

# bookmarks

FOR EVERYONE WHO HASN'T READ EVERYTHING



JAN/FEB 2025 NO. 134  
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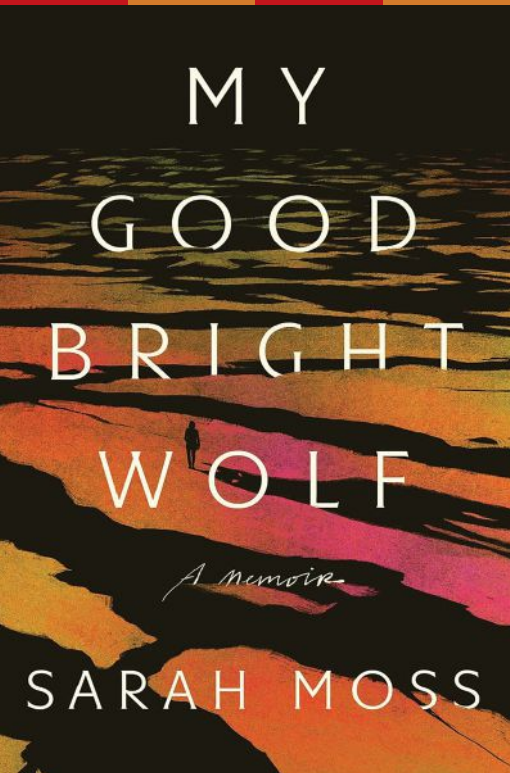


**BEST BOOKS 2024 • LAURA DAVE INTERVIEW  
MIDDLE-GRADE SPOTLIGHT • LOVE OF LIFE LIBRARY  
1976 • READER PICKS • NEW BOOKS GUIDE • MORE**



SCHWADRA

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Each issue of *Bookmarks* features our Selections—staff favorites from among the books reviewed throughout the year. We present a round-up of our 60 Selections from 2024.

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The bestselling author of *The Last Thing He Told Me*, *The Night We Lost Him*, and other novels reflects on her childhood inspirations, the development of her characters' romantic and platonic relationships, and the importance of understanding the totality of a person and finding your true self.

### 26 **Middle-Grade Spotlight: Fiction on Tough Subjects**

Many middle-grade novels provide insight into difficult, ripped-from-the-headline subjects, including war,

homelessness, abuse, bullying, prejudice, and death, and offer coping mechanisms for readers experiencing similar issues. We suggest some titles that will resonate with readers of all ages.

### 29 **A Love of Life Library**

Every year, February 14th gives us the perfect opportunity to remind our relatives, friends, and romantic partners how much we love and appreciate them. This Valentine's Day, we invite you to reflect on *other* kinds of love that energize and enrich our lives, from sports to art, nature, and entertainment. Here are ten books that examine the many varieties of extrapersonal love.

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The members of the Knitting Book Group first met on a retreat in Argentina and Uruguay that explored knitting traditions, farms, yarn stores, and restaurants. Some 160 meetings later, they are still devoted to textiles.

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## About Our Cover

Our cover was conceived and created by Lydia Tuttle.

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# Letter from the Editor

## bookmarks

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025

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**M**Y TEENAGE DAUGHTER AND I, BOTH PASSIONATE MUSEUM-GOERS, recently returned from a trip to Paris and Amsterdam. In Paris, we strolled through the sculpture garden of the Musée Rodin, admired Pierre-Auguste Renoir's joyful portraits of rosy-cheeked girls at the Musée d'Orsay, and pondered the fragmented forms in works at the Musée Picasso. In Amsterdam, we marveled at the civic guardsmen in Rembrandt van Rijn's dark yet luminous *Night Watch* and the enigmatic women in Johannes Vermeer's quiet portraits.

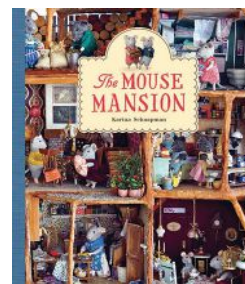
My daughter was already familiar with some of these museums' artworks and eagerly sought out those she recognized: Camille Claudel's waltzing couple, Edgar Degas's ballerinas, and Claude Monet's waterlilies. I, too, searched for my favorite artists and their subjects, ones I had known since childhood and cherished throughout my life. Here they were—ageless and unchanged—old, intimate friends I was delighted to see once again.

Books can feel like old friends as well. About ten years ago, my kids and I discovered Karina Schaapman's picture book *The Mouse Mansion*. In 2008, Schaapman, a Dutch artist, built a whimsical, labyrinthine dollhouse from cardboard and papier-mâché for her miniature knitted mice; the dollhouse was photographed for a children's book in 2011. Each cozy room—from the humble shops to the workspaces, bedrooms, and secret spots under the stairwell—reflects the lives, loves, friendships, and stories of its tiny creatures. My kids and I immersed ourselves in every clever detail included in the book, from the overflowing laundry suds and the hoisting machine that moved food up and down the uneven floors to the embroidered clothing and musical instruments. We also enjoyed the short tales about the mouse inhabitants' everyday adventures.

Imagine the joy my daughter and I felt when, on a street corner in Amsterdam, we stumbled upon the real Mouse Mansion, housed in a small museum and shop. Tears filled my eyes as I encountered my beloved young mouse friends, Sam and Julia; Sam's baby triplet siblings; the playroom decorated for a birthday party; and the pancakes flipped accidentally onto Sam's head. Yes, these endearing little mice—like the renowned artists and their subjects in the museums we visited—are indelibly etched into my mind and heart, friends to revisit time and again on my bookshelf. What a serendipitous gift it was to meet them in person!

Throughout the years, we've all read books that feel like cherished companions. We've heard from readers who shared their most influential books—the stories and characters that have left a lasting impact. Keep your letters coming; we will publish readers' reflections in our next issue!

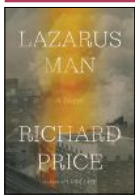
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# Bookmarks Selections



## Lazarus Man

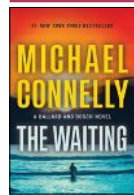
By Richard Price

The collapse of a tenement in East Harlem reveals a community in crisis.

San Francisco Chronicle **"There is no better bard of everyday life in urban America."**

LITERARY

Page 33



## The Waiting

A Ballard and Bosch Novel

By Michael Connelly

Introducing ... Harry Bosch's daughter!

Law Society Journal **"You know what you're in for—that's why you picked it up."**

CRIME

Page 48



## The Most

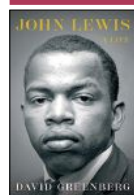
By Jessica Anthony

In 1957, a woman reconsiders her marriage and her life.

NPR **"[T]his superb short novel ... deserves to become a classic."**

LITERARY

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## John Lewis

A Life

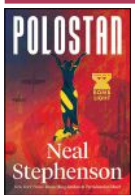
By David Greenberg

An Alabama farm boy became a civil rights activist.

NY Times Book Review **"[A] panoramic and richly insightful biography."**

BIOGRAPHY

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## Polostan

Volume One of Bomb Light

By Neal Stephenson

A woman born in the Wild West makes her way to the Soviets.

Booklist **"A glorious achievement from a unique and compelling writer."**

LITERARY

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## Patriot

A Memoir

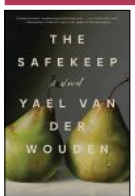
By Alexei Navalny

The Russian activist and political prisoner opposed Vladimir Putin.

Guardian **"This is a brave and brilliant book."**

BIOGRAPHY

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## The Safekeep

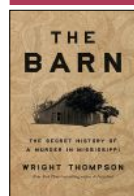
By Yael van der Wouden

A Dutch house harbors romance, guilt, and wartime secrets.

NY Times Book Review **"What a quietly remarkable book!"**

LITERARY

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## The Barn

The Secret History of a Murder in Mississippi

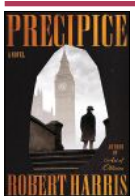
By Wright Thompson

Thompson explores the murder of Emmett Till.

Times (UK) **"Part investigative journalism, part catharsis."**

HISTORY

Page 60



## Precipice

By Robert Harris

This thriller fictionalizes a real-life love affair during World War I.

BookTrib **"Fact and fiction are seamlessly blended."**

CRIME

Page 47



## Night Magic

Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark

By Leigh Ann Henion

Our nighttime backyards house miraculous worlds.

Christian Science Monitor **"[A] nature lover's guide to the dark that unfolds like a novel!"** ■

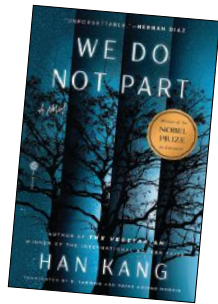
SCIENCE

Page 63

# Coming Soon

## Literary

**We Do Not Part** | HAN KANG, TRANS. E. YAEWON AND PAIGE ANIYAH MORRIS: Han (*The Vegetarian*), who won the 2024 Nobel Prize in Literature, looks back at Korea's complex history to tell a tale of a friendship between two women, the Jeju massacre, and lasting trauma. **JAN**



**The Granddaughter** | BERNHARD SCHLINK AND CHARLOTTE COLLINS: Schlink (*The Reader*) explores German reunification with the story of a German bookseller. After the death of his wife, he attempts to connect with his granddaughter—and finds a community of neo-Nazis. **JAN**

**The Stolen Queen** | FIONA DAVIS: Davis's (*The Lions of Fifth Avenue*) latest novel toggles between Egypt in the 1930s and New York City in the 1970s. An anthropologist who worked on a dig in the Valley of the Kings is now a curator at the Met. An artifact disappears, and a young woman joins her to hunt for it. **JAN**

**Isola** | ALLEGRA GOODMAN: The author

of *Sam* and *The Cookbook Collector* follows an orphaned French noblewoman in the 16th century. Instead of governing a chateau and its land, she finds herself on a small island, at the mercy of the elements. **JAN**

**The Vanishing Point Stories** | PAUL THEROUX: The American novelist and travel writer's (*The Great Railway Bazaar*, *The Mosquito Coast*) stories take place in various locales, from Africa and Hawaii to the United States. The characters yearn for love, mourn the passing of time, and cultivate memories. **JAN**

**Rosarita** | ANITA DESAI: Desai, a three-time Booker finalist, sets her newest novel in Mexico, where Bonita has left her home in India to study Spanish. When an elderly woman befriends her, Bonita delves deep inside her mother's hidden past. **JAN**

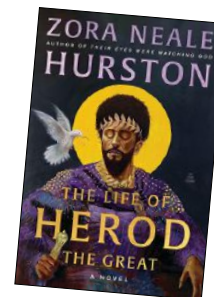


**A Calamity of Noble Houses** | AMIRA GHENIM, TRANS. MILED FAIZA AND KAREN MCNEIL: Ghenim's first novel to be translated into English was a finalist for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. In 1930s Tunisia, two upper-class families, one conservative and

the other progressive, cross paths. Eleven narrators follow their destinies to the present day.

**JAN**

**The Life of Herod the Great** | ZORA NEALE HURSTON AND DEBORAH G. PLANT: The never-before-published work by Hurston (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*) keeps coming. This historical novel features Herod the Great—portrayed not as a villain but as a religious and visionary leader in the 1st century BCE. **JAN**



**Bronstein in the Bronx** | ROBERT LITTEL: Littel (*A Plague on Both Your Houses*, *The Company*) imagines 10 weeks in the life of Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky in 1917. On the run, he escapes political exile in Siberia and arrives in New York, where he grapples with politics and his conscience. **JAN**

**Back After This**

| LINDA HOLMES: Holmes (*Evvie Drake Starts Over*) writes about podcast producer Cecily Foster, who's given the chance to talk about her dating life on her own podcast show. When she falls for the wrong guy, she must choose between love and her career. **FEB**



**We All Live Here** | JOJO MOYES: The author of *Someone Else's Shoes* tells the story of Lila Kennedy and her eccentric family. In midlife, Lila has



## Coming Soon to a Theater Near You

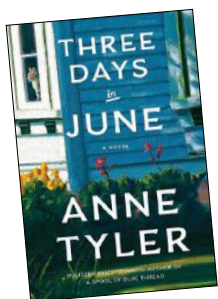
**BRIDGET JONES: MAD ABOUT THE BOY**

Directed by Michael Morris and starring Hugh Grant, Renée Zellweger, and Emma Thompson. Based on the 2013 title of the same name by Helen Fielding. **FEB**

a broken marriage, two rebellious daughters, and an elderly stepfather to care for. Then, her birth father appears on her doorstep. **FEB**

### Three Days in June | ANNE TYLER: Tyler (*French Braid*)

returns with a short novel about love, family, heartbreak, and joy. Gail's daughter is about to marry—just as Gail loses her job and her ex-husband shows up. The wedding is jeopardized when a secret about the groom comes to light. **FEB**



**Show Don't Tell Stories** | CURTIS SITTENFELD: Sittenfeld's (*Prep*) second short fiction collection explores friendship, marriage, divorce, art, and fame. The main character from *Prep*, Lee Fiora, also makes an appearance at an alumni reunion at her old boarding school. **FEB**

**Gliff** | ALI SMITH: The author of the Seasonal Quartet embarks on another boundary-pushing novel. In Scottish, "gliff" means a faint glimpse or shock. This story takes place in the near future, and humanity still matters. **FEB**



**The Echoes** | EVIE WYLD: When Max dies, he becomes a ghost who watches his girlfriend, Hannah, in their London apartment. Before Max's death, Hannah had escaped Australia and her past secrets. Did Max ever really know her? **FEB**

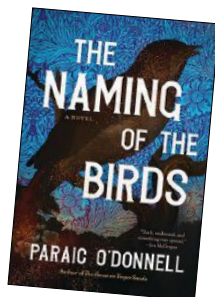
**Every Tom, Dick & Harry** | ELINOR LIPMAN: In this romcom, Eleanor reluctantly takes over her parents' estate-sale business. When she finds a house

of ill repute disguised as a bed and breakfast, Eleanor must decide what to do with her life. **FEB**

## Crime

### The Naming of the Birds | PARICA O'DONNELL:

The sequel to *The House on Vesper Sands*, set in Victorian London, follows Inspector Cutter as he tries to solve gruesome, professionally orchestrated murders. He grows ever more gloomy; Sergeant Gideon Bliss steps in to help. **JAN**



**Presumed Guilty (Presumed Innocent, Book 3)** | SCOTT TUROW: In the third book in the series (after *Presumed Innocent* and *Innocent*), Rusty, a retired judge in the rural Midwest, has found love again. Then, his soon-to-be wife's delinquent son disappears and becomes the prime suspect in a murder. It's not looking good. **JAN**

**The Oligarch's Daughter** | JOSEPH FINDER: In this thriller, Paul Brightman was once a rising Wall Street star. Then, he unwittingly became involved with a Russian oligarch. Now he's on the run, with a bounty on his head. **JAN**

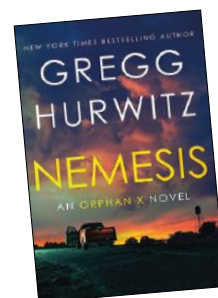
**Been Wrong So Long It Feels Like Right (King Oliver, Book 3)** | WALTER MOSLEY: The third in the series featuring NYPD investigator Joe King Oliver (after *Down the River Unto the Sea* and *Every Man a King*) sees King looking for his estranged father, who's living underground. He's also tasked with finding a powerful California mogul's wife. **JAN**

**Pro Bono** | THOMAS PERRY: Perry (*The Butcher's Boy*, *The Old Man*) follows Los Angeles attorney Charles Warren, who specializes in finding hidden money. A job helping a young

widow, however, brings up dirt from the past. **JAN**

**Saint of the Narrows Street** | WILLIAM BOYLE: In the Italian working-class neighborhood of Gravesend, Brooklyn, in 1986, a tragic accident and a secret put two big-hearted sisters and an infant on a path they never saw coming. **FEB**

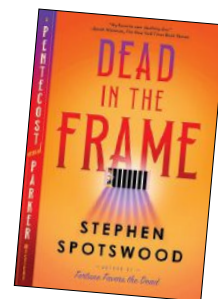
**Nemesis (Orphan X, Book 10)** | GREGG HURWITZ: The tenth in the series features Evan Smoak, once a black ops assassin known as Orphan X. Now he finds himself in a showdown with his best friend, a talented gunsmith. Which of them will survive? **FEB**



**Blood Ties (Kingdom, Book 2)** | JO NESBØ: The sequel to *The Kingdom* sees Carl and Roy Opgard somewhat successful in Os, their small Norwegian town. Then, plans for a new highway derail their dreams, and things go downhill from there. **FEB**

**Close Your Eyes and Count to 10** | LISA UNGER: Unger's (*The New Couple in 5B*) newest novel takes place on Falcao Island, with the ultimate game of hide-and-seek. Then, a storm hits, and the social media stunt turns deadly. **FEB**

**Dead in the Frame (Pentecost and Parker Mysteries, Book 5)** | STEPHEN SPOTSWOOD: This fifth installment (after *Murder Crossed Her Mind*), which takes place in 1947 New York City, sees detective Lillian Pentecost under arrest for the murder of a wealthy businessman.



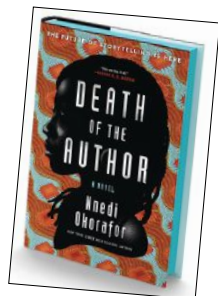
Of course she didn't do it—but who did? **FEB**

**The Ghosts of Rome (The Rome Escape Line Trilogy, Book 2)** | JOSEPH O'CONNOR: The second in the trilogy, after *My Father's House*, again follows Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, the leader of The Choir, who smuggled thousands out of occupied Rome during World War II. Now, the Escape Line is in grave jeopardy. **FEB**

## SF

**Witchcraft for Wayward Girls** | GRADY HENDRIX: Hendrix (*How to Sell a Haunted House*) turns to Wellwood House in St. Augustine, Florida, and its unwed mothers who deliver their babies in secret. None of the girls are too happy to be there—until they discover an occult book about witchcraft, which might provide a way out. **JAN**

**Death of the Author** | NNEDI OKORAFOR: The award-winning Okorafor (*Like Thunder*) has penned a work of metafiction. In it, a disabled Nigerian American woman writes a far-future epic in which AI and androids wage war. Her novel reshapes the world. **JAN**



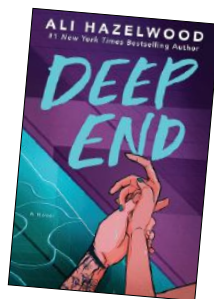
**Cold Storage (The Revival Series, 2)** | MICHAEL C. GRUMLEY: Army vet John Reiff returns in this techno-thriller (following *Deep Freeze*). He was previously frozen in a river for 20 years and revived. Now, he must dodge a shady organization intent on uncovering some precious secrets. **JAN**

## Young Adult

**I Am Not Jessica Chen** | ANN LIANG: Liang's (*If You Could See the Sun*)

book follows Jenna Chen, who feels like a disappointment compared to her brilliant, beautiful cousin, Jessica. Then Jenna magically *becomes* Jessica—but at what cost? **JAN**

**Deep End** | ALI HAZELWOOD: In Hazelwood's (*Love, Theoretically*) latest, two Stanford University athletes—Scarlett and Lukas—seemingly have little in common. Then a secret emerges, they begin a relationship, and the Olympic games approach. **FEB**

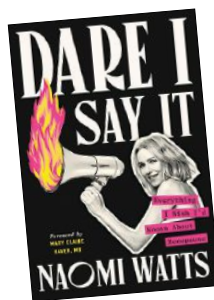


**I Am the Cage** | ALLISON SWEET GRANT: Elisabeth, 18, lives alone in a small cabin in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, away from her painful memories. When she's forced to accept help from her neighbor, she must confront her past and find her way forward. **FEB**

**(S)Kin** | IBI ZOBOI: Zobo's (*American Street, Nigeria Jones*) fantasy debut, written in verse, takes inspiration from Caribbean folklore. Marisol, who has magical powers, emigrated from the islands to Brooklyn. Through two teens, the novel explores beauty ideals, colorism, assimilation, and lineages. **FEB**

## General

**Dare I Say It Everything I Wish I'd Known About Menopause** | NAOMI WATTS AND MARY CLAIRE HAVER: Watts is a popular actress; Haver is the author of *The New Menopause*. Together, they

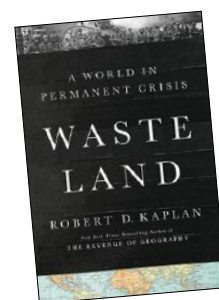


share their stories about and research on menopause—what it is, its symp-

toms, and how women of a certain age can tackle it successfully. **JAN**

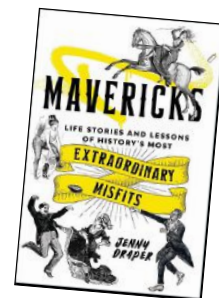
## Waste Land

**A World in Permanent Crisis** | ROBERT D. KAPLAN: Climate change, water, geopolitical rivalry, pandemics, mass migration, technology, war, and more—Kaplan discusses what's next for us. Drawing on the past, he offers an eye-opening vision of the future. **JAN**



**Black in Blues How a Color Tells the Story of My People** | IMANI PERRY: Perry (*South to America* won the National Book Award) examines the concept of human blackness in conjunction with the color blue. Drawing from her life, art, literature, and history, she examines the colors' meaning to African Americans and in modern culture. **JAN**

**Mavericks Life Stories and Lessons of History's Most Extraordinary Misfits** | JENNY DRAPER: Draper, a TikTok historian (yes, that's a thing), explores those eccentric folk that shaped the world—not the kings or queens, but the oddballs, including a medieval sex worker, a cross-dresser in 18th-century London, a dinosaur historian who consumed the heart of a French king, and more. **FEB**



**Seeking Shelter A Working Mother, Her Children, and a Story of Homelessness in America** | JEFF HOBBS: Hobbs (*The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace*) follows a single mother of six in Los Angeles. Although poverty and domestic violence left her family houseless, she never lost her vision for

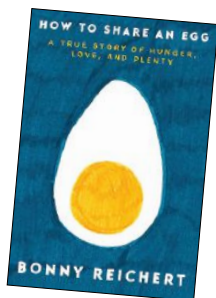


her children. FEB

## Biography

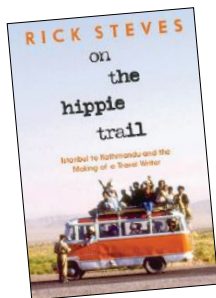
**I Am Nobody's Slave** How Uncovering My Family's History Set Me Free | LEE HAWKINS: The acclaimed writer relates his black Minnesotan family's legacy of enslavement, systematic racism, and violence. Hawkins examines his childhood trauma, struggles, resilience, and, ultimately, his family's successes. JAN

**How To Share an Egg** A True Story of Hunger, Love, and Plenty | BONNY REICHERT: In this culinary memoir, winner of the Dave Greber Book Award for social justice writing, Reichert, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, reflects on her upbringing, her father's suffering in Auschwitz, and her rich culinary lineage. JAN



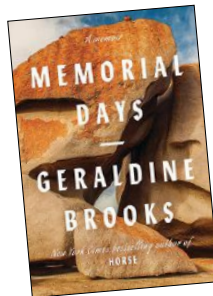
**Three Wild Dogs (and the Truth)** A Memoir | MARKUS ZUSAK: The bestselling author of *The Book Thief* focuses not on himself but on his family's cadre of misfit dogs—wild, big, chaotic, and a little violent—but ultimately lovable and relatable. JAN

**On the Hippie Trail** Istanbul to Kathmandu and the Making of a Travel Writer | RICK STEVES: In 1978, when he was 23, the famed travel writer backpacked along the "Hippie Trail" from Istanbul to Kathmandu. He shares his life-changing impressions and adventures through photographs and journal entries. FEB



**Source Code My Beginnings** | BILL GATES: This memoir is for readers interested in the man behind the myth. Instead of writing strictly about Microsoft, technology, or philanthropy, Gates reveals details about his family, his friends, his struggles for acceptance, and his early technical endeavors. FEB

**Memorial Days** A Memoir | GERALDINE BROOKS: When Brooks (*Horse*) learned that her husband of 30 years, Tony Horwitz, had died suddenly at age 60, she had little time to grieve. Three years later, she found the time and space to mourn along the isolated, rugged Australian coast. She writes about their lives together and how different cultures grieve. FEB



**The Buddhist Years** | JACK KEROUAC, ED. CHARLES SHUTTLEWORTH: Kerouac's previously unpublished writings chart the evolution of his spirituality and embrace of Buddhism. Through his reflective writing, Kerouac explores materialism, freedom, belief, and consciousness. FEB

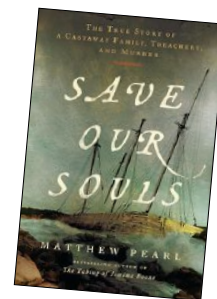
**Reading the Waves** A Memoir | LIDIA YUKNAVITCH: In her second memoir, the author (*Verge*, *The Book of Joan*) draws on literature to explore her own story: her father's abuse and his relationship with her disabled mother, her growth as a writer, and the memories that shaped her understanding of herself. FEB

**Scout Camp Sex, Death, and Secret Societies Inside the Boy Scouts of America** | JAMES RENNER: In this personal true-crime memoir, Renner, an author, the creator of the *True Crime This Week* podcast, and a former Boy Scout, digs deep into the organization's secrets, sexual violence, deaths, and his own trauma. In particular,

he examines the deadly violence in 1995 at the Boy Scouts camp in Seven Ranges, Ohio, where he was a counselor. FEB

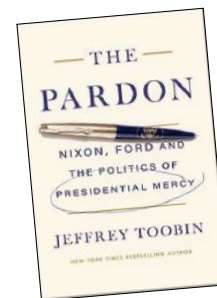
## History

**Save Our Souls** The True Story of a Castaway Family, Treachery, and Murder | MATTHEW PEARL: The author of *The Taking of Jemima Boone* tells the real-life story of the Walker family. In 1887, they became castaways on a deserted island inhabited by a mysterious man. Think *Swiss Family Robinson*, with intrigue and danger. JAN



**A History of Ancient Rome in Twelve Coins** | GARETH HARNEY: The author, a Roman historian and coin collector, explores the history of Rome through 12 of its coins, which represent the Romans' gods, emperors, battles, and more—in sum, the story of the Roman Empire. JAN

**The Pardon** Nixon, Ford and the Politics of Presidential Mercy | JEFFREY TOOBIN: Toobin (*The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court*, *The Run of His Life: The People v. O. J. Simpson*) turns to the gritty details of Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon: the drama, the resignation, the legal issues, the characters involved, and the implications for the political future. FEB ■



# Have you Read?

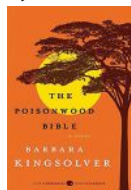
## MY BEST FRIENDS

Andrea Micheals is from Brighton, Michigan.

I have loved books all my life. I often say, "Some of my best friends are books!" I grew up on a farm in Oregon, and we read constantly because there was nothing else to do. I have a free little library, and I love curating it. All my seven children read, even my disabled son. I read about 60 books a year and send the best of them to many people, which keeps me in touch with friends who live far away.

## The Poisonwood Bible

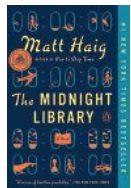
By Barbara Kingsolver



This novel is told from the perspectives of four daughters who arrive in the Belgian Congo in 1959 with their evangelical Baptist father, whose mission is to convert the natives to Christianity. Told over three decades, the novel puts a human face on Africa and its problems, as well as one family's tragedies. I came to understand this unique continent better.

## The Midnight Library

By Matt Haig



This novel changed my life. A young woman, Nora Seed, is considering suicide until she stumbles into a building and finds that it's a library. An old friend helps Nora discover the other

lives she might have lived had she made different choices. We all have dreams and regrets about paths we could have taken, which might have changed our lives. Nora gets to see all the lives she might have lived, but are those lives really better? Ultimately, it's about the life we live now.

## The Town House (The Suffolk Trilogy)

By Norah Lofts



These bestselling novels, published in the 1960s, are a series of tales of the people of England, starting in 1381 and ending in 1956. The stories feature the inhabitants of the "Town House" and cover the history of England over the centuries. In the first tale, "Martin Reed," a serf escapes from bondage and arrives at a town where he will one day be free if he can live there for one year. Rather than featuring royalty or the upper crust of society, these stories follow the common people of England and explore how they lived between the eras spanning the reigns of Edward III and Elizabeth II.

## Stones from the River

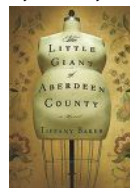
By Ursula Hegi



Trudy, a dwarf, lives in the town of Burgdorf, Germany, during World War II. Trudy learns the secrets of the townspeople, from saints and sinners to everyone in between. We learn why some of the people in the town venerate Hitler and others stay silent. We learn who is hypocritical, who cheats others, and who harbors Jews. Burgdorf is every town everywhere, and it is us. The novel explores the banality of evil and the love that can heal others.

## The Little Giant of Aberdeen County

By Tiffany Banks



This story of two sisters features the beautiful Serena Jane and Truly, the one considered hugely enormous because of the existence of an unknown tumor in her pituitary gland. Truly, the heroine, shows us what being different is like in a small town. She discovers an old book on folk remedies. She learns how to bring merciful death at the end of life. But there is, of course, a price to pay.

## The Master Butchers Singing Club

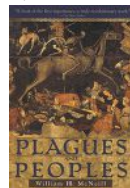
By Louise Erdrich



This masterpiece represents the best of Erdrich's work. A German immigrant marries his pregnant best friend's fiancée after the friend's death in World War I and emigrates to Argus, North Dakota, with his new bride and a set of butcher's knives. This story of immigrant life in a small town features an unexpected cast of characters.

## Plagues and Peoples

By William H. McNeill



Communicable diseases have spread ever since people started to farm and live in close societies. Bubonic plague, cholera, smallpox, typhus, typhoid, measles, dysentery, whooping cough, mumps, influenza, and more have had enormous impacts on the history of humankind. For example, armies often lost wars not because of men lost in battle but because of disease. When Cortés entered Mexico in 1519, many of the

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Aztec leaders died of smallpox, and the native population was in the throes of the epidemic. Diseases' impact on our history is unrivaled to anything else. This nonfiction book opened my eyes to a whole new field of study.

### Gentleman and Players

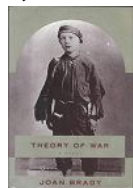
By Joanne Harris



A poor boy in England sneaks into an exclusive boys boarding school, where he blends in with the students. Jealous, he understands that a boy like himself could never be one of the elite students. Later, the boy returns and exacts his revenge. There is a surprising twist to this riveting, suspenseful novel.

### Theory of War

By Joan Brady



Just after the Civil War, a white, four-year-old boy is sold into slavery to a Kansas tobacco farmer. His suffering haunts future generations of his family. Told by his disabled grandchild when she cracks the code of her grandfather's diary and learns of his revenge, the novel explores hatred, survival, war, and the emotional cost of slavery.

### The Thirteenth Tale

By Diane Setterfield



At the end of her life, Vida Winter, a famous but reclusive writer, hires a local biographer to record the true story of her life, which she had, until now, concealed from everyone. It's the story of the Angelfield family and the secrets they have concealed for so long. The story involves a set of autistic girl twins, who die in a fire. Or do they? This novel has an exciting twist.

## ART COLLECTORS, MUSEUMS, AND HEISTS GALORE

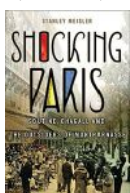
Miriam Webb is from Ontario, Canada.

I am an art collector, consultant, and docent in Toronto. I read with passion and love finding books that are less noticed.

### Shocking Paris

Soutine, Chagall and the Outsiders of Montparnasse

By Stanley Meisler

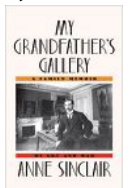


Meisler describes how, in the decades before World War II, a group of artists escaping discrimination and pogroms came to Paris. Among them were Marc Chagall, Amedeo Modigliani, Chaïm Soutine, and others, all of whom tremendously influenced what appeared to be less talented Parisian artists. They were called artists of the School of Paris. Meisler clearly describes each of the artist's lives and the social conditions in which they lived. This is a fascinating report on an important art movement.

### My Grandfather's Gallery

A Family Memoir of Art and War

By Anne Sinclair



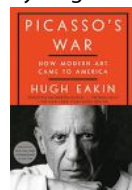
The author's touching account of her family's history goes back to before World War II, when her grandfather, Paul Rosenberg, was an important art dealer in France. Drawing on his correspondence with Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Henri Matisse, to name a few artists, Sinclair describes her grandfather as a pioneer in the art world. She also chronicles how the Nazis, who seized dozens of her grandfather's gallery's works, reshaped the art world and his life. In 1940, Rosenberg fled Vichy France for New York. Sinclair is the former wife of Dominique Strauss-Kahn; after her divorce, she opened up about her art possessions. The

memoir is touchingly personal and factual.

### Picasso's War

How Modern Art Came to America

By Hugh Eakin



When we thought not much more could be said about Pablo Picasso, Eakin makes the fascinating claim that his art was not initially accepted in the United States. There was opposition to his work, and it was only because of a small group of supporters that he became championed in a changing America. American lawyer John Quinn and, later, Alfred H. Barr, who became the director of New York's Museum of Modern Art, ensured the artist's acceptance into the collection. Eakin's biography provides a truly fascinating look into the history of an essential part of the MOMA's acquisitions and permanent collections.

### The House of Fragile Things

Jewish Art Collectors and the Fall of France

By James McAuley

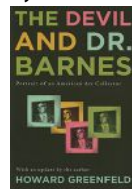


The author, a Paris correspondent for the *Washington Post*, describes the heartbreaking events of collector dynasties that fell prey to the Nazis' murderous greed, hatred, and destruction. Families who devoted their lives to their country were ultimately abandoned, and their lives were destroyed. This book sheds light on the plight of patriotic French Jews in the fin de siècle and the fate of their estates and vast collections.

### The Devil and Dr. Barnes

Portrait of an American Art Collector

By Howard Greenfeld



Dr. Albert Coombs Barnes of the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia rose from poverty to great wealth. He affected the art world by collecting art from such masters as Henri

Matisse, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, Amedeo Modigliani, Chaïm Soutine, and others. He was radical in his choices and turned his back on those in the art establishment who criticized him. He built a museum in Merion, Pennsylvania, which has since been moved to the downtown area after fighting between those who wanted to keep the original building and those who wished for a new downtown venue. The book sheds light on the art of the time and the person who championed it.

### The Girl With the Gallery

Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the Modern Art Market

By Lindsay Pollock



Pollock, an art journalist, describes how Edith Gregor Halpert, a Russian émigré, founded the Downtown Gallery in Greenwich Village—a

daring and unprecedented move for a young woman in 1926. Halpert was an early and ardent champion of contemporary American art at a time when Paris had a monopoly on the art market. She was a brilliant and tragic figure coping with loss, poverty, class, and greed as she laid the foundation for the art market's modern era.

### The Whitney Women and the Museum They Made

A Family Memoir

By Flora Miller Biddle



How much do we know about the history of this prestigious and thriving museum in Manhattan?

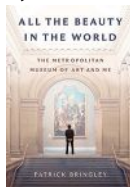
The author, the granddaughter of Gertrude

Vanderbilt Whitney and Harry Payne Whitney, delves into the history of the Whitney Museum, which Gertrude founded in 1931, when Europe was the world's art capital. After she died in 1943, her daughter Flora took over, and then her daughter, Flora Biddle. The challenges and struggles to keep the museum going and ensure survival and expansion make for fascinating reading

### All the Beauty in the World

The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Me

By Patrick Bringley



This biography, which takes place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, features a museum guard—the author—who worked there for over a decade. Personal tragedy and the need to escape the mundane and immerse himself in beauty brought him to this position. This biography offers a glimpse into the workings of the museum and illustrates the power of art.

### The Art Thief

A True Story of Love, Crime, and a Dangerous Obsession

By Michael Finkel

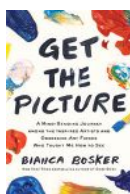


This is a true account of a committed art thief—a young man who, along with his accomplice girlfriend, could not restrain himself from stealing any work of art that moved him. Stéphane Bréitwieser amassed about 300 priceless works of art in about 200 heists, many in broad daylight. He never damaged a piece and felt he was the proper custodian of these priceless objects. He stole paintings, sculptures, tapestries, and works of historic importance. Read how he did it, how he outsmarted security systems, and what the outcome was.

### Get the Picture

A Mind-Bending Journey among the Inspired Artists and Obsessive Art Fiends Who Taught Me How to See

By Bianca Bosker



The author knows no limits. She delves into the entire art world—the collectors, dealers, curators, and, of course, artists—with razor-sharp wit and keen observation. If you have ever wondered why certain things are called art, know you are not alone. You will never forget Bosker's descriptions of so-called A-List Gallerists, staff, and the people who buy art.

Find out why art matters in a serious but funny way. ■



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# Book Groups

## THE KNITTING BOOK CLUB

Submitted by Megan Baldrige, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

### What is your book group like?

Have you ever wanted to join a book club that supports your extracurricular interest? We had that itch and scratched it, and, lo and behold, our everything-knitting-and-fiber-book club was born.

Our book club of nine avid readers is devoted to textiles: knitting, weaving, spinning, dyeing, and clothing. We've been meeting by Zoom every Monday night since shortly before the pandemic. Although we are a relatively new group, we have some 160 meetings under our belts, as well as three weeklong retreats to a remote ranch in New Mexico, where we (surprise!) talked about books, hiked, and knitted together.

Our members hail from Washington, D.C., Denver, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Austin, San Diego, New Orleans, and Gooseberry Mesa in Utah. We first met on a knitting retreat that explored knitting traditions, farms, yarn stores, and restaurants in Argentina and Uruguay. Many of us, strangers at the start of the trip, bonded over knitting projects, ideas, and books.

We returned home just as the pandemic struck, and Zooming took off. We began a tradition of reading a chapter or more a week of our book of the moment. The absence of conflicting activities contributed to our regular attendance; now, post-pandemic, we continue our wonderful socializing and learning-from-books tradition. In between weekly meetings, we share book or textile jokes and observations over WhatsApp.

### What do you read?

Instead of reading how-tos, we choose books that examine what is happening in the textile field or how new ideas are informing old practices.

We are aided by a recent flurry of new nonfiction titles on various aspects of the textile industry, and we are engaged with the idea of supporting a local clothing industry. Our best discussions have centered on the adventures of a bale of wool, the idea of a "fibershed" community, and the ways we can support local independent sheep farms and mills. Our least favorite books have been memoirs by knitting stars, who write more avidly about themselves and less interestingly about the rest of the fiber world.



For *Patterns of Exchange, Navajo Weavers and Traders* by Teresa J. Wilkins, we discussed the experiences of one of our member's friends, who grew up at a trading post. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer was a favorite for, noted member Tina Cary, "its writing and the narration, and her integration of science and tradition." All women, we consider textile issues from a female perspective.

The line between book and life often intertwines. We are often knitting as we discuss our book on Zoom; we end every Monday night meeting discussing our current knitting projects—*after* we talk about our assigned book chapter. "I look forward to our weekly meetings among friends—not only to talk about the book we are reading but also to see what everyone else is knitting and to discuss the latest goings-on in the knitting world," member Mimi Seyferth said.

Our most recent titles include *The Sewing Girls Tale: A Story of Crime and Consequences in Revolutionary America* by John Wood Sweet, *Slow Knitting: A Journey from Sheep to Skein to Stitch* by Hannah Thiessen, *Follow the Flock: How Sheep Shaped Human Civilization* by Sally Coulthard, and *A Perfect Red* by Amy Butler Greenfield. We have not read much fiction, simply because the most interesting recent books about textiles have been nonfiction investigations and memoirs. However, our docket for the next year includes some fiction: *Lyddie* by Katherine Paterson, *The Blue Door* (Quilt Trilogy, #3) by Ann Rinaldi, *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell, and *Women of the Silk* by Gail Tsukiyama.

*continued on page 28*

# Awards

## NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS

The winners were announced on November 20th, just after we went to press.

## FICTION

### FINALISTS

#### JAMES

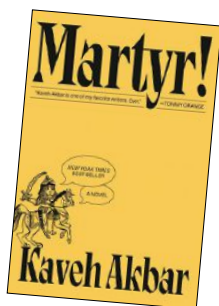
By Percival Everett

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* portrayed Jim as a loyal, good-natured slave whom Huck befriended on their journey down the Mississippi. Everett inverts key elements of this classic. Huck, a white boy, fakes his death and flees his abusive father; Jim, a slave, escapes when he learns that he will be sold and separated from his family. But Jim is now James—an erudite student of Voltaire and John Locke who narrates his experiences of untold violence, un-freedoms, ironies, and agency. (★★★★ SELECTION May/June 2024)



#### MARTYR!

By Kaveh Akbar  
Akbar, an Iranian American poet, follows Cyrus Shams, a queer Iranian American poet in the Midwest battling

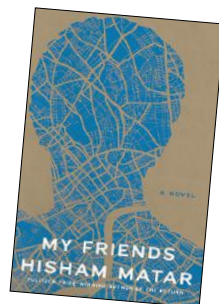


addiction and grief. His father, who worked at a factory farm, recently died, and his mother was on the plane that was accidentally shot down by a U.S. missile over Iran in 1988. Cyrus is currently sober but struggling with suicidal thoughts as he searches for meaning. He settles on researching a Book of Martyrs, which takes an unexpected turn. (★★★★ SELECTION May/June 2024)

#### MY FRIENDS

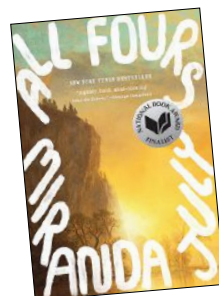
By Hisham Matar

In 1983, during Qaddafi's repressive regime, Khaled, 17, leaves Benghazi to study in Edinburgh. While attending an anti-Qaddafi protest in London, he and his new friend Mustafa are shot by pro-Libyan gunmen and hospitalized. Fearful of jeopardizing their families, they go into exile. Twelve years later, Khaled befriends a dissident writer. The three men bond, become estranged, and come together again. When the Arab Spring erupts in 2011, they each face life-altering decisions. (★★★★ SELECTION Mar/Apr 2024)



#### ALL FOURS

By Miranda July  
A woman plans to drive from Los Angeles to New York City for a writing retreat. Instead, she checks into a Monrovia, California motel and



stays there for two weeks. She calls her husband and tells him made-up stories about the places she's been on her road trip. She also ponders how she's gotten herself trapped in motherhood and a heterosexual marriage. Approaching menopause, she embarks on a sex spree with women and men alike. (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2024)

#### GHOSTROOTS

Stories

By Pemi Aguda

These dozen stories, set in modern-day Lagos, Nigeria, explore family, gender, tradition, and myth. The award-winning "Breastmilk" features a wife who forgives her husband's infidelity—and then, unable to produce milk for her infant, doubts her motherhood. Another story follows three fathers who discover their tragic connections. In "Manifest," a woman sees her abusive mother in her daughter's face. Other tales feature kidnappings, cowardly men, and legacies of abuse. Haunted family relationships prevail; ghosts pass down through maternal lineages.



### LONGLIST

**THE MOST** | JESSICA ANTHONY (★★★★ SELECTION Jan/Feb 2025)  
**CATALINA** | KARLA CORNEJO VILLAVICENCIO  
**CREATION LAKE** | RACHEL KUSHNER (★★★★ SELECTION Nov/Dec 2024)  
**YR DEAD** | SAM SAX  
**REJECTION** | TONY TULATHIMUTTE

# NONFICTION

## FINALISTS

### KNIFE

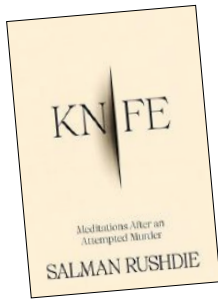
#### Meditations After an Attempted Murder

By Salman Rushdie

On August 12, 2022, more than three decades had passed since Ayatollah Khomeini had issued a fatwa against Rushdie after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie gradually returned to living a more public life. But on that evening, as he prepared to deliver a talk in upstate New York on the importance of keeping writers safe, he was brutally attacked by 24-year-old Hadi

Matar. Rushdie recounts his grueling recovery and includes an imagined conversation with his assailant.

(★★★★ July/Aug 2024)

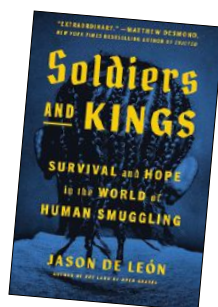


### SOLDIERS AND KINGS

#### Survival and Hope in the World of Human Smuggling

By Jason De León

For five years, the author embedded himself in a group of smugglers—coyotes or “guides”—who lead undocumented migrants from Central America through Mexico and the deadly Sonoran Desert to the United States. The migrants, many of them from countries dominated by gangs and poverty, embark on these dangerous journeys to find greater economic opportunities and political stability; the smugglers hope for similar futures. De León puts human faces on this extra-legal billion-dollar global industry.

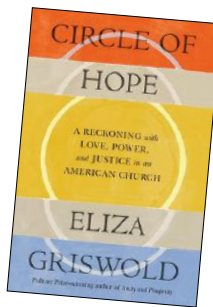


### CIRCLE OF HOPE

#### A Reckoning with Love, Power, and Justice in an American Church

By Eliza Griswold

For many years, people have been leaving organized religion. The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist explores the opposite trend—the growth of radical evangelicalism. She focuses on Circle of Hope, which was founded in 1996 and had four congregations in greater Philadelphia by 2019. Church members (mostly whites) addressed social ills and served its poor communities. Griswold explores the confluence of social activism, antiracism, and idealism and the internal strife—caused by the pandemic and the George Floyd murder—that brought it down.

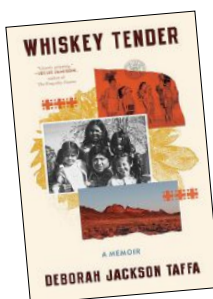


### WHISKEY TENDER

#### A Memoir

By Deborah Jackson Taffa

Taffa recounts her childhood and adolescence in the 1970s and 1980s as a child of two nations: the Quechuan (Yuma) and Laguna Pueblo. Her mother, of mixed Spanish and Indigenous ancestry, suffered from depression; her father turned to drink. From the Gold Rush on, trauma was passed down to the next generation. Taffa writes of growing up in California and moving to the edge of the Navajo Nation in New Mexico; of dispossession, exploitation, resistance, and assimilation; and of her own mixed heritage, which left her always an outsider.

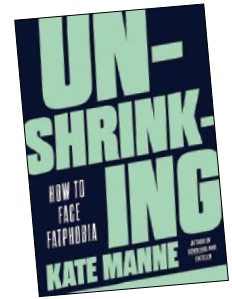


### UNSHRINKING

#### How to Face Fatphobia

By Kate Manne

“Where did I learn to hate my fat body?” Manne asks about her desire to be smaller her entire life. A self-proclaimed feminist and the author of books on misogyny, Manne explores the many ways we are told and taught to make ourselves smaller, no matter the psychological and health costs. Manne blends personal stories and criticism to show why fat phobia is one of the most important social justice issues of our time, a system of oppression in which “some bodies should be ignored, disregarded, and mistreated.”



## LONGLIST

### THERE'S ALWAYS

**THIS YEAR: ON BASKETBALL AND ASCENSION** | HANIF ABDURRAQIB (★★★★ July/Aug 2024)

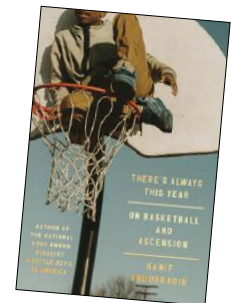
**OUR MOON: HOW EARTH'S CELESTIAL COMPANION**

**TRANSFORMED THE PLANET, GUIDED EVOLUTION, AND MADE US WHO WE ARE** | REBECCA BOYLE (★★★★ May/June 2024)

**THE WAR BELOW: LITHIUM, COPPER, AND THE GLOBAL BATTLE TO POWER OUR LIVES** | ERNEST SCHEYDER

**A GREAT DISORDER: NATIONAL MYTH AND THE BATTLE FOR AMERICA** | RICHARD SLOTKIN

**MAGICAL/REALISM: ESSAYS ON MUSIC, MEMORY, FANTASY, AND BORDERS** | VANESSA ANGÉLICA VILLARREAL



# LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

## FINALISTS

### ÆDNAN

#### An Epic

By Linnea Axelson, trans. from the Swedish by Saskia Vogel

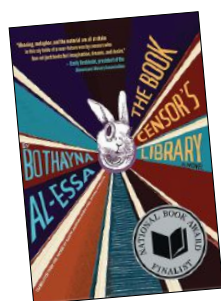
The Sámi Swedish author's novel-in-verse tells a multigenerational tale of two Sámi families. In the 1910s, Ristin, her family, and their herd of reindeer migrate from their Arctic home to summer ground just as a new border separates Sweden and Norway; a tragedy affects them all. Sixty years later, Lise, a Sámi, reflects on her childhood trauma and forced assimilation. In the 2010s, Lise's daughter has become an Indigenous activist. Themes of migration, colonialism, tradition, loss, community, resistance, and survival abound.



### THE BOOK CENSOR'S LIBRARY

By Bothayna Al-Essa, trans. from the Arabic by Sawad Hussain and Ranya Abdelrahman

Drawing on *Zorba the Greek*, 1984, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Pinocchio*, and *Fahrenheit 451*, this novel follows a book censor hired by his dictatorial government. The man is tasked with finding illicit mentions of democracy, blasphemy, the Internet, homosexuality, and the Old World (the era before the end of personal freedom). Soon, he becomes immersed in stories and discovers a secret, dangerous world of book lovers in this reactionary world. Absurdist and satirical,

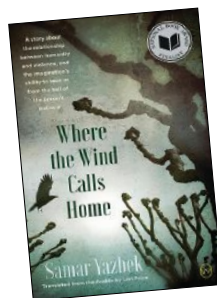


the book explores passion, dreams, imagination, and rebellion.

### WHERE THE WIND CALLS HOME

By Samar Yazbek, trans. from the Arabic by Leri Price

During the long Syrian civil war, Ali, 19, is a conscript in the Syrian Army. When a bomb injures him at his patrol station in the Latakia mountains, Ali falls beneath a tree, hovering between life and death. He turns to delirious memories of the oak tree near his mother's prayer space, the hardships and cultural richness of his traditional village, and the abuse he suffered at the hands of his father. Meanwhile, the mystical natural world surrounds him.



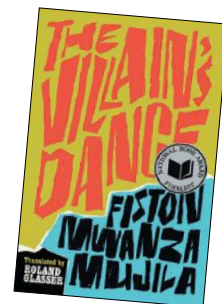
### TAIWAN TRAVELOGUE

By Yáng Shuāng-zǐ, trans. from the Mandarin Chinese by Lin King

Presented as a translation of a 1954 text, this book features successful novelist Aoyama Chizuko, a young Japanese woman who sails from her home in Nagasaki and arrives in Taiwan in 1938. Chizuru, the charming Taiwanese woman hired as her interpreter, takes her all over the land to experience its culinary splendors. Chizuko becomes enamored of her guide, but Chizuru rebuffs her advances at friendship. Not all is what it seems in this tale of intimacy, status, and politics.



The adolescent Sanza lives in 1990s Lubumbashi, Zaire (present-day Democratic Republic of Congo). He joins a street gang and spies on citizens at the city's popular rumba bars. A parallel narrative follows a woman claiming to be many centuries old and seeking her fortune among the diamond miners; she lives simultaneously in Anglia and Japan. The stories of these and many other characters zig-zag and intersect, bringing to life Africa's political instability and its colorful people.



## LOONGLIST

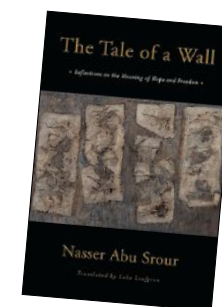
**THE TALE OF A WALL: REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF HOPE AND FREEDOM** | NASSER ABU SROUR, TRANS. FROM THE ARABIC BY LUKE LEAFGRN

**ON THE CALCULATION OF VOLUME (BOOK I)** | SOLVEJ BALLE, TRANS. FROM THE DANISH BY BARBARA J. HAVELAND

**WOODWORM** | LAYLA MARTÍNEZ, TRANS. FROM THE SPANISH BY SOPHIE HUGHES AND ANNIE MCDERMOTT

**PINK SLIME** | FERNANDA TRÍAS, TRANS. FROM THE SPANISH BY HEATHER CLEARY

**THE ABYSS** | FERNANDO VALLEJO, TRANS. FROM THE SPANISH BY YVETTE SIEGERT



## YOUNG PEOPLE'S LITERATURE

### FINALISTS

#### THE FIRST STATE OF BEING

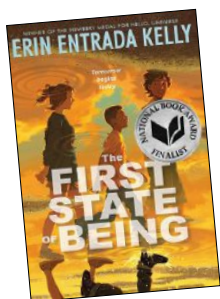
By Erin Entrada Kelly

The award-winning author follows 12-year-old Michael Rosario,



who lives in Red Knot, Delaware, in 1999. He dreads Y2K and has a crush on his babysitter. His life changes when Ridge, a teenage boy, mysteriously appears. Ridge is confident and bold—and also a time traveler from the near future.

Anxious and vulnerable, Michael wants knowledge of the great unknown future—but how far will he go to get it? Can he find joy in the here and now?



### BUFFALO DREAMER

By Violet Duncan

Summer's family spends relaxing summers on the reservation in Alberta, Canada, where her mother's family lives. This summer, she starts to dream about the past—in particular, the schools that removed Native children from their families. Then she learns about the unmarked children's graves that have been uncovered near her grandpa's old school and his own painful history. Duncan draws on her own family's experiences to tell this story of tragic truths, intergenerational love, and hope.

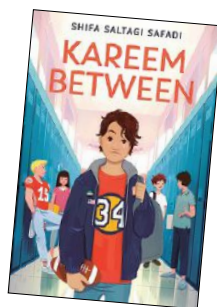


### KAREEM BETWEEN

By Shifa Saltagi Safadi

For Kareem, a Syrian American Muslim seventh grader, middle school can't get much worse. His best friend moved away, and he was cut from the football team. Then he's tasked with showing the new kid—a recent Syrian Christian refugee—around the school. When his mother returns to war-torn Syria to

help her family, and he learns of a chance to make the football team, Kareem must navigate his heritage, stand up against injustice, and choose between right and wrong.



### THE GREAT COOL RANCH DORITO IN THE SKY

By Josh Galarza

Brett's life is spiraling out of control. His adoptive mother has cancer, he hates his body, he's starting to drink, and he feels unloved. To manage, Brett, almost 16, creates fantasies, including the intergalactic Kid Conductor comic, which mirror his own life. Then his peers learn about his insecurities, and his body dysmorphia and eating disorder worsen. Despite Brett's deep embarrassment and grief, a girl steps in to help and let him know he's not alone.



### THE UNBOXING OF A BLACK GIRL

By Angela Shanté

This nonfiction book employs haiku, free verse poetry, and vignettes to explore black girlhood in 1990s New York City. Shanté criticizes how black girls are pigeonholed from an early age and examines how others viewed her mother's status as a single parent: "she wanted us to know /



that we had community / a culture / a home / a safe space / to land. / In a hard / hard / world." Shanté offers various perspectives on family, adolescence, racism, and personal identity and acceptance.

### LONGLIST

**ARIEL CRASHES A TRAIN** | OLIVIA A. COLE  
**WILD DREAMERS** | MARGARITA ENGLE  
**EVERYTHING WE NEVER HAD** | RANDY RIBAY  
**FREE PERIOD** | ALI TERESE  
**MID-AIR** | ALICIA D. WILLIAMS

### POETRY

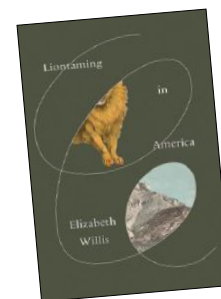
#### FINALISTS

**WRONG NORMA** | ANNE CARSON  
 [...] | FADY JOUDAH  
**MODERN POETRY** | DIANE SEUSS  
**MOTHER** | M.S. REDCHERRIES  
**SOMETHING ABOUT LIVING** | LENA KHALAF TUFFAHA



### LONGLIST

**LIFE ON EARTH** | DORIANNE LAUX  
**SPECTRAL EVIDENCE** | GREGORY PARDLO  
**SILVER** | ROWAN RICARDO PHILLIPS  
**THE BOOK OF WOUNDED SPARROWS** | OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA  
**LIONTAMING IN AMERICA** | ELIZABETH WILLIS ■

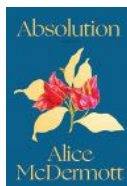


# best books 2024

A look back at our favorite books

Each issue of *Bookmarks* features our Selections—staff favorites from among the books reviewed. Below is a round-up of our Selections from 2024.

## Literary



### ABSOLUTION

By Alice McDermott

Newlyweds Tricia and Peter Kelly, “an engineer on loan to the navy,” arrive in Saigon in 1963. A New York Irish Catholic, Tricia feels out of place among the expat socialites until Charlene, an oil magnate’s wife, takes her under her wing. Charlene involves Tricia in well-meaning but misguided charity events to aid Vietnamese orphans and leprosy patients. Much of Tricia’s and Charlene’s story unfolds through letters that pass many years later between Tricia and Charlene’s daughter. **JAN/FEB**



### ALL THE LITTLE BIRD-HEARTS

By Viktoria Lloyd-Barlow

Sunday Forrester lives in a small English Lake District town with her 16-year-old daughter, Dolly, and works at a greenhouse. Divorced and autistic, Sunday feels isolated until she meets her new neighbors, Vita and Rollo, who have moved from London. Their lifestyle seems glamorous, and their weekly dinners introduce her to new things. However, Sunday has trouble deciphering the social nuances involved and feels betrayed when she learns of Vita’s plans for Dolly. **MAR/APR**



### BEAUTYLAND

By Marie-Helene Bertini

Adina is an alien from a planet 300,000 light-years away who is sent pre-utero to “take notes” on human society for her endangered planet. She grows up with

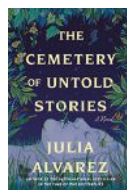
her loving single (human) mother in a poor Italian neighborhood in Philadelphia, attends a posh school, waitresses at a diner, makes and loses friends, moves to New York, and tries and rejects romantic love. As she sends her observations to her extraterrestrial relatives via a fax machine, Adina experiences human existence. **MAR/APR**



### BLACKOUTS

By Justin Torres

The dying Juan Gay is living out his final days in the Palace, a “desert building fallen into disrepair.” He’s visited by a younger man, “Nene” (“sweetheart”), whom he knew when the two met in a psychiatric ward some years back. Juan has a heavily redacted 1941 pioneering collection of interviews with gay men and women that normalized queer desire. Juan wishes for Nene to add their voices to the collection to correct the record and preserve their stories. **JAN/FEB**



### THE CEMETERY OF UNTOLD STORIES

By Julia Alvarez

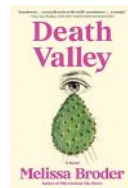
When Alma Cruz retires, she leaves the United States for her late father’s estate in the Dominican Republic. She plans to construct a casita on it, but first, she builds a cemetery for her abandoned book drafts and hires Filomena, a middle-aged local woman, as groundskeeper. One book was to feature Alma’s father, and another, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo’s wife. Filomena is illiterate, but she starts hearing the characters from these stories whispering to her and illuminating her own life. **JULY/AUG**



### CREATION LAKE

By Rachel Kushner

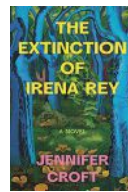
“Sadie Smith,” the young American narrator, works undercover to undermine activists. Her new task is to sabotage the Moulinads, a small farming commune in southwestern France, which is resisting large-scale corporate agriculture. Sadie operates by hacking and inventing cover stories, seductions, and strategies. Then, she is taken by the Moulinard’s mysterious leader, Bruno, who wants to return the region to ancient times. Bruno’s masterful seduction of Sadie puts into question her mission and her identity. **NOV/DEC**



### DEATH VALLEY

By Melissa Broder

A Los Angeles novelist, struggling with her disabled husband’s illness and her father’s hospitalization following a car accident, sets off into the desert and checks into a Best Western in Death Valley. Much of the novel takes place in the hotel or the desert, as the woman hikes and experiences mystical encounters that involve her entering a giant cactus through a portal. She ponders death, nature, and the structure of her next book in this quirky delight. **JAN/FEB**



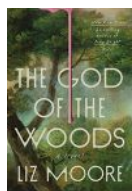
### THE EXTINCTION OF IRENA REY

By Jennifer Croft

Croft is an American critic, author, and acclaimed translator. Her novel follows eight translators, who gather at famed writer Irena Rey’s home in Poland’s ancient Białowieża forest to translate her latest novel

into their respective languages. Soon after their arrival, Irena disappears. Tensions emerge as the translators decide whether to finish their work or search for their revered author. Narrated by the squabbling Spanish translator and translated by the English one, the novel becomes an almost surreal detective story.

**MAY/JUNE**

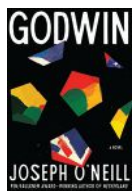


**THE GOD OF THE WOODS**

By Liz Moore

In 1961, eight-year-old Bear Van Laar was abducted from Camp Emerson, a sleepaway summer camp in the Adirondacks owned by his dysfunctional parents. He was never found. In 1975, the family's 13-year-old daughter, Barbara, vanishes from the same camp. Because Barbara is a rebellious, temperamental youth, many believe she ran away. Others speculate she was taken by a serial killer who has recently escaped from prison. A young investigator is on the case.

**SEPT/OCT**



**GODWIN**

By Joseph O'Neill

Mark Wolfe, a writer in Pittsburgh, is forced to take a short leave. He uses the time to help his younger half-brother, Geoff, search for an African teenage soccer prodigy known as Godwin. Geoff, who lives in London, is just starting out as a sports agent, and finding the young man he discovered via an online video could be his big scoop. The brothers travel to England and France, and then a French scout goes to Benin to locate the elusive Godwin. **SEPT/OCT**



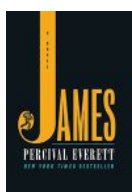
**THE HEART IN WINTER**

By Kevin Barry

Tom Rourke, a degenerate poet, drinker, and photographer's assistant in late 19th-century

Butte, Montana, dreams of becoming an outlaw. Then Polly Gillespie rides into town to meet the devout, self-flagellating mine captain she will marry. But the union does not last long. As winter approaches, Tom and Polly fall in love. After burning down a boarding house and stealing money and a horse, the lovers strike out west. Can they survive and start a new life together?

**SEPT/OCT**



**JAMES**

By Percival Everett

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* portrayed Jim as a loyal, good-natured slave whom Huck befriended on their journey down the Mississippi. Everett inverts key elements of this classic. Huck, a white boy, still fakes his death and flees his abusive father; Jim, a slave, escapes when he learns that he will be sold and separated from his family. But Jim is now James—an erudite, dignified student of Voltaire and John Locke who narrates his experiences of untold violence, un-freedoms, ironies, and agency. **MAY/JUNE**



**LIES AND SORcery**

By Elsa Morante

Morante was one of the greatest Italian novelists of the 20th century. This multigenerational epic, originally published in 1948, takes place in turn-of-the-20th-century Southern Italy. Blending social realism and fabulist elements, it follows three generations of a declining middle-class family. Elisa, an orphan, narrates her tortured legacy of love, madness, intrigue, desire, lies, and treachery as she tries to expel the ghosts in her head. A larger picture emerges of a stratified, repressive society. **JAN/FEB**



**LONG ISLAND**

By Colm Tóibín

*Long Island* continues the intricate portrait of Eilis Lacey—now more mature, self-assured, and decisive—that Tóibín started in *Brooklyn*. Eilis left Enniscorthy, a small town in Ireland, for New York City in the 1950s, married Tony Fiorello, and joined his overbearing Italian American family. In 1976, Eilis, in her 40s and living in Long Island, learns that Tony has had an illicit affair. Enraged, Eilis returns to Enniscorthy with her two teenagers and confronts decisions about her future. **JULY/AUG**



**LOVED AND MISSED**

By Susie Boyt

When her daughter Eleanor's drug addiction becomes clear, Ruth, a London schoolteacher, takes custody of her granddaughter, Lily. This short novel's vignettes depict, over the next 15 years, the closeness that develops between Ruth and Lily but also the guilt and sadness they harbor. Lily invites her mother to her birthday parties but knows to expect her absence. Ruth's friends are her emotional support, especially a fellow teacher, who helps raise Lily into an independent teenager. **JAN/FEB**

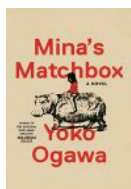


**MARTYR!**

By Kaveh Akbar

Akbar, an Iranian American poet, follows Cyrus Shams, a queer Iranian American poet in the Midwest battling addiction and grief as he approaches age 30. His father, who worked at a factory farm, recently died, while his mother was on the plane that was accidentally shot down by a U.S. missile over Iran in 1988. Cyrus is currently sober but struggling with suicidal thoughts as he searches for meaning. He settles on researching

a Book of Martyrs, which takes an unexpected turn. **MAY/JUNE**

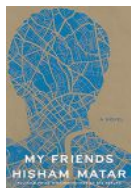


### MINA'S MATCHBOX

By Yoko Ogawa

In 1972, 12-year-old Tomoko is sent to live with her aunt's family on a country estate in the hills outside Osaka. Her father has died; her mother is studying in Tokyo. Her aunt's household is large, wealthy, and exotic. Tomoko's precocious, chronically asthmatic 11-year-old cousin, Mina, collects matchboxes and loves books. She pampers her pet pygmy hippo and occasionally rides him to school. Over a year, as tragedies unfold in the wider world, a story of childhood delight and sadness emerges.

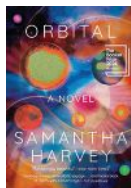
**NOV/DEC**



### MY FRIENDS

By Hisham Matar

In 1983, during Qaddafi's repressive regime, Khaled, 17, leaves Benghazi to study in Edinburgh. While attending an anti-Qaddafi protest in London, he and his new friend Mustafa are shot by pro-Libyan gunmen and hospitalized. Fearful of jeopardizing their families, they go into exile. Twelve years later, Khaled befriends Hosam Zowa, a dissident writer he admired as a child. The three men bond, become estranged, and come together again. When the Arab Spring erupts in 2011, they each face life-altering decisions. **MAR/APR**



### ORBITAL

By Samantha Harvey

Over 24 hours, six astronauts orbiting Earth on an international space station experience the wonders, anxieties, and privileges of their magnificent journey. Caught in a dreamlike, weightless space, the crew members study microgravity, Earth storms,

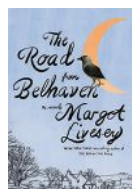
gardening, and viruses. There are daily concerns (such as a leaky toilet) and highly personal issues. The Japanese astronaut receives word that her mother has died; another discovers a lump on his neck. The human experience from hundreds of miles above Earth is mundane and profound. **MAR/APR**



### ORDINARY HUMAN FAILINGS

By Megan Nolan

In the early 1990s, toddler Mia Enright is strangled to death in a London apartment. Police zero in on her ten-year-old neighbor, Lucy Green, whose struggling Irish immigrant family arrived in England nearly a decade back. Lucy, from a family of alcoholics, has acted violently at school; such behavior, along with her dysfunctional upbringing, makes her a prime suspect. A journalist—one of five perspectives, along with the Greens—tries to get the scoop through lies and bribery. **MAY/JUNE**



### THE ROAD FROM BELHAVEN

By Margot Livesey

The Scottish-born Livesey has many gifts—not least, a legacy of the supernatural. Here, Lizzie Craig, who lives on her grandparents' hardscrabble farm in late 19th-century Scotland, has the gift of sight; she selectively sees “pictures” of events before they occur, except in her own future. Keeping her clairvoyance a secret, she comes of age among her friends, animals, and chores. As an adult, she is forced to come to terms with her responsibilities to herself and those around her. **MAY/JUNE**



### SO LATE IN THE DAY

Stories of Women and Men

By Claire Keegan

The Irish author's collection contains a novella and two short stories. In the title story, Cathal, an office worker, spends a weekend reflecting on what went wrong between him and his fiancée. In “The Long and Painful Death,” a female writer on a seaside retreat rejects a German scholar's unwanted intrusions and uses them, instead, in her art. “Antarctica” tells of a married woman seeking an affair. Together, the stories offer a portrait of damaging gender and dangerous power relations. **MAR/APR**



### STATE OF PARADISE

By Laura van den Berg

A 30-something woman and her husband return to her central Florida hometown to care for her dying father when a pandemic strikes. The woman, the unnamed narrator, ghostwrites for a famous thriller author; her husband is a historian. Her past, including a stay in a psychiatric hospital after a suicide attempt, haunts her. And things are getting decidedly weird with a new “virtual reality meditation device,” which sends messages to the woman from her dead father.

**SEPT/OCT**



### TABLE FOR TWO

Fictions

By Amor Towles

*Table for Two* collects six stories, some set in New York City throughout the past half-century and a novella set in Los Angeles. “The Ballad of Timothy Touchett” features a rare books dealer who coaxes his assistant into forging an author's signature on a first-edition book. The novella, “Eve in Hollywood,” follows the intrepid Evelyn

Ross (last seen in *Rules of Civility*) as she tries to rescue her dear friend, film star Olivia de Havilland, from blackmail in 1930s Hollywood.

**JULY/AUG**



### **THIS STRANGE EVENTFUL HISTORY**

By Claire Messud

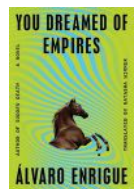
This multigenerational saga draws on the author's family history. During World War II, Gaston Cassar, an Algerian-born French naval attaché, is stationed in Greece; his wife and young children return to their home in Algeria. Over the next seven decades and three generations, the family's lives play out against history and personal conflict. Five perspectives across time and place—from Geneva to Toronto, Buenos Aires, New York, and Sydney—chronicle war, displacement, sacrifice, tangled relationships, thwarted dreams, and desire. **JULY/AUG**



### **TWO-STEP DEVIL**

By Jamie Quatro

In 2014, Winston the Prophet, 70, lives off the grid in the woods of Lookout Mountain, Alabama. He hears the word of God, paints his visions of the end of the world, and sells vegetables; Two-Step Devil occasionally taunts him. One day, the Prophet saves a teenage girl, whom he identifies as God's "Big Fish," sent to deliver messages of imminent apocalypse to the White House. They form a moving friendship as they try to understand their traumatic pasts and path forward. **NOV/DEC**



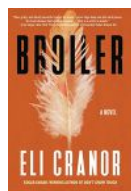
### **YOU DREAMED OF EMPIRES**

By Álvaro Enrigue, trans. Natasha Wimmer

In 1520, Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés and his men wrested control

of Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) from the Aztecs. Cortés claimed that Moctezuma ceded the Aztec empire to the Spanish conquistadores; Enrigue imagines their encounter and the city's destiny differently. A year earlier, conquistadores bumble through Tenochtitlan. Their horses eat the emperor's prized fruits; Moctezuma takes hallucinogenic mushrooms for depression; and his wife wants to save their kingdom. Both parties, rife with misunderstandings, wait for their official meeting. **MAR/APR**

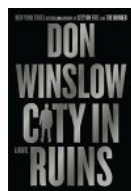
## **Crime**



### **BROILER**

By Eli Cranor

Gabriela Menchaca, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, dropped out of high school to work as a chicken plucker at Arkansas's Detmer Foods. She and her partner, Edwin Saucedo, live in a trailer park and struggle to make ends meet. One morning, Edwin arrives a minute late to the factory and is fired by the ambitious plant manager. Events spiral; complications arise. At play: a miscarriage, extramarital affairs, exploitative and dehumanizing management, toxic masculinity, motherhood, female bonding, and ... loose chickens. **SEPT/OCT**



### **CITY IN RUINS**

By Don Winslow

*City in Ruins* concludes the Danny Ryan Trilogy (after *City of Dreams* and *City on Fire*), modeled on Virgil's tragedy, *The Aeneid*. Danny Ryan, whom we first met as a Rhode Island dockworker and muscle for the Irish mob, has made a name for himself in Las Vegas; he's now a family man and a wealthy gambling tycoon. But his dream of building a billion-dollar casino

complex meets with resistance from lethal rivals old and new. It's a fight to the finish. **JULY/AUG**

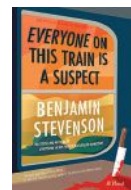


### **THE COMFORT OF GHOSTS**

A Maisie Dobbs Novel

By Jacqueline Winspear

This 18th book concludes the Maisie Dobbs novels. Throughout this historical series, Maisie played many roles: maid, student, nurse, spy, and private investigator. After being widowed, she remarried and adopted a daughter. When she attends the funeral of her former father-in-law, she learns squatters have taken over the family home in London—the very place where she worked as a maid. She agrees to investigate, encountering more mysteries along the way. **SEPT/OCT**



### **EVERYONE ON THIS TRAIN IS A SUSPECT**

By Benjamin Stevenson

The sequel to *Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone* follows writer/detective Ernest Cunningham, who's on a luxury train traveling from Darwin to Adelaide. The long-distance train journey is hosting the 50th annual Australian Mystery Writers' Festival. Struggling to write his second novel, Cunningham compares his success unfavorably to that of the five other famous authors at the festival. As the train hurtles through the Australian desert, a writer is murdered. Who is next? **MAY/JUNE**



### **GUIDE ME HOME**

A Highway 59 Novel, Book 3

By Attica Locke

*Guide Me Home*, the third in a trilogy, follows *Bluebird*, *Bluebird* and *Heaven, My Home*. Darren Mathews, questioning his place as a black man in law enforcement, has taken a leave

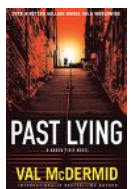
from the Texas Rangers. He's facing an indictment for tampering with evidence in the investigation of the murder of an Aryan Brotherhood member. Now, his estranged mother has shown up with a missing persons case—and the cops don't seem to care. Mathews is about to uncover some ugly truths. **NOV/DEC**



### A HAUNTING ON THE HILL

By Elizabeth Hand

As the first novel to return to the world of Hill House authorized by Shirley Jackson's estate, *A Haunting on the Hill* features Holly, a struggling playwright. She has found the perfect place to finish her witchy, feminist play: the creepy, abandoned Hill House. Despite the protestations of her girlfriend, Nisa (the play's songwriter), Holly rents the house to complete her opus. Holly, Nisa, and their cast pile into the house. But the malevolent house distorts the fears of everyone inside. **JAN/FEB**

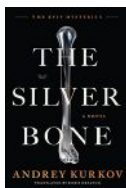


### PAST LYING

A Karen Pirie Novel, Book 7

By Val McDermid

During Covid-19, Karen Pirie, the head of Edinburgh's Historic Cases Unit, is researching unsolved crimes—including the disappearance of Lara Hardie, a novice writer who had idolized best-selling mystery novelist Jake Stein. Stein, accused of sexual assault, has since died. Found among his belongings, however, is an unfinished manuscript that bears similarities to Hardie's murder and Stein's attempt to frame his professional rival. Embedded within this novel-within-a-novel is a subplot concerning an endangered Syrian refugee. **MAR/APR**



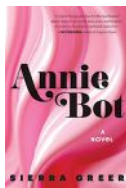
### THE SILVER BONE

The Kyiv Mysteries, 1

By Andrey Kurkov, trans. Boris Dralyuk

In 1919, Samson Kolechko, a young engineering student, witnesses Soviet Cossacks kill his father in the streets of Kyiv. Caught up in the same attack, Samson loses his right ear (which plays a further role in his surreal story) to a saber. He returns to his apartment to find that Red Army soldiers have taken over. When he submits a well-written report on their furniture theft to the police, Samson is offered a detective job during the Bolshevik Revolution. **JULY/AUG**

## SF



### ANNIE BOT

By Sierra Greer

Annie Bot is a "Stella," a part-organic, custom-made robot who looks just like a woman. Specifically, she resembles Gwen, the ex-wife of Doug, who purchased Annie to fulfill his every desire. But Annie's been set to "autodidactic" mode, meaning she learns from experience and can make choices. When Annie and Doug's relationship is compromised, Annie travels to Lake Champlain to seek counsel from Jacobson, her programmer. But Jacobson may not have Annie's best interests at heart. **JULY/AUG**



### IN ASCENSION

By Martin MacInnes

Leigh Hasenboch, a Dutch microbiologist and marine scientist, joins an expedition to explore a hydrothermal vent in the Atlantic Ocean three times as deep as the Mariana Trench. Because space findings seem relevant to the trench, Leigh is asked to work on developing algae-based foodstuffs

for a new mission to search for extraterrestrial life. From the depths of the ocean to the heights of space, Leigh's travels will have her questioning her troubled, abusive past and the concept of home. **MAY/JUNE**



### THE BRIGHT SWORD

A Novel of King Arthur

By Lev Grossman

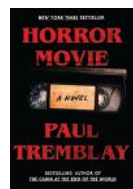
Grossman starts where most stories about King Arthur end—with the fall of Camelot. Collum, who wishes to become a knight, provides an outsider's perspective on the supernatural contests with devils, knife fights, shattering battles, and the tension between God and magical paganism. When Collum arrives at Camelot, the king has died in battle, Merlin is gone, and only a sorceress and a few ragtag knights remain. Collum and this crew of leftovers set out to find a new king. **SEPT/OCT**



### THE FAMILIAR

By Leigh Bardugo

The author based this novel on her family history as Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain. During the Spanish Inquisition, Luzia Cotado is an orphaned housemaid in Madrid who hides her Jewish heritage—and her ability to cast spells. When her employer discovers her special powers, he enters her into a competition for royal magicians. To prepare, she will train under a wealthy man's "familiar" (immortal servant). But Luzia must be on guard against religious persecution. **JULY/AUG**

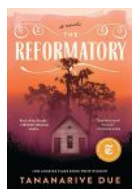


### HORROR MOVIE

By Paul Tremblay

In 1993, the unnamed narrator is recruited by former classmates to perform in a low-budget film called *Horror Movie*. He's known to his classmates as "Weird

Guy”; in the movie, he’s the silent, masked Thin Kid, a pathetic character confined to a storage closet. The production ends in tragedy. Fifteen years later, *Horror Movie* is a cult sensation. Even more years later, Hollywood producers want to make a big-budget reboot of the original. Tremblay intersperses the narrative with the screenplay. **SEPT/OCT**



### THE REFORMATORY

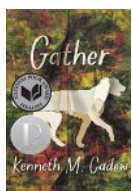
By Tananarive Due  
Robert Stephens, a 12-year-old black orphan, lives in Jim Crow Florida. When a white boy makes sexual advances towards his older sister, Gloria, Robert fights back. He is then sentenced to six months at the Gracetown School for Boys (based on the real-life Dozier School), where he’s haunted by the dangerous ghosts of the boys who died there. With skulls exposed and knives in their backs, the ghosts entreat Robert to set them free. Meanwhile, Gloria tries to help Robert. **JAN/FEB**



### TOWARD ETERNITY

By Anton Hur  
Anton Hur is a Korean-to-English translator from Sweden. His first novel follows scholar Yonghun Han and cellist Ellen Van der Merwe, who are among the first recipients of a treatment performed in a Cape Town laboratory by Dr. Mali Beeko, which replaces their body’s cells with small machines called nanites. Nanites are designed to ward off sickness, aging, and death. What follows involves new bodies, disappearances, malfunctions, AI-led corporations, Victorian poetry, war, and humanity’s fight for survival. **NOV/DEC**

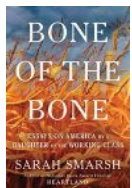
## Young Adult



### GATHER

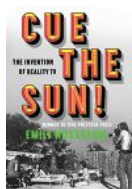
By Kenneth M. Cadow  
Ian Gray, a tenth grader, lives with his mother in rural Vermont; ever since his father abandoned them, making ends meet has been impossible. When his mother is hospitalized, Ian must fend for himself. Ian quits the basketball team to look for a job; kind neighbors step in to help. Ian then adopts Gather, a large, lovable stray dog. When his mother returns, she finds work at a local diner—and life looks sunnier. Then, tragedy strikes. **JAN/FEB**

## General



### BONE OF THE BONE

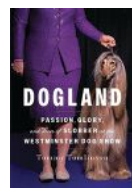
Essays on America by a Daughter of the Working Class  
By Sarah Smarsh  
Smarsh, a journalist born and raised in a working-class Kansas family, merges memoir with political analysis and “reverse” reporting on working-class folk in America. “The White, rural, working-poor people about whom I most often write—they are your people too.” She writes of the (false) “red versus blue” dichotomy, growing wheat in Kansas, poverty and dental care, the religious right and its influence on K-12 public education, her father’s hardscrabble life, laws criminalizing poverty, and her summer job as a Hooters Girl. **NOV/DEC**



### CUE THE SUN!

The Invention of Reality TV  
By Emily Nussbaum  
Nussbaum examines the genre from its origins in radio, including such shows as *Queen for a Day*, which

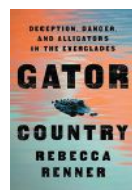
transitioned from radio to television—and which Nussbaum describes as *The Bachelor* crossed with GoFundMe. Later, in PBS’s groundbreaking *An American Family*, viewers witnessed a marriage unraveling. *Survivor*, *The Bachelor*, and *The Apprentice* followed. The book’s title comes from the movie *The Truman Show*, featuring a man unaware he’s living in a television until the show’s creator shouts, “Cue the sun,” revealing his make-believe world. **SEPT/OCT**



### DOGLAND

Passion, Glory, and Lots of Slobber at the Westminster Dog Show  
By Tommy Tomlinson

It’s not easy being top dog. Tomlinson examines our deep relationship with our beloved canine companions. Spending three years on the road and attending more than 100 dog show competitions, he shares insights into dog training, traveling, performance, and the eccentric humans involved in this cutthroat subculture. Stories abound of handler Laura King and Striker the Samoyed, who won the working group category at the 2022 Westminster Dog Show, and his dear lab mutt, who was definitely *not* a show dog. **JULY/AUG**

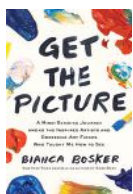


### GATOR COUNTRY

Deception, Danger, and Alligators in the Everglades  
By Rebecca Renner

While recounting the swamplands’ history, Renner tells the stranger-than-fiction tale of alligator egg poaching in the Everglades through two real-life characters—a poacher and a Florida Fish and Wildlife enforcement officer. Clarence “Peg” Brown illegally collected eggs from the Ten Thousand Islands in Everglades National Park; Jeff Babauta was called in to investigate. Going undercover

with a new name and appearance, Babauta ran an alligator farm in Arcadia, Florida, to learn about local poaching and combat it. **MAR/APR**

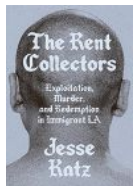


### GET THE PICTURE

**A Mind-Bending Journey among the Inspired Artists and Obsessive Art Friends Who Taught Me How to See**

By Bianca Bosker

In this work of gonzo journalism, Bosker embeds herself in the art world. She interns for Jack, who runs 315 Gallery in Brooklyn; attends Miami Art Week and sells photographs; curates an art show in Hong Kong; learns about the science of art at a Belgian conference; apprentices as a studio assistant to painter Julie Curtiss; and finds work as a security guard at the Guggenheim Museum. She finds an elite, gossipy, and exclusive club, where jealousy prevails. **MAY/JUNE**



### THE RENT COLLECTORS

**Exploitation, Murder, and Redemption in Immigrant LA**

By Jesse Katz

In 2007, to prove himself to the Los Angeles street gang Columbia Lil Cycos, immigrant Giovanni Macedo, 18, approached a Mexican street vendor, intending to kill him. Macedo wounded the man and accidentally killed an infant. To appease the Mexican Mafia, Macedo was driven across the border and left for dead. He survived, testifying against gang members and receiving a 51-year prison sentence. Katz shares the stories of Macedo's life and his victims, the history of the Central American immigrant neighborhood, and immigration policy. **NOV/DEC**

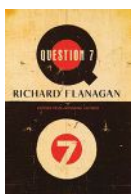
## Biography



### GRIEF IS FOR PEOPLE

By Sloane Crosley

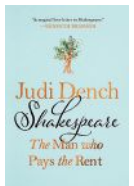
This memoir opens in 2019, with a break-in at Crosley's New York City apartment and the theft of cherished jewelry belonging to her grandmother. Crosley sets out on a far-fetched, obsessive quest to recover her property. Four weeks into her search, Crosley learns that her best friend and mentor has died by suicide. She reflects on her efforts to come to terms with her grief; the theft becomes "a dark gift of delineation" between what truly matters and what doesn't. **MAY/JUNE**



### QUESTION 7

By Richard Flanagan

This nonlinear memoir/history opens with a 2012 interview Flanagan conducted in Japan with a guard in the World War II internment camp in which his captured father had been a slave laborer. Flanagan ties together Hiroshima, Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard, H. G. Wells, the Manhattan Project, the British government's genocide of Tasmania's Indigenous people, his parents, and his near drowning at age 21. All constitute "an account of memory ... —its tricks, its evasions, its silences, its inventions, its inevitable questions." **NOV/DEC**



### SHAKESPEARE

**The Man Who Pays the Rent**

By Judi Dench

"All I ever wanted to do was play Shakespeare, nothing else. It was a kind of zenith for me," says Judi Dench. Now, at age 89, she looks back on seven decades of performing The Bard (or, as she and her husband, the late actor Michael Williams, called him, "the

man who pays the bills"), from her performance as Ophelia in *Hamlet* in 1957 to Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* in 2015. Shakespeare, she says, is "a beacon for humanity and a bridge across cultures." **JULY/AUG**



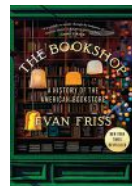
### THE SHOWMAN

**Inside the Invasion That Shook the World and Made a Leader of Volodymyr Zelensky**

By Simon Shuster

Having been granted unparalleled access to Volodymyr Zelensky, Shuster chronicles his path from his role in a prime-time comedy series, in which he played the president of Ukraine, to his election as the country's real-life president and leader in turning back the Russian invasion. Shuster writes about the start of the war, Zelensky's ongoing tensions with his top general, Valery Zaluzhny, and their severe losses on the battlefield. Nor does the author shy away from suggesting the president's overreaches. **MAY/JUNE**

## History



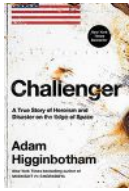
### THE BOOKSHOP

**A History of the American Bookstore**

By Evan Friss

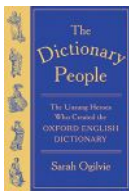
This celebration of American bookshops highlights a different bookshop in each chapter to illuminate various historical themes. Friss starts at Three Lives Bookstore in New York City before delving into the 19th century, with Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia shop. He covers Chicago's Marshall Field & Company, New York's Gotham Book Mart, radical bookstores, stores that cater to various minorities and marginalized populations and provide like-minded communities, and superstores. Above all, the book is a love letter to a lasting institution. **NOV/DEC**





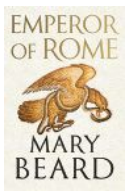
**CHALLENGER**  
**A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space**  
 By Adam Higginbotham

On January 28, 1986, 73 seconds after liftoff, the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded. Two minutes later, it hit the surface of the Atlantic Ocean, killing all seven crew members. On March 7, the remains of their bodies were recovered. President Ronald Reagan convened a commission to investigate the disaster. The report determined that, as Higginbotham writes, the accident had not simply been a technical failure; it had been “human error of the most shocking kind.” Higginbotham examines the tragedy and its aftermath. **SEPT/OCT**



**THE DICTIONARY PEOPLE**  
**The Unsung Heroes Who Created the Oxford English Dictionary**  
 By Sarah Ogilvie

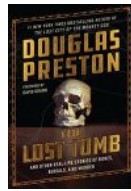
While working on the OED, Ogilvie discovered notebooks listing 3,000-plus people who contributed examples of word usage to the dictionary since 1879—folk who didn’t necessarily fit into Victorian society. They included, in her words, “not one but three murderers, a pornography collector, Karl Marx’s daughter, a President of Yale, the inventor of the tennis-net adjuster, a pair of lesbian writers who wrote under a male pen name, and a cocaine addict found dead in a railway station lavatory”—and James Murray, of course. **JAN/FEB**



**EMPEROR OF ROME**  
**Ruling the Ancient Roman World**  
 By Mary Beard

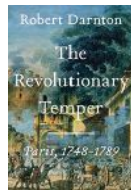
Beard examines the rulers of ancient Rome, starting with Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. and ending with Alexander Severus in 235 A.D. Violence is a recurring theme; most emperors’

succession arose from a predecessor’s death or political machinations. Elagabalus, for example, allowed drunken guests to sleep over and then released wild animals into their rooms; he was assassinated at age 18. Beard underscores that there’s much we don’t know but suggests there were fewer psychopaths than we might imagine. **JAN/FEB**



**THE LOST TOMB**  
**And Other Real-Life Stories of Bones, Burials, and Murder**  
 By Douglas Preston

“I could never have become a novelist without first being a nonfiction journalist,” Preston writes at the outset of these 13 true-crime essays. The mysteries involve possible cannibalism in the ancient Southwest, the mass death of skiers in Russia’s Ural Mountains in 1959, the search for buried treasure, the sealed burial chambers in an Egyptian tomb, and the asteroid whose collision with Earth killed off the dinosaurs. Preston terrifies and enlightens as he traipses across the globe. **MAR/APR**



**THE REVOLUTIONARY TEMPER**  
**Paris, 1748-1789**  
 By Robert Darnton

Darnton explores the events leading up to July 14, 1789, when a crowd of angry Parisians stormed the Bastille prison, triggering the overthrow of Louis XVI’s monarchy. Ordinary people were fed up with incompetence, corruption, and debauchery; the monarchy was mired in wars, scandals, and infighting. Darnton delves into Parisians’ revolutionary motivations and influences. Their “information society” included pamphlets, underground newsletters, literature, satirical street songs, and gossip. Darnton chronicles the blossoming of a collective con-

sciousness that contributed to the revolution. **MAR/APR**



**THE SIEGE**  
**A Six-Day Hostage Crisis and the Daring Special-Forces Operation That Shocked the World**  
 By Ben Macintyre

In the spring of 1980, six Iranian Arab gunmen seized the Iranian Embassy in London and took 26 people, including Britons, hostage. Their goal was to liberate the Arab-majority Iranian province of Khuzestan. Six days later, no demands had been met. Special Air Service troops stormed in, killing five gunmen and capturing the sixth. The ordeal cemented Margaret Thatcher’s reputation as “an iron-willed leader,” Macintyre writes, demonstrating to the IRA that she wouldn’t be intimidated and facilitating public approval for the United Kingdom’s invasion of the Falklands. **NOV/DEC** ■



# Laura Dave

Finding Your  
True Self on the  
Way Home

BY ELLEN SEIDEN

A *Bookmarks* interview with *New York Times* bestselling author Laura Dave, who lives in Santa Monica, California, with her husband and son.

**LISTENING TO HER FATHER READ BOOKS TO HER EVERY NIGHT AS A CHILD INSPIRED LAURA DAVE TO BECOME AN AUTHOR.** As a little girl, she wrote stories and poems. “I remember being a teenager, going to a bookstore in a nearby town, picking up a book by southern writer Ellen Gilchrist, and thinking, I hope one day to be the one who has written a book that someone picks up and wants to read. I would love to make that happen.” She did just that, never turning back from her ambition.

Starting with *London Is the Best City in America* in 2006, Dave has written seven compelling novels selling in the millions worldwide; six have been optioned for film and television. The author’s voice—wise, compassionate, and intuitive—resonates in her works. A combination of mystery, romance, and general fiction, her fiction is immersive and relatable.

Each novel starts with a “good secret” to solve, often with a mystery to unravel. Edge-of-the-world locales by the sea take on a magical persona. Wine and comfort foods provide warmth. Landscapes are peopled by flawed characters who regret their decisions, wish they had said or done things differently, and are given a second chance at redemption or reconciliation; some attempt to clean

up messy family dynamics. Past and present overlap, with Easter Egg memories inserted as clues to understanding revelations. A heroine searches for her elusive home, be it a place or state of mind. The author gets into a reader’s head and heart and lingers there. At the end of a Laura Dave novel, that’s where we, the readers, reside.

Novels in order of publication: *London Is the Best City in America* (2006), *The Divorce Party* (2007), *The First Husband* (2011), *Eight Hundred Grapes* (2015), *Hello Sunshine* (2017), *The Last Thing He Told Me* (2021), and *The Night We Lost Him* (2024).

ES: Your novels are character-driven, with three-dimensional, complex people who are not stereotypes. They are relatable humans, neither good nor bad. How do you create a memorable character like Hannah (*The Last Thing He Told Me*) with her loyalty and fallibility or a person who has reinvented herself into a flawed being, like Sunshine in *Hello, Sunshine*?

LD: I always think about my main character as someone I want to watch become the hero of her life. Whoever that character is at the beginning, especially Hannah, is right to trust herself that her love with her husband is real. The motion of her movement comes from that certainty, and she must figure out how to get to a better place when the drama amps up. If I figure out the specific viewpoint of how my main character sees the world, everything else follows. In the case of Sunshine, an evolution moved her

away from her authentic self, and part of her journey of returning to herself is the ability to remind herself of her best self. I like to explore the narrative of what makes someone authentically happy and how one can live authentically. When you're keeping a secret from yourself, as in the case of Liam (*The Night We Lost Him*), you're not living your truest life until that secret comes out.

ES: Infidelity breaks up relationships in your novels, characters decide at zero hour not to marry their intended, sometimes they wish to return to prior relationships, and occasionally they act on their attraction to someone new. What is your take on the idea that no one ever really knows another person?

LD: I feel you can know someone either romantically or not. The interest is really knowing someone on a soul level, even if the details reveal themselves to be different than what you thought they were. The idea of infidelity or betrayal enters because of how we love different people in public rather than in private and the triangulation that can emerge. That is something I've been exploring since my first book. Knowing someone and being known is something I like to play with, that the person who knows you best might not be your romantic partner, as is the case with Hannah and Bailey, a love story about a woman becoming a mother—or in *The Night We Lost Him*, a familial love story between a brother and a sister. Romantically or otherwise, there is a way to know someone on a deep soul level if that person lets you.

ES: You write about not “being seen” and being taken for granted, where thwarted dreams and invisibility are the roots of relationship problems. Can you elaborate?

LD: I think we have a responsibility to the people we love to try to see the totality of them through their evolutions over a lifetime and understand the different versions of the person each becomes. In families, it's interesting to look at how imperfections grow into an understanding that, much to members' surprise, people have more in common than they thought.

ES: The theme of yearning for what might have been resonates in many of your novels. Take Liam and Cory in *The Night We Lost Him*. Do you think romanticized or idealized love from afar exists more so when a couple lives apart and sees each other occasionally, as in literature such as *Romeo and Juliet* (one night), *The Bridges of Madison County* (one weekend), or *Same Time Next Year* (once a year)?

LD: The responsibilities that go into an everyday marriage or everyday life partnership are quite different than these romantic, insular situations. We know these will end and that the characters have no responsibility beyond that, so it's easier for romance to exist in that world. In day-to-day marriage, there can be friction, and partners need to show up for each other despite the circumstances.

ES: You mention in *The Night We Lost Him* that grief and love are intertwined. In what way?

LD: I think whenever we lose someone close to us, we feel like we're in the middle of a conversation that we don't get to finish. That's a universal pain that many people relate to when they lose someone dear to them. For me, I started to think of grief as not being something that's only sad but the continuation of that conversation. It's a way for love to still exist. I imagine this book as a love letter to Nora's father, as she starts speaking to him and says, “This was your life, wasn't it, Dad?”

ES: Characters often take road trips to rediscover the past or see its reflection on the present. What is the nature of getting home or returning home in your stories? What is home?

LD: I've lived in Los Angeles on and off for 15 years. Every time I land in New York [I was raised in Westchester County], I still feel I've come home. Where we grew up is primal to our understanding of everything that comes later. Certainly, that is the first home where you come into consciousness. If you're lucky as you get older, home means different things to different people. Some people find their home in a place that's very soothing to them. Others find it with people they know, and wherever those people are, that's home. Often, my books end in a bittersweet way. But I think the sweetness is in finding it in a person or place they didn't expect.

ES: Music underscores the atmosphere, drama, and themes of your stories. How so?

LD: Music is part of my writing routine. At first, when I wrote in coffee shops wearing headphones, it was a way to drown out the noise. Then, it became meditative. Now, I write at home, and music works to keep the storytelling going. I've listened to “If I Should Fall Behind” by Bruce Springsteen for inspiration for *The Last Thing He Told Me* thousands of times: “I'll wait for you, and should I fall behind wait for me.” Even if a song is sad, music always uplifts me.

ES: Do you know the end of your novels from the start?

LD: Never. My first draft is one of discovery, of finding my way to the ending. I work hard to stay open to where the story will take me. Only in later drafts, when I know where the story is going, do I solidify the ending and figure out what needs to change to earn that ending. I am now writing the sequel to *The Last Thing He Told Me*, which has shown me that the ending I was originally writing about is really the ending of a two-parter.

ES: What advice has been most inspiring to your writing?

LD: I recommend a quote attributed to Hemingway to everyone trying to write: “The best way is always to stop when you are good, and when you know what will happen next. If you do that every day when you are writing a novel, you will never be stuck.” That is the most valuable thing I can tell you, so try to remember it. ■



# Middle-Grade Spotlight

## Fiction on Tough Subjects

BY BETSY L. HAASE

**WHEN I WAS ABOUT EIGHT, I OFTEN HEARD MY NANA REMIND MY RELATIVES, “LITTLE PITCHERS HAVE BIG EARS.”** After dinner, when dessert was cleared, family matters were discussed, and kids were shooed away. Practically a lifetime ago, I was shielded from gossip and the news. Current events were only something that we read about in school in our flimsy Weekly Reader. At least for a while, I grew up in a sheltered world.

Today, information is immediate—especially for a middle-grade reader with an electronic device. The information such young folk may receive, often passively, can be scary, incomplete, and out of context; the innocence I knew growing up is long gone.

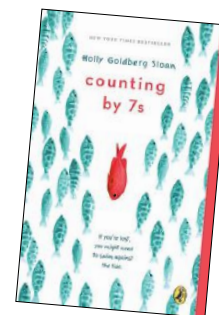
This is where books fill a much-needed gap in our digital age. They can provide genuine insight into difficult, ripped-from-the-headline subjects, with worthy and sympathetic protagonists, realistic settings, and coping mechanisms for readers experiencing similar issues. The following novels, many delicately told, cover age-old subjects: war, homelessness, abandonment, abuse, bullying, racial prejudice, and death. As *Booklist* wrote about Jacqueline Woodson’s *Harbor Me*, “The magic is in the writing. Woodson tells stories torn from headlines but personalizes them with poetry and memories, blunting their trauma with understanding and love.”

The following novels offer stories of hope, resilience, and healing. Though targeted toward middle-grade readers, they will resonate with audiences of all ages.

### Counting by 7s

By Holly Goldberg Sloan (2013)

Willow Chance, an awkward, mixed-race 12-year-old genius, obsesses over medical textbooks, plants, and the number seven. Willow and her adoring adoptive parents look forward to her entering middle school, hoping she will make a friend.



When Willow acs a standardized test in moments, she is accused of cheating and assigned to therapy sessions with Dell Duke, the bumbling district counselor who labels teenagers as misfits, oddballs, and weirdos. There, she meets outgoing and friendly Mai, a freshman, and her 15-year-old troublemaker brother Quang-ha. For the first time, Willow connects and teaches herself Vietnamese, the language of her new friends.

When tragedy strikes, Willow must pick up the pieces and question her ideas of what a family really is. Readers will cry and laugh as the quirky preteen struggles through loss and grief and forms a cadre of misfits, including Dell,

Mai, Quang-ha, their mother, and a cab driver. Willow inspires readers to discover their own best selves and find their places in the world.

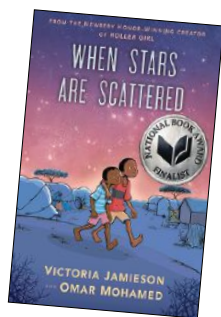
## When Stars Are Scattered

By Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed (2020)

♦ NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST

This graphic novel parallels Omar Mohamed's decades-plus story, including his time in refugee camps. After soldiers murder his father, four-year-old Omar and his disabled, nonverbal younger brother Hassan journey with neighbors on foot from war-torn Somalia to Dadaab, a United Nations refugee camp in Kenya. They arrive malnourished, dehydrated, and sick with malaria. Omar believes that someday, he and his brother will find their mother. Most days are "empty" without food; the camp also lacks running water and electricity.

Eventually, Fatuma, the brothers' assigned guardian, and a community leader convince Omar to attend school. Learning English and becoming educated will help the brothers resettle in another country. The teachers, also refugees, encourage students to think of themselves as stars in the sky, who deserve to exist. Omar finds his own supportive family within his community and focuses not on what is lost but on what is given. His story inspires faith and hope. An excellent afterword, photographs, and authors' notes follow.



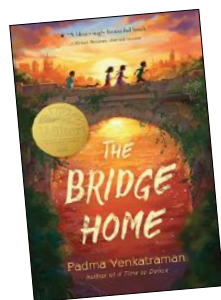
## The Bridge Home

By Padma Venkatraman (2019)

♦ WALTER DEAN MYERS AWARD

This empowering story follows Viji and her developmentally disabled sister Rukku, who run away from their abusive home to the city streets of Chennai, India. They meet two homeless boys, Arul and Muthi, who have found shelter on an abandoned bridge. An immediate friendship develops as the four band together. To exist, they "ragpick" through mountains of trash to find and sell recyclables, pooling their daily earnings to buy food and supplies.

Although many look down upon their dirty faces and torn clothing, the four experience adventures and fun despite their daily hardships. They have interesting discussions about religion and the afterlife as they come from different backgrounds.



Written as a reflective letter to Rukku, the novel explores the lessons 11-year-old Viji learns about what it means to move ahead: "How you live matters more than how long you live."

## Fighting Words

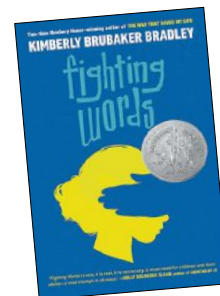
By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley (2020)

♦ NEWBERY HONOR

Bradley (*The War That Saved My Life*) warns young readers and their parents at the outset that the novel includes drug addiction, sexual abuse, and suicide. The preface also states, "For any child who needs this story: You are never alone."

Ten-year-old Della frankly narrates the story of her dysfunctional childhood. While their mother serves a prison term, her sister Suki, only six years older, has essentially raised her. The story begins with their removal by police from their mother's boyfriend's place, where they lived unhappily for eight years.

Della navigates through many changes, including foster mother Francine, who agrees that the system "might be better than anything you've ever had in your life so far, (but) it will still never be as good as what you should have had." Suki eventually confronts her painful secret, and Della faces her own guilt. Both sisters learn that even though they have each other, they can also embrace friendship and compassion from others.

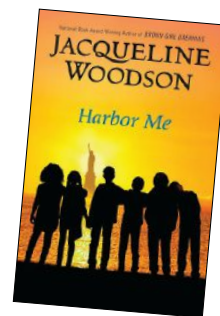


## Harbor Me

By Jacqueline Woodson (2018)

What happens when six diverse fifth- and sixth-graders in Brooklyn, who all learn differently and fail to thrive in a large public school setting, are given their own teacher and classroom? What happens when these students are given the final school hour every Friday to talk without their teacher present?

At first, nothing happens, but gradually, as their teacher surmises, the six students begin to open up in this safe space and share their stories. The preteens talk about their angst and anger over racial prejudice and profiling. One boy shares his exploding heartbreak—the sudden deportation of his father. Another reveals her secret—her father's eight-year-long imprisonment. Bullying, the difficulties of assimilation, and guns also come into play. Week after week, six kids confront their disappointments, anxieties, frustrations, hopes, and



dreams as they learn what it means to develop the connections they crave and the significance of *harbor me*.

## Starfish

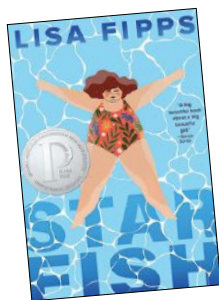
By Lisa Fipps (2021)

◆ PRINTZ HONOR

This novel, written in verse, deals with fat-shaming, harsh stereotypes and biases, inner strength, friendship, and personal acceptance.

Overweight her entire life, 11-year-old Splash—or “Whale”—has been bullied since her fifth birthday party, when she cannonballed into a pool. Not only is she tormented at school by her peers, but her older brother and sister continue the abuse at home. The worst is her mother, who monitors her food intake, threatens her with bariatric surgery, and calls her demeaning names.

The backyard pool offers her a daily escape from her “Fat Girl Rules.” When she floats, arms and legs extended like a starfish, she feels weightless. Her supportive father, her new friend Catalina, and an effective therapist help this young girl accept herself and think of herself by her given name—Ellie.



## The Magical Imperfect

By Chris Baron (2021)

This lyrical novel, also written in verse, tackles many difficult subjects: friendship, family, community, body image, and mental and physical health.

It's 1989, and 12-year-old Etan's world is falling apart. His mother has been hospitalized for depression, his father doesn't know how to help him, and the constant earthquakes in his hometown, just north of San Francisco, make the world a scary place. Etan's response? He stops speaking.

Etan finds an unlikely friend in Malia. Known as the “Creature” in school, Malia, who suffers from acute eczema, stopped going to school when the bullies became too much for her to take. Together, the two outcasts combine the loving support of Etan's grandfather's Jewish beliefs and Malia's grandmother's Filipino traditions to create their own magic and find their place in the world.

As the author notes at the end, “At a time of personal challenge and upheaval, when even the earth is not safe, healing and hope can come from surprising places.”



## Red, White, and Whole

By Rajani LaRocca (2021)

◆ NEWBERY HONOR

LaRocca explains that this novel-in-verse came to her as a metaphor for blood and took only six weeks to write. “Cells and plasma together are called whole blood, / which is what flows inside us,” she notes. Written in verse, the story explores family, community, biology, illness, loss, and the difficulties of navigating two different worlds.

Thirteen-year-old Reha, born in the midwestern United States to Indian immigrant parents, dreams of becoming a doctor. As the only Indian American student at her Midwestern school, she struggles between two worlds—her weekdays of school, friends, and music, and her weekends of her parents' conservative customs and traditions.

Her mother's leukemia diagnosis upsets Reha's world, even as Reha strives to do anything to make her mother well again—even giving up her American customs. LaRocca hopes “the book of my heart” will help young readers “understand that even when you feel torn apart, you can still be a whole person.” ■



*continued from page 11*

### Some of Our Books to Date

**ALL THAT SHE CARRIED: THE JOURNEY OF ASHLEY'S SACK, A BLACK FAMILY KEEPSAKE** | TIYA MILES

**UNRAVELING: WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT LIFE WHILE SHEARING SHEEP, DYING WOOL, AND MAKING THE WORLD'S UGLIEST SWEATER** | PEGGY ORENSTEIN

**SPIDER WOMAN'S CHILDREN: NAVAJO WEAVERS TODAY** | BARBARA TELLER ORNELAS

**VANISHING FLEECE: ADVENTURES IN AMERICAN WOOL** | CLARA PARKES

**MOVE THE NEEDLE: YARNS FROM AN UNLIKELY ENTREPRENEUR** | SHELLEY BRANDER

**THE GOLDEN THREAD: HOW FABRIC CHANGED HISTORY** | KASSIA ST. CLAIR

**THE SECRET LIVES OF COLOR** | KASSIA ST. CLAIR

**MAKING A LIFE: WORKING BY HAND AND DISCOVERING THE LIFE YOU ARE MEANT TO LIVE** | MELANIE FALICK

**FIBERSHED: GROWING A MOVEMENT OF FARMERS, FASHION ACTIVISTS, AND MAKERS FOR NEW TEXTILE ECONOMY** | REBECCA BURGESS

**WORN: A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF CLOTHING** | SOFI THANHAUSER

**WOMEN'S WORK: THE FIRST 20,000 YEARS: WOMEN, CLOTH, AND SOCIETY IN EARLY TIMES** | ELIZABETH WAYLAND BARBER ■



# A Love of Life Library

BY MATT R. LOHR

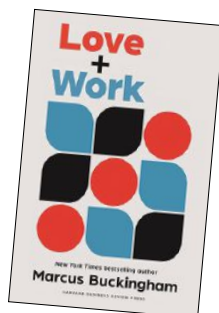
**JUST PEEK IN THE WINDOW OF ANY CARD SHOP OR FLORIST IN TOWN, AND IT'S UNMISTAKABLE:** Valentine's Day is right around the corner. Every year, February 14th gives us the perfect opportunity to remind our relatives, friends, and romantic partners how much we love and appreciate them. But this Valentine's Day, we invite you to reflect on *other* kinds of love that energize and enrich our lives. It could be your love of a favorite hobby, a special style of creative expression, a cherished self-care practice ... or yes, even your job.

Here are ten books that examine, from a host of unexpected and enlightening angles, just a few of these many varieties of extrapersonal love. Consider this list a "Love of Life Library." Who knows? One of these reads just might open your eyes to your next great passion.

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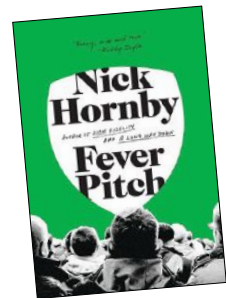
## WORK AND PLAY

For far too many of us, work is the furthest possible thing from a source of love in our lives. Rather, it's a trial we endure to keep the bills paid and our loved ones safe and happy. But Marcus Buckingham's *Love + Work* (2022) offers a practical guide to (as the subtitle states) "Find What You Love, Love What You Do, and Do It for the Rest of Your Life." Buckingham, the developer of the acclaimed StrengthsFinder professional aptitude program, offers unconventional perspectives on



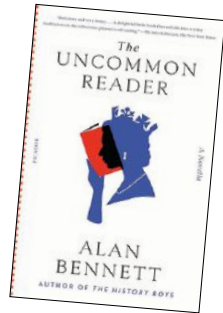
our perceptions of work. For instance, he suggests that your workplace strengths should be defined *not* by your skills but by your love of the tasks at hand. And, by quantifying these loves and applying your best, most substantial self to maximizing their prominence in your working life, Buckingham maps out a pathway towards increasing both your personal job satisfaction and positive outcomes for your employer or business.

Watching sports can be a great way to blow off that after-hours steam when the work day is done. But for millions worldwide, following our favorite franchises has become more than an enjoyable pastime. Indeed, for people like best-selling British author Nick Hornby, sports fandom is something more like a religion ... or maybe a cult. Hornby's 1992 memoir *Fever Pitch*, which chronicles his checkered, decades-spanning support of the Arsenal football club, is a clear-eyed, often sarcastically funny look at the obsessive depths to which some fans can sink as they root on their favorite squad. Hornby sees the flaws and foibles of soccer as deeply as any sports skeptic. He writes perceptively about the sometimes fatal mismanagement of football arenas and his own relationship-hampering hangups about simply *never* missing a home game. But in recounting how Arsenal helped to heal the rifts of his broken home and gave a rootless wannabe writer a sense of otherwise absent community, Hornby's book is an ultimately affectionate love letter to a sport that, for all the grief it's caused him, has also brought him abundant joy.

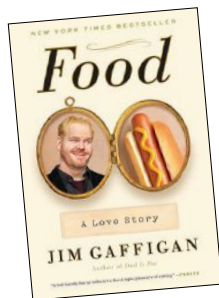


## BRAIN FOOD AND FOOD FOOD

That you're reading this magazine means you fully grasp the power of a great book. But what if your life never gave you time to really dive into reading, even if you're one of the most powerful people on the planet? Alan Bennett's charming 2007 novella *The Uncommon Reader* posits just such a thought-provoking speculative scenario. Chasing down her legendarily mischievous corgis, Queen Elizabeth II stumbles across a bookmobile parked near Buckingham Palace. With the guidance of a well-read kitchen staffer, she embarks on a late-in-life transformation into a hardcore bibliophile. Bennett's light prose presents the Queen's literary explorations as a benevolently disruptive force, shaking up the staid, tradition-bound palace staff while transforming the monarch into a more thoughtful, empathetic leader of her people. It's a warm, enthusiastic vision of how the power of reading can brighten the life of absolutely anyone—and a fable made especially bittersweet in light of the Queen's passing in 2022.



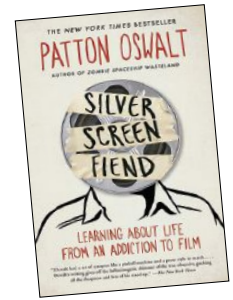
No one will ever mistake comedian Jim Gaffigan for the queen of England. But he's become famous for an appetite to rival that of King Henry VIII himself. In his grandly amusing 2014 book *Food: A Love Story*, Gaffigan waxes rhapsodic about a supermarket's worth of his favorite tasty treats. He sings the praises of cheeseburgers ("the mother's hug of meat"); details the fear-of-missing-out-driven anxiety that greets him every time he sets out to dine in the food mecca of New Orleans; and celebrates the lessons in how to be a man he received from watching his father grill the hell out of a steak. Gaffigan is unsparing about foods he dislikes, such as sauerkraut and oysters, which he evocatively dubs "snot from a rock." But the overall feeling one takes from *Food: A Love Story* is a good-natured appreciation of the literal and figurative feast that awaits us every day, if we just keep our spirits light and our palates ready to savor and enjoy.



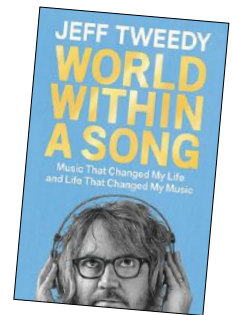
## MOVIES AND MUSIC

According to the latest statistics from theater owners, the average American sees only six movies in the theater every year. But for comedian and actor Patton Oswalt's first four years in Los Angeles, the act of taking in flicks on the big screen became nothing less than an encompassing addic-

tion. In 2015's *Silver Screen Fiend: Learning About Life from an Addiction to Film*, he recounts his journey in clear-eyed, self-deprecating detail. Convincing himself that seeing literally every film he possibly could was his ticket to a directing career, Oswalt embarks on a quest that finds him knocking off triple features on Christmas Day, alienating friends and romantic connections with his need to satisfy his celluloid desires, and finding his grip on reality shattered during a multi-day horror-movie marathon. *Silver Screen Fiend* might seem like the kind of book that could turn someone off watching movies for good. But Oswalt's enduring love of cinema radiates from his sharp, erudite writing, and the book culminates in a touching tribute to Sherman Torgan, the late proprietor of Oswalt's favorite Los Angeles revival house and an exemplar of a life lived in honorable service to film.



As is also often the case with true-blue cinophiles like Oswalt, serious music lovers seldom confine themselves to one genre or artist. Instead, they cast their ears far and wide, seeking the beauty and hope in all types of music. One such broad-ranging listener is singer and songwriter Jeff Tweedy, frontman of the beloved indie rock/country band Wilco. In *World Within a Song: Music That Changed My Life and Life That Changed My Music* (2023), Tweedy examines 50 tunes that, in one way or another, have exerted a profound influence on his life, his own work as a musician, and his understanding of the world around him. His playlist-in-prose includes hip-hop and prog rock, Lou Reed and ABBA, fresh favorites like Billie Eilish's "I Love You," and chestnuts like "You Are My Sunshine," which Tweedy says exemplifies how a song "can feel like it has always existed." Tweedy's writing is conversational, welcoming, and witty, and the resulting book read feels like a marathon broadcast by the most enjoyable DJ to ever grace the airwaves.



## ART AND NATURE

It's one of the most familiar critical sentiments there is: *I don't know much about art, but I know what I like*. But have you ever wondered how it would feel to know what you like *because* of what you know about art? Carolyn Schlamm is a painter and sculptor, and her 2020 volume, *The Joy of Art: How to Look at, Appreciate, and Talk about Art*, is nothing less than a print-form master class in what the subtitle says. Using some of the world's most beloved canvases and sculptures as her jumping-off points, Schlamm breaks down artis-

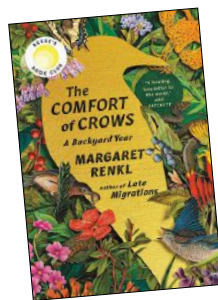


tic practices and techniques in a lucid, approachable fashion so any reader can understand just how the great artists achieved their most dazzling and beautiful effects. The book is richly illustrated with re-creations of the artworks Schlam discusses, so you can get the benefits of her instructional examples straight from their sources.



Some may feel a granular approach to art appreciation such as this might decrease their ability to just enjoy what they see at a museum or gallery. But in Schlam's hands, the process of learning to truly *see* and fully celebrate the art we consume is user-friendly and wholly edifying.

Of course, sometimes you don't need to look any further than your own backyard to find a panorama of beauty, strength, delicacy, and emotional fulfillment. Margaret Renkl captures the humbling majesty of the everyday in her 2023 volume *The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year*. Renkl's week-by-week observations of the flora and fauna surrounding her home in Tennessee bring readers face to face with the admirable persistence of bugs and creeping vines. She breaks our hearts with tales of the animal struggle and suffering that is part and parcel of the natural process. Her book also offers plenty to contemplate regarding the shifting of the seasons, the soothing certainties of natural cycles, and the escalating effects of climate change that imperil those delicate balances. Renkl's writing is casually poetic yet deeply engaged with the ground-level nature of her subject. In her deeply considered yet instinctive love for the world around her, she brings us into closer communion with the most cherished elements and qualities of our own home and surroundings. (And, if Schlam's book has got you still in the mood to enjoy some artwork, this volume is beautifully illustrated with original nature-themed works by Renkl's brother Billy.)



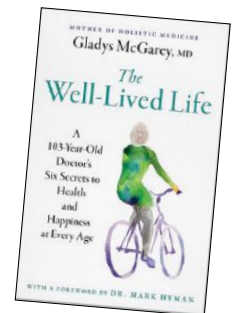
## BODY AND SOUL

One of the biggest challenges preventing people from achieving optimum health is that, for more than a few of us, exercise is something we just don't enjoy. Acclaimed Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami fully understands this, and he makes it clear in his 2008 memoir *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* that he's not on a mission to recruit new runners into the fold. Instead, in sincere, unfussy prose (skillfully translated by Philip Gabriel), he simply shares all the good things his chosen form of physical fitness has brought to his own life. He never shies away from the physical strains and mental stresses running at a top-tier level can entail; he vividly describes a grueling marathon run at the height of a searing Athens summer.

But he also celebrates how his years of running have improved his health, sharpened his thinking, and brought him to a host of fascinating revelations about the human capacity for self-actualization—all worthwhile lessons for people seeking the right physical activity to help them live their best lives.



But at the end of the day, who better to teach readers how to truly love life than a person who's experienced more than a century of it? Esteemed medical doctor Gladys McGarey was 102 when she published *The Well-Lived Life* in 2023, and her exploration of six secrets to getting the most out of our days approaches the process from a fully holistic point of view. McGarey's frank yet friendly book, with its easy-to-apply personal growth exercises, encourages readers to explore the complete range of guiding personal passions, to make the most of interpersonal connections in both professional and home-life contexts, and to never forget that, for all the pharmaceutical miracles practitioners like McGarey can apply, ultimately, "Love Is the Most Powerful Medicine." (That's secret number three!)



Whether found on the job or the soccer pitch, in a beloved song or on a dinner plate, or even right in your backyard, there are countless opportunities all around to bring more love into your life. Here's hoping that this reading list will get you thinking about the things in your life you love the most ... and maybe help you greet this Valentine's Day with even more reasons for your heart to shine its brightest.

## Further Reading

- THE JOY OF WORK: 30 WAYS TO FIX YOUR WORK CULTURE AND FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR JOB AGAIN** | BRUCE DAISLEY (2019)
- LOVING SPORTS WHEN THEY DON'T LOVE YOU BACK: DILEMMAS OF THE MODERN FAN** | JESSICA LUTHER & KAVITHA A. DAVIDSON (2020)
- EX LIBRIS: CONFESSIONS OF A COMMON READER** | ANNE FADIMAN (1998)
- TENDER AT THE BONE: GROWING UP AT THE TABLE** | RUTH REICHL (1998)
- A YEAR AT THE MOVIES: ONE MAN'S FILMGOING ODYSSEY** | KEVIN MURPHY (2002)
- MUSICOPHILIA: TALES OF MUSIC AND THE BRAIN** | OLIVER SACKS (2007)
- SEVEN DAYS IN THE ART WORLD** | SARAH THORNTON (2008)
- THIS IS WHERE YOU BELONG: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF LOVING THE PLACE YOU LIVE** | MELODY WARNICK (2016)
- WALK YOURSELF HAPPY: FIND YOUR PATH TO HEALTH AND HEALING IN NATURE** | JULIA BRADBURY (2025)
- HELLO, HIGHER SELF: AN OUTSIDER'S GUIDE TO LOVING YOURSELF IN A TOUGH WORLD** | BUNNY MICHAEL (2024) ■

## NEW BOOKS GUIDE

We read hundreds of book reviews each month to select the works to include in each issue. We seek a balance among three categories: highly-rated books that received many reviews, highly-rated books that received less comprehensive coverage, and lower-rated books that were widely reviewed and well publicized.

### The collective wisdom of critics

Each critic offers an individual perspective. We quote and summarize the reviews studied to provide an informed, balanced critique and to make sure that unique insights do not get missed. We apply a rating to a book from each review we study—those ratings are assessed to provide a final rating.

### Spoiler-free book descriptions

We hereby pledge not to reveal the ending or revelatory plot points when discussing a fictional work.

### APPLYING RATINGS TO WORKS OF ART IS FRUSTRATINGLY REDUCTIONIST

It is also helpful in navigating through myriad choices. As with any rating system, it is solely a guide—a summing up of several informed perspectives. There is no substitute for reading the book yourself and forming your own opinion.

## RATINGS

### ★★★★★ CLASSIC

A timeless book to be read by all

### ★★★★ EXCELLENT

One of the best of its genre

### ★★★ GOOD

Enjoyable, particularly for fans of the genre

### ★★ FAIR

Some problems, approach with caution

### ★ POOR

Not worth your time

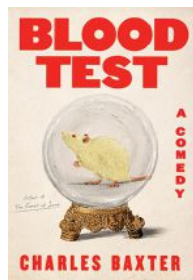
## literary

**FICTION**


### Blood Test

A Comedy

By Charles Baxter



Charles Baxter's novels include *The Sun Collective* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2021), *The Soul Thief* (★★★★ May/Jun 2008), and *Saul and Patsy* (2003). *The Feast of Love* (2000),

a reworking of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was nominated for the National Book Award. He has also published short story collections, essays, and poetry. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a PEN/Malamud Award in 2021 for Excellence in the Short Story. A retired professor of creative writing, Baxter lives in Minneapolis.

**THE STORY:** The antihero of Baxter's seventh novel is Brock Hobson, an insurance salesman in Kingsboro, Ohio. He's a good guy who teaches Sunday school and stays involved in his teenage kids' lives even though he and their mother have parted ways. When Brock visits his doctor for a minor complaint, he's encouraged to take a blood test designed by Generomics, which predicts his future behavior based on his genetics and psychology. The results, to his amazement, suggest that he's "about to embark on a major crime wave." Generomics then gives him a gun. "It's in their interests financially for me to shoot somebody." Is committing murder part of Brock's destiny?

Pantheon. 224 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780593700853

Minneapolis Star Tribune ★★★★★

"The humor in the book—and there is plenty, including a nod to slapstick involving a banana peel—comes from the absurdity of the situation and from the narrator's droll asides. ... At its heart, though, *Blood Test* is a novel about family—the way they love each other and

protect each other and look out for each other." LAURIE HERTZEL

NY Journal of Books ★★★★★

"*Blood Test* may offer a dark view of aspects of middle America, but it is consistently amusing and is an expression of its author's deep fascination with and love of flawed, eccentric Americans. ... *Blood Test* demonstrates that laughter is still the best medicine." JOHN M. CLUM

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

"By announcing itself a comedy, *Blood Test* isn't wrong, but it undersells itself. It is a profound and unsettling—and, yes, frequently funny—snapshot of our current tribulations, cast in relief against the stubborn peculiarities of the American character." ADAM STERNBERGH

Spectator (UK) ★★★★★

"Baxter has crafted a testament to his enduring literary talent as well as a remarkably relevant work that speaks to the lives led by normal people these days, a book that blends humor with profound social commentary, offering a severe yet thoroughly entertaining exploration of contemporary American life. It is a necessary novel for right now." SAM FORSTER

Washington Post ★★★★★

"Baxter retains a firm grip on the bewildering nature of social decay, romantic chaos and life's compensatory delights. ... Fortunately, he remembers the first rule of comic novels: Keep it short." RON CHARLES

Los Angeles Times ★★★★★

"[M]ostly Baxter is a deadpan artist: He's made Brock as blandly Midwestern as possible to put the wildness of contemporary American life into sharper relief. ... [A]fter Baxter has laid out the parade of selfish, money-hungry, blindly tech-admiring elements of contemporary life, the black comedy of the words shines through." MARK ATHITAKIS

Boston Globe ★★

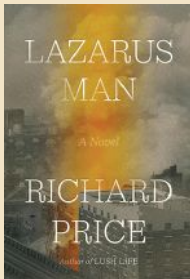
"The target of satire is never clearly defined. ... This book aims to be a tragicomic compendium of the way we live now, but its mishit notes make it hard

## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## Lazarus Man

By Richard Price



American novelist Richard Price is the author of several novels, including *The Wanderers* (1974), *Clockers* (1992), *Samaritan* (2003), and *Lush Life* (★★★★ May/June 2008)—all gritty works exploring late 20th-century urban America. He has also written for television dramas, including *The Wire* and *The Deuce*. Raised in the Bronx in a housing project, Price lives in Manhattan.

**THE STORY:** When a five-story tenement collapses in East Harlem in 2008, six bodies are found in the rubble; others remain missing. Days after the tragedy, Anthony Carter, a 42-year-old biracial teacher, ex-coke addict, and drifter, is miraculously pulled from the wreckage. With a new lease on life, he reinvents himself as a motivational speaker and media personality. His path intersects with other denizens: Felix Pearl, a young photographer new to the city; Royal Davis, who scouts the devastation for potential business for her Harlem funeral home; and Mary Roe, a single mother and city detective determined to find a specific survivor. Together, these folk create a portrait of a disintegrating community wrestling with its soul.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 352 pages. \$29. ISBN: 9780374168155

Atlantic



**"It is animated by unreconstructed, unembarrassed humanism. ... The genius of Price's novel is that it rejects all mechanistic accounts of human existence—tragic or utopian, religious or otherwise—without downplaying the social forces that shape lives of labor."**

TYLER AUSTIN HARPER

Los Angeles Times



**"Price has clearly inherited their storytelling chops, then fine-tuned those skills by persuading police to let him ride shotgun as research. ... He can size up people with a phrase."** LEIGH HABER

San Francisco Chronicle



**"Price knows and loves the hustles and the hustlers, the noise and the rhythms, the wondrous sense of interconnectedness at work even when everyone seems too caught up in their own worlds to look up. ... The wandering souls of *Lazarus Man* are all searching for something, and the disaster at the novel's center sends them into the same orbit and pushes them toward transformation."** CHRIS

VOGNAR

**to settle in and enjoy the music."** SEBASTIAN

STOCKMAN

## CRITICAL SUMMARY

Baxter's short, incisive novel approaches farce, with a chain of events

Slate



**"Threads of mystery run through the book, and Price's account of Mary's police work in search of the missing husband has the ring of scrupulous accuracy to it, in her dogged schlepping from check-cashing shop to corner bodega to city property record archives in pursuit of the least glamorous kinds of clues. ... Some might call *Lazarus Man* gritty—especially when Price clocks the 'cooked-diaper-smelling stairs' of an old tenement—but the novel has a surprisingly tender heart."** LAURA MILLER

Wall Street Journal



**"His storytelling is a little more diffuse and introspective than in previous books and his characters' emotions are more on the surface, especially in the sweetly vulnerable romance Anthony strikes up with a separated mother-of-one from the neighborhood. ... If *Clockers* is the perfect novel to challenge and energize the young, *Lazarus Man* will speak to readers with a few more years behind them."** SAM SACKS

Washington Post



**"For a nation riven and terrified, *Lazarus Man* is the strangest of urban thrillers: a thoughtful, even peaceful story about stumbling into new life. ... As engineered by Price, this rotating structure [of characters] feels entirely natural on the page even as it mimics the multiple storylines of ensemble TV shows and movies."** RON CHARLES

Boston Globe



**"Halfway through the novel Price gathers his cast at a rally, and the plot gains clarity and purpose. ... *Lazarus Man* is a paean to the people that make the five boroughs the shape-shifting metropolis it was, and is, and will be."** HAMILTON CAIN

## CRITICAL SUMMARY

"There is no better bard of everyday life in urban America," writes the *San Francisco Chronicle*. That critic, along with others, once again marveled at Price's masterful characterizations, gritty street dialogue, vivid social canvas, and "hunts for moments" that redefine lives. As in *Lush Life*, he's "more interested in the ripple effects of the initial shocking incident than in the incident itself" (*Slate*), using the tragedy to launch his lightly linked characters' evolutions. The novel feels less propulsive and a little more diffuse than previous ones, but it's also gentler, more compassionate, and more humanistic. An ode to a gentrifying, changing neighborhood and its residents, *Lazarus Man* is a "wise, wistful book about regret and renewal and the many compromises required to get from one to the other" (*Wall Street Journal*).

"both startling and hilarious" (*Shelf Awareness*). It's easy to sympathize with Brock's confusion as his situation tips into absurdity. His predicament is

## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## The Most

By Jessica Anthony



Jessica Anthony, who was born in Oneida, New York, has written three previous novels: *The Convalescent* (2009), *Chopsticks* (2012), and *Enter the Aardvark* (2020). She lives in Maine and teaches at Bates College. *The Most* was longlisted for the 2024 National Book Award.

**THE STORY:** On a warm November day in 1957, *Sputnik 2* launches into space with a Soviet dog. And Kathleen Beckett, instead of attending church with her family, goes for a swim. She enters the pool of her depressing apartment complex in Newark, Delaware, and, hours later, refuses to come out. Slowly, a backstory emerges. Kathleen, a once-promising intercollegiate tennis champion, married Virgil, a midlevel insurance salesman; she became a homemaker and had two sons. From the couple's alternating perspectives, we learn of Virgil's infidelities, wartime experiences, and estranged familial relationships. Kathleen's childhood loneliness, past love affairs, and buried anger and desires emerge. What they choose to disclose to each other will determine their futures.

Little, Brown. 144 pages. \$18.99. ISBN: 9780316576376

NPR



**"I don't say this often, but this superb short novel, about a marriage at its breakpoint, deserves to become a classic. ... [What] we get—along with the green wall-to-wall carpet, the ominous launch of Russia's *Sputnik 2* carrying a doomed 'Muttnik' named Laika into space, the '57 Buick Bluebird provided by Virgil's new employer, Equitable Life, against future sales that have not yet materialized—is a story about tradeoffs in marriage and life."** HELLER

MCALPIN

Big Issue



**"Witty, provocative, rich with insight and deep with melancholy, it features a 'normal' 1950s middle class American family with multiple cracks just below the surface. ... There are surprising reasons for Kathleen's direct actions, secrets she has not shared with her husband."** JANE GRAHAM

Book Riot



**"This is a short punch of a book about marriage and secrets, and how things get torn apart. It pairs well with *Liars* by Sarah Manguso and *Splinters* by Leslie Jamison."** LIBERTY HARDY

an opportunity to tackle life's biggest questions: fate versus choice, nature versus nurture, and how to love others

unconditionally. Baxter also successfully mocks modern faith in technology. One critic wasn't sold on the satire,

feeling the author's "ear for comedy in the ha ha sense falters" (*Boston Globe*). Other reviewers praised a "story [that]

Oprah Daily



**"With this seemingly small act of female rebellion ... [Anthony] leads us into the secret upheaval of marriage, good-girl American society, and a silenced female fury and ambition. ... *The Most* is exquisitely written, heady rush of story that you can—and probably will—finish in a few hours, before your sunscreen needs reapplying."** LEIGH NEWMAN

Scotsman (UK)



**"[An] utter joy, as crisp and unexpected as the surprisingly sunny November 1957 day over which it takes place. It is almost a distilled novel, and reads like a late, undiscovered masterpiece by John Cheever (and not just because of the melancholy of swimming pools)!"** STUART KELLY

Guardian (UK)



**"In *The Most*, she takes a similar—if slightly sadder—tone [than in *Enter the Aardvark*] with the 1950s American marriage, popping its upright, perma-smiling bubble with a portrait of two people who don't really know each other at all. Billed as *Mad Men* meets *On Chesil Beach*, the brevity of *The Most* means it never really delivers on that promise."** BEN EAST

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

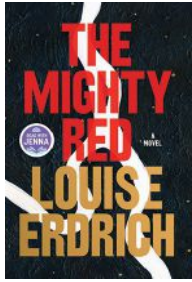
"With its echoes of John Cheever's 'The Swimmer' and its midcentury details, we're expecting a new take on 20th century suburban malaise," writes NPR. Yet Anthony presents something very different: a story about marriage and its tradeoffs and sacrifices. Tightly constructed, the novel is "not a new set-up: the bored housewife ripe for temptation; the dull, rigid, unseeing husband" (*Big Issue*). Anthony, however, excavates deep beneath the surface. She reveals Kathleen's motivations and secrets, as well as Virgil's own sacrifices and regrets, as he and the kids return from church and go about their day; Kathleen remains in the pool. The different perspectives offer insight into a seemingly unknowable mid-century marriage while delivering "page-turning interior secrets" (*Guardian*). This short novel packs a punch.

charges along ... boisterously” and an author who, at age 77, “is still fearlessly embracing his own zaniness” (*Washington Post*).



## The Mighty Red

By Louise Erdrich



Louise Erdrich lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she owns Birchbark Books, an independent bookstore. She is a member of the Chippewa tribe, and her books center on

Indigenous Americans' lives in the historical or contemporary Midwest. Her work includes *The Round House* (★★★★ SELECTION Jan/Feb 2013), winner of a National Book Award; *LaRose* (★★★★ July/Aug 2016); and *The Night Watchman* (★★★★ SELECTION May/June 2020), which won the Pulitzer Prize. *The Mighty Red* is Erdrich's 19th novel.

**THE STORY:** *The Mighty Red* opens on a “mild autumn night” in 2008 in Argus, a town in North Dakota's Red River Valley. Crystal Freshette, a trucker, is at work hauling beets from the fields to a sugar processing plant when she sees a mountain lion and fears it's “a destroying angel.” Soon, her husband takes flight after putting the family in dire financial straits. And her much-adored teenage daughter, Kismet, may marry Gary Geist, the high school quarterback, a nice boy from a wealthy family but a bit of a dolt and notoriously accident-prone. Kismet's true love is working-class Hugo, who gives her a copy of *Madame Bovary* and then sets out to make a fortune as a “mudlogger” in the oil fields.

HarperCollins. 384 pages. \$32. ISBN: 9780063277052

Boston Globe



“Erdrich effortlessly conveys both cosmic vastness and a vividly particularized local community. She simultaneously dramatizes a hideous history of exploitation and degradation and offers

hope that ingenuity and resolve can combat corporations and chemicals, that empathy and mercy may release suffering souls from grief and guilt.” PRISCILLA GILMAN

Los Angeles Times



“In *The Mighty Red*, Louise Erdrich's enthralling ode and elegy to the people of North Dakota's Red River Valley, climate change, Big Ag and economic hard times have ravaged the landscape. ... Erdrich calls on us to heal our frayed bond with the earth, and to regard it, as she does, with wonder.” LEIGH HABER

Minneapolis Star Tribune



“[T]he short chapters rotate among the characters and their subplots (these are piled as high as the sugar beets, including embezzlement, armed robbery, identity theft, a fracking operation, fraying marriages, gardening and the attempts of the book club members to read *Eat Pray Love*) ... *The Mighty Red* is as good a novel as the Pulitzer Prize-winning Erdrich has written and, as most will agree, that's saying a lot.” MARION WINK

NY Times Book Review



“Erdrich steps into the long past, apprising us of the geology of the region, its farming history, the fate of the herds of buffalo so vast they would take three days to pass. ... These interludes bind the work together, transforming an immersive domestic drama into one that, like much of Erdrich's oeuvre, speaks to the acrimony at the heart of the American national project.”

FIONA MOZLEY

Washington Post



“This is not a teen novel in the traditional sense, but it's a novel that focuses with unusual depth and compassion on the lives of teenagers. ... How each of them rises to the occasion—some heroically, some timidly—offers the kind of hope that feels rare these days.” RON CHARLES

Wall Street Journal



“[W]hat persists in Ms. Erdrich's work is a spaciousness of vision that reduces the melodrama of plot to a secondary concern. Alternating among multiple perspectives, *The Mighty Red* is most absorbing as a wide-ranging almanac of ordinary life.” SAM

SACKS

Guardian (UK)



“Some pivotal scenes are so protracted and overblown that the tension slackens, while the crowded design and lurching plotting doesn't allow for sufficiently engaging character growth to pull the reader through. ... It takes a while for the reader to settle into storytelling as tonally mixed as *Kismet's* quilt, but Erdrich's achievement is pretty remarkable: a voice with brio and lightness that wends and weaves, as the titular river does, between modes and moods.” MICHAEL DONKER

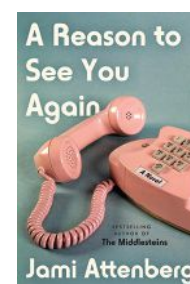
### CRITICAL SUMMARY

*The Mighty Red* is the latest of Erdrich's novels to deal with questions of inheritance and identity, “mapping the impacts of past injustices on present-day inequalities” (*NY Times Book Review*). The *Boston Globe* calls it a “deliciously strange, entirely captivating” novel, in which “[d]affiness mingles with brutality, high comedy with wrenching tragedy”—a narrative by turns “heart-rending and hilarious, righteously angry and expansively numinous.” The *Washington Post* notes how humor and sorrow are “fused together like twined tree trunks that keep each other standing.” The novel also contains the “amiable, inviting” (*Los Angeles Times*) quality inherent to all Erdrich's novels, including her ability to engage readers with, for example, requisite pesticide protocols. That accessibility in no way diminishes her scenes, characters, and awe-inspiring portrayal of the natural world.



## A Reason to See You Again

By Jami Attenberg



Jami Attenberg's previous novels include *The Middlesteins* (★★★★ SELECTION Mar/Apr 2013), a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction; *Saint Mazie* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2015); *All*

*Grown Up* (★★★★★ May/June 2017); and *All This Could Be Yours* (★★★★★ SELECTION Jan/Feb 2020). She has also published a short story collection, *Instant Love* (2006); a memoir, *I Came All This Way to Meet You* (★★★★★ Mar/Apr 2022); and a writer's guide, *1000 Words* (2024). Attenberg lives in New Orleans.

**THE STORY:** The Chicago-area Cohen family—Rudy, Frieda, and daughters Nancy, 16, and math whiz Shelly, 12—are close, with a Saturday night Scrabble-playing routine. But in 1971, when the novel opens, Rudy, a Holocaust survivor, is already weakening with the illness that will kill him. Over the next 35 years, grief leaves the remaining Cohens open to dependencies and poor decisions. Nancy has a baby in her early 20s, moves to Arizona, and becomes a wellness coach. Shelly works in early cell phone technology and becomes a role model for her niece. They're often estranged from Frieda, and partners come and go. Abandonment, addiction, and unacknowledged homosexuality recur across the generations.

Ecco. 240 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780063039841

People ★★★★★  
**"We all know there's no running from the past, but that doesn't stop the Cohen women from trying. ... [I]t's a luminous, witty, empathetic novel."** LIZZ SCHUMER

Real Simple ★★★★★  
**"[The Cohens'] journey to overcome the past, told over the course of 40 years, makes for a moving epic about the endurance of family love."** KRISTYN KUSEK LEWIS

Shelf Awareness ★★★★★  
**"Attenberg's characters are as loveable as they are maddening, and the combination of choices and luck makes the novel's events feel as random—and genuine—as real life. ... [A]nother masterful dysfunctional family story, this time focusing on the love lives and careers of three generations of women."** REBECCA FOSTER

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
**"[T]he episodic nature of the narrative can also serve to distance and sometimes disengage the reader. ... It's a testament**

**to Attenberg's gift for world-building that even the lovely, most likely temporary grace note that arrives in the final pages ... somehow feels like a loss."** LEAH GREENBLATT

Publishers Weekly ★★★★★  
**"It's an admirable portrait of a distinctly unhappy family."**

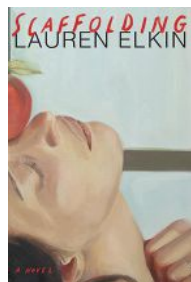
### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Skipping through time, Attenberg crafts vivid scenes that reveal the dynamics of an ordinary family of "striving, imperfect people" (*NY Times Book Review*). The selected incidents represent the whole; she "knows where to shine a spotlight to reveal characters' personalities" (*Shelf Awareness*). Readers get the (fun) challenge of piecing together what's happened in the years in between. Some momentous events "take place off-screen," and Attenberg often foreshadows what will occur in the future for the Cohen women as a way of playing with what seems like a straightforward chronology. Her "wry, streamlined wit" (*NY Times Book Review*) inspires fondness for flawed characters in this winning novel.



### Scaffolding

By Lauren Elkin



Lauren Elkin is the author of *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City* (★★★★★ May/June 2017), *No. 91/92: Notes on a Parisian Commute* (2021), and *Art Monsters: Unruly*

*Bodies in Feminist Art* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2023). She is also a translator, most recently of the UK edition of Simone de Beauvoir's posthumous novella, *The Inseparables*. From New York City, Elkin lived in Paris for nearly two decades before moving to London.

**THE STORY:** Elkin's debut novel features two women inhabiting the same apartment in Paris in different decades. Anna (in the present day) and Florence (in the 1970s) are both psychoanalysts cheating on their husbands in protest

of their unhappy marriages. In Anna's case, her depression also contributes to a miscarriage. When her husband, David, leaves for work in London, she becomes obsessed with the actions of her neighbors and new friends, Clémentine and Jonathan. Florence, too, is desperate for a baby, but her husband, Henry, doesn't want one. Beyond superficial similarities and an apartment whose décor Anna hates, more connections surface between the two women.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 400 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780374615291

Atlantic ★★★★★  
**"Elkin's prose is elegant and straightforward, with just enough experimentation to suit its ideas. ... She writes Florence's and Anna's marriages as immensely loving ones, despite their holes and wobbles; in such relationships, the novel seems to argue, it is conceivable—though not guaranteed—that almost anything can be forgiven or absorbed."** LILY MEYER

Chicago Rev of Books ★★★★★  
**"A riveting, bold challenge to the norms of relationships, friendships and marriages, Elkin has certainly earned her place on any bookshelf and in the minds of any reader. I'll be reading this one again and again."** MADELINE SCHULTZ

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★  
**"Scaffolding is the sort of very cerebral novel that a good essayist would write. ... The prose is as well crafted as Elkin's nonfiction leads us to expect, and the characters are very finely developed."** SARAH MOSS

Times Lit Supplement (UK) ★★★★★  
**"Anna's first-person voice, rendered as diaristic reportage, is immersive. ... Throughout the novel narrative doublings and repetitions enact the psychoanalytic idea of the uncanny, while story lines left dangling, including half-told Holocaust histories, lend a slithery undertow to the mundane naturalism of the prose style."** LUCASTA MILLER

Washington Post ★★★★★  
**"All told, Scaffolding contains at least**

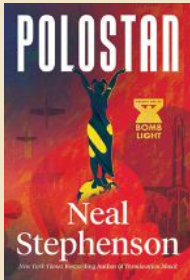
## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## Polostan

Volume One of Bomb Light

By Neal Stephenson



Bestselling author Neal Stephenson is renowned for his doorstopper works of speculative, historical, and thriller fiction; many of his novels concern mathematics, cryptography, linguistics, philosophy, currency, and the history and future of science. He is the author of almost 20 books, including *Snow Crash* (1992), the Locus Award winner *Cryptonomicon*

(1999), *Reamde* (2011), *Seveneves* (★★★★ July/Aug 2015), *Termination Shock* (★★★ Jan/Feb 2022), and the epic Baroque Cycle (2003—2004). He lives in Seattle. *Polostan* is the first in a planned series.

**THE STORY:** Dawn Rae Bjornberg was born in the Wild West in 1916 to a Russian father and an American anarchist mother. Her father fought in World War I and then moved his family to the Soviet Union to help advance the revolution. He then brings them back to the United States to serve the Communist cause, first in Montana and then in Depression-era Washington, D.C. Dawn, now renamed Aurora Maximovna Artemyeva, becomes involved in her father's intelligence gathering, and her exceptional polo skills give her entry her into elite society. But, it's soon back to Russia, where this chameleon of a woman will be groomed by the KGB's forerunner.

William Morrow. 320 pages. \$32. ISBN: 9780062334497

Book and Film Globe (Canada) ★★★★★

**"As Dawn Rae, she is a country child of the Montana sunrise: as Aurora (also meaning sunup) she takes her name from the cruiser that fired the first shot at the Winter Palace in the 1917 Russian revolution. ... World history unfurls around Dawn/Aurora: she witnesses Italo Balbo's Decennial Air Cruise arrive in America, Richard Feynman comes to Chicago to explain Bohr to her, Patton rides out of the White House to greet her as he goes off to defeat the Bonus Expeditionary Forces."** DAN FRIEDMAN

Booklist ★★★★★

**"Tremendously entertaining. ... A glorious achievement from a unique and compelling writer."** DAVID PITT

Kirkus ★★★★★

**"The first installment in Stephenson's historical epic paints an engrossing picture of the United States during the Great Depression, the Soviet Union in its tumultuous and violent early years, and the looming threat of the technological advancements that will soon lead to the atomic bomb and the space race. ... A deeply immersive historical epic."**

Reason Magazine ★★★★★

**"It's a characteristically grand, Stephensonian vision, about the perils of Communism and the tumultuous glory of scientific progress. ... In Stephenson's worldview, socioeconomic systems and ideologies are, themselves, a kind of technology, a series of interlinked systems, like streetcar tracks and bridges, that make human activity possible—or, in some cases, impossible."** PETER

SUDERAN

Washington Post ★★★★★

**"With its flair for characterization, precision of language, witty aperçus and fecundity of events, the novel delivers what we've come to cherish from the author of such fantastical classics as *The Diamond Age*, *Snow Crash*, and *Cryptonomicon*. ... [But] this is new territory for Stephenson—and good for him!"** PAUL DI FILIPPO

Sunday Times (UK) ★★★★★

**"This inventive and slightly batty novel—packed full of anarchists, polo players, secret policemen, cowboys, gangsters, physicists, kulaks and soldiers—is the story of Dawn Rae Bjornberg. ... She becomes involved in gun-running and a ladies polo team, meets Beria, Stalin's secret policeman and so much more in this sometimes unwieldy tale."** ANTONIA SENIOR

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

**"When the final twist of a novel leaves you more excited about pages yet to be written than the ones you've just read, the immediate temptation is to downgrade the pleasures you've experienced along the way. That's the conundrum of assessing Neal Stephenson's *Polostan*, an enjoyable book in its own right, but a trifle disappointing for the way it abruptly ends just as your interest is peaking in its intriguing main character."** DAN FESPERMAN

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Espionage is a new genre for Stephenson—this novel is also much shorter than most of his and lacks his trademark fantastical flourishes—and the consensus is that he's got a real knack for it. His protagonist, the *Washington Post* writes, "assumes the roundedness, depth and dangerous allure" of Thomas Pynchon's Oedipa Maas and Octavia Butler's Lauren Oya Olamina. If the reader isn't infatuated with her by the novel's end, the reviewer contends, "they will be revealing a heart of stone." The *NY Times Book Review* calls Stephenson a writer of "exuberant prose" who revels in embracing big ideas and offers "plenty of intrigue and beautifully rendered scenes" but laments that *Polostan* ultimately feels like a setup for a bigger spy saga. Still, as *Reason* magazine concludes, "Even the shortest and slightest of Stephenson's books are vast, intricate machines—bigger, better, and bolder than almost anything else you can read." Stay tuned!

five therapists, two marriages and four affairs—a lot for one novel to accommodate. Elkin does it elegantly, in part by making full use of the Belleville apartment as a metaphor, populating Anna's and Florence's worlds with overlapping points of reference that they bump into, like furniture in a timeshare."

ROSE CORTEAU

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
 "Throughout Elkin scatters shrewd and satisfying Easter eggs of connection among Anna, Florence and Clémentine, women of different generations who contend with the same stock questions of sexual liberation, childbearing and 'the male gaze.' ... Readers of Elkin's nonfiction will find themes and even phrases repurposed here, her own bibliographic history superimposed onto the present, fictional text." LAUREN CHRISTENSEN

Irish Times ★★  
 "I sometimes felt like I was correcting a university assignment. These (women, because it is women) writers need to trust that they are intellectual and interesting enough to carry the weight of their work."

LUCY SWEENEY-BYRNE

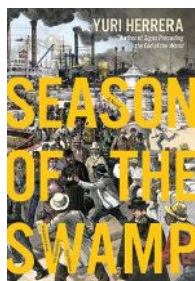
### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Elkin is known for her provocative, ideas-driven work. For the most part, reviewers welcomed *Scaffolding* as a different model of how to write about marriage and adultery. Her female protagonists make mistakes and don't have all the right answers. They are just two in a cast of relatable characters. Readers interested in a fast-paced plot should be forewarned that psychological exploration takes the place of action. Only one critic found this approach problematic, calling the book "overburdened by analysis and detached from lived city reality" (*Irish Times*). As Sarah Moss, reviewing the book for the *Guardian*, concluded, "Not every good essayist should write a novel, but we should be glad Lauren Elkin did."



## Season of the Swamp

By Yuri Herrera, trans. from the Spanish by Lisa Dillman



Mexican author Yuri Herrera's books available in English translation include the novels *Kingdom Cons* (2017), *The Transmigration of Bodies* (2016), and *Signs Preceding the End of the World* (2015), winner of the BTBA Best Translated Book Award for Fiction; as well as the short story collection *Ten Planets* (★★★★

SELECTION July/Aug 2023), which was nominated for the Ursula K. Le Guin Prize. He is an associate professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Tulane University. Translator Lisa Dillman is a professor of Spanish and director of the Honors program at Emory University.

**THE STORY:** Benito Juárez, who later became the president of Mexico, lived in New Orleans between 1853 and 1855. He had been the governor of Oaxaca but was exiled by his rival, General Santa Anna. There is no historical record of what happened during the two years he spent in Louisiana, so Herrera takes creative liberties in this novella, speculating that Juárez was beaten by local police and felt distressed by the slave trade. Juárez remained engaged with Mexican politics by writing letters, printing pamphlets, and meeting with fellow expatriate intellectuals such as Ponciano Arriaga and Melchor Ocampo. He also experienced the vibrant New Orleans atmosphere: parades, bear fights, and Carnival.

Graywolf Press. 160 pages. \$26. ISBN: 9781644453070

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
 "It is a testament to Yuri Herrera's virtuosic talents that his new novel ... manages to breathe new life into a character who had long become a wax figure. ... I, for one, don't feel inclined to reproach the author for preferring an accumulation of detail to

the concatenation of events." NICOLÁS MEDINA

MORA

Observer (UK) ★★★★★  
 "His careful layering of detail is clearly gleaned from newspaper archives and other historical documents. Herrera brilliantly conveys Juárez's disorientation on arrival at the city's port, his attempts to understand the language and the 'not being seen.'" LUCY POPESCU

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★  
 "[T]he writing thrills to the racial and linguistic diversity of New Orleans, its roil of bodies and babel of noise. Mr. Herrera wonderfully captures Juárez's bewilderment and awe when stumbling upon a Mardi Gras parade." SAM SACKS

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ★★★★★  
 "While this is historical and fiction, *Season of the Swamp* bears little resemblance to historical fiction. ... [It is] a vibrant novel that asks us to see how the soul of a revolutionary is made." CAROLYN KELLOGG

Southern Review of Books ★★★★★  
 "Like a great artist, Herrera found a story within a larger work and made its color shine. ... While Herrera has captured the spirit of a place many attempt to manifest and fail, 160 pages felt too short a stint in this wild world where revolutions are reasonable and drinking coffee amongst friends is an act of treason." TOBY LEBLANC

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Unlike a biography, this novel focuses not on moments of glory plucked from its subject's entire life but on one "unglamorous interlude" (*NY Times Book Review*). Because of the scant historical record, Herrera imaginatively recreates characters and scenarios. He envisions Benito Juárez's time in New Orleans through vivid scenes and "muscular prose" (*NY Times Book Review*). One critic, although generally complimentary, expressed discomfort with the blend of history and fiction, objecting that "there is too little alignment of dates and facts, and too much play with language" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). Others appreciated the use of metaphorical language. All told, this "evocative" and "crisply translated"



(*Observer*) novella should beguile readers.



## Shred Sisters

By Betsy Lerner



Betsy Lerner's previous books include a writing advice guide, *The Forest for the Trees* (2000), and the memoirs *Food and Loathing: A Life Measured Out in Calories* (2003) and *The Bridge Ladies* (★★★★ **SELECTION** Sept/Oct 2016). A literary agent and former editor, Lerner lives in New York City. *Shred Sisters* is her first novel.

**THE STORY:** Amy Shred lives in the shadow of her beautiful, unpredictable older sister, Olivia, better known as Ollie. Ollie exhibits typical teenage rebelliousness but also bipolar disorder, and she is committed to a psychiatric hospital at age 18. Over the next few decades, the sisters' paths diverge. Amy gives up scientific research, becomes an editor, and has a short-lived marriage. Ollie is a nomad, always embarking on new ventures but not seeing them through. She steals from stores and family members alike. Often, the only clue to her whereabouts is a call from the police or a homeless shelter. Despite the turbulence of Ollie's mental illness, the sisters' bond endures.

Grove. 272 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780802163707

Boston Globe ★★★★★

**"Drama, disappointment, and despair thread throughout this bittersweet saga, but empathy, humor, and the narrator's sharp yet loving powers of observation make it a joy to read. It must also be noted that in an era when so much contemporary fiction is dystopic, Lerner's debut recalls simpler times, though minus sentimentality or nostalgia."** LEIGH HABER

Jewish Book Council ★★★★★

**"Lerner's sharp storytelling places her in the canon of Nora Ephron and Judy Blume. *Shred Sisters* is an honest, intimate,**

**and heartfelt meditation on the ways our toughest loves shape, break, and rebuild us."** SARA LIPPMANN

NPR ★★★★★  
**"Lerner elevates what may sound like yet another pop saga of endurance, measured recovery and forgiveness into a closely observed story that's ragged and wry. ... These are the kind of revelatory ordinary human moments Lerner captures with precision."** MAUREEN CORRIGAN

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
**"The prose is controlled, but neither virtuosic nor spare; the plot, enticing but neither Dickensian nor minimalist. Decidedly un-trendy, crescendo-less and restrained, this tragicomic family saga is a Bach prelude to the Rachmaninoff of a writer like Jonathan Franzen."** LAUREN CHRISTENSEN

Washington Post ★★★★★  
**"[The] bright, clean, gallivanting story rewards an open mind and heart with crisp prose, fresh plot turns and dimensional, dishy portraits we can instantly recognize. ... What comes at us, page after page, is new news, for which—laughter and pain alike—we're ultimately grateful."** JOAN FRANK

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

"No one will love you more or hurt you more than a sister," Lerner writes. Her bittersweet family saga in miniature captures all the sweetness—and all the pain—of a relationship complicated by mental illness. Reviewers uniformly admired the 60-something author's first novel, describing it as "elegant" (*NY Times Book Review*), "enthraling" (*Boston Globe*), and "engrossing" (Jewish Book Council). With unassuming prose but "taut, sharp dialogue" (*Washington Post*), the novel explores Ollie's self-destructive patterns and recovery process over 20 years and Amy's coping mechanisms. Critics appreciated the book's "pitch-perfect wit ... and deep insight" (*Boston Globe*). *Shred Sisters* is a debut worth discovering.



## The Third Realm

By Karl Ove Knausgaard, trans. from the Norwegian by Martin Aitken



Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgaard's honors include the Norwegian Critics' Prize for Literature for *Out of the World* (1998), the first debut novel to win that award. *A Time for Everything* (2004) was a finalist for the Nordic Council Prize; *My Struggle: Book One* (2009) was a *New Yorker* Book of the Year. Translator Martin Aitken received the PEN America Translation Prize in 2019. *The Third Realm* is the third in the Morning Star series, after *The Morning Star* (2021) and *The Wolves of Eternity* (2023).

**THE STORY:** Residents of an unnamed Norwegian town, in the thick of an intensely hot summer, witness the appearance of a new star in the sky. Strange things begin to happen. The novel opens and closes with Tove, a painter of dark images, whose husband, Arne, described her struggles with mental illness in the first novel. She now shares her perspective. While vacationing with her family, she goes off her medication and is haunted by actual demons. Elsewhere in town, three members of a heavy-metal band have been gruesomely murdered, and philandering detective Geir descends into their world to investigate. Finally, neurologist Jarle arrives to look into the alleged return to life of a brain-dead man.

Penguin. 512 pages. \$32. ISBN: 9780593655214

Atlantic ★★★★★  
**"Knausgaard's writerly self-discipline is formidable. ... Maddening but enthralling."** LEV GROSSMAN

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★  
**"[*The Third Realm*], with its disquisitions on death and eternity, is extremely grandiose. ... With his more desperately humdrum passages, Knausgård seems to suggest**

that his credentials for interrogating the nature of being and eternity are not that he knows everything but that he knows nothing." LARA FEIGEL

Library Journal ★★★★★  
 "Knausgaard's achievement in this novel is to combine Scandinavian crime fiction with science fiction, while integrating discussions of religion, philosophy, neurobiology, and music. A highly readable and compelling work by a major and prolific novelist." JACQUELINE SNIDER

Spectator (UK) ★★★★★  
 "A few might find satanic rituals and strange noises at night hackneyed, but they are used to spine-chilling effect. Others might [balk] at scientifically impossible scenarios—but the whole is so gripping, and at any one time, science only understands the tip of the iceberg of observed phenomena." LEYLA SANAI

Washington Post ★★★★★  
 "[O]ne of the most genuinely suspenseful, alluring books I've ever read." BRANDON TAYLOR

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ★★★★★  
 "There are explanations, musings, arguments, and near-impossible acts of god (or something else entirely). But no matter how close or far these characters are from the new light of their shared sky, they continue to make very real, and very human, determinations." MATTHEW MINICUCCI

NY Times Book Review ★★★  
 "[W]hile the division of *My Struggle* into volumes was essentially commercial and practical ... this time he is more actively exploiting the potential of the *roman-fleuve*, a form with an ability to complicate and comment on its own procedures, to work toward vast cumulative effects, to absorb and absolve its weaker constituent parts." LEO ROBSON

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Knausgaard has "crossed some boundary of plausible deniability" beyond a time when "we might have [rationally] accounted for the visitations, visions and other occurrences" (*Washington Post*). *The Third Realm* is a decidedly strange book. Opinions differ on the importance of having read the previ-

ous two books in the series, but prior knowledge will be rewarded. With scenes from those books reenacted from different perspectives, we get a masterclass in what fiction can offer: "the expansion of readerly sympathies, bringing a sense that there are potentially endless perspectives available" (*Guardian*). The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* adds that while characters at times are terrifying, they also make "very human, very everyday choices about who they love and what is it they want out of their lives."



## The Volcano Daughters

By Gina María Balibrera



Salvadoran American writer Gina María Balibrera holds an MFA in Prose from the University of Michigan's Helen Zell Writers' Program. Her

awards include grants from Aspen Words, the Gould Center, the Rackham Foundation, Tin House, and the Under the Volcano Sandra Cisneros Fellowship. She is one of 48 recipients of the inaugural Periplus Fellowship, a mentorship program for writers of color. *The Volcano Daughters* is her debut novel.

**THE STORY:** Graciela is part of a circle of five close-knit friends who live on a coffee plantation on the side of a volcano in El Salvador. When her father, an advisor to the general El Gran Pendejo, dies, she is called to the capital city to pay her respects. She meets her estranged sister, Consuelo, who lived with their father and his new wife. Graciela and Consuelo are beholden to El Gran Pendejo, who rises as a dictator and orders a massacre of Indigenous people, including those from their hometown. Graciela's friends are among the murdered; together, they narrate the novel. Graciela and Consuelo survive and start new lives in California and Paris.

Pantheon. 368 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780593317235

Debutiful ★★★★★  
 "A staggering tome of sisterhood, disaster, and myth. Readers can expect an imaginative roller coaster of emotion as the sisters do everything they can do to reconnect."

People ★★★★★  
 "Long-lost sisters are reunited under cruel circumstances until genocide forces them to flee in this lush, imaginative debut with hints of magic." CARLY TAGEN-DYE AND LIZZ SCHUMER

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ★★★★★  
 "The novel tackles head-on colorism, discrimination, class disparity, and gender violence in a nuanced manner. Perhaps Balibrera's greatest accomplishment is her ability to not only tell this story in a slant, but bring the language and the stories of those from the Salvadoran diaspora so unapologetically to the page." TANYA SHIRAZI GALVEZ

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
 "This is an epic story, a remarkable achievement for a writer making her first foray into the literary landscape. ... Deep into the story, too many minor characters are introduced with flourish, never to reappear." MARIE ARANA

Wash Ind Rev of Books ★★★★★  
 "Balibrera's writing is rich and lyrical, but anyone not fluent in Spanish would do well to keep a Spanish-English dictionary on hand for the many unfamiliar words and phrases peppering the text. ... The women portrayed in these pages are strong and resourceful, conflicted and authentic." ANNE ELIOT FELDMAN

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Balibrera bases the novel's plot on the historical tragedy of "La Matanza." In 1932, the government of El Salvador suppressed a revolt by Communists and Pipil peasants, killing tens of thousands of people. In an act of "unchecked reckoning, Balibrera accomplishes the feat of rendering these spirits alive" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). Critics found the book challenging with its plethora of secondary characters and frequent Spanish-language phrases. However, the setting and prose are vivid, and the story is "defi-

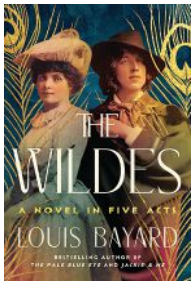
ant, engrossing and haunting” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). The violence and injustice depicted are, unfortunately, familiar. Balibrera is “a gifted new storyteller with a nose for history and a prodigious imagination” (*NY Times Book Review*).



## The Wildes

A Novel in Five Acts

By Louis Bayard



Louis Bayard is the author of 11 novels, many featuring historical settings and real-life figures. His works include *Jackie & Me* (2022), about the Kennedys; *Courting Mr.*

*Lincoln* (★★★★ July/Aug 2019), about Abraham Lincoln; *Roosevelt's Beast* (2014), about Theodore Roosevelt; and the Edgar-nominated *The Pale Blue Eye* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2006), about Edgar Allan Poe. *The Pale Blue Eye* was also adapted into a Netflix movie starring Christian Bale. Bayard lives in Washington, D.C.

**THE STORY:** In 1892, Constance learns that her husband, Oscar Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*), has been having an affair with a man. At the time, the Wildes are living on a rented Norfolk farm. In this novel, structured like a play, the couple engages in witty conversations even as they ignore the uncomfortable truths beneath the banter. In three years, Wilde will be embroiled in a scandalous court case. For now, the focus is on the consequences for his home life and happiness rather than his authorial reputation. Constance leaves Oscar, later fleeing abroad to hide from the media attention. She and her sons must forge a new path. Can the family's love endure?

Algonquin. 304 pages. \$29. ISBN: 9781643755304

Columbus Dispatch



**“In a daring ‘fifth act,’ Bayard returns to the time and place of the first, reimagining history in a way that gives all of the Wildes**

**a fighting chance against the various forms of doom that await them. ... Both slyly comic and achingly tender, the novel sets the readers within the context of an unexpectedly complicated and fascinating family.”** MARGARET QUAMME

Minneapolis Star Tribune ★★★★★  
**“Bayard has been doing great things with gay-centric versions of historical fiction for a couple of books now, namely *Jackie and Me* and *Courting Mr. Lincoln*. ... One can rarely pronounce with confidence about the emotional veracity of historical fiction, but I’ll say it anyway: Louis Bayard has gotten it right.”** MARION WINIK

NY Journal of Books ★★★★★  
**“Throughout this dazzling novel of heartbreak, we hear echoes of Wilde. ... *The Wildes* is both a powerful family portrait and a verbal delight.”** JOHN M. CLUM

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★  
**“This sort of imaginative work, in which actual historical figures are endowed by a modern author with thought and speech, is very hard to pull off, but Mr. Bayard has contrived to make Wilde sound like Wilde as well as to flesh out credible and sympathetic inner lives for Wilde’s gentle, long-suffering wife, Constance, and his sons, Cyril and Vyvyan. ... Oscar Wilde’s attractiveness and his flaws were equally outsize, and Mr. Bayard conveys them both admirably.”** BROOKE ALLEN

Washington Post ★★★★★  
**“Bayard sticks close to the known facts ... and enriches them by providing vivid inner lives for these wounded souls. ... Some might criticize Bayard for rewriting history to suit 21st-century tastes, and it must be admitted that he indulges in some overt signaling.”** WENDY SMITH

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Bayard is known for bringing historical figures, especially queer icons, to life through his fiction. Oscar Wilde is well known through his own writings—from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) to *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)—but the author also creates a convincing personality for his wife, Constance. This tribute to Wilde will draw readers in with “witty epigrams”

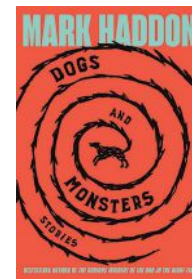
(*NY Journal of Books*) and, ultimately, give them entry into a legendary character’s mind and soul. This meticulously researched and warmly imagined book will also inspire empathy for all those who have “suffered from unjust social stigmas” (*Washington Post*). With its unexpected ending, it also offers “an alternate history” (*Wall Street Journal*).



## Dogs and Monsters

Stories

By Mark Haddon



English author Mark Haddon gained widespread acclaim with *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2003), which won

the Whitbread Award. His works include the novels *A Spot of Bother* (★★★★ Nov/Dec 2006), *The Red House* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2012), and *The Porpoise* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2019); and a short story collection, *The Pier Falls* (2016). Haddon has also written poetry, radio plays, television screenplays, and children’s books and worked as an illustrator and cartoonist. He lives in Oxford and teaches creative writing.

**THE STORY:** Several of Haddon’s stories update Greek mythology. “D.O.G.Z.” embodies the titular theme by retelling the story of Actaeon, torn apart by hounds after spying on the goddess Diana. “The Quiet Limit of the World” depicts the love between Tithonus and Eos, the goddess of dawn. “The Mother’s Story” recasts the Minotaur myth in medieval England. “The Wilderness,” a chilling tale inspired by H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, features a young woman rescued from a bicycle accident, only to be imprisoned. “The Temptation of St. Anthony” sees the saint tortured by devils and disciples alike. In “My Old School,” a middle-aged man recalls his boarding-school bullying experience.

Doubleday. 288 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780385550864

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

**"Each of these stories opens a door upon an unexpected landscape, a dangerous situation, a character who may be simultaneously 'monster, and miracle.' All are complex, surprising, evocative and richly entertaining."** NINA ALLAN

Minneapolis Star Tribune ★★★★★

**"Haddon's inventive and entertaining tales find new ways of exploring age-old themes—fate and mortality, love and betrayal, loneliness and madness. All showcase the enduring power of storytelling."** MALCOLM FORBES

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

**"The stories in this splendid new collection are inspired by an eclectic variety of sources. ... The work of a consummate storyteller, the brilliantly conceived *Dogs and Monsters* illuminates a variety of species, both real and mythical, including our own."** HILMA WOLITZER

Spectator (UK) ★★★★★

**"The tight prose and descriptive range are remarkable. ... There isn't much room for redemption in this wise, immersive book: but there is always space for a bat-squeak of hope."** PHILIP WOMACK

Shelf Awareness ★★★★★

**"In eight well-crafted stories, Mark Haddon revisits several Greek myths as well as showcases equally creative original material."** HARVEY FREEDENBERG

Financial Times (UK) ★★★

**"The collection—which has moments of brilliance but is suffocated by its many allusions—speaks to literature's participation in, or ingestion by, a larger vogue for karaoke culture. ... Whether the source material is being used as a crutch or an exercise in brand recognition, it feels cynical as well as cyclical, while pre-used hooks all too often have blunt barbs."**

CHRISTIAN HOUSE

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Most of the stories in Haddon's second short fiction collection draw on myths or legends and quickly turn very dark.

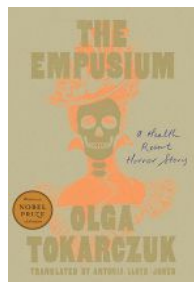
Critics lauded the character development as proof of the author's "empathy for the human condition" (*Shelf Awareness*). They also affirmed his choice to update traditional tales; "*Dogs and Monsters* demonstrates how ancient stories can yield new delights when re-purposed, updated and told from different perspectives" (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*). One reviewer objected to the reused material: "On a fundamental level, a fiction writer persistently following another author's lead—even to interesting ends—isn't really doing their job" (*Financial Times*). With this exception, reviewers found the book compelling, and readers should, too.



## The Empusium

A Health Resort Horror Story

By Olga Tokarczuk, trans. from the Polish by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



Polish author Olga Tokarczuk was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2018. She won the Man Booker International Prize for *Flights* (★★★★★

SELECTION Nov/Dec 2018). Her other novels include *House of Day, House of Night* (2003), *Primeval and Other Times* (2010), *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead* (★★★★★ SELECTION Nov/Dec 2019), and *The Books of Jacob* (★★★★★ Mar/Apr 2022). *The Empusium* first appeared in Polish in 2022. Antonia Lloyd-Jones is a London-based translator.

**THE STORY:** In September 1913, the Polish Mieczysław Wojnicz, 24, arrives in Görbersdorf, Germany, hoping to be cured of tuberculosis. The health resort is full, so he finds a room for rent in the Guesthouse for Gentlemen. He befriends an art student named Thilo; most of the other residents are older men from across Europe. They spend their evenings drinking a psychotropic local brew and debating human nature and the differences between men and women. Strange things happen

here: Rumors circulate about a ritual murder every November, and the novel seems to be narrated by ghosts who live in the attic and emanate from the chimney.

Riverhead. 320 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780593712948

Atlantic ★★★★★

**"Pulling from folktales, mythology, art, and literature, Tokarczuk's novel spins a story that feels eerily familiar and yet totally new. ... For Tokarczuk, telling odd and sometimes incredible stories seems to be a political choice, a way of challenging the official histories that get passed down."**

BEKAH WAALKES

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

**"An exuberant feminist parable from the International Booker winner that takes in philosophy, misogyny, illness and the power of the irrational."**

San Francisco Chronicle ★★★★★

**"As ever, Tokarczuk's prose—and Antonia Lloyd-Jones' glorious translation thereof from the Polish—will knock the wind out of you. As in her previous novels, Tokarczuk infuses the physical with the metaphysical, making even the dullest objects and places glow with meaning."**

CHELSEA DAVIS

Times Lit Supplement (UK) ★★★★★

**"Happily, all the various unlikely strands come together in the closing chapters. The eerily majestic finale is haunting, cathartic and gleeful—a zany confection that could only have come from this unpredictable, unique writer."** CLAIRE LOWDON

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

**"It's an odd, fascinating book—a blackly serious joke—from an author of great daring and intelligence. ... It makes for absorbing if often mystifying reading, but what stands out most is the philosophical conflict it stages between rationality and folk belief."** SAM SACKS

Vulture ★★

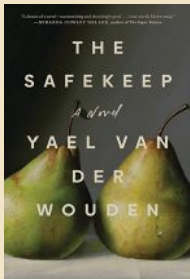
**"[T]he best word to describe *Empusium* would not be horror but fear: not the reader's, or any character's, but the author's. Tokarczuk seems desperately afraid that you not miss the point of her**

## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## The Safekeep

By Yael van der Wouden



Yael van der Wouden was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, and moved to the Netherlands when she was ten. She first attracted attention with her 2017 essay, “On (Not) Reading Anne Frank,” which recounted her experiences of anti-Semitism in the Netherlands. *The Safekeep*, her first novel, was shortlisted for the 2024 Booker Prize.

**THE STORY:** Isabel den Brave, 30, lives alone in a large house in the Dutch countryside. She moved into the furnished home in 1944 with her mother and brothers to escape the “hunger winter” in wartime Amsterdam. Now, in 1961, Isabel, repressed and anxious, guards the house and the objects inside it. When her brother’s girlfriend moves in for the summer while he travels for work, Isabel seethes with anger. Eva dyes her hair, wears cheap clothes, lacks manners, and brings a sense of menace into the pristine home. Soon, objects—a spoon, a thimble—disappear. More alarming is the sexual attraction that develops between the two women and the festering secrets the house and its inhabitants hold. Simon & Schuster. 272 pages. \$28.99. ISBN: 9781668034347

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

**“With Eva’s arrival, the psychological drama gradually gives way to a love story of such intensity that it is easy to forget about the broken china plate. ... The vivid, tense character of Isabel is the first great achievement in *The Safekeep*; her fears and her worries and her isolation, her determination to stay in her grief and shut others out, the way this armor slowly and then quickly cracks apart.”** LORI SODERLIND

Sunday Times (UK) ★★★★★

**“Van der Wouden takes the risk, all the more impressive in a debut, of writing about sex without retreating into humour—and it pays off. ... Then comes a brilliantly executed twist that elevates the novel from a beautifully written lesbian romance to a shocking unmasking of the legacy of the Holocaust.”** LAURA HACKETT

Washington Post ★★★★★

**“In telling the story of Isabel, her family and the secrets they have lived with—sometimes unconsciously—Van der Wouden has produced the rare novel about World War II, the Holocaust and**

**their aftermath that succeeds in feeling fully, intimately human. ... That twist is not what makes *The Safekeep* remarkable; what does is the extraordinary, emotional story Van der Wouden crafts around it, and the pitch-perfect voice she brings to the characters who experience its consequences.”** TALYA ZAX

London Rev of Books (UK) ★★★★★

**“Much of its pleasure depends on the tension between Isabel’s more paranoid interpretation of events and what we gradually infer to be the truth of the situation. ... One of van der Wouden’s boldest choices is to use the same language to yoke together different kinds of repression: Hendrik and Sebastian’s necessary secrecy; Isabel’s wariness of her own desires; society’s silence about its wartime guilt.”** JON DAY

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

**“Suffice to say, the German occupation is still very recent, as are the atrocities, injustices and opportunism that flourished under their watch. ... She can draw characters with nuance, without fear too; she creates and sustains atmospheres deftly, and ultimately delivers a thrilling story.”** RACHEL SEIFFERT

Telegraph (UK) ★★★

**“[Eva] is vague about how or when her parents died, keeps a carefully guarded diary, and once tells a story about some fancy plates that were broken during a birthday party at her childhood home. ... As well as revealing her own story, Eva’s diary entries include horrifying accounts of friends who survived the concentration camps and returned home only to be landed with bills from the Dutch government—or ‘outstanding taxes’ on unoccupied properties, or debts accrued while recovering in Switzerland—which plunged them into poverty.”** GABRIELLE SCHWARZ

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

“What a quietly remarkable book,” wrote the *NY Times Book Review*. The story is both an erotic romance and a penetrating look at wartime crimes and guilt as Isabel—tormented and antisocial—gradually opens her home and her heart. Although the sex scenes rarely feel gratuitous, a few critics commented that the sex “just doesn’t move the story on” (*Guardian*). Some reviewers also guessed the novel’s major twist early on; others felt that the love story and the mood overshadowed the larger lesson about the Holocaust, World War II, trauma, pain, and complicity. But if the romance storyline prevented some reviewers from “having a proper reckoning with the past” (*Telegraph*), the work is nonetheless a “razor-sharp, perfectly plotted debut novel, [where] history always comes back to nick you” (*Sunday Times*).

**book or take away the wrong lesson.”** ROBERT RUBSAM

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Tokarczuk was inspired equally by Thomas Mann’s bildungsroman *The*

*Magic Mountain* and the history of a real tuberculosis sanatorium. However, she puts her own magic realist and philosophical spin on the narrative, crafting a “mischievous fairy tale about transformation, emotion and ambig-

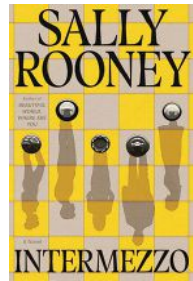
ity” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Reviewers remarked on the lack of female perspectives and speculated that such an exclusion may deliberately underscore how braggadocious men think they are always in control. A few critics

felt that the political implications were too overt and that the ghost story fails to frighten. Though not as successful as her previous work, *The Empusium* is a unique, impish work for daring readers.



## Intermezzo

By Sally Rooney



Irish author Sally Rooney's previous novels include *Conversations with Friends* (2017), winner of the *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year Award; *Normal*

*People* (★★★★ SELECTION July/Aug 2019), which won a Costa Book Award, was nominated for the Booker Prize and the Women's Prize for Fiction, and was adapted into a successful TV series; and *Beautiful World, Where Are You* (★★★ Nov/Dec 2021). Rooney lives in her hometown of Castlebar, Ireland. *Intermezzo* is her fourth novel.

**THE STORY:** Brothers Peter and Ivan Koubek are reeling from the loss of their father to cancer. Peter is a Dublin lawyer in his early 30s; Ivan is an eccentric former chess champion who has just graduated from university. Ivan strikes up a romance with an older woman who works at an arts center; Peter has two women in his life. He still loves his ex, Sylvia, who lives with chronic pain after a car accident. But he's also attracted to unconventional Naomi, who's still in college. Grief has left both brothers emotionally needy. Judging each other for their choices drives them further apart. Love—in its many forms—always has complications.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 464 pages. \$29. ISBN: 9780374602635

New York Times



**"There is so much restraint and melancholy profundity in [Rooney's] prose that when she allows the flood gates to open, the parched reader is willing to be swept**

**out to sea. ... Rooney has an exquisite perceptiveness and a zest for keeping us reading."** DWIGHT GARNER

NPR



**"Intermezzo is focused less on topical questions about how to live in a troubled, increasingly unviable world and more on the psychological ramifications of love, loss and heartache. ... [The novel] propels you to its well-earned, moving climax with nary a false move."** HELLER MCALPIN

Observer (UK)



**"Intermezzo is perfect—truly wonderful—a tender, funny page-turner about the derangements of grief, and Rooney's richest treatment yet of messy romantic entanglements. ... What makes Rooney so electrically compelling is the way she sticks with a scene and draws it out."** ANTHONY CUMMINS

New Statesman (UK)



**"What makes Intermezzo better than its predecessors is what makes it more imperfect: it is Rooney's most wholehearted novel but also her most sentimental; her most uninhibited but not her most compulsive; her most likeable but not her coolest; her most highbrow but not her most accomplished."** LOLA SEATON

Boston Globe



**"Intermezzo is studded with shimmering moments of pastoral stillness that offer an alternative to life on an urban career track or a conventional path to domestic bliss, but there's an overwhelming air of resigned doom in this novel. ... Though Rooney is one of our most earnest and passionate contemporary writers, one hopes that this saga framed by lust and grief is an interlude between great acts."** LAUREN LEBLANC

Times Lit Supplement (UK)



**"Each character has been flattened like the butter on the bread they incessantly eat, turned into a blandly satisfying fantasy of good humour, essentially good motives and good old romance. ... While Intermezzo also presents as a novel about 'grief,' the brothers' father having recently died, he is sketched so vaguely that we must content ourselves with bland and unaffecting sentiment."** ANN MANOV

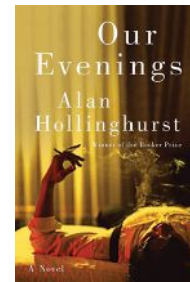
## CRITICAL SUMMARY

A new Sally Rooney novel is considered a major event on the international literary calendar. In chess, an "intermezzo" is a bold, surprise move that forces the other player to retreat to a defensive position. As a title, it refers to how the two brothers and their romantic interests always react to each other's unexpected decisions. Rooney is as astute as always on romantic relationships, but critics felt this novel marked a step forward for her in that she also considers familial love, grief, and aging. The book felt long, slow, and overly male for many reviewers. However, most deemed it "wise, resonant, and witty" and a "mature, sophisticated weeper" (*New York Times*).



## Our Evenings

By Alan Hollinghurst



English novelist Alan Hollinghurst's works include *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988), winner of the Somerset Maugham Prize; *The Line of Beauty* (★★★★

SELECTION Jan/Feb 2005), winner of the Man Booker Prize; *The Stranger's Child* (2011); and *The Sparsholt Affair* (★★★★ SELECTION May/June 2018).

He has also received an E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction. Hollinghurst lives in London.

**THE STORY:** David Win looks back on his life as a mixed-race homosexual actor in England. His British mother met his father while working in Burma as a typist in the 1950s. She raised David by herself in England, making a living by dressmaking. A mentor gave Dave the chance to attend an exclusive prep school as a teenager. There, he was bullied by his mentor's son (later a Conservative Member of Parliament). David didn't fit in for several reasons: his skin color, his lower class, and his sexuality—though the latter, of course,

was still a secret. Nearing age 70, Dave wistfully remembers his acting career and love affairs.

Random House. 496 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780593243060

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

**"No page-turner; [the novel] moves with the heavy tread of a royal procession. ... That rare bird: a muscular work of ideas and an engrossing tale of one man's personal odyssey as he grows up, framed in exquisite language."** HAMILTON CAIN

Observer (UK) ★★★★★

**"Our Evenings is a novel about acceptance: of time's passage, of life's limitations, of the small victories that make existence meaningful. ... What emerges is a work of quiet power, a novel that finds its emotional weight not in dramatic confrontations but in the slow, steady accumulation of a life, with all its beauty and sadness, moments that slip away largely unnoticed, until we are left, like Dave, to reckon with the twilight of our own evenings, looking back on bright mornings."** ALEX PRESTON

Slate ★★★★★

**"Passages of precise and perceptive social dissection are what the Hollinghurst fan lives for, but *Our Evenings* has its moments of straightforward ravishment as well. His allegiance to sheer beauty balances the tartness of his observations of class."** LAURA MILLER

Washington Post ★★★★★

**"The miracle of *Our Evenings* ... is its elegance and transparency, its ability to capture exactly what Dave is thinking and feeling all the way into his 70s. In that sense, Hollinghurst is the Jamesian ideal—a person on whom nothing is lost."**

RON CHARLES

New Yorker ★★★★★

**"In *Our Evenings*, Hollinghurst shows how much else [sex writing] can convey: distraction, estrangement, a fond attentiveness. ... For all these strengths, however, the book is oddly lacking in cumulative force; in place of direction and momentum, there is simply an exquisite drift."** GILES HARVEY

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

**"[W]ith Dave becoming settled and content, the second half of the book, which runs through the five decades of his adulthood, loses momentum. The final twist, though shocking and thematically coherent, feels like a belated attempt to reinject some vigor."** TOBY LICHTIG

Spectator (UK) ★

**"Our Evenings does nothing new. The plot is one of tedious familiarity."** FRANCESCA

PEACOCK

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Hollinghurst's seventh novel revisits familiar themes of class, art, and gay life. A close mother-son relationship is another key element here, perhaps because the author's mother died just before he started writing. Through David's vocation and romances, he gains a temporary sense of belonging despite his outsider status. The novel is, therefore, a "lovely, elegiac consideration of how people find happiness in the margins" (*Slate*). Reviewers acknowledged the novel's slow pace with words like "languorous" (*NY Times Book Review*) and "languid and reflective" (*Observer*). One critic found it dull and too similar to Hollinghurst's previous works. For most, though, it is an elegant achievement worthy of the author's reputation.

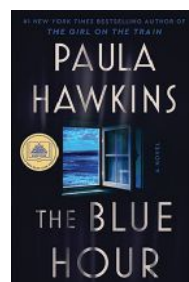
crime

FICTION



## The Blue Hour

By Paula Hawkins



Paula Hawkins, who lives in London, is the author of the thrillers *The Girl on the Train* (★★★★★ SELECTION Mar/Apr 2015), which was adapted into a 2016 film; *Into the Water* (★★★ July/Aug 2017); and *A Slow Fire Burning* (2021). She was a journalist for 15 years before

writing her first novel. *The Blue Hour* is a *Good Morning America* Book Club Pick.

**THE STORY:** Eris, a Scottish island accessible only at low tide, was home to celebrated artist Vanessa Chapman, who, upon her death, left her house to her friend, Grace Winters. Twenty years later, James Becker is the curator of Chapman's artistic estate. He is confronted with a potential scandal: It appears that what was thought to be a deer's rib bone in a Chapman found-object sculpture exhibited at the Tate Modern is, in fact, a human bone. Becker sets out to investigate what Winters may know about the whole thing. She's initially resistant, but the two grow fond of each other. Could it be that the bone belongs to Chapman's philandering ex-husband, Julian, who disappeared two decades ago?

Mariner Books. 320 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780063396524

BookTrib ★★★★★

**"In her latest addictive novel ... Hawkins immediately captures her readers' attention through deception, beautiful art, and complicated characters. ... *The Blue Hour* shows the depth that Paula Hawkins has to her artistic pallet while continuing to immerse the reader in these worlds she builds much like her other books."** LYDIA

LEFEVRE

Canadian Press ★★★★★

**"Set in the U.K. art scene, the end of COVID-19 lockdowns are a catalyst for the plot in the was-there-a-murder mystery. ... The thriller, centred on a mysterious museum collection hiding deadly secrets, is told from three perspectives: that of an artist who died shortly before the onset of the pandemic, her friend-turned-caretaker-turned-executor, and the museum curator tasked with retrieving the remaining artworks left to his employer."**

NICOLE THOMPSON

Southern Bookseller Rev ★★★★★

**"*The Blue Hour* is a book about art—it is about the reclusive artist, the sculptures and paintings, the curator obsessed with her work, and the people who have come to be in possession of pieces of her art. ... [It] is also a psychological drama about**

self-worth, loneliness, loss, and love.” NANCY

MCFARLANE

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

“Ms. Hawkins tells her multifaceted, constantly surprising story through an assemblage of prose segments—diary entries, newspaper features, events as recalled from different points of view. What emerges from this asymmetrical approach is a tale as dark and compelling as the works produced by Vanessa, a woman who had a defining effect on all who dared to come close.” TOM NOLAN

Associated Press ★★★★★

“[A] tight story with interesting characters that keeps you engaged until the end. ... It’s not really a keep-the-reader-guessing type of thriller, but more of a slow build that culminates in a shocking ending.” ROB

MERRILL

Medium ★★★★★

“It showcases her ability to create a richly atmospheric setting, complex characters, and a mystery that goes beyond simple whodunit mechanics to explore deeper psychological and artistic themes. ... It’s a novel that lingers in the mind long after the final page, inviting readers to ponder the nature of art, memory, and the secrets we keep even from ourselves.” JEFF MURDOCK

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

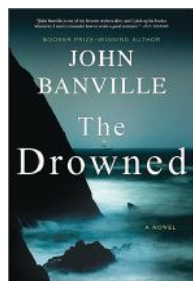
Variations of the “slow burn” concept frequently appear in reviews of this novel. Hawkins exhibits a great talent for taking the slightest detail or possible clue and making it feel important to the plot. The novel’s setting feels like a character in itself, with the *Associated Press* suggesting the island’s isolation renders it “a fine place to bury secrets—physical and psychological.” *Medium*’s reviewer adds that its “moods and tides” mirror the psychological states of the human characters as Hawkins explores themes of “obsession, the nature of memory, and the lasting impact of trauma.” You will not soon forget this “dark and chilling story of obsessive love,” concludes the *Southern Bookseller Review*.



## The Drowned

Strafford and Quirke, Book 4

By John Banville



John Banville’s novels include the Booker Prize winner *The Sea* (★★★★★ SELECTION Jan/Feb 2006) and *The Singularities* (★★★★ Jan/Feb 2023). He has also

published 13 crime thrillers under the pseudonym Benjamin Black, among them *The Black-Eyed Blonde: A Philip Marlowe Novel* (★★★★ May/June 2014) and *Wolf on a String* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2017). The previous Strafford and Quirke novels include *Snow* (★★★ Jan/Feb 2021), *April in Spain* (2021), and *The Lock-Up* (2023). Banville has won the Irish PEN Award for Outstanding Achievement in Irish Literature and Spain’s Prince of Asturias Award. He lives in Dublin.

**THE STORY:** This 1950s-set mystery begins with an empty car in a field in coastal Ireland, its engine running. Denton Wymes is a loner in a nearby caravan. Out walking his dog, he runs into Armitage, who tells him that the car belonged to his wife, who has disappeared. Armitage fears she may have drowned herself. Wymes isn’t sure whether to believe the histrionic man. Detective Inspector St. John Strafford travels from Dublin to launch an investigation. Everything is complicated: Wymes has a police record for child molestation; Armitage is untrustworthy; Strafford is going through a divorce, and his mistress is pregnant. Meanwhile, two more bodies turn up. Hanover Square Press. 336 pages. \$28.99. ISBN: 9781335000590

Boston Globe ★★★★★

“Like its predecessors, *The Drowned* is no pulse-pounding thriller but rather a slow-burning atmospheric mystery, one that subtly ratchets up the suspense and stealthily exerts a grip. Banville enlivens his narrative by rotating his characters’

perspectives, and he frequently enriches it with arresting descriptions.” MALCOLM FORBES

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

“Mid-century mores of class and creed also exert steady pressure on the narrative, with seemingly no aspect of life free from ethno-sectarian interpretation, from surnames to diction to choices of drink at the bar. ... While readers of past instalments may find satisfaction in the comeuppance handed out to the novel’s prime malefactor, *The Drowned* stands alone, too, suspenseful on its own terms.”

ANTHONY CUMMINS

New York Times ★★★★★

“Banville has a lot of sour fun watching Strafford cluelessly bumble through his relationships, be they with Quirke (adversary, mentor) or Quirke’s daughter Phoebe (paramour), who happens to be connected to the case in surprising ways.”

SARAH WEINMAN

Seattle Times ★★★★★

“Running parallel to the story’s mystery are dynamic characters in an encapsulating atmospheric backdrop attempting to navigate their own personal problems and grief. The rich prose Banville weaves makes for a compelling, vibrant nail-biter that continues an already marvelous series.”

JORDAN SNOWDEN

NY Journal of Books ★★★★★

“[T]he greatest pleasures gleaned from *The Drowned* will be the forays into the Irish countryside and time spent in the company of Strafford, his ex-wife, and Phoebe, his current partner, as well as Quirke and the participants in the disappearance.” LAURY A. EGAN

Shelf Awareness ★★★★★

“By the mystery’s denouement, some readers will have guessed the perpetrator’s identity, but it is less that identity and more the psychology of it that is Banville’s final blow. Through these intricacies and its murky sense of foreboding, this inexorable novel will continue to advance Banville’s considerable reputation.” JULIA KASTNER

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Psychological insight often outweighs the plot in this quiet, unshowy mys-



## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## Precipice

By Robert Harris



Robert Harris writes alternative history, historical fiction, and suspense. His novels include *Pompeii* (★★★★ SELECTION Mar/Apr 2004), *Imperium* (★★★ Jan/Feb 2007), *The Ghost* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2008), *The Fear Index* (★★★★ SELECTION May/June 2012), *An Officer and a Spy* (★★★★ SELECTION May/June 2014), *Conclave* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2017), *Munich* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2018), *The Second Sleep* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2020), and others. A former newspaper columnist and television correspondent, he lives in a small village in Berkshire, England.

**THE STORY:** In the summer of 1914, Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith, 61 years old and married, starts an affair with Venetia Stanley, a bored, 26-year-old aristocratic socialite. With the First World War looming, Asquith recklessly divulges confidential diplomatic and military information to his lover through letters. Scotland Yard tasks Detective Sergeant Paul Deemer, who had crossed paths with Stanley over a tragic drowning, with investigating the breach of security and the couple's suspected liaison. Deemer intercepts their daily missives and probes the leak of top-secret documents. Meanwhile, Asquith sends British forces to fight the Germans, Stanley finds a purpose in the war effort, and Asquith becomes increasingly desperate.

Harper. 464 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780063248052

Anniston (Alabama) Star ★★★★★

**"We remain unsettled and, of course, deeply curious knowing that we are being made privy to an actual historical war room, replete with the whims of the actual players. ... Add in the fore-knowledge of the beginning of that 'war to end all wars,' and Robert Harris's new book promises more than a couple of sleepless nights completing the latest from a true master of the political thriller."**

STEVEN WHITTON

BookTrib ★★★★★

**"It is a stunning, revelatory and utterly fascinating account of the secret largely epistolary love affair between Liberal Party Prime Minister H. H. (Henry Herbert) Asquith and Venetia Stanley, a 35-year-old younger socialite from a prominent and wealthy family. ... Fact and fiction are seamlessly blended in this exciting thriller."** LINDA HITCHCOCK

Sunday Times (UK) ★★★★★

**"Their relationship has been well documented, and Robert Harris, who is a past master at turning real events into gripping fiction, has taken it as the basis for this excellent novel. ... Despite Asquith's astonishing behaviour, Harris creates in him a believable and even sympathetic character, and as events move towards their**

**poignant climax, the reader cannot help feeling for Asquith and Venetia, caught in a web of their own making."** MARGARET VON KLEMPERER

Observer (UK) ★★★★★

**"Harris has left the framework of history intact, his only invention being the character of a detective to act as the envoy of writer and reader. ... The novel's brilliance lies in the way the author has written into the void, giving life and voice to Venetia, bringing her to dazzling life through her imagined letters to Asquith and Harris's portrait of a bright, unconventional and complex young woman seeking to escape the strictures of her aristocratic upbringing."** ALEX PRESTON

Washington Examiner ★★★★★

**"The plot strand involving Deemer, the book's only fictional main character, takes the form of a propulsive police procedural, and we eagerly follow him as he goes about his sleuth work, whether inveigling his way into Venetia's parents' stately home in Wales or steaming open envelopes and gasping at the contents."** MALCOLM FORBES

Washington Post ★★★★★

**"Harris again embellishes the record to accentuate the drama—and in this case, the comedy, too—that historians often miss. ... *Precipice* is both a harrowing story of the run-up to a terrible war and a fresh look at the much-maligned position of mistress to a powerful man."** DENNIS DRABELLE

Guardian (UK) ★★★

**"Harris is reliably attentive to tone and vocabulary: the voice of the novel feels all-of-a-piece. ... *Precipice* is well researched and expertly constructed, but it shies away from psychological insight into these two forceful individuals—and seems to prefer it that way."** IMOGEN HERMES GOWAR

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Harris was given access to an archive of letters, telegrams, and official documents possessed by the Bonham-Carter family (the actress Helena Bonham-Carter is Asquith's great-granddaughter), which he used to construct this "exceptional work of historical fiction" (*BookTrib*). The story of illicit romance, espionage, and political intrigue unfolds mostly through letters. Asquith's (more than 500) remain in the historical record; Harris invented Stanley's, which were destroyed. Harris has a "knack for lighting on a fascinating episode of history" (*Guardian*), and this tale is certainly worth telling. A few reviewers wished for more psychological insight into the central characters. Most, though, found *Precipice* to be another highly entertaining work from the reliably gripping Harris.

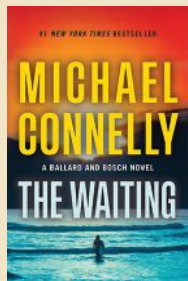
## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## The Waiting

A Ballard and Bosch Novel

By Michael Connelly



Michael Connelly has written more than 30 novels, many starring Harry Bosch. This is the sixth book, after *The Dark Hours* (★★★★★ SELECTION Jan/Feb 2022), *Dark Sacred Night* (★★★★★ Jan/Feb 2019), and *The Night Fire* (★★★★★ SELECTION Nov/Dec 2020), to pair longtime protagonist Bosch with Detective Renée Ballard.

A former newspaper reporter who worked the crime beat, Connelly lives in California and Florida.

**THE STORY:** While surfing one morning, Detective Renée Ballard's badge and gun are stolen. Her attempt to recover the items leads to evidence of a planned terrorist attack in Malibu. She turns to Harry Bosch, who is now retired, for help. Another major case involves a serial rapist who hasn't struck since 2005; Ballard's team picks up a trail suggesting this man may be a fearsome Superior Court Judge. Though Ballard encounters considerable obstacles and danger as she starts to investigate, she's fortunately assisted by a new volunteer in the force's Open-Unsolved Unit, Harry's daughter, Maddie, a patrol officer. But there's more. It turns out Maddie has evidence that could help solve Hollywood's infamous 1947 Black Dahlia murder.

Little, Brown. 416 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780316563796

Associated Press ★★★★★

**"The multiple plot lines are suspenseful and unfold at a torrid pace, and as usual in a Connelly novel, the prose is tight and the characters are compelling and well-drawn. *The Waiting* is the habitually best-selling author at the top of his game."** BRUCE DESILVA

Crime Fiction Lover ★★★★★

**"There's laughter and tears in this one, plus a rock-solid storyline that keeps those pages a turning. I'm losing count of how many novels Michael Connelly has under his belt, but this guy never lets the standards slip and *The Waiting* is definitely well worth the wait."** SANDRA MANGAN

Good Reading ★★★★★

**"As with all of Connelly's novels, *The Waiting* is densely plotted and combines police procedural with mystery, drama and complex moral dilemmas. ... Another brilliant entry into an already strong body of work."** TESSA CHUDY

tery; Banville "offers a stark series of events in understated tones" (*Shelf Awareness*). The detective characters will be familiar to some readers. However, a fair amount of time passes before Strafford comes onto the scene,

and Quirke arrives even later. The perspectives change as Banville reveals the various players' secrets. "As well as being a fiendish whodunit, the book is an astute character study" (*Boston Globe*). The story builds slowly until

it becomes a fully gripping record of "quiet desperation" (*Shelf Awareness*). Even better, its "gentle charm and keen perception" (*NY Journal of Books*) make it an excellent addition to the series.

Law Society Journal ★★★★★

**"If you like page-turner, plot-driven commercial crime fiction, then you'll enjoy *The Waiting*. ... You know what you're in for—that's why you picked it up."** PIPPA LYONS

Library Journal ★★★★★

**"The story follows the cases methodically and realistically, and the characters continue to grow. With a TV series on Amazon Prime coming soon starring Maggie Q as Renée Ballard, this novel will generate more interest than usual."** JEFF AYERS

Medium ★★★★★

**"*The Waiting* is an essential read for fans of legal thrillers and crime fiction, providing a fresh perspective on the genre while remaining true to the elements that have established Connelly as a household name."** JOHN MCGEE

Real Book Spy ★★★★★

**"Michael Connelly shows yet again that he continues to have his finger firmly on the raw pulse of Los Angeles, striking gold with *The Waiting*, a riveting mystery that further establishes Renée Ballard as his protagonist of the future alongside the beloved Harry Bosch."** RYAN STECK

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

*The Waiting* is the first-rate thriller readers have come to expect from Connelly, with some thought-provoking themes woven in. Prepare yourself for a late-night reading session, the *Real Book Spy* advises, because this one is Connelly at his very best, "proving once again why he is the undisputed master of the modern crime novel." *Crime Fiction Lover* lauds the teaming of Ballard with two generations of Bosches, adding that while Harry is essentially a bit player here, "with each outing Renée Ballard elevates her position in the crime fiction universe." A hallmark of Connelly's writing, *Medium* asserts, is his knack for expressing complex emotions through "simple yet impactful language." This approach is particularly effective here, the critic concludes, "where themes of patience, doubt, and introspection resonate deeply."



## The Sequel

By Jean Hanff Korelitz



Jean Hanff Korelitz's novels include *Admission* (★★★★ July/Aug 2009), which was made into a movie in 2013; *You Should Have Known* (★★★★

July/Aug 2014), the inspiration for the HBO series *The Undoing*; and *The Latecomer* (★★★★ **SELECTION** July/Aug 2022). *The Sequel*, her ninth novel, is the second in The Book series, after *The Plot* (2021), which is being adapted for Hulu. She has also written poetry and a theatre adaptation. Korelitz lives in New York City.

**THE STORY:** After her husband Jacob Finch Bonner's death by apparent suicide, Anna Williams-Bonner goes on tour to promote his final, posthumously published book. Her agent secures a place at an artists' colony, where she starts work on an autobiographical novel, *The Afterword*, which draws on her untimely experience of becoming a widow. Soon, Anna has a bestseller on her hands. But readers will quickly realize that Anna is not just a liar but a sociopath as well. Someone begins sending her excerpts from a novel she thought was destroyed. Is it a warning from someone who knows the truth about her brother's and husband's deaths? A delicious battle of wills ensues.

Celadon. 304 pages. \$29. ISBN: 9781250875471

Criminal Element ★★★★★

**"Korelitz offers incisive commentary on what it means to be a writer, the divisive nature of *The Sequel*, and the cultural discourse over (mis)appropriation. These meditations are cleverly self-referential and provide a more cerebral counterpoint to the action-oriented components of the crime story."** JOHN VALERI

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

**"Like its predecessor, *The Sequel* is a novel about stories, an on-the-nose satire about**

**the cut-throat publishing industry, and a Chinese puzzle of books-within-books and deliberately placed literary references for the cognoscenti. ... There is, of course, a twist, satisfyingly executed, and the author's skewering of the feuds and resentments of the publishing industry are enormously entertaining, though perhaps funnier for insiders than the general reader."** STEPHANIE MERRITT

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

**"Cleverly meta, the title fits the sardonic mood that infuses the two books. ... The story Korelitz has crafted means that we root for [Anna], and fear her, in equal measure."** CLÉMENCE MICHALLON

Telegraph (UK) ★★★★★

**"As the title suggests, this is a follow-up to Korelitz's hugely enjoyable 2021 hit, *The Plot*. ... The result is an entertaining cat-and-mouse thriller laced with satirical swipes at the publishing industry."** TERRY RAMSEY

Washington Post ★★★★★

**"Readers who enter Korelitz's fictional worlds should not expect to be coddled. ... Anna is a heinous devil who may shock and offend, but never bores."** MAUREEN CORRIGAN

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

**"Korelitz's book, mixing dark wit with coldblooded suspense, provides an unforgettable tour through the life and mind of a homicidal protagonist."** TOM NOLAN

NY Journal of Books ★★★★★

**"The movement and pacing of the novel overall are satisfying, but there are infelicities and missteps in the prose."** ERIC VANDERWALL

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

A sequel by name and by nature, Korelitz's new novel is a knowing satire on the publishing world and a gripping mystery with a wicked antiheroine. Multiple reviewers likened Anna to Patricia Highsmith's famous Tom Ripley. Readers will cheer her on even as they find her actions detestable. For the most part, the critics welcomed this "solid, darkly fun follow-up to *The Plot*" (*New York Journal of Books*). It nails the tone of a playful thriller:

"droll, cunning" (*Washington Post*). A few critics complained about the prose but none about the plot. It's complicated and satisfying, leaving room for another sequel. It's worth noting, however, that *The Plot* should be read first.



## Absolution

A Southern Reach Novel

By Jeff VanderMeer



Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation* (★★★★ **SELECTION** May/June 2014), the first volume in the Southern Reach series, won the Nebula Award and the Shirley Jackson

Award and was adapted into a movie starring Natalie Portman; it was followed by *Authority* (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2014) and *Acceptance* (2014). His other titles include *Finch* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2010), *Borne* (★★★★ July/Aug 2017), and *Dead Astronauts* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2020). Born in Pennsylvania and raised on the Fiji Islands, VanderMeer lives in Tallahassee, Florida. *Absolution* is the fourth volume in the Southern Reach series and serves as a prequel.

**THE STORY:** *Absolution* returns to the coastal area called Area X, a bespoiled paradise. Old Jim, a peripheral character in the earlier volumes, now takes center stage. He's posing as a bar owner but is, in fact, working undercover for Central, a government intelligence agency. The book is divided into three sections. The first unfolds a couple of decades before the formation of Area X, as narrated by Old Jim, and the others move us forward to reveal an alligator experiment and the appearance of carnivorous white rabbits with cameras attached to their necks; Lowry, an investigator on a later expedition in the region, appears. Folks are going mad. And Old Jim has some mysteries to solve.

MCD. 464 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780374616595

Boston Globe ★★★★★

"[VanderMeer] seeks to broaden his readers' horizons and expand their sense of the possible. Maddening, haunting, and compelling, this is essential reading for anyone interested in the boundaries of speculative fiction." MATTHEW KEELEY

Los Angeles Times ★★★★★

"[A] book that defies stultified notions of literary genre to lure readers into a form of nature in which no rational order can be imposed. ... He uses his beautiful prose—sometimes muscular, sometimes lyrical—in service to his brand of ecological-horror science fiction that asks probing questions of human nature." LORRAINE BERRY

New York Times ★★★★★

"And in his trademark hallucinatory fashion, the new novel delivers as many questions as answers. ... The final section is a trippy, expletive-laced first person account from a soldier named Lowry who is sent on a reconnaissance mission into Area X—and steadily loses his mind as he confronts the incomprehensible." ALEXANDRA ALTER

ALTER

San Francisco Chronicle ★★★★★

"[*Absolution*] blends and morphs, from the imaginative writing of science-fiction to the grotesqueness of horror and the paranoia of the best spy thrillers out there. All of this is by design and masterfully done." URBAN WAITE

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

"The novel adds new information to our understanding of the site and its genesis, but also opens new questions, and leaves some dangling loose ends. What it does do is reinforce the original series' contention—that the boundary between the uncanny and the familiar is more porous than we realise—with the observation that sometimes, at the very heart of rationality, we may find madness." ABIGAIL NUSSBAUM

ABIGAIL NUSSBAUM

Washington Post ★★★★★

"*Absolution* could have dragged the series' many monsters and mysteries into a clarifying light. Instead, it sticks to the shadows, just where the best horror

belongs. And while that could vex readers looking for answers, their reward is a good scare." JESS KEISER

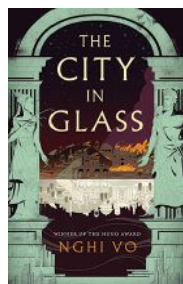
### CRITICAL SUMMARY

*Absolution* is every bit as good as the first three volumes of the series. The novel works for the same reason the others did, striking that "rare balance between revealing (the task of the novel) and revealing too much (the danger horror must avoid)" (*Washington Post*). The *Los Angeles Times* compared occupying VanderMeer's world to wandering the canvases of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings, in particular how the humans in "The Garden of Earthly Delights" "look comfortable with the chaos they're a part of," while that "same world of chaos is dark and terrifying in "The Last Judgment." It's worth reading the first books in the series, though, for an introduction to VanderMeer's strange, bureaucratic, and creepy world.



## The City in Glass

By Nghi Vo



Nghi Vo, born in Illinois, is a writer of fantasy, science fiction, and horror. The Hugo Award-winning *The Empress of Salt and Fortune* (★★★★★ July/Aug 2020), a feminist

fantasy set in a land inspired by imperial China, was the first novella in The Singing Hills Cycle, followed by *When the Tiger Came Down the Mountain* (★★★★★ Mar/Apr 2021). Also reviewed: *The Chosen and the Beautiful* (★★★★★ Sept/Oct 2021), a queer retelling of *The Great Gatsby*, and *Siren Queen* (★★★★★ SELECTION July/Aug 2022), set during Hollywood's Golden Age.

**THE STORY:** The demon Vitrine is deeply in love with Azril, the city she has spent generations creating. She has often inflicted hardship on the city, but always in the belief it was in its inhabitants' best interests. Then, one

day, four angels rise from the harbor and destroy the city. Vitrine is devastated. In her battle with the angels, she injures one, who is left behind. Although Vitrine intends to destroy it, a relationship develops. Both are immortal; it looks like they're in it for the long haul. With the help of the few survivors, Vitrine dedicates herself to rebuilding Azril. We learn of her history, why she loves the city, and why it is, once again, in peril.

Tor. 224 pages. \$24.99. ISBN: 9781250348272

Dragonmount ★★★★★

"The prose is stunning throughout this book: beautiful and raw and honest. ... I loved reading [*The City in Glass*], and Vo's biblical 'and it was so' way of describing this fantasy world of demons and angels."

Locus ★★★★★

"On the one hand, [this novel is] a beautifully written meditation on loss, reparation, and redemption; on the other, it's urban planning for demons. ... Vo's almost restrained mastery of the novella form leaves us with not only the sweeping sense of an implied epic, but the elegance of a well-told parable." GARY K. WOLFE

Publishers Weekly ★★★★★

"In poetic and evocative prose, Vo draws readers into the richly textured world of Azril while gracefully exploring themes of love, loss, and redemption. This beautifully crafted tale of resilience and transformation may be Vo's best yet."

Washington Post ★★★★★

"Vitrine's relationship with the nameless angel who helped to obliterate her beloved Azril takes some deliciously dark turns, but they also bond over nurturing the reborn city. ... Vo packs a lot into a short novel, delving into the inner lives of cities in a different way than N. K. Jemisin does in her recent *Great Cities* duology."

CHARLIE JANE ANDERS

Nerd Daily ★★★★★

"All in all, *The City in Glass* is a beautifully written, atmospheric novel that will appear to readers who appreciate lyrical prose and don't mind a less conventional narrative structure. However, those who seek a more traditional fantasy story with

extensive world-building and character development might find it lacking.” ANNA G.

SciFi Mind ★★★  
**“The City in Glass hits a strong and beautiful melody from the outset and plays hundreds of variations in its rich composition, but, enjoyable as it is, I missed something of the dramatic power I’ve had from other Nghi Vo stories. I’ve rarely felt this way about a book, so enamored of its style and imaginative power yet still missing that essential experience of dramatic change.”** JOHN FOLK-WILLIAMS

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

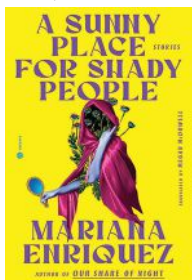
*The City in Glass* doesn’t offer much of a compelling plot, but readers will appreciate the beautiful prose and find themselves immersed in an intriguing world. *Dragonmount* notes that grief and resilience are major themes in the book and suggests that while the perspective of a demon crafting a city over a millennium may not be relatable to everyone, “the emotion of stark loss is, and Vo’s writing brings this mercilessly home.” The *SciFi Mind* critic agrees on the demon-relatability issue, asserting that demons “don’t exactly develop as characters.” But again, the author’s lovely prose and setting make for a fulfilling experience.



## A Sunny Place for Shady People

### Stories

By Mariana Enriquez, trans. from the Spanish by Megan McDowell



Argentinian author Mariana Enriquez’s books include the horror novel *Our Share of Night* (2019) and two previous short story collections: *The Dangers of Smoking in Bed* (2021), which was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize, and *Things We Lost in the Fire* (2017). Enriquez lives in Buenos Aires. Translator Megan McDowell, who has

won a National Book Award and English PEN award, lives in Santiago, Chile.

**THE STORY:** These 12 stories showcase Enriquez’s dark magic realism. The dead—and undead—play major roles. An abandoned zoo is the creepy backdrop for “Hyena Hymns.” The physician protagonist of “My Sad Dead” tends to souls rather than to live patients. “Face of Disgrace” explores the effects of silence and shame. “Metamorphosis,” appropriately, adapts Kafkaesque tropes to comment on the medical establishment’s lack of serious treatment of women. Women narrate most of the stories. Ghosts appear; Argentina’s tragic history repeats. The title story is an odd one out, taking place in Los Angeles and imagining the truth behind the real-life accidental death of 21-year-old Canadian tourist Elisa Lam.

Hogarth. 272 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780593733257

Book Riot ★★★★★  
**“Behind every dark fairytale lies ideas about the role of women, tumultuous familial relationships, or the impact of generational trauma. Enriquez is a master at taking these common themes and examining them through her unique perspective on the world.”** KENDRA WINCHESTER

Minnesota Star Tribune ★★★★★  
**“Enriquez is consumed by recent Argentine history, but she dribbles it out with the subtlety of a master chef. ... With its occult elements and cast, *A Sunny Place for Shady People* feels as vivid and essential as Kafka’s tales.”** HAMILTON CAIN

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
**“Enriquez illuminates both the night and the ghosts, and she rejects her characters’ paralysis. She refuses silence and crafts stories so searing they cannot be buried or ignored.”** SAMANTHA HUNT

Chicago Rev of Books ★★★★★  
**“These chilling stories evoke the feeling of creeping dread that’s becoming the hallmark of the new wave of Latin American horror led by women authors—no jump scares here, just a steady pulsing of adrenaline, not enough to find relief, just enough to keep you from falling**

asleep. ... [S]ometimes, the transgressions feel less successful, less like they push past a cultural stereotype, and more like they thud up against them.” LEAH RACHEL VON ESSEN

Los Angeles Times ★★★★★  
**“Entertaining, political and exquisitely gruesome, these stories summon terror against the backdrop of everyday horrors. ... [W]e are lucky to be privy to [the characters’] strange and mesmerizing journeys.”** GINA ISABEL RODRIGUEZ

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★  
**“There are some stories here that are conceptually strong, but feel sketchy or banal in their realisation, as though they had originally been written to a restrictive word count or deadline and never expanded to the full length they needed. There are instances when Enriquez’s prose suffers from the kind of dilatory imprecision that some reviewers found so off-putting in *Our Share of Night*.”** A K BLAKEMORE

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Enriquez updates established horror tropes in these twisted tales. Critics welcomed her latest collection as part of a “growing wave of socio-psychological Latinx horror” (*Chicago Review of Books*). Admiring the blend of tradition and innovation, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* dubbed it “a Gothic vision on steroids.” The author often takes inspiration from the headlines, especially concerning gendered violence towards women. One reviewer found the book “uneven” with an “overly literal translation” and expressed disappointment that “this collection oscillated so often between too much and too little” (*Guardian*). Overall, however, critics were impressed with this “scorching” set of stories (*NY Times Book Review*)—and one even predicted a future Nobel Prize for the author.

## general

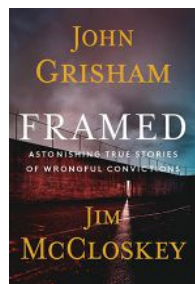
NONFICTION



## Framed

Astonishing True Stories of Wrongful Convictions

By John Grisham and Jim McCloskey



John Grisham, who lives in Virginia, has written nearly 50 books and twice won the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction. Reviewed: *Camino Island* (★★★★ Sept/Oct

2017), *The Guardians* (★★★★ Jan/Feb 2020), *Camino Winds* (★★★★ July/Aug 2020), and *The Exchange* (★★★ Jan/Feb 2024). Jim McCloskey founded Centurion Ministries (Grisham is on the board of directors), which has freed 70 wrongly convicted individuals. He holds a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and is the author of the memoir *When Truth Is All You Have* (2020).

**THE TOPIC:** Grisham and McCloskey alternate across the book's ten chapters, each telling five stories of justice denied. Many factors can be involved, such as police corruption, racism among jurors and officials, or inept legal representation. Grisham's accounts include three men convicted of killing an elderly woman even though DNA testing indicated they weren't responsible, as well as the Navy officers known as "the Norfolk Four," who were bullied into falsely admitting to rape and murder. McCloskey writes about clients such as a black janitor found guilty by an all-white jury and a witness singled out in a fake confession. "If we as a society had the political gumption to change unfair laws, practices and procedures," Grisham contends, "we could avoid virtually all wrongful convictions."

Doubleday. 368 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780385550444

Washington Post ★★★★★  
**"Grisham's five are characteristically page-turning retellings of cases previously reported by newspaper and magazine journalists, all of whom he credits. McCloskey's stories are all ones in which Centurion Ministries got involved, and what they lack, by comparison, in narrative drive, they make up for with inside detail and nuance."** MARK WHITAKER

Booklist ★★★★★  
**"Readers unfamiliar with the genre—those, perhaps, picking up the book because Grisham's name is on the cover—will be shocked and outraged, which is precisely the response the authors were looking for. ... Legal-thriller star Grisham is the hook, but the true-crime topic will also be a big draw."** DAVID PITT

NYTimes Book Review ★★★★★  
**"McCloskey reminds us never to be self-righteous and exonerate ourselves with easy anger when we're all capable of shortcuts and complicity. ... Grisham does a service by elevating Jim McCloskey, who can inspire all of us to use our privilege in the service of those ensnared in the moral scandal we call a criminal justice system."**

MAURICE CHAMMAH

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ★★★★★  
**"Both [authors] keep their language lean and their narrative straightforward—the stories of the unjustly convicted are enough. ... [The stories'] blend of public service and call to action—and their draw as true-life pulp fiction—will inform, infuriate and, one can only hope, inspire."**

CARLO WOLFF

Associated Press ★★★  
**"Framed is ... clinical, carefully assembling the stories of those wrongly imprisoned ... Grisham and McCloskey present 10 unrelated cases around the nation."** JEFF

ROWE

## CRITICAL SUMMARY

*Framed* presents ten eye-opening cases of innocent men who spent years in American jails for crimes they did not commit; each one underscores the importance of the work that McCloskey and others do in overturning unjust convictions. Blending research and sus-

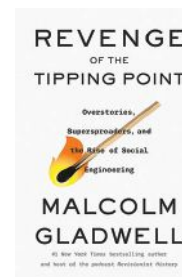
pense, the authors "relate stories that utterly boggle the mind" (*Booklist*). As expected, Grisham generally delivers the more gripping narratives, but many critics found McCloskey's chapters more rewarding for their passion and grounding in experience. McCloskey even struck some reviewers as a better writer; "Grisham seems happy playing second fiddle, even as he hits a few wrong notes" (*NY Times Book Review*). "These stories are sad and shameful" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*), but they should galvanize rather than depress readers.



## Revenge of the Tipping Point

Overstories, Superspreaders, and the Rise of Social Engineering

By Malcolm Gladwell



Malcolm Gladwell's bestsellers include *The Tipping Point* (2000), *Blink* (★★★ Mar/Apr 2006), *Outliers* (★★★★ Jan/Feb 2009), *What the Dog Saw* (2009), *David and Goliath* (★★★★ Jan/Feb 2014), and *The Bomber Mafia* (★★★★ July/Aug 2021). He is a co-founder of Pushkin Industries, which produces the podcast *Revisionist History*. Born in England and raised in rural Ontario, Gladwell now lives outside New York City.

**THE TOPIC:** Twenty-four years after the publication of *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell reassesses the beliefs that underpin his most famous work. A tipping point is when an idea so builds in popularity that it becomes the norm. His theme, as before, is social epidemics—a term that has taken on new meaning in the post-Covid era. Although he offers a few positive examples (such as nationwide acceptance of gay marriage), he focuses this time on negative situations, with sections on the opioid crisis and the threats involved in social engineering. "Overstories" account for the differences between communities. For

instance, Illinois' rate of opioid abuse is much lower than Indiana's because the former requires a pharmacist and a regulatory agency to monitor medical prescriptions, which encourages extra consideration.

Little, Brown. 368 pages. \$32. ISBN: 9780316575805

Guardian (UK)

★★★★

**"Many of Gladwell's subjects are familiar and yet he injects them with a new energy. ... For all Gladwell's academic citations, his objective tone and his repeated references to lessons or laws, this is a book of songs, a skilfully woven fabric made of stories, images and metaphors."** EDWARD POSNETT

Los Angeles Times

★★★

**"Gladwell's update of his ideas about tipping points will probably satisfy hardcore fans, and challenge and divert other readers. ... It turns out that trying to poke holes in his arguments is at least half the fun."** JULIA M. KLEIN

Slate

★★★

**"Critics have complained—and will surely continue to do so—that *Revenge of the Tipping Point* is more of the problematic same from Gladwell: that his claims are not sufficiently supported by the evidence and that he uses the narrative power of anecdote to bypass the skepticism that should greet such claims. ... But a comparison between *Revenge* and its predecessor shows that he has in fact changed his approach in the past 25 years, and in a way that acquiesces to the 'overstory' of his own profession."** LAURA MILLER

MILLER

NY Times Book Review

★

**"[Gladwell] has chosen to be a farm stand that serves salty, fatty, sugary pseudo-thinking. His signature methodology is to convey relatively boilerplate, already well-known ideas, by rebranding the ideas and wrapping them in stories."** ANAND GIRIDHARADAS

GIRIDHARADAS

Wall Street Journal

★

**"And he rarely tells one story when 10 or 20 will do, shuffled like a deck of cards. ... The bigger problem is that Mr. Gladwell's rules mainly seem to work in hindsight."**

FRANK ROSE

Washington Post

★

**"The book reads as a clear exercise in crafting social theory rather than mere 'reporting,' which makes the book only as good as Gladwell's own ideas. ... Where Gladwell adds new concepts in this book, they mostly overcomplicate obvious principles or offer unnecessary neologisms."** W. DAVID MARX

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Reviewers were sharply divided on Gladwell's follow-up to *The Tipping Point*. For some, that eye-opening book revealed "the hidden workings of society" (*Guardian*), and the sequel proved to be nearly as thought-provoking. To others, the book seemed like a rehashing of old arguments and tired examples. Critics took issue with Gladwell's "unduly slow and discursive" style (*Los Angeles Times*) and the "oddly solipsistic approach" that only recycles "his own theories" (*Washington Post*). The reflections on Covid and the opioid crisis are somewhat worthwhile. However, some concluded that the book amounts to nothing more than "a brand extension" for the author (*NY Times Book Review*). Readers' reactions may depend on how much they value *The Tipping Point*.

biography

NONFICTION

★★★★

## My Good Bright Wolf

A Memoir

By Sarah Moss



English author Sarah Moss's eight novels include *Ghost Wall* (2018), *Summerwater* (2020), and *The Fell* (2021). Her nonfiction work includes a study of

polar exploration in literature, two food-related histories, and a travel book about Iceland, *Names for the Sea* (2012). Moss is a Royal Society of

Literature Fellow and teaches at University College Dublin.

**THE TOPIC:** Moss's struggle with anorexia began in girlhood, when her angry, judgmental parents made it clear that eating less and staying small was their ideal. The classic children's literature she devoured in those years—*Swallows and Amazons*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Little Women*—alternately subverted and reinforced that message of denial. Learning from feminism and going away to college seemed to cure her, but her eating disorder was only lying in wait. At age 46, Moss's anorexia returned with such severity that she ended up in a hospital emergency room in Dublin. Though a memoir, *My Good Bright Wolf* is told mostly in the second person, with one third-person section. Moss also incorporates the voice of an inner critic questioning her memories and motives.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 320 pages. \$28. ISBN: 9780374614638

Los Angeles Times

★★★★

**"Moss refuses the jargon of psychology, eschewing terms familiar to Americans such as depression, anxiety and trauma to focus instead on the cultural and intellectual forces that define who is seen as normal and abnormal within society. When she teases apart the structural underpinnings that prescribe gender, her analytical skills are breathtaking."** LORRAINE BERRY

BERRY

NY Times Book Review

★★★★

**"Powerfully original and unsettling. ... [Moss] weaves literary analyses into her complex, textured story."** SYLVIA BROWNRIGG

Observer (UK)

★★★★

**"It is a complicated tale and her telling is many-sided, as full of devastation as it is wisdom. ... For Moss, the result is a book so full of workings that its bleak subject matter is turned warm—and revelatory."**

ELLEN PEIRSON-HAGGER

Shelf Awareness

★★★★

**"Sarah Moss's innovative memoir spins a dark fairy tale from her history of disordered eating by interrogating the messages she absorbed from her parents and her childhood reading. ... Feisty and**

LITERARY  
CRIME  
SF  
YA  
GEN NF  
BIO  
HISTORY  
SCIENCE

**original, this feminist text exhorts self and readers alike to 'befriend your body.'**

REBECCA FOSTER

**Boston Globe** ★★★★★  
**"It is a memoir of mental illness, specifically anorexia, and it is an extraordinary record of that particular variety of spiritual, emotional, and physical torment. ... In the best case, such an account increases our empathy for and appreciation of what people (perhaps we ourselves) go through."** MARION WINIK

**Guardian (UK)** ★★★  
**"Moss's hand-wringing, the voices that haunt her, contain a sad beauty. ... They damage but don't break her thought-provoking, tender midlife memoir, just as they damaged but didn't break a brilliant mind."** DINA NAYERI

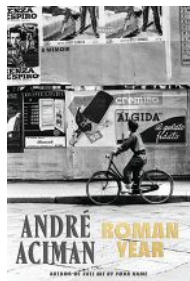
**CRITICAL SUMMARY**

Moss transforms her unhappy adolescence into an "inventive narrative" (*NY Times Book Review*) that employs unusual nicknames—"the Jumbly Girl" for her mother and "the Owl" for her father. She dredges up her childhood trauma but adds mitigating layers of analysis and skepticism. With a structure and style that are "full of daring" (*Observer*), Moss finds compassion for her younger self. One reviewer was frustrated that she "frequently stops the flow to apologise for her privilege" (*Guardian*), reminding herself she is lucky and shouldn't complain. However, Moss's artistic choices worked for most critics: "second- and third-person narration emphasizes the contrast between her thinking self and troublesome flesh" (*Shelf Awareness*). No ordinary memoir, this book is a striking achievement.



**Roman Year**

A Memoir  
 By André Aciman



André Aciman teaches comparative literature at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His debut novel, *Call Me by Your Name* (★★★★★ May/June

2007), won a Lambda Literary Award in the Gay Fiction category and was made into a 2017 movie that won the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay (sequel: *Find Me* ★★★ Jan/Feb 2020). He is the author of five novels and five works of nonfiction. Raised in Alexandria, Egypt, Aciman now lives in Manhattan.

**THE TOPIC:** When Aciman's Jewish family was expelled from Egypt in 1966 because of the country's rising tensions with Israel, they resettled in Rome as refugees. Aciman, his mother (who was deaf), and his younger brother lived in poverty. Their apartment, which existed in an old brothel, was secured by Aciman's harsh great-uncle, Claude. The author knew hardly any Italian himself yet had to interpret this new world for his mother. To escape an unhappy home life, he explored the city and read books. He haunted Rome's bookshops and also learned to appreciate the beauties of its streets and architecture at any time of day. *Roman Year* serves as a sequel to Aciman's previous memoir, *Out of Egypt* (1994).

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 368 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780374613389

**Boston Globe** ★★★★★  
**"Aciman is a sensitive and passionate writer, and this volume's packed with human incident: friendships, meals, sex, politics and culture, music, film, art. ... Such bristling clarity, always filtered by compassion, makes *Roman Year* a brave, sensuous, tender chronicle."** JOAN FRANK

**Irish Times** ★★★★★  
**"The book is a cornucopia of wonderful impressions and emotions, some so elusive as to challenge, if not defy, verbalisation. It's a superb portrait of a complex city through the eyes of a complex teenager, on an exciting journey through this unpredictable life."** ÉILÍS NÍ DHUIBHNE

**NY Times Book Review** ★★★★★  
**"Aciman evokes the passing of time in rich, meandering prose, rebuilding 1960s Rome in sentences suffused with light and sound and memories. ... Both an affecting coming-of-age story and a timely, distinctive description of the haunted lives of refugees."** AMINATTA FORNA

**San Francisco Chronicle** ★★★★★  
**"Bittersweet, buoyant and teeming with cinematic detail, André Aciman's new memoir tells of political upheaval and personal transformation in the vibrant, volatile Mediterranean of the 1960s. ... Aciman keeps the reader close to the ground, firmly planted in the singular, pungent place that helped turn him into a writer."** KEVIN CANFIELD

**Open Letters Review** ★★★★★  
**"Aciman isn't merely turning the yellowed pages of a family album, and his storytelling skills, always at their sharpest and least self-indulgent in his nonfiction, hardly ever desert him here."** STEVE DONOGHUE

**Guardian (UK)** ★★★  
**"Repetition and redundancy in the writing don't help. ... [T]oo often it seems a detail is present not because it is remarkable but simply because it has been remembered."** CHRIS POWER

**CRITICAL SUMMARY**

Aciman's memoir brings 1960s Rome to life through lively detail. He weaves in Italy's political background and cultural history along with his personal memories. Although life was not easy for his refugee family, he eschews gloominess. "This is not, in style or spirit, a sad book. It's filled with canny adaptiveness and invention" (*Boston Globe*). Nor does Aciman romanticize life in a foreign country; he "has little time for the idealized Europe seen on postcards" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

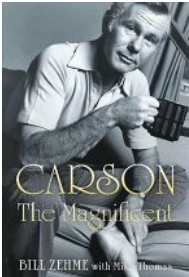


One reviewer thought the content was thin and repetitive but granted that “the tedium burns off” in the book’s second half, when a slightly older Aciman cultivates sexual expertise (*Guardian*). Overall, this “vivid, earthy book” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) is well worth discovering.



## Carson the Magnificent

By Bill Zehme and Mike Thomas



Bill Zehme, a native of Chicago, was the author or coauthor of biographies of Frank Sinatra, Hugh Hefner, Jay Leno, Andy Kaufman, and many others. When he died in 2023,

writer Mike Thomas completed this biography, which was 20 years in the making.

**THE TOPIC:** Johnny Carson (1925–2005), late-night television’s charismatic host of NBC’s *The Tonight Show*, fascinated Zehme as a teen. Shortly after Carson’s death, Zehme started this non-chronological biography, which peels back layers of Johnny’s contradictory life. “Quite literally,” the authors write, “he launched the dreams of generations, as no golden Hollywood dream merchant might have fathomed.” Carson came from humble Nebraska beginnings; he served in the Navy during World War II, started in radio and an unsuccessful variety program, and then took over as host of the late-night talk show in 1962. The authors touch on his personal life—his four marriages and three divorces, his infidelity and abuse, his troubles with alcohol, the loss of his child, and his hidden inner life.

Simon & Schuster. 336 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9781451645279

Air Mail



“Despite Zehme’s years of doubt and apprehension, however, the pair ultimately did a masterful job of revealing the unseen side of a man. ... Zehme seems to have discovered that being ‘Johnny Carson’

was ultimately the Great Carson’s most magnificent trick of all.” JOSH KARP

Minnesota Star Tribune ★★★★★  
“Carson’s laid back persona, Zehme and Thomas demonstrate, was not always in evidence in his personal life. ... He had not given nearly as much time and energy to his family, Carson acknowledged, as he had to the show.” GLENN C. ALTSCHULER

Washington Post ★★★★★  
“The backstory doesn’t upstage the biography; it deepens it, imbuing what might have been a conventionally snappy celebrity showbiz tale with a bittersweet sense of loss and accomplishment. ... Until Zehme could discover a eureka insight to Carson’s encased personality, he was compelled to construct his biography from the outside, zealously collecting as many clips, scraps of personal memorabilia and insights.” JAMES WOLCOTT

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
“Zehme and Thomas have taken, if not the high road, the yellow brick one, with Carson’s Midwestern background left in dusty black and white while the nitty-gritty of show business is buffed to a high Emerald City sheen. ... Carson’s work was to keep the show going, not to dwell on unpleasant topics (including politics), and Zehme follows suit.” ALEXANDRA JACOBS

Los Angeles Times ★★★★★  
“More disturbing is Zehme’s willingness to underplay Carson’s lifelong habit of infidelity and his catastrophic relationship with alcohol. ... Zehme is too good a journalist to ignore the more troubling aspects of his subject, who was often described off-stage as cold and aloof, but he is also too big a fan, perhaps, to explore them fully.” MARY MCNAMARA

New Yorker ★★  
“The first three-quarters is chronologically scrambled and written in Zehme’s fevered post-Tom Wolfe style, filled with parentheticals, italics, digressions, and sentences that rival Victor Hugo’s in length. ... What emerges from all this is less a portrait of Carson than a portrait of Zehme’s obsession with Carson.” ISAAC BUTLER

## CRITICAL SUMMARY

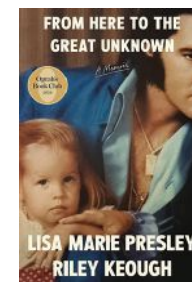
Plenty has been written about Carson, including books by Laurence Leamer, Nora Ephron, Ed McMahon, and others. This exuberant, flamboyant, and voluminously researched biography reflects Zehme’s love for Carson; it’s easy to tell where Thomas picked up, as the later chapters are more straightforward and chronological. Because Zehme was such a fan, he highlights the positive, “run[ning] through the curriculum vitae with a brisk ring-a-ding” (*NY Times Book Review*) while somewhat glossing over Carson’s womanizing, abuse, and alcoholism. “Writers’ obsessions can illuminate their subjects in ways that more dispassionate approaches can’t,” admits the *New Yorker*, despite the reviewer’s criticism. It is, in the end, “[a]s much the definitive testimony of a Carson fan as it is a definitive biography, a decades-long labor of love” (*Los Angeles Times*).



## From Here to the Great Unknown

A Memoir

By Lisa Marie Presley and Riley Keough



Lisa Marie Presley, the only child of Elvis and Priscilla Presley, was a singer and songwriter. She passed away on January 12, 2023. Riley Keough, an actress and director,

is Lisa Marie Presley’s eldest daughter. Keough has been nominated for an Emmy, a Golden Globe, and an Independent Spirit Award. This memoir is an Oprah’s Book Club Pick.

**THE TOPIC:** When Lisa Marie Presley died in 2023 of complications from weight-loss surgery, she had been writing her autobiography. Her daughter, actress Riley Keough, completed it, working from hours of interviews her mother had already conducted. In alternating passages, Keough added her own observations. We learn of Pres-

ley's rambunctious days growing up in Graceland with an indulgent father, a distant mother, and a revolving cast of acolytes and domestic staff. Presley recalls playing demolition derby with golf carts and subsisting on French fries. Then, at age nine, she watched as her father's body was carried down the stairs of Graceland and started her reign as America's "forlorn little princess." She writes of her marriages to Michael Jackson and Nicholas Cage, her struggle with opioids, and the suicide of her son Ben Keough, from which she never recovered.

Random House. 304 pages. \$32. ISBN: 9780593733875

Medium ★★★★★

**"From Here to the Great Unknown is not just a celebrity memoir; it's a deeply human story of love, loss, addiction, and resilience. ... This book stands as a testament to her strength, her struggles, and her enduring legacy."** JEFF MURDOCK

Variety ★★★★★

**"[W]as it celebrity, nature, or lack-of-nurture that made Lisa Marie's life such a melancholic one? ... But here's to Keough addressing some of those issues further when she pens her own memoir, a happier one about breaking generational expectations and patterns, 30 or 40 or 50 years from now."** CHRIS WILLMAN

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★

**"[A] haunting harmony that builds to a crescendo of heartbreak."** ELISABETH EGAN

Sunday Times (UK) ★★★★★

**"[A]n intimate celebrity memoir that gets beyond trashy revelation or prissy image-control to tell something that sounds like the truth."** SARAH DITUM

Vulture ★★★★★

**"What emerges is less of a retelling of Presley's life—though there is plenty of that—and more of a conversation between mother and daughter about parents and children, what we expect of those who raise us and what they impart to us when they leave."** FRAN HOEPFNER

Washington Post ★★★★★

**"Both women write gracefully about the**

**unbearable, immovable heaviness of grief. Keough's portrait of her mother in her final months is especially indelible."** ALLISON STEWART

Guardian (UK) ★★★

**"And that's before the revelations about her son Ben Keough's 2020 suicide (she kept his body on dry ice in her California home for two months). ... Ultimately, this is a book built on grief: Lisa Marie Presley's for her father and son, but also a daughter's for her mother."** BARBARA ELLEN

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

However sad you're expecting the story of Lisa Marie Presley's life to be, *Variety* avows, "take heed: it's sadder than that." It's an engrossing and very strange tale from start to finish, "a warts and all jaw-dropper" (*Guardian*). The *Washington Post* suggests the book is of two minds: "an unadorned, conversational memoir that's more matter of fact than gossipy" and "a frank, almost unbearably heavy meditation on grief." Reviewers agree that the saddest of the sad are the final 80 pages that chronicle Presley's descent into addiction. The *NY Times Book Review* found those pages to be the most powerful: "Instead of tap dancing around the hard parts, we're drilling into the bedrock," with the account largely delivered by Keough, "who comes across as level headed, valiant and kind."



Q

**A Voyage Around the Queen**  
By Craig Brown



English author, critic, and satirist Craig Brown is the author of *Hello Goodbye Hello: A Circle of 101 Remarkable Meetings* (2012) and *150 Glimpses of the Beatles* (★★★★★ SELECTION Jan/Feb 2020). He has written a parodic diary for the magazine *Private Eye* since 1989, and his work has also appeared in various newspapers.

**THE TOPIC:** Brown takes us on a whimsical journey through the life of Queen Elizabeth II, the most famous person of her time. Roughly half the people on the planet, he writes, watched her funeral on television. We're offered delectable glimpses of the person behind the image. We knew of her love of corgis but not that she kept a set of bagpipes nearby, which she blasted to cease their fighting. We learn that when she met Marilyn Monroe, the Queen felt sorry for her "because she was so nervous she had licked all her lipstick off." In a disco at Windsor Castle, she danced with Elton John to Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" while holding her handbag. And she found Donald Trump "very rude," noting how he had kept looking over her shoulder "as though in search of others more interesting."

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 672 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9780374610920

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

**"[I]t has taken a humorist, Craig Brown of the *Daily Mail* and *Private Eye*, a man who supposedly trades in throwaway wisecracks, to tell us something thought-provoking, perhaps even deep, about monarchy."** STEPHEN SMITH

New Yorker ★★★★★

**"[Brown] depicts the monumental figure at its center with magnanimous levity. ... Q is plausible evidence for the case that any book about the monarch is also a book about the realm and its populace—as well as that much larger sphere of non-subjects over whom Queen Elizabeth somehow still managed to reign."** REBECCA MEAD

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

**"Q is cleverly constructed, consistently insightful and hilarious, and quite possibly the closest we will ever come to understanding who the Sphinx of Balmoral really was."** DOMINIC GREEN

Guardian (UK) ★★★★★

**"Given his many years as a contributor to *Private Eye*, it might be expected that his account of the Second Elizabethan Age would have its tongue jammed firmly into its cheek. ... Overall, however, Brown gives an astute account of the wellnigh**

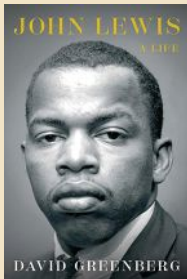
## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## John Lewis

A Life

By David Greenberg



David Greenberg's books on American history and politics include *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* (2003) and *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency* (2016). He is a professor of History and of Journalism & Media Studies at Rutgers University and the former acting editor of the *New Republic*.

**THE TOPIC:** Greenberg chronicles the life of John Lewis. Martin Luther King Jr. called Lewis "the boy from Troy," who, as a kid, preached to the chickens on his family's Alabama farm. Lewis was the first in his family to attend college, enrolling at American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville. There, he was introduced to the teachings of King, Gandhi, and other disciples of nonviolence and dedicated himself to the civil rights movement, organizing sit-ins and other protests against segregation. He was the youngest speaker at the March on Washington in 1963; his skull was fractured at the Bloody Sunday march in Selma in 1965. Greenberg recounts Lewis's ascent from Atlanta's city council to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served for more than three decades and became known as the "conscience of Congress." Lewis died in 2020 at age 80.

Simon & Schuster. 704 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9781982142995

Associated Press



**"The poem 'Invictus' by William Ernest Henley plays a starring role in the biography, which describes how Lewis would recite its verses as a child and would later chant them in his office. Just like that poem, Greenberg's riveting biography describes someone who was the captain of his soul."** ANDREW DEMILLO

Medium



**"By humanizing Lewis while still acknowledging his heroic stature, Greenberg has created a biography that will inform and inspire readers for years to come. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in civil rights history, American politics, or the power of individual courage to change the world."** JEFF MURDOCK

NY Journal of Books



**"Drawing on voluminous interviews with associates from every phase of Lewis's public and private life, Greenberg paints a richly**

**unaccountable public life of an intensely private person who, for most of that life, was on display before the slack-jawed and pop-eyed gaze of millions of total strangers."** JOHN BANVILLE

Washington Post



**"Brown can be faulted for devoting too many pages to the queen's corgis—their rowdy behavior, their diet and their ancestry. ... But otherwise Q: A Voyage Around the Queen remains absorbing,**

**edifying and frequently laugh-out-loud funny."** CLARE MCHUGH

Evening Standard (UK)



**"This collection of recollections, as it were, is fun, fizzy and told in Brown's inimitable**

**detailed and layered portrait of a man too often reduced to a symbol."** STEVE NATHANS-KELLY

NY Times Book Review



**"[A] panoramic and richly insightful biography. ... [Greenberg] makes us privy to the alchemy that transformed a shy Alabama farm boy into a central voice of the movement that drove a dagger into the heart of Jim Crow."** BRENT STAPLES

Philadelphia Tribune



**"Readers who've spent considerable time studying the politician will be pleasantly surprised to find new information here. Those who are familiar with Lewis's Civil Rights work or his politics will devour the until-now unfamiliar parts, making each page a pleasantly dramatic new discovery."** TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Wash Ind Rev of Books



**"The professor's academic credentials (summa cum laude at Yale; a Ph.D. from Columbia), combined with his journalistic talent ... have brought forth this captivating biography of a hero who cried easily, laughed often, and never lost faith in 'the beloved community,' where all God's children, particularly those who got into 'good trouble,' would be blessed."** KITTY KELLEY

New Yorker



**"Greenberg's book is less hagiographic [than Raymond Arsenault's *John Lewis: In Search of the Beloved Community*]. ... Some biographers must wrestle with their subjects' inconsistencies, but Greenberg, for the most part, has the opposite challenge: Lewis seems to have been a stubbornly straightforward character, deeply committed to the civil-rights movement, and to other movements and moments that evoked it."** KELEFA SANNEH

## CRITICAL SUMMARY

Longtime journalist and biographer Kitty Kelley writes in the *Washington Independent Review of Books* that matching a great subject with an estimable biographer is like "a celestial phenomenon that lights up the night sky and bestows a sense of wonder and excitement." Such is the case here, she attests, even as readers agree *John Lewis* is no hagiography. The *NY Times Book Review* asserts that Greenberg sets a new standard by giving Lewis's congressional career the depth of attention it deserves, documenting how "our mild-mannered seminarian submerged his pacifist tendencies enough to succeed in the bare-knuckled world of electoral politics." The *Associated Press* writes that the moments of despair and vulnerability by the "seemingly eternally optimistic Lewis" that Greenberg captures are part of what makes this biography so remarkable.

## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## Patriot

## A Memoir

By Alexei Navalny, trans. from the Russian by Arch Tait and Stephen Dalziel



Alexei Navalny (1976–2024) was a Russian lawyer, activist, and political prisoner jailed for his opposition to Vladimir Putin. In 2011, he founded the Anti-Corruption Foundation. In 2021, he was awarded the Sakharov Prize, given annually by the European Parliament to individuals who dedicate their lives to the defense of human rights and freedom of thought. He is thought to have been poisoned in a Russian Arctic prison camp.

**THE TOPIC:** This memoir, posthumously published with help from his widow, Yulia Navalnaya, bears the marks of its composition—Navalny’s writings were smuggled out of prison piecemeal. The first half, a traditional autobiography, recounts his Soviet youth and growing interest in activism. His family taught him to engage in politics, and in the aftermath of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant accident, he realized the government was lying to its people. For his stand against corruption and his position as the opposition leader against Putin, Navalny faced many physical trials, including eye damage after chemicals were thrown in his face and a poisoning that nearly killed him. He also endured solitary confinement and a hunger strike. The book’s second part contains diaries and Instagram posts Navalny’s lawyers published on his behalf until January 2024; he died in a Siberian penal colony a month later, at age 47.

Knopf. 496 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9780385549936

## Air Mail



**“Navalny, who describes himself as a high-school nerd, makes references not just to Tolstoy but also to the animated series *Rick and Morty* and the CBS comedy *The Big Bang Theory*. ... Navalny’s diary entries from prison are extraordinary, but some of the best writing describes his Soviet childhood and the collapse of the U.S.S.R., in 1991.”** STANLEY

## AP News



**“He tracks the boredom, isolation, exhaustion, suffering and absurdity of prison life, while working in asides about everything from 19th century French literature to Billie Eilish. ... His family and allies fought for him to be airlifted to Germany for treatment [after nerve agent poisoning], and after recovering there for five**

**insiderly, gossipy style. They are shared without judgment, and I think it’s a useful book, certainly very readable, though it does at times go on a bit.”** HARRIET ADDISON

## CRITICAL SUMMARY

While more than 50 biographies of Queen Elizabeth exist, Brown distinctly captures “the persona as much as the person. He shows how the

**months, he returned to Russia, only to be arrested and sent to prison, where he would spend the last three years of his life.”** HILLEL

ITALIE AND DASHA LITVINOVA

## Atlantic



**“Humor also seems to be what buttressed Navalny as he faced the consequences of this courage, sitting in one bleak prison cell after another. ... The account of Navalny’s childhood in the dying days of the Soviet Union has the same slicing clarity.”** GAL BECKERMAN

## Guardian (UK)



**“This is a brave and brilliant book, a luminous account of Navalny’s life and dark times. It is a challenge from beyond the grave to Russia’s murder-addicted rulers.”** LUKE HARDING

## Los Angeles Times



**“After he was poisoned, he could have stayed in Germany, or any Western country, with his wife and two children. On principle, however, he returned to Russia, to his country, his home, his mission.”** ROBIN ABCARIAN

## NY Times Book Review



**“Navalny’s wardens permitted him to keep some notebooks, and he began to document, in meticulous detail, life behind bars. ... Navalny’s indefatigable goodness is all the more poignant.”** DAVID

KORTAVA

## Washington Post



**“*Patriot* is breezy, especially when Navalny surveys the downfall of the Soviet Union, the continuities between that era and the present in Russia, and his own coming of age. ... He brings a wry and sensible touch to a range of subjects, from his denunciations of corruption to his meticulous efforts to brew a decent cup of coffee in prison.”** WILL ENGLUND

The very qualities that made Navalny such a passionate political activist also account for his memoir’s power: “single-mindedness,” “superhuman willpower,” and “an unimaginable degree of faith” (*Atlantic*). Despite the odds stacked against him and the attacks and imprisonments he suffered, Navalny never lost his fundamental optimism. Indeed, the book is “full of penetrating wit” and exhibits the author’s “nice ear for mockery” (*Washington Post*). In sharp contrast to Vladimir Putin’s humorlessness, Navalny “wielded cheerfulness as a weapon” (*Washington Post*). Critics remarked on how poignant it was to read this work in the knowledge of the fate that awaited its author. *Patriot*, the ultimate testament to defiance, offers a priceless “chance to commune with the mind of a dissident” (*Atlantic*).

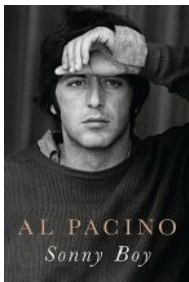
world responded to Elizabeth over her long life, and vice versa” (*Washington Post*). No subject is off limits here, the *Evening Standard* assures us, as Brown “hungrily recounts little details

as though he's been told all the stories himself." Among the chapters that caught the *New Yorker* reviewer's fancy was one entirely comprised of quotations in which the Queen is described as "radiant," including by Sylvia Plath. The *Guardian* critic notes that Brown seems to have read everything ever written about her—"a sisyphian effort" not without the perils that come with a kitchen sink approach.



## Sonny Boy

By Al Pacino



Al Pacino is a nine-time Academy Award nominee, winning for Best Actor in 1992 for *Scent of a Woman*. His other notable films include *The Godfather* series,

*Dog Day Afternoon*, *Serpico*, and *The Irishman*. He has also won two Tony Awards and two Emmys and is a Kennedy Center Honoree.

**THE TOPIC:** As a child, legendary actor Al Pacino, raised in the South Bronx by his mother and grandparents, ran the streets in a pack of "wild, pubescent wolves with sly smiles." He tells of his mother, often suicidal, instilling in him a love of movies. A teacher recognized his talent for acting and helped him make his way to the High School of Performing Arts, from which he dropped out at 16 to take acting classes. He landed the occasional role, but his big break came in 1971 with *The Panic in Needle Park*. Over the next five years, he starred in *The Godfather I and II*, *Serpico*, and *Dog Day Afternoon*. In the 1980s, he walked away from acting and went broke. Should he make it to heaven, Pacino writes, he'll be thrilled to inform his mother, "Hey, Ma, see what happened to me?"

Penguin. 384 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9780593655115

Atlantic



"[*Sonny Boy* gives] us the Pacino of ordinary deeds, bumbling around and

having his experiences, and we see that he is in service—in thrall—to Pacino the actor. And if a certain fuzziness or impressionism attends his memories, well, we get it: He doesn't want to violate, with too much insight, the precious mystery at the core of his craft." JAMES PARKER

Guardian (UK)



"Pacino's account of New York's postwar mean streets is startlingly cinematic. He introduces us to his gang of little toughs, kids called Cliff, Bruce and Petey who bunk off school to play in the derelict allotments or fish in open sewers for anything shiny that they can sell for a dime." KATHRYN HUGHES

Los Angeles Times



"[T]he eccentricity of *Sonny Boy* is part of its charm, and the book's distinctive voice speaks to a fruitful collaboration between Pacino and Itzkoff ... [S]hot through with what certainly feels like self-deprecating honesty to go with the well-worn Pacino swagger." CHRIS VOGNAR

Wall Street Journal



"[This memoir] preserves Mr. Pacino's personality, with all his intelligence, his wit and his eagerness to talk about the theater history he loves. ... If you like your star memoirs with a side of dish, *Sonny Boy* may disappoint." FARRAN SMITH NEHME

Air Mail



"It's not that Pacino is falsely modest, but he often seems reluctant to toot his own horn—a quality that is both disarming and frustrating in a memoirist. ... The spirit of this memoir: half-victory lap, half-shrug."

BRUCE HANDY

Washington Post



"[B]reezily readable. ... The push and pull between being open and taciturn, between acute self-awareness and occasional cluelessness, continues throughout the book." MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

Pacino left a lot out of his memoir (written with Dave Itzkoff), including discussions about his most successful films and the women in his life. The *Washington Post* notes moments of "frustrating reticence" captured in

"a spontaneous, conversational tone" that often sounds like he simply sat down at a tape deck and hit "record." That said, the reviewer found this sense of "voice and aliveness" to be what's best about the book. Almost all of the reviewers appreciated Pacino's exploration of the art of acting and analysis of his approach to roles—and agree his eccentricity shines through. Throughout this "discursively soulful book," the *Los Angeles Times* attests, "runs a series of interconnected questions," with Pacino pondering how he made it when so many others didn't and why he can't simply practice his craft without the weight of stardom. A good memoir for fans.

history

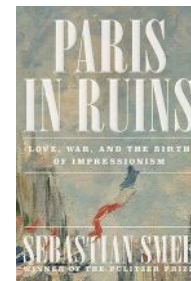
NONFICTION



## Paris in Ruins

Love, War, and the Birth of Impressionism

By Sebastian Smee



Sebastian Smee is a Pulitzer Prize-winning art critic for the *Washington Post*. His previous books include *The Art of Rivalry: Four Friendships, Betrayals, and Breakthroughs in*

*Modern Art* (2016), *Lucian Freud* (2007), and *Side by Side: Picasso v. Matisse* (2002). Raised in Australia, Smee moved to the United States in 2008.

**THE TOPIC:** Paris suffered a disastrous year between 1870 and 1871, when the Prussian army deposed Emperor Napoleon III and set many of the city's buildings aflame. The siege left citizens close to starvation. It took ingenuity to send written reports out of the city, including by hot-air balloon. After the end of the monarchy, the country's fledgling Third Republic seemed imperiled, especially by the rebellious Paris Commune. It was a tumultuous time for the three painters Smee spotlights here: Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, and Berthe Morisot. Morisot

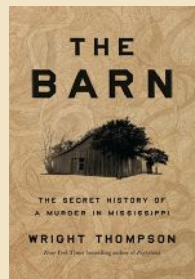
LITERARY  
CRIME  
SF  
YA  
GEN NF  
BIO  
HISTORY  
SCIENCE

BOOKMARKS SELECTION



**The Barn**

**The Secret History of a Murder in Mississippi**  
By Wright Thompson



Wright Thompson is the author of *Pappyland: A Story of Family, Fine Bourbon and the Things That Last* (2020) and *The Cost of These Dreams: Sports Stories and Other Serious Business* (2019). He has served as a senior writer for *ESPN.com* and *ESPN The Magazine*.

**THE TOPIC:** On August 28, 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till, a black boy from Chicago who was visiting relatives in the Mississippi Delta, was accused by a white woman of accosting her in her family's grocery store. Others said he only whistled toward her. Till was driven away in the back of a pickup truck, tortured, shot in the head, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River. At his memorial in Chicago, attended by more than 100,000 people, he was laid to rest in an open casket; his mother wanted the world to see. Two white men were tried and acquitted by an all-white jury but later admitted to the murder in a paid story in *Look* magazine. The author grew up 23 miles from the barn where Till was killed but knew nothing of it until college. He's now learned that "hate grows stronger and more resistant when it's pushed underground."

Penguin. 448 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9780593299821

Associated Press ★★★★★

**"[Thompson considers] his personal history and the collective effort required to cover up details of Till's story in this country's stubborn refusal to confront its racist origins. ... [P]owerful and unflinching writing."** ROB MERRILL

Boston Globe ★★★★★

**"Terrifying and humbling, *The Barn* is a chilling examination of the American strain of a nasty human disorder: the slow immolation that some communities initiate when they choose enabling mythologies, deceit, silence, injustice, and willed ignorance as their moral orders."** WALTON MUYUMBA

Electric Lit ★★★★★

**"Gaining the trust of Emmett's friends, family, and local**

was Manet's sister-in-law and model; rumor had it they were in love. While many artists fled the city during that terrible year, these three stayed. Smee persuasively argues that the Impressionist style they helped pioneer was a reaction against the existential threat of wartime and the fragility of their lives. Norton. 384 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9781324006954

Christian Science Monitor ★★★★★  
**"Smee blends political and military history and biography into a seamless narrative that will fundamentally change the way that we think about the emergence of impressionism. For art history lovers, this is required reading."** TERRY W. HARTLE

NY Times Book Review ★★★★★  
**"Smee has a gimlet eye, a seductive style and a novelist's feel for character and incident. ... Sebastian Smee has written an inspiring book ... about artists committed to 'the new': new ways of seeing a changing world; new ways of living and feeling; new ways of painting."** CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

community members, who continue Mamie Till Mobley's mission to resolve that her son's death would not be in vain, ... Thompson explores what exactly happened the night that Emmett Till died, the history of the region, the forces that aligned to erase what happened, and the implications for all of us." DEIRDRE SUGIUCHI

Sojourner's Truth ★★★★★

**"Thompson uses a narrow barn as a pivot point to reach back in history, to Reconstruction and slavery, Jim Crow and differences in racism in the North and South, Delta culture, and the biography of a boy, in a story that's both personal and local, and that'll keep you glued to your seat."** TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER,

Times (UK) ★★★★★

**"Thompson travels back and forth through space and time, describing a brutal murder on one page, riffing about the blues on another. ... The writing is often breathtaking, brutality amplified through perfectly crafted prose."** GERARD DEGROOT

Washington Post ★★★★★

**"[N]ot only an intimate history of the tragedy, but also a deep meditation on Mississippi and America. ... At its essence, *The Barn* is a book about choices and their consequences."** ARAM GOUDSOUZIAN

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

**"Emmett Till has been a prominent part of America's cultural conversation for several years now—a figure not of neglect but of remembrance. Mr. Thompson's sweeping, meditative and sometimes overwrought chronicle seems intended to keep the colloquy going."** MEGHAN COX GURDON

**CRITICAL SUMMARY**

Thompson is a white Mississippian who acknowledges his family's complicated past. *The Barn*, the *Wall Street Journal* writes, is part historical account, part eulogy, and part apology from "an author who, as a white 'child of the Delta,' feels genetic complicity" in Till's fate. "Much like a love letter written in arsenic," *Sojourner's Truth* attests, Thompson describes his beloved Mississippi in "lush words with horror behind them. *The Barn* is a tale that's hard to read, but also one you can't look away from." Quoting the author, the *Boston Globe* concludes that *The Barn* is the author's attempt to "explore the unknown registers of a killing that, when seen clearly, illuminates the true history of our country." Thompson honors the work of those who ensure this murder is never forgotten.

Washington Post ★★★★★  
**"To these well-known events, Smee ... brings a fresh perspective by linking them to the artistic development of impressionism in general and of Manet and Morisot in particular. With this approach, Smee offers a valuable complement to a book listed in his bibliography: Peter Brooks's *Flaubert in the Ruins of Paris: The Story of a Friendship, a Novel, and a Terrible Year* (2017), which explores the impact of 1870-71 on the French modernist authors Gustave Flaubert and George Sand."**

CAROLINE WEBER

Telegraph (UK) ★★★  
**"Smee's belief that [Manet's and Morisot's] dialogue developed into a grand if unconsummated love affair looks like a biographer's wishful thinking, undermined by the absence of any solid evidence to that effect—though he is not alone: others have drawn the same conclusion. ... Whatever questions linger unanswered, this is a book written in buoyant and accessible fashion, unimpeded by footnotes or scholarly apparatus beyond a modest bibliography."** RUPERT CHRISTIANSEN

Wall Street Journal ★★★  
**"Though Mr. Smee gives a rather standard account of the political and social upheaval that led to the Commune and its suppression, his chronicle gains sinew as he recounts the deprivations and terrors of various artists and their families during the Prussian bombardment and the Communards' revolt."** DAN HOFSTADTER

Minneapolis Star Tribune ★★★  
**"Smee has a tremendous knack for placing readers inside historical scenes, but can be hyperbolic and repetitive. He excels at interpreting art, clearly sketching how Manet and Morisot influenced each other, though is less convincing linking the development of their art to the events of 1870-71."** CORY OLDWEILER

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

*Paris in Ruins* is "a wide-ranging work of cultural history" (*Wall Street Journal*) that devotes much space to both art criticism and military events. Critics agreed that the book is "deeply researched and suavely written" (*NY Times Book Review*) but differed in

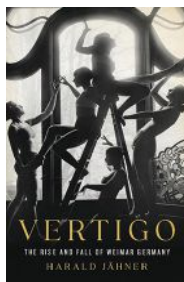
their response to its dual focus. For some, the political information outweighed the art appreciation, and it remained unclear how Impressionism arose from the conflicts of the time. However, there was widespread praise for Smee's scene-setting and his characterization of the central trio of artists—especially Berthe Morisot—who are "charmingly vivified in this warm-hearted account" (*Wall Street Journal*). Readers would benefit from a particular interest in these particular painters and/or life in Paris in the 1870s.



### Vertigo

The Rise and Fall of Weimar Germany

By Harold Jähner, trans. from the German by Shaun Whiteside



Harold Jähner is a German cultural journalist and former editor of the *Berliner Zeitung*. His book *Aftermath: Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich, 1945-1955* (2019) was

shortlisted for the Cundill History Prize and the Baillie Gifford Prize for Nonfiction.

**THE TOPIC:** As one newspaper proclaimed at the time, in the years between Germany's defeat in World War I and the rise of the Third Reich, "Never before has Berlin danced so much and so furiously." The Weimar Republic was a short-lived experiment in democracy. Jähner captures the uncertainty of the times and the desperate longings for a better future amid deep partisan divides and the constant threat of violence. Amid this, so many were in the mood to celebrate, express their liberation, and rebel against norms. An avant-garde movement thrived; the works of Fritz Lang, Bertolt Brecht, and Kurt Weill were the rage. The backlash was brutal: Nazism took root. Jähner shares many colorful anecdotes, including that of a young Billy Wilder as a gigolo foxtrotting at the Hotel Eden.

Basic Books. 480 pages. \$35. ISBN: 9781541606203

Sunday Times (UK) ★★★★★  
**"[Jähner's] political coverage is relatively fleeting, probably because German readers are already so familiar with it. And like so many writers he tends to focus on eye-catching extremes."** DOMINIC SANDBROOK

Telegraph (UK) ★★★★★  
**"Fascinatingly detailed, widely researched, memorably well written (and flawlessly translated by Shaun Whiteside), *Vertigo* is narrative history of the very best sort. ... And now, as then, in our world of sloganeering and papered-over divisions, of social-media credulity and extravagant excess, it shows us with disturbing sharpness just where our lack of serious self-examination may lead."** JULIAN EVANS

Washington Post ★★★★★  
**"There is a palpable nostalgia for Weimar on [Jähner's] final pages, a sadness that this exhilarating awakening ended in the human catastrophe of Nazism and World War II. ... With a nod to current political uncertainties and the perception of modern democracies in crisis, his book is a stark reminder not to surrender to the auguries of false prophets."** ROBERT GERWARTH

Air Mail ★★★★★  
**"Everything was visceral, and Jähner conveys this intensity of experience to the reader. ... What Jähner, a cultural journalist, does, and does extremely well, is to take us inside the dance hall, the boxing club, the photographic studio, and the new open-plan office."** TIM BOUVERIE

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★  
**"Mr. Jähner's narrative seems at times disjointed and idiosyncratic. ... But [it] is a serious, deeply researched addition to the literature."** JULIA M. KLEIN

NY Times Book Review ★★★  
**"[A] book about Weimar should tell us less about ourselves than about German consciousness on the other side of 1933. The period is so encrusted in caricature that it requires a harder hammer to expose what stumbling through modern life for the first time felt like."** THOMAS MEANEY

LITERARY  
CRIME  
SF  
YA  
GEN NF  
BIO  
HISTORY  
SCIENCE

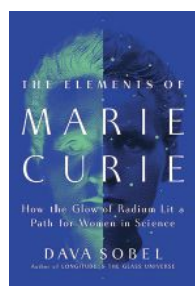
**CRITICAL SUMMARY**

In this impressively researched yet accessible book, Jähner refrains from explaining in detail the rise of Nazism, instead focusing on, in the author's words, the era's "feelings, moods and sensations." Jähner is wonderful on the details of everyday life, "from houses and offices to cars, typewriters, dresses and dances" (*Sunday Times*). The *Wall Street Journal* contends that capturing such a mixture of confidence, anxiety, ennui, and the hunger for experience is "an even tougher and more inchoate task" than chronicling the succession of governments that "alternately stabilized and threatened German democracy." The parallels of this period to today, critics note, are difficult to ignore. If you want to know where our "polarised, gullible, narcissistic world might end up," the *Telegraph* writes, you should read this book, throughout which you might "nod in appalled realisation and murmur to yourself, 'So that's how it goes.'"



**The Elements of Marie Curie**

How the Glow of Radium Lit a Path for Women in Science  
By Dava Sobel



Dava Sobel's popular science titles include *The Glass Universe: How the Ladies of the Harvard Observatory Took the Measure of the Stars* (★★★★ Mar/Apr 2017), the Pulitzer Prize-finalist *Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love* (1999), and *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time* (1995).

**THE TOPIC:** Marie Curie, born Maria Salomea Skłodowska in Poland in 1867, was the first woman to win a Nobel prize and is still the only person

to win Nobels in two scientific fields: physics, with her husband, Pierre, in 1903; and chemistry, in 1911. The 1903 prize was for discovering radium, and Sobel chronicles the element's history. (Curie coined the term "radioactivity.") Pierre died in 1906, and Curie assumed his position as a professor of physics at the Sorbonne. She raised two daughters, one of whom, Irène, likewise won a Nobel Prize in physics. The book also explores the many women Curie mentored, including Ellen Gleditsch, a pioneer of nuclear-physical and chemical research. Curie, who suffered from recurrent kidney issues, died in 1934 at the age of 66 of aplastic anemia, the result of exposure to radioactivity.

Atlantic Monthly Press. 336 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9780802163820

Science ★★★★★  
"In *The Elements of Marie Curie*, Dava Sobel offers a vivid narrative that uses Curie's well-known story as scaffolding for tales of the brilliant young women who trained in her lab and became part of her scientific legacy. ... This superbly rendered portrait of Curie and her intellectual offspring could inspire many bright minds to follow in the scientist's footsteps for generations to come." VIJAYSREE VENKATRAMAN

Shelf Awareness ★★★★★  
"The *Elements of Marie Curie* is a necessary reminder of Curie's remarkable contributions to science, and how one person, using the opportunities given to them, can open doors for other people and reshape entire fields. This is an essential read for anyone who values works that highlight women in the sciences." MICHELLE ANYA ANJIRBAG

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★  
"Ms. Sobel's book deftly explores the science of chemistry and the history of radium, while also following the remarkable thread of Marie Curie's achievements ... [W]hat sets Ms. Sobel's biography apart isn't the timeline or the events of her subject's life; it's those women of science whose lives intersected with Curie's, a cast of brilliant researchers and thinkers that the author skillfully weaves into her narrative." BRANDY SCHILLACE

Sunday Times (UK) ★★★★★  
"The picture that emerges of Curie is less of a remote superstar than a generous enabler and mentor to the scores of young women who flocked to Paris to work in her laboratory. All this at a time when any career for women, scientific or otherwise, was an obstacle race with outrageously poor odds." KATHRYN HUGHES

Guardian (UK) ★★★  
"Sobel does an excellent job of helping the reader to understand the historical importance and context of Curie's work, but her interior life remains largely mysterious. I found myself itching to consult other sources—her collected letters to her daughters, her mourning journal, the biography written by her [daughter]—in order to fill in the gaps." SOPHIE MCBAIN

NY Times Book Review ★★★  
"As in her earlier books, Sobel writes elegantly about science, unspooling Curie's pursuits in the lab like a mystery. She leaves us less clear how Curie herself viewed the position of women in science." KATE ZERNIKE

**CRITICAL SUMMARY**

Writing a biography of someone as well-known as Marie Curie and coming up with a fresh angle is no small task. The *NY Times Book Review* attests that Sobel succeeds in this endeavor by exploring how Curie's discovery of radium "lit a path for women in science" and then introducing us to 45 female scientists she mentored at the Sorbonne—some of whom, admittedly, are much more richly depicted than others. *Shelf Awareness* writes that the author "paints a human portrait not of an isolated genius, but of a woman who existed in and built scientific community." The *Guardian* praises Sobel for her clear explanations of complex science but laments that the "emotional heart" of many stories is lost in extraneous details. But for readers interested in women in science, *The Elements of Marie Curie* is a must-read.



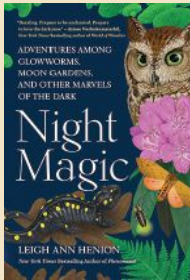
## BOOKMARKS SELECTION



## Night Magic

Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark

By Leigh Ann Henion



Leigh Ann Henion is the author of *Phenomenal: A Hesitant Adventurer's Search for Wonder in the Natural World* (2015). Her writing has appeared in various publications, and she has received four Lowell Thomas Awards from the Society of American Travel Writers.

**THE TOPIC:** In *Night Magic*, Henion set out to “re-center darkness by spending time with some of the diverse and awe-inspiring life-forms that are nurtured by it.” She relates much of that story from around her home in the mountains of western North Carolina, though she also travels to Tennessee, Alabama, and Ohio. She assures us that nearly anywhere on Earth can, at the flip of a switch, become “a wilderness of possibility”: marvels abound everywhere. Henion takes us into forests to search for bioluminescent mushrooms; we venture through the darkness with spotted salamanders and night-blooming flowers, and we witness the flash patterns of fireflies and the luminescence of the eponymous glowworm. Henion laments the loss of natural cycles of light and dark and the disintegration of ecosystems in our own backyards.

Algonquin. 336 pages. \$30. ISBN: 9781643753362

Christian Science Monitor ★★★★★

**“Along the way, she meets a wonderland of nocturnal creatures, wrestles with the societal tendency to chase away darkness, and confronts her own fears of the unknown. The result is a nature lover’s guide to the dark that unfolds like a novel.”** NOELLE SWAN

Kirkus ★★★★★

**“A lyrical, fascinating story about exploring the secret world of darkness and the remarkable creatures within it. ... Henion writes with poetic grace, blending her journey of discovery with the natural wonders in our own backyards.”**

Minneapolis Star Tribune ★★★★★

**“You’re likely to come away from *Night Magic* not demoralized, but educated and inspired. It’s heavy on science, but equally rich on poetry—Henion writes often of human responses to night darkness that allow us to recognize and reconsider it, and to embrace its tranquility and beauty.”** PAMELA MILLER

Scientific American ★★★★★

**“Henion’s vivid style of nature writing and complementary self-reflection are reminders that witnessing the extraordinary can be as easy as shifting your bedtime back an hour and going outside.”**

MADDIE BENDER

Wall Street Journal ★★★★★

**“In a truly inspired travel conceit and very clever response to the pandemic’s restrictions, [Henion] explores the animals and plants and fungi that conduct much of their lives while we are asleep. ... I’d forgotten that salamanders migrate to puddles at night, that they can breathe through their skin and regenerate internal organs; and I didn’t know you should only handle them with wet hands, to avoid damaging their skin’s protective layer of mucus.”**

EUGENIA BONE

Washington Post ★★★★★

**“Culture tells us to ‘step into the light,’ but [Henion] asks what might happen if we pause in the darkness to witness what it offers—looking at the life forms that arise, seeing how a familiar landscape can change and staying alert to the possibility of wonder.”** BECKY MELOAN

Science News ★★★★★

**“In my mind, I’ve been walking the mountains and meadows of the Appalachian region after dark. ... My guide has been Leigh Ann Henion, who seeks to restore night to its rightful place as a wonderland of nature and renewal.”** AIMEE CUNNINGHAM

### CRITICAL SUMMARY

The *Wall Street Journal* contends that despite what the title may suggest, the narrative here is less about biology than biography—but that given the beauty of Henion’s prose, there’s not a thing wrong with that. She urges us not to sit idly by as darkness is vanquished. She closes the book with what *Science News* calls “a blessing and a call to action”: that we might find our way back to natural darkness, or, as Henion puts it, “at least hold fast to the wilderness that still exists, so that we’ll be able to bear witness to night’s living riches.” If readers are moved to simply turn off outdoor lights when they’re not needed, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* suggests, or “walk down a moonlit gravel road, taking in the sights, scents and sounds of the night, much will have been accomplished” with this book. ■

# The Year in Books

# 1976

## NOTABLE FICTION

### Humboldt's Gift

By Saul Bellow

◆ PULITZER PRIZE

An unexpected gift from his mentor, failed poet Von Humboldt Fleisher, gives bestselling, spiritually impoverished author Charlie Citrine a second chance at life.

### JR

By William Gaddis

◆ NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

In this dialogue-driven novel about the emptiness of modern capitalism, JR Vansant evolves from a barely literate adolescent into a greedy, wealthy businessman—all via his school's pay phone.

### Saville

By David Storey

◆ BOOKER PRIZE

In the poor coal-mining village of Saxton during and after World War II, Colin Saville struggles to overcome his difficult childhood and find his place in life.

**EDGAR AWARD** HOPSCOTCH | BRIAN GARFIELD

**HUGO AND LOCUS AWARDS** THE FOREVER WAR | JOE HALDEMAN

**NEBULA AWARD** MAN PLUS | FREDERIK POHL

## New York Times Best Sellers

January 11, 1976

1. CURTAIN | AGATHA CHRISTIE (15 WEEKS ON LIST)
2. RAGTIME | E. L. DOCTOROW (24)
3. THE GREEK TREASURE | IRVING STONE (12)
4. THE CHOIRBOYS | JOSEPH WAMBAUGH (7)

5. IN THE BEGINNING | CHAIM POTOK (8)

6. THE EAGLE HAS LANDED | JACK HIGGINS (23)

7. SHŌGUN | JAMES CLAVELL (26)

8. LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR | JUDITH ROSSNER (30)

9. HUMBOLDT'S GIFT | SAUL BELLOW (19)

10. NIGHTWORK | IRWIN SHAW (4)

## Other Notables

LADY ORACLE | MARGARET ATWOOD

SAVING THE QUEEN | WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY

THE GREAT SANTINI | PAT CONROY

ROOTS: THE SAGA OF AN AMERICAN FAMILY | ALEX HALEY

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL | IRA LEVIN

WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME | MARGE PIERCY

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE | ANNE RICE

EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES | TOM ROB-BINS

SMALL CEREMONIES | CAROL SHIELDS

TRINITY | LEON URIS

## YOUNGER READERS

**NEWBERY AWARD** THE GREY KING | SUSAN COOPER

**CALDECOTT MEDAL** WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ IN PEOPLE'S EARS: A WEST AFRICAN TALE | VERNA AARDEMA, ILLUSTRATED BY LEO AND DIANE DILLON

**NATIONAL BOOK AWARD** BERT GREEN'S BARN | WALTER D. EDMONDS

## Other Notables

ZIA | SCOTT O'DELL

A STITCH IN TIME | PENELOPE LIVELY

THE MISSING PIECE | SHEL SILVERSTEIN

THE AMAZING BONE | WILLIAM STEIG

ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY | MILDRED D. TAYLOR

## NOTABLE NONFICTION

**PULITZER PRIZE** WHY SURVIVE?: BEING OLD IN AMERICA | ROBERT N. BUTLER

**NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FOR NONFICTION** THE GREAT WAR AND MODERN MEMORY | PAUL FUSSELL

## New York Times Best Sellers

January 11, 1976

1. BRING ON THE EMPTY HORSES | DAVID NIVEN (12 WEEKS ON LIST)

2. SYLVIA PORTER'S MONEY BOOK | SYLVIA PORTER (27)

3. ANGELS: GOD'S SECRET AGENTS | BILLY GRAHAM (7)

4. THE RELAXATION RESPONSE | HERBERT BENSON (10)

5. THE NEW YORKER ALBUM OF DRAWINGS, 1925–1975 (3)

6. POWER! HOW TO GET IT, HOW TO USE IT | MICHAEL KORDA (13)

7. WINNING THROUGH INTIMIDATION: HOW TO BE THE VICTOR INSTEAD OF THE VICTIM IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE | ROBERT J. RINGER (19)

8. THE ASCENT OF MAN | J. BRONOWSKI (31)

9. THE AGE OF NAPOLEON: THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION, VOL. 11 | WILL AND ARIEL DURANT (5)

10. MEMOIRS | TENNESSEE WILLIAMS (2)

## Other Notables

THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM | DANIEL BELL

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER OVER THE SEPTIC TANK | ERMA BOMBECK

THE SELFISH GENE | RICHARD DAWKINS

OF WOMAN BORN: MOTHERHOOD AS EXPERIENCE AND INSTITUTION | ADRIENNE RICH

PASSAGES: PREDICTABLE CRISES OF ADULT LIFE | GAIL SHEEHY

ON WRITING WELL | WILLIAM ZINSSER

## Lit Year in Review

Saul Bellow (U.S., 1915–2005) wins the Nobel Prize in Literature “for the human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture that are combined in his work.” ... National Book Critics Circle bestows its first awards (E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* wins for fiction). ... Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* celebrates its bicentennial. ... Doubleday admits that *The Vladimirov Diaries*, about an agent assigned to Mao during World War II, may be a literary fake. ... *Flowers for Algernon* is banned in Plant City, Florida, for its distasteful love scenes. ... Agatha Christie dies. ■

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