

Book Review

JULY 19, 2020



LEIGH GULDIG

COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES When the white working class rioted in New York

TWITTER NOBILITY A memoir by the social media star Duchess Goldblatt

FICTION Sophie Mackintosh, Lynn Steger Strong, Lysley Tenorio and more

Slings And Arrows

By Geraldine Brooks

"HAMNET" IS AN exploration of marriage and grief written into the silent opacities of a life that is at once extremely famous and profoundly obscure.

Countless scholars have combed through Elizabethan England's parish and court records looking for traces of William Shakespeare. But what we know for sure, if set down unvarnished by learned and often fascinating

HAMNET

A Novel of the Plague

By Maggie O'Farrell

305 pp. Alfred A. Knopf. \$26.95.

speculation, would barely make a slender monograph. As William Styron once wrote, the historical novelist works best when fed on short rations. The rations at Maggie O'Farrell's disposal are scant but tasty, just the kind of morsels to nourish an empathetic imagination.

We know, for instance, that at the age of 18, Shakespeare married a woman named Anne or Agnes Hathaway, who was 26 and three months pregnant. (That condition wasn't unusual for the time: Studies of marriage and baptism records reveal that as many as one-third of brides went to the altar pregnant.) Hathaway was the orphaned daughter of a farmer near Stratford-upon-Avon who had bequeathed her a dowry. This status gave her more latitude than many women of her time,

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The New York Times

Book Review

The New York Times

JULY 19, 2020



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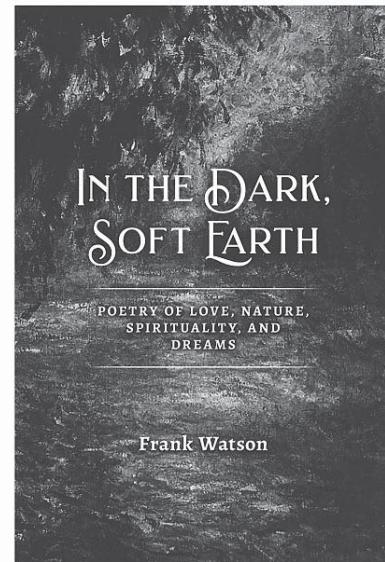
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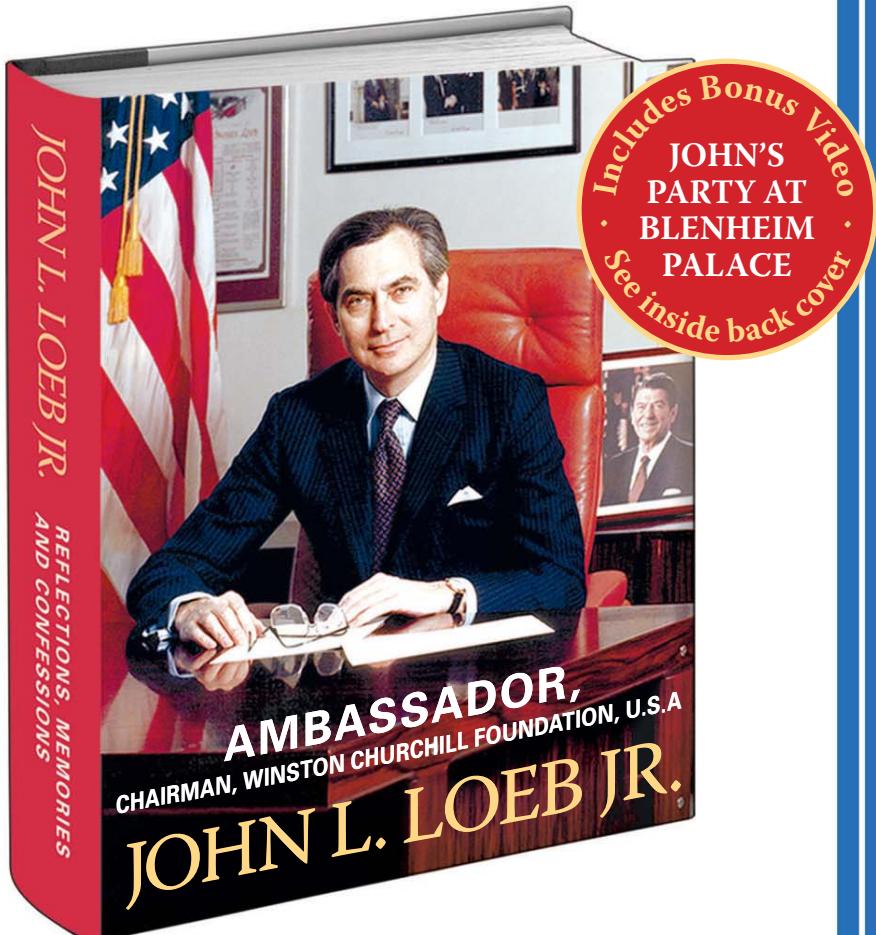
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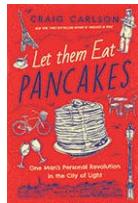
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New & Noteworthy



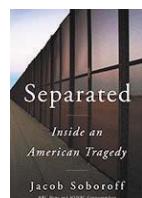
SCORPIONFISH, by Natalie Bakopoulos. (Tin House, paper, \$16.95.) Across a balcony in Athens, a grounded sea captain and a grieving academic spend summer nights sharing beers and stories of heartbreak in Bakopoulos's elegant, atmospheric second novel.



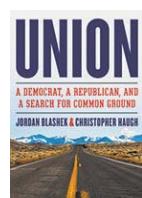
LET THEM EAT PANCAKES: ONE MAN'S PERSONAL REVOLUTION IN THE CITY OF LIGHT, by Craig Carlson. (Pegasus, \$27.95.) Like his first memoir, "Pancakes in Paris," this charming sequel explores Carlson's unexpected success operating an American diner in the capital of France, with plenty of colorful anecdotes and personal detours.



SKYLAND, by Andrew Durbin. (Nightboat, paper, \$12.95.) Durbin's loose, impressionistic novella — about a writer who visits the Greek island of Patmos to find a painting of the cult novelist Hervé Guibert — offers many of the sly insights and scabrous pleasures of Guibert's own work.



SEPARATED: INSIDE AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY, by Jacob Soboroff. (Custom House, \$29.99.) As a correspondent for NBC News, Soboroff was among the first to report on the Trump administration's family separation policy; here, he digs deeper into its roots and consequences.

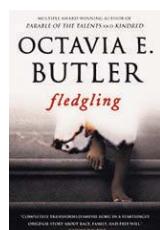


UNION: A DEMOCRAT, A REPUBLICAN, AND A SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND, by Jordan Blashek and Christopher Haugh. (Little, Brown, \$28.) An Obama-era speechwriter and a Republican Marine Corps veteran drive cross-country.

WHAT WE'RE READING

The often bleak speculative fiction of Octavia E. Butler might seem an odd escape from the news, but I found most of the vampires in Butler's final novel, *FLEDGLING*, somehow reassuring. Butler's vampires aren't the average bloodsuckers, snacking on humans and discarding our desiccated corpses like peanut shells, but symbionts who cultivate extended families of willing humans, granting them longer lives and better health. The book begins when Shori, a young vampire with darker skin than her pale compatriots because she was genetically engineered to better withstand the sun, awakens in a cave wounded, amnesic and starving, her human and vampire families murdered. Shori sets out to rediscover who she is, build a new family and bring the murderers to justice, confronting bigotry along the way. Other Butler books, like "Kindred" or the "Parable" novels, might feel more topical, but if you're intrigued by humanistic, hopeful vampire lore, I can't recommend "Fledgling" more highly.

— DANIEL E. SLOTKIK, METRO REPORTING FELLOW



Letters



Barack Obama meets with Vladimir Putin, June 2013.

Covert Actions

TO THE EDITOR:
Timothy Naftali's July 5 review of David Shimer's "Rigged" contains this statement: "Intervening in other countries and covertly supporting allies was in the Bolsheviks' DNA in 1917. It would take another generation and a second world war for Americans to start playing the same game."

In fact, Americans intervened both covertly and overtly to try to overthrow the Bolsheviks from 1917 to 1920. Almost 30 years ago I described the United States intelligence-gathering organization established inside Soviet Russia in 1918. Intervention took many forms, including covert financial and military aid to anti-Bolshevik forces, as well as

military operations. All this is in my 1995 book, "America's Secret War Against Bolshevism." Since then, many other scholars have written about the subject, including Norman E. Saul in "War and Revolution" and Donald E. Davis and Eugene P. Trani in "The First Cold War."

DAVID FOGLESONG
PRINCETON, N.J.

Don't Skip the Scary Parts

TO THE EDITOR:
In his July 5 By the Book interview, Steve Inskeep describes reading Harry Potter aloud to one of his daughters, "eliding the scariest pages as we go."

Protecting children from the scary parts is a fool's errand.

When my eldest daughter was 4, I began reading her Laura Ingalls Wilder's "By the Shores of Silver Lake," which begins by detailing Laura's sister Mary's bout with scarlet fever. On the second page, Wilder wrote, "Far worst of all, the fever had settled in Mary's eyes, and Mary was blind." Horrified at upsetting my child with this harsh reality, I said, "Mary was having trouble seeing." My daughter looked up and said, "That's because she's blind, Dad."

RICHARD E. CHAISSON
BALTIMORE

CORRECTIONS

The New & Noteworthy column on July 5 included a book that is not available yet. "Everybody (Else) Is Perfect," by Gabrielle Korn, is scheduled to be published in January 2021. The column also misidentified the publisher of the audiobook versions of "Wolf Hall" and "Bring Up the Bodies," by Hilary Mantel. It is Macmillan Audio, not HarperAudio.



An essay last Sunday about Ann M. Martin's Baby-Sitters Club books misstated the year that Raina Telgemeier began publishing her graphic novel adaptations of the series. It was 2006, not 2015, which was the year the color editions debuted.

BOOKS@NYTIMES.COM

From Our Archives

In this week's issue, Geraldine Brooks reviews Maggie O'Farrell's "Hamnet," a novel about Shakespeare's son. In 1863, a letter from Abraham Lincoln to the actor James H. Hackett about Shakespeare's works appeared in the pages of The Times.

MY DEAR SIR: Months ago I should have acknowledged the receipt of your book and accompanying kind note, and I now have to beg your pardon for not having done so.

For one of my age I have seen very little of the drama. The first presentation of "Falstaff" I ever saw was yours here last Winter or Spring. Perhaps the best compliment I can pay is to say, as I truly can, I am very anxious to see it

again. Some of Shakespeare's plays I have never read, whilst others I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader. Among the latter are "Lear," "Richard Third," "Henry Eighth," "Hamlet," and especially "Macbeth." I think none equals "Macbeth." It is wonderful. Unlike you gentlemen of the profession, I think the soliloquy in "Hamlet," commen-

ing, "O, my offence is rank," surpasses that commencing, "To be or not to be." But pardon this small attempt at criticism. I should like to hear you pronounce the opening speech of "Richard the Third."

Will you not soon visit Washington again? If you do, please call and let me make your personal acquaintance.

Yours, truly, A. LINCOLN.

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By the Book



Charlie Kaufman

The film director, whose debut novel is ‘Antkind,’ would clone Oscar Wilde for a dinner party ‘and place him on each end of the table so everyone could enjoy his witticisms.’

What books are on your nightstand?

Not to split hairs, but I don’t have a nightstand. I’m living in a temporary place for reasons too tedious and painful to get into here. There’s not much furniture. In the bedroom, such as it is, I have only a sleeping bag and a floor lamp. There are a few books next to me (I’m currently in the sleeping bag), books I ordered for research purposes. I’m reading Toynbee’s “A Study of History” and Tsiolkovsky’s “The Will of the Universe,” although the truth is, I am having trouble focusing lately. I spend long hours staring at the old, stained mattresses in the dump outside my window, as I shelter in place in this unfamiliar apartment. There is so much unexplained in my new, small world. The strange noises emanating from my neighbors’ apartments; the constant dropping of large items on the floor above me, the clinking of hundreds of wine bottles, as the neighbors across the hall carry them daily to the trash room. The screams.

Do you count any books as a guilty pleasure?

Not a book (yet!), but I’ve been reading a lot of Sweet Tooth Pam on Twitter lately. Her biography describes her as a “Fun-loving senior. Loves travel and my grandkids.” I don’t know anything else about her, but that makes her sound pretty great, and I’ve gotten over my embarrassment about admitting this infatuation. I stumbled upon her account while perusing the responses to a President Donald Trump tweet. There is surprisingly little in her musings about travel or her grandkids; it’s mostly 2A (a highway in Alberta, it turns out) and Q (British writer Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, I believe), but I’m learning an awful lot. Perhaps she should add “polymath” to her bio!

What writers are especially good on Hollywood and the film industry?

Recent discovery: No one writes more incisively on Hollywood than Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin’s minister of culture. His book “The Zionism, Ebionism, and Pie in

the Sky-onism of Hollywood Under Jewish Businessmen Goldwyn, Zanuck, and Fox” is a refreshingly chatty yet eye-opening read. Sweet Tooth Pam tweeted about it last week, and I read all 543 pages on my Kindle in a single sitting.

You’re organizing a literary dinner party. Which three writers, living or dead, would you invite?

I’ve always loved this exercise, the imaginary dinner party! What fun! I see Oscar Wilde there, of course, Voltaire, Carol Saroyan Saroyan Matthau (wife of William Saroyan, William Saroyan, and Walter Matthau, and a writer in her own right), Hitler (not witty but quite a “get”), Edie Sitwell, Molière, Oscar Wilde (so witty I thought why not double him and place him on each end of the table so everyone could enjoy his witticisms?), Aristophanes, and Sir Kenneth Dover (to translate Aristophanes’ jokes for the other guests). That’s more than three, but one must assume there will be cancellations. Oh, and Jesus.

What genres do you especially enjoy reading? And which do you avoid?

Everyone loves a mystery. For my money, the best of that genre is the Japanese mystery and the best of the Japanese mysteries is “Dogra Magra,” by Kyusaku Yumeno. This 1935 novel by the unrivaled master of surrealism finds an amnesiac awakening in a clinic, attended by two doctors who tell him he’s killed his wife. Did he? Are the doctors playing a cruel game? The point is it’s impossible to know, especially in the only English-language version, which seems to have been translated by a drunk computer. And this is what makes the book so delicious, as it adds another dreamy layer of incomprehension to the already mysterious story. Here’s a taste:

... *The girl across the wall knows me. It is my wife ... And I was killed by my hand the night before I had a wedding with me. And the wall with me SingleFor a momentIn a room across the streetClose-WhenTimeBasketThisIt seems that they are calling me, not at night, but not at night.*

This novel ticks off all my boxes.

As for a genre I avoid? Anything with a dog as the narrator.

What’s the most interesting thing you’ve learned from a book lately?

“Jenny barn” is an archaic term for “whorehouse.”

Do you prefer books that reach you emotionally, or intellectually?

I’m sorry, what? I’m a bit distracted. I’m fairly certain I just swallowed a tooth. □

An expanded version of this interview is available at nytimes.com/books.

We've Been Through Worse



SIMONE MARTIN-NEWBERRY

ONE OF THE MANY pleasures of Marina Endicott's exhilarating new novel, **THE VOYAGE OF THE MORNING LIGHT** (Norton, 400 pp., paper, \$15.95), is its celebration of life on the open sea. From the very first pages, when the barque Morning Light sets sail from Nova Scotia in 1911, Endicott's heroine knows she's in a new world. "In the rush of the elements, in the star-jangling wind of the night and the full moon shining ahead," 12-year-old Kay Ward finds both unexpected beauty and an equally unexpected release from memories of experiences no child should have to endure.

Kay wasn't meant to be on the voyage, which doubles as a honeymoon for her half sister, Thea, whose new husband, Francis, will take charge of this sleek vessel as it hauls cargo down the Atlantic coast, then across to Africa and on to Asia. But many deaths back in Alberta at the Indian school led by her preacher father have left Kay with nightmares only gentle Thea seems able to soothe. So off they go, a makeshift family that will be expanded (temporarily) to include a scholarly missionary bound for an outpost in Tonga and (more or less permanently) a young boy Thea "rescues" from some starving South Pacific islanders in exchange for a few tins of tobacco.

Kay's gradual awareness of what she can and can't escape works in deft counterpoint with the wider-world encounters of the dark-skinned child she calls Aren, considered by Thea and Francis to be their adopted son. But how will this arrangement play back in Canada, if Aren even makes it that far? The second half of the novel picks up the action a decade later, when the Great War has

destroyed the last remnants of the great age of sail, as it has so many other things. There are new troubles on the horizon, but the sea, with its invigorating attraction, remains.

LIKE KAY, the four central characters in Alex George's **THE PARIS HOURS** (Flatiron, 272 pp., \$26.99) are all seekers, but their activities are confined to one city on a single day in the summer of 1927. Souren Balakian, a lonely Armenian émigré longing for a sense of connection with his new home, stages disturbingly unconventional puppet shows in the Luxembourg Gardens. Guillaume Blanc, a talented but as yet undiscovered artist, engages in an increasingly desperate search for enough cash to fend off a thuggish moneylender. Jean-Paul Maillard, a war veteran, pursues his career as a journalist while ever alert for a sign that his daughter, supposedly killed a decade earlier along with his wife, might still be alive. And Camille Clermont, horrified to learn that her husband has sold a valuable notebook belonging to her former employer, must retrieve it before anyone can learn its dangerous contents.

The notebook Camille hunts was the only one she failed to destroy on the orders of Marcel Proust, a single act of disobedience after her many years of devoted service. Proust will appear in background scenes that flesh out Camille's story, as will other famous figures who serve as a supporting cast for Guillaume, Souren and Jean-Paul: Maurice Ravel, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Beach, Josephine Baker. By design, we're told in an author's note, "they exist on the periphery of the novel."

And what a design! George expertly crosscuts between various plots, coaxing

them closer and closer as evening draws on. The tinder has been set and the fire is lit as the action converges on a raucous cabaret in Montmartre. "It's not just objects that warp and disappear in the flames' embrace," it's the characters' notions of what they're capable of doing, of what sort of people they've become in this combustible present.

ASAKO SERIZAWA TAKES a different approach to the legacy of the past in her ambitious collection of linked stories, **INHERITORS** (Doubleday, 288 pp., \$26.95). Intended, as she puts it, to "spark questions about how history is made, how it is lived, remembered, reproduced and used," this kaleidoscope of narratives takes a cast of Japanese and American characters from the early years of the 20th century through the near future. At first their voices come to us from scattered points on that timeline. An uncomfortable interview with the elderly Japanese widow of a rice farmer, asked to recall her early years through the fog of Alzheimer's, is followed by a bristling account of a Japanese-American family's visit to the father's homeland in the mid-1980s, which in turn gives way to a Japanese journalist's brutal revelations of what it took to survive World War II and the American occupation.

Connections — and missed connections — are gradually revealed, as are the ways one generation's traumas are passed along to the next. Serizawa's most gripping stories capture the horrors of the Japanese experience of the war and its aftermath: the testimony of a doctor forced to take part in "the harvesting of living data"; an account of an orphaned boy's efforts to survive in bombed-out Tokyo; the chilling sequence in which a miraculous survivor of numerous battles is given a final order, strapping himself into a torpedo and steering it on a suicide mission toward the enemy fleet.

Neither the Americans nor the Japanese emerge as anything but tragically, sometimes barbarically, human. Occasionally the visceral power of these stories is undermined by forced exposition: a lengthy passage in which two men engage in convoluted parsing of an already convoluted story by Borges; a labyrinthine section, set in the 2020s and mid-2030s, featuring the creation of a "crowdsourced weather pattern recognition program." But for the most part Serizawa's fiction is convincingly rooted in the intimate, yet still provocatively collective, quandaries of her characters. As one late-20th-century Japanese-American woman is told when trying to understand her estranged father, "His concern wasn't where he belonged but how he wanted to fit in." □



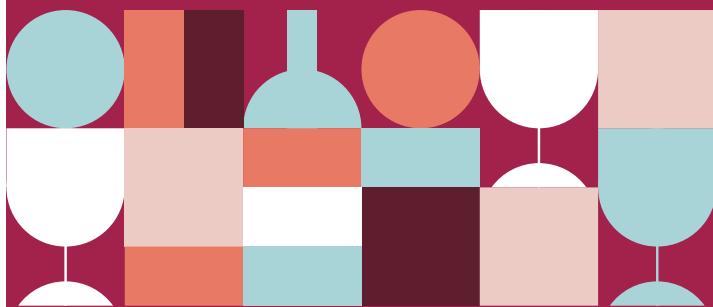
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Nuclear Family

In contemporary Trinidad, love is both tenuous and unshakable.

By GABRIEL BUMP

THERE CAN BE a hollowness in the word "love," if it's used incorrectly, invoked in the place of, say, anger or empathy, self-examination or remorse. Consider Derek Walcott's poem "Love After Love," which implores us to "Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, / the photographs, the desperate notes, / peel your own image from the mirror." To "Give back your heart / to itself."

What Walcott accomplishes in his poem — love deployed right, facing inward, uplifting — Ingrid Persaud accomplishes in her stel-

The rest of the narrative takes place years later, after Mr. Chetan has taken Sunil's place in the house. Constant threat is replaced with warmth.

Persaud makes this transition smooth. She doesn't ruminate on logistics. Instead of long meditations on what constitutes a home, she demonstrates the meaning of family through small actions: a snack retrieved from the kitchen, a playful dinner conversation, a gentle touch, a caring admonition. Through her tender eye, we see full characters leaning on one another to better understand the world and themselves. We wish

mantically, and Betty, now alone, moves aimlessly about the island, ghostlike and drained.

In lesser hands, the plot of "Love After Love" could have fallen into melodrama. Domestic abuse, bigotry, failed romance — these are delicate topics that are easy to exploit. But Persaud never loses control. She understands that real love is experienced through unpredictable cycles. Like planets in orbit, her characters may drift apart, but they're always eventually pulled back toward the huge, blazing center.

That said, the writing can at

LOVE AFTER LOVE

By Ingrid Persaud

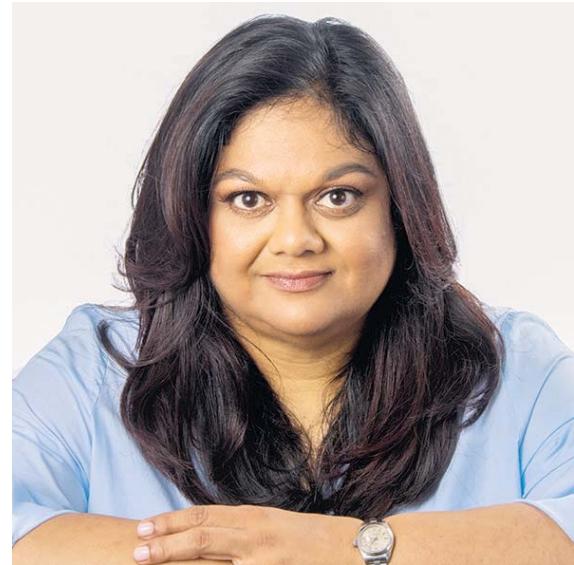
326 pp. One World. \$27.

lar debut novel, titled "Love After Love" in tribute to Walcott, who lived in her native Trinidad as an adult. She has taken the spirit of Walcott's poem and exploded it into a bighearted prose narrative about an unconventional family, fear, hatred, violence, chasing love, losing it and finding it again just when we need it most.

Set in contemporary Trinidad, the novel is told from three perspectives: those of Betty Ramdin, an insightful school administrator and widow who's inherited a large house from her grandmother; Mr. Chetan, a closeted gay teacher at Betty's school who is in need of a place to live; and Betty's only child, Solo. Persaud displays an ease in inhabiting each of these distinct, colloquial yet poetic voices, jumping back and forth between them without losing each speaker's unique personality. With them we smell the food of the Caribbean, sit in the traffic, enjoy the sun, feel the remnants of colonial oppression pressing down on struggling citizens.

This book about love begins with an act of violence. Sunil, Betty's alcoholic husband, lashes out at her and their son. But after this harrowing first chapter, after breaking Betty's arm with a rolling pin, Sunil dies off the page. At the funeral, her arm in a cast, Betty recalls others having mistakenly called her "real lucky" to have her husband, equating love and violence. "That man only gave love you could feel," she thinks in response.

GABRIEL BUMP is the author of "Everywhere You Don't Belong."



Ingrid Persaud

our families were more like theirs.

But still, Persaud knows no love is without its challenges. Having established a comfortable, peaceful order, she quickly upends it. And it's in the second half that the novel's heart lies, as a secret re-

times feel too restrained. Just when we want to hang out a beat longer in the minds of these wonderful characters, Persaud ends the chapter or scene, throws us into another perspective. There are also moments when the characters feel secondary to the overall message, but readers shouldn't mind this hierarchy too much.

We're all living through amplified despair, loneliness, collective grief, anger. Great books about love, like this one, feel like precious and impossible gifts. We should cherish the writers who provide them. Persaud shows us the importance of allowing people into our lives who will squeeze us when we need it, rub our backs, offer us a drink, pick us up from the airport. Through her characters, she teaches us, as Walcott did: "You will love again the stranger who was your self." □

Dry Season

A study of America's deserts reveals the roots of our present calamities.

By WILLIAM ATKINS

SILENT, STATIC, SKELETAL, the desert has always been a symbol of death. That's part of its appeal. But it also signifies transcendence: It is the realm of the prophet as well as the outcast. For the Desert Fathers of third-century Egypt, Christianity's founding monastics, the desert was not merely a place for undistracted prayer or a sanctuary from persecution; as the realm

DESERT NOTEBOOKS

A Road Map for the End of Time

By Ben Ehrenreich

325 pp. Counterpoint. \$26.

of the Devil, it was a spiritual battleground. You went there as if to the front line.

In "Desert Notebooks," Ben Ehrenreich, a columnist for *The Nation*, confronts more familiar demons. The book has two strands. The first, which is in the nature of a journal, describes scenes from Ehrenreich's life in desert America. From a cabin near Joshua Tree National Park he moves to a desolate apartment in Las Vegas (a city rife with "compressed, ambient violence") to undertake a semester's writing scholarship. In Joshua Tree he hikes in the desert, sometimes with his partner. They look at the night sky, enjoy the scent of creosote bushes after rain, admire petroglyphs and watch owls. (The owl, real and imagined — "deaths dreadfull messenger," in Edmund Spenser's words — is the book's presiding spirit, a little desert god flitting from chapter to chapter.)

In Las Vegas, Ehrenreich's world shrinks. He goes jogging and observes the many homeless people sleeping near his apartment. All the time, he summarizes the daily horrors in the news with ticker-tape detachment (it's 2018), especially the latest works of the colossal wreck who is his country's commander in chief: "the Rhino," a creature so damned its real name shall not, it seems, be uttered. Having apologized to rhinoceroses, which do "not deserve to be tarred by this analogy," Ehrenreich remembers a speech given by the president after his first State of the Union address, in which he lamented the difficulty of unifying the country. "Without a major event where people pull together," Trump said, "that's hard to do." That "Desert Notebooks" was written before the coming of Covid-19 only makes it feel more, rather than less, timely. Read two months into lockdown, it feels creepily prescient: We are all living in the desert now.

To observe that these notes from arid America, vivid though they are, lack weight is not a criticism, since they are really only the framework for a series of learned, arcane, startlingly original mini-



Joshua Tree National Park

essays — on Mayan cosmology, on colonialism, on black holes, on the racist elisions and misdirections of ethnologists, and on the suppression and distortion of Indigenous knowledge. Ehrenreich's scholarly reflections serve to locate the origin of America's present crisis in the atrocities of its founding; but the root causes he identifies are above all epistemological, and far older than America. We are living in the "Time of Crisis," he contends, "Vertigo Time"; though he is less interested in the Rhino or other manifestations of the apocalypse than in our flawed conception of time itself — which, in his view, has "led us to precisely this perilous moment, in which everything, time included, appears to be on the verge of collapse."

"Messianic time" is Walter Benjamin's term for "time filled with the presence of the now." Confusingly, Ehrenreich uses the same term to mean almost the opposite: a model in which events are understood to occur "like the beads of a rosary" (Benjamin's words) with Christ's birth at one end and his "return hung like a lantern" (Ehrenreich's) at the other. This vision the author sets against nature's "timeless and cyclical rule of death and regeneration." It is linear time, "that empty, overbright hallway with a single door at the end," that, in the hands of colonialists, capitalists, missionaries and nationalists, has driven us to the cliff-edge of the present: to "active shooter alerts and fracking-induced earthquakes," to "concentration camps for the immigrant poor," to the ascent of despots and the collapse of the Antarctic glaciers. (To say nothing of pathogens flushed out of

the forests of Hubei Province, China.)

We might ask where the desert comes into all this — what lessons might arid landscapes conceal about time? It's true that its passage is generally more discrete in deserts than elsewhere, partly because there the mark of history, the human mark, tends to be less conspicuous. But it's not just that the flow of Ehrenreich's "Messianic time" appears, here, to be arrested. Look out on any desert landscape, from the Egyptian boulder-plains of the Desert Fathers to Ehrenreich's relatively verdant Joshua Tree National Park. In their apparent minimalism, and the repetition of their forms (rock, cactus, bush; rock, cactus, bush), and the illusion they present of limitlessness, desert landscapes promise nothing less than time's erasure. This the Desert Fathers understood. "If eternity, all the past and every future, flits through every moment," Ehrenreich writes, "then we can grab it there." "There," in this sentence, might be that singular moment — but it might also be a place.

Ehrenreich's desert is not a depopulated void, of course. Petroglyphs, scribed into desert rocks thousands of years ago, alert him to the human pasts of places deemed unpeopled "wastes" by the first white men to apprehend them. And then there is Las Vegas, a hysterical mockery of environmental providence, conjured in a location where evaporation has always far exceeded rainfall. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, traveling in New Mexico in the 1980s, declared that in America, deserts "denote the emptiness, the radical nudity that is the background to every hu-

man institution." Las Vegas is that nudity tasseled and flaunted. "I never left the desert," Ehrenreich realizes. "This is it." And he doesn't just mean the heat.

It's probably inevitable that a book that critiques the linear model of time will also be ambivalent about both the act of writing itself and the clicking rosary that is narration. "Desert Notebooks" sometimes seems to aspire to the atomized condition of sand. Writing itself is invariably a form of plunder, Ehrenreich accepts; and "all narratives are lies." Certainly he has no illusions that the writer himself can outpace time: "Even if *The New York Times* loves you and everyone reads your books," he writes early on, "what is any of it worth? Gossip squeaked between lemmings racing for the cliffs. Why bother to write when there will be no one left to read?"

It's a question revisited in the final pages (this being a book that exalts the circle over the line), when Ehrenreich unearths the transcript of an interview with Emmanuel Osagie, whose Paiute ancestors were massacred in the aftermath of the annexation of California. "It was like the end," says Osagie, "yet our stories still survive." This note of hope, if not exactly solace, is affirmed by those desert petroglyphs — "bighorn sheep in profile, wavy lines like rivers or serpents or the surface of a stream, six-fingered hands" — and while Ehrenreich's book might not aspire to such endurance, it is more than lemming-gossip. Out of love and despair (where else does art come from?), he has built a potent memorial to our own ongoing end-times. □

Working-Class Rampage

How the Vietnam War sowed divisions that still have not healed.

By CLYDE HABERMAN

THE NATION, we keep hearing on television and in social media blather, is politically divided as never before. Nonsense. The ostensibly united states have been disunited many, many times, and “The Hardhat Riot,” by David Paul Kuhn, vividly evokes an especially ugly moment half a century ago, when the misbegotten Vietnam War and a malformed notion of patriotism combined volatilely. They produced a blue-collar rampage whose effects still ripple, not the least of them being Donald Trump’s improbable ascension to the presidency.

Let’s remember what the United States was like in 1970: a country torn apart after years of political assassination, unpopular war, economic dislocation, race rioting and class disharmony. The last thing it needed



New York construction workers, May 8, 1970.

in 1970 was more open fighting in the streets. But that’s what it got on May 8, days after President Richard Nixon had expanded America’s Southeast Asia misadventure into Cambodia and Ohio National Guardsmen shot dead four students during antiwar protests at Kent State University.

Kuhn, who has written before about white working-class Americans, builds his book on long-ago police records and witness statements to recreate in painful detail a May day of rage, menace and blood. Antiwar demonstrators had massed at Federal Hall and other Lower Manhattan locations, only to be set upon brutally, and cravenly, by hundreds of steamfitters, iron-workers, plumbers and other laborers from nearby construction sites like the nascent World Trade Center. Many of those men had served in past wars and viscerally despised the protesters as a bunch of pampered, longhaired, draft-dodging, flag-desecrating snotnoses.

It was a clash of irreconcilable tribes and battle cries: “We don’t want your war” versus “America, love it or leave it.” And it was bewildering to millions of other Americans, including my younger self, newly back home after a two-year Army stretch, most of it in West Germany. My sympathies were with the demonstrators. But I also understood the working stiffs and why they felt held in contempt by the youngsters and popular culture.

New social policies like affirmative action and school busing affected white blue-collar families far more than they did the more privileged classes that spawned

many antiwar activists. For Hollywood, the workingman seemed barely a step above a Neanderthal, as in the 1970 movies “Joe,” about a brutish factory worker, and “Five Easy Pieces,” in which a diner waitress is set up to be the target of audience scorn. (Come 1971, we also had “All in the Family” and television’s avatar of working-class bigotry, Archie Bunker.)

It was, too, an era when New York was changing fast and not for the better. Corporations decamped for the suburbs and warm-weather states. Kuhn notes how between 1967 and 1974 the number of Fortune 500 headquarters in the city fell to 98 from 139. Whites moved out in droves. Crime rose, and if you proposed getting tough on felons you risked being labeled a racist. Roughly one in three city residents was on public assistance. Municipal finances were in tatters. In short, 1970 New York was a caldron of misery, one rare bright spot being its basketball team, the Knicks, neatly integrated and en route to its first championship.

Kuhn quotes the estimable Pete Hamill as observing back then that the working-

man “feels trapped and, even worse, in a society that purports to be democratic, ignored.” One could go further. Many blue-collar workers felt scorned — by the wealthy, by the college-educated, by the lucky ones with draft deferments, by every group that qualified as elite. They sneered back, especially at the patrician New York mayor. The way many of them referred to Lindsay, you’d have thought his first name was not John but, rather, an all-too-familiar obscenity.

UNDERSTANDING HARD-HAT resentment, however, does not translate into excusing the violence that hundreds of them inflicted that May 8, the 25th anniversary of the Allied victory over Germany in World War II. Self-styled paragons of law and order, they became a mob, pounding and kicking any antiwar youngster they could grab, doing the same to bystanders who tried to stop the mayhem and justifying it in the name of America. Kuhn ably and amply documents the cowardly beating of women, the gratuitous cold-cocking of men and the storming of a shakily protected

City Hall, where the mayor’s people, to the hard hats’ rage, had lowered the flag in honor of the Kent State dead.

“A tribal tension had infused downtown,” Kuhn observes. Among the tribes were the police, who were anything but New York’s finest that day. Mostly, they stood aside while the hard hats ran amok; examples of their nonfeasance abound. Some of them even egged on the thuggery. When a group of hard hats moved menacingly toward a Wall Street plaza, a patrolman shouted: “Give ‘em hell, boys. Give ‘em one for me!” Yet the police were never held accountable for failing to stop the marauding, and “few hard hats owned up to the extent of their violence.”

Kuhn favors straightforward journalistic prose, with few grand flourishes. In setting scenes, he tends toward a staccato, some of it overdone: One speaker “exuded Establishment. The jacket and tie. A WASP face with a Roman nose. The side-swept hair, straight and trim with delicate bangs, a tidy mustache, pinkish skin.” Hardly every antiwar protester merits his go-to characterization of them as potty-mouthed hippies.

But over all, this is a compelling narrative about a horrific day. In their fury, the hard hats left more than 100 wounded, the typical victim being a 22-year-old white male collegian, though one in four was a woman; seven police officers were also hurt. Kuhn concludes that while the workers plainly came loaded for bear, their tantrum was essentially spontaneous and not, as some believed, part of a grand conspiracy.

That said, they were just what some conservative strategists were looking for. Patrick Buchanan, then a Nixon aide, said of blue-collar Americans in a memo to the boss, “These, quite candidly, are our people now.” He wasn’t wrong. Republicans have since catered as ever to the rich but they have also curried favor with working-class whites, while Democrats seem more focused on others: racial minorities, gays, immigrants. Thanks in good measure to white blue-collar disaffection, Trump in 2016 narrowly won Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, a hat trick he may yet pull off again in November.

In a way, Vietnam continues to cast its shadow. A short walk from those 1970 streets of chaos, there is a memorial to the 1,741 New Yorkers who died in the war. Its dominant feature is a wall of thick glass etched with reflections on combat, including part of a haunting letter sent home from Vietnam in 1968. “One thing worries me — will people believe me?” The Navy lieutenant Richard W. Strandberg wrote. “Will they want to hear about it, or will they want to forget the whole thing ever happened?”

Indeed, most Americans forgot about Vietnam long ago. The same has been true about the shameful hard-hat riot of 1970. Until now. □

CLYDE HABERMAN, United States Army 1968-70, is the former “NYC” columnist for The Times.

Scorched Earth

Newt Gingrich's rise marked a turning point in American history.

By GEOFFREY KABASERVICE

WHEN DID AMERICAN POLITICS take the wrong turn that led to our present era of endless partisan warfare and hyperpolarization? According to the Princeton University history professor Julian E. Zelizer, politics went pear-shaped in the period from January 1987 to March 1989, when the maverick Republican representative Newt Gingrich rose to power, which culminated in the forced resignation of Democratic House Speaker Jim Wright. Zelizer makes

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

Newt Gingrich, the Fall of a Speaker, and the Rise of the New Republican Party

By Julian E. Zelizer

Illustrated. 368 pp. Penguin Press. \$30.

a convincing case that Gingrich not only "legitimated ruthless and destructive practices that had once been relegated to the margins," he also helped to degrade Congress's institutional legitimacy and paved the way for the anti-establishment presidency of Donald Trump.

Although "Burning Down the House" is not the first history to cast Gingrich as lead assassin in the murder of bipartisanship and effective governance, it is an insightful if deeply unflattering portrait of Gingrich himself, highlighting his signature traits of arrogance, ferocity, amorality and shoulder-shrugging indifference to truth. It's not surprising that Gingrich declined the author's interview request. And the book's narrow time frame, which stops well short of Gingrich's leading the House Republicans to their 1994 electoral triumph and his subsequent elevation as speaker, supplies a detailed and nuanced historical context that makes Gingrich's actions more understandable if not excusable.

Gingrich first won election to Congress in 1978, representing a district based mainly in the northern Atlanta suburbs. It was a transitional moment when an older generation of Southern Democrats was being displaced in Congress both by reform Democratic "Watergate babies" and a rising wave of conservative Republicans like Gingrich. Zelizer's masterly 1998 work, "Taxing America," focused on one of those old Southern Democrats, Wilbur Mills, who chaired the powerful House Ways and Means Committee from the 1950s through the 1970s.

Gingrich's adversary, Jim Wright, was a Texan born in 1922, from a political generation between Mills (born in 1909) and Gingrich (born in 1943). A protégé of Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson, he was suf-

ficiently a part of the old Southern Democratic tradition that he voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. But he soon regretted that vote and supported the Voting Rights Act the next year.

Zelizer's portrait of Mills made clear that many of the old Southern Democratic committee chairmen were inclusive dealmakers concerned to reach bipartisan agreements and move legislation forward — with the glaring exception of any issue involving race. Zelizer doesn't quite spell this out, but while Wright clearly was not a racist of the old stripe, neither was he a dealmaker of the same caliber as they were. That was partly because the post-Watergate reforms prevented the kingpins from negotiating behind closed doors, and partly because of ideological sorting within the parties. But it was also because House Democrats by the 1980s, convinced that Republicans would be permanently in the minority, regularly abused their majority power.

Democrats denied minority legislators adequate staff, excluded them from committee deliberations, gerrymandered their districts and even, Republicans were convinced, stole elections. Wright piously recorded in his diary that Republicans were making it impossible to "rely upon the gentlemen's rules which have prevailed for all of my 30 years in Congress," but the speaker broke plenty of norms himself with his parliamentary rule-bending. And despite the Watergate babies' desire to remove money from politics, the Democrats did little to halt the stream of funds from lobbyists, private money and special interests that flowed principally to the majority party.

Those to whom evil is done do evil in return. Democratic bullying made moderate Republicans will-

Democratic bullying made moderate Republicans willing to empower Gingrich.

ing to empower Gingrich — their support was critical to his election as minority whip in 1989 over a more conciliatory candidate — and to tolerate his scorched-earth tactics. Gingrich insisted that the only way to end the Democrats' four-decades-long majority was for Republicans to destroy Congress in order to save it. They would have to "put aside their concern for governance until they regained power," according to Zelizer. They would seek to persuade the public that Congress had become "morally, intellectually and spiritually corrupt," in Gingrich's words, and to overthrow Speaker Wright as the embodiment of that illegitimate establishment. In pursuit of these ends all means

were permissible, including the shattering of traditional customs, the destruction of opponents' reputations and the embrace of maneuvers long held to be off-limits, like shutting down the government.

Zelizer argues that Gingrich made the media unwitting accomplices to his partisan crusade, just as the unscrupulous anti-Communist demagogue Joseph McCarthy had done in the 1950s. "The number-one fact about the news media," Gingrich observed, "is they love fights." By provoking confrontations with the Democrats, Gingrich would gain media attention — even more so when he succeeded in goading the Democrats into retaliation, which he portrayed as further evidence of their tyranny. The Woodward-and-Bernstein-inspired influx of young investigative reporters into Washington, most of them educated and well intentioned but ignorant of the practical operation of politics, offered a decisive opportunity for Gingrich, who "instinctively grasped the possibilities for taking advantage of their idealism."

Zelizer sees Gingrich's "masterstroke" as the co-optation of reform-oriented institutions that, in Watergate's wake, were supposed to make government more accountable and progressive. The ethics charges that Gingrich brought against Wright were, in Zelizer's view, mostly spurious. But scandal-seeking journalists served

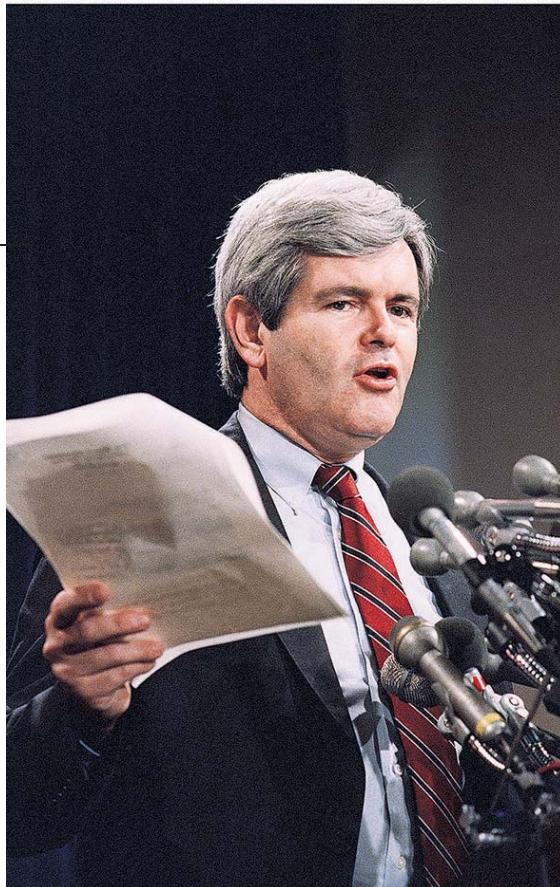
Gingrich's cause by churning out so many thinly sourced stories about Wright's supposedly shady involvement with Texas oil executives and bankers that the leading good-government organization, Common Cause, felt compelled to call upon the House Ethics Committee to investigate him. This instantly transformed what otherwise would have seemed "a shabby partisan coup" into a respectable campaign, giving cover to Republicans who previously were reluctant to enlist in Gingrich's vendetta and undercutting Wright's Democratic defenders. From then it was just a matter of time until Wright was forced out.

Zelizer provides a moving description of Wright's farewell address, in which the resigning speaker decried the "mindless cannibalism" that had overtaken politics, and he delivers an eloquent indictment of all those responsible for Wright's downfall. These include Gingrich, of course, along with the journalists and good-government organizations he made his palsies. But they also include the Democrats who failed to stand by Wright, thus incentivizing Republicans "to ramp up their efforts and engage in even more brutal fights," and Wright himself, who couldn't adapt to a new era of partisan warfare.

Zelizer reserves some of his harshest verdicts for the Republican Party leaders who naively believed they could harness

Gingrich's insurgency. He acidly observes that while Republican gatekeepers of the early 1950s used McCarthy to attack their opponents, they never made the renegade senator their leader. Many, perhaps most of the Republicans of the Gingrich era deplored what the minority leader Bob Michel called "trashing the institution." But Republicans who upheld reasoned opposition, bipartisan compromise, civil discourse and mutual respect deceived themselves about their ability to control the revolution and ended up being devoured by it. To quote the Talking Heads song that shares the title of this book, "Watch out — you might get what you're after."

Many social scientists believe that the partisan polarization that now afflicts us was all but inevitable, a by-product of geographic and ideological sorting that led to more consistently ideological parties. If Newt Gingrich hadn't pursued no-holds-barred partisan warfare, according to this line of thinking, someone else would have. But Zelizer forcefully counters that this view "denies agency to the politicians and leaders who pushed partisan combat into a deeper abyss at very specific moments." The battle to overthrow Wright, he concludes, was one of those critical turning points "from which Washington never recovered." □



Newt Gingrich raises charges against Jim Wright, 1988.

Perp School

A survivor recalls the aftermath of her rape at St. Paul's.

By JESSICA KNOLL

INEVITABLY, WHEN A woman comes forward with an allegation of a sexual assault from many years ago, a certain type of person will ask, "Why now?" The question dogged Christine Blasey Ford during her Senate testimony in 2018 and was used in an attempt to discredit women victimized by both Bill Cosby and Harvey Weinstein. In Lacy Crawford's erudite and devastating memoir recounting her time as a student at St. Paul's School, an elite boarding school in Concord, N.H., the question does not arrive until the last 15 pages of the book.

"That was 1990, this is 2018. Why now?" wonders the man who as a "sixth former" (St. Paul's speak for seniors) lured Crawford to his room with a deceitful tale of woe (something terrible had happened to his mother and he needed help). After helping Crawford climb through his window, he raped her orally while his roommate held her down, then held her steady so his roommate could rape her orally again. Crawford calls her attacker Rick Banner;



Lacy Crawford

NOTES ON A SILENCING

A Memoir

By Lacy Crawford

400 pp. Little, Brown & Company. \$27.

when he asks the question, he is speaking to a female detective who comes to his doorstep as part of a criminal investigation opened by the state of New Hampshire into St. Paul's — specifically, whether the school had ever engaged in conduct endangering the welfare of a child or obstructed the course of justice by failing to report crimes in order to protect its own reputation.

"Neither of them denied it," the detective tells Crawford afterward, which tracks. "Why now?" is a logical fallacy. It fails to dispute the claim and "tries to portray the victim as predator, the one with a clever plan." The question he should be asking is "Why again?" As Crawford points out: "I'd talked about the assault in 1991 too, and had been assured that if I continued to do so in the context of a criminal investigation, I would be expelled from school and slandered up and down the Eastern Seaboard." She stopped telling after that — many St. Paul's students did, as she comes to find out in adulthood — though the slandering happened anyway and it did not stop at the Eastern Seaboard. Crawford is 29 years old when an ex-boyfriend calls to ask if he should be worried that he contracted herpes from

her. He heard she had it from someone his sister met at a bar in Los Angeles. "I would drown myself at dawn," Crawford thinks. "Just as soon as I found someone to take my dog."

"Notes on a Silencing" is a purposefully named, brutal and brilliant retort to the asinine question of "Why now?" What Crawford experiences at the hands of an esteemed institution with the money, power and connections to operate as a "minor nation" is downright crippling. Ten days after the first attack (another, weeks later, is perpetrated by a recent St. Paul's graduate, its details no less chilling or pre-meditated though it fails to make its way into the criminal investigation), her throat begins to hurt "in a jagged way, as though I had swallowed a piece of glass and it would not go down." At the infirmary, the nurse who looks down Crawford's throat sees nothing — because the herpes virus that one or both of the men inflicted on her, ultimately discovered by Crawford's pediatrician after months of agony, is "so far out of the way" that the doctor doesn't even know if Crawford would be capable of transmitting it to anyone else. "You'd have to really work at it, I mean, to get that deep. And I can't imagine...."

Crawford's writing is astonishing. There are lines that keen. Of the girls who get picked to be girlfriends and the ones who become prey: "If you were not perfect, you were not safe." Of a note she receives from a friend she helped: "I saved it, so I could remember how it felt to take care of someone I loved." The story is crafted with the precision of a thriller, with revelations that sent me reeling.

"Notes on a Silencing" also left me with a deep heartache and little relief, though Crawford offers up moments of reprieve where she can. A popular teammate who throws her arm around Crawford's shoulder after her coach has shamed her, a queer female priest who invites a crying Crawford to cuddle her dog, the glamorous mother of an old classmate who gives this pitch-perfect response when Crawford worries she's "made some bad decisions" since the assault. "Well, of course. ... You're devastated. They stole your sense of self-respect and ruined your sense of boundaries."

If you are looking for a story about triumph, about justice, you will not find it here. But perhaps that is a necessary thing. Perhaps more of us need to get closer to the catastrophic experience of a silencing so that it stops happening, so that there will never be a need to ask a woman "why now," because she will have been believed from the start. Want to make the question of "Why now?" obsolete? Hear women the first time. □

Frankenburger

Meat can be grown in a lab — but will we eat it?

By BEE WILSON

HUMAN APPETITES ARE strange things. Most eaters (I include myself) will salivate at bacon, despite what we know of the waste, squalor and suffering caused by mainstream meat production. Yet when we hear about a new type of "ethical" meat with a much lower carbon footprint, cultured from cells without killing a single animal, our initial response is usually something like: "Ew! — I wouldn't eat that."

We should try to get beyond our disgust about "lab meat," argues the journalist Chase Purdy, who is in the rare position of having actually tasted it. In a fast-paced global narrative, Purdy follows the various cell-cultured meat companies that are currently competing to get their product to market first. The front-runners are in Israel, the Netherlands and (no surprise) Sil-

would normally live its life as a feather producer, tell it to stop working on feathers, and then revert it back into an earlier-stage cell." In this way, cells from a single feather could give rise to multiple batches of chicken nuggets.

The snag is that these cell-grown nuggets would cost \$50 apiece. Up until now, the biggest obstacle to getting cultured meat on the market has been the sheer expense — hence the "billion dollar burger" of Purdy's hyperbolic title. When the first lab-grown burger was unveiled in 2013 by a panel including the Dutch food scientist Mark Post, it was estimated to have cost \$330,000 for a single five-ounce patty: equivalent to \$1.2 million per pound of beef. But that cost is falling, and fast. In 2019 an Israeli firm called Future Meat Technologies claimed that by 2022, it would be able to get cell-cultured meat on

BILLION DOLLAR BURGER

Inside Big Tech's Race for the Future of Food

By Chase Purdy

272 pp. Portfolio. \$28.

icon Valley. The results of what Purdy calls this "edible space race" may shape the future of meat eating around the world.

Meat that is grown in a vat doesn't taste as bad as you might expect, according to Purdy.

It's not as if conventional ground beef from feedlot cows tastes that great either when you really pay attention. In San Francisco, at the offices of the food company JUST, a lab tech serves Purdy a taco stuffed with duck chorizo grown from cells. The meat, he reports, is "moist and richly flavored." The early prototypes of cell-cultured meat — grown from muscle stem cells — suffered from being too lean, but now the companies have figured out ways to grow fat tissue as well as muscle tissue, which means that the mouthfeel is getting closer to the meat we know (though it's still easier to make a texturally plausible meatball than a convincing steak).

This is Purdy's first book, and he sometimes falls into journalistic clichés. His story teems with the occasional "make-or-break" moment or a light bulb going off in someone's head. But the upside is that his writing is always punchy and readable, even when he is explaining the complex and gruesome biology of growing a new piece of flesh from an old one. Sometimes there is a kind of Frankenstein fascination, such as in his description of how scientists at JUST have figured out a way to manipulate cells collected from the pointy tip of a chicken's feather to become not just more feathers but also muscle and fat. Purdy explains that "scientists can take a cell that



At the laboratories of Redefine Meat.

the market for as little as \$10 a pound.

Even if it were cheap enough, would we want to add cultured meat to our grocery lists? Purdy says that the biggest barrier to getting these products to market in the United States is "a difficult regulatory landscape" influenced by meat lobbyists with a strong vested interest in keeping cell-cultured meat off the shelves.

We can't blame the meat industry for all of our wariness around cell-cultured meat, however. Purdy concedes that many questions about this new technology remain unanswered. In the Netherlands, Post tells him that one of the many differences between traditional meat and cell-cultured meat is that the cell culture lacks an immune system. This sounds like it might just be important.

It's too soon to say whether our "Ew" response to cultured meat is warranted or not. Many of the much-promoted novel foods of the past — margarine, I'm looking at you — turned out over time to be less healthy than was first thought. In a lovely passage, Purdy has a conversation in the kitchen with his aunt and grandmother about whether they would like to eat these new meats. "I'd have to get past the whole thought of it all," his aunt replies. She's not the only one. □

JESSICA KNOLL is the author of "Luckiest Girl Alive" and "The Favorite Sister."

Two graphic novel masters show the form's range — from the highly intimate to the world-historical.

BORN IN SACRAMENTO in 1974, Adrian Tomine has gone from “the boy wonder of mini-comics” (per Daniel Clowes) to master of the form, and for the past 20 years his books have moved from strength to strength. His seductively clean line makes for instantly romantic images — think of his iconic *New Yorker* cover depicting two cuties sitting in passing subway cars who spot each other clutching the same book.

But the key to Tomine’s fiction is the rage and fragility beneath the pristine compositions. In his 2007 graphic novel “*Shortcomings*,” race becomes a live wire, as its antihero, a Gen-X Japanese-American slacker in Berkeley, utterly loses his cool in a stew of interracial dating and infidelities. The book begins with the skewering of an Asian-American film festival, and the bad vibes only get worse (and funnier) from there. It’s a controlled mess of a classic, from the title’s micropenis innuendo to its final silent panels: a crystalline snapshot of Asian-American identity in the aughts. Perversely, the six impeccable, at times brutal stories in his next major fiction, “*Killing and Dying*” (2015), avoid such charged cross-cultural material — indeed, the one inarguably Asian character (who narrates the enigmatic “Translated, From the Japanese”) is never seen.

THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG-DISTANCE CARTOONIST (*Drawn + Quarterly*, 168 pp., \$29.95) finds Tomine in the gentler autobiographical mode of 2011’s “Scenes From an Impending Marriage,” in which he transforms into an unexpected Groomzilla. Constructed in a loose, appealingly humble style on a Moleskine-like grid, the 26 vignettes here trace a lifetime of neuroses and humiliations, from Fresno, 1982, to Brooklyn, 2018, blurring the line between character trait and occupational hazard. In “The Sbarro Incident,” he goes from being the star of a popular book event to a friendless schlub sitting alone at a pizzeria, as attendees gawk through the window at him. At the Javits Center for Book Expo in 2015, he’s heartened “that in this day and age, this many people still care about books and authors!” — only to have his Q&A session interrupted by Khloé Kardashian fans cheering for her tome “Strong Looks Better Naked.”

Alongside these promotional tour mis-haps and professional mortifications runs a steady stream of racial insults, ren-

dered comical by time but still with the power to sting. Visiting the home of his friend, neighbor and hero, Clowes (“*Ghost World*”), in 1996, Tomine is speechless when an older fellow cartoonist who doesn’t know him mistakes him for the I.T. guy. At a desolate book signing in Albany, he sits in agony under a poster for “That Yellow Bastard” — an installment of the “*Sin City*” comic by Frank Miller, who unwittingly insulted him years ago at an awards show by not even trying to pronounce his name. Though Tomine’s fictional characters aren’t always recognizably Asian, when playing himself, he can’t escape the prejudices of those who see him as the Other. At a New Yorker party in his mid-30s, he works up the courage to say hello to an esteemed writer he’s long admired; in turn, the author says, “I love jujitsu.” Tomine just stands, stammered and stunned, mouth open in amazement at the limits of his success.

In contrast to such artful minimalism, Joe Sacco believes that more is more; his large-scale panels teem with detail, visual and verbal. The Malta-born, Portland-based creator of such frame-breaking works of comics journalism as “*Palestine: In the Gaza Strip*” (1996) and “*Safe Area Gorazde*” (2000) stays on this continent for **PAYING THE LAND** (*Metropolitan/Holt*, 272 pp., \$29.99). With his intrepid guide, Shauna, he travels to Canada’s Northwest Territories — a region as big as France and Spain, but with a population under 45,000 — for an immersion into the Indigenous Dene culture. What begins as an exploration of the effects of fracking on Native lands sprawls into a haunted history of an entire civilization.

Sacco takes pains to convey texture — I’m tempted to say the way he draws trees is worth the price of admission alone. The first chapter is a tour de force that begins with a baby birthed during a long-ago tribal migration. These are the precious memories of a current community leader named Paul Andrew, which conjure the rhythm of his nomadic childhood out in “the bush” when the tribe’s movements were dictated by nature. Eschewing panels in favor of a more organic flow of images from top to bottom, Sacco captures the essence of life lived as part of the land. Narrative time melts away as we witness the complex construction of a boat, from the men chopping trees to the women making sinew to a young boy and an elder’s hunt for spruce gum as a sealant. In four or



From “*The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Cartoonist*.”

five days, “they would have this thing from nothing,” Andrew recalls with awe — a gift from the world.

You might periodically return to these luminous pages over the course of “*Paying the Land*,” as Sacco’s wide-angle reporting takes in the tragedy and challenges the Dene have faced since the Canadian government made appalling one-sided treaties with them in the 19th century. Decades of struggle have given some Dene a political say, but the culture still suffers from colonialism’s after-effects: troublingly high rates of suicide and addiction, and an alarming legacy of incest and abuse. The country’s 1920 policy of separating Native children from their parents and sending them hundreds of miles away to Christian-run “residential schools” is the buried secret that Sacco uncovers midway — a wrenching, dehumanizing practice that Canada’s

Truth and Reconciliation Commission would later brand an act of “cultural genocide.”

As in earlier books centered on the Middle East and the Balkans, Sacco gives voice to the marginalized, letting his subjects tell their stories without overly interpreting them — a sign of respect, and a way to show that the Dene aren’t monolithic. Near the book’s end, Sacco and Shauna visit an abandoned industrial gold mine, where 237,000 tons of toxic dust (a poisonous byproduct of mining) have been shoved back into the mine itself. It’s here, touring the vast, lethal underground site, that Sacco levels a withering critique, sounding like a fragment from an ancient poem: “What is the worldview of a people who mumble no thanks or prayers, who take what they want from the land, and pay it back with arsenic?” □



From “*Paying the Land*.”

Hiding in Plain Sight

A debut novel about an undocumented Filipino-American mother and son.

By MADELINE LEUNG COLEMAN

WHEREVER SHE SHOWS UP in American literature, the angry immigrant mother exerts an intense gravitational pull: She may dominate a scene with an outburst, or just a tightening of the lips. Though her fury may be justified, it rarely translates into actual agency; writers too often resolve the first-generation parent's plight into a

THE SON OF GOOD FORTUNE

By Lysley Tenorio

290 pp. Ecco. \$27.99.

punch line, or an obstacle for her American children to overcome.

I hadn't realized how much I longed to see this narrative go another way until I read Lysley Tenorio's debut novel, "The Son of Good Fortune." As in his 2012 story collection, "Monstress," here too the main characters are part of the Filipino diaspora: 19-year-old Excel ("like the spreadsheet"), an introverted Everyman whose life is defined by fear over his undocumented status, and his formidable, tough-loving

MADELINE LEUNG COLEMAN'S writing has appeared in *The Nation* and *The New York Review of Books*.

single mother, Maxima.

The novel opens in Colma, Calif., where Maxima is grifting lonely men on dating websites ("OK Filipinas, A Kiss Across the Ocean, Pacific Catholic Romance"), luring them via chaste video calls into wiring her money — a scheme Tenorio depicts without flinching, or judging. With his girlfriend, Sab, and an envelope of cash from his mother in tow, Excel has already escaped his Northern California hometown for the fictional Hello City, "near the bottom of California," knowing nothing about this Burning Man-esque desert community or what he'll do when he arrives.

When Excel comes back nine months later, he surprises Maxima at home: She jumps up with "a switchblade aimed right at him," mistaking him for an intruder. "Though he didn't think she'd look any different," Tenorio writes, "he's caught off guard by how much she resembles the way he often imagines her — weapon in hand, ready to strike." Once a low-budget action movie actor in Manila, Maxima lit out for the United States when she was eight months pregnant with Excel. She found safe haven with Joker, her "grandmaster in the Filipino martial art of escrima."

By the time the novel begins, Joker has died, destabilizing their makeshift family, but Maxima's athletic drive has not. Ten-



Lysley Tenorio

orio interweaves Maxima's dialogue with her daily training routine; as she grinds through menial jobs and prepares (like many immigrants) care packages for family back home, Maxima also makes time for pull-ups, push-ups and whaling on "The Bod," her blue, male-torso-shaped boxing machine. When Maxima spends an afternoon watching TV, "she isn't so much lounging and relaxing as she's keeping still, as though exerting as little energy as possible, saving it all for the night ahead."

The book cuts back and forth in time, revealing more about Excel's past — such as when his mother decides to tell him, on his 10th birthday, that they are "T.N.T." a Filipino abbreviation for undocumented immigrants — as he works through memories in the present. And yet "The Son of

Good Fortune" is not overtly political, remaining vague about the pressures the U.S. government puts on people like Excel and Maxima. Tenorio's insistence on the specificity of his characters' dreams and longings is its own kind of argument for their right to be here.

The women in this book — Maxima, Sab, Maxima's friend Roxy — are by far the strongest and most compelling characters. And compared to his mother's online scheming, Excel's digital and real-life naïveté sometimes feel unconvincing, as though we're meant to believe that hermetic disconnectedness is a form of self-protection.

Still, Tenorio finds a way for Excel to exercise his own kind of nonconfrontational power: When he realizes a co-worker is even worse off than he is, he finds strength in helping save someone else.

Ultimately Tenorio's novel is an affecting portrayal of just how potently a parent can shape the expectations of her child. As Excel struggles to find his own way in a country that does not acknowledge or protect him, he is stuck on the idea that his mother came to the United States on instinct, without a second thought: "She'd lived a life and found another, no deliberations or discussions." His story is a tribute to the extreme inner strength it takes to make any life decision look like fate. □

Best Friends Forever?

A woman seeks solace for midlife woes in a long-lost companion.

By HELEN SCHULMAN

LAST WINTER, when we were all still riding the subways, a friend and I noticed a 20-something couple making out on a downtown train and she asked, "Remember that?" But next to the couple was a group of adolescent girls so fiercely in sync with

WANT

By Lynn Steger Strong

209 pp. Henry Holt & Company. \$25.99.

one another — hugging, talking, laughing — that they almost missed their stop. "Remember that?" I thought, even more wistfully, mourning those early intense friendships that were as close as if not closer than romances — the ones that you thought were going to last.

So I empathized with Elizabeth, the confessional narrator of "Want," Lynn Steger Strong's moving second novel. Her now severed friendship with Sasha carried them both through high school, college,



Lynn Steger Strong

mental illness and drug addiction — until it broke, years ago, under all that weight. Left mourning, Elizabeth has taken to cyberstalking Sasha on social media in her free time, which is almost nonexistent. An English literature Ph.D. who, like so many of her peers, could not land a university position, Elizabeth now has two jobs that don't quite equal one salary: teaching by day in a charter high school and at night as an adjunct at her alma mater. Elizabeth also has two little girls, 2 and 4 years old, and a charming husband who hasn't been able to make a living since Lehman Brothers collapsed in 2008, when he left finance

"to do custom carpentry for the sorts of people that he used to work with." It hasn't panned out, thus the onus is on Elizabeth to support her family in their Brooklyn one-bedroom, a burden she finds crushing. She hates the school she teaches in, playing hooky as often as she can to read books in cafes and browse art galleries. At home she flees the tedium of runny noses and the anxiety of bankruptcy by taking long, hard runs every morning, and treating herself to movies with the one credit card that still works. She is estranged from her wealthy lawyer parents, who threaten to seek custody of her children, citing Elizabeth and her husband's financial ineptitude. In the midst of these crises, a desperate Elizabeth reaches out to the haunting Sasha, only to discover that her ex-friend's own life has also taken a turn for the worse. Can their long-lost bond save them both now?

As a narrator, Elizabeth is smart and funny and literary to the marrow. The books she inhales for sustenance have turned out to be a great addition to my own pandemic pile. (Thank you, Ms. Strong.) But her tale of woe is in many ways painfully familiar, and "Want" often reads like the plotless treadmill diary of a 30-

something artist-class white Brooklynite who was born into what she unrealistically thought was a safer, more forgiving world. As I read on, engaged, sympathetic and often frustrated, I found myself in that strange space of feeling deeply for her predicament, yet wanting to shake sense into her: Keep your two lousy jobs and send your husband back to work!

But what looks at first glance like a couple too entitled and spoiled to face the music ultimately lays bare what happens to people so vulnerable and idealistic that they are seemingly unable to climb out of the hole they've dug together. Viewed from that angle, the book proved more interesting, and it turns out some of the heroine's fecklessness is related to long-ago psychological torment that brought both Elizabeth and Sasha to their knees.

Of course, when the two reunite they find no panacea for past and present turmoil. Rather, through kindness, they provide all that friends can for each other: nourishment. And it ends up being enough — what the great Raymond Carver termed "a small, good thing." While it doesn't fix the world or even pay the rent, in companionship there is grace. □

The Right to Choose

A dystopian novel in which women can work or have children, but not both.

By VERONICA ROTH

IN “BLUE TICKET,” the follow-up to her 2019 debut, “The Water Cure,” Sophie Mackintosh presents us with a dystopian tale of a woman desperate to have a child in a place that affords only certain women that privilege.

Calla’s first period prompts her father to take her to a ceremony of sorts wherein she is presented with evidence of what she has always suspected: “Blue ticket: I was not motherly. It had been judged that it wasn’t for me by someone who knew better than I did.” She is outfitted with what

BLUE TICKET
By Sophie Mackintosh

282 pp. Doubleday. \$26.95.

seems to be an IUD, though contraception (like everything else involving her body) is never explained to her. She is then sent to “the city,” on a treacherous journey we read about only briefly, ominously, after the fact, as if Calla can’t bear to face it head-on: “I know what the boys do on that road.”

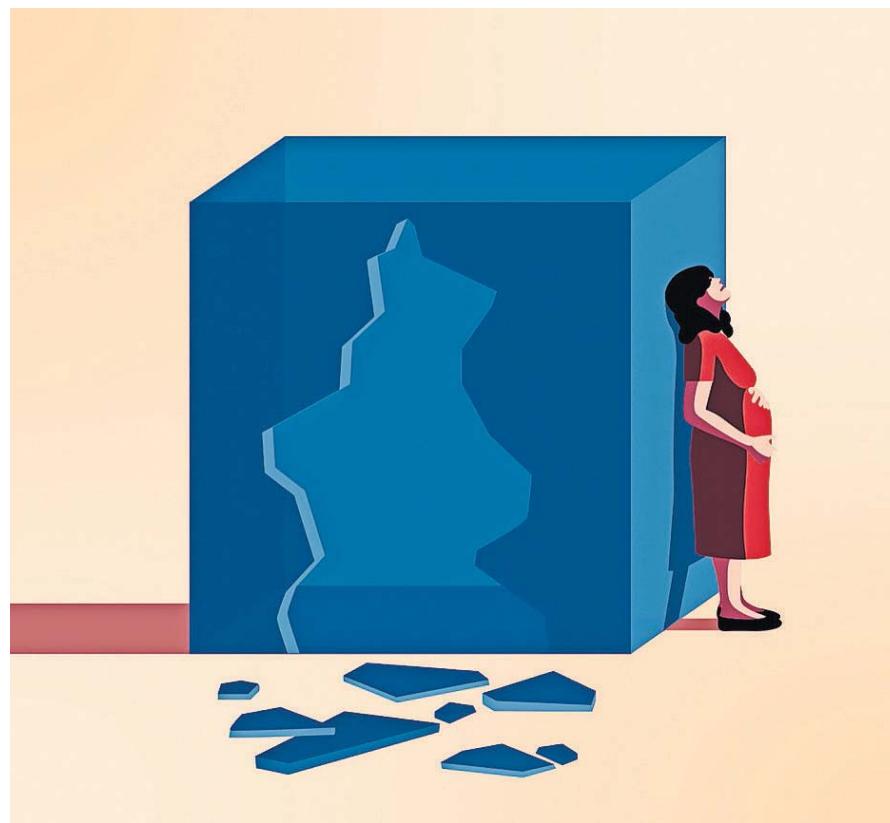
Once there, however, Calla finds unexpected freedom, in a world (almost) without limitations on her behavior. She drinks, smokes, dances and has sex with both men and women, with abandon. She has a house, a job, a car. There are only two rules: She must have regular visits with Doctor A, a mysterious but well-drawn figure of both menace and comfort; and she is prohibited from getting pregnant.

But Calla describes her burgeoning desire for a child as a “dark feeling” that will not be denied. One day she removes her own contraceptive device with a pair of tweezers, and then begins a relationship with a serviceable man, R, under the pretense of being a true “blue ticket” woman — in other words, not the kind of woman you have to worry about committing to.

Doctor A soon discovers that Calla is pregnant, and gives her two options: terminate the pregnancy, or get a 12-hour head start as the authorities pursue her. She doesn’t know exactly what they will do when they find her — obviously nothing good — but Calla’s instincts and desires guide her to choose the latter: “The choice seemed simple and yet the wrong answer was pulsing in me.”

The rest of the story follows her dangerous path to the border, which promises safety — a path made more dangerous by her increasingly conspicuous belly. En route she encounters strangers both threatening and generous, sometimes both at once. She forms a meaningful and tender bond with a fellow pregnant “blue ticket” woman, who gives herself the fake name Marisol. As they continue their trek

VERONICA ROTH is the author of the “Divergent” trilogy and, most recently, “Chosen Ones.”



ANNA PARINI

to the border together, Marisol’s character develops satisfying complexity along the way.

Other women enter Calla’s life throughout the book, too, providing necessary perspectives on childbearing, romance and the world in which they find themselves, and prompting insights from Calla herself that wouldn’t otherwise find their way into the story. Mackintosh gives full names only to her female characters, and at one point Calla muses that men are “less able to see into or through me.” Her trust in her gender is reciprocal: Other women are the ones to see Calla most clearly, for better or worse, and she sees them more clearly in return. But Calla herself is the pillar of the story, a compelling figure who balances thoughtfulness with ferocity, and whose growth throughout is more than earned.

Calla’s impending childbirth provides the story with a tense, ticking clock: Will she make it to the border, to safety and freedom, before it is too late?

This tense plot is nonetheless told with such restraint and subtlety that the one or two heavy-handed moments felt odd, as if they belonged to a different book. A few turns felt rushed, but over all the writing is clear and sharp, with piercing moments of wisdom and insight that drive toward a pitch-perfect ending.

Like “The Water Cure,” “Blue Ticket” is not a book that offers easy answers. It does not explain how the world ended up this way — or even where in the world, exactly, the story takes place. This lack of

concrete information is far from frustrating, but rather essential to the narrative effect: something allegorical and dreamlike, a story that doesn’t so much declare things about our outside world as reveal, intimately, Calla’s interior one. That isn’t to say there are no meaningful parallels to be drawn between the protagonist’s experience and that of being a woman in today’s world — but these are drawn not through the dystopian premise, but through the story’s thoughtful specificity.

Mackintosh successfully avoids a potential pitfall of the genre: its single-issue focus. In this postapocalyptic universe, the nightmare is not on the surface; Calla has the illusion of freedom. (“You could do anything,” Doctor A tells her, “almost anything.”) This element of choice allows Mackintosh to more thoroughly explore her themes of self-determination and misogyny.

In this way, “Blue Ticket” adds something new to the dystopian tradition set by Orwell’s “1984” or Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale.” Those novels were like mirrors, meant to reflect us back to ourselves with horrifying clarity. “Blue Ticket” concerns itself more with its small cast of characters than with the world they occupy, but the novel is no less relevant or incisive for its intimacy. It is as much about the tension between independence and obligation, between desire and capability, as it is about contemporary womanhood: under constant threat just for having a body, and longing to decide your own fate. □

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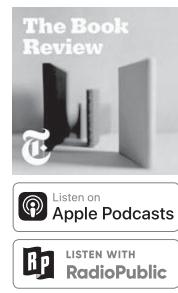
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Slings and Arrows

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

who relied on paternal permission in choosing a mate.

Shakespeare was a grammar school graduate, the eldest son of a glove maker in declining fortune. His father had once been the equivalent of Stratford's mayor, but by the time his son was 18, he had fallen into debt, disrepute and legal opprobrium.

For centuries, Shakespeare's male biographers twisted these meager facts into a misogynistic scenario: An aging spinster entraps a callow youth and a loveless, mostly long-distance, marriage ensues. In 2007, in her convincing corrective, "Shakespeare's Wife," Germaine Greer placed these accounts in the long history of male scholarship's diminishment of women — especially wives — in the lives of male artists and intellectuals going back to the ancient Greeks. O'Farrell has cited Greer's work as an influence on her thinking.

In "Hamnet," Shakespeare's marriage is complicated and troubled, yet brimming with love and passion. Hathaway is imagined as a free-spirited young woman, close to the natural world and uncannily intuitive. She attracts the ardor of a repressed, restless teenager still in search of his life's purpose. In this telling, Will, with his disgraced father and uncertain prospects, is no catch; it is Agnes, given her degree of social and financial independence, who is seen as making the poorer match with this "feckless, tradeless boy."

A few more facts from the historical record: The child whose imminent arrival likely forced the timing of the Shakespeares' November wedding was born six months later, a girl named Susanna. Two years on, the couple had twins: Judith and Hamnet. In 1596, Hamnet, just 11 years old, died of plague. By then William Shakespeare was an established playwright, living in London but providing amply for his family, amassing Stratford property and returning home for visits.

He is not at home, however, as O'Farrell's novel opens on a moment of domestic tension. The boy, Hamnet, is in frantic search of help. His twin sister has suddenly fallen ill. We feel his anxiety rise as he fails to find the adults — particularly his mother — who might know what to do.

Here, right at the start, O'Farrell plants her flag. This novel will be about grief: how

GERALDINE BROOKS'S most recent novel is "The Secret Chord."

we experience it, how we respond to it, what it costs and whom it damages. "Every life has its kernel, its hub, its epicenter, from which everything flows out, to which everything returns," she writes. "This moment is the absent mother's: the boy, the empty house, the deserted yard, the unheard cry.... It will lie at her very core, for the rest of her life." The mother is a mile away from home, tending to her beehives. Her son's building panic is juxtaposed beautifully with a serene description of her gentle labors. Would her presence have

happened to this day. One moment, she and Hamnet were pulling bits of thread for the cat's new kittens... and then she had suddenly felt a weakness in her arms, an ache in her back, a prickling in her throat.... Now she is on this bed and she has no idea how she got here." O'Farrell, in her memoir, has written vividly of how, at age 8, she contracted encephalitis, almost died and was bedridden for more than a year. When Judith lies watching the walls "bulging inwards, then flexing back" as the bedposts "writhe and twist like serpents," it is the precise and graphic description of high-fevered hallucinations recalled by someone who has experienced them.

At times, "Hamnet" brought to mind an earlier novel I admire, Sena Jeter Naslund's "Ahab's Wife" (1999), which centers its narrative on the young bride of Melville's whaling captain — a woman barely mentioned in "Moby-Dick." At the time, Naslund recalled the pressure of writing into the space occupied by such a classic: "You don't send a minnow out after 'Moby-Dick.'" Nor do you go after the private life of the Bard of Avon with a casual regard for English prose. O'Farrell, Irish-born, schooled in Scotland and Wales, and shaped by a childhood steeped in story and school days that always began with song, has a melodic relationship to language. There is a poetic cadence to her writing and a lushness in her descriptions of the natural world.

She is deft, too, at keeping her research subordinated to the story. We're not force-marched through a manual on 16th-century glove-making techniques or an exegesis of illegal practices in the Tudor wool trade. But we can smell the tang of the various new leathers in the glover's workshop, the fragrance of the apples racked a finger-width apart in the winter storage shed, and we can see how the pale London sun "reaches down, like ladders, through the narrow gaps in buildings to illuminate the rain glazed street."

At the center of the novel is a question: Why did Shakespeare title his most famous play for the son who had died several years earlier? (Hamlet and Hamnet are used interchangeably in parish records of the time. They were, essentially, the same name.)

The book builds toward an intriguing speculation, which I will not reveal here. As it unfolds, it brings its story to a tender and ultimately hopeful conclusion: that even the greatest grief, the most damaged marriage and most shattered heart might find some solace, some healing. □



Maggie O'Farrell

saved her child from plague? Probably not. But grief's equations are not figured rationally.

O'Farrell knows this. Her breathtaking memoir, "I Am, I Am, I Am: Seventeen Brushes With Death," details the disturbing instances in her own life when the angel of death came close enough to let her feel the beat of wing feathers disturb the air. And as the mother of a child born with a suite of life-threatening illnesses, she is on intimate terms with the dread, grief and guilt engendered by a suffering offspring.

This novel is at once *about* the transfiguration of life into art — it is O'Farrell's extended speculation on how Hamnet's death might have fueled the creation of one of his father's greatest plays — and at the same time, it is a master class in how she, herself, does it.

Consider this description of Judith falling ill: "She cannot comprehend what has

Her Grace Speaks

Without naming names, a Twitter personality shares her life story.

By JULIE KLAM

FULL DISCLOSURE: I know the author of this memoir. I know Duchess Goldblatt the way I know Omar Little and Wonder Woman. I know her the way I know Rhoda Morgenstern and Tony Soprano.

@DuchessGoldblat, if you aren't familiar with her, is a Twitter personality — a "character." She's a self-described 81-year-old author of royal blood, who lives in the (fictional) town of Crooked Path, N.Y. She has a (fictional) middle-aged daughter, Hacienda, who is incarcerated, and she's the author of the (fictional) memoirs "An Axe to Grind" and "Feasting on the Carcasses of My Enemies: A Love Story." Her avatar is a (nonfictional) 1633 painting by Frans Hals titled "Portrait of an Elderly Lady," which hangs in the National Gallery.

BECOMING DUCHESS GOLDBLATT

By Anonymous

240 pp. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. \$24.

Like most of her 25,000 followers, I feel as if I know her. We interact in real time and I have a strong sense of who she is. I like her posts, and every once in a while, she likes one of mine. And yet reviewing her book doesn't compromise my ethics in the least. Because I really don't know her at all.

Since I began following her, people have regularly direct-messaged me some version of "Do you know who Duchess Goldblatt is?" Meaning, Who is behind the made-up character? I truly have no idea, besides assuming she was a gay man in publishing in Manhattan (a common misconception, she writes); she is very smart and her humor is on the literary side, and the gay man part was just a feeling from her particular brand of warmth and wit. More than that — I really don't want to know. The whole fun of her is imagining this 17th-century, elegant elderly woman in a brocade gown, starched white linen ruff and Dutch cap in a tall throne of a chair, tapping away on her iPhone to tweet, "I left a window open overnight and the moonlight slipped away and now the sun's getting in and touching all my stuff." Or: "Loyal friends don't grow on trees. They grow on little vines near the ground and



Frans Hals's "Portrait of an Elderly Lady" — and Duchess Goldblatt's Twitter avatar.

JULIE KLAM is the author of several books, most recently "The Stars in Our Eyes."

have to be harvested by hand. Huge pain in the ass, frankly."

In fact, the memoir does tell us who Duchess Goldblatt really is, without giving a name. As one of those followers who didn't want to see behind the curtain, I found it deeply satisfying, unexpectedly moving and not spoilery in the least. And as lovable as the duchess herself.

It's the story of a woman going through a terrible time. Her husband leaves her, she loses her job and she is trying to cope with the great pain of a part-time separation from her young son. Out of these ashes emerged Duchess Goldblatt — the name came from her friend's dog and his mother's maiden name, but her subjects on Twitter treat it as her royal title (they call her Your Grace, or YG). The Duchess says she doesn't have many analog friends. She prefers not to be too chummy when moving to a new neighborhood: "I'd wave to them and keep moving. I was very careful to be nice but never too friendly.... You get too friendly with the neighbors like this, and then you've got a problem on your hands when they inevitably drop you. Suddenly you're persona non grata on your own busy street. I didn't dare risk that. Better to be a neutral positive, as it were." And yet in Duchess Goldblatt's digital neighborhood, people are not just welcome but completely adored.

Later she realizes she wants to connect with people — she tells a friend, "I'm trying to make a new life for myself, and it's like this life doesn't want me" — and her friend suggests that she do something she enjoys. She realizes what she loves is writing and being the duchess. And just like that, people gravitated to her.

A lovely consequence of the duchess' Twitter persona is the friendship she develops with the singer Lyle Lovett, of whom she has been a longtime devoted fan. She

tweets with him and then meets him in real life. They discuss Duchess Goldblatt's appeal, and she reveals that her followers confide in her about "trying to get or stay sober, or their marriages are unhappy or they have a child who's terribly sick." She says, "I think talking to Duchess might be like whispering a little prayer into the wind. You know, it's safe."

Duchess and Anonymous subtly, slowly, become one person. She no longer feels alone; neither do her subjects. People find solace in this fictional character — and Anonymous does, too. □

Easy Does It

A journalist learns to live without booze.

By BETH MACY

AT THE DEPTH of her alcohol addiction, Erica C. Barnett passed out in the bathroom of the newspaper where she worked with a litter box of white wine tucked into her messenger bag — two days in a row.

There are many ways to recover from alcoholism, a key message of "Quitter: A Memoir of Drinking, Relapse, and Recovery," and even more ways to write about it. Barnett's account of her climb from hipster

QUITTER A Memoir of Drinking, Relapse, and Recovery

By Erica C. Barnett

336 pp. Viking. \$26.

wino to memoirist emphasizes the relapse stage. Her challenge was to transform the chaos of a chronic, relapsing brain disease into literature without wearing her reader out. One can stomach only so many descriptions of warm hair-of-the-dog chardonnay.

Like many addicted people, Barnett grew up with a high level of what researchers call "adverse child experiences." She didn't know her biological mother for decades, and she was temporarily raised by grandparents in rural Mississippi, where she became an insomniac at age 6 and tried to master tough-girl skills, including how to kill a man with a pen if she had to (an upward jab through the Adam's apple).

Uprooted to live with her father and stepmother in suburban Texas, she took her first drink at 13. She lost her teenage best friend to suicide and suffered sexual harassment early in her journalism career, a time when "I didn't know the first thing about paying my bills on time, talking through a disagreement without storming out the door, or which color of wine was the one you drank cold." Through it all, she portrays herself as a Type A overachiever who could hang with the boys both at the bar and in the bedroom. Until she couldn't.

With snide asides reminiscent of those spouted by the main character in "Fleabag," Barnett mocks the hipsters she worked with in Austin, where she honed her political-reporting chops, a place that "felt like a festival wristband I couldn't take off." In Seattle, where she's now based, she recounts vomiting on the heated floors of semifamous unnamed men and having midday makeup sex with her married lover (another workplace bathroom encounter).

As a former ink-stained wretch myself, I

BETH MACY is the author of "Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company That Addicted America," and a writer and executive producer of the forthcoming limited television series of the same name.

related to Barnett's chronicle of '90s-era newsrooms, with "men in the top jobs, making the decisions, women doing the grunt work at the bottom of the pyramid." Her prose zings as she describes drinking to fit in with her alternative-news tribe, blacking out so many times that her memory becomes "patchy, like watching a film with half the scenes cut out." Flying home to visit her parents, she smells so bad that the flight attendant asks her to change clothes. Not only is she arrested after shoplifting wine from a local health-food



Erica C. Barnett

store, a reporter at a competing paper writes a gotcha story about it.

After seven years of relapsing, Barnett eventually embraces Alcoholics Anonymous, warts and all, after initially dismissing it as cultish and unsophisticated. Her turnaround is illuminating and occasionally hilarious, as when her A.A. sponsor suggests she add the F-word while praying for an old boss she can't find it in her amends-making arsenal to forgive.

Though Barnett's prose style is brassy and clear-eyed, with echoes of Anne Lamott, the drinking stories become oppressively repetitive — like reading what long-time A.A. members call a "drunkalog." Braiding in the science, history and an analysis of America's byzantine treatment system would have helped. But that context doesn't surface until the last chapter, in a conclusion that feels tacked on, as if ordered up by an editor after the third draft.

Still, Barnett's pluck will appeal to avid memoir readers, who will cheer her hard-won recovery, especially the steadfastness of her best friend, Josh. For those new to recovery and the people who love them, Barnett's story could be a balm.

For those who find themselves drinking more than usual in the era of Covid — especially women, who are more likely to become alcoholics later in life — "Quitter" is both a warning and a reminder: If you can stop drinking after one or two beers, you're not better than Barnett and the more than 60 million Americans who binge drink. You're just luckier. □

These books offer the physical joys of the great outdoors to families ready to roam free.

ON LIMITED OUTINGS in my Brooklyn neighborhood, children I see riding atop their dads' shoulders or lounging in strollers are all wearing masks. Without having much to compare it to, their sci-fi pandemic version of life is, simply, life. No telling what sort of impact all this will have on their tender psyches.

The wide-open spaces are surely getting a workout this summer with so many antsy families ready to roam free. But especially for kids still stuck inside, three timely new picture books confirm that a whole world is waiting out there: patient, green and lovely. Even non-hiking, non-camping multitaskers who equate slowing down with slacking might enjoy them. Because the

HIKE

Written and illustrated by Pete Oswald

40 pp. Candlewick. \$17.99.
(Ages 4 to 8)

are as soothing as a walk in the woods. Nature gets a starring role here with animals and insects close enough for the child to examine and sweeping vistas grand enough to convey the wonder a child feels facing the immensity of the world.

The closeness of the father and child is a reassuring note in most of the illustrations: a hand on the shoulder here, a hug there. There are a couple of tense moments — crossing a log over a river near a waterfall and later rock climbing — when the child is fearful. But there are no slips and they complete their mission: planting a sapling.

Visual details layer the narrative with satisfying messages that will reveal themselves over repeated readings — no small feat for a mostly wordless book.

If I knew someone who was about to go camping for the first time, Jennifer K. Mann's "The Camping Trip" would be the perfect gift. From sleeping bag and pillow to lantern, whistle, marshmallow-roasting fork and playing cards, Mann offers a visual checklist of what to take with you. And that's just the endpapers.

Ernestine is invited to go camping with Aunt Jackie and cousin Samantha. Her anticipation builds as she packs supplies (stuffed Foxy is a must), tests her new flashlight and makes trail mix with Dad.

In graphic-novel-style layouts, the road trip from city to country unfolds — the girls look at comic books, play cat's cradle, stare out the window, sing along with the radio — culminating in a full-spread illustration of the destination, a lake in the woods.

Ernestine has much to discover. Setting up camp is work. Lake swimming might include live fish. Hiking is not the same thing as walking. But there are wonderful things as well: massive trees too wide to reach around, strange bugs to study, unfamiliar foods that prove to be surprisingly tasty.

The first-person voice is on point: Ernestine loads her backpack so full of food for a short hike — supplementing the trail mix with essentials such as "leftover chips, cheese sticks, peanut butter crackers and cookies" — that she can barely climb a hill. "When we finally stop, I eat a lot so my backpack will be lighter on the way back!"

Her excitement, curiosity, hesitations and fears play out in her dialogue and keep her awake when everyone else is sleeping: "I'm boiling. I need to get my socks off! Where's my water bottle? Where is Foxy? I'm freezing. Is anyone else awake?" The magic of the nighttime sky is just the tonic she needs; stargazing with Aunt Jackie



Clockwise, from left: "Hike"; "The Camping Trip"; "Hurry Up! A Book About Slowing Down."

A whole world is waiting out there: patient, green and lovely.

and Samantha settles her down. By the next day, a confident Ernestine tackles a swim in the lake and helps break down the campsite.

The illustrations, a mix of pencil line drawings with digital collage and painting, are evocative and effective. Step-by-step sequences, presented in panels, deconstruct key activities like making a campfire. Mann's diagram showing how to assemble a s'more might inspire even those who rarely leave their apartments.

"Hurry up! Hurry down. Hurry round and round . . . and round" is a tempo that many children recognize — at least, it was before the pandemic cleared everyone's schedules. In "Hurry Up! A Book About Slowing Down," Kate Dohrak captures the frenetic pace of life and polishes it into a succinct and bouncy rhyme just right for read-alouds.

A young, bespectacled boy races through his school day, leaving his dog behind. Then, with perfect timing, the child on the run reaches fever pitch just as the text and art shut down the action with a full-page spread that shouts, "STOP."

And the story takes a breath. Abruptly, the graphic, mixed-media illustrations by Christopher Silas Neal that were filled with kids, buildings and school buses settle down and shift their color palette to the cool side. Neal expands on the slim but pithy text to build out the boy's world with a diverse set of classmates and the charming little houses where they live.

There's no insistence that working hard is bad — toys are present along with books and paperwork. The need for a break is the point. So the boy and his dog slow down, take a walk, play, lie in the grass and breathe. "This is what it's all about," the text affirms. As night falls, they count stars and catch fireflies.

The equivalent of a deep breathing exercise, "Hurry Up!" will likely help even the most active little multitaskers unwind. □

great outdoors that beckons from their pages makes isolation look a lot like blissful, mask-free freedom.

The ingredients for an escape from the city are scattered around a child's bedroom on the opening pages of "Hike," the illustrator Pete Oswald's solo debut. Observant readers may guess what's in store just by ticking off items in the room — compass, map, binoculars — but surprises await.

The child in the story could be either a boy or a girl; the gender is open to interpretation. The sense of excitement is clear, though, as Dad awakens the child early to get ready for their adventure. The car is packed, the city fades behind them at dawn and the road leads into a not so wild wilderness, with "Welcome" signs and hiking trails.

Painterly, textural illustrations, digitally rendered in a palette of greens and browns,

PAT CUMMING'S latest books include the picture book "Where Is Mommy?" and "Trace," her debut middle grade novel.

Best Sellers

The New York Times

For the complete best-seller lists, visit
nytimes.com/books/best-sellers

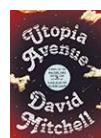
COMBINED PRINT AND E-BOOK BEST SELLERS

SALES PERIOD OF JUNE 28-JULY 4

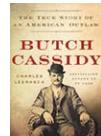
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	Fiction	WEEKS ON LIST	Nonfiction	WEEKS ON LIST	
1	2	THE VANISHING HALF , by Brit Bennett. (Riverhead) The lives of twin sisters who run away from a Southern Black community at age 16 diverge as one returns and the other takes on a different racial identity but their fates intertwine.	5	1	THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENED , by John Bolton. (Simon & Schuster) The former national security advisor gives his account of the 17 months he spent working for President Trump.	2
2	1	28 SUMMERS , by Elin Hilderbrand. (Little, Brown) A relationship that started in 1993 between Mallory Blessing and Jake McCloud comes to light.	3	2	WHITE FRAGILITY , by Robin DiAngelo. (Beacon Press) Historical and cultural analyses on what causes defensive moves by white people and how this inhibits cross-racial dialogue.	15
3	3	WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING , by Delia Owens. (Putnam) A young woman who survived alone in the marsh becomes a murder suspect.	95	3	HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST , by Ibram X. Kendi. (One World) A primer for creating a more just and equitable society through identifying and opposing racism.	10
4		SEX AND VANITY , by Kevin Kwan. (Doubleday) Lucie Tang Churchill is torn between her WASPy billionaire fiancé and a privileged hunk born in Hong Kong.	1	4	STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING , by Ibram X. Kendi. (Bold Type) A look at anti-Black racist ideas and their effect on the course of American history.	5
5	4	THE GUARDIANS , by John Grisham. (Doubleday) Cullen Post, a lawyer and Episcopal minister, antagonizes some ruthless killers when he takes on a wrongful conviction case.	22	5	SO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT RACE , by Ijeoma Oluo. (Seal) A look at the contemporary racial landscape of the United States.	7
6	8	THE GUEST LIST , by Lucy Foley. (Morrow) A wedding between a TV star and a magazine publisher on an island off the coast of Ireland turns deadly.	5	6	UNTAMED , by Glennon Doyle. (Dial) The activist and public speaker describes her journey of listening to her inner voice.	17
7	5	CAMINO WINDS , by John Grisham. (Doubleday) The line between fact and fiction becomes blurred when an author of thrillers is found dead after a hurricane hits Camino Island.	10	7	BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME , by Ta-Nehisi Coates. (Spiegel & Grau) A meditation on race in America as well as a personal story, framed as a letter to the author's teenage son.	68
8	7	THE SUMMER HOUSE , by James Patterson and Brendan DuBois. (Little, Brown) Jeremiah Cook, a veteran and former N.Y.P.D. cop, investigates a mass murder in Georgia.	4	8	THE COLOR OF LAW , by Richard Rothstein. (Liveright) An examination of the ways in which the government caused residential segregation.	5
9	9	LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE , by Celeste Ng. (Penguin Press) An artist upends a quiet town outside Cleveland.	73	9	BEGIN AGAIN , by Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (Crown) An appraisal of the life and work of James Baldwin and their meaning in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement and the Trump presidency.	1
10		FRIENDS AND STRANGERS , by J. Courtney Sullivan. (Knopf) Complications ensue when a New York journalist downshifts to become a mom in a small town and hires a senior at the local women's college to babysit.	1	10	JUST MERCY , by Bryan Stevenson. (Spiegel & Grau) A law professor and MacArthur grant recipient's memoir of his decades of work to free innocent people condemned to death.	36

The New York Times best sellers are compiled and archived by the best-sellers-lists desk of the New York Times news department, and are separate from the editorial, culture, advertising and business sides of The New York Times Company. Rankings reflect unit sales reported on a confidential basis by vendors offering a wide range of general interest titles published in the United States. **ONLINE:** For complete lists and a full explanation of our methodology, visit www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers.

Editors' Choice / Staff Picks From the Book Review



UTOPIA AVENUE, by David Mitchell. (Random House, \$30.) Fans of Mitchell, the British master of formally intricate, elaborately interconnected and often fantastical novels, have long been aware of his passion for music. That love, deployed with his usual narrative high jinks, is on full display in this story of a London rock band's rise to fame in the Swinging Sixties.



BUTCH CASSIDY: The True Story of an American Outlaw, by Charles Leerhsen. (Simon & Schuster, \$28.) Made famous by Paul Newman and Hollywood, Butch Cassidy, as Leerhsen shows, was in real life a smallish cowboy of dubious morals, driven to crime by the harsh financial realities on the open range.



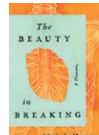
BIG FRIENDSHIP: How We Keep Each Other Close, by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman. (Simon & Schuster, \$26.) Sow and Friedman describe intense friendships as one of life's foundations, neglected at our peril and, likely, our regret. Their book calls on us to stop seeing these relationships as something that we put on hold while we focus on careers, marriages or children.



EMPTY: A Memoir, by Susan Burton. (Random House, \$27.) Burton's memoir of anorexia and binge eating is fueled by anger and honesty. This fearlessly intimate story brings perfectionism into tight focus and provides an unforgettable portrait of a different kind of addiction.



THE BIGGEST BLUFF: How I Learned to Pay Attention, Master Myself, and Win, by Maria Konnikova. (Penguin Press, \$28.) Konnikova, a writer for The New Yorker with a Ph.D. in psychology, decided to study poker for its interplay between luck and determination. This is an account of her journey, which took her much further into the world of high-stakes gambling than she ever imagined.



THE BEAUTY IN BREAKING: A Memoir, by Michele Harper. (Riverhead, \$27.) When Harper was a teenager, she drove her brother to the hospital to get treated for a bite her father had inflicted. There, she glimpsed a world she wanted to join. "The Beauty in Breaking" is her memoir of becoming an emergency room physician. It's also a profound statement on the inequities in medical care today.



NINE SHINY OBJECTS, by Brian Castleberry. (Custom House, \$27.99.) A reported U.F.O. sighting in 1947 inspires the many characters in Castleberry's far-reaching debut to search for a new way of life centered on family, belonging, and a loving and racially diverse community.



A PEUCULAR PERIL, by Jeff VanderMeer. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$26.99.) VanderMeer's first sally into young adult fiction — about a teenager who discovers his grandfather's overstuffed English country mansion is a portal to another world — is a madcap mash-up of everything from the Narnia books to "Mary Poppins."



CROOKED HALLELUJAH, by Kelli Jo Ford. (Grove, \$26.) Set in the 1970s, Ford's debut novel follows three generations of Oklahoma women with Cherokee blood in their veins and a penchant for no-good men. Ford implies that education and reason is the antidote to these thwarted female lives.

The full reviews of these and other recent books are online: nytimes.com/books

Inside the List

ELISABETH EGAN

Tour de Force Surely there are writers across the land reading aloud from new books at intimate, socially distanced backyard gatherings, but Elin Hilderbrand appears to be the summer's only best-selling author to preside over in-person public events. To date, she has signed copies of "28 Summers" at four independent stores — Bethany Beach Books and Browseabout Books on the Delaware coast, Books & Greetings in Northvale, N.J., and Warwick's in La Jolla, Calif.

"The only qualms I had were about traveling."



At each location, up to 25 fans were scheduled to arrive every 15 minutes. "It seems like a lot, but it's not; you really only have one minute per person or less. People wore masks. I told them, if they stood six feet away, they could take masks off for pictures," Hilderbrand says. "The only qualms I had were about traveling and even then I didn't look at anyone, talk to anyone or touch anything." Including stock to be sold later, she estimates that she signed about 1,000 books in Delaware alone. She says, "It was well worth it for me to go. These are devoted readers and bookstores that I trust, so it was a no-brainer."

"28 Summers," now No. 3 on the hardcover fiction list, is Hilderbrand's 25th book. For the past seven years, she has published two novels a year, adhering to a strict schedule that brings her from Nantucket to a villa in St. John to a studio apartment in Boston, depending on where she is in the process. She writes on legal pads — a habit dating back to when her kids were little and she'd work on the beach — using "lucky" blue pens from Nantucket Bank: "Once or twice a year, I go to the main office where I got my mortgage and they hand me a bag of probably 50 pens." She has never lost a legal pad.

After she gets a draft on paper, Hilderbrand types it, prints out the manuscript, edits that, enters the changes into her computer, then prints and edits again. She estimates (jokingly) that she does this 59 times until a book is finished.

Hilderbrand may have an intense macro routine (including listening to classical music and lighting nine candles in Ted Muelhling candlesticks while she revises), but she doesn't have a micro one. She says, "For me, every day is different. I have teenagers and they're busy; today I had to pick up my son and get him to work. I try to get three hours of composing done, but if it doesn't get done I don't freak out because that's how you make yourself insane. If you compile those three hours, 360 days a year, you will write two books."

PRINT / HARDCOVER BEST SELLERS

SALES PERIOD OF JUNE 28-JULY 4

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	Fiction	WEEKS ON LIST	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	Nonfiction	WEEKS ON LIST
1	3	WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING , by Delia Owens. (Putnam) In a quiet town on the North Carolina coast in 1969, a woman who survived alone in the marsh becomes a murder suspect.	96	1	1	THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENED , by John Bolton. (Simon & Schuster) The former national security advisor gives his account of the 17 months he spent working for President Trump.	2
2	1	THE VANISHING HALF , by Brit Bennett. (Riverhead) The lives of twin sisters who run away from a Southern Black community at age 16 diverge as one returns and the other takes on a different racial identity but their fates intertwine.	5	2	2	HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST , by Ibram X. Kendi. (One World) A primer for creating a more just and equitable society through identifying and opposing racism.	18
3	2	28 SUMMERS , by Elin Hilderbrand. (Little, Brown) A relationship that started in 1993 between Mallory Blessing and Jake McCloud comes to light while she is on her deathbed and his wife runs for president.	3	3	4	UNTAMED , by Glennon Doyle. (Dial) The activist and public speaker describes her journey of listening to her inner voice.	17
4		SEX AND VANITY , by Kevin Kwan. (Doubleday) A nod to "A Room With a View" in which Lucie Tang Churchill is torn between her WASPy billionaire fiancé and a privileged hunk born in Hong Kong.	1	4	3	BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME , by Ta-Nehisi Coates. (Spiegel & Grau) A meditation on race in America as well as a personal story, framed as a letter to the author's teenage son.	92
5	4	CAMINO WINDS , by John Grisham. (Doubleday) An author of thrillers is found dead after a hurricane hits Camino Island.	10	5		BEGIN AGAIN , by Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (Crown) An appraisal of the life and work of James Baldwin and their meaning in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement and the Trump presidency.	1
6	6	THE GUEST LIST , by Lucy Foley. (Morrow) A wedding between a TV star and a magazine publisher turns deadly.	5	6	8	THE SPLENDID AND THE VILE , by Erik Larson. (Crown) An examination of the leadership of the prime minister Winston Churchill.	19
7	5	THE SUMMER HOUSE , by James Patterson and Brendan DuBois. (Little, Brown) Jeremiah Cook, a veteran and former N.Y.P.D. cop, investigates a mass murder in Georgia.	4	7	7	BECOMING , by Michelle Obama. (Crown) The former first lady describes how she balanced work, family and her husband's political ascent.	82
8		HOME BEFORE DARK , by Riley Sager. (Dutton) Maggie Holt inherits the Vermont estate that was the setting of her father's horror memoir.	1	8	5	ME AND WHITE SUPREMACY , by Layla F. Saad. (Sourcebooks) Ways to understand and possibly counteract white privilege.	7
9		MEXICAN GOTHIC , by Silvia Moreno-Garcia. (Del Rey) In 1950s Mexico, a debutante travels to a distant mansion where family secrets of a faded mining empire have been kept hidden.	1	9	9	I'M STILL HERE , by Austin Channing Brown. (Convergent) A Black woman who was given a white man's name by her parents shares her journey to finding her own worth and what stands in the way of racial justice.	4
10		FRIENDS AND STRANGERS , by J. Courtney Sullivan. (Knopf) Complications ensue when a New York journalist downshifts to become a mom in a small town and hires a senior at the local women's college to babysit.	1	10	6	COUNTDOWN 1945 , by Chris Wallace with Mitch Weiss. (Avid Reader) The Fox News Sunday anchor gives an account of the key people involved in and events leading up to America's attack on Hiroshima in 1945.	4

An asterisk (*) indicates that a book's sales are barely distinguishable from those of the book above. A dagger (†) indicates that some bookstores report receiving bulk orders.

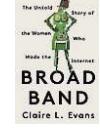
Paperback Row / BY JENNIFER KRAUSS



WILDOOD: The Astounding Connections Between Human and Animal Adolescents, by Barbara Natterson-Horowitz and Kathryn Bowers. (Scribner, 384 pp., \$18.) "You don't even need to anthropomorphize to find some of the similarities between animal and human teenagers uncanny, and the lessons they have to learn remarkably similar," our reviewer, Judith Newman, noted about this sequel to the authors' "Zoobiquity."



THE SENTENCE IS DEATH, by Anthony Horowitz. (Harper Perennial, 384 pp., \$16.99.) The author plays a part in this mystery about a celebrity divorce lawyer murdered with a 1982 bottle of Château Lafite Rothschild. "I like to be in control of my books," he writes, explaining why he positioned himself as the detective Daniel Hawthorne's sidekick.



BROAD BAND: The Untold Story of the Women Who Made the Internet, by Claire L. Evans. (Portfolio, 288 pp., \$16.) Evans is an "intelligent observer" who "speaks fluent tech lingo, has written about science and sci-fi for the likes of Vice and Wired and also sings in a pop group," Dava Sobel, our reviewer, quipped. She "proves a companionable guide" for this tour of cyberspace, "peopled predominantly with all-American girls" wanting, as Time magazine once put it, "a ROM of their own."



THE UNPASSING, by Chia-Chia Lin. (Picador, 288 pp., \$17.) This "singularly vast and captivating" debut novel depicts the "muffled anguish" of a Taiwanese-immigrant family struggling to adapt to the Alaskan wilderness outside Anchorage in the 1980s after the death of their youngest child. Our reviewer, Brian Haman, described it as "beautifully written in free-flowing prose that quietly disarms."



BEATEN DOWN, WORKED UP: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor, by Steven Greenhouse. (Anchor, 416 pp., \$17.) This "engrossing, character-driven" book by a former New York Times labor reporter "spans a century of worker strikes, without overcondensing or oversimplifying, and with plausible suggestions for the future," Zephyr Teachout, our reviewer, declared. She deemed it "labor history seen from the moments when that history could have turned out differently."



TRICK MIRROR: Reflections on Self-Delusion, by Jia Tolentino. (Random House, 320 pp., \$18.) These original essays by a New Yorker staff writer whose voice our reviewer, Maggie Doherty, called a mix of "force, lyricism and internet-honed humor" is a millennial examination of personal essay writing itself.

MONTHLY BEST SELLERS

SALES PERIOD OF MAY 31-JUNE 27

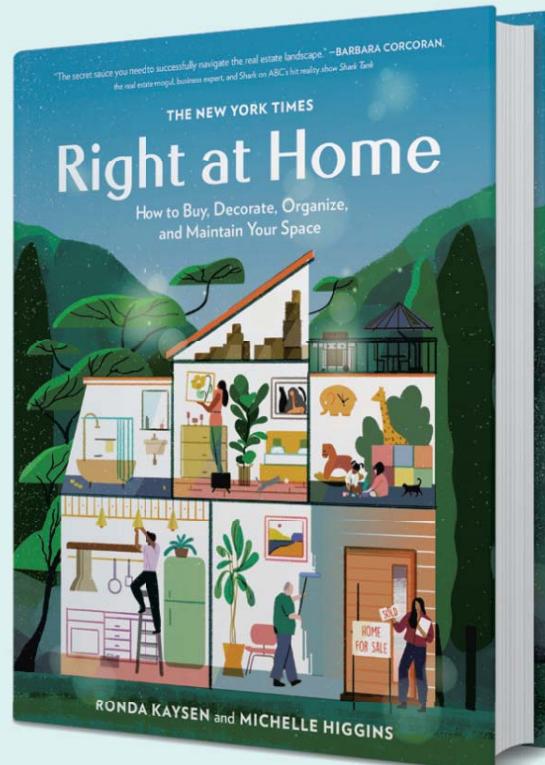
THIS MONTH	Graphic Books and Manga	MONTHS ON LIST	THIS MONTH	Mass Market	MONTHS ON LIST
1	NEW KID , by Jerry Craft. (HarperCollins) Jordan Banks, an artistically inclined seventh grader from Washington Heights, has a tough time navigating an upscale private school where diversity is low and maintaining his neighborhood friendships.	8	1	THE DARK SIDE , by Danielle Steel. (Dell) Painful childhood memories surface for Zoe Morgan when she has a child of her own.	1
2	STRANGER PLANET , by Nathan W. Pyle. (Morrow Gift) A sequel to "Strange Planet" that explores the subjects of traditions, nature and knowledge.	1	2	THE GUARDIANS , by John Grisham. (Dell) Cullen Post, a lawyer and Episcopal minister, antagonizes some ruthless killers when he takes on a wrongful conviction case.	1
3	GUTS , by Raina Telgemeier. (Scholastic) Raina finds her tummy trouble might be more than it first appears to be when she goes back to school.	10	3	BLUE MOON , by Lee Child. (Dell) Jack Reacher gets caught up in a turf war between Ukrainian and Albanian gangs.	2
4	MY HERO ACADEMIA, VOL. 24 , by Kohei Horikoshi. (VIZ Media) The Meta Liberation Army prepares for a new metahuman revolution but Tomura plans to fight.	1	4	LAST GIRL STANDING , by Lisa Jackson and Nancy Bush. (Zebra) A high school reunion brings back up the sudden and mysterious death of one girl from a clique known as the Five Firsts.	1
5	BECOMING BRIANNA , by Terri Libenson. (Balzer + Bray) The fourth book in the Emmie & Friends series. A middle school girl goes outside her comfort zone.	2	5	EVERY BREATH , by Nicholas Sparks. (Grand Central) Difficult choices surface when Hope Anderson and Tru Walls meet in a North Carolina seaside town.	2
6	BEST FRIENDS , by Shannon Hale. Illustrated by LeUyen Pham. (First Second) Shannon struggles to keep up with what is considered cool.	10	6	THE PRESIDENT IS MISSING , by James Patterson and Bill Clinton. (Grand Central) President Jonathan Duncan, a gulf war veteran and widower, takes on adversaries at home and abroad.	1
7	JACKY HA-HA , by James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein, adapted by Adam Rau and Betty C. Tang. (Jimmy Patterson) A graphic novel version of the story about a class clown trying to distract herself from serious matters.	2	7	ENVY , by Sandra Brown. (Grand Central) An editor receives an anonymous manuscript and sets out to discover its author's identity.	1
8	SISTERS , by Raina Telgemeier. (Scholastic) Raina is stuck in the back seat between her younger brother and sister for a weeklong road trip in this family memoir.	9	8	STEALING HOME , by Sherryl Woods. (MIRA) When her husband leaves her for a younger woman, a mother of three children restarts her life and falls for her son's baseball coach. The basis of the Netflix series "Sweet Magnolias."	1
9	MY HERO ACADEMIA, VOL. 1 , by Kohei Horikoshi. (VIZ Media) In a world full of people who can develop superpowers, Izuku Midoriya is just a "normal" teenager. Will a chance encounter with a superhero change his fate? Most likely!	6	9	THE CHEF , by James Patterson and Max DiLallo. (Grand Central) Caleb Rooney, a police detective and celebrity food truck chef, must clear his name of murder allegations.	2
10	DRAMA , by Raina Telgemeier. (Scholastic) Callie becomes the stage manager for her middle school's production of "Moon Over Mississippi."	10	10	RISING FIRE , by William W. Johnstone and J.A. Johnstone. (Pinnacle) The third book in the Jensen Brand series. Smoke Jensen's daughter Denny must outmaneuver a swindler named Count Malatesta.	1
11	BABY-SITTERS LITTLE SISTER: KAREN'S WITCH , by Ann M. Martin. Illustrated by Katy Farina. (Scholastic) Karen wants to prove her neighbor is a witch named Morbidda Destiny.	7	11	DEEP HARBOR , by Fern Michaels. (Zebra) When death and corruption swirls around her, C.J. escapes to a small New England town.	2
12	FGTEEV PRESENTS: INTO THE GAME! , by FGTEEV. Illustrated by Miguel Diaz Rivas. (Harper) Four kids battle their way through video games to rescue Moony and Duddy.	6	12	THE YANKEE WIDOW , by Linda Lael Miller. (MIRA) A woman who loses her husband during the Civil War draws the attention of two soldiers from opposite sides of the battle.	1
13	SMILE , by Raina Telgemeier. (Scholastic) Raina experiences braces, boy troubles and other plagues of the sixth grade.	10	13	RUN AWAY , by Harlan Coben. (Grand Central) A family is torn apart when the daughter becomes addicted to drugs and goes missing.	2
14	STRANGE PLANET , by Nathan W. Pyle. (Morrow Gift) Moments from the life cycle of a planet's inhabitants including "Being Gains a Sibling" and "Being Begins a Vocation."	8	14	THE ORACLE , by Clive Cussler and Robin Burcell. (Putnam) Treasure-hunting couple Sam and Remi Fargo embark on a new adventure to find a sacred ancient scroll and lift its curse.	2
15	NAT ENOUGH , by Maria Scrivan. (Scholastic) As she starts a new school year, Natalie learns to focus on who she is rather than who she isn't.	3	15	MICHAEL CRICHTON: THE ANDROMEDA EVOLUTION , by Daniel H. Wilson. (Harper) A team of experts is assembled to stop an evolving and potentially apocalyptic microbe.	1

Sales are defined as completed transactions between vendors and individual end users during the period on or after the official publication date of a title. Graphic book rankings include all print and digital formats. Adult, children's, young adult, fiction and nonfiction graphic books are eligible for inclusion on the graphic books and manga list. **ONLINE:** For complete lists and a full explanation of our methodology, visit www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers.

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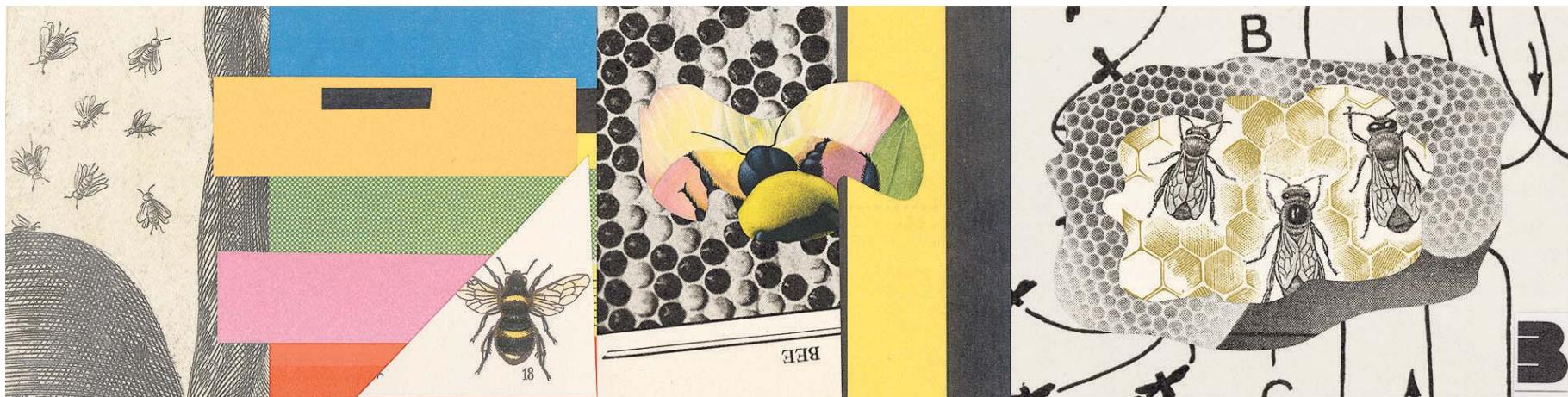
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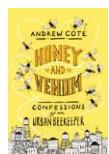


HONEY AND VENOM

Confessions of an Urban Beekeeper

By Andrew Coté

295 pp. Ballantine. \$27.



I will never eat bananas near a beehive. The mere thought is enough to set lively scenes from Coté's book replaying in my mind's eye. Bananas contain a chemical that resembles the substance in honeybees' alarm scent, so the resulting encounter could turn nasty.

Coté's book is full of facts like this, interwoven with anecdotes from his life as an urban beekeeper. And we're not just talking one or two beehives in a backyard here: Coté tends hundreds of hives throughout New York City, high on rooftops, in parks and gardens. He also travels the world to talk about beekeeping.

Month by month we accompany Coté through the key events in a beekeeper's calendar, as he weaves in stories from his life. Coté's relationship with his father, who initiated his son into the mysteries of these hard-working hexapods, is described with great affection. His journey to urban beekeeping is brought to life as he recounts often funny or bizarre situations — like rescue operations that involved swarms of bees that saw fit to set up house in a church tower or on a traffic light in New York City's most exclusive shopping district.

The book's title suits it well: "Honey and Venom" isn't all sweet stories. Bees aren't the only ones who can deliver venomous stings, and now and then Coté's depictions of the people who oppose his sticky endeavor can get to be a bit much. At the same time, enthusiastic praise for beekeeping is served up by the ton in this slightly rambling but informative and entertaining memoir.

BEE PEOPLE AND THE BUGS THEY LOVE

By Frank Mortimer

312 pp. Citadel. \$25.



A lecture on backyard beekeeping at the library spurs Mortimer to take his abiding fascination for honeybees to the next level and start out as a beekeeper. In this book, meetings — with both individuals and the local beekeeping club — play a major role as we follow the author's progress from "newbee" to experienced beekeeper. There is no shortage of eccentrics on hand to offer Mortimer help and more or less good advice. All, from oddballs to flagrantly self-promoting windbags, are described in an effective, relatable way that is never malicious — more like, affectionately barbed.

Mortimer presents himself as a bee nerd and he offers solid expertise when it comes to facts about honeybees. For a book so broad in scope, one could perhaps have wished it to widen its perspective to include the role of wild insects when discussing the significance of pollination. That said, it is an achievement to convey so much knowledge so accessibly without once seeming overbearing. The main reason it all works is the honest descriptions of friendships that spring up around a shared, all-absorbing interest in bees.

The book is written in a stylistically assured voice and with a structure that makes it easy to follow. And Mortimer intersperses useful facts about his passion in a successful and funny book that is sure to swell the ranks of the world's beekeepers.

SHOW ME THE HONEY

Adventures of an Accidental Apiarist

By Dave Doroghy

294 pp. Touchwood Editions. Paper, \$20.



If you think beekeeping is a quick and easy shortcut to wealth, this book will set you straight. Doroghy keeps his houseboat moored on the Fraser River in British Columbia and is not especially interested in either insects or the intricacies of nature to start off with. One day, his sister, a beekeeper, asks if she can set up a beehive on the back deck of his houseboat. After a resoundingly successful first season, Doroghy ends up receiving the hive's 15,000-strong population as a Christmas present. And there he finds himself: a brand-new adoptive dad without the faintest clue what to do.

One by one, Doroghy makes all the mistakes a rookie beekeeper possibly could, and he recounts his failures here with a humility that borders on self-flagellation. His detailing of the practical challenges and his attempted solutions are honest and often witty. There are poorly performing queen bees, wasps to chase away, mite problems to deal with. Through all his errors, Doroghy gains growing insight into all the things that need to work if the bee population is to thrive and his dreams of a honey-based fortune are to come true. Knowledge of bees and beekeeping is worked so naturally into the story that it never becomes didactic.

From time to time, the descriptions are a bit long-winded and the wise-cracks on the feeble side, but all in all, this is a light read on the pleasures and pains of a beekeeper that will give you new respect for all the work — by two- and six-legged laborers alike — that goes into producing the spoonful of honey you stir into your tea.

A HONEYBEE HEART HAS FIVE OPENINGS

A Year of Keeping Bees

By Helen Jukes

238 pp. Pantheon. \$26.95.



The title of Jukes's book is as delightful as the book itself, offering as it does a hint that this will be about more than hive tools and honey production. And indeed this book is just as much about people and our relationships with one another as it is about beekeeping.

After a rootless, itinerant urban life, Jukes starts a new job in Oxford. There she rents a small house where she tries to get a grip on her new existence. Her backyard is just big enough for a beehive. Having previously been initiated into urban beekeeping in London, Jukes now decides to get some bees of her own. But what does it really mean to "keep" bees? Is it about owning and holding onto or rather about tending and caring? What is a home — whether a house or a hive — and is it possible to truly tame other beings?

Through such reflections, often accompanied by references to etymology (Jukes's friend works for the Oxford English Dictionary), Jukes gently weaves her personal history into a larger tale of friendship and responsibility: for one another, and for different species such as honeybees.

This book is not big on action, flowing as slowly as golden honey. And perhaps it takes a while to grasp its soul, especially early on. Here, Jukes reads up on the history of beehives and beekeeping, and for the remaining chapters we follow her own bees through the first season. While you will undoubtedly learn something new about bees, this is, first and foremost, a successful and eloquent piece of modern nature writing.

ANNE SVERDRUP-THYGESEN is a professor of conservation biology and the author of "Extraordinary Insects: The Fabulous, Indispensable Creatures Who Run Our World," out now in paperback.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN GALL

Sketchbook / Letterpress / By Leanne Shapton

Packing for a move this past winter, an artist discovered much flora between the pages of her books.



1. Queen Anne's lace, Bay View, Mich.
"Road to Xanadu," by John Livingston Lowes

2. Pine needles, Cap Ferrat, France
"Delirious New York," by Rem Koolhaas

3. Lily, New York City
"I Know How to Cook," by Ginette Mathiot

4. Lavender sprig, Le Gras, France
"The Odyssey," by Homer, translated by Emily Wilson

5. Rose, London
"Milkman," by Anna Burns

6. Four-leaf clover, Mississauga, Canada
"Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1975"

7. Tulip, New York City
"A Balthus Notebook," by Guy Davenport

8. Eucalyptus leaves, Los Angeles
"Women Talking," by Miriam Toews

9. Oak leaf, London
"Cy Twombly: Drawings, Catalog Raisonné, Vol. 6, 1972-1979," by Nicola Del Roscio

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