

With chapters named after important horses in her life, Nir traces a love affair that began at age 2, when family lore has it that her parents put her on a horse in an attempt to get their frenetic little girl to sit still. Her Jewish father had escaped the Holocaust by posing as a Catholic child in Poland and later became chief of child psychiatry at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, among his many other accomplishments. Her psychologist mom became a TV personality, chatting with Oprah and co-writing books with her husband. With such busy parents and half brothers who resented her very existence, Nir turned to horses in both loneliness and awe.

As a city kid, Nir's horseback riding experiences were far from typical. She honed her skills at Claremont Riding Academy, a vertical four-story stable in the heart of Manhattan where horses and riders trudge up and down ramps between riding rings and stalls. In high

chronic pain hasn't kept Nir away from riding, which she says is discounted as an extreme sport because its participants are predominantly female. "I'll never stop," she writes. "I'm extreme too." For her, the sport creates "an interspecies bridge that . . . leaves the two halves greater than a whole."

Reminiscent of Susan Orlean's *The Library Book* in its fascinating examination of a singular topic, **Horse Crazy** is an expertly crafted, wrenchingly honest memoir.

—Alice Cary

To Start a War

By Robert Draper



Political Science

The mistakes in judgment that led to the United States invasion of Iraq have frequently been described as a failure of the imagination. However, as Robert Draper demonstrates in his compelling

and richly documented **To Start a War: How the Bush Administration Took America Into Iraq** (Penguin Press, \$30, 9780525561040), in reality, imagination drove the policy.

Saddam Hussein denied having weapons of mass destruction, but he had used them in the past, and his government had repeatedly lied about them, so his past behavior did raise some questions. Even so, the case for Hussein possessing more of these weapons was based on badly outdated information, almost all circumstantial and often fabricated. President George W. Bush and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz wanted, for their own reasons, to believe the weapons were there and that the U.S. should use that "fact" to oust Hussein.

CIA analysts tried to give the president what

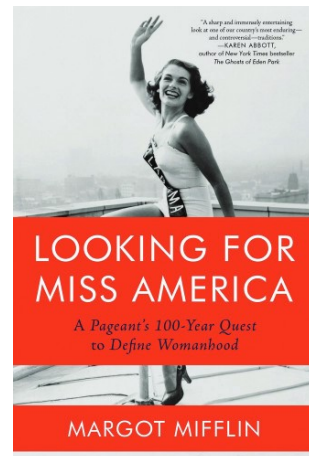
recently released documents to give a vivid picture of how events unfolded. There really was not a process, Draper reveals. For example, there was no plan for what to do following a military victory. Meanwhile, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld seemed to give more importance to finding fault with other government agencies and micromanaging his department than to urgent follow-through. Vice President Dick Cheney was allowed to make misleading or false public statements without correction.

As we continue to live through the ripple effects of this momentous decision in American foreign policy, Draper's revelatory account deserves a wide readership.

—Roger Bishop

★ Looking for Miss America

By Margot Mifflin



American History

If you've disregarded the Miss America pageant as nothing but frivolous cheesecake, you are not alone. But consider taking a closer look at this cultural artifact, which has been around nearly as long as

women have had the right to vote. In **Looking for Miss America: A Pageant's 100-Year Quest to Define Womanhood** (Counterpoint, \$28, 9781640092235), historian Margot Mifflin encourages us to view Miss America as more complicated than just sashes, hairspray and high heels.

If you've disregarded the Miss America pageant as nothing but frivolous cheesecake,

control of women and people of color, Miss America slowly changed along with the culture. The pageant grappled with social revolution regarding women's "ideal" bodies, sexual expression, sexual orientation, educational opportunities, gender roles and careers. "The pageant has been in constant dialogue with feminism, though rarely in step with it," writes Mifflin.

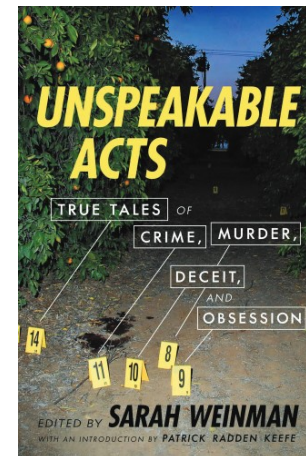
Mifflin's deep research, numerous support texts, nuanced analysis and punchy writing weave an engaging account. (The history of the bathing suit portion of the pageant is especially fascinating.) She interviewed over a dozen past pageant contestants, pageant employees, a judge and others for a comprehensive behind-the-scenes narrative.

Even if you've never watched a single Miss America pageant on TV, anyone with an interest in American history would benefit from this deep dive into a complex cultural figurehead.

—Jessica Wakeman

Unspeakable Acts

Edited by Sarah Weinman



True Crime

True crime fans have never had it so good. Between podcasts, binge-worthy Netflix extravaganzas and blockbuster books, we are spoiled for choice. But even while we Google "Joe Exotic" or

"Jeffrey Dahmer" for more details to enhance our viewing and reading experiences, most true crime enthusiasts tend not to explore the issues of why we are attracted to these tales, what they say about us or how our society determines who is a criminal and who is a victim.

In **Unspeakable Acts: True Tales of Crime, Murder, Deceit, and Obsession** (Ecco, \$18.99,

Evil” considers whether Ted Bundy was an inhuman evil genius or an utterly human product of his environment and his mental illness. In “What Bullets Do to Bodies,” Jason Fagone reminds us that true crime is a daily occurrence in our cities, where real human bodies are shattered by real bullets, and real trauma surgeons like Dr. Amy Goldberg heroically strive to stitch them back together. And in “I Am a Girl Now,’ Sage Smith Wrote. And Then She Went Missing,” Emma Copley Eisenberg uses the investigation into the disappearance and probable murder of a young Black trans woman in Charlottesville, Virginia, to demonstrate how implicit biases deny equal justice to those who do not fit within preconceived notions of victims.

Unspeakable Acts invites readers to consider true crime not only as a literary genre but also as a gateway to understanding our society and ourselves. It is an invitation well worth accepting.

—Deborah Mason

Two Trees Make a Forest

By Jessica J. Lee



Nature

Like the sequoias of the U.S. Pacific Northwest, red and yellow cedars in Taiwan are so huge that just two of them, writes environmental historian Jessica J. Lee, can look and feel like a whole forest. She finds

them as she hikes through the mountainous spine of the country where her beloved grandfather Gong was sent home to die, alone in the dementia of Alzheimer's. Lee still grieves his solitary death and is determined to learn more about his life from before he and Po, her “irascible, difficult grandmother,” became

enveloped in fog and the constant threat of mudslides and earthquakes. Lee studies the calligraphy of both Taiwanese and Chinese (her mother speaks Mandarin) and sprinkles her memoir with the illustrations that help her find her way through the two languages. Still, as she visits her mother's crowded childhood home city of Taipei, Lee's biracial features and diffident tongue reveal her as a foreigner.

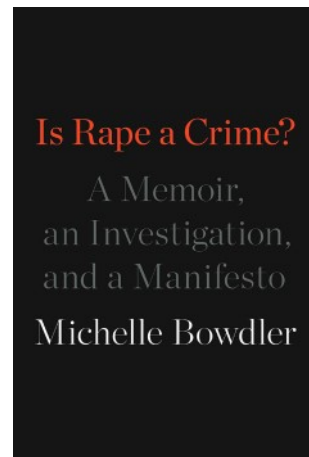
Taiwan has a complicated history, explored and exploited by Europeans and tossed back and forth between Japan and China. Lee learns that Gong was a fighter pilot with the famous Flying Tigers, risking his life on secret missions and rewarded for his bravery. Injured in a 1969 crash that should have killed him, he could no longer fly and left Taiwan for the promise of flying in Canada, only to become a factory janitor instead.

Lee finds her own ways of imprinting her rediscovered homeland on her spirit. Using her skills as a scholar, she identifies the many species she finds as she hikes and bikes through the countryside, some existing nowhere else in the world. As Taiwan reveals itself, Lee comes to a kind of peace. Gong's past and her present, so evocatively examined, suggest the forest she needed to find.

—Priscilla Kipp

Is Rape a Crime?

By Michelle Bowdler



Memoir

In 1984, two men broke into Michelle Bowdler's Boston apartment. They tied her up, blindfolded her, held a knife to her throat and raped her. After they left and once she freed herself, Bowdler immediately

called the police. Cops took fingerprints and

and decades, the Boston Police Department's mishandling became even worse.

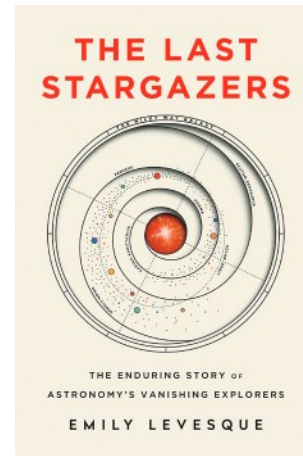
An article in the *Boston Globe* in 2007 prompted Bowdler to revisit her rape case and press the BPD for answers. At the time, there were many news stories about a backlog of untested rape kits. (It's estimated that as many as 400,000 evidence kits have never been tested in the United States.) Bowdler argues that the word “backlog” implies a queue. The real problem is that law enforcement has not shown the will to pursue these crimes.

Is Rape a Crime? blends Bowdler's own narrative with detailed research about how law enforcement—from crime labs to individual cops—fail rape victims. Bowdler is candid about how trauma from the break-in, rapes and police inaction still affects her entire life. She is now a wife and mother of two, but piecing her life together following the rapes has been a slow process. Understandably, a lot of conversations about rape victims focus on positives, like their strength to survive. Bowdler's voice in the conversation will make sure you know that her survival is hard won.

—Jessica Wakeman

The Last Stargazers

By Emily Levesque



Science

Emily Levesque, an astronomy professor at the University of Washington, trains her gaze on humans' fascination with the stars in this engaging look at the field of astronomy and its practitioners

who strive to enrich our understanding of the universe. Like many astronomers, Levesque traces her determination to study space to early childhood, when as a toddler in 1986 she

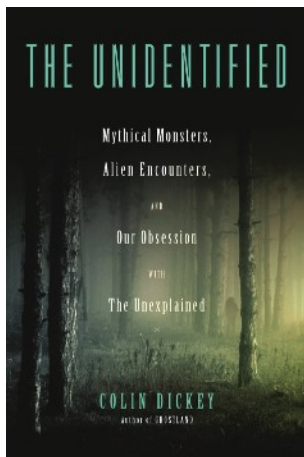
technical narrative. Levesque knows how to tell a story, and her conversational style and clear, easygoing prose bring readers into the action, whether it's her own first experience of a total eclipse or another astronomer's discovery of a supernova with the naked eye. Readers will learn what it takes to be granted access to a single night of observation at one of the world's premier telescopes or to ride along in NASA's flying SOFIA telescope—and what happens when things go wrong. This is also an introduction to the community of astronomers working today, many of whom Levesque interviewed for her book and whose stories help make her narrative shine. She even devotes a section to how technology may change the field for future astronomers.

While astronomy is an incredibly precise and technical field, the professional astronomers Levesque interviewed could almost always link their desire to explore the universe to a vivid moment of awe and wonder. Something, Levesque concludes, “drives us to reach outward and upward into the vast cosmos before us simply because we must.” Immensely informative and inspiring, **The Last Stargazers: The Enduring Story of Astronomy's Vanishing Explorers** (Sourcebooks, \$25.99, 9781492681076) is the perfect complement to a summer night under the stars.

—Deborah Hopkinson

The Unidentified

By Colin Dickey



Social History

Most of us have heard about the mythical city of Atlantis, the elusive Bigfoot and the UFO hotbed of Area 51. But where did these stories originate? Is there any truth

Places, focused on Americans' fascination with the paranormal. Here, he hits the road again, this time turning his critical and clever eye on enduring stories about strange beasts, alien visitors and other oddities. In this compelling historical and cultural analysis of human nature, in terms of where myths come from and why they persist, Dickey cites the historians, credible or otherwise, who have made conspiracy theories and UFOs their life's work, and shares his take on their motives and popularity. He also examines why “fringe beliefs” have increased in recent years, contributing to “a rising sentiment of distrust in science, in academic institutions, and in government.”

Dickey begins his engaging and impressively researched journey in his home state of California, at Mount Shasta—believed to have a secret city, Lemuria, inside. He notes that, like Lemuria, the lost city of Atlantis (first described by Plato) is a utopia. Both are “places that don't exist, that we can fill with meaning precisely because there are no facts against which to measure that meaning.” As he brings readers to New Jersey (the New Jersey Devil: once a hoax creature, now a hockey team name), Montana (the 1968 Montana Snowman sightings) and more, he points to the human tendency toward discomfort with things that don't make sense and “the automatic obsession to explain [them].”

Scientists did try to explain the Great Kentucky Meat Shower . . . but I won't spoil the outcome here. Suffice it to say, Dickey found a sort of inspiration in the tale. Ultimately, when it comes to the unexplainable—meaty or otherwise—he exhorts readers to “cling to the wonder, the possibilities, without allowing your doubt to become its own certainty.”

—Linda M. Castellitto

The Death of the Artist

By William Deresiewicz



Economics

In 2014, award-winning essayist William

ey—the new economy—are devastating artists and the arts.

In **The Death of the Artist: How Creators Are Struggling to Survive in the Age of Billionaires and Big Tech** (Holt, \$27.99, 9781250125514), one of Deresiewicz's key points—and the object of much of his diatribe—is that it isn't necessarily a good thing that the internet allows unmediated access to audiences and artists. Sure, there are benefits, but it also “starves professional production [and] fosters the amateur kind.” Big tech has also convinced us that we can all be artists and has given us the tools (but not the talent) to believe it, with questionable results. He writes, “Have you seen your cousin's improv troupe? Is *that* the only kind of art you want to have available, not only for the rest of your life but for the rest of the foreseeable future?”

William Deresiewicz's wide-ranging, vividly written new book focuses on how big tech and big money—the new economy—are devastating artists and the arts.

How and why we may be on the verge of this eventuality—in music, writing, visual arts, film and television—is the thrust of his inquiry. In his research, Deresiewicz interviews roughly 140 artists, most of whom we might call midlevel, midcareer artists, who make up the broad ecosystem from which great work arises, and the very people likely to disappear in a new economy that favors the few. “Bestselling books have gotten bestier; blockbuster movies have gotten bustier,” Deresiewicz pointedly observes.

In the end, he argues that a new economic paradigm has arisen, and artists must respond to it. Some of his recommendations are oddly old school. For one, artists who are now asked to work for free to build an online audience, a following, must demand to be paid. “I cannot think of another field in which people feel

★ Splinters of Scarlet

By Emily Bain Murphy

Historical Fantasy

Marit Olsen is alone in the world. Her father died in an accident in the wealthy Vestergaard family's mines. The Firm, an icy buildup in the veins that freezes a body from the inside as a result of the overuse of magic, claimed her sister not long after. Like her sister, Marit has magic; Marit's gives her a connection to fabric, thread and sewing. She can embroider a dress in one night that would take an expert seamstress weeks. But like all magic users, Marit uses her gift sparingly for fear of the Firm.

On the cusp of aging out of the orphanage, Marit is determined to look out for Eve, a younger girl with a gift for ballet who has become like a little sister to her. When Eve is adopted by Helene Vestergaard, Marit manages to obtain a place as a seamstress in the Vestergaard household. As she settles in among the staff, she realizes they

all have magical abilities that they use often. While Eve adjusts to a life of wealth and privilege, Marit uncovers new information about her father's accident with the help of her new friends, siblings Liljan and Jakob. If her father's death wasn't an accident, could the Vestergaards have been involved? Is Eve in danger? Marit will risk it all, including the Firm, to ensure that her chosen family is safe.



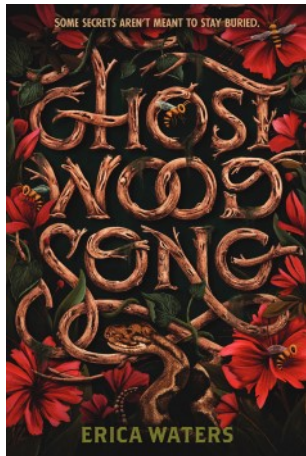
Emily Bain Murphy's second novel is an assured blend of historical fiction and fantasy, with satisfyingly researched details appearing alongside a simple but powerful system of magic. The story includes a slow-burning romance, but Marit's prickly enemies-to-friends relationship with another household servant is even more compelling. Most satisfying is the book's villain, an occasional narrator whose identity is revealed in time. Murphy has created a more nuanced villain than is usually attempted in YA fantasy, with valid (yet misguided) goals and easily understandable, even sympathetic motivations.

Marit's struggle to find and protect her found family, the lush and hygge-filled Scandinavian surroundings and the thrilling showdown with a complex villain make **Splinters of Scarlet** (HMH, \$17.99, 9780358142737) a finely woven tale perfect for historical fiction and fantasy readers alike.

—Annie Metcalf

Ghost Wood Song

By Erica Waters



Mystery

Shady Grove's daddy could call ghosts from the grave with his fiddle. He died in a car crash four years ago, but when the woods around Shady's home suddenly fill with the sound of the bluegrass music he used to play,

she knows he's trying to send her a message. Then her brother is accused of murder, and Shady realizes it's her turn to take up her daddy's fiddle, call out the ghosts and illuminate

they wrestle with grief, family secrets and high school drama. (Shady and her two best friends, Sarah and Orlando, can't agree on the set list for their band, and their arguments are complicated by the love triangle between Shady, Sarah and gorgeous cowboy Cedar.) Waters makes it easy to root for Shady as she battles conflicts both mundane and supernatural, working through a wide range of emotions rendered with nuance and authenticity.

Ghost Wood Song is a lyrical, evocative novel that's part ghost story and part mystery, wrapped around a gorgeous tale of loss, love and family healing.

—Sarah Welch

Chasing Starlight

By Teri Bailey Black



Mystery

The victim of a childhood

from her grandfather, but instead she walks in on a crime scene. As Kate acclimates to her new life in 1938 Hollywood, a challenging job and a burgeoning romance, there's also a killer to track down. A girl could get blisters doing all that in heels!

Chasing Starlight (Tor Teen, \$17.99, 9780765399519) is full of golden-age Hollywood glamour but spotlights the sweat and sacrifice that make it all happen. Teri Bailey Black juggles multiple storylines with the same efficiency Kate uses to land a gig as a production assistant. The misfits who rent rooms from Kate's grandfather are distinct and mostly lovable. Black organically incorporates mentions of the Hays Code, which required strict moral standards in movies during this era, while exploring women's roles in film and the industry's history of persecution and blacklisting of communists. It all plays out as if on a movie set, giving things a delightfully meta kick.

The book's disparate strands entwine in a conclusion straight out of film noir, com-

On fighting

Newbery Honor author Kimberly Brubaker Bradley explains why **Fighting Words**, her powerful novel about a girl who has been abused, is the book she was put on earth to write.

I never intended to write **Fighting Words**, except, of course, that I always did.

In the fall of 2018, I finished the third draft of a historical novel and sent it to my editor. I planned to rest while she read it, because I wanted to come at the next draft with fresh eyes. It's what I usually do.

Then I watched some news on television. When I tell this story, I no longer share which exact news report tipped me over the edge into rage, because I've found it derails the discussion into whether my rage was justified or whether the report was real. It doesn't matter. Something happened in the world, and I'd. Had. It. I felt angrier than I'd ever allowed myself to feel.

The next morning, still on fire, I sat down to my computer and opened a new document. I typed a furious one-word title: **WHATEVER**. By Kimberly. Brubaker. Bradley.

And then I let loose. I didn't think. I wrote. As fast as I could, without pause, making absolutely everything up as I went along.

My new tattoo is covered by a Band-Aid, but halfway through recess, the Band-Aid falls off.

That's the first sentence I wrote that day. It remains the opening line of **Fighting Words**. Della's voice, pure Appalachia, tough and wise, came from a place I'd never accessed before.

Rage.

Children who have been abused often can't allow themselves to feel anger.

That day, I did.

I wrote 19 pages (for me, a remarkable output would be 10 pages). The next day I wrote another 20 pages, and by evening, I'd actually completed a narrative arc—beginning, middle, end—though what I was writing was not entirely clear.

It had no chapter breaks. There wasn't much plot. Anytime I didn't

Twenty years ago, when my debut novel had just been accepted by a young editor at Random House named Lauri Hornik (now president of my publisher, Dial, always my champion and trusted friend), I sent her the nearly finished draft of a second book. It was about childhood sexual abuse. She responded thoughtfully: "You're not ready to write this story yet. Try again in five years."

It took me 20.

So, on some level, the story was always in my mind. But on every other level, Della caught me entirely by surprise. I did not expect her story, not that day, not ever.

I loved her. I knew before the end of my second writing day that I'd fight for Della even more fiercely than I'd fought for Ada Smith, the heroine of *The War That Saved My Life*, who was born with a clubfoot. I felt the sort of protectiveness for Della and Ada that one feels toward one's own abused and neglected inner child.

In fighting for Della, I fought for myself. The story of **Fighting Words** is informed by my own personal experiences, which is all I'm going to say publicly about that. Forever.

After Jessica Garrison, my beloved editor, read those first pages (which she'd later describe as "lightning in a paper bag"), she called and asked, "What the hell is this?"

I answered, "I swear I can make it into a novel. I swear I will do the work."

She said, "We're in."

I pushed her a little bit. Could I keep the suicide attempt? The meth explosion? The word "snow" substituting for profanity 86 times? **THE TATTOO?** Because if I couldn't—"Yes, yes," Jessica said impatiently. Then she held me to my word and



I told the folks at Dial that I hope they like me, because after this book I will never leave them. They are stuck with me now.

I told friends when I sent them copies so they could consider writing blurbs of recommendation that this book is the hill I'm willing to die on.

This book means the world to me. It is—and I say this without a smidgen of exaggeration—the book I was meant to write. The work I was put on this earth to do.

I'm hanging my winter coat on the hook in our fourth grade classroom when my teacher,

Fighting Words
Dial, \$17.99, 9781984815682
ages 10 and up

Middle Grade



Class acts

The first day of school is full of excitement, trepidation and curiosity.

Four picture books offer encouragement to youngsters as they embark on a thrilling rite of passage: the first day of school.

Give **Pearl Goes to Preschool** (Candlewick, \$16.99, 9781536207439, ages 3 to 6) to any reader curious about trying something new but in need of a small, encouraging nudge. Pearl is a confident, energetic, tiara-loving girl who's more than a bit skeptical when her mom raises the notion of preschool. After all, Pearl already attends daily classes at her mom's ballet studio, and she even knows how to count ("First position! Second position! Third position!"). What could be better? Well, Mom explains, Pearl can meet kids her own age at preschool, and everyone gets to do finger painting, learn the alphabet and dress up. Pearl talks it over with her friend Violet, a plush mouse clad in a purple tutu, and the two decide that preschool's worth a try.

Author-illustrator Julie Fortenberry's painterly art hits the emotional mark. She masterfully conveys Pearl's impatience, joy, nervousness and relief, as well as Pearl's mom's carefully concealed amusement as she negotiates with her spirited kiddo. A muted color palette makes a lovely backdrop for this engaging portrait of a strong parent-child relationship: Pearl feels safe in expressing herself, and her mom's gentle guidance helps Pearl take ownership over big decisions. **Pearl Goes to Preschool** is a real treat.

A.E. Ali's **Our Favorite Day of the Year** (Salaam Reads, \$17.99, 9781481485630, ages 4 to 8) opens as Musa starts kindergarten. Despite what Musa's teacher says, the boys at his table don't "look like his friends. They were total strangers." But Ms. Gupta has a plan: Throughout the year, students will share their favorite holidays as a sort of interactive show and tell (not to mention icebreaker and friendship builder).

Skepticism melts away as months pass and students treat each

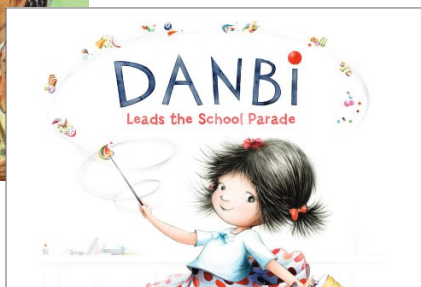
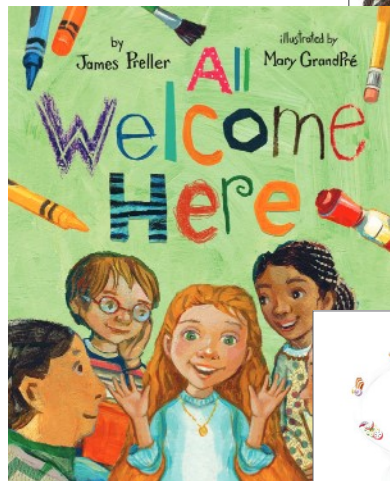
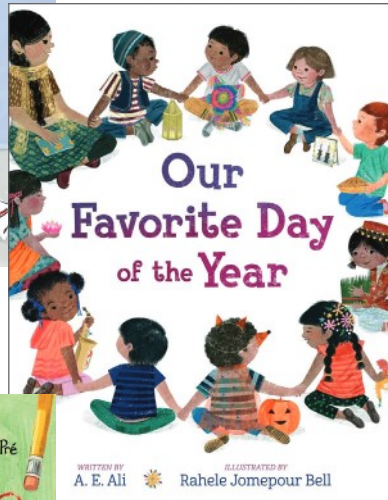
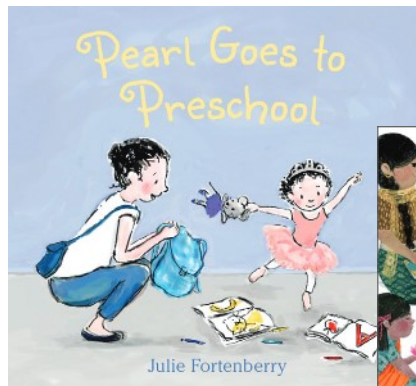
Where's my classroom? I dropped my backpack! Is that a hamster? I think I know her. What's for lunch? With spot-on snippets of poetry and illustrations steeped in primary colors, **All Welcome Here** (Feiwel & Friends, \$18.99, 9781250155887, ages 4 to 7) captures the swirling, frenetic energy of the first day of school. Author James Preller's linked haiku lead readers through the maze of an exciting, chaotic and often humorous new adventure. A diverse group of children clamors for fresh school supplies ("All the bright new things / Smell like sunrise, like glitter") and the release of recess ("Can we? Is it true? / Yes, recess. Run, RUN!"). They also consider the scariness of stepping onto a giant yellow school bus for the first time ("It's dark and noisy / and what if they aren't nice?"). The effect is sometimes impressionistic and always empathetic.

Fans of illustrator Mary GrandPré, Caldecott Honoree for *The Noisy Paintbox*, will be pleased to see her work here. Her collages and paintings, which make clever use of color and pattern, capture both the big splash of a water fountain prank and the engrossed calm of bookworms enjoying library time. Preller dedicates the book to "public school teachers everywhere" and GrandPré to "all young artists," fitting tributes to those who inspired this spirited whirlwind of first-day jitters and delight.

Debut author-illustrator Anna Kim draws on personal experience in **Danbi Leads the School Parade** (Viking, \$17.99, 9780451478894, ages 3 to 7), a charming, moving story about a girl who's leaping into

the unknown not only at a new school but in a new country, too. Danbi and her parents immigrated to the United States from South Korea, and the time has come for Danbi to meet her new teacher, who smiles encouragingly, and a puppy-pile of classmates, who stare at her with curiosity.

Danbi's heartbeat is the soundtrack to her determined but unsuccessful attempts to fit in, as she tries new dances and games. She is relieved when lunchtime arrives: "That, I knew how to do!" But when the other kids pull out sandwiches and juice boxes, her crystal dumplings and rainbow drops draw more stares and a big "Wow!" from the group. Ever resourceful, Danbi attempts to teach her classmates to use chopsticks, which turns into a comedy of errors. Pivoting again, she taps her



★ The Summer We Found the Baby

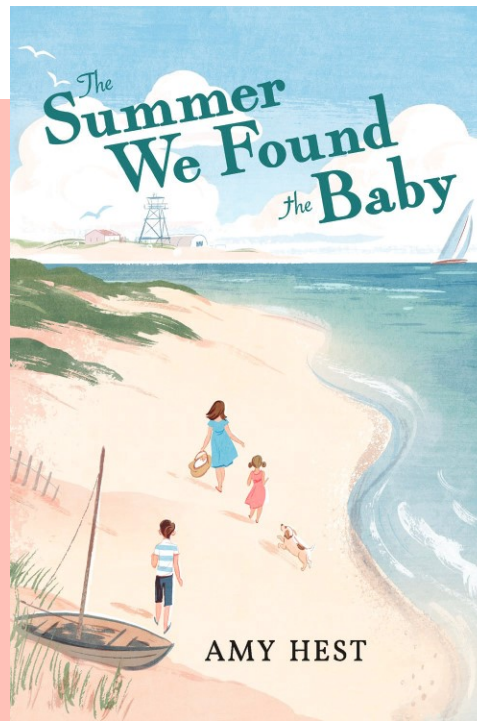
By Amy Hest

Middle Grade

At first glance, **The Summer We Found the Baby** (Candlewick, \$16.99, 9780763660079, ages 10 and up), a short novel about a baby discovered in a basket on the steps of the new children's library in Belle Beach, Long Island, appears to be a sweet snapshot of life in a small town during World War II. But author Amy Hest packs much into its pages—an intricate plot, deeply imagined characters and relationships and adroitly tackled big issues such as death and unplanned pregnancy—and handles it all with delicacy and care.

Alternating rapidly among three narrators—12-year-old Bruno Ben-Eli; his next-door neighbor, 11-year-old Julie Sweet; and Julie's 6-year-old sister, Martha—the book begins in

the morning just before the library's opening-day celebrations. Julie and Martha have arrived early with a home-made cake for First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to whom Bruno and Julie have both written letters in the hope that she might attend the day's festivities. It's the girls who discover the baby nestled in a basket on the library steps, but it's Bruno who spots them walking away from the library with the basket. "Holy everything," he thinks, "Julie Sweet is a kidnapper."



The action unfolds quickly from this auspicious beginning. With each twist and turn of the plot, Hest is adept at filling in only as much backstory as is needed for each character. The three resourceful children are united by an undertone of sadness and longing. Bruno's beloved older brother, Ben, is serving overseas, and Julie and Martha's mother is deceased. The war casts a long shadow over the book's events, and Hest adds spare but effective historical references throughout the story.

Hest's prose is wonderfully unadorned, her narrative voices natural and the story deliciously satisfying. **The**

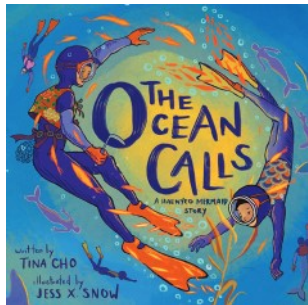
Summer We Found the Baby is a quiet wonder and a rare delight.

—Alice Cary

The Ocean Calls

By Tina Cho

Illustrated by Jess X. Snow



Picture Book

Journey under the sea in **The Ocean Calls** (Kokila, \$17.99, 9781984814869, ages 5 to 8) and discover the story of South Korea's haenyeo.

Dayeon's grandma is like a mermaid, exploring the ocean's depths without an oxygen tank, then bringing abalones, octopus and other creatures to the surface. For Grandma and her fellow haenyeo, the water is home—a home she will teach her granddaughter how to find. But being a haenyeo is about more than seeking treasures beneath the waves; it's

carrying their gear to the beach, practicing their diving breath, exhaling with a whistling sound called *sumbitori* and gathering after a dive in the *bulteok*, a communal space on the beach, their worn faces full of determination and pride.

Jess X. Snow's illustrations are saturated with wide strokes of deep blues and purples, and their use of light is masterful as they transport readers below the waves to peer up at the sun on the water's surface. Washes of color contrast with intricately drawn shells and fish to create a world so encompassing and vivid, I found myself holding my breath with each dive.

—Jill Lorenzini

War Stories

By Gordon Korman



Middle Grade

Trevor can't

even liberated a small French village. Jacob's heroism is an unquestionable fact, and Trevor's life revolves around his great-grandfather's war, from the video games he plays for hours on end to the memorabilia he collects and the posters that adorn his bedroom walls.

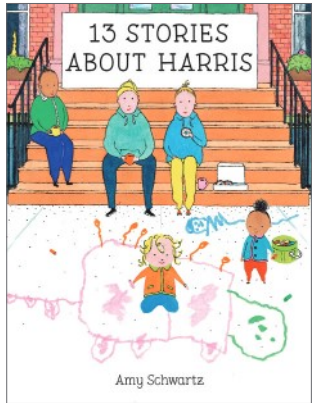
It seems like the opportunity of a lifetime for Trevor when the French village of Sainte-Régine wants to honor Jacob as the last surviving participant in the battle for the town's liberation. It's a chance to travel with Jacob to a place where the war was actually fought. But was Trevor's great-grandfather really as heroic as he seems in all his stories?

Trevor, his father and Jacob embark on a pilgrimage of sorts, retracing Jacob's footsteps during the war from basic training at a base in Georgia to England and then to France. Trevor takes in the sights and the history with enthusiasm, but Jacob becomes less excited and more tired as they come closer to Sainte-Régine, and the trip is plagued by a series of unpleasant coincidences. There's no telling

masterful demonstration of how the effects of war don't end when battles are won or lost but continue to ripple down through generations.
—Kevin Delecki

13 Stories About Harris

By Amy Schwartz



Picture Book

Demonstrating her deep understanding of the preschooler mind, Amy Schwartz's charming **13 Stories About Harris** (Holiday House, \$18.99, 9780823442492, ages 3 to 6) delivers exactly

what its title promises: 13 stories about a child

named Harris, though his best friend Ayana figures prominently, too.

13 Stories About Harris offers a baker's dozen of whimsical tales and demonstrates Amy Schwartz's deep understanding of the preschooler mind.

These are miniature domestic dramas; the longest story spans four pages, and a very funny one ("That's why they call permanent markers permanent," Harris's mother said.) is just a single page. Most center on Harris' imaginative play. In one, he draws an exceptionally long dragon's tail on the sidewalk; in another, he and Ayana role-play worms "taking over the world" by jumping around in their pillowcases. Harris also makes butter with his mother, goes

on play dates with Ayana, visits his preschool and more.

There's a lot of humor here, much of it understated, as when Harris and his mother pet sit for Stanley, Ayana's hamster, only to discover six baby hamsters in the cage. Another reads, "Harris was standing on his truck and he shouldn't have been," then wordlessly reveals the consequences of Harris' actions after the page turn. The final story, in which Harris and Ayana declare they will hold hands "forever and ever," wraps it all up on a tender note.

The illustrations are classic Schwartz, with finely drawn, carefully composed vignettes in vivid colors of children at play. The stories' pacing varies, but each one gets it just right. Schwartz knows when to let her illustrations speak for themselves, such as Harris' woeful fall from his toy truck, giving readers an opportunity to put two and two together. Put **13 Stories About Harris** into the hands of young readers ready for a baker's dozen of whimsical tales.

—Julie Danielson

meet LULU DELACRE

How would you describe your book?



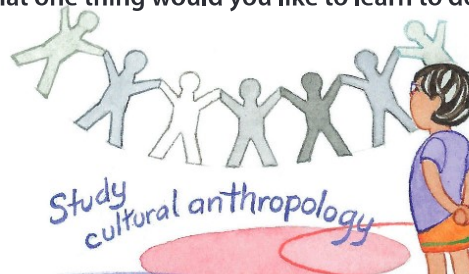
Who has been the biggest influence on your work?

Puerto Rico:
its sounds, tastes,
sights & stories
Sendak:
perfect P...

What books did you enjoy as a child?



What one thing would you like to learn to do?



In Lulu Delacre's **Luci Soars** (Philomel, \$17.99, 9781984812889, ages 4 to 8), Luci doesn't have a shadow. She feels ashamed until she realizes that everyone is weighed down by their shadows—but she is free to soar. Delacre is a three-time Pura Belpré Award honoree who has been writing and illustrating children's books for almost four decades. Her recent work includes *Turning Pages*, written by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

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Yaa Gyasi
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A NOVEL

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Kathleen Rooney
CHER AMI AND MAJOR WHITTLESEY:
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FOR READERS OF BLOOD BONES & BUTTER; NOTES FROM A YOUNG BLACK CHEF; AND YES, CHEF

David Chang with Gabe Ulla
EAT A PEACH:
A MEMOIR

From the chef behind Momofuku and star of Netflix's *Ugly Delicious*—an intimate account of the making of a chef, the story of the modern restaurant world that he helped shape, and how he discovered that success can be much harder to understand than failure.

Clarkson Potter | Available in Hardcover, eBook, and Audio Editions

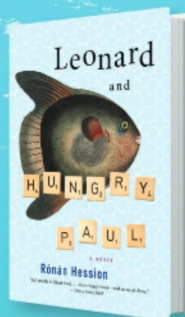


FOR READERS OF THE HANDMAID'S TALE AND NEVER LET ME GO

Ros Anderson
THE HIERARCHIES:
A NOVEL

Set in a recognizable near future, and laced with dark, sly humor, Ros Anderson's deeply observant debut novel is less about the fear of new technology than about humans' age-old talent for exploitation. In a world where there are now two classes of women—"born" and "created"—the growing friction between them may have far-reaching consequences no one could have predicted.

Dutton | Available in Hardcover, eBook, and Audio Editions



FOR READERS OF NICK HORNBY AND FANS OF GOOD OLD FASHIONED FRIENDSHIP

Rónán Hession
LEONARD AND HUNGRY PAUL

In this charming and truly unique debut, popular Irish musician Rónán Hession tells the story of two single, thirty-something men who still live with their parents and who are . . . nice. They take care of their parents and play board games together. They are resolutely kind. They come to realize that none of this is actually considered normal.

Melville House | Available in Hardcover and eBook Editions



FOR READERS OF SALLY ROONEY, ELENA FERRANTE, AND CLARICE LISPECTOR

Gabriella Burnham
IT IS WOOD, IT IS STONE:
A NOVEL

"A lush depiction of privilege and power, sex and stability . . . following three women in São Paulo . . . *It Is Wood, It Is Stone* is an elegant arrival of a new talent." —*Elle* (One of the Most Anticipated New Books of Summer)

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