



## Shared Quiet, Common Comfort in Books

So here we all sit, waiting. At least as I write this, although things can change fast in this new world we inhabit, singly and yet together. Locked up in the fortresses of our houses or apartments, bound together by fear, yes, but also by a newfound appreciation for those who live nearby, we watch our neighbors walking in close family units, venturing out in their cars to get groceries or medication, perhaps giving and receiving quick waves before retreating into the refuge of home. The housework we once resented has become a benison, the mindless making of a bed, the simple act of washing a pot, or sweeping a porch clear of leaves cleansing; the coming-together whether at meals or by phone a welcome connection; reading books, alone or side-by-side in shared quiet, an act of grace. The bond that connects those of us who find answers in books has never seemed so profound.

When The King's English first closed its front door for the sake of safety, yours and ours, as COVID-19 began its onslaught here in Salt Lake and we announced that we'd continue getting books to you by hook or by crook (which we managed to do, thanks in large part to Anne, and to Margaret and Rob and Will, and to all the incredible booksellers who stayed and helped us and you), your support stunned us—not only the fact of it but the warmth of it. The love. We've always felt we were family—the store, the booksellers, our customers—but never more so than now, when able to take orders only virtually or by phone, get books to you only by mail, delivery (it's back!) or our newly modified version of drive-by pickup. Yet there you are still, wanting to hear about books, to talk about books in whatever medium, to buy books from us however you can.

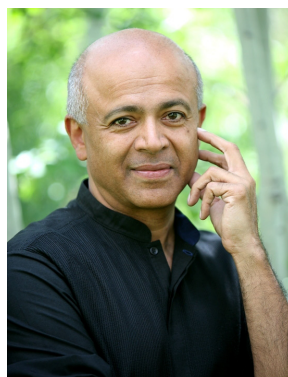
The world of books is, of course, larger than simply booksellers and readers. Publishers are a vital part of it as, at its very core, are writers. Wanting, out of gratitude, to give back to you our customers, it seemed natural to reach out to those writers we've known and come to love over the years—those who have helped us to question, to dig deep for answers, to find ourselves surprised into empathy; who have illuminated dark corners of humanity, shone equal light on the best of us; have allowed us to escape, and, more than anything, have made us feel—and to ask these writers the central question you've each asked yourselves, asked us: What books should we gather up to see us through whatever it is we are all facing?

So we did, reaching out to writers by email or through their publishers and receiving responses from nearly all of them—as astonishing in its way as the warmth of your response. We truly are connected. All of us, as we wait at home for this scourge that has beset our earth to pass—and discover in the waiting what Terry Tempest Williams calls “The Great Quieting.” And in that quiet what Richard Powers wishes for us all: “safety, health, and distilled attention in your own days of quarantine.”

Here then is the question to which each of the authors we wrote replied, and below that, their responses:

*We've talked at length about what our customers at The King's English might want to read as they sit at home waiting for the viral clouds to lift—and what unread books on our own bedside tables we're looking forward to. Which led us to wonder about the books our favorite housebound authors have piled high to see them through the pandemic's reign. So, we decided to ask them.*

*Have you gathered such a stack of books, if so how high is it and can you tell us what titles are on top?*



### Abraham Verghese

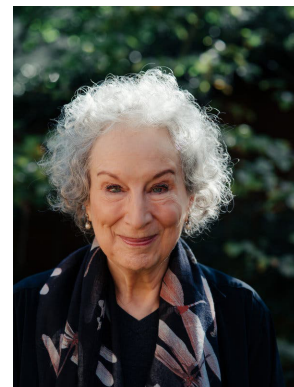
Forgive me, I have been inundated with work as you can imagine. As to what I'm reading, I'm systematically reading and discovering Dostoevsky, late in life—*The Idiot* right now. Maybe I read him when I was younger but I don't think I was mature enough for his ideas. What else? I'm reading the poetry of W.S. Merwin and also found myself listening to and enjoying *The Overstory*. I trust that helps and stay safe. A. Editor's

*note: Abraham Verghese is on the front lines right now in ways most of us cannot imagine. None of us at TKE have ever forgotten the moment at a reading when a woman asked if he was planning to write fulltime now that his book was so successful. Madam, he said, a look of shock on his face, medicine is my calling. We are moved beyond measure that he took time out to answer us in the midst of what he must be going through—that any of these amazing authors did. We are beyond grateful.*

### Margaret Atwood

My stack is indeed very high!

On top (and being read) right now is Hope Jahren, *The Story of More*. Very clear, climate change and threat to the planet so even the most pig headed can understand it. I'm also reading *Women in Fundamentalism*, by Maxine L. Margolis. After I'm done it will go in the *Handmaid's Tale/Testaments* file, because, like, I knew it! Then a hefty bird-related book, *Owls of the Eastern Ice*, by Jonathan Slaght. The search for the large rare Blakiston's fish owl, which I once tried to see but didn't. Set in the wilds of Eastern Russia.



## Shared Quiet, Common Comfort in Books

On the way to me by delivery are Hilary Mantel, *The Mirror & the Light* -- I'm a fan of the series, and reviewed *Bring Up the Bodies*. To go with the Tudors, I'll read *Tomblands*, by C.J. Sansom... his series started in the time of Cromwell. And another mystery, Kathy Reich's, *A Conspiracy of Bones*. I've been reading her ever since *Deja Dead*. Also Thomas King, *Obsidian* -- in his Thumps Dreadfulwater series. (The laconic, ironic Native North American detective, master of the oblique comment.) Then if I work myself up to it ... *These Truths: A History of the United States*, by Jill Lepore.

That's enough to keep me busy for a while.



**Richard Powers**

A joy, in these strange and disturbing days, to remember a far happier one, not all that long ago, wandering under the campus trees [at the University of Utah campus] and talking with you about all kinds of wonder. A welcome flashback, in self-isolation! My stack of books these days is turning toward the thick, slow, inward, and old. I'm reveling in the poems of Rumi and Hafiz. I'm marveling at how prescient

Erich Fromm was about this moment, from his vantage several decades ago. The clarity and sanity of Robert Macfarlane is the perfect antidote to noise and hysteria of all kinds. And I figured that this is a pretty great opportunity to revisit the *Decameron*, which had such an effect on me when I was a young man. I mean: if those stories were medicinal in a far wilder plague almost seven centuries ago, they ought to be even richer now. I hope this helps! And I wish you safety, health, and distilled attention in your own days of quarantine.

**Richard Russo**

The stack on my bedside table is tall enough to teeter. Despite being a writer, I would've thought that in times like these I would've wanted the distraction of TV and movies, which are more passive, but trapped as we are, all I want to do is read and write, which I think says something about what we really value when the chips are down (and boy are they ever down). Right now I'm loving the Irish writer Anne Griffin's wonderful *When All Is Said*. And I can't say enough good things about a book I recently finished, Jessica Anthony's *Enter the Aardvark* (a genuine tour de force). In the coming days and weeks I'll also be reading two books by James McBride (his new novel and his earlier memoir, *The Color of Water*). Also, because I'm missing Charles Portis, his *Escape Velocity*, which I somehow neglected. I'm hearing nothing but raves about Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*. And because I've worked a good deal in film, Sam Wasson's *The Big Goodbye*, about the making of Chinatown. And while it's not on my bedside table, what kind of a dad would I be if I didn't plug my daughter Kate's first novel *Super Host* (out this June)? *Editor's note: Like her dad, Kate Russo is a born storyteller. Super Host is fabulous—funny, insightful, and deeply affecting.*



**Elizabeth Strout**

I am reading the galley to Elena Ferrante's novel to be published in the spring, *The Lying Life of Adults*, and I am just loving it tremendously, reading it very slowly so it doesn't end. *Editor's note: This new Ferrante has been postponed until September, but in the meantime read her four-part Napolitano series published in paperback by Europa, My Brilliant Friend, The Story of a New Name, Those Who Leave and Those*

*Who Stay, The Story of the Lost Child.* By the time you've finished, her latest novel will be out and waiting for you.



**Anthony Doerr**

To-read pile for King's English

-Olga Tokarczuk, *Flights* I'm trawling my way through this weird, gorgeous, composite novel, doling it out in small doses like some precious anti-viral medicine. It brims with essays, pieces of stories, and little observations that stop you in your tracks.

-Alessandro Mazzoni, *The Betrothed* Last summer Italian friends expressed shock when I confessed I knew nothing

about this book: a big, whirling, immersive first novel, published in 1827 and set in the 17th century. So far, sixty-three pages in, I've met a bumbling local priest, bandits with knives, star-crossed lovers, and a petty local strongman... apparently a plague is coming, too. So far it's wry and compelling. And I learned that Pope Francis has read it three times!

-Brian Greene, *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe* Brian Greene is a physicist (or maybe a cosmologist?) -- he's also a marvelous teacher. If you want to give your brain a good workout, his new book covers the entire history of the universe, from the big bang until, yep, the end of time. Already this book has given me two nights of fascinating, pandemic-free thought: his reasoning reminds you how infinitesimal this moment actually is, and how unbelievably fortunate we are that we get to be here at all—to sing and dance and love and make stuff—before we're gone.

-Nora Krug, *Belonging* I love collages and mosaics, and since *Belonging* appears to be part graphic novel, part scrapbook, part handwritten memoir, I'm fascinated to see how the structure of this book works. My editor sent me this a couple of years ago and I still haven't opened it! No better time than the present.

-Jill Lepore, *These Truths* I think Jill Lepore is an absolutely brilliant writer. This is one of those books I bought in 2018 with great enthusiasm, read sixty pages of, then promptly got swept away by life and other projects. Hopefully this spring I can dive back in: a survey of America's history from 1492 to Trump, restoring so many of the stories of people (slaves, women, Native Americans) that were marginalized in the American histories I grew up with.



## Shared Quiet, Common Comfort in Books

-Hilary Mantel, *The Mirror & the Light* Probably the book I'm most excited to read this spring is a book I don't own yet, one I'm saving for a few weeks from now, in case things get even scarier: Hilary Mantel's brand new *The Mirror & the Light*. It's the third and last novel of her Wolf Hall trilogy about Henry VIII's fixer, Thomas Cromwell, a resilient, expedient operator who is not afraid to get his hands dirty. Few reading experiences have so totally swallowed me as the first two novels, and I'm so excited to see what Mantel does with the final novel. In fact, I think I'll order it from The King's English right now... *Editor's note: He did! And great news, he's just finishing revisions on a new book although he wouldn't reveal its content.*

### Isabel Allende

My unread books waiting their turn are not in a pile. They move around like a living organism. I am writing a non-fiction book about being a woman and a feminist, so half of my reading is about those themes. These are some of the titles in English, I will not mention the ones in Spanish:

-Nonfiction

*The Truth Will Set You Free, But First It Will Piss You Off*, by Gloria Steinem  
*Headscarves and Hymens*, by Mona Eltahawy  
*Men Explain Things to Me*, by Rebecca Solnit

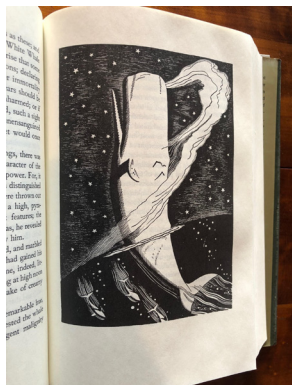
-Fiction

*Apeirogon*, by Colum McCann  
*The Lifters*, a kid's book, the only one by Dave Eggers I have not read.  
*The House of Broken Angels*, by Luis Alberto Urrea (I read it but Roger just started it)  
*Weather*, by Jenny Offill  
*Rebel Cinderella*, by Adam Hochschild  
-Two Advanced Readers copies [books not yet published]:  
*A Burning*, by Megha Majumdar  
*One Year of Ugly*, by Caroline Mackenzie  
-Finally, two audiobooks:  
*American Dirt*, by Jeanine Cummings  
*Dear Edward*, by Ann Napolitano



### Amor Towles

Betsy,  
I'm diving back into You-know-who.



### Terry Tempest Williams

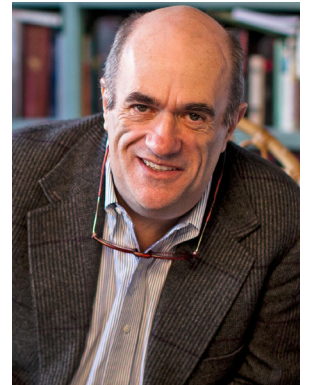
I would love to respond to your question as to what I am reading: Right now, *The Plague* by Albert Camus, strangely comforting. I am also loving Ariane Reines' revelatory poetry, *A Sand Book*. The last section called "Mosaic" printed on black paper is more than prescient, it is an Oracle for this moment in time: "Each people has the gift of its own catastrophe./ Learn how to use this gift or meet your peril."

And what's on my bedside: *Extra Hidden Life, among the Days* by Brenda Hillman, *The Way of Silence: The Prose and Poetry of Basho*, *Dissolve* by Sherwin Bitsu, *I Have Been Assigned the Single Bird* by Susan Cerulean (in galleys), *A Novel of Thank You* by Gertrude Stein, and lastly, *Dangerous Mystic: Meister Eckhart's Path to the God Within* by Joel F. Harrington This is so surreal. On one hand, I feel so selfish being home in Castle Valley where it is so beautiful as meadowlarks sing against red rock cliffs under azure skies — a reminder of all things primary. On the other hand, we all feel this low-grade fever inhabiting the world spiking with our fears. This Great Quieting — is changing us, is changing me. How extraordinary that what sent each human being on the planet home was something Unseen. Not something outside us but something inside us — a virus — of Earth — as we are — of Earth. I can never go back to the life I was living. The Earth has called us home. To be still, to reflect, to create and take care of those we love. We are a species in withdrawal — in the process of recovering our senses. Who knew being asked to stay home could be so difficult and so beautiful?

### Colm Tóibín

There is a book called *The Dreamers* by Volker Weidermann that I love. It tells the story of a group of dreamers and poets who actually took over power in Munich in 1918 in the vacuum that came after the First World War and they ran a little Soviet Republic until they were ousted. This is a true story, well-researched, but it reads like a fable.

Also: *Hitler, My Neighbor* by Edgar Feuchtwanger tells the story of the rise of Hitler from the perspective of a small Jewish boy in Munich who lived next door to him. Also: *The Big Goodbye* by Sam Wasson that tells the story of the making of the movie 'Chinatown'. And: *Tyll* by Daniel Kehlmann is the story of a trickster in Germany during the Thirty Years War. Daniel Kehlmann is a big discovery if you don't know his work. You feel you are in the hands of a born writer, a cunning story-teller, a well-stocked mind, a voice filled with invention, wit and energy. All you have to do is read the first page of *Tyll* and you know you are in the hands of someone you can trust and want to follow. And Jim Shapiro's *Shakespeare in a Divided America*. I read the last few chapters first and they are astonishing, especially the last two. Then I found some wonderful stuff in the middle, especially the Lincoln chapter. Also: *Being Here Is Everything: The Life of Paula Modersohn-Becker* by Marie Darrieussecq.



## Shared Quiet, Common Comfort in Books

PS I am revising the new novel now. It is called *The Magician* and is about Thomas Mann.

PPS Do you know a book called *The Order of the Day* by Eric Vuillard? It is about big business and Hitler. Really fascinating, and short. *Editor's note: Having read (and reread) Tóibín's The Master we can only imagine what his forthcoming book on Thomas Mann will be like. Oh, joy.*

### Erik Larson

The King's English pandemic reading list:

To escape viral chaos, I read for distraction. Right now I'm halfway through a cracker of a thriller called *The Couple Next Door*, by Shari Lapena. Unnervingly good and indeed very distracting.

In the line-up:

—*Sophie's Choice*, by William Styron.

I've read this before, but what I'm looking forward to is just losing myself in the beauty of Styron's prose.

—*My Dark Vanessa*, by Kate Elizabeth Russell. Comes highly recommended by a bookseller in Wichita, Kansas.

—*Imaginary Friend*, by Stephen Chbosky. My local indie bookstore tells me this is nice and spooky, and well written to boot.

—*Things in Jars*, by Jess Kidd.

But for other comforting reads in this time of crisis, I recommend:

—*A Gentleman in Moscow*, by Amor Towles. Ideal really: It's about a Russian count who is sentenced by Soviet authorities to spend the rest of his life in a Moscow hotel (read that, "self-quarantine") and how he conjures a seductive world of his own among a cast of offbeat characters.

—*A Man Called Ove*, by Fredrik Backman. A cranky old man who constantly finds himself affronted by the ineptitude of those around him comes to find a warm home in the world. Joyous!

—*The Witches of Eastwick*, by John Updike. It is language here that seduces and transports.

—*The Cabin at the End of the World*, by Paul G. Tremblay. No, no, no. I am kidding. Do not read this right now. Save it up for the summer, when I hope all this will be past. Because it is a brilliant, utterly terrifying read.



### Donna Leon

The new Hillary Mantel: *The Mirror & the Light*

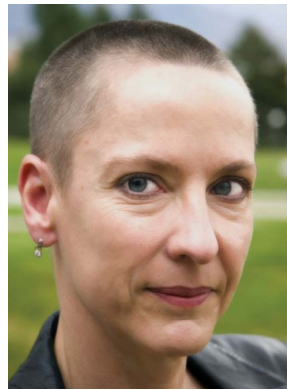
*A Place for Everything: The Curious History of Alphabetical Order* by Judith Flanders. I've started this and it's fascinating.

I plan to reread *Great Expectations*, and, if this goes on for a very long time, *Bleak House*. Dickens never disappoints.



*Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, a shocker written in 1892.

And if it goes on even longer, I'll read my way through the Patrick O'Brian sea novels. For the third time.



### Katharine Coles

An hour before I received this request, I called the store to get Hilary Mantel's newest novel, *The Mirror & the Light* (who knew that Tudor England would provide an avenue for escapism); Emily St. John Mandel's *Glass Hotel* (beautiful while being completely relevant, as was her *Station Eleven*); the newest Rebecca Solnit, *Recollections of My Nonexistence*; and two copies of Robert Hass's long-awaited *Summer Snow*, one for me and one for my mother. And I

just realized I need to call back for the new Brian Greene, *Until the End of Time*, having heard Doug Fabrizio's interview with him on my run today. Greene's question: "What is it all for, if it all goes away?" He also gives some answers. After hanging up, I hopped on line and ordered gift certificates for my nieces and nephew-in-law. I am about to email those along, with the news that the store delivers locally and seems also to be offering \$1.00 (!?) shipping. My best read lately, by the way, was my reread of *Middlemarch*, which like *Moby Dick* and *Mrs. Dalloway* just gets better with time. You wouldn't think I'd need all these, since books were really all I stockpiled for the duration, in the sense that I acquired more than I could possibly need to get me through. But it turns out more than enough is never enough. *Editor's note: After our Mayor's Stay at Home proclamation we stopped same-day delivery and drive-by pickup. But we recently modified and restarted both programs and no longer offer \$1.00 shipping.*

### Leif Enger

With travel & other distractions out of reach for the moment, here's my stack. Top to bottom: a beautiful British edition of Anne Fadiman's essays, which I read every few years to remember how essays ought to be; the new Louise Erdrich, which I plan to start tonight; an ARC of the forthcoming novel from stellar Minnesotan writer Peter Geye; current releases from James McBride and Isabel Allende; and lastly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Superstitions*, which I found at an estate sale and is not only fun to dip into but turns out a lively source for the book I'm writing now. It's so good to see everything The King's English is doing to engage and assist readers through the viral crunch. Our own local indie, Zenith Books, is taking similar care and helping in every way possible. This afternoon I made an order, drove down to the store, and exchanged a laugh and long-distance chat with Bob Dobrow, the owner, as he unlocked the door and set a bag down on the sidewalk, then locked himself back in. These are strange times, and how reassuring that booksellers, and books themselves, are going to see us through.





## Shared Quiet, Common Comfort in Books

### Paisley Rekdal

I'm reading a big pile of books right now, starting with the Hilary Mantel trilogy. I never actually got time to read *Wolf Hall* a decade ago, so I'm treating myself by plunging in now. (I did NOT realize that it is set in a time of plague, so I may be crying more than I normally would while reading.) I have *Bring Up the Bodies* and *The Mirror & the Light* waiting on my desk for when I finish. After that, new work from my colleagues at the University of Utah: Lindsey Drager's *The Archive of Alternate Endings* and Lance Olsen's *My Red Heaven*. And since I write poetry and essays, I have a lot of books I can dip into and out of as I sit at my desk and contemplate my mortality each day: *The Irrationalists*, by Suzanne Buffam, *The Great Medieval Yellows*, by Emily Wilson, *Shrapnel Maps*, by Phil Metres, and *Animals Strike Curious Poses* by Elena Passarello, who will—barring the total collapse of civilization—be coming to read on our campus in spring 2021. Finally, I love translations, so this is a great time to spend on Ha Seong-Nan's strange short stories, *Bluebeard's Wife* (I used to live in South Korea, so am very interested in this), and Michael Ben-Naftali's novel, *The Teacher*. For those of you into erotica (who, YOU?) I also recommend the short, spicy novel, *The Proof of the Honey*, by Salwa Al Neimi. And finally, because I'm a big fan of murder mysteries, quantum physics and Downton Abbey, I'm going to read the murder mystery *The 7 ½ Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle*, by Stuart Turton. Hope this gets me to Easter—



### Karl Marlantes

Hope you're doing OK. Being a writer married to a classical musician, I have been self-isolating for years, so other than the black cloud of what's happening "out there" beyond my patch of the woods, not a lot has changed for us.

I have two bedside piles. One is the pile that lives with me for years, and the other is what rotates. (I've done one of these for King's English before, so you may see some repetition from my

permanent pile.)

In my permanent pile: I always have two bibles. One is a King James version that I have had since I took my first communion. The other tends to get rotated depending on what translation seems to be calling me. Right now, I dip nightly into a translation by Eugene Peterson called *The Message*. It is in totally modern, colloquial American English. I find it fun to compare his translation with the more traditional ones. Yes, nerdy.

Also in the permanent pile:

*The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, translated by Alistair Shearer.

*Classics of Indian Spirituality: Bhagavad Gita, Dhammapada, and Upanishads*, translated by Eknath Easwaran. And almost permanent is a very large book which I take a page at a time, but it probably will go back on the book shelf when I finish it, *The Gospel of Sri Ramak-*

*rishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, with a forward by Aldous Huxley.

In my current pile:

*The Voice*, a poem by Julia Karpeisky with illustrations by Anna Yakuboskaya.

*Mortal Republic: How Rome Fell to Tyranny*, by Edward J. Watts.

*Night Soldiers*, by Alan Furst.

*The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777*, by Rick Atkinson.

I also have the current issues of *Foreign Affairs* and *Sky and Telescope*. All the past issues are stacked on the coffee table in the living room until my wife gets tired of the clutter and makes me choose which go into the recycling. Finally, there is one that has been sitting there for several months, but which I don't seem to be able to get organized enough to read: *What's a Disorganized Person to Do?* by Stacey Platt.

### Pam Houston

I am scared and sad like everyone, but I also can hardly believe I get to stay home for a month (or 18) and read. So, on my literal stack are the following books, all of which I am excited about.

Memoir

*Later*, by Paul Lisicky. Paul might be my favorite memoirist writing today. *The Narrow Door* was so profound a part of me I'm still living inside it.

*What You Have Heard Is True*, by Carolyn Forché. I have heard Carolyn read from this memoir and every word was dazzling, honed by a poet's heart and love of the line.

*At the Center of All Beauty, Solitude and the Creative Life*, by Fenton Johnson, who is my best friend. (Fenton the human)

Fiction

*Evening in Paradise* by Lucia Berlin. *A Manual for Cleaning Women* jumped up to my top ten all time list last year when I finally discovered it.

*Angels of the Universe* by Einar Mar Gudmundsson, the most recommended book to me while I was in Iceland last September

*Sula*, by Toni Morrison, because I reread and reread all of her books and that is the one I am on in the rotation.

Anthologies

*Dear America, Letters of Hope, Habitat, Defiance, and Democracy*, by a whole bunch of writers including one letter from me.

*Earthy Love, Stories of Intimacy and Devotion*, also containing an essay by yours truly, but very excited to read the ones by Camille Dungy, Scott Russel Sanders and others.

A Whole Bunch of Poetry: In really difficult times there is nothing like poetry to feel connected to your fellow human beings. In my stack I have the following books of poems:

*Pale Colors in A Tall Field* by Carl Phillips



## Shared Quiet, Common Comfort in Books

*The Tradition* by Jericho Brown

*Dissolve* by Sherwin Bitsui

*In The Lateness of the World* by Carolyn Forché

*Homie*, by Danez Smith

*Calling a Wolf A Wolf*, by Kaveh Akbar

Editor's note: see note below Amy Irvine's list for more on Pam Houston



Amy Irvine

I'll admit I was obsessed with dystopian narratives before the coronavirus, so those are at the top of my teetering tower of books. I'm especially interested in the non-white, non-male perspective on the apocalypse, in part because those books are less about survival and isolation than they are about community and intimacy. Such works have taken hold also because I'm interested in the way climate chaos and related issues such as pandemics, migrations,

and extinctions are at work in stories outside the environmental writing genre--that are being read broadly. Why? Because most of us writing about environmental concerns have failed to fundamentally change the systems and behaviors that threaten our only home. Sadly, we're largely preaching to the choir. So here's what I have just read or am about to read again: *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler (this work is so prescient, and it was written in the '90s!), *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich, *The End We Start From* by Megan Hunter, *The Dog Stars* by Peter Heller (he's a privileged white guy, but he's writing about a post-pandemic in the Intermountain West, and he's writing about love, and it's just so beautiful), *Gold Fame Citrus* by Claire Vaye Watkins, *The Book of Joan* by Lidia Yuknavitch, *Bangkok Wakes to Rain* by Pitchaya Sudbanthad. I am also returning to the epic poem, *The Descent of Alette* by Alice Notley. It is very much a female descent narrative to rival Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but instead of the male narrator ascending to heaven in the end, to merge with the Beloved, Alette is transformed into an owl, and sent back into the world to "kill the Tyrant." When she ascends from the Underground, others are emerging too, as wild animals, to predate on tyranny. This book, more than any other, is my go-to these days. To remind me why art is also activism, and it's never been as necessary as it is right now. *Alette* also reminds me to return to the animal body. To the sensual, sensory and visceral embodiment of ourselves. When we connect with the body, we connect with the world. We cannot save what we are disconnected from. Editor's note: Amy Irvine added in a subsequent email, "As the world falls apart, as the quarantine continues, it is impossible to make sense of it all. Pam Houston and I are having an urgent back and forth about it that Orion Mag will publish online next week, I think. These correspondences, including the one with you, are such a sweet part of slowing down, of retaining our humanity. I have never been more grateful for the Internet and suspect I am far from alone in this sentiment."

Bill Clegg

I wish I were more adventurous in my reading now, but this week I find myself returning to old favorites, some calming like W.S. Merwin's collection, *The Vixen*; and others, like the stories and novels of Lauren Groff, that mirror and validate this upside down time. An early environmentalist, Merwin's *Vixen* is both a love song to the natural world and an aching, nostalgic elegy of a place and time that no longer exists. In the title poem there is the line 'let me see catch sight of you again' and it makes me ache for a time I didn't expect to end, the one when I didn't fear the breath and touch of loved ones, not to mention my own and their power to harm. There is also a poem in the collection called 'Peire Vidal' which is the most pleasing poem to read out loud. It is epic and wild, a boasting and bitter monologue of a poem that holds the whole world in it and offers something new every time I read it. I also can't shake the warnings in so much [of] Lauren Groff's work - the first short story of hers that I ever read, L. Debarde and Aliette, was set in the flu pandemic of 1918; and the ending pages of her masterpiece *Arcadia*, the novel before *Fates and Furies*, which forecasts a fearful near future rife with scarcity and disease; and most recently her collection *Florida*, which illuminates both a mindset in modern times and a natural world hurtling toward the brink. Editor's note: Bill's email went astray and we just received this, thanks be. He has a fantastic new novel coming this fall with a title that might be all too apt right now, *At the End of the Day*.



Mary Beth Keane

I have several stacks of books scattered around the house. My priority pile is in my bedroom and if we're looking for silver linings in all of this, mine is that I've been powering through that pile. I'm about two-thirds into *Dominicana* by Angie Cruz. The main character here, Ana, rises from the page fully formed. Plucked from her childhood in the Dominican Republic and married at fifteen to a man in his thirties, I rooted for her from the moment I met her. It's a novel of immigration, leaving home - a genre I'm always drawn to - but more than that she's a girl, and then a woman, trying to find power in a world ruled by men. Next up will be *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* by Maggie O'Farrell. I'm on a big O'Farrell kick right now, after having read *Hamnet* a few months ago. After that the plan is: *Wyoming* by JP Gritton, *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, and *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen. I'd also like to plug three other books I've already read but have been too lazy to actually carry downstairs and place on my bookshelf where the read books go: *Valentine* by Elizabeth Wetmore, *St. Ivo* by Joanna Hershon and *Good Morning, Destroyer of Men's Souls* by Nina Aron.



## So Many Books, So Much Time

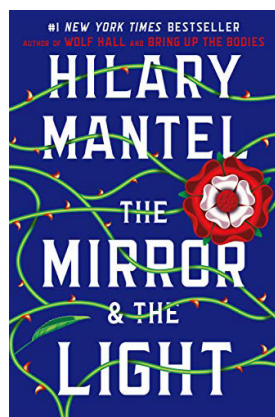
Overcome by joy at the responses of so many authors beloved by all of you—and by their dazzling lists—we are equally bowled over by publishers' lists this year. As you are about to see, publishers have collectively sent into the world in 2020 some of the most stunning new books that we've seen in decades. Add to such magnificent novels in January and February as *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann, *A Long Petal to the Sea* by Isabel Allende, *Run Me to Earth* by Paul Yoon and *Weather* by Jenny Offill and such unexpected and thought-provoking mysteries as *My Dark Vanessa* by Kate Elizabeth Russell and *Things in Jars* by Jess Kidd (see the forthcoming section of our last *Inkslinger*), the wealth of spring fiction, nonfiction and mysteries by everyone from Hilary Mantel and James McBride, Emily St. John Mandel, Sebastian Barry, and Louise Erdrich to Erik Larson and James Shapiro, Julian Barnes and Rebecca Solnit, not to mention mystery writers

from Susan Hill to Ottessa Moshfegh, to the new Ojibwe author Dennis Staples.... Fear not, there is no shortage of brilliant new books available to you from TKE as you wait and try not to worry, ponder and try not to fear what awaits us all in the coming weeks.

We are equally wowed and utterly humbled by our booksellers' passion for good books, by the depth and breadth of their knowledge, and by their ongoing efforts to supply you with books, yes, but also with ideas and suggestions, whether via virtual reality, phone or the pages of the *Inkslinger*, that take you where you wish to travel—by book if not by plane or train. We wish you safety and peace, ongoing good health, a surcease of angst and rage and a wealth of newfound knowledge to see you through the days ahead.

Betsy Burton, Editor and Publisher

### FICTION



*The Mirror & the Light*, Hilary Mantel

Mantel's (*Wolf Hall*, *Bring Up the Bodies*) Thomas Cromwell alternately soothes and schemes his way through the present and through dreams of times past, so seldom surprised by the actions of others that when he's occasionally taken aback the reader is stunned. Uncanny in his understanding of women, of the ambition that drives humankind, and of the currents of history, his is a character of Shakespearean stature. As is Henry Tudor's, arrogant, erratic, as insecure—and as cruel—as that

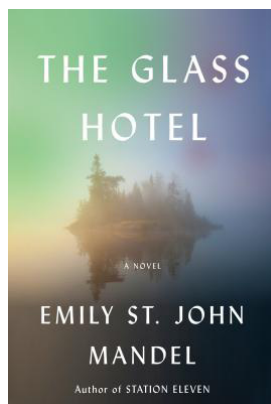
of our present president. Mantel's mind is not just brilliant but capacious enough to house the entangled narratives of recorded history, canny enough to recognize their complications and complexities—and to make literary (and emotional) sense of them. Enlightening, utterly involving and hundreds of glorious pages long, this is the perfect way to face and even embrace the coming hours, days, and weeks ahead, learning the lessons the past has to teach in the process.

– Betsy Burton, Henry Holt, \$30

*The Glass Hotel*, Emily St. John Mandel

Take a Bernie Madoff-like Ponzi scheme, a chic and difficult-to-get-to hotel on Vancouver Island, a touch of fantasy and a very diverse cast of characters and you've got what Mandel creates so well...a narrative that grips you on page one and keeps you on tenterhooks until the last page. I know we often say we go back and start a book over after we finish but this one I really did flip over and begin again because I wanted to experience it anew. And it's as if a newsreel has been running through my imagination ever since I finished it (the second time)!

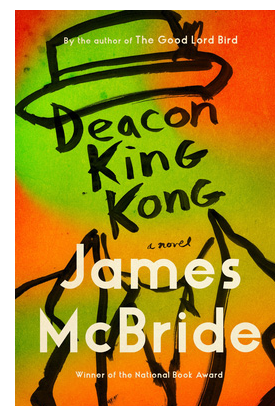
– Anne Holman, Knopf, \$26.95



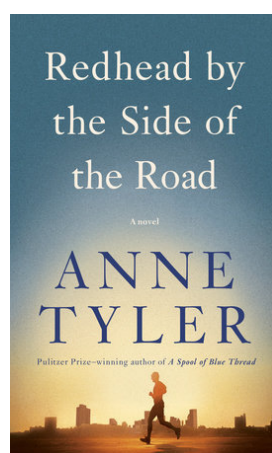
*Deacon King Kong*, James McBride

Sportcoat, an old man who drinks too much and gets into daily arguments with his dead wife, is so overcome by the ruination of his neighborhood at the hands of a baseball-star-turned-drug-dealer that, improbable as it may seem, the aging Deacon shoots said drug-dealer in front of God and the population of their South Brooklyn Housing Project. In a novel as boisterously funny as it is touching, as truth-telling as it is wacky, McBride weaves a tale of hilarity and wonder, proving the adage that home is where the heart is. I loved every page.

– Betsy Burton, Riverhead, \$28

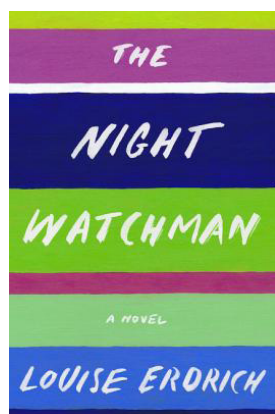


*Redhead by the Side of the Road*, Anne Tyler



Over the decades, Tyler's characters have become my friends. From the early days of Cody, Jenny, and Ezra in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* to Macon Leary in *The Accidental Tourist* and, more recently, to Willa Drake in *Clock Dance*. They each offer a piece of themselves that I keep with me, causing me to smile when remembering their stories. And now we meet Micah Mortimer, a nice enough fellow but one so wedded to his routine that it threatens to undo even the tiniest bit of happiness thrust his way. An IT expert, he could make more money if he just upped his game a bit. He has a nice girlfriend who is looking for a little more but that would mean getting out of his routine for sure. He's a chicken-on-Monday, fish-on-Friday kind of guy; so what happens when a teenager materializes at his back door claiming to be his son? You'll have to become friends with Micah to find out!

– Anne Holman, Knopf, \$25.95



***The Night Watchman*, Louise Erdrich**

There is so much to love in Erdrich's new book: a plot about white plotters trying to steal Chippewa land; tall tales from *The Book of Mormon*, the *Bible*, and collective Chippewa memory; a young woman lost in the city whose sister and mother fear for her, dream her danger; her sister, Patrice, whose hated nickname, Pixie, belies her always able, often implacable nature; Wood Mountain, a brilliant boxer who'd rather love than fight; the white math teacher Haystack and, white also, a

couple of Mormon missionaries whose dislike of one another is fast turning to hatred; Millie, well-educated, smart, clearly on the autism spectrum; Roderick, an unassimilated Chippewa ghost; and Thomas, the factory's night watchman, who watches over them all—or tries to. It is Thomas who marshals a plan to save the reservation from the plotters in Washington D.C. and who puts together the pieces of their resistance with the advice of his ancient father Biboon. It is Thomas who orchestrates their assault on Congress against the humorless Mormon Senator Arthur V. Watkins—along with the Senator for Indian Affairs, Rex Lee (holy moly this really is based on fact!). Erdrich's boisterous, bewitching, seemingly improbable tale is as enraging as it is hilarious, as heartbreaking as it is entertaining, as whimsical, humorous, heroic as it is factual. A true story in the best sense of the word. I loved every page. – Betsy Burton, Harper, \$28.99

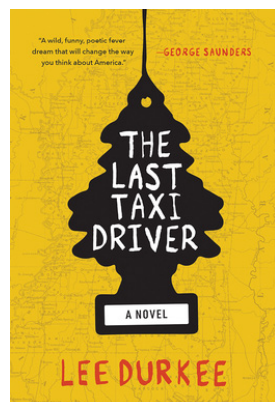
***A Thousand Moons*, Sebastian Barry**

Barry, recently named Laureate for Irish Fiction, returns with the continuing tale of Thomas McNulty (first introduced in *Days Without End*), an Irish emigrant who became a soldier at the time of the Indian Wars and eventually found himself fighting for the Union in the Civil War. He and his lover, John Cole, rescue a Sioux Indian child, name her Winona and raise her in west Tennessee as their own. This is Winona's story when, as a young teenager, she faces a town not inclined to like Indians, rebels who are still fighting for the Confederacy, and a boy who wants to marry her, but may offer her violence rather than safety. Poetry shines through Barry's writing, which is dense, beautifully constructed and rich with the language and soul of his characters. Probably my favorite Irish author—he never fails to astonish me!

– Sue Fleming, Viking, \$27

***The Last Taxi Driver*, Lee Durkee**

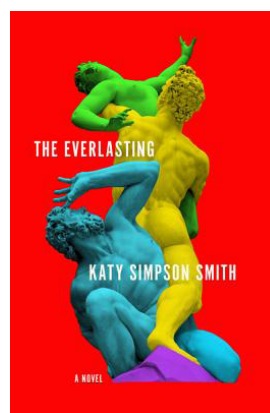
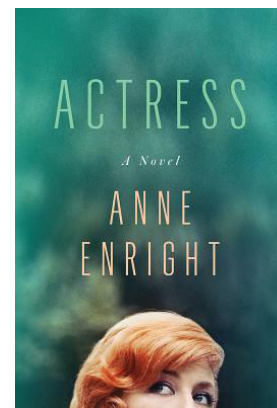
Over the course of 24 hours in a small Mississippi college town, our protagonist, Lou, picks up and drops off a wild and crazy array of folks who need a cab, either because they don't have a car, are drunk, planning to be, or are literally sick. As in, they are leaving the hospital and going either home or back to prison—it's hard



to tell with these people. What is clear is that Lou is too nice to be a taxi driver. He lets people cheat him out of money, convince him to drive them way out of his jurisdiction, wait while they have surgery (yes, the hospital bit) or just plain mistreat him. What will also be clear is that you'll wish with all your heart that your next Uber driver is as great as Lou. – Anne Holman, Tin House Books, \$25.95

***Actress*, Anne Enright**

If Enright (winner of the Booker Prize) had not disclaimed “key characters in this novel are completely fictional and are based on no person living or dead,” I would have been certain that Katherine O'Dell (the actress around whom the action focuses) had actually been a gift to the Irish and American theatre and film. Such is the craft of this masterful writer! Katherine springs to life through her daughter Norah's perceptive narrative: “My mother had a voice that arrived from everywhere....She could cry out of one eye or both, Hollywood style.... move in and out of character, right there in front of you... shift a shoulder, settle her mouth, change behind the eyes....She certainly knew how to make an entrance.” Norah takes us on her mother's theatrical journey from its high point in her defining role as a red-haired Irish nursing sister who, like a “clumsy pieta,” holds a dying soldier in her arms, to a medieval adulteress to a murdered woman's unreliable sister. But success is fleeting: “In those days, when a woman hits 30, she went home and shut the door.” Katherine lives to be 58, spiraling into madness and alcoholism; ultimately she is confined to a mental hospital for shooting a producer in the toe (he later loses his leg). Through all of this we also come to know Norah, who becomes her mother's nurse, sidekick, and most ardent fan—the actress and her “over-shadowed child.” Enright is unflinching in her depiction of Irish places, primarily Dublin where Katherine engages with the IRA protesters, and Norah, in the aftermath of a bombing, writes, “I knew she was a woman by the handbag still attached to her wrist.” *Actress* lovingly and wittily explores the often fragile, always complex relationship of a mother and her daughter, made intoxicatingly dramatic by its theatrical setting. – Carol Kranes, Norton, \$26.95



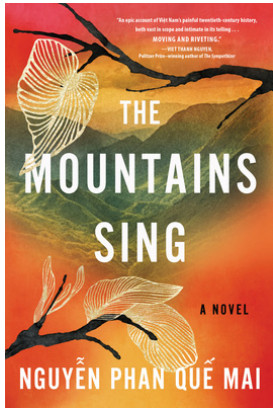
***The Everlasting*, Katy Simpson Smith**

In this novel of passion, Smith's hook is, literally, a fisherman's hook. Her four stories, all set in Rome, span centuries—165 CE to present day. Tom, a modern-day microbiologist, is in Rome to research ostracods. While collecting specimens from a pond near the ruined monastery of Santa Prisca, a child cries out, and Tom wades into the water to carefully extract a hook from the child's finger. Heading backwards in time, Giulia, a powerful Medici princess, pregnant by a man not

her husband, navigates the religious and political intrigues of her time. She discovers the rusted hook carefully wrapped in cloth, a relic put in her trust by the brotherhood of Santa Prisca. Moving still fur-



ther back in time, Felix, a 60-year old monk in the poor monastery of Santa Prisca, has spent a lifetime struggling against his forbidden desire. He buys the hook from a street vendor in the hope it may have belonged to the martyred Santa Prisca. Prisca herself, a 12-year old in 165, finds the fisherman's hook in the pond adjacent to her family's farm. She imagines it to be her link with Christ, fisher of men, and keeps it, as a token of her budding faith in a God still outlawed by the Roman Empire. – Michelle Macfarlane, Harper, \$27.99



***The Mountains Sing*, Nguyen Phan Que Mai**

It's painful to read about American bombs (7 million tons) and Agent Orange devastating Vietnam. (Why were we even fighting there?) *The Mountains Sing* provides an unflinching, personal story of four generations of the Tran family as they suffer and survive with remarkable courage and compassion. Opening the past to her granddaughter, Huong, the matriarch Dieu Lan tells of being robbed of the family's prosperous farm by

Communists in the 1955 Land Reform, then fleeing with five of her six children. As a beggar, she becomes "invisible," and faces unspeakable choices. Twenty years later, now as narrator, Huong carries the story forward when both she and her grandmother survive the American bombardment. Though Dieu Lan becomes a trader in the black market, and the family gains financial success, they are isolated and shunned because of this illegal activity. Two uncles and Huong's mother return from the war, crippled, emotionally bruised, dying yet optimistic and resilient as they tell of their suffering. This is an intimate, lyrical love story which tests loyalties to country, family and religion, ultimately observing that "In times of crisis people are kind" and "Good luck hides inside bad luck." A MUST READ for anyone who wants to discover Vietnam, and for Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans searching to understand their grandparents and parents. – Carol Kranes, Algonquin, \$26.95 *Editor's note: One of the seven books The New York Times "Travel" section recommends for reading about a place when you can't travel today.*

***The Book of Longings*, Sue Monk Kidd**

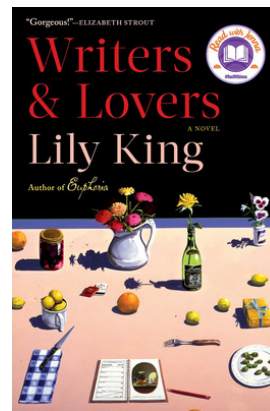
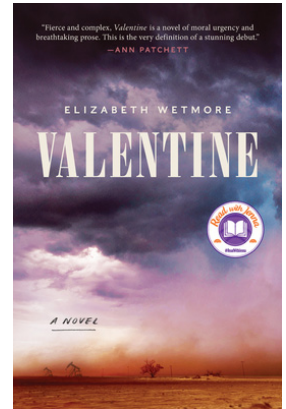
Kidd's (*The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Invention of Wings*) new novel, tells the story of Ana, wife of Jesus, in beautiful, audacious, thoughtful prose. He is her Beloved and she, his Little Thunder, a writer and poet who is reviled by her family and sent into exile to Egypt for her misdeeds. Kidd makes the argument that marriage was the sacred duty of every Jewish man, and, while no record of a wife appears in the Bible, neither is it said anywhere that she did not exist. Kidd's portrayal of Jesus is fully human. We meet his parents, brothers and extended family before his baptism by John. We see his wandering in the wilderness and his subsequent teaching to the Jews of Galilee. Ana is the daughter of Matthias, head scribe to Herod Antipas, and for a time she is allowed quills and parchment to indulge her headstrong desire



to write. Her rebellion truly begins when she is betrothed to a man twice her age. On the day of her betrothal, hiding her writings in a cave outside town, she encounters the young carpenter she's seen in the market. Befriended by Phasalis, wife of Antipas, Ana visits the palace one day and catches the attention of the governor, who insists on capturing her beauty in mosaic form—a sin of terrible proportion to Jews. Then her betrothed unexpectedly dies of a flu rampaging the city, and, seen not to sufficiently mourn him, she is accused of fornication and stealing. It is her subsequent stoning that Jesus interrupts in a masterful plot. Without giving away any more, I ask only that readers enter this world that Kidd so realistically renders to judge for themselves the validity of such bold subject matter. – Anne Stewart Mark, Viking, \$28

***Valentine*, Elizabeth Wetmore**

Remember these names: Gloria, Corinne, Debra Ann, Ginny, Mary Rose, Glory, Suzanne and Karla. This story takes place in Odessa, Texas, in the mid-'70s, and maybe the small-town oil patches were worse places than others for women. But really, weren't most places? Aren't many places still? One terrible thing happens to Gloria and everyone else for miles around is left to interpret it as they see fit. Over the course of this amazing debut novel we get to know each of these females in her own voice. They are all strong and sad and funny, and you find yourself rooting for each and every one of them to get what they want, whether in Texas or far, far away. – Anne Holman, HarperCollins, \$26.99



***Writers & Lovers*, Lily King**

Most of Casey's friends have let go of their literary aspirations, settling for more practical careers or for marriage. But she writes and rewrites the novel she's determined to finish, taking her characters up and down the stairs of their lives even as her own mental balance starts to teeter. King regards Casey with a kind-hearted yet clear-eyed acuity that brings her to aching and believable life, her panic attacks and her waitressing feats limned with equal parts humor and empathy.

Gorgeously written, perceptive, moving, this is a book any writer will love—as will anyone who has waited tables, waited for love, or for will-o'-the-wisp inspiration to strike. – Betsy Burton, Grove, \$27

***Enter the Aardvark*, Jessica Anthony**

Ahh, the magnificent Washington Beltway and all it brings to bear on our nation's health and humanity. Alexander Paine Wilson, a denizen of said environ, is about to run for reelection and believes he's a shoo-in. Not since Ronald Reagan



has a Republican been so trustworthy, so handsome, so, so, all that. He even has a pretty girlfriend that he may or not be getting engaged to soon. So when a stuffed aardvark is delivered to his townhouse it couldn't be meant for him from his secret, gay boyfriend, could it? Bitingly funny and prescient; a novel for our times. – Anne Holman, Little, Brown, \$26

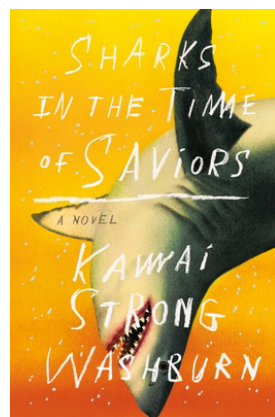


**Exile Music**, Jennifer Steil

Orly is a child living a full life in Vienna with her parents, her older brother Willi and her best friend Anneliese. The two little girls are inseparable. Orly's parents are both professional musicians, but as the Nazi menace overtakes Austria they lose their jobs and are forced into a ghetto. It becomes evident they must get out. Willi escapes to Switzerland, and after many days of loss and confusion, the family finally gets their visas to move to Bolivia, the last country in the Western Hemisphere to accept Jewish refugees. This story takes you through the incredible adjustments Orly and her parents make in adapting to a new world so totally different from the one they left, portraying their fears, their losses, the steps they take to create a life in a new land. But it also tells a richer tale of the Bolivia which Orly must adjust to as she develops during her youth and adolescent years: her passion for reading, her friendships, her sexual awakening, and also her learning a Bolivian instrument, keeping music in the family. Central to all of this is the incredible landscape of high mountains surrounding La Paz, so unlike the Alps she had known as a young child. I loved this book. – Deon Hilger, Viking, \$27

**Sharks in the Time of Saviors**, Kawai Strong Washburn

Noa, who falls overboard off the coast of Hawai'i and is rescued, literally, by sharks, becomes a sort of totem in the family, bringing in badly needed money with his supernatural healing prowess but at the same time engendering the jealousy of his two siblings, especially that of his brother Dean. Over the course of this astonishing debut novel the family splinters, the siblings coming of age as they grow apart, finding homes in California, Idaho, Oregon. And yet their fates do intertwine—bound by their family's past, the deeply mysterious past of their Hawaiian ancestors—despite their need to separate, to find their own distinctive voices. And distinctive voices they are, by turns raging, crying out, whispering in a lyrical language of hope. – Betsy Burton, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$27

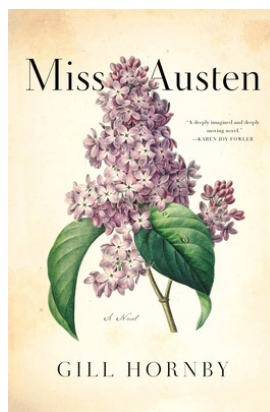


**The Authenticity Project**, Clare Pooley

This is a novel to curl up with next to a cozy fire with a cup of tea, a perfect remedy for these times. Heartbreakingly lonely artist Julian Jessop, who has been mourning his dead wife for 15 years, asks the question: why are people not truly honest with each other? And so he writes about his own struggles in a small green notebook. Entitling it "The Authenticity Project," he leaves it at his favorite café in East London and challenges whoever picks it up to write honestly about their own life before leaving it for the next person. Monica the owner of the café is the first. Others who find the notebook include a drug addict, an overachieving mother, and a beautiful Aussie adventurer. All bravely add truths about their own loves, losses and selves until soon an interconnectivity occurs as people discover each other in real life. This little book reminds readers of the joy of connecting with one another—something we are all trying to do during this particularly difficult period of social distancing. – Anne Stewart Mark, Viking, \$26



**Miss Austen**, Gill Hornby

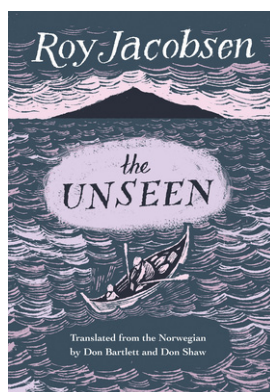


**Miss Austen**, Gill Hornby

In her dotage Cassandra Austen, sister to Jane, sets out to find and if necessary destroy letters Jane had written long ago—particularly those penned to her dear friend Eliza. Determined to protect her beloved sister's legacy and willing to go to great lengths to do so, Cassandra descends uninvited on the niece of a man to whom she was once betrothed. Thus begins a tart and observant tale of entangled families and of tangled strands of memory that cross lines of age and class.

Brimfull of the yearning for love (whether romantic or that of family and friends), always at the heart of Austen's work. – Betsy Burton, Flatiron, \$26.99

## FICTION IN PAPER

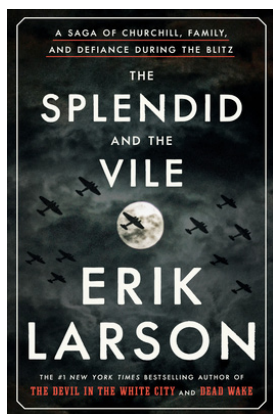


**The Unseen**, Roy Jacobsen (translated from Norwegian by Don Sham and Don Bartlett)

"Once you settle on an island, you never leave, an island holds on to what it has with all its might and main." Jacobsen's **The Unseen** occupies pure, rugged, literary terrain. This is an endurance story of the Barroys who live quite isolated on an island in Norway, in a place they can't seem to leave, even though the modern world is but a boat-ride away. The unforgiving sea gives and takes, but mostly

takes. The creatures, both human and animal, serve a purpose. Nothing is wasted on the island, nor are the words on the page. I read this novel while in the middle of a huge snowstorm and all I wanted was to wrap myself in cushy eider duck down. I was transported and you will be too! – Jamie Ortwein, Biblioasis, \$16.95





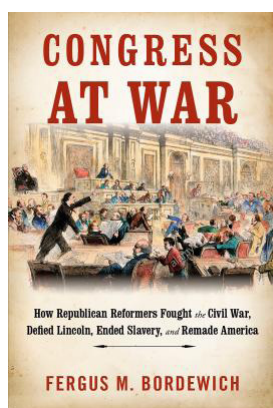
***The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson**

As in his previous *Dead Wake*, Larson brings history to life in a riveting account of Winston Churchill's first year as Prime Minister of Great Britain during the Second World War. Reading like a novel, Larson's account of the Blitz personalizes the horrors faced by the British people from the Nazi air onslaught. It describes in vivid detail the agonizing decisions Churchill had to make in fighting the Germans, holding together his government in the face of many who wished

to find a compromise with Hitler, persuading Franklin Roosevelt to aid England, and sustaining the morale of the British people. A truly remarkable tale told by a master storyteller. – Jack Mark, Crown \$32

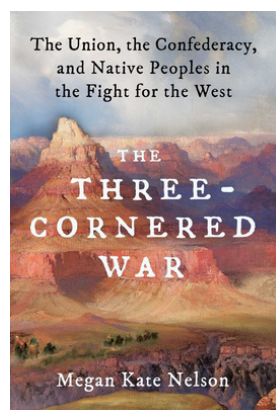
***Congress at War: How Republican Reformers Fought the Civil War, Defied Lincoln, Ended Slavery, and Remade America*, Fergus M. Bordewich**

Bordewich offers a deep understanding of the American Civil War, especially from a policy perspective. And, interestingly, the leader of the policy changes during the Civil War era turns out not to have been Abraham Lincoln but a progressive faction of Republican members of Congress! The Republican Party had just been formed in 1854 in Ripon, Wisconsin, as an anti-slavery party and within a few short years had managed to send a large number of progressives to Congress and elect a President. Bordewich's account follows the actions of four of these progressive Republicans as they prod and push Lincoln to bolder action and steer the war-time Congress toward legislation which is still impacting the United States to this day. The author's style and wonderful description of the personalities create a very enjoyable book—and make you wonder what happened to the Republican Party. No better read for these worried times! – Patrick Fleming, Knopf, \$32.50



***The Three-Cornered War*, Megan Kate Nelson**

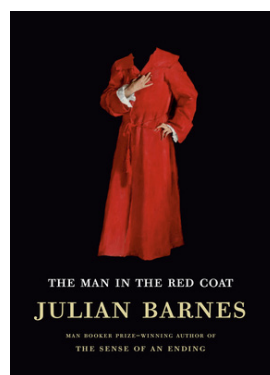
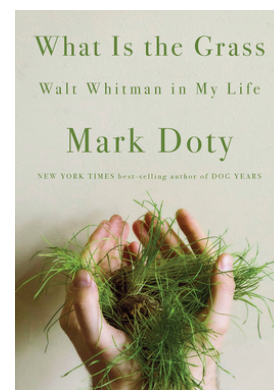
Nelson's examination of how the Civil War was waged in the American West focuses not only on the clashes between the Union and Confederacy but also Native Americans and Mexicans throughout the Southwest. This vast land encompassed modern-day Arizona, New Mexico and California where the push for and against slavery as well as the desire to fulfill manifest destiny with settlers flooding into lands previously held by Native



Americans and Mexican settlers created a maelstrom. Nelson focuses on nine individuals who represented each side of the fight and, in doing so, gives us a thorough view of the issues. – Barbara Hoagland, Scribner, \$28

***What Is the Grass: Walt Whitman in My Life*, Mark Doty**

In the first few pages of his homage to Whitman, Doty writes of how this “thin, oversized book [*Leaves of Grass*] was, to put it plainly, weird.” Weird is a strong word. But how else to make his case for, to jolt the modern reader into a sense of, just how revolutionary Whitman's mid-19th century masterwork was, in particular, his “Song of Myself?” Time and again Doty wonders from whence Whitman drew his authority to write in such a way, as no poet who had come before. “Who is this I” who in his own 1885 preface describes a poet as one “who glows for a moment on the extremist verge?” Doty culls words and phrases, whole passages even, from the masterwork to demonstrate Whitman's own awareness of what he had set out to do as both man and poet—“loosening doors from their jambs”—and to demonstrate how very high Whitman saw the stakes to be. Over the course of this marvelous memoir, we come to see how high the stakes are here, as well, for Doty. As Doty's own narrative of homosexual desire braids with his startlingly personal explications of passages in *Leaves of Grass*, we come to see how Doty's body of contemporary work stems precisely from the roots of Whitman's profound influence upon him. – Michelle Macfarlane, Norton, \$25.95

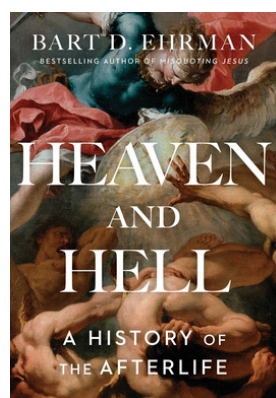
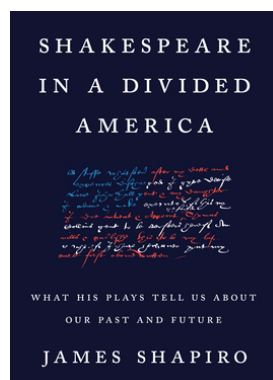


***The Man in the Red Coat*, Julian Barnes**

Beginning his novel brilliantly and providing a superb lesson for creative writing classes, Barnes also drops provocative clues to upcoming events in the book. The principal subject is Dr. Jean Samuel Pozzi, whose portrait John Singer Sargent captured in his striking “Dr. Pozzi at Home” (1881). Barnes introduces us to his witty, perceptive vision of France's Belle Epoque and its doctor, a handsome, distinguished physician and pioneering gynecologist whose hospital management and operating room techniques saved countless lives. While most have not heard of Dr. Pozzi, we certainly are familiar with the glitterati who surround him (many his patients): Henry James, Oscar Wilde, Sarah Bernhardt, Marcel Proust (for example). Dr. Pozzi marries Therese Loth, a wealthy French woman, but after only 18 months the marriage seems “deeply damaged.” After 30 years the couple separate but cannot divorce because of her Catholic beliefs. “Biography is a collection of holes tied together with string, and nowhere more so than with the sexual and amatory life.” Barnes is scrupulous in presenting details of Dr. Pozzi's life (and of those many others he recounts), always admitting “What we cannot know” distinguishing it from “This is what they said, anyway.” Delicious digressions are a tempting focus in this work: Oscar Wilde's trial, “dandies,” life as it imitates art, duels, attempted (sometimes successful) murders are only a few examples. The book also showcases 21 beautifully rendered, sometimes humorous full-page illustrations (most in color) and numerous tiny celebrity portraits, as these poets, politicians, artists, actresses and popes are discussed. Dr. Pozzi's life ends on June 13, 1918. He lives on in *The Man in the Red Coat*. – Carol Kranes, Knopf, \$26.95

***Shakespeare in a Divided America*, James Shapiro**

The very word Shakespeare wends its way through American history in every classroom in the nation. Shapiro's stories, illustrated with lively vignettes, follow America's chronological history. He selects eight critical moments in U.S. history to demonstrate the public's use of Shakespeare for good or for ill in response to them. Shapiro begins with President John Quincy Adams's reaction to Desdemona and Othello and Caliban in the era of mass immigration. He ends with a modern, controversial New York staging of Julius Caesar in which a Trump-like leader is assassinated. Shapiro is a storyteller as fascinating as he is informative. He demonstrates his love of Shakespeare's dramas along with the human responses which readings from Shakespeare still evoke. — Wendy Foster Leigh, Penguin, \$27



***Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife*, Bart D. Ehrman**

At the core of modern Christianity is the concept of heaven and hell, but examination of historical records does not support this as a central concept of the first Christians. Ehrman delves into ancient history to scrutinize the thoughts and beliefs of the earliest societies from the Epic of Gilgamesh to the Greeks to the teachings of Jesus and his followers, showing the progression and development of the concept of a literal heaven and hell. His

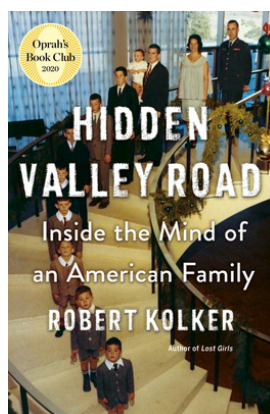
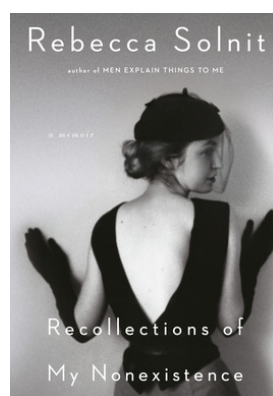
discussion is thoughtful and insightful as is his final conclusion that humans ultimately cannot know the absolute truth.

— Barbara Hoagland, Simon & Schuster, \$28

***Recollections of My Nonexistence*, Rebecca Solnit**

Gender violence began for Solnit, as with most women, in girlhood, with “ordinary ubiquitous damage,” psychologically casual at the very least, done by the men in her neighborhood, by even the men within her family's circle—the men who told her to smile for example, the overweight stranger who criticized her for eating a pastry—the insults and threats reminding her always that she was never free or safe as she moved through the world. At the heart of this memoir's matter is Solnit asking again and again, in different ways, and at different stages of her formation: “... whether the territory of my own body was under my jurisdiction or somebody else's, anybody else's, everybody else's, whether I controlled its borders, whether it would be subject to hostile invasions, whether I was in charge of myself.” Author of *Men Explain Things to Me*, Solnit has pushed the ramifications of this observation still further in the exploration of what formed her as a woman, as a writer, as a feminist. Clear-headed, erudite, devastating, this is a must-read for every body.

— Michelle Macfarlane, Viking, \$26



***Hidden Valley Road*, Robert Kolker**

In 1944, just before Don Galvin was to ship out with the Navy, he married his sweetheart Mimi. Returning from the Pacific, the couple eventually settled down in Colorado Springs, where they raised 12 children, two girls and ten boys—six of whom would develop schizophrenia. Living within this family became a nightmare for some, a haven for others. Over the years the boys were treated with a variety of drugs and other treatments and several succumbed to long-term altering effects. Those who escaped the diagnosis worried their own children would develop schizophrenia or some other form of mental illness. Research conducted on these family members by the National Institute for Mental Health has aided medical science in offering more accurate information to others whose families struggle with similar challenges. Kolker's empathic and detailed presentation of this amazing story provides medical history and hope for those suffering from schizophrenia. — Sue Fleming, Doubleday, \$29.95

***On All Fronts: The Education of a Journalist*, Clarissa Ward**

Ward's riveting memoir is an account of what propelled her to do the kind of extreme reporting for which she has received numerous Peabody and Murrow awards. Having been based in many of the world's post-9/11 hotspots—Baghdad, Beirut, Beijing, Moscow—she is still best known for her multiple forays into the tempest of Syria's ongoing civil war. Early on, she embedded with Syrian rebels to better understand, to help all of us better understand, why Western extremists were drawn to ISIS. Thus, Ward's own memoir becomes an account of our world's extremism, an extremism that has pushed millions—perhaps all of us—towards annihilation. — Michelle Macfarlane, Penguin, \$28

**ON ALL FRONTS**  
THE EDUCATION of a JOURNALIST



**Clarissa Ward**



***The Women with Silver Wings*, Katherine Sharp Landdeck**

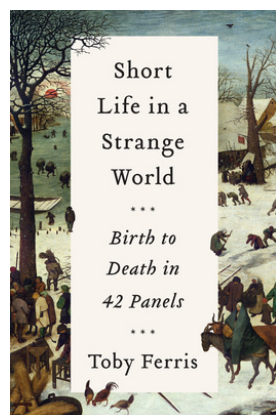
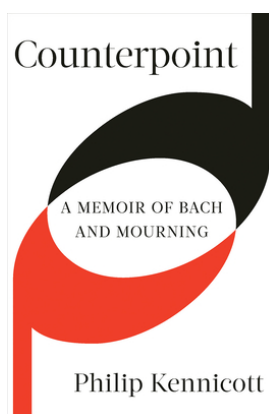
In her excellent account of women's service and sacrifice during WWII, Landdeck introduces us to WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots), an organization that gave women pilots the opportunity to serve. While not authorized to serve in combat, the WASP helped train male pilots for service abroad and ferried bombers across the country. Because of Landdeck's exhaustive research, these military veterans are beginning to receive

the recognition they deserve. Landdeck got to know many of the women personally by attending their parties and reunions, and, as they've grown older, their funerals. A fascinating account of remarkable women. — Sue Fleming, Crown, \$28



**Counterpoint: A Memoir of Bach and Mourning**, Philip Kennicott

As Kennicott packs to travel to be with his dying mother, he grabs the CD of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. Loving music and having had years of piano lessons, Bach is his choice to help him through this very difficult time. *Counterpoint* is the story of his exploration into his grief for his mother, a most unhappy woman who never felt she had the power to direct her own life; his own tale of growing up in her controlled household where her anger often flared; and the story of Bach: his life, his compositions, and in particular, the Goldberg Variations. Kennicott takes on thoroughly learning the Variations as a possible way of finding a higher spiritual meaning in his own life. His honesty about himself, his musical understanding, and all one learns about Bach and the Goldberg Variations make this memoir most compelling. – Deon Hilger, Norton, \$26.95



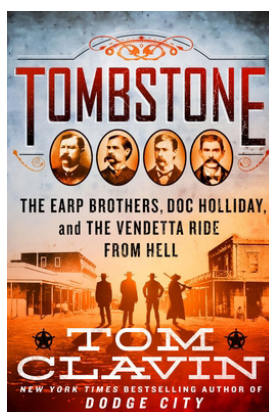
**Short Life in a Strange World: Birth to Death in 42 Panels**, Toby Ferris

Pieter Bruegel the Elder painted 42 panels before his death at about the age of 42. Toby Ferris, at around age 42, began a pilgrimage to see every known painting by Bruegel the Elder and to reflect on the life and times of the Dutch Renaissance painter. Bruegel died in 1569 and his paintings are detailed pictures of his world; however, Ferris moves the works from the panels into vignettes about growing up in the 21st century and

remembering his own father and family. A mixture of art history and memoir, this is a look at history and the philosophy and religion of the 16th century complete with the loves and fears of the time—the main of which was death. Bruegel and the other painters of his time saw death and hell as something real and concrete. The images in a Bruegel painting are stories replete with warnings—the keys to heaven and hell. Looking at the paintings is an obsession to Ferris as he sees his own life through the eyes of a visual storyteller. Whether the memoir is of Ferris or Bruegel and his world is for the reader to decide. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Harper Collins, \$29.99

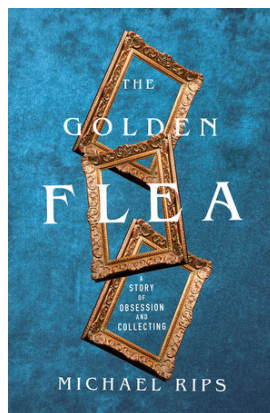
**Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride from Hell**, Tom Clavin

Perhaps the most famous shootout in Western history took place at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona, in 1881. The story behind the shootout and what brought the Earp brothers, Doc Holliday and the Clantons together in that one quick decisive event is part of a mythic history which Clavin does a masterful job of untangling. In so doing, he weaves in the stories of Western icons such as Bat



Masterson, Johnny Ringo, Curly Bill Brocius and, of course, Doc Holliday and the Earp brothers. Their stories are mesmerizing and their actions became mythic events in the settling of the Wild West.

– Barbara Hoagland, St. Martin, \$29.99



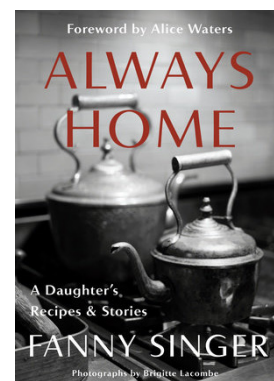
**The Golden Flea**, Michael Rips

A perfect read for those who love Damon Runyon and his New York world filled with peculiar individuals with peculiar obsessions. This is both a memoir of Rips and his movement back and forth between collector and hoarder and the stories of men and women in the Chelsea Flea Market. Vendors in the market are international, and Rips' first purchases are West African fetishes, but he expands into vintage clothing, rugs and fine art. He befriends the booth vendors—a

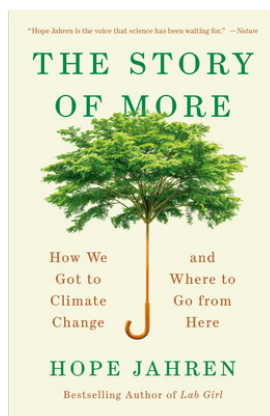
strange group of eccentrics appealing to unconventional customers and unconventional objects. The book is written with a light hand, describing a world most people will never enter but wish they could. The Chelsea Flea Market has gone and with it a former day and age where a mystical flea market could become a magic carpet carrying the reader into a magical world. This book will become a personal gift for friends who enjoy a lively look at art, history and the lives of eccentrics. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Norton, \$26

**Always Home**, Fanny Singer

What a perfect balm for this time when we are all stuck at home! An affectionate but never saccharine account of growing up as Alice Waters' daughter, this is a story of food, of travel, of love and, above all, of the sense of home that Fanny carries with her everywhere because of her mother. – Michaela Riding, Knopf, \$35



## NONFICTION IN PAPER



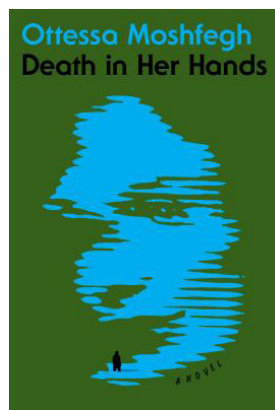
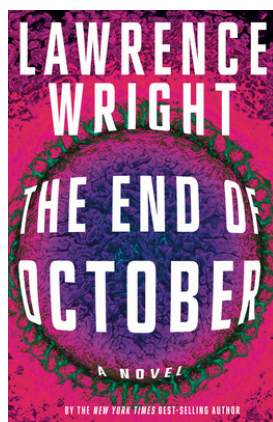
**The Story of More**, Hope Jahren

Jahren's latest book takes on climate change in a sweeping, mind-boggling catalog of human insatiability. Amid all the fighting between climate change believers and deniers, hers is a dispassionate balm, a simple counting of the earth and its inhabitants as they stand today. An essential read on climate change, global weirding, and the human trait we definitely want more of: hope.

– Michaela Riding, Vintage, \$15

### *End of October*, Lawrence Wright

When the Kongoli flu virus first shows up at an internment camp in Indonesia, the World Health Organization asks Dr. Henry Parsons to investigate. And although Henry is on his way home to his family and his CDC job in Atlanta, he agrees. Once at the camp he takes the usual precautions—mask and gloves—even though he's in a hurry. By the time he finds the team of MSF researchers—all dead—and has quarantined the camp, his local driver has already left the camp headed for the Hajj in Mecca unknowingly carrying the deadly virus. A global pandemic is coming, unleashing consequences no one is prepared for. This may be fiction but we are currently living it. — Paula Longhurst, Knopf, \$27.95

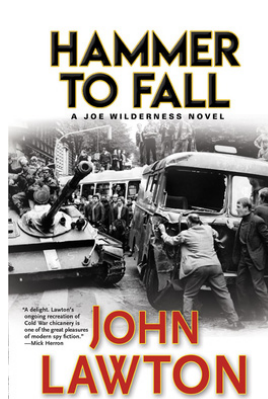
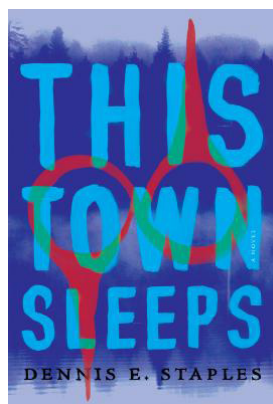


### *Death in Her Hands*, Ottessa Moshfegh

This gripping mystery begins with a non-confession. A note has been left but there is no body to be found. The elderly widow who finds the note is completely shaken and takes us along her journey. Lovers of Moshfegh's writing will not be disappointed. Her dazzling way with words and her insights into the dark depths of the human mind captivate from the first sentence. — Michaela Riding, Penguin, \$27

### *This Town Sleeps*, Dennis E. Staples

In his first novel, Ojibwe writer Dennis Staples skillfully interweaves people and place into astonishing stories. The place: a small northern Minnesota town (pop. 677) where the...“public high school was always more Indian than white but even the white children were like a special kind of Reservation White.” Celebrating the nature of the small town is its “silent guardian,” an abandoned silo painted with images of eagles, roses, a lynx or fox, feathers and tribal dancers. The people: a central narrator, Marion, a gay Ojibwe man in his mid-20s who begins a relationship with his former classmate Shannon, a heavily closeted white man. These two confront their identities during the novel, but other townsfolk—mostly women—join in telling their stories as well, primarily revolving around the murder of a 17-year-old basketball hero whose presence and spirit linger dramatically over the book's pages. A jawbone, wolf/dog spirit and the murdered hero emerge in dark, dream-like scenes. Ojibwe words woven liberally throughout provoke, probe, and leave the reader wanting to follow Marion and Shannon as each enters the next phase of his life. — Carol Kranes, Counterpoint, \$26



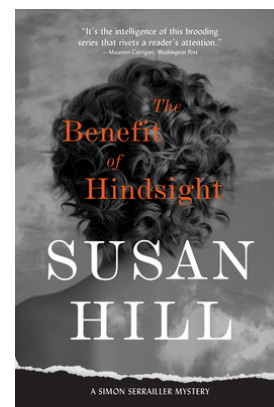
### *Hammer to Fall*, John Lawton

Like Thomas Mann's Felix Krull, Joe Wilderness is a man without morals (at least in the established sense), a con man par excellence, a natural born trickster. The fact that he's a British spy provides ample opportunity for what might be described as extracurricular activities—opportunities he takes full advantage of when not manufacturing them out of thin air. Readers of Lawton have met Joe in Berlin and London twice before but this time he is far afield—in 1950s Finland and then

Ireland. Berlin is the site of the endgame, however, one that is amusing, even laugh-out-loud funny—until it isn't. Until the wheels-within-wheels that Lawton is so good at turning take over the tale and a world akin to that so frequently portrayed by John Le Carré (whom Lawton, clearly an admirer, refers to obliquely time and again) comes into sharp focus. Irreverent, witty, and for all that a penetrating look at an interesting time and place in history. — Betsy Burton, Atlantic, \$26

### *The Benefit of Hindsight*, Susan Hill

DCI Simon Serrailler is no longer a young, intellectual, artistic policeman. He is a wounded man both physically and mentally who is returning to work following an incident which cost him his arm. Not only is his body damaged and his mind troubled but his decisions are questionable. When robberies turn into murder, he finds himself troubled by anxiety attacks which have become part of his life as he attempts to investigate. Meanwhile his sister Cat, a GP, finds herself drawn to the problems of a peculiar pregnant woman and her equally peculiar husband. The intertwined stories build into a rich, psychological mystery. Those who have been reading Hill's novels will not be disappointed by this, the tenth book in the series. If you are in the mood for a new, literate series, begin with book one, *The Various Haunts of Men*, and you'll start to care about the town of Lafferton and its citizens. — Wendy Foster Leigh, Overlook, \$27



### *Play the Red Queen*, Juris Jurjevics

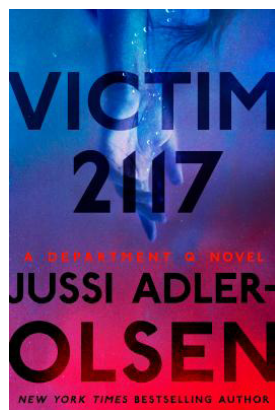
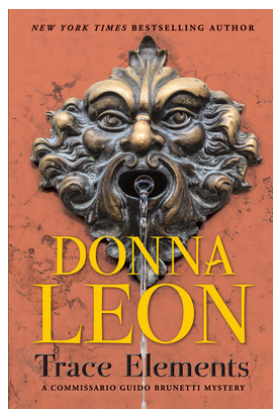
Saigon, 1963, and America is caught in the violence and corruption of Vietnam without formally fighting a war. A young female Viet Cong assassin is targeting Americans, and two army investigators are assigned to find and eliminate her. The search is not easy and takes the reader into the ugly workings of both American and Vietnamese politics and military. No one is innocent in the conflict. Not an easy read although, as readers of a certain age will recognize, this could serve as a

lesson plan for involvement in futile wars and the damage they do to the people involved. — Wendy Foster Leigh, Soho, \$27.95



## Trace Elements, Donna Leon

An encounter with a dying woman not only moves Commissario Guido Brunetti deeply, it also arouses his curiosity concerning the death of her husband. As is always the case in Leon's elegantly written and thoughtful books, currents of mystery carry the reader along the canals of Venice and its byways of corporate corruption as Brunetti probes the minds of the two women in his life—his scholarly wife Paola and the technologically brilliant secretary Elettra—along with the wisdom of the Greek dramatists he loves to read in order to plumb the depths of human perfidy and greed. Vivid in its indignation and, in the end, disillusionment, it fits our own time and place all too aptly. – Betsy Burton, Atlantic Monthly, \$27



## Victim 2117, Jussi Adler-Olsen

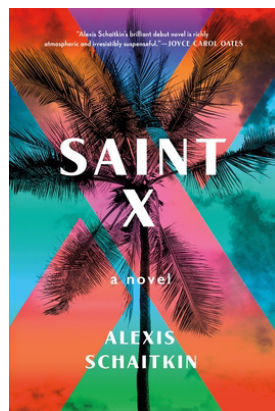
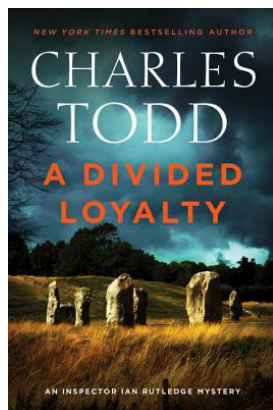
Department Q fans get the story we've all been waiting for. Assad has been the janitor since Carl Morck started handling the coldest of cold cases, but we've all suspected that behind the prayer mat and the mint tea lurked a much more complex personality. To the press, victim 2117 is the latest refugee to die in the Mediterranean Sea. To a young Copenhagen teen, she is the excuse to unleash a violent crime spree that Morck has been warning the police about for months. To a terrorist, she's a stepping-stone to a plot years in the making. And to Assad?

She's a chance to take down the man who wiped out his family.

– Paula Longhurst, Dutton, \$28

## A Divided Loyalty, Charles Todd

Inspector Ian Rutledge is assigned a murder set in the stone circles of Avebury, close to Stonehenge. His colleague, Inspector Leslie, has already been given the case, visited the site, and given up as to ever discovering who the victim is and who murdered her. Now, it is Rutledge's turn to answer the unanswered questions. Never one to give in, Rutledge digs into the details of the body and the location, getting to the bottom of the murder only to discover that he does not like what he finds. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Morrow, \$27.99



## Saint X, Alexis Schaitkin

The Thomas family annual vacation: a sandy beach, hot and cold running waiters, beach volleyball. On the last night on Saint X, 18-year-old Alison Thomas

vanishes, and two local men are subsequently arrested for her murder—and then released. Years later Claire Thomas, Alison's younger sister, gets into a New York taxicab and recognizes her driver as one of the accused from Saint X. She befriends him as a way of finding out if he really killed her sister. Her growing obsession with solving the unsolved murder begins to take over her life, with dangerous consequences. – Paula Longhurst, Celadon, \$26.99



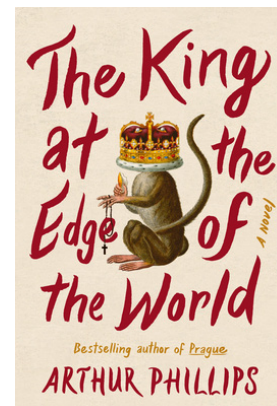
## Three Hours in Paris, Cara Black

Black has jumped from the world of the Leduc Detective Agency into German-occupied Paris, 1940. Her protagonist, Kate Rees, is an American sharpshooter armed with a rifle and a drive for revenge. British intelligence has recruited her to take the shot which could change the course of World War II. When she misses, she becomes the target for the Reich's security service and thus realizes that she has simply been a pawn in the intelligence service's greater plan. German-occupied

Paris is not a safe place for a young woman from Oregon, but she is bright and tough. A great read! – Wendy Foster Leigh, Soho Crime, \$27.95

## The King at the Edge of the World, Arthur Phillips

The world in the title is England and Scotland in 1601. Major characters are Elizabeth I, James VI, and Mahmoud Ezzedine, a Muslim physician who arrives at Elizabeth's Court with a diplomatic mission from the Ottoman Empire and is abandoned in this strange and harsh land. The time and place are filled with intrigue. Recruited as an undercover agent by Elizabeth's spymasters, Ezzedine, who simply wants to return to his homeland, is the perfect outsider. The novel may be set in 1601, but it reflects current divisions along religious and political lines and allows us to enter the minds of strong and ambitious characters who will stop at nothing to gain power. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Random, \$27



## Rollover, Paula Longhurst

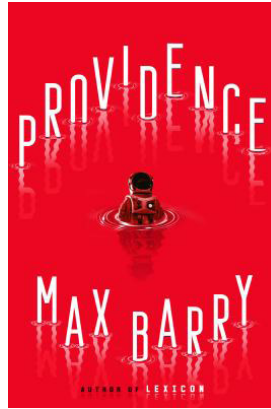
Nikki Doyle has an interesting job; she "handles" lottery winners when they can't seem to manage themselves. Funny what winning a bazillion pounds will do to a person's good sense. And she should know. Her own family won big when she was young and managed to make a mess of things too. To make matters worse, Nikki was recently an unsuspecting participant in a violent bank robbery and it's haunting her day and night. With the help of a therapist, she's trying to uncover what

she's repressed about that day but it's a rough go and the latest batch of "winners" are crazier than ever. I love Nikki and I think you will too! – Anne Holman, Open Flame Press, \$16.99 *Editor's note: So do the rest of us at TKE!*

## SPECULATIVE FICTION

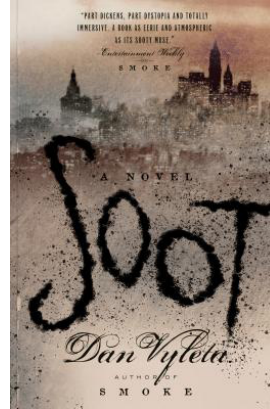
### **Providence**, Max Barry

Seven years ago earth made first contact with an alien race. It didn't go well, and earth took its armies into space, sustaining heavy loss of life. As support for the war waned, the military industrial complex created the Providence class of warship, run by powerful AI and a skeleton crew of four—basically window dressing to keep the public onside. At the launch of the Providence Five, it becomes pretty clear to the reader that these four (with one exception) shouldn't be in charge of a lemonade stand, let alone a multi-billion-dollar weapon of war. Months later the crew are deep in uncharted space, cut off from earth communication, and locked in the fight of their lives with an enemy who seems to get smarter with every encounter and a ship which is rejecting their commands. – Paula Longhurst, Putnam, \$27



### **Soot**, Dan Vyleta

Vyleta's previous novel, *Smoke*, continues into this Dickensian dystopian future dominated by the clouds of smoke which were once considered a sign of sin but have become the element which unites people. Thomas, Charlie, and Livia return, traveling from England and its northern workers to the aristocracy of the south to the North American continent and even to India during the colonization of the continent. The major characters serve as guides and the cast of characters



from the first volume are all there, but the narratives are separate—until Vyleta maneuvers them into a whole. His overwhelming theme of power and its dangers is the unifying element in this long novel, perfect for a stormy spring evening's read. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Doubleday, \$28.95

### INKSLINGER'S INKSLINGERS

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